Provisional Realities

Live Art 1951-2015

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DECLARATION

I, Isabella Maidment, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis reframes the history of live art as a mode of simultaneous production, exhibition and reception that emerged as an aesthetic form of new significance post-1945. In an attempt to complicate the existing terrain of interpretation, I present the history of live art as a mode of representation, and method of making, rooted not just in space but, importantly, in time. Over five chapters I trace a trans-historical dialogue between the neo-avant-garde and contemporary live art since the turn of the millennium.

The thesis is structured around four temporal framings: the *vernissage*; the night; the stage, and the museum; four sites of live production in which the live event emerged as a new aesthetic paradigm. In Chapter One I deploy the *vernissage* as a discursive framework and focus on two case-studies: Yves Klein's *Le Vide* (1958), and Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* (1959). Chapter Two positions Group Zero's night work as a key example of the post-war development towards live art, whilst Chapter Three underscores the transnational nature of that development in a study of the Tokyo-based collective Jikken Kōbō first work *The Joy of Life* (1951). The final two chapters examine the situational aesthetic and its strategic manipulation of the museum since the turn of the millennium through the work of Tino Sehgal, Tania Bruguera, and Roman Ondák.

Central to the history I am tracing is the relationship between live art and the contemporary art museum. In an effort to expand the existing history beyond a narrative of consensuality or dissent, I propose a history of live art and the museum as active, rather than reactive and recast the relationship as dialogic in character rather than necessarily effective as institutional critique. I address the museum as a *dispositif*, a performative apparatus in its own right.

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INTRODUCTION

Provisional Realities: Live Art 1951 – 2015

On 14th March 1959, Jean Tinguely staged his first live work, an action that entailed the dropping of 150,000 copies of a manifesto over the skies of Düsseldorf from the window of a small aircraft. Titled *Für Statik* (For Static), Tinguely's manifesto instructed its reader to 'Live in the present; live once more in Time and by Time – for a wonderful and absolute reality.'[1] The lead up to the action is documented in a series of photographs taken by Charles Wilp, four images that record Tinguely in the cockpit of the aeroplane grasping copies of the manifesto neatly fanned in both hands (figure i). Tinguely leans back in his seat beside the pilot turning in the direction of the photographer for whom the work was staged. In the final photograph in the series, Tinguely appears poised to drop the flyers out of the window of the aeroplane onto the city below (figure ii); and yet no image of the flyers in freefall exists, nor any record that they were received on the ground. It was reported that Tinguely's manifestoes failed to land on Düsseldorf because 'the currents of warm air blew the leaflets far out into the surrounding countryside.'[2] Whether or not the plane Tinguely hired was ever airborne remains uncertain. As a

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[1] Jean Tinguely, 'Für Statik' (Düsseldorf, 1959) For a full account of the event that places *For Static* in the context of Tinguely's broader production, see Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 2004), Lee suggests that: 'The gesture functioned in a quasi site-specific way. The action of a Swiss artist dropping literature over Germany carries with it patently militaristic associations: namely, that of American and Allied forces leafleting occupied countries during the wars years and the Eastern Bloc countries that emerged in the Cold War.' p.106. Lee suggests that the work allegorized Tinguely's message on time itself. p108.

[2] See K.G. Pontus Hulten, *Meta/ Jean Tinguely* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), p.79.

live event *For Static* exists today as myth, as an event performatively staged by its author, a work seemingly supported, verified, and made authentically 'real' by the 'documentation' of the action that the photographs appear to record. Written on the occasion of the artist's first exhibition at Galerie Schmela, titled *Concert for Seven Pictures*, Tinguely's programmatic manifesto rallied against pictorial stagnation, and called for a new aesthetic response to the changing reality of the post-war era. 'Stop painting time,' Tinguely urged, 'Stop evoking movements and gestures. You are movement and gesture. Stop building cathedrals and pyramids which are doomed to fall into ruin.'[3] (figure iii) In a longer and more descriptive version of the manifesto, delivered as part of a performance staged at the ICA in London that same year, Tinguely argued that time is not something to be possessed or owned, and that acknowledgment of the state of impermanence should lead not to a state of resignation, but rather to the celebration of instability and the dynamic of change.[4] Tinguely's theatrical framing of temporality foregrounds two issues fundamental to the history this thesis traces: the problem of documentation, and the challenges posed by artwork that only existed in the present moment of its making. Together with the manifesto, the photographs today occupy the curious status of a document without a history. The converse applies to the history of live art this thesis traces. What follows is a narrative of artistic production that is predominately without documents or objects, a history of art that only existed live in the present moment of its production and reception. By using the term 'live' I mean to refer specifically to the temporality of the work's making: to a mode of simultaneous production,

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[3] Jean Tinguely, 'Für Statik' reprinted and trans in 'Manifesto for Statics,' reprinted in Heinz Mack and Otto Piene (eds.) *ZERO*, op. cit. (note 1), p.119.

[4] For the full statement, see K.G. Pontus Hulten, *Meta/ Jean Tinguely op.cit.* (note 2), p.79.

exhibition and reception that I will be arguing emerged as an aesthetic form of new significance post-1945.

What follows is an attempt to grapple with a problem of representation central to the history of live art: the problem of writing a history where little to no documentation exists. The attempt to understand one-time-only, live events retrospectively through the fragmentary evidence of occasional photographs, film footage, and first hand written accounts necessarily entails an engagement with immaterial content that is doubly mediated, often with the added complication of the strategic intentions of the authors themselves intertwined. Writing in the early nineties, Peggy Phelan defined the ontological condition of performance as its 'one time only life'. Performance's only life is in the present,' she wrote, it 'cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so it becomes something other than performance'. 'Without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility – in a maniacally charged present – and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control'[5] This thesis challenges the logic Phelan describes.

Since the publication of Rose-Lee Goldberg's groundbreaking study of live art in 1979, the dominant narratives of performance and live art have tended to accentuate the human body as live art's primary site of artistic production; and emphasise performance art as antagonistic to the institutions in which it is stage.[6] My aim is to complicate the existing terrain of interpretation by examining the history of live art from an alternative viewpoint, as a mode of representation and method of making

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[5] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked the Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.146.

[6] See Roselee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (London & New York: Harry N Abrams, 1979) subsequent revised editions published as *Performance: Art From Futurism to the Present* (London & New York: Thames & Hudson, 1988, 2001, 2011).

rooted not just in space but, importantly, in *time*. This thesis is structured around four temporal framings: the vernissage; the night; the staged, and the museum; four sites of live production in which the live exhibition emerged as a new communicative medium. Structured over five chapters, this thesis charts a history of live art and its sites of production and exhibition from 1951 to 2015. Central to the history I am tracing is the relationship between live art and art's institutions, in particular that of the western contemporary art museum.[7] In an effort to expand this history beyond a narrative of consensuality or dissent, I propose a history of the shifting strategies of action and event-based art and the museum as active, rather than reactive, and suggest the dialogic as a more powerful means to think through this complex history. From the outset, then, this thesis sets out to recast the relationship between live art and the museum as dialogic in character rather than necessarily effective as institutional critique.

My project began with the work of Tino Sehgal, with a chance encounter with *This Progress*, Sehgal's first institutional exhibition in the United States, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York, in 2010. On that occasion I was struck by the work's unprecedented capacity to infiltrate and animate the institutional framework of the museum. It was a logic that seemed rooted not in the performance strategies of the 1960s or 1970s, but rather in a specific understanding, and strategic appropriation, of art's expositional structures and institutional codes and conventions. In short it seemed historically indebted to an earlier moment in the genealogy of live art: the immediate post-war years of the 1950s, a period that existing narratives of the history of performance had yet to fully address. I set out to trace the origins of this particular mode of live production prevalant among

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[7] Hereafter referred to simply as 'the museum'.

contemporary art since the turn of the millennium; and to begin to unravel its relation to the institution of the museum.

In an attempt to locate the origins of the shift towards live production in a historical moment that pre-dates the emergence of Conceptual art, in the early 1960s, and the subsequent advent of those practices associated with institutional critique, in the 1970s and 1980s, this thesis presents the immediate post-war period of the 1950s as a moment of historical reckoning, a point at which the live exhibition emerged as a new aesthetic paradigm. The history this thesis traces is notably distinct from both existing narratives of performance art and the history of installation art, that tendency which Claire Bishop defined as 'the institutionally approved artform *par excellence* of the 1990s.'[8] Instead this thesis traces the specific development of the spatio-temporal live event and its subsequent effect on that institution with which the ontological basis of live art is seemingly diametrically opposed. My aim here is twofold: to articulate the urgency of the live medium in the immediate post-war period and to trace its influence on contemporary art and the institution of the museum today. As one of Group Zero's core members, Günther Uecker prophetically asserted, 'our projects of today are the realities of tomorrow.' It is precisely this trans-historical dialogue that this thesis attempts to unravel and articulate. I begin by deploying the form of the *vernissage* as a discursive framework, as a means to think through the shift in artistic making that occurred in the 1950s, from the making of abstract paintings to the orchestration of live events, a transition that I map as a methodological shift from *Informale* to the provisional. In Chapter One I examine two contrasting *vernissages* of radically immaterial and anti-materialist kinds: Yves Klein's *La spécialisation*

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[8] See Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005).

de la sensibilité à l'état de matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée, (*Refinement of Sensibility in the First Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility)* better known as *Le Vide* (or The Void), realized at Galerie Iris Clert in the Spring of 1958; and the opening of Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* installed at Galerie René Drouin in Paris in March 1959. My focus in this first chapter is on two specific case studies of contrasting types, two ephemeral, one-time-only events that I present as conflicting examples of the strategic deployment of the provisional reality of the *vernissage* as a new form of aesthetic composition, and as a self-conscious meta-structure reflexive of its own gallery situation. I suggest that these one-time-only events are indicative of a broader impulse towards the crafting of experiential time as a new medium and that, as such, they may be read as key episodes in the history of a methodological shift in art making towards simultaneous production and presentation, realization and reception that occurred in the post-war period on a transnational scale. I suggest that the *vernissages* of both Klein's *Void* and Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* may be understood as spatio-temporal events that broadcast the condition of liveness itself as epistemic of a new tendency amongst the visual neo-avant-garde post-1945.

The decision to begin this study with the work of Yves Klein, the only canonical figure in the history this thesis traces, was made as a result of his strategic deployment of art's institutions and established presentational codes and conventions which, I believe, was instrumental in providing a historic blueprint, and formative framework, for that which I define as the situational aesthetic prevalent in contemporary art since the turn of the millennium. Klein occupies an established position within the dominant narratives of performance art. His

Anthropometries (1960) (figure vi) in particular have become assimilated into a particular body-centric reading of performance that pervades narratives of live art to this day.[9] Yet *The Void* is understood within a very different narrative, positioned within a specifically pictorial history, the trajectory of the development of abstraction, and the monochrome in particular. To date the only text to have addressed the ephemeral nature of Klein's 'invisible works' conceived and executed between 1957 and 1962 is Denys Riout's important study.[10] In an attempt to complicate the existing terrain of interpretation, my aim is to reposition Klein's seminal event firmly within the history of live art. Klein's inclusion in the opening chapter highlights an essential aspect of the history this thesis traces: the problem of institutional recognition both art historical and museological. With the exception of Klein, the work of the post-war artists and collectives examined in this study has largely been considered secondary to canonical narratives of the history of performance and live art precisely because of the lack of documentation of their predominately ephemeral work. Today the exhibition of live works always tends towards a reliquary of the objects, privileging the material remnants that remain, as though the live material is in fact subsidiary. It is precisely this lack of documentation, its lack of objects, and ephemeral condition that has lead to the

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[9] See Roselee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (London & New York: Harry N Abrams, 1979) subsequent revised editions published as *Performance: Art From Futurism to the Present* (London & New York: Thames & Hudson, 1988, 2001, 2011). Goldberg's seminal survey constituted a ground-breaking attempt to define live art as an art historical phenomenon. Charting the development of performance in Europe and North America through the course of the twentieth century Goldberg's survey was the first history to connect and historicize specialist areas of performance in a single trajectory.

[10] See Denys Riout *Yves Klein Expressing the Immaterial*, (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2010). (Originally published as *Yves Klein: manifester l'immatériel*, (Paris, Éditions Dilecta, 2004).

canonical omission of the work that the first three chapters of this thesis addresses, in both the existing scholarship in the field, and the work of museum.

In Chapter Two I make the case for Group Zero's performative work as one such example of the post-war development towards an art of simultaneous production, presentation, and reception that has otherwise been overlooked in canonical narratives of the history of live art. The past two years have born witness to a surge of institutional interest in the Düsseldorf-based Group Zero, and the broader ZERO network. This is largely due to the first retrospective survey of its work that toured the United States and Europe in 2014/2015. Whilst that retrospective was instrumental in reasserting ZERO's importance as a transnational avant-garde, the German group's live work still remains largely unexamined.[11] This chapter attempts to remedy this omission with a focused study of Zero's specific contribution to the development of live exhibition making between 1957 and 1964. I present the live exhibition as a new space of representation for Zero, and suggest that its aesthetic negotiation of night-time in particular was systematically integral to its performative agenda. I begin with a discussion of the *Abendausstellungen*, or night exhibitions, and move on to consider Zero's collaboratively produced demonstrations. In a reading informed by Raymond Williams' notion of 'structure of feeling', I suggest that Zero's nocturnal exhibitions and demonstrations may be seen as transient arrangements of a shared sensibility that formed as a response to the historical conditions of post-war Germany.[12] With hindsight Heinz Mack succinctly summarized Zero's position: 'We had to leave the known territories in

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[11] One notable exception is Margariet Schavemaker's recent essay 'Performing Zero' in Katherine Atkins et al., *Zero: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s-60s* (New York, New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2014), pp.44-55.

[12] The notion was first articulated by Williams in 1954 in Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954) p.33.

order to search for new spaces, the co-ordinates of which were unknown.'[13] I present Zero's night work as a collective attempt to reconfigure the traumatic space of war to one of peace, to rephrase the night into a peaceful event.

It is my contention that the shift away from the pictorial plane towards the provisional temporality of the live event occurred, in the 1950s, as a response to the socio-political climate of reconstructive culture, and the question of the representation of historical experience, post-1945. Underpinning this thesis is my belief that the live event as an aesthetic medium emerged as a direct response to this problem of the representation as a means of grappling with the recent past in the present tense of the live medium. Informed by Michel Serres's theorization, a notion of a critical layering, or stratification of time, links the first two chapters and culminates in the third, a chapter focused on the live work of the Japanese collective Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop), active between 1951 and 1958. This third chapter addresses Jikken Kōbō's first collaborative live work, *The Joy of Life*, realized in Tokyo in 1951, a cross-disciplinary intermedia production based on Picasso's painting of the same title, *La Joie de Vivre* (1946). The chapter appears deliberately out of sync within the otherwise chronological narrative of the thesis as a means to underscore the aesthetic responses to the immediate post-war era as multi-temporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic. Although its work prefigures that of the internationally established Gutai Art Association, active in Osaka between 1954 and 1972, Jikken Kōbō remains largely unknown beyond Japan. The first retrospective of its collective output was held in Japan in 2012, fifty-five years after the workshop ceased to exist

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[13] Heinz Mack, 'What was Zero?' pp.11-12 in Heinz Mack: *Licht der ZERO-Zeit* exh. cat, Ludwig Museum Ludwig, Cologne. (Cologne: Kerber, 2009) p.12.

as a working entity; meanwhile its work has yet to receive institutional recognition outside its homeland. The existing literature on Jikken Kōbō is limited, restricted to a handful of publications. This is largely due to the problematic central to the narrative this thesis traces: the transient nature of the Jikken Kōbō live work and the lack of documentation and object remnants which substantially contributed to its subsequent institutional invisibility.[14] I position *The Joy of Life* as a play of transpositions, a collaborative act of polychronicity that reflected the contemporary condition both psychic and social. With Chapter Three I present Jikken Kōbō's history without objects as a lynchpin between the historical avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde, and today's situational aesthetic – a tendency of which I argue the work of Tino Sehgal is paradigmatic.

In Chapter Four, my focus shifts to contemporary artistic production: to the live art that is rooted in the aesthetic strategies of the post-war years. I begin by articulating the situational aesthetic prevalent since the turn of the millennium and argue that it takes the logic and format of the live events established in the 1950s as its foundational basis. Borrowing Victor Burgin's term first coined in the context of the advent of Conceptual art in the early 1960s, I transpose the 'situational aesthetic' to articulate a tendency peculiar to contemporary artistic production over the past fifteen years (2000-2015). I use the term to refer to the specific temporality of the live works I will be discussing, and to simultaneously acknowledge their necessary complicity with the institutions in which they are staged – a collusion that I suggest is structurally engrained within the live 'fabric' of the work in question. My focus in this fourth chapter is the work of Tino Sehgal and its specific

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[14] Works by individual Jikken Kōbō artists have been acknowledged, notably the series of twenty *Compositions for APN APN no tameno kousei* (1953-54) photographs by Katsuhiro Yamaguchi and Kiyoji Otsuji acquired by Tate in 2012.

relation to the institutional framework of the museum. Focusing on three specific case-studies: *This Progress* realized at the Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York in 2010; *These Associations* exhibited at Tate Modern, London in 2012, and the twelve month retrospective, *A Year at the Stedelijk: Tino Sehgal* held at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 2015, I argue that the criticality of Sehgal's live production lies in its strategic manipulation of existing codes and conventions of art's exhibition and reception; in a reinforcement of the logic of the contemporary art museum, understood as both a collection of objects, and a performative apparatus in its own right. I suggest that Sehgal's work is parasitic in logic and structure, conceived as a live culture dependent on the host body of the museums in which it is staged.

In Chapter Five I argue that live art, as a mode of representation and method of making rooted not just in space, but importantly in time, has come to define the very ontological status of the museum as it exists today. My contention is that the recent shift in the role of the museum, one that Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbemuseum has articulated as a move from the old museum as 'treasure chest' to the new museum as 'tool box'[15] is both the result of, and a response to, a shift inherent within methods of artistic making rather than a reflexive anti-institutional impulse. The nature of the museum's permanent collection has evolved considerably over the past fifty years. Whilst the development of so-called 'time-based media' – works that took the format of video, film, and installation – demanded increasingly complex conservation requirement idiosyncratic to the specificities of each work acquired, a situation that has become more complex in

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[15] See Catherine Wood, 'In Advance of a Broken Arm: Collecting Live Art and the Museum's Changing Game', in Teresa Calonje (ed.), *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, (London: Koenig Books, 2014), pp.123-146.

the post-digital age due to the obsolescence of many of the technologies on which the work depend; it is the acceleration of efforts over the past decade to collect live art notably by MoMA, New York; the Van AbbeMuseum, Eindhoven; FRAC Lorraine, Metz; San Francisco MoMA, and Tate, London, that is challenging the museum's focus and traditional modes of operation more drastically. The incremental embrace of live artworks, Catherine Wood has argued, 'is instigating a broader conceptual transition in terms of how we understand not only the idea of collecting, but the very role of the museum. It is a shift that [...] arguably inflects the entire collection in new ways,' animating existing objects to new ends.[16] The past fifteen years have witnessed a surge in live art's institutional assimilation, but with its heightened profile comes a new set of challenges for the museum. The subject has become the focus of a number of research initiatives, notably *Collecting the Performative*, a research network that has brought together Dutch and British academic scholars and museum professionals to examine emerging practice for collecting and conserving performance-based art from 2011-2014. As Wood rightly acknowledges, 'Collecting live art is not just about the struggle of ensuring its capture for posterity, of fixing it in object-like-form, but about how live work, alongside and entwined with material artwork in a collection, changes the material through the very process of trying to incorporate it.'[17] This final chapter questions what is at stake in inviting live art into the museum's *permanent* collection?

This fifth chapter examines the museum as medium in the work of Tania Bruguera, and Roman Ondák. In this final chapter I present the situational aesthetic as an aesthetic strategy that stands in stark contrast to the systematic exploration of museological representation that defined the artistic practices of the 1970s

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[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Wood, op. cit. (note 16), p.143.

associated with institutional critique. This work acknowledges the situation that the proponents of institutional critique eventually accepted, the fact, as Andrea Fraser wrote, that 'Just as art cannot exist outside the field of art, we cannot exist outside the field of art […] because the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside of ourselves.[18] The recent strategy I identify, I argue, is conceptually interwoven with an understanding of the museum as a system or framework within which a set of rules might be performatively restaged. I suggest that the work of Bruguera and Ondák is anchored in a shared interest in subverting the conventional behavioural codes of the museum whilst simultaneously reinforcing its institutional framework. I focus on two significant live works realised over the past decade that involve the creative manipulation of the museum as medium: Bruguera's *Tatlin's Whisper #5* (2008), and Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good Times* (2003), two works that I suggest involve the imaginative manipulation of the museum matrix that have subsequently been acquired and assimilated into the permanent collection of the museum. I will argue that this recent wave of artistic activity that Bruguera and Ondák's work exemplifies underscores the urgent need to think of the museum no longer as simply a treasury of objects, or a permanent collection of artworks, but as a *dispositif*, a performative apparatus in its own right. This final chapter is an attempt to question what it might mean to rethink the institution not as a noun but as a verb.

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[18] Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique,' in John C. Welchman (ed.), *Institutional Critique and After*, (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006), pp.123-135.

CHAPTER ONE: THE VERNISSAGE, PARIS 1958-1959

'The object of this attempt is to create, to establish, and to impress upon the viewing public a sensuous pictorial state within the confines of the art gallery; in other words, the creation of an environment, of a real pictorial climate, therefore one that is invisible.'[19] With this seemingly paradoxical statement, Yves Klein described the intention behind his infamous second solo presentation at Galerie Iris Clert, Paris in the spring of 1958. Titled *La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état de matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée*, (*Refinement of Sensibility in the First Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility)* the exhibition became known as *Le Vide* (The Void), a shorthand description of an installation that was entirely devoid of material artworks. The exhibition was conceived as a prelude to Klein's self-titled 'Pneumatic period', as a statement of intent that marked the end of his so-called 'Blue Period' and the dawning of a new conception of the monochrome.[20] With *The Void* Klein reconfigured the space of painting into a charged, conceptual field, a performative environment in which the monochrome became a phenomenological experience, an event to be experienced live. This chapter borrows Klein's notion of a pictorial climate as a means to think through the late 1950s as a point of origin in the history of live exhibition making. I will use the temporal form of the *vernissage* as a conceptual means to explore this point of

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[19] Yves Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art' (1958) in Klaus Ottman (ed.), *Overcoming the Problematics of Art: The Writings of Yves Klein*. (Putman, Conn.: Spring Publications, 2007), p.48.

[20] Denys Riout was the first to note that the name 'pneumatic period', which Klein never fully explained, refers to the notion of pneuma meaning 'breath' in Greek, a spiritual principle that existed in the early days of Christianity, when the Gnostics affirmed the existence of a 'pneumatic' world in contrast to that of the Hylics, men who focused on material realities. See Denys Riout, *Yves Klein Expressing the Immaterial* (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2010), p.65.

origin, the beginning of a new approach to artistic production and presentation born of a specific historical condition, a specifically live form of mise-en-scène.

Defined as a private showing or preview, the term *vernissage* is etymologically rooted in image making. Derived from *vernis* meaning varnish or glaze, the French noun was first used in 1912 to define the day before an exhibition of paintings officially opened to the public, a day reserved for artists to varnish and apply finishing touches to their paintings. This chapter takes the *vernissage* itself as a discursive framework, as a means to think through the shift in artistic making that occurred in the late 1950s, from the making of abstract paintings to the orchestration of live events, a transition from the *Informale* to the provisional. I examine the *vernissages* of two contrasting exhibitions of radically immaterial and anti-materialist kinds: *The Void* at Galerie Iris Clert in the Spring of 1958, and the opening of Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* realised at Galerie René Drouin in Paris one year later. My focus here, then, is on two specific case studies of contrasting types, two ephemeral, one-time-only events; conflicting examples of the strategic deployment of the provisional reality of the *vernissage* as a new form of aesthetic composition. My argument is that these experimental live events are both a deliberate negation of the art gallery and the conventions of object-based display, and a strategic occupation of the behavioural codes and social conventions of the *vernissage* understood, at the same time, as a key structural component. What was at stake in the imaginative staging and activation of the dramaturgy of the *vernissage* at this specific historical juncture? What did it mean to transform the gallery opening into an experiential testing ground, a pictorial climate in which the artwork became a situation to be lived?

My contention is that the structure of the *vernissage* was deliberately deployed as an announcement, as a ceremonious preview of a new aesthetic form born of a

specific historical condition. The aim of this chapter is to examine the impetus behind the artistic production taking shape post 1945, to establish the temporal specificity and critical significance of these particular instances of live exhibition making in light of the subsequent shift towards live production evident in artistic practices over the past fifteen years. I propose that these two contrasting *vernissages* may be read as blueprints or templates for that which I will be defining in the final chapter of this thesis as the new situational aesthetic prevalent in contemporary art today. These one-time-only events are indicative of a broader impulse towards the crafting of experiential time as a new medium and that, as such, they may be read as key episodes in the history of a methodological shift in art making towards simultaneous production and presentation, realization and reception that occurred in the post-war period on a transnational scale.

The term 'situational aesthetics' was first coined by artist and theoretician Victor Burgin in 1969 as a means to acknowledge the emergence of a strand of artistic production that found its essential form in message rather than materials. In a phenomenologically inflected reading of the development of a process-orientated attitude towards the making of aesthetic objects, Burgin argued that in the late 1960s and early 1970s art was conceived increasingly in terms of behaviour and justified as activity. Addressing the question of the conditions underlying the perception of art, he stated that 'the specific nature of any object is largely contingent upon the details of the situation.'[21] Inherent to the new tendency Burgin recognised was not only the concentration on process and behaviour, but also the recognition of 'a multiplicity of times'. 'Works may be proposed in which materials

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[21] Victor Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', *Studio International* Vol 178 (October 1969), pp.118-121; p.119. For a broader overview of Burgin's thinking that positions this early essay in relation to his subsequent work and writing see Alexander Streitberger (ed.) *Situational Aesthetics: Selected Writings by Victor Burgin* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009).

are deployed and shifted in space in order to create compressions and rarefactions of time,' Burgin writes. 'Such a work would be perceived in the "extended present" within which we appreciate music. In this state of awareness the distinction between interior and exterior, between subject and object, is eroded.'[22] My concern here is not with the dematerialised art object, as it would come to be theorised in the 1970s, but rather with the situational aesthetic that developed at an earlier moment; with the imaginative potential of the 'extended present' of the live event established within the specific socio-political landscape of the immediate post-war moment and the rise of spectacular culture.[23] My interest, then, lies in precisely that which the history of conceptual art omits, the role of the space of the gallery itself as a supporting structure, one interwoven with and integral to the establishment of meaning in works produced in the late 1950s. The situation was itself contingent upon the validating infrastructure of the gallery, conceptualised here through the specifically temporal and social frame of the *vernissage*.

Klein's *Void* and Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* are both seminal examples of the strategic manipulation of the *vernissage* as a form of time-based medium, as a temporal framework in which to imaginatively craft experiential time within the fixed parameters of a single evening. I will turn first to the *vernissage* of Klein's *Void*, a work that I will position as a highly strategic, carefully orchestrated event that operated dialogically with the conventions of the gallery *vernissage*. Unlike the *Cavern of Anti-Matter*, *The Void* occupies a seminal position within existing histories of conceptual art, and exhibition making. From the outset I would like to

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[22] Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', *op. cit.* (note 3), p.121.

[23] See Lucy Lippard's seminal text, Lippard, *Six years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries* (New York: Praeger, 1973).

distinguish my own project from the extensive existing literature on Klein, and the body-centric focus on his work within the history of performance art in particular. In an attempt to complicate the existing terrain of interpretation, my aim is to reposition Klein's seminal event within the history of performance and live exhibition making.[24] I propose an alternative reading of *The Void* as a prototypical example of what I will be defining as the situational aesthetic prevalent in recent artistic production since the mid-1990s. Klein boldly claimed that with *The Void* he had successfully 'overcome the problematics of art'; I believe, however, that the work may be seen, not as an exhaustive gesture, but rather as a key example of the emergence of a new aesthetic form, live compositions that exemplified a new understanding of the critical potentiality of live production and the ephemeral one-night-only event.

Preparations for the *vernissage* of *The Void* began in earnest two weeks before the opening on 12 April 1958. 3,500 invitations were sent out with a text by critic Pierre Restany written in the hyperbolic language typical of the interpretation surrounding Klein's work:

> Iris Clert invites you to honour with all your affective presence the lucid and positive advent of a certain reign of the sensuous. This manifestation of perceptive synthesis testifies to the pictorial quest for ecstatic and immediate communicable emotion in Yves Klein's work.[25]

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[24] To date the only detailed account of Klein's 'invisible works' which he conceived and executed between 1957 and 1962 is Denys Riout, *Yves Klein Expressing the Immaterial* (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2010). (Originally published in French as *Yves Klein: manifester l'immatériel*, Paris: Gallimard, 2004).

[25] Klein, 'Preparation and Presentation of the Exhibition on 28 April 1958 at Galerie Iris Clert' in Klaus Ottmann (ed.), *Overcoming the Problematics of Art: The Writings of Yves Klein*, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.49. On the subject of the invitations, Klein stated: 'This brilliantly laconic text is very clear and we decide, in view of the importance of this exhibition for the history of art, to have it engraved on a card with an informal format but with formal English script. Thus it is solemn and above all in relief so that the blind can read it' Ibid., p.48.

A free admission ticket for two people was included with the invitation. The ticket stated that without the card the price of admission would rise to 1,500 francs per visitor. Klein claimed that this precaution was necessary to prevent viewers receptive to the work's 'sensibility' from 'robbing him', whether consciously or not, of some degree of the work's 'intensity'.[26] Printed on white card in blue ink, the invitations were posted with Klein's own blue stamps that were residual elements of his simultaneous exhibitions of monochromes at Galerie Iris Clert and Galleria Colette Allendy in May 1957. Entirely monochromatic, the imageless stamps were void of any signifying information or monetary value and were therefore illegal – an early indication of Klein's intention to deliberately disrupt existing systems of formality and exchange through a gesture that deployed the postal network as a space of artistic self-promotion.

Two days before the opening, Klein began painting the gallery's interior walls a stark, luminous white. Using pure white lithopone pigment blended with his own varnish of alcohol, acetone and vinyl resin, he aimed to transform the small twenty metre square gallery into a bare, spatial totality capable of communicating the 'ecstatic and immediate emotion' that the invitation described. Klein later claimed that he alone painted the space, working in a state of almost monastic seclusion; in fact a number of friends recall that they were put to work to help with the preparations.[27] Galerie Iris Clert had a single shop window facing rue des Beaux-Arts. Klein painted this window his signature blue

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[26] Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art', *op. cit.* (note 1), p.49.

[27] When interviewed by Sidra Stich, Jean-Pierre Mirouze, Bernadette Allain, and Charles le Moing remembered assisting Klein with the painting of the gallery. See Sidra Stich, *Yves Klein*, exh. cat., Museum Ludwig, Cologne and Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1990), p.135

to prevent both a preview of the exhibition and any external view from inside thereby rendering the gallery autonomous from everyday life. In order to further emphasize the environment's experiential impact, the visitor flow through the gallery was deliberately disrupted. The usual entrance on the street was blocked and the carriageway adjacent to the gallery, a doorway normally used by the residents in the apartments above, was used as an alternative. The passageway functioned as a reception area in which visitors could acclimatise to the blue before entering the absent monochrome of *The Void*. A heavy velvet curtain in deep, ultramarine blue announced this temporary entrance. Together with a single curtain hung on one wall in the passageway inside, it formed a theatrical blue scene-setting, and a means of emphasizing the white luminosity of the supposedly dematerialised blue monochrome inside, that 'colour-space that is not seen but within which one is impregnated' to paraphrase Klein.[28] With the external façade painted blue and the inside stripped of all superfluous content and painted all-over white, the monochrome was turned inside out, flipped on its pictorial axes, to reveal its supporting structure, the validating context of the commercial gallery.

On the night of the vernissage, visitors were offered a vivid blue concoction, a cocktail of gin, Cointreau and methylene blue. The cocktail proved to 'impregnate' visitors in a literal capacity when they discovered the next day that it had turned their urine the same vivid shade of blue as the drink. Klein's judo students were employed to guide guests into the gallery in groups of ten. Klein, stationed inside the space in evening dress, asked visitors to remain inside the exhibition for no more than two to three minutes. Inside, the gallery was empty with the exception of

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[28] Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art', *op. cit.* (note 1), p.47.

a small fitted cabinet and an object-less glass showcase which Klein had also rendered white with the aim of creating an 'invisible pictorial state' synonymous with radiance; 'a pictorial climate of the sensibility of immaterialised blue'. The only colour visible was Iris Clert's recently fitted charcoal-grey carpet. On the subject of the radically immaterial content of the exhibition, Klein stressed that objects or 'intermediaries' were no longer useful or needed: 'For the creative act to succeed, the immaterialization of the invisible and intangible canvas must act upon the sensuous vehicles or bodies of the gallery visitors with much more efficiency than ordinary, physical, representational paintings,' he stated rhetorically.[29] By 9:45pm *The Void* was full to bursting. 'It is delirious' Klein reported. 'The crowd is so tightly packed that no one can make the slightest movement. I am staying inside the gallery. Every three minutes I shout out and repeat in a loud voice: […] ladies and gentlemen, please have the extreme kindness not to stay too long in the gallery so that other visitors waiting outside can enter in turn.'[30] At 10 pm, according to Klein's account, three vans of police plus firemen 'in full force with their giant ladder' arrived, but the crowds outside the gallery were so densely packed that they were prevented from entering. The *vernissage* continued until half past midnight when the gallery closed and Klein led a party of forty to La Coupole, a local bar in Montparnasse, where at 1am, 'trembling with fatigue', he delivered his 'revolutionary discourse': 'Ladies, Gentlemen,' he began, 'All of you this evening have conscientiously attended a historic moment in the history of universal art. Even beyond my modest person, this is the abrupt extrapolation of four millennia of

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[29] Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art' *op. cit.* (note 1), p.48.

[30] *Ibid.*, p.54.

civilization that has just found its exhaustive coronation.'[31] *The Void*, Klein claimed, marked his detection of a new significant human state within the framework of his pictorial evolution. This evolution, I am suggesting, was inextricably interwoven with the ritualised temporal space of the vernissage.

The few photographs that document *The Void* are deliberately minimal in content, carefully composed to represent a specific 'pictorial sensibility' over bodily engagement. It is notable that these photographs fail to record the frenzied atmosphere of the vernissage that Klein's writings described. Instead, they depict a sterile environment almost entirely devoid of human engagement (figure 1.1).[32] These photographs deliberately fail to record any trace of the *vernissage* an event which, according to Klein, some 3,500 people attended.[33] The installation views reveal an inherent contradiction at the heart of *The Void*: in their emptiness and stubborn refusal to depict the experiential conditions of the installation as a whole, these photographs are loaded with expectation, yet the real work had already taken place. Klein was clearly conscious of the visual power of the photograph. This is patently evident from the images that document the making of his *Anthropometries*, for instance, the series of works made between 1958 and 1961 in which naked

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[31] The justification of his work, Klein claimed, resided in 'the universal and motivated projection of its pictorial essence' nothing less than a desire to turn France into an immediate and radiant vision. 'The detection of a new significant human state within the framework of my pictorial evolution prohibits to me to give up increasing my physical canvases.' He said. Yves Klein, 'Speech Delivered after the Opening Reception for the Pneumatic Period', in *Overcoming the Problems of Art The Writings of Yves Klein op. cit* (note 1), p.57.

[32] As part of Klein's first and last museum retrospective during his lifetime in 1961, *Yves Klein Monochrome und Feur*, (14 January – 26 February 1961) a second incarnation of *The Void* was realised at the Museum Haus Lage in Krefeld. The work which still exists to this day occupies the space where the Lage family organ once stood and is just 7m in area and lit by a single overhead fluorescent. In contrast to the first iteration of the work in Paris, ideally this work should be experienced by a single visitor alone at any given time.

[33] Yves Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art, op. cit. (note 1), p.54.

models performed the role of living paint brushes imprinting their IKB coated bodies against canvas (figure 1.2); or the now iconic highly constructed photograph of Klein's mythic *Leap into the Void* in October 1960 (figure 1.3). The absence of photographs recording the opening of *The Void* is therefore both striking and significant. There is no visual record of the crowds inside the gallery and the street outside, nor the arrival of the police or the fire brigade who were called in an effort to control them. In contrast to the theatricality of the *vernissage*, the photographs are deliberately mundane offering no single view of *The Void*, merely fragments of detail. These interior views draw attention to the architecture of the gallery, to the corners of the room, and the empty vessel of the display case that was the only piece of furniture that remained. The eye is drawn to material surfaces, to the rough texture of the walls, the irregular finish of its plastering, and the folds of a single white curtain hanging motionless, waiting to be opened. Our attention is focused on the basic structure of the gallery and its mechanisms of visibility and display, physical elements that jar with the immaterial 'manifestation of perceptive synthesis' that Klein sought to enable.

The Void is also documented in a short 1'39" colour film in which the display of 'immaterial pictorial sensibility' is similarly presented as a purified space lacking any active engagement.[34] In this film, once again, *The Void* is consciously staged as 'a ritualized state/environment/zone of total spatial control.' The film stages the gallery itself as a site of expectation. It begins with a glimpse of the clouded sky over rue des Beaux-Arts and quickly cuts to the entrance of Galerie Iris Clert and the blue velvet entrance through which a number of passersby disappear, one man hesitates momentarily, observing the unusual façade before entering (figure 1.4),

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[34] Shot on 16mm stock, *La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état de matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée*, 1958 was restored by the Centre Pompidou, Paris in 1999.

yet the only visitor we see inside *The Void* is its creator. As the camera cuts to the interior Klein appears and pulls back the curtain which lifts with almost theatrical elasticity. With the scene set, the gallery is revealed as entirely empty. A single lampshade bounces up and down, frenetically spotlighting the gallery, animating the otherwise action-free void. Nobody comes, nobody goes. The camera navigates the empty interior in a single, ghostly movement, cutting to a close-up of the roughly plastered walls, an almost lunar texture that recalls the surface of Klein's monochromes. The film ends with a shot of a visitor's book revealing a sketched portrait, a representation of a guest unseen. A hand, presumably Klein's, turns the page sharply and the film cuts to black. The total effect is phantasmagorical, staging the gallery as a ritualised, semi-sacred space of loaded potential; a fetishized interior.

A comparison with stills of the film Klein made one year earlier, that which documents the exhibition *Yves Klein: Propositions monochromes* at Galerie Colette Allendy in 1957 reveals the extent to which a phenomenological engagement in the film of *The Void* was deliberately suppressed (figure 1.5). The primary documentation of the *vernissage* of *The Void* is in fact Klein's own carefully crafted written account, a blow-by-blow descriptive record that reproduces the events of the evening in the present tense.[35] In both the photographs and the films that document *The Void* the gallery is presented as emphatically empty, yet in his writings Klein emphasizes that the artist's physical presence in *The Void* was critical. 'My active presence during the execution in the gallery space will create the climate and the radiating pictorial environment that habitually permeates the studio of the artist endowed with a true power; a sensuous density that is abstract

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[35] Yves Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art', op. cit, (note 1), pp.48-56.

yet real, existing and living, by itself and for itself,' he explained.[36] This notion of transposing the sacred space of the artist's studio into the expositional space of the commercial gallery is highly problematic. The studio or atelier is a place of work, a space synonymous with the artist's 'genius' and with unseen processing of making. The only form of making that Klein transposed to Galerie Iris Clert was an act of showmanship, a performance that ultimately served to underscore his own legitimising presence.

Close reading of Klein's description of the *vernissage* reveals a tension between the aesthetic claims he is making for the work – the language of a direct, solitary communicable emotion experienced through 'impregnation' as though the viewer were soaked, saturated and otherwise deeply immersed in the immaterialised pictorial sensibility of the monochrome – versus the reality of its means of production. As Klein, I believe, was keenly aware, *The Void* was dependent on the authorising framework of the gallery opening in order for it to exist or be experienced as an artwork at all. In short, *The Void* was only validated by the *vernissage* that came before it, by the provisional reality of that live event. After the opening, Klein noted that the exhibition had been enlightening in allowing him to understand that: 'Art does not depend on vision, but on the sensibility that effects us, on affectivity therefore, and that much more than on all that touches our five senses.'[37] That affectivity, I am suggesting, was only made possible by Klein's strategic negotiation of the dramaturgy of the *vernissage. The Void* could only be articulated through a skilled understanding of the power spectacle, and the strategic use of the commercial gallery as a space of promotion and artistic validation.

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[36]Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art', *op. cit.* (note 1), p.51.

[37] Reprinted in Stich, *Yves Klein, op. cit,* (note 8), p.140.

In his 1976 account of the history of the ideology of the gallery space, *Inside the White Cube*, Brian O'Doherty positions *The Void* as the first of several, by then canonic, gestures that use the gallery as 'a dialectical foil'.[38] These gestures, O'Doherty suggests have a history and a provenance: each tells us something about the social and aesthetic agreements that preserve the gallery. Each uses a single work to draw attention to the gallery's limits, or contains it in a single idea. O'Doherty argues that, with *The Void*, the gallery, 'the locus of transformation', became 'an image of Klein's mystical system.'[39] In terms reminiscent of Klein's own writings, he describes *The Void* as 'a grand synthesis derived from the symbolists in which *azur* (International Klein Blue) became the transubstantiating device – the symbol, as it were for Goethe, of air, ether, spirit.'[40] Klein's gallery gesture, he sums up, as 'marvellous hocus-pocus'. The point I am making here is that *The Void* was, in fact, far from mystical, rather the work was inextricably tied to its reinforcement of gallery behavioural codes and conventions and the temporal framework of the *vernissage* in particular.

Through its insertion into the ready-made ritualised framework of the *vernissage*, *The Void* operated through the augmentation or heightening of social rituals. The work functioned through a series of highly coded signifying conventions. One of

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[38] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, (Berkey: University of California Press, 1999) 2nd edition, p.87. (First published 1976). O'Doherty positions *The Void* within a historical lineage of the gallery as gesture in the late 1960s and early 1970s than includes Armarand P. Arman, *Le Plein*, a sequel to Klein's installation at Galerie Iris Clert in 1960s in which the gallery was packed from floor to ceiling with rubbish, detritus and material waste; Daniel Buren's exhibition at Galleria Apollinaire, Milan in October 1968 in which he sealed the gallery for the duration of the exhibition and pasted vertical white and green fabric stripes to the closed door; and Robert Barry's exhibition at Eugine Butler Gallery, Los Angeles for which he simply closed the gallery leaving it dark and empty for three weeks in March 1970.

[39] *Ibid.,* p.88.

[40] *Ibid.,* pp.88-89.

the most absurd aspects of the *vernissage* was the involvement of the authority of the Republican Guards, part of the French Gendarmerie whom Klein engaged to stand at either side of the entranceway to *The Void* for the duration of the opening.[41] Stationed in full regalia the guards' legimitising presence lent the event an air of diplomatic importance given that they could only normally be deployed if the French President, a government minister or a secretary of state were in attendance.[42] Tropes of grandeur, political importance and authority, the Republican Guards were strategically engaged to imbue the empty gallery with the greatest of significance. Their presence served to encode *The Void* symbolically as a space presided over and protected by the French state, whilst simultaneously lending a potential threat to legislate the gallery visitor's behaviour.

Despite its title, in its act of emptying, whitewashing, abyss making, *The Void* functioned not as a negation, nor as an act of cancelling out a reductive gesture or subtraction, as it is usually conceived, but rather as a reinforcement of a specific set of existing expositional and social conventions. The work functioned through its interdependence on the codes, norms, and behavioural conventions of the commercial gallery. After all, the immaterial pictorial sensibility was exhibited for sale to be sold either in individual 'pieces' or as a total installation. There is a danger of falling into a trap of describing *The Void* in the same transcendental rhetoric that Klein self-consciously constructed, but the reality of the work is that it

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[41] Iris Clert used her connections in high political circles to secure the guards' presence. This is detailed in Stich, *Yves Klein*, *op. cit.* (note 8), pp.136-137.

[42] As Sidra Stich notes the guards' presence was made even more absurd by the political situation in France at the timen May 1958, France was in the midst of a major governmental crisis. During the weeks before and after the vernissage of The Void, Paris was plagued by a massive often violent protests caused by the escalation of the Algerian conflict. The menace of national disunity loomed large, especially after the resignation of President Félix Gaillard on 15 April. It was a potentially explosive situation. See Stich, *Yves Klein*, *op. cit.* (note 8), p.137.

was created within a very specific structuring framework: that of the commercial gallery and the art market system which was then undergoing a period of transition. In conflict with the spiritual claims Klein attempted to impose on the exhibition, the means of producing *The Void* was dependent on the orchestration of the *vernissage* as a live event, a provisional reality constructed almost entirely through tactical spectacularisation. With this work, Klein announced the dawning of his Pneumatic Period with the calculated methods of a skilled strategist. With *The Void* Klein took the ritualized temporal space of the *vernissage* as a ready-made promotional framework.

From its earliest inception, Klein's work was strategically structured according to pre-existing art historical conventions. As early as November 1954 he published *Yves Peintures* an edition of 150, 24.4 x 19.7 cm booklets. With ten colour plates and a three-page preface, the booklet echoed the design and format of a deluxe publication.[43] By mimicking the monographic catalogue dedicated to the work of an established artist, the publication presented Klein as a significant artist with a substantial oeuvre when in fact he had yet to mount a single exhibition. The preface written by Klein's childhood friend, poet Claude Pascal, is a wordless text of unbroken horizontal lines. There is no ekphrasis, no attempt at interpretation; and yet, by its very presence, the publication announces Klein as an artist of significance, though at this stage he was, in fact, entirely unknown. Indeed, as Nan

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[43] Nan Rosenthal was the first to draw attention to these two small 'books' *Yves Peintures* and *Haguenault Peintures* which Klein supposedly 'published' in Madrid before definitively dedicating himself to an artistic career. On the subject of these leaflets of some fifteen small pages, Yve-Alain Bois writes: 'far from the 150 numbered copies announced in the colophon, there were only a few and it is very likely that most were made only posthumously from the material Klein brought back from Spain.' Yves-Alain Bois, 'Klein's Relevance for Today', *OCTOBER 119*, (Winter 2007), p.79. *Yves Peintures* was backed by his Aunt Rose and published by the father of Klein's friend Sarabin who owned a printing shop.

Rosenthal, who was the first to draw attention to this fact established, the works apparently reproduced never existed at all.[44] The monochromatic plates offer the semblance of works: each colour plate is presented as an anonymous entity: a spatial field of a single hue that range between turquoise, brown, purple, green, pink, grey, yellow, ultramarine, mint, orange, and red. So these images are utterly non-representational and yet, at the same time, perfect simulations. Entirely fictitious, these apparent reproductions of existing paintings merely mimic the conventions of the monographic exhibition catalogue or the catalogue raisonée. The image captions reinforce the publication's matter of fact, tautological tone by providing nothing more or less than such basic data as the artist's name (the familiarity of the single first name Yves); a city location reference (London, Madrid, Nice, Paris, or Tokyo), a date, 1951, 1952, 1953 or 1954, plus the work's supposed dimensions listed without any indication of the standard or unit of measurement.[45]

Yves Peintures offers one of the earliest examples of Klein's strategic manipulation of art's representational conventions as a means of validating his own work as something worthy of reproduction. The fact that the publication appeared to reproduce paintings that had no material basis in the physical world is precisely the point, Klein here is strategically manipulating art's institutional frameworks to construct a myth of the work in order for it to come into being. As Yve-Alain Bois has argued, the tension between the true and the false is central to the logic of Klein's entire oeuvre from the outset. It is that which allowed Klein 'to

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[44] See Nan Rosenthal, 'Assisted Levitation: The Art of Yves Klein,' in *Yves Klein 1928-1962: A Retrospective*, exh. cat. (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), p.109.

[45] In H*aguenault Peintures* the geographical notations are accompanied by detail of the so-called 'provenance' of the work, again fictious information presented according to convention for instance, 'Haguenault/Paris, 1951 (162 x 97), collection Raymond Hains.

simultaneously lament the disillusionment of the world, and to ironically draw substance and subsistence from it.'[46] 'In a world in which everything has become myth and spectacle, only the spectacularization of myth and spectacle can contain a parcel of truth: as their indictment,' he argues.[47] For Bois the relevance of Klein today lies in the fact that he shows us how to deflate the spectacle of the culture industry by staging an even greater hoax.[48] Klein's populist stunts, he argues, fought against 'the equally pompous but even more hollow spectacle of the high bourgeois culture of his time (more hollow because it was levelled out by the culture industry while pretending to ignore it).[49] This notion of hollow spectacle is one that we might usefully apply to *The Void*, a work that may be read as an act of showcasing par excellence.

In 1959, Klein applied the central tactics of *The Void* to a group exhibition context. On 17 March, Klein participated in the group show, *Vision in Motion* at Hessenhuis in Antwerp titled in homage to László Moholy-Nagy.[50] Klein's contribution to the exhibition on this occasion once again took place within the framework of the *vernissage* format. For one night only, he proposed a *Zone of immaterial pictorial sensibility* articulated only by his physical presence announced by his surname stenciled on the floor where he stood motionless. 'I did not even

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[46] Bois, 'Klein's Relevance for Today', op. cit. (note 25), p.86. As Bois rightly asserts, Klein today is not the same as Klein in the 1960s. He argues that we know much more about Klein today now that the quasi-monopoloy that critic Pierre Restany had over the artist's work has ceased to be an issue. Bois suggests that one of the main factors in the change that occurred in Klein's legacy was the critical analysis of the artist's "sauce" – especially the meticulous study of Klein's Rosicrucianism conducted by Thomas McEvilley in the catalogue of the artist's retrospective at the Musee National d'Art Moderne in 1983. See Thomas McEvilley, 'Yves Klein and Rosicrucianism,' in Yves Klein (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), pp. 238–54.

[47] Bois, 'Klein's Relevance for Today', *op. cit.* (note 25), p.86.

[48] Bois, Yve-Alain. 'Klein's Relevance for Today', p.93

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: P. Theobald, 1947).

want to paint one or several walls or make any kind of figurative gesture, sweep or brush the walls with even a dry, paintless brush,' Klein stated. 'I simply restrained myself to presenting myself at the exhibition space on the day of the opening, announcing to everyone in the space that was reserved for me: 'First there is nothing, then there is deep nothing, then there is blue depth' (after G.Bachelard).[51] In addition to this contribution, Klein offered to sell a zone of 'Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility' in exchange for one kilo of gold.[52] In a subsequent work realised the following year, Klein turned to the specific temporal framework of a twenty-four hour day. At a press conference held in advance of the event, Klein announced: 'As part of the theatrical presentations of the Festival of Avant-garde Art in November-December 1960, I have decided to present the ultimate form of collective theatre: a Sunday for everybody.'[53] On Sunday 27 November 1960, from midnight to midnight, Klein presented a full day of festival, 'a true spectacle of the Void' which he conceived as a culmination of all his previous theories.[54] It is this notion of spectacle that is key to understanding the dramaturgy of Klein's *vernissage. The*

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[51] Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art', *op. cit.* (note 1), p.56.

52 On the subject of the logistics behind the sale of Klein's immaterial pictorial sensibility, the American sculptor Edward Kienholz explained, 'An Immaterial is a very difficult work. In its final distilled aspect, it is probably pure art because nothing physical exists. It works this way: The buyer-collector of an Immaterial would give Yves money; in fact quite a bit of money for the ownership of the Immaterial. Yves would then issue a receipt for the money which was printed on very special paper, the stub of which I believe was filed somewhere by someone for record purposes. Yves would then divest himself of the money by "throwing the gold", which meant actually scattering the money in the mountains from a plane or dropping it in the ocean from a boat, etc. The buyer-collector then completed the gesture by burning the receipt so that artist and owner each had nothing but the art experience.' Edward Kienholz statement in *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, (Berne, 1969) reprinted in Kerry Brougher; Deborah E Horowitz; Klaus Ottmann; et al, *Yves Klein: With The Void, Full Powers* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010), p.196.

[53] Klein, announcement of *Dimanche* (27 November 1960) reprinted in Klaus Ottmann (ed.) *Overcoming the Problematics of Art: The Writings of Yves Klein*, *op. cit.* p.99.

[54] *Ibid.*

Void offered a highly problematic provisional reality, a work with which the viewer was not enabled to be dialogically engaged, but that functioned hermetically with the logic of the commercial gallery and the *vernissage* format as a structuring and validatory form, a work that could only exist through a series of performative tactics. A comparison with the opening of Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* realised in the spring of 1959 will, I hope, shed further light on the specificity of the v*ernissage* Klein staged one year earlier.

In a letter written in January 1959, the Parisian Gallerist, René Drouin announced that he would present an exhibition of 'paintings of a new genre', works driven in spirit towards a new dynamic vision, one that sought to encourage favourable relations between 'men worldwide'.[55] The exhibition he described was Gallizio's first in France, a show in which he transformed the gallery into an all-over immersive installation, a dark, metaphorically subterranean space titled *Cavern of Anti-Matter*.[56] The rationale behind the exhibition was in keeping with the post-war climate of international economic dialogue signalled by the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) two years earlier. Article 2 of the Treaty of Rome, signed in March 1957, set out its core objectives as follows:

'The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and progressively approximating the economic policies of Member States, to promote throughout the Community a harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increase in stability, an accelerated raising of the standard of living and closer relations between the States belonging to it'.[57]

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[55] Letter of invitation from René Drouin to Pinot Gallizio (Paris, 25 January 1959. Archivo Gallizio, Torino.

[56] The exhibition *Caverna dell'antimateria* (Cavern of Anti-Matter) took place at Galerie René Drouin at 5 rue Visconti, Paris and opened on 13th May 1959.

[57] The Treaty of Rome was initially signed by six nations Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. Published in Moshe Kaniek, *The Exclusive Treaty-Making Power*

The treaty signalled a determined resolution to lay the foundations of a closer union among the people of Europe, an effort to ensure a future of economic and social progress through common action, and eliminate the dangers of nationalist barriers – priorities echoed in Gallizio's proposal for a new aesthetic composition. 'Industrial Painting', the new painting genre that Drouin described, was a term Gallizio used to define collaboratively produced, abstract-gestural paintings made in large quantities up to several meters in length that combined sand, oil paint, resins, metal filings, feathers, egg shell and other miscellaneous elements in an alchemical pictorial mix.[58] Sold by the meter at cost price and in unlimited supplies at the local market, Gallizio conceived of these works as fantastical coverings that he hoped might transform the relationship between social space and its inhabitants. Written in 1959, Gallizio's manifesto for Industrial Painting, titled *Per un'arte Unitaria applicable* (For a Unitary Applicable Art), called for a radically new approach to artistic production.[59] From this text it is evident that Gallizio's intention was not for Industrial Painting to inhabit the walls of the museum, or the home of the private collector, but to infiltrate the everyday public space of the urban environment. When situated in the street, Industrial Painting was not merely decorative, instead it served a useful social purpose. It was a prototype of the 'unitary applicable art' that Gallizio described, namely a type of urban painting that was ambitiously intended

of the European Community up to the period of the Single European Act, (The Hague; Boston: Kluwer Law International,1996), p.190.

[58] The term 'Industrial Painting' appears in Gallizio's diary for the first time in 1956. For a fuller explanation of the Industrial Painting method see Nicola Pezolet, 'The Cave of Anti-Matter: Giuseppe "Pinot" Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the early Situationist International,' *Grey Room* 38, 9 (Winter 2010), pp.62-89, in particular pp.68-69.

[59] Pinot-Gallizio, 'Discours sur la peinture industrielle et sur un art unitaire applicable,' *Internationale Situationniste* 3, (December 1959) reprinted in *Internationale Situationniste* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1997), pp. 99-100.

to engulf whole cities, an experiment in provoking new dynamic forms of social interaction.[60] Gallizio's choice of exhibition title, for his French debut, *Cavern of Anti-Matter*, deliberately implied a negation; the reference to anti-matter borrowed from particle physics connotes a process of annihilation, a burst of electromagnetic energy.[61] In a letter to Drouin, Gallizio explained that the title made explicit reference to the need to 'offer protection to those living fearfully in the prehistory of the atomic age'. In effect the *Cavern* functioned less as a place of refuge than as a critique of the very space in which it took place. Gallizio deployed the temporal framework of the *vernissage* as a platform from which to parody the spectacle of the commercial gallery from within.[62]

A preparatory sketch for the *Cavern* frenetically drawn in pencil and black ink maps a technicolour tunnel of 'antimondo', a total environment in which the visitor would be enveloped by painting from all sides (figure 1.8). A snapshot pasted in Gallizio's diary documents the traditional commercial gallery environment that the *Cavern* deliberately negated (figure 1.9.).[63] Instead of the existing glazed shop window front open to the street outside, the gallery was blacked out, instead of full illumination, the darkened cavern was lit by single bulbs glowing with Ultra Violet and Infrared light. The combined effect was evocative of an alternative underworld; nothing could have been further from the installation Klein realised at Galerie Iris

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[60] See Stracey, Frances. 'Pinot-Gallizio's 'Industrial Painting': Towards a Surplus of Life', *Oxford Art Journal*, October 2005, 28 (3): pp. 391-405; p.403.

[61] The existence of the anti-proton had been proven by physicists Emilio Segre and Owen Chamberlain at the University of California, Berkeley in 1955, a discovery for which they were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1959 the year the Cavern opened. Gallizio borrowed the term initially from the writings of the Italian physicist Francesco Pannaria who conceived of the physical world as a theatre in which antimatter waits in the wings with matter in the orchestra with the exchange between the two occurring live on stage. See Pezelot, *op. cit*. (note 41).

[62] Pinot Gallizio letter to René Drouin, 12 March 1959, Archivo Pinot Gallizio, Torino.

[63] Pinot Gallizio, diary, unpaginated. Archivo Pinot Gallizio, Torino.

Clert a year earlier.[64] Inside, the gallery walls, floor and ceiling were shrouded in swathes of Industrial Painting: lengths of haphazardly painted canvas that had been collaboratively produced in Gallizio's laboratory in Alba, Italy.

The laboratory was located in a vaulted cellar that itself evoked a grotto, a space redolent of the prehistoric caves unearthed by Gallizio near Alba. Gallizio hoped to use the space as a means of contributing to the edification of a new public sphere by offering its visitors the image of an 'anti-world' – a term he borrowed from the Italian physicist Francesco Pannaria. The chaotic and playfully decorated interior of the laboratory, Gallizio hoped, would train visitors in new perceptual habits with the aim of creating new subjectivities adapted to a communitarian political system, the opposite or 'anti-world' of the capitalist system.[65]

As Frances Stracey noted, as an amateur archeologist, Gallizio was well aware that spatially, to go underground simultaneously signifies to go back in time. We can therefore read his construction of such a seemingly archaic, even primitive, form of habitation (registered here by the childlike daubs of paint and dirt on the floors, walls and ceiling) as an embrace of a decidedly anti-modern abode, and, by association, an equally outmoded (even prehistoric) projected inhabitant.[66] 'Gallizio's, *Cavern of Anti-Matter* works to crack open the present, in order to contest and undo it from within, or better to hollow it out from below, at the

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[64] In its *détournement* of the gallery architecture the *Cavern* to some extent echoed *The Void* in its negation of the traditional gallery shop front. In this respect both works may be seen as important precedents for Claes Oldenburg's *The Store* (also known as Ray Gun Mfg. Co) located at 107 East 2nd St., in New York City in December 1961. See *Claes Oldenburg: Writing on the Side, 1956-1969* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2013).

[65] See Pezolet, 'The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International', *op. cit.* (note 40), p.66.

[66] Frances Stracey, 'The Caves of Gallizio and Hirschhorn', *October* 116 (Spring 2006), p.89.

roots,'[67] Stracey wrote. [68] It was this environment that Gallizio imaginatively transposed to Galerie Drouin to the provisional framework of the *vernissage*.[69]

The *Cavern* was dark and intensely claustrophobic, so densely hung with painting that one reviewer described the atmosphere inside as 'suffocating, vehement, and violent'. The same critic noted that it was literally a dangerous place to visit due to the alchemical mixture of highly combustible resins and varnishes used to seal the surfaces of the paintings.[70] Gallizio's intention was evidently to create an atmosphere evocative of a dark underworld, a cavernous space reminiscent of a pre-historic era. Although the gallery was some 95m deep and 45m wide, photographs of René Drouin standing inside the installation reveal a claustrophobically low ceiling sagging from the walls at either side (figure 1.10). The paintings from which the *Cavern* was constructed are notably different from Gallizio's earlier Industrial Paintings, for instance *Industrial Painting* (1958), a single long roll of canvas, Gallizio's largest 'industrial painting' and the second he ever made.[71] This work, which immediately predates the installation in Paris, a scroll of painting measuring 74 x 7 m, is characterized by its particularly vivid palette of crimson and cadmium yellow monoprinted oil and acrylic paint overlaid with loose gestural workings of black typographic ink. Its palette is similarly

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[67] *Ibid.,* p.94.

[68] In a reading informed by the writing of Denis Hollier, in particular *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), Stracey suggests that rather than disciplining or performing the subject, Gallizio's architectural device might 'perform spacing' that is 'a space from before the subject, before meaning; the a-subjective, a-semantic space of an un-edifying architecture.' Stracey, 'The Caves of Gallizio and Hirschhorn', *op. cit.* (note 48), p.94.

[69] It is notable that Gallizio's cavernous laboratory recalls Ugo Mulas's 1954 portrait of Fontana in his own subterranean studio.

[70] The reviewer commented that it was forbidden to smoke. See 'Notice Biographique' in *Pinot-Gallizio* (Paris: Bibliothéque D'Alexandrie,1960) n.p.

[71] The first *Industrial Painting*, at 9 metres long, dates from 1957.

echoed in three, single meter long industrial paintings executed on translucent nylon prior to the opening of the *Cavern* in May 1959. These three panels are thought to have been made for the exterior of the gallery as an entrance to the cavern, but were ultimately never used.[72] Instead, the Drouin works are dark and menacing in tone, noticeably more sinister than the additional paintings that Gallizio chose to reject. The paintings are densely worked with experimental mark making, a combination of monotype printing with 'peinture d'ensemble' and an alchemical mix of resins and fragments of broken mirror and glass embedded in the predominately dark encrusted surface of the painted canvasses.[73] A parody of the unique *Informale* canvas reconfigured to form a temporary habitat, a theatrical backdrop for a live event. From the outset the *Cavern* was conceived as the first manifestation of the Situationist International's conception of the 'constructed situation' defined by Guy Debord as 'a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambience and a game of events.'[74]

Debord was heavily involved in the production of the *Cavern of Anti-Matter* in its initial stages. In late January 1958, he wrote to Gallizio, reminding him of the substantial amount of preparation to be done in the limited space of three months.[75]

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[72] As told by Lilliana Dematteis, personal interview with the author, Turin, July 2014.

[73] The original floor was destroyed after its exhibition at Galerie René Drouin. A replica is made each time the installation is recreated. I am grateful to Lilliana Dematteis for this information.

[74] Guy Debord, 'Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation' (1958) reprinted and trans. in Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley (Calif.): Bureau of public secrets, 2006), pp.49-51.

[75] Debord lists the details of the preparatory work which includes the fabrication of the rolls of industrial painting, the manufacture of large panels covered populit of resins, iron, and all the new materials with which Gallizio had been experimenting, new fragrance research and , the urgent purchase of 'useful' music, and the preparation of a new apéritif. Debord also reminds Gallizio of the need to fabricate a roll of industrial painting intended to be cut into pieces, folded in half and

In his 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency' presented to the founding conference of the Situationist International at Cosio d'Arroscia in July, 1957, Debord stated rhetorically:

'First we believe that the world must be changed. We desire the most liberatory possible change of the society and the life in which we find ourselves confined. We know that such change is possible by means of pertinent actions […] Our concern is precisely the use of certain means of action, along with the discovery of new ones that may more easily be recognized in the sphere of culture and manners but that will be implemented with a view to interaction with global revolutionary change […] Our era is at heart characterised by the great distance at which revolutionary political action lags behind the development of the modern potentialities of production, which demands a superior organisation of the world.'[76]

'We must undertake an organized collective labour that will strive for a common usage of all the means of transforming everyday life,' Debord urged. 'We must build new settings that will be both the product and the instrument of new behaviours.'[77] The *Cavern of Anti-Matter* was conceived precisely as one such setting. What did it mean, then, to construct this situation within the context of a commercial gallery? My contention is that together Gallizio and Debord strategically deployed the specific form of the gallery *vernissage* as a spatio-temporal platform from which to critique the alienating conditions of spectacle from within.

A dark, noisy, odorous event, the opening of the *Cavern* took place on 13 May 1959. The invitation card announced the event as 'an experiment in constructing an atmosphere, realised with 145 metres of painting made by Gallizio with the

sold during the vernissage at the gallery. Letter from Guy Debord to Pinot Gallizio, Paris, 30 January 1958. Archivio Pinot Gallizio, Turin.

[76] Guy Debord, 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency' reprinted in and translated in Tom McDonough, *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, (Cambridge, Mass., & London, 2002), p.29.

[77] *Ibid.,* p.42.

assistance of his son, Giors Melanotte (figure 1.11).[78] A quote from the artist explained:

> 'The right wall, the left wall and the back wall of the gallery represent the reactions which occur between anti-matter, on matter, on the floor. These forces meet and blend into a "provisional reality" represented by the model dressed in painting.'[79]

The *Cavern* was activated by a single young blonde woman whose identity is unknown who appeared wearing high heels and 'dressed like the walls' in tightly wrapped panels of Industrial Painting (figure 1.12).[80] Here painting itself was staged as an event bordering on parody, as both product and spectacle, as a site of exchange that operated on a number of levels. The *Cavern* proffered an alternative 'reality', a form of critique that represented the opposite or 'anti-world' of capitalism. The organization of the olfactory ambience of the gallery was central to this critique. Initially Debord had encouraged Gallizio to create a new perfume for the installation; instead, Gallizio proposed a pastiche, a synthesis of existing scents from the great perfumiers of Paris, to be 'launched' at the *vernissage* as a new fragrance. A 'cocktail of perfumes' from Houbigant, Caron, Lanvin, and Coty which he titled 'Mon Ami', the scent was intended to function as a humorous

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[78] Official invitation to the opening of the exhibition at Galerie Drouin, Archivo Gallizio, Turin (translated by the author). Giors Melaotte was a pseudonym of Pinot Gallizio's son, Giorgio Gallizio.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Frances Stracey noted that there is more than a visual resemblance between the photographs of Gallizio's Industrially Painted model and Cecil Beaton's use of paintings by Jackson Pollock as a background to fashion plates for *Vogue* magazine published on 1st March 1951. T. J. Clark suggests that the latter reveal a 'bad dream of modernism' a fear of art's reduction to a kind of 'apocalyptic wallpaper.' See T.J. Clark, "Jackson Pollock's Abstraction' in Serge Guilbaut (ed.) *Reconstructing Modernisms: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), pp.172-238.

critique of luxury scent marketing.[81] Further plans for the olfactory element of the installation included the use of odorant resins and the burning of sandalwood, eucalyptus, myrrh, frankincense and various different balms to create a heady scented ambience. True to his original training, Gallizio was concerned with the chemistry of the *vernissage*, with the atmospherics of the live event. A motion-detector sound device concealed behind the canvas walls emitted unexpected polyphonic noises, its frequency dependent on the proximity of the passing bodies. Additional music, conceived as a soundtrack or score, was provided by fellow Situationist International co-founder Walter Olmo, an experimental musician and composer who had been expelled from the group earlier in the year. In keeping with the broader Situationist agenda, the *Cavern* was conceived as a provisional habitat capable of functioning as a transformative microcosm through the unsettling sensations it provoked.

Formally the *Cavern* recalled the work of Gallizio's friend, Lucio Fontana, specifically *Spatial Environment in Black Light*, a site-specific installation created in Milan's Galleria del Naviglio in February 1949 (figure 1.13). With this environment Fontana installed a network of intersecting papier-mâché forms coated in polychrome fluorescent paint lit by ultraviolet light in a gallery shrouded with heavy black curtains. Though the work was subsequently destroyed and no colour photographs documenting the work exist today, a photograph Fontana hand-coloured in ink conveys the chromatic specificity of the original environment (figure 1.14). Fontana's calligraphic stalactites cling to the ceiling, their fluorescent biomorphic forms dramatically illuminated by single beams of ultraviolet light.

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[81] 'MON AMI: un cocktail des parfumes de Paris' is described in a letter from Pinot Gallizio to Guy Debord, Alba, 1 February 1958, Archivo Gallizio, Turin. 'Maybe you do not know the enormous technical and psychological difficulties to which are the master perfumers. Only once every ten years you can actually come out with a new scent' Gallizio complained.

Roughly modelled arabesques glowing volcanic red, sulphuric yellow and illuminous ultramarine animate an otherwise darkened grotto. Looking back on the work in 1967, Fontana described *Spatial Environment in Black Light* as: 'The sign of the void, the end of making a gallery with paintings hung, sculptures for sale.' The environment was radical in its insistence on the phenomenological incorporation of the body of the spectator into the very fabric of the work. The viewer became an active component of the pictorial environment, one that turned the bodies of its inhabitants an eerie shade of purple. No wonder the work was dubbed 'the first graffito of the atomic age.'[82] Critic Guido Ballo described Fontana's fantastical installation in terms that resonate strongly with Gallizio's later work, 'The gallery was transformed: the ceiling was coloured with a violet light, full of shadows, in which spatial forms were suspended…[The spectator] did not contemplate a detached form before his eyes; he entered a *pictorial environment*.'[83] The *Cavern of Anti-Matter* may be read as an extension and development of Fontana's preliminary endeavour, as part of the historical lineage of the move away from the pictorial plane into the pictorial environment, to the making of provisional realities or pictorial climates.

In an account which serves to reposition Fontana's work as interconnected with the changing place of artistic practice within modern society and the rise of modern consumer culture, Anthony White suggests that *Spatial Environment in Black Light* may be read as Fontana's response to the challenge of producing a utopian artwork

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[82] Lisa Ponti quoted in Antony White, *Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), p.156. Polignoto observed in *L'Europeo* that upon entering the environment, 'the first impression is of finding oneself in one of those mysterious and macabre booths at the carnival or in the consulting room of the radiologist.' Polognoto quoted in White, *Lucio Fontana Between Utopia and Kitsch*, *op. cit*. p.155.

[83] Guido Ball, 'Pitture a gran fuoco,' *Bellezza*, no. 9 (September 1949), p.65 quoted in White, *Lucio Fontana Between Utopia and Kitsch*, *op. cit,* p.154 (my emphasis).

post-1945. White argues that the environment should be seen as a utopian vision in which 'aesthetic experience broke through the shell of art's autonomy and became one with the surrounding empty space in which the viewer lived.'[84] By exploiting the modern devices of nightclub decoration and advertising spectacle, he argues, 'Fontana constructed a fairytale space of magical splendour, an otherworldly atmosphere in which the distinction between the material object and the surrounding space was blurred. At the same time, though, this dream is cheapened by its association with the dubious arts of commodity spectacle. The exhibition clearly had the power to evoke wonder, but it also strongly figured that sense of wonder as something fraudulent or ridiculous. It was a "beyond" firmly planted in the here and now'. [85] Over and above its formal similarities, it is, I believe, precisely this aspect of Fontana's environment – the staging of the fraudulence of spectacle – that reverberates in Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* and its strategic manipulation of the framework of the *vernissage* in particular. Whereas Klein had consciously appealed to the infinite dimensions of the void and the boundless ultramarine blue expanse of the sky, Gallizio withdrew to the darkness of the cave to mount a critique of spectacularized culture, one that subsisted within the framework of the gallery *vernissage*, in an act that served not to reinforce but to subvert it from within.

Unlike the provisional reality of *The Void*, the opening of the *Cavern* followed the logic of the constructed situation, 'a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambience and a game of

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[84] White, *Lucio Fontana Between Utopia and Kitsch, op. cit.* (note 64), p.154.

[85] *Ibid.,* p.156.

events'[86] In an undated diary entry headed 'Artistic science', Gallizio listed the following:

Industrial painting technique
Galaxies anti-galaxies
Citizens of the anti-world
The principle of exchange in art
'Communicating vessels'[87]

This list might be read as a summary of the key concerns underpinning the *Cavern of Anti-Matter* which itself was conceived as one such vessel, a constructed situation intended to transform its visitors' consciousness, to involve them as citizens of the 'anti-world.' With the *Cavern* the *vernissage* was mobilised as a 'platform for a provisional opposition'.[88]

Gallizio's provisional reality took place, not in the street or in some other public space, but inside the specific coded confines of the commercial gallery, and the framework of the *vernissage* in particular. As Libero Andreotti notes, the *Cavern*'s challenge to the institution of the art gallery would have gone further, and perhaps taken an unprecedented turn, if the Situationist International had been allowed to mount a group exhibition planned for the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam a few months later. The ambitious installation, as seen in a diagrammatic plan that is the only surviving evidence, would have transformed an entire wing of the museum into a two-mile long obstacle course culminating in a tunnel of industrial painting.

[86] Guy Debord, 'Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation' (1958) reprinted and trans. in Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, *op. cit.* (note 56), pp.49-51.

[87] Pinot Gallizio undated diary entry. n.p. Archivo Gallizio, Torino. The latter notion explicitly references André Breton's 1932 book *Les vases communicants* (Communicating Vessels) in which Breton attempts to define the notion of 'objective chance'.

[88] Debord uses this phrase as a subheading in 'Report on the Construction of Situations.' Reprinted in Tom McDonough (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International Texts and Documents*, *op. cit.* (note x), p.42.

At the same time, a series of real operational *dérives* were to take place downtown in Amsterdam, where teams of Situationists would have drifted for three days communicating with each other and the museum space with radio transmitters.'[89] The constructed situation of the *Cavern* would have taken to the streets and infiltrated public life, while still remaining dependent on the framework of art's institutions of exhibition and display, this time that of the museum.

Just as Gallizio planned to extend the Cavern into civic space, so Klein too intended to extend *The Void* beyond the confines of the gallery. A sketch made in 1958 reveals Klein's ambitious plan to illuminate the obelisk at Place de le Concorde, the largest public square in Paris, in blue light.[90] The plan was to apply blue filters to the existing floodlights so that at exactly 11pm on the night of the *vernissage*, the obelisk would appear bathed in luminous ultramarine while the base would remain cast in shadow. The intention was for the obelisk to 'soar into space, immutable and static, in a monumental movement of the affective imagination, over the entire expanse of the Place de la Concorde, above the pre-historic gas-lit streetlamps into the night, like an enormous unpunctuated exclamation mark!'[91] In this way, Klein claimed, 'the tangible and visible blue will be outside, outdoors in the street, and indoors will be the dematerialization of blue: the coloured space, which is not seen, but with which one is impregnated.'[92] Using the symbolism of

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[89] The plan for the unrealised project, 'Die Welt als labyrith' was published in *Internationale situationist* 4 (New York: SI, June 1960), pp.5-7.

[90] The work was later realized posthumously on the occasion of another *vernissage*, that of the Yves Klein retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in 1983. The illumination of the place de la Concorde obelisk took place again on the occasion of an exhibition of sculptures on the Champs Elysees, Les Champs de la sculpture, Paris, 11 April – 9 June, 1996, and again during the Nuit blanche of 9 October, 2006 when a second Yves Klein retrospective was held at the Centre Pompidou.

[91] Klein, 'Overcoming the Problematics of Art', *op. cit*. (note 1), p.52.

[92] *Ibid.*

light, Klein planned to extend the perceptive synthesis of *The Void* into the civic space of the public realm. Klein's proposal is revealing in its choice of location. Known as Cleopatra's needle, the obelisk originated from the Temple of Ramses II at Thebes in Egypt and was erected in Paris in October 1833. At 75 feet tall and covered with hieroglyphs from the reigns of Pharaohs Ramses II and Ramses III, the obselisk is an imposing emblem of a bygone era, a reminder of ancient civilisations that serves to connect Modern France with the Egyptian Kings. With light, the most immaterial of materials, Klein intended to superimpose his work symbolically onto French national history while commandering the mythic grandeur of Ancient Egypt in a brief live event plumbing deep time to reinforce his own hyperbolic legacy.

One might read Klein's plans for the obelisk, as a form of immaterial advertising.[93] In May 1958, concurrent with *The Void*'s realisation, the Eiffel Tower was dramatically illuminated from below for the first time using a new lighting system involving 1290 projectors located in the Champ-de-Mars gardens that stayed in place until its restoration in the 1980s.[94] Klein's unrealised work may then be seen as both a form of architectural intervention in the public realm, and a gesture that took the symbolically encoded civic space of the public square as a space of promotion and self-exposure. Plans for the intervention in Place de la Concorde were ultimately foiled on the evening of the *vernissage* when Klein received a call from the Republican Guards informing him that permission to

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[93] The Eiffel Tower hosted its first decorative lighting display from 1925-36 when the name Citroen was sculpted in 250,000 coloured lamps arranged across three sides of the tower.

[94] Unveiled on the 31st December 1985, invented by Pierre Bideau, an electrician and lighting engineer, the so-called golden lighting system in place to this day consists of 336 projectors equipped with high-pressure, yellow-orange sodium lamps. This form of illumination was the starting point of a nocturnal revival of monuments in Paris.

illuminate the obelisk had been denied due to 'the overly personal nature of the manifestation' and also the publicity surrounding the gesture on the radio and in local newspapers – additional communicative infrastructures that Klein infiltrated as part of the self-promotional activity with which *The Void* was co-dependent. The illumination of the obelisk was intended as a symbol of Klein's Pneumatic Period – a means of marking a specific movement in time. Although it was never realised during Klein's lifetime, the failure of the obelisk proposal project underscores what was at stake in *The Void* as an aesthetic strategy, and offers further evidence of the self-mythologizing Klein engaged in by strategically manipulating existing symbols, codes, and conventions.

Benjamin Buchloh has argued that reconstruction culture in post-war Europe was defined by a dialectic of historical disavowal and spectacularization, by a hidden nexus between the repression of political history and the formation of spectacle culture. Most of the visual neo-avant-garde practices between 1958 and 1968, he suggests, were formulated as part of a larger project of social modernization and amnesia. 'Those visual practices that gained and retained international art historical and critical interest in the post-war years, were precisely those that refrained from any entanglement with the problematic and central question of the representation of historical experience,' Buchloh writes.[95] 'The silence on the subject of history, is almost total, in the works of the visual avant-garde from 1958-1968,' he argues.[96] Though much indebted to Buchloh's important formulation, my argument is subtly different; instead I am suggesting that the condition of liveness itself established not only as a practice of negation but also a

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[95] Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), p.280

[96] *Ibid.,* p.262.

reconfiguration of that epistemic crisis, that the live event as an aesthetic medium emerged as a direct response to the problem of the representation he describes. It was its specific temporal quality of provisionality, its dual status as both artwork and spectacle that established the live event as a viable platform from which to articulate the complex conditions of culture production in the immediate post-war period. In this respect the *vernissage* was a powerful iteration of the paradigmatic shift towards live production, itself a powerful form of spectacularization through which the critical potentiality of the pictorial field as a space of representation was radically reconfigured into a space of provisionality and temporal flux.

One contemporary review described Klein's *Void* as 'an antechamber where time is passed beyond and where the past and the future no longer have reasons for being.'[97] This statement points to something central to the fundamental distinction between the two *vernissages*, and moreover to the history of the emergence of the live situation as an aesthetic strategy in the immediate post-war period. For the Ancient Greeks the cave signified a passageway between worlds, a transitional meeting place between divine and quotidian places of existence; Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* existed as one such site, as a spatio-temporal situation that represented a radical transition from material to live image making, a work that we might read as a barometer for the shift from Informale to the provisional. What was at stake in this spatio-temporal habitat was a complex negotiation of time, a temporal layering which I believe is not only key to Gallizio's provisional reality, but also central to the historical origins of the trajectory of post-war live exhibition

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[97] 'Manifestation d'avant-garde à la Galerie Iris Clert,' *Combat* (5th May, 1958), p.7 quoted in Stich, *Yves Klein, op. cit.* (note 8), p.140.

making this thesis traces.[98] Philosopher Michel Serres has put forward an alternative theory to the prevailing conception of time as a linear construct that might usefully be applied to understand this transitional moment in artistic production in the late 1950s, and what was at stake for the Situationist International in the *Cavern of Anti-Matter* in particular. Time, according to Serres, is not linear but turbulent and chaotic schematized by a kind of crumpling, a multiple, folding diversity.[99] While a historicist approach supposes that time develops in a linear fashion/ follows a linear logic, whether continuous, cumulative or interrupted, according to this logic it consistently remains linear, Serres instead relates time to chaos theory, that understanding that disorder in nature can be explained, or reordered, by means of fractal attractors. Historic events conceived as distant according to a linear understanding of time are therefore in fact in the same neighbourhood.[100] For Serres, time is paradoxical; it folds or twists.[101] Noting that the French language uses the same word for both time, and the weather, *le temps*, he reasons that, at a profound level, they are in fact one and the same thing. Historical time is even more complex than the shifts of meteorological weather, 'it passes and also it doesn't pass'. Time doesn't flow, instead it percolates. As Serres has said: 'Time does not always flow according to a line…nor according to a plan, but, rather, according to an extraordinary complex mixture, as though it reflected

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[98] To the night work of Group ZERO, and also to Jikken Kōbō's work examined in the subsequent two chapters.

[99] Michel Serres, 'Second Conversation: Method' in *Michel Serres with Bruno Latour: Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* trans. Roxanne Lapidus, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p.59. The book was originally published in French, as *Eclaircissements* by Editions François Bourin in 1990.

[100] *Ibid.,* p.57.

[101] *Ibid.,* p.58.

stopping points, ruptures, deep wells, chimneys of thunderous acceleration, rendings, gaps – all sown at random, at least in a visible disorder.'[102]

Following Serres' conception, time exists not in the form of the stable and well-defined distances of metric geometry, but rather to the science of nearness and rifts called topology, the study of geometrical properties and spatial relations unaffected by the continuous change of shape or size of figures, the way in which constituent parts are interrelated or arranged. We confuse time and the measurement of time, which is a metrical reading on a straight line. In place of a linear concept of history, Serres proposes a series of different figurings of time based on dynamic volumes, or topologies. His discussion of baker's dough in *Rome: The Book of Foundations* (1991) is one such image of the complex overlapping of time, endlessly regathering: 'The system grows old without letting time escape; it garners age the new emblems are caught up and subsumed by old ones; the baker molds memory. Time enters into the dough, a presence of its folds, a shadow of its folding over.'[103] For Serres, history is a flow of circumstances. According to Serres's non-linear trajectory of time and history, a topology of mappings is the true picture of reality in process. I am suggesting here that this notion might be applied to Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* which in its temporal layering may be read as a product of the temporal turbulence to which Serres's account attends. Something of Serres's thinking is at stake in this pictorial climate, I think, by which I mean that this provisional expositional zone of atmospheric variation was indicative of a broader climate change away from the pictorial towards the making of live images, environments, and provisional realities.

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[102] Serres, 'Second Conversation: Method', *op.cit.* (note 82), p.57

[103] Michel Serres, Rome: *The book of foundations*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), p.81.

According to Serres' theory, every historical era is multi-temporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic. Each given object, or circumstance, is polychronic, multi-temporal, and reveals a time that is gathered together, 'with multiple pleats' – a description with which we might usefully comprehend the thinking behind Gallizio's *Cavern*, and, more broadly, the shift towards live image making it represents. What I am suggesting here is that we might use Serres' notion of time as a means to think through what was at stake for both Klein and Gallizio in constructing these provisional realities in a gallery context, that this conception of time as a topological, non-metric network might be a powerful means to rethink the making of live exhibitions at this juncture. We might read these pictorial climates as closer in structure to the meterology of weather than the fixity of the static object and its previous modes of exhibition.

For Buchloh, Klein is the artist par excellence of advanced capitalism. He argues: 'In a Europe devastated by war, more than anyone, Klein demonstrated that the attempt to redeem spirituality by artistic means at the moment of the rise of a universal control of mass culture would inevitably clad the spiritual in a sordid (involuntary) travesty.'[104] By making his work dependent on all of the previous hidden *dispositifs*, in short the spaces of advertising and means of promotion in which the work existed, Buchloh suggests that Klein initiated an aesthetic of both institutional and discursive contingency and total spectacularization.[105] It is

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[104] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Plenty or Nothing: From Yves Klein's *Le Vide* to Arman's *Le Plein*,' in *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, Mass,; MIT Press, 2000), p.269.

[105] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Plenty or Nothing: From Yves Klein's *Le Vide* to Arman's *Le Plein*,' in *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), p.269.

precisely this aspect that Gallizio's *Cavern* critically negated and *The Void* theatrically showcased.

The *vernissage* connotes both an end point and a beginning; a moment of finishing and completion that simultaneously exists as an announcement of a new body of work about to be publically unveiled, a visual statement to be made. I have been suggesting that the *vernissages* of both Klein's *Void* and Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter* existed as two such sites: as spatio-temporal events that broadcast the condition of liveness itself as epistemic of a new tendency amongst the visual neo-avant-garde post-1945. These provisional realities, I will be arguing, are indicative of a methodological shift in art making towards simultaneous production and presentation, realization and reception, which formed part of a broader transnational impulse towards the crafting of experiential time as a new medium, and as such they form important historical blueprints or templates for that which I will be defining as the new situational aesthetic prevalent in contemporary art today. Though conflicting in both their production and intention, Gallizio's work deliberately disruptive of the logic of the gallery, Klein's tacitly affirmative in its strategically manipulation of the dramaturgy of the *vernissage*, both events, I believe, exemplify a new understanding of the critical potentiality of live production that emerged in the 1950s through a particular aesthetic negotiation of time, one necessarily and inextricably interwoven with the formation of spectacle culture, revealing the urgency of the live exhibition as a new space of representation. Through the strategic occupation of the *vernissage*, the provisional reality of the live event replaced the fixed surface of the canvas as a field of operation and opposition.

CHAPTER TWO: THE NIGHT WORK OF GROUP ZERO, 1957-1966

The film begins on a city street where a large crowd is gathered at night in anticipation of an event. A number of men and women are curiously dressed in rigid, black, cylindrical tunics with the word 'ZERO' emblazoned in white (figure 2.1). A man enters the throng with a broom and the action begins. Working quickly, he marks out a large ring, a single circle of white paint five metres in diameter, which he fills to create a makeshift stage on the cobbled street (figure2.2). The camera cuts to the audience blowing streams of soap bubbles through wands. The man with the broom returns, this time with a flaming canister, which he places under a large sheet of plastic to form the fabric of a hot air balloon (figure 2.3). With the help of a number of assistants the balloon quickly takes shape and is launched into the night sky. Bemused local residents look on from the safety of their apartment windows. Lightly tethered, the balloon hovers above the party below, an aerial marker of the festivities on the ground (figure 2.4). The camera moves to the street where the windows of a small gallery have been boarded with rough timber and graffitied with white paint. An over-sized white arrow points to a hole in the front door, encouraging enthusiastic participants to peep through. Inside, the gallery is crowded, the walls papered with spreads from a magazine – black and white photographic reproductions of artworks. Copies of the magazine are suspended on wires, hung like bunting above the visitors' heads. A number of copies are seen changing hands for cash. Visitors play on a specially customized pinball machine whilst the sound of a jukebox is heard in the background. Two men pass a cigarette to light the end page of the magazine upon which is printed the proclamation: '*Zero: wir lieben. Zero: wir sind für alles*' – Zero: we love. Zero: we

are for everything, the text affirms. As the pages begin to burn, the film fades to black.

What I am describing here is the documentation of a live event, a film produced by the German television channel WDR, recording the first public demonstration realized by Group Zero in the summer of 1961.[106] The leading protagonists are Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker – the three artists who formed Zero's central nucleus, the axis around which a shared artistic impetus revolved. Rhetorically titled *ZERO EDITION EXPOSITION DEMONSTRATION,* the exhibition took place on 5th July at Galerie Schmela, a tiny commercial gallery in the Old Town of Düsseldorf. This loud, spectacular event was one of fifteen nocturnal works collectively produced by Group Zero between 1957 and 1966.

The existing literature on Group Zero has tended to focus on its internationalism, in particular its connections with Amsterdam, Paris, and Milan. Parallels have also been drawn with the Italian groups Azimuth, Gruppo T and Gruppo Enne, groups that emerged more or less contemporaneously with Zero in the wake of *Arte Informale*.[107] The curatorial focus of the touring retrospective in 2014/2015 has significantly substantiated Zero's importance as an inherently international avant-garde.[108] That exhibition, the first large-scale historical survey

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[106] The documentary was included in a programme of 'Hier und heute', broadcast by Westdeutscher Rundfunk on 6 July 1961. ZERO Foundation archive, Düsseldorf.

[107] See for instance Valerie L. Hillings, Catherine Millet, Heike Van DenValentyn et al, *ZERO in New York 2008*, (New York: Sperone Westwater, 2008) and Marco Meneguzzo's discussion of Azminuth, Enne, Marco Meneguzzo, 'Ti con Zero' in Udo Kultermann (ed.), *Zero: 1958– 1968 tra Germania e Italia* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana, 2004).

[108] Realized fifty years after Zero disbanded, this important touring retrospective began as *Countdown to Tomorrow: The International ZERO Network, 1950s–60s,* Solomon R. Guggenheim, October 2014–January 2015. In his foreword to the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, Solomon R. Guggenheim Director, Richard Armstrong writes: 'The exhibition demonstrates the role artists in this loose network played in the transformation of art in the late

of Zero in the United States at the Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York, and its subsequent, and subtly different, iterations at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, endeavored to articulate the internationalism that characterized the wider ZERO network – with the capitalized form of the name used to denote the larger shared history beyond the Düsseldorf-based group.[109] As the historical surveys clearly articulated, ZERO was a complex transnational network encompassing many different modes of artistic production and intention.[110] Whilst Zero's geographical reach was undoubtedly crucial to its work and legacy, my interest here lies in the temporal specificity of what I will be referring to as Zero's 'night work': the collaboratively-produced, nocturnal exhibitions and live events orchestrated by Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and, later, Günther Uecker between 1957 and 1966.[111] In this chapter I position this body of work as a significant example of the post-war development towards an art of simultaneous production, presentation, and reception that has otherwise been overlooked in canonical narratives of the history of the neo-avant-garde. Whilst Group Zero has been examined in isolation; the dominant narratives of the history of performance and

1950s and the '60s, not only through their experimental artistic production but also because of the international scope of their activities', see *Zero: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s-60s*, (New York, New York: Guggenheim, 2014), p.11. The exhibition toured to Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin as *ZERO: The international art movement of the 50s and 60s* (21 March – 8 June, 2015) the most comprehensive exhibition of Zero to date; and finally to Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam as *ZERO: Let us explore the stars* (4 July – 8 November, 2015) where the exhibition focused on ZERO's connection with the Dutch Nul group and on the Stedelijk's first Zero presentation in 1962.

[109] The term 'ZERO' has historically been applied to the German artists' group – although it is more accurate to use 'Zero' for the group, according to Piene, as well as to a larger history most often referred to as an art 'movement'.

[110] Curated by Valerie L. Hillings, the premise of the Guggenheim retrospective drew on her doctoral research at Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, New York City. See Hillings, *Experimental Artists' Group in Europe, 1951-1968: Abstraction, Interaction and Interaction* (unpublished PhD Thesis: Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2002).

[111] Günther Uecker became a core 'member' of Group Zero in 1961.

live art have yet to account for its important work.[112] In an attempt to expand the existing terrain of interpretation, I will make the case for Zero's night work as a crucial aspect of the group's artistic output, and suggest that its collaboratively produced live works exemplify a new understanding of the critical potentiality of live production and the transient event that emerged in the 1950s through a particular aesthetic negotiation of time. This chapter, then, does not offer a comprehensive study of ZERO's extensive output. Rather, it is a focused examination of the German group's specific contribution to the development of live exhibition making in the immediate post-war period. Whilst highlighting the urgency of the live exhibition as a new space of representation for Zero, I will present night-time as systematically integral to its aesthetic agenda.

In reference to the moment after countdown before a rocket takes flight, the name 'Zero' was chosen to indicate a desire to make a new start, demarcating a conceptual framework in which existing theories and expectations of art might be stripped away, leaving new territory to be explored. The term Zero signified a tabula rasa, a point at which a positive and clear beginning with an orientation towards the future replaced the dark, angst-ridden past represented by Tachism. The name was also chosen in part for its universal significance and served, therefore, as an indication of the desire to forge working relationships with artists worldwide,

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[112] See for example Rose Lee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011). One of the only texts to address the performative aspect of Zero's work is Margriet Schavemaker's recent essay in which she examines the group's performances in light of their relationship to mass-media. Schavemaker argues that one of the reasons for Zero's exclusion from the existing narratives of the history of performance art is that performance has tended to have been interpreted primarily as 'a protest against the conventional art world and the advance of consumer society.' As I hope to show in this chapter, Zero's live work was far from antithetical to this description. See Margriet Schavemaker, 'Performing Zero' in *Zero: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s-60s, op.cit* (note 3), pp.44-55.

one that reflects the neo avant-garde's shared commitment to transcending national barriers as well as formal and ideological differences. Unapologetically idealistic, Zero's ambitions read as typically avant-gardist both in scope and in tone; yet its aspirations were far from naïve, instead they were grounded in a profound reaction to the experiential conditions of war. Zero came into being in Düsseldorf at a moment 'when things were very rudimentary, still very ruinous and life was difficult. There was an impetus to do something good despite the circumstances,' as Piene emphasized.[113] He described Group Zero as a 'voluntary cooperation of single artists,' one that 'sometimes do team work, but as a contributing possibility to creativity, not as an alternative to individual work in a socialist age.'[114]

Zero came into being in the wake of the second world war, at a moment of great socio-political upheaval as Germany grappled to negotiate the trauma of the recent past. The almost total absence of an art market in Germany post-1945 further isolated young artists struggling to find a viable means to approach artistic production at this moment. Mack described the country as 'a kind of poorhouse […] we were enclosed by a cultural cemetery, an information vacuum that is unimaginable today' he recalled.[115] Mack and Piene first met at the Staatliche Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf in 1950 where they both enrolled as art students.[116] In response to the absence of gallery system together with the lack of institutional

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[113] Otto Piene, interview with the author, 2 July 2012.

[114] Otto Piene, 'Zero and the Attitude,' manuscript, April 1965, Düsseldorf. n.p.

[115] Heinz Mack quoted in Valerie Hillings, *Experimental Artists' Group in Europe, 1951-1968: Abstraction, Interaction and Interaction* (unpublished thesis, Institute of Fine Art, New York City, 2002), p.119.

[116] Following service in the German anti-aircraft youth corps, a year in the military (1944-45) and a few months in a British prisoner-of-war camp from which he was released in January 1946, Piene studied in Munich first at the Blockerer Art School, then at the Akademie der Künste. For a detailed account of Mack and Piene's education, see Hillings, *Experimental Artists' Group in Europe, 1951-1968: Abstraction, Interaction and Interaction*, *op. cit.* (note 10), pp.118-119.

support for young artists, they initially decided to join Künstlergruppe Niederrhein 1953 e.V. (or Lower Rhine Artist Group 1953 registered organization) an organisation better known as Gruppe 53.[117] Gruppe 53 was a loosely formed initiative founded by a number of young artists who graduated from the Akademie that year. The group championed abstract, expressionist Tachisme, or German *Art informel* and aimed to organize exhibitions that challenged the hegemony of the artists' association, the Secession.[118] Mack and Piene joined the group in the hope of finding opportunities to exhibit, but were largely ignored in favour of more established artists and those whose work had already gained recognition abroad. It was within this context that Mack and Piene became increasingly aware of the need to develop their practices beyond the Tachist orientation, to find an expressive idiom that was future orientated in its approach. Both artists were unified in the view of *Informel* as a nihilistic attitude towards life born of the oppression of war, one that was heavily informed by Existentialist thinking; a tendency they considered to be 'the expression of a pessimism tinged with melancholia and naturally accepting of human misery' and 'a bad kind of freedom.'[119] Like Yves Klein and Pinot Gallizio, both Mack and Piene rejected this expressionist tendency in pursuit of new progressive modes of artistic production that expanded their own painterly preoccupations beyond the picture plane. This situation provided a

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[117] Mack and Piene were in the second year of their studies in philosophy at the Albertus Magnus University of Cologne when Gruppe 53 was first formed. Mack took his state exams in 1956, and Piene completed his in February the following year. Piene's studies were concentrated on aesthetics and phenomenology with particular focus on the work of Husserl whose writings may be seen to have influenced the move away from the pictorial plane into Piene's subsequent *Light Ballets* and live performances.

[118] The first Gruppe 53 exhibition was held in April 1954 at the Staatiche Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, where an exhibition was mounted every second year until the group disbanded in 1959.

[119] Piene, 'Zero and the Attitude,' *op. cit.* (note 9), n.p.

catalyst for what would become Zero's first night work: a new expositional form that provided the foundations for the beginnings of the group's move towards the making of live events.

Zero was first articulated in a series of *Abendausstellungen*, single night exhibitions organized by Mack and Piene.[120] Described as 'a vernissage at night without an exhibition lasting any longer', the night exhibitions began in Piene's studio in Düsseldorf at 69 Gladbacher Strasse, a workspace he and Mack shared with the artist Hans Salentin and the commercial art photographer Charles Wilp. Functioning as 'a breeding place for ideas', the studio was vital for Zero as a space where its members could meet, work through new ideas and play improvised jazz.[121] The night exhibitions began pragmatically, since both Mack and Piene had young families and taught during the day. 'We were working on the art work necessarily and unavoidably in the night, in the studio,' Piene recalled.[122] Night-time soon became not just practically necessary, but also systematically crucial to Zero's performative agenda.

Featuring work by Piene, Mack and Salentin, together with Hans Joachim Bleckert, Peter Bruning, Horst Egon Kalinowski, Herbert Kaufman and Gerhard Wind, Zero's inaugural night exhibition was held at the studio on 11th April 1957. Following German convention, the one-night-only exhibition opened with a speech: the British art critic John Anthony Thwaites gave a formal introduction to an

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[120] The literal English translation of *Abendausstellungen* is 'Evening exhibitions', but 'Night exhibitions' was acknowledged by Otto Peine when interviewed as the more accurate translation. Otto Piene, personal interview, 2 July 2012.

[121] Otto Piene's description quoted in Laurence Alloway 'Viva Zero', in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, MIT Press, 1973), p.ix.

[122] Piene was working at the Modeschule Düsseldorf where he taught for thirteen years. He taught drawing, art history and cultural history, history of couture and anatomy. Mack was teaching art and philosophy at secondary schools in Düsseldorf. Otto Piene, interview with the author, 2 July 2012.

exhibition of paintings unified by the privileging of structure and form over composition. This theme extended to Zero's expositional strategy with the exhibition lasting for just three hours. 'By compressing the display of art into a single evening the exhibition became a performance, an event in real time…' critic Lawrence Alloway noted. 'Even paintings, when shown at this speed, took on a kind of ephemeral configuration.'[123] Between 1957 and 1961, nine night exhibitions were held at the Gladbacher strasse studio, a series of transient, live events through which the traditional format of the exhibition was radically transformed.[124]

The launch of Zero's night exhibitions coincided with the opening of two galleries in Düsseldorf in May 1957. These two commercial spaces dedicated to exhibiting the work of both local and international contemporary artists had important implications for Zero, providing an opportunity to exhibit as well as a vital means of disseminating knowledge of their work abroad.[125] Less than a week after the inaugural night exhibition, the art dealer Jean-Pierre Wilhelm,[126] together

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[123] Alloway, 'Viva Zero', *op.cit.* (note 17), p.ix.

[124] The first night exhibition was held at 69 Gladbacher Strasse on 11 April, 1957. Subsequent exhibitions took place on: 9 May 1957; 4 July 1957; 26 September 1957; 24–31 October 1957; 10 December 1957, a solo show of Klaus Jürgen-Fischer; 24 April 1958; 2 October 1958, and 10, 13 and 15 October 1960. For the fifth night exhibition (24-31 October) Johannes Geccelli was invited to have a solo show, one that broke with the original format by running from seven to nine o'clock every night for seven nights. Subsequent night exhibitions reverted to the one-night-only format.

[125] The complex history of the role of commercial gallery network in incubating and promoting international artistic exchange in the immediate post-war period deserves substantially more research than the scope of this thesis allows.

[126] Wilhelm was instrumental in forging connections between Paris and Düsseldorf when he returned to Germany after living in exile in the French capital during the war. Wilhelm was responsible for organising a series of reciprocal exhibitions with which he promoted the École de Paris, *Art brut*, and *Art informel* thereby introducing artists in Düsseldorf to the approach to abstract expressionism prevalent among artists in post-war Paris at this time. In April 1955, Wilhelm had also arranged an exhibition of German non-figurative painting at Galerie Drouin in Paris, the site of Pinot Gallizio's

with Manfred de la Motte, opened Galerie 22 with an exhibition of German *Informel*.[127] That same month, on 31st May, Alfred Schmela opened a gallery with Yves Klein's first solo exhibition in Germany titled *Yves, Propositions monochromes*.[128] It was at the opening of that exhibition that Piene and Klein met for the first time.[129] On the subject of the paintings Klein asserted, 'my monochrome propositions are landscapes of freedom,' it is a statement that resonates with Zero's ideological concerns at this time.[130] After this initial encounter, Mack, Piene, and Salentin traveled to Paris to visit Klein in his studio and were enthused by his fearless and iconoclastic approach, one that appealed to the Zero sensibility, and desire to move beyond the limitations of the *Informel* preoccupation with the past. It was within this artistic climate of cultural cross-contamination that Zero's night work took form.

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anti-tachist *Cavern of Anti-Matter* in 1957. See Valerie Hillings, *Experimental Artists' Group in Europe, 1951-1968: Abstraction, Interaction and Interaction*, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp.120-121.

[127] The artists featured in the first exhibition at Galerie 22 included Dahmen, Gaul, Götz, Hoehme, Kreutz, Schultze, Schumacher and Jenkins. See Renate Wiehager, *ZERO aus Detschland 1957-1966. Und heute = ZERO out of Germany 1957-1966 and today,* (Ostfildern bei Stuttgart: Hatje, 2000). p.254.

[128] Antoni Tàpies was Alfred Schmela's first choice for inaugural show but proved impossible to secure. The German sculptor Norbert Kricke (1922-1984) then based in Paris had seen *Yves Klein. Propositions Monochromes* at Galerie Iris Clert and was so impressed with the exhibition that he advised Alfred Schmela to invite Klein to exhibit in Düsseldorf. After first meeting in 1957, Klein and Kricke exchanged works, Kricke showed his Klein painting to the architect Werner Ruhnau who subsequently commissioned Klein to create an installation for the lobby of the newly built Gelsenkirche opera house.

[129] Mack and Klein had previously met during a visit to Klein's studio in Paris on 1st December 1955. See Heiner Stachelhaus, *Zero: Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker* (Düsseldorf; New York: ECON Verlag, 1993), p.153. Uecker had a personal connection to Klein who became his brother-in law when Klein married Uecker's sister, Rotraut Uecker, in 1962.

[130] On Friday, 23 August Yves Klein wrote: 'My monochrome propositions are landscapes of freedom. I am an impressionist and a disciple of Delacroix.' Klein, 'Some excerpts from my journal of 1957' Reprinted and trans. in Klaus Ottmann (ed.), *Overcoming the Problematics of Art: The Writings of Yves Klein*, (Putnam, Conn.: Spring Publications, 2007), p.13.

The 7th night exhibition was the first to be organized around a single theme. Held on the night of Thursday 24 April 1958, the exhibition was conceived under the title, *Das rote Bild* or The Red Painting. The colour red, 'particularly light vermillion and bright red' was chosen as a symbol of the newly 'extroverted and uninhibited times'.[131] The exhibition was Zero's most ambitious to date with forty-four contributing artists. With this night exhibition, for the first time, the scope of the contributions extended beyond Germany to accommodate international contributions, including works by Klein, Georges Mathieu, and the Brazilian artist Almir da Silva Mavignier who was based in Paris at the time. Günther Uecker's work was also included for the first time in a Zero context.[132] The opening speech was given by Klaus Jurgen Fischer, artist and editor of the journal *Das Kunstwerk,* whose work also featured in the exhibition:

> 'Ladies and Gentlemen,' Fischer began, 'It's good to know that, besides the many courageous galleries that are flourishing today in a number of different cities in western Germany, there are also still experimental fields in art that are completely uncommerical and without a declared goal or established program, which pursue only the intention of showcasing, stimulating and keeping alive that special fluctuation between image and observer…I would like to consider these 'Night Exhibitions' such a field of experimentation, with the accent not on the unfinished artwork, but rather on the crucible in which it comes about…'[133]

The night exhibition functioned as just such as crucible, as an ephemeral container for the rejection of *Informel* that underscored the progressive potential of the provisional, one-night-only event as a new, collaborative means of expression in a temporary expositional form. In a comment that underscores the central principle motivating Zero's night work, Piene ends his 1958 essay on the subject of 'Colour

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[131] Cited in Annette Kuhn, *ZERO: eine Avantgarde der sechziger Jahre*, (Frankfurt am Main; Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1991), pp.16-17.

132 Uecker had previously exhibited with Mack and Piene in the Winterausstellung Dusseldorfer Kunstler (Winter Exhibition of Dusseldorf Artists) in 1957.

[133] Klaus Jürgen Fischer, opening speech at the 7th Abendausstellung, 24 April, 1958 reprinted in Thelka Zell, 'The ZERO Travelling Circus: Documentation of Exhibitions, Actions, Publications 1958-1966' in *ZERO* (exh.cat., Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 2015), pp.19-178; p.24.

in Different Values Systems' by stating: 'Only the inescapable realization that the task of today's creative art is to overcome the dimension of time will lead us to colour as true colour, as light, as energy.'[134]

The 7th night exhibition, *The Red Painting*, had a dual function as both a group exhibition and a live platform from which to launch the ZERO magazine. Simply titled *ZERO I*, *ZERO II* and *ZERO III*, the journal combined programmatic texts with photographic reproductions of artists' works loosely grouped around specific themes. The first entirely text-based issue was dedicated to the monochrome, the second to vibration and motion, the third to the total environment and the nature-man-technology triad.[135] In essence the magazine functioned as a collaborative almanac, a visual and theoretical synopsis of the main concerns of the artists associated with Zero in its formative years. In March 1958, Mack wrote to Klein asking him to contribute to the first issue of the publication, an article on the theme of 'colour as a function of space' – a logical choice given Klein's experiments in the transition from the making of monochromes to pictorial climates at this juncture. 'This journal shall become a manifest(o) for a new kind of painting, against Tachism, ' wrote Mack, 'a painting, with the signification of a new colour, space, time and form in picture, without any naturalism thought-transference.'[136] Klein accepted the invitation and in the resulting essay, 'My Stance in the Battle

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[134] Otto Piene, 'Colour in Different Value States', *ZERO* I, 1958, reprinted and trans. in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, MIT Press, 1973), p.21.

[135] Three issues of *Zero* were published, the first two volumes in 1958 and the final issue in 1961. The first issue was published to coincide with the opening of the seventh evening exhibition *Das rote Bild* on 24 July, 1958.

136 Heinz Mack letter to Yves Klein, March 1958 reprinted in Thekla Zell, 'The ZERO Traveling Circus: Documents on Exhibitions, Actions, Publications 1958-1966' in Dirk Pörschmann; Margriet Schavemaker (eds,) *ZERO*, (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 2015), pp.19-176; p.25.

between Line and Color', set out the conceptual framework that may be seen as a theoretical prologue to *The Void* which opened at Galerie Iris Clert just four days after the launch of the *ZERO* journal at the 7th night exhibition on 28 April, 1958:

> 'Although I live in the midst of errors, naiveness, and utopias. I am happy to be dealing with a problem that is so much of our time. One must - and this is not an exaggeration - keep in mind that we are living in the atomic age, where everything material and physical could disappear from one day to another, to be replaced by nothing but the ultimate abstraction imaginable.' Klein wrote. 'My paintings are now invisible and these I would like to show in my next Parisian exhibit at Iris Clert's, in a clear and positive manner.'[137]

Zero's ephemeral night work emerged as one such solution to the problem to which Klein referred. Together the 7th one-night-only exhibition and the first *ZERO* publication formed a collective statement of intent, a manifestation of a desire to move beyond the strictures of *Informel* towards new experimental forms, an impetus that would soon lead to Zero's first live works. From April 1958 onwards, the night exhibitions developed in parallel with the *ZERO* magazine. In a polemical essay published in the inaugural issue, Mack set out Zero's pictorial agenda: 'Overcoming polychromaticism through colour itself means that we must give up composition in favour of a simple structure zone, i.e. the simple "coming together" of all creative elements.'[138] Through a 'process of figurative purification' in which all contexts extraneous to the image-narration, subject, composition were removed, Zero sought to create a 'new dynamic structure' defined as a pictorial space that counteracted static balance. Mack sets out the terms for a new comprehension of pictorial space, one in which, he explained, 'movement will not only be realized on

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[137] Yves Klein, 'Ma Position Dans Le Combat Entre La Ligne et La Couleur' (My Position in the Battle between Line and Colour), 16 April 1958, reprinted and trans. in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, MIT Press, 1973), p.8.

[138] Heinz Mack, 'Die Neue Dynamische Struktur' ('The new dynamic structure'), in *ZERO*, vol. 1, 1958, reprinted and translated in *Ibid.,* p.15.

the surface of the painting but will also leap out at the observer unexpectedly.' A form of painting that is entirely self-sufficient, freed from a dependence on representation or naturalism, 'a completely nonrepresentational, dynamic pictorial structure, light years apart from nature.'[139]

'The dialectics of static and dynamic elements produce virtual vibration i.e. pure, perpetually creative moment, which cannot be found in nature. It is free of all suggestive illusion; it is directionless and therefore never finalized. Time cannot be actualized in it,' wrote Mack.[140] Time was therefore conceptually interwoven into the new pictorial space as a vital component. Conceived as a new future for painting, the notion of the new dynamic structure may be understood as a core strategy for Zero that served as both a theoretical notion and a working form – a structure which found its live manifestation in Zero's nocturnal production. The existing literature on Group Zero, and the broader international network known as ZERO, has tended to place considerable emphasis on the importance of the group's publication, yet I would argue that the innovative nature of the Zero impulse, implicit in the magazine's literary content, typography and design is equally, if not more succinctly, expressed in the making of its nocturnal exhibitions and the performative night work through which Zero came into being.[141]

The shift in Zero's practice towards the making of live events was catalyzed by a development of Piene's studio practice, by the beginnings of the *Light Ballet*, a work he developed in the summer of 1957 (figure.2.5). Over a period of four months spent working in the studio, Piene experimented with perforated stencils

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[139] Mack, 'Die Neue Dynamische Struktur' ('The new dynamic structure'), *op.cit.* (note 33), p.15.

[140] *Ibid.*

[141] The prominence of the *ZERO* journal in the existing literature is largely due to its reproduction and subsequent distribution as a single volume which remains the only published primary source on Zero, see Heinz Mack; Otto Peine; Howard Beckmann (eds.) *ZERO* op. cit (note 33).

that had initially been used in the making of a series of paintings titled *rasterbild* (pattern image): modestly-scaled abstract canvases created using fire, soot, and pigment strained through the stencil to create grid-like monochromes. Playing with basic light sources, Piene constructed lamp units and light boxes in the dark of the studio at night. After discovering that shining light through stencils could create moving projections and rudimentary light plays, he realized the performative potential of these basic materials.

In an essay titled, 'On the Purity of Light' published in *ZERO II*, Piene expounded the benefits of his new luminous vision whilst criticizing Tachist artists for their drab palette, pessimistic attitude and technique of placing matter in front of the old, perspectival space. Light, 'the primary condition for all visibility' he offered as the solution for the need for a new field of exploration.[142] Under the title *Ein Fest Für Das Licht* (A Feast for the Light), the *Light Ballet* debuted at the ninth night exhibition on 15th October 1960. A more or less improvised choreographic sequence or 'light dance in a specific order', Piene described this experiment as an attempt 'to influence the human landscape […] to penetrate darkness by means of smoke, fire and light-projection.'[143] Latent within this description is the desire to reconfigure darkness and its effects into something affirmative rather than destructive.

The elementary origins of the *Light Ballet* are documented in *0 x 0 = Kunst. Maler ohne Farbe und Pinsel (Painters without Paint or Brush)*, the first extensive documentary on the work of Zero and its expansive network broadcast by Hessischer Rundfunk on 27th June, 1962. The *Frankfurter Rundschau* newspaper

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[142] Otto Piene, 'On the Purity of Light', *ZERO* vol.2, 1958, reprinted and trans in Heinz Mack; Otto Peine; Howard Beckmann (eds.) in *ZERO*, *op.cit.* (note 33), pp.46-47.

[143] Otto Piene, interview with the author, 2nd July 2012.

described *0 x 0 = Kunst* as a film about a new pictorial conception; a film about 'an artistic tendency of our times.'[144] Piene stated that the film itself was very much a collaboration with Winkler. 'It seems as though Winkler felt his way toward an understanding of "Zero" during the course of filming' a report in the *Frankfurter Runschau* newspaper affirmed.[145] A programme announcement published in the *Hessischer Rundfunk* described the theme of the film as: '*Die super-avantgardistische Kunst*' (The super-avant-garde art).[146] The film features footage of Piene in his studio producing smoke paintings and early *Rastebild*, cut with shots of Herbert and Claudia, Piene's son and daughter punching holes through sheets of sugar paper. 'I'm not the painter, but the light is', Piene's voiceover explains.[147] 'I transform darkness into a volume of power'. In a programmatic essay published in the first issue of the *ZERO* journal, in 1958, Piene wrote: 'To praise brightness alone seems to me to be insufficient. I go to darkness itself, I pierce it with light, I make it transparent, I take its terror from it, I turn it into a volume of power with the breath of life like my own body.'[148] This statement cuts to the driving force of Zero's live work. Through its nocturnal work Zero sought to reconfigure the

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[144] '0 x 0 ist Kunst', *Frankfurter Runschau*, June 1962 reprinted in Zell, 'The Zero Traveling Circus Documentation of Exhibitions, Actions, Publications 1958-1966', *op.cit.* (note. 32), p.94.

[145] *Ibid.*

[146] Programme announcement printed in the Hessischer Rundfunk, 27th June 1962, reprinted in Zell, 'The Zero Traveling Circus Documentation of Exhibitions, Actions, Publications 1958-1966', *op.cit.* (note. 32), p.94.

[147] Footage of Yves Klein making his *Fire Paintings* in 1960 also features in the same documentary. In contrast to the highly staged footage in which Klein performs in front of his canvases with the assistance of a prominently featured fireman, an act that underscores the dramaturgy underpinning his whole oeuvre, Piene's studio set-up featured in this documentary is modest, representative of an approach that privileged the act and process of experimental making over polished results.

[148] Otto Piene, 'Paths to Paradise', 1958 reprinted and trans. in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO, op.cit.* (note. 33), pp.148.

traumatic space of war to one of peace, to rephrase the night into an affirmative event.

In parallel with its debut at the final Zero night exhibition on 15th October 1960, the *Light Ballet* was performed at the opening of Piene's first solo exhibition at Galerie Schmela. On this occasion the ballet was accompanied by a soundtrack recorded at the Gladbacher Strasse studio. The otherwise dilapidated atelier had one extraordinary feature: a large, broken grand piano left behind by the previous tenant. Piene used the piano to record basic sounds and tones for a soundtrack that the Light Ballet followed in a loose, improvisational manner. Music played an important role in the shift in Zero's production away from the strictly optical and pictorial towards the experiential live event.[149] From its initial presentation, the *Light Ballet* became a performance that could be 'played' live and developed into increasingly ambitious, architecturally scaled installations. Integral to this performative work, from its first inception, was the phenomenological engagement of the viewer who was placed at the centre of the action. Piene conceived of the light ballet as an inherently egalitarian performance to be played for the greatest happiness of the greatest number, 'I speak of the present state of the light ballet as archaic.' He wrote in an essay published in *ZERO II*. 'In my imagination, the classical light ballet takes place in a large, perfectly hollow sphere, everyone can see it watch it or not, but I need a lot of time to get the searchlights.'[150] A theatre for the *Light Ballet*, titled *Placentarium* a *'Pneumatic Theatre for Light and Gas*

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[149] Piene stressed that the integral part played by sound in the *Light Ballet* has been overlooked in its most recent re-presentations. The original score accompanied a number of presentations of the *Light Ballet* as part of a retrospective *Otto Piene: Lichtballet* at MIT List Visual Art Centre in 2011.
Otto Piene, interview with the author, 9th July 2012.

[150] Piene, 'Paths to Paradise', *op.cit.* (note 44), p.149.

Ballets' (1960), was designed by Piero Manzoni but ultimately never realized.[151]
From Piene's initial experiments with projected light, the basic elements of light
against darkness allowed the night work to expand out from the studio to form the
basis of Zero's experiments in live production. For both Piene, and Zero more
broadly, light was a fundamental 'material' which it conceived as an 'integrating
reigning' power that 'fused' its diverse efforts: 'We try to transform its
inexhaustible energies into human measures,' Piene explained.[152] In a typically
idealistic tone he asserted:

> My endeavor is twofold: to demonstrate that light is a source of life which has to be constantly
> rediscovered, and to show expansion as a phenomenal event. Everything is striving for larger
> space. We want to reach the sky. We want to exhibit in the sky, not in order to establish there a
> new art world, but rather to enter new space peacefully — that is, freely, playfully and
> actively, not as slaves of war technology.[153]

Piene's statement of intent is crucial, I believe, for it points to the critical impetus
behind Zero's nocturnal work. The group's methodological shift towards live
performance and production was inextricably interwoven with a collective desire to
rework the night sky, once full of bombs, with peaceful intent.

Formally and conceptually, Piene's *Light Ballet* clearly recalls Lázló Moholy-
Nagy's *Light-Space-Modulator* of 1923. This earlier kinetic sculpture was first
displayed as part of the German contribution to the Deutscher Werkbund (German
Work Federation) exhibition in Paris in 1930. Composed of three moveable metal
and glass structures arranged on a rotating disc, the *Light-Space Modulator* was
created to be exhibited in a darkened space where it produced spectacular shadow
formations in an interplay of coloured and white light. Also known as *Light Prop*

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[151] A plan and elevation for the Placentarium featured in *ZERO II* alongside an essay by Manzoni
titled 'Immediate Projects.' see *ZERO* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), p.214.

[152] Otto Piene, 'Opening forward', *Group Zero*, exh. cat., Philadelphia, 1964, n.p.

[153] Otto Piene, *Piene – Light Ballet*, exh. cat., New York, 1965, n.p.

for an Electric Stage, the work was intended to create light displays for theatre, dance, and other performance spaces. With its gleaming glass and metal surfaces of mobile perforated disks, a rotating glass spiral, and a sliding ball it created the effects similar to those of photograms in motion. The kinetic sculpture was the subject of the film *Lichtspiel Schwarz-Weiß-Grau* (Light Play Black-White-Grey), a film Moholy-Nagy directed in 1930.[154] The central focus of the film is the 'new space-time' articulated through *lichtspiel* or light play, the effect is the capturing of 'vision in motion', a concept articulated in Moholy's final book of the same title published posthumously in 1947.[155] For Moholy, 'vision in motion is simultaneous grasp. Simultaneous grasp is creative performance - seeing, feeling and thinking in relationship and not a series of isolated phenomenon. It instantaneously integrates and transmutes single elements into a coherent whole. This is valid for physical vision as well as for the abstract.' He wrote. 'Vision in motion is a synonym for simultaneity and space-time; a means to comprehend the new dimension'. 'Vision in motion, he continues, 'also signifies planning, the projective dynamics of our visionary faculties.'[156] Piene claimed no knowledge of Moholy's, or indeed any other influence on his light play. 'I have arrived at the light ballet through painting and many other things, through my own methods and instruments. I only heard later that I was the son of half a dozen fathers, whom I did not know as such' he wrote.[157]

Piene later explained that it was not until the photographer Manfred Tischer found some typed pages of Moholy's writings and gave them to Piene's wife around

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[154] The film was originally planned as the sixth and final part of a longer work depicting the 'new space-time'.

[155] Lázló Moholy-Naghy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: P. Theobald, 1947), p.12.

[156] *Ibid.*

[157] Piene, 'Paths to Paradise', *op.cit.* (note 44), p.232.

1959/1960 that Piene became aware of his theories.[158] With hindsight, however, it is hard to deny how closely Moholy's notion of the progressive visionary capacities of light play and Zero's night work appear inextricably intertwined. In *Vision in Motion* Moholy describes art as:

> '[…] the most complex, vitalizing and civilizing of human actions', an intensified expression involving many layers of experience. Out of them art forms a unified manifestation, like dreams which are composed of the most diverse source material subconsciously crystallized. It tries to produce a balance of the social, intellectual and emotional existence; a synthesis of attitudes and opinions, fears and hopes. Art has two faces, the biological and the social, the one toward the individual and the other toward the group. By expressing fundamental validities and common problems, art can produce a feeling of coherence. This is its social function which leads to a cultural synthesis as well as to a continuation of human civilization.[159]

The socio-political and ideological concerns underpinning Zero's night work share Moholy's future-orientated and progressive approach alongside the idealistic belief in the promise of a new medium.

Like the experimental pictorial climates instigated by Klein and Pinot-Gallizio, Zero's night work was born of a particular set of historical conditions, conceived in a country devastated by war. Like *The Void* and *The Cavern of Anti-Matter*, Zero's night work, I believe, exemplifies a new understanding of the critical potentiality of live production that emerged in the 1950s through a particular aesthetic negotiation of time. Through the night exhibitions the live exhibition format emerged as a new space of representation for Zero, a viable platform from which to articulate the complex conditions of culture production and the conflicted nature of visual representation post-1945. The night work developed as a new form of visual representation and aesthetic experimentation that took the nocturnal sky as a

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[158] Otto Piene interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obrist in *Otto Piene: Fire Paintings From 1965-2009*, (exh. cat., The Mayor Gallery, London, 2014), pp.15-21; p.16. Manfred Tischer was commissioned to document the majority of Group Zero's work.

[159] Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion, op.cit.* (note 51), p.28.

symbolically loaded framework, a grandiose, spatially limitless theatre for aesthetic experiments to be produced and experienced live. As such Zero's night work offers further evidence of the methodological shift towards simultaneous production and presentation, realization and reception that was occurring in the post-war period on a transnational scale.

A concept that arose from the light ballet and the night exhibitions at the Gladbacher Strasse studio was that of the 'demonstration', a form that became a crucial tool in Zero's working vocabulary. To demonstrate is, of course, to explain or describe, to show something clearly and convincingly, to make a public show for or against a cause, or to participate in a public display of opinion. A total of five Zero demonstrations were realized between 1961 and 1966 that actively engaged every aspect of the verb.[160] A logical extension of the earlier night exhibitions, Piene described the form as 'a mildly aggressive presentation of new art', as an intentional appeal to the public that drew attention to something that 'ought' to be seen.[161] In a departure from the earlier night exhibitions, in which predominantly fixed art works had been exhibited in an ephemeral, expositional form, the Zero demonstration could only be experienced live in the transient passage of its making. Zero's night work grew and became increasingly spectacular, with new focus on experiential elements and the dramaturgy of the event. Whilst footage documenting the first demonstration, ZERO EDITION EXPOSITION DEMONSTRATION, outside Galerie Schmela reveals a party-like atmosphere, for Zero there was critical

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[160] *Edition, exposition, demonstration* held at Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf in 1961; *ZERO Party*, Galerie A Arnhem that same year; *ZERO demonstration* held on the bank of the Rhine, Düsseldorf in 1962; *Carnival Düsseldorf*, 1964, and *ZERO ist gut für dich* at Bahnhof Rolandseck Remagen in 1966.

[161] Otto Piene, interview with the author, 9th July 2012.

purchase to the festive event. A comparison with an earlier exhibition will clarify the motivations at stake.

The first Zero demonstration clearly recalls 'Yves Klein Propositions Monochromes', the seminal exhibition of Klein's work held at Galerie Iris Clert in 1957, his first exhibition at the gallery and one that may be seen, in many respects, as a prelude to *The Void*. At the vernissage of that first exhibition, monochrome paintings were presented alongside Klein's *Aerostatic Sculpture* – a work composed of one thousand and one blue balloons released into the sky over Saint-Germain-des-Prés. In keeping with Klein's later work discussed in the previous chapter, the *Aerostatic Sculpture* may be seen as a pioneering model of the concept of art as media event, an attempt to create a charged conceptual field in which the relationship between the exhibition and the spectator was imaginatively restaged. Yet, despite the stylistic similarities, there is, I think, an important distinction to be drawn between Klein's work and Zero's first demonstration. Unlike the event in Paris, which was to all intents and purposes a strategic publicity stunt marking the opening of the exhibition, Zero's demonstration existed as a collaboratively produced work in its own right. The actual installation inside Galerie Schmela was less an exhibition than a presentation of the *ZERO* magazine; the real work took place outside, on the street, amongst a live audience. In contrast to Klein's theatrical gesture, Zero's demonstration existed as an artwork in which time was made manifest, and not compressed into finite objects, one that came into being through the very making of the live event.

ZERO EDITION EXPOSITION DEMONSTRATION was of such significance that it was repeated in Arnhem under the name of ZERO Party (1961) at

International Galerie A.[162] 'Arnhem will be gaining something totally new that will probably be extremely controversial and will undoubtedly inspire not only approval and delight but also abhorrence and outrage,' one journalist commented.[163] Reviews of the demonstration reveal the local critics' dismay at the addition of frenetic electronic music created by a friend of Uecker's named Luigi Pelliccioni. This music was considered an eccentric choice for the otherwise contemplative spectatorial conditions of a gallery exhibition. As its name indicates, the demonstration was conceived as a locus for interpersonal connection, as a celebratory, transient event that, in the fusing of light, music, and crowds in a party-like atmosphere, came close to the conditions and atmosphere of a nightclub.

The Zero demonstration emerged as a response to the perceived need to create a new space of representation, one premised on spontaneous experimentation and interpersonal encounter rather than a singular expression of existential angst expressed within the confines of the pictorial plane. 'It is not a question of formation and it is not a question of expression (nor can one turn to extraneous problems like parascientific complexities, psychoanalytic secrecies, graphic composition, ethnographic fantasy etc),' Uecker wrote. 'Are not perhaps such expressions, fantasy and abstraction empty fictions? There is nothing further to add there is only to be; to live.'[164] 'Our projects of today are the realities of tomorrow',

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[162] The gallery had recently been founded by Hans Peeters. The Zero presentation was the inaugural exhibition at the gallery. Thelka Zell notes that Henks Peeters also intended *Expositie Demonstratie Zero* to function as an advertisement for the exhibition Nul planned to open at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1962. See Zell, 'The Zero Traveling Circus Documentation of Exhibitions, Actions, Publications 1958-1966 ' in *ZERO op. cit.* (note 32), p.74.

[163] 'Gallery A for ultramodern art opens in Arnhem Open-air demonstration at the opening of the exhibition by Zero,' *Arnhemsche Courant* (8th December 1961), reprinted in Zell, 'The Zero Travelling Circus', *op. cit.* (note 32), p.75.

[164] Günther Uecker, 'Untitled' first published in *ZERO* vol.3 (July 1961), n.p. reprinted in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO op.cit.* (note 17), p.220.

he continued, 'to obtain widest participation, the production of art must cease to be limited to the individual as it has been until now. My objects constitute a spatial reality, a zone of light. I use the means of technology to overcome the personal gesture, to objectify, to create the conditions for freedom.'[165] Coached in the idealistic tone synonymous with both the historic avant-garde, and his own generation, Uecker's words are indicative of the ideological foundation on which Zero's move into the provisionality of live making was built, a shift that occurred in response to, and in refusal of, the nihilist attitude that had dominated the recent past and the work of those artists associated with *Informel* in particular. The live event as an aesthetic medium emerged as a direct response to this urgent problem of representation post-1945. It was within this complex socio-political framework that the condition of liveness itself emerged as epistemic to visual neo-avant-garde practices in the immediate post-war years. The playfulness of Zero's celebratory and sociable demonstrations operated as a model of subversion, a mode of social critique formed as a response to the particularity of a historically conflicted moment.

The Zero demonstration may be understood, following Raymond Williams, as representative of a new 'structure of feeling' that responded directly to the specific conditions of the immediate post-war climate. A notion first coined by Williams in the 1954 text *Preface to Film*, a structure of feeling was used initially as a means of theorizing the problem of historical changes in dramatic convention in film.[166] Its central claim is that 'it is in art, primarily, that the effect of the totality, the dominant structure of feeling is expressed and embodied'.[167] As firm and definite as

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[165] *Ibid.*

[166] Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film*, (London: Film Drama, 1954).

[167] Williams, *op. cit.* (note 62), p. 33.

the term 'structure' may be, structures of feeling operate in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activities. Importantly, structures of feeling allow for art to become a primary and constitutive force in social cohesion and social change. What I am suggesting here is that Zero's collectively orchestrated night works functioned as both a means of acknowledging an actual change of feeling and realizing it in new representational terms. We might then think of the ZERO demonstration as a social experience in solution, as a critical operation and new representational mode. The claim is a large one, but the context I think demands it.

Zero's night work emerged contemporaneously with the publication of *The Human Condition* (1958) – Hannah Arendt's phenomenological analysis of the fundamentals of human activity, in which action is characterized as a mode of human togetherness, as a form of participatory democracy, 'the one miracle-working faculty of man.'[168] Action is aligned with natality – in which it is ontologically rooted – and with the performative promise of a new beginning. 'To act, in its most general sense, means to take on initiative, to begin (as the Greek work *archein*, "to begin", "to lead", and eventually "to rule" indicates) to set something into motion [….],' Arendt writes.[169] Action is distinguished from fabrication in that it is never possible in isolation, but is rather dependent on the surrounding presence of others. Regardless of its specific content, action establishes relationships and connections. For this reason it has the potential to defy limitations and transcend borders. Inherent within action is a plurality of agents.[170] Central to action is the 'inter-est' that lies between people and may bind them together. Its revelatory quality comes to the fore where people act together and are neither for

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[168] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, second ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1998), p.246.

[169] *Ibid.,* p.177.

[170] *Ibid.,* p.190.

nor against one another. When human togetherness is broken, as in modern warfare for instance, in which we go 'into action' not together but against the other, action loses this specific character, 'the quality through which it transcends mere productive activity'. Central to the political efficacy of action is the somewhat intangible 'web of human relationships'.[171] Arendt described her text as 'a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears' a statement that might equally be applied to Zero's night work. 'What I propose is very simple,' she wrote, 'it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.'[172] The Zero demonstration may be read as a similar endeavor in aesthetic form, an attempt to rework the night as a temporal platform from which to think through the recent past through an act of collaboration articulated in a live medium. Through the nocturnal demonstration Zero sought to harness the efficacy of action, and create a space of inter-personal encounter in which night-time could be reconfigured as a celebratory event. Through its nocturnal work Zero sought to reconfigure the traumatic space of war to one of peace, to rephrase the night into an affirmative event.

Zero's demonstrations have been posthumously described as actions and as the precursors of German Happenings, events that anticipated Fluxus in the demand to bring art closer to life.[173] Zero's connection with Fluxus is complex and deserves further investigation, but it is interesting to note in passing the two-day festival *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* held at the Düsseldorf Art Academy on 2nd and 3rd

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[171] *Ibid.,* p.183.

[172] *Ibid.,* p.5.

[173] Renate Wiehager, '54321 ZERO – Countdown to a New Art in a New World' in Renate Wiehager (ed.), *Zero aus Deutschland 1957-1966 und heute = Zero out of Germany 1957-1966 and today,* exh. cat., (New York, 2000), p.17.

February 1963. The event, organized by Joseph Beuys and George Macicunas, was one of seven Fluxus festivals touring Europe that year. George Brecht, Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, and Emmett Williams were among the performers. It was on this occasion that Beuys realized his first two public actions: *Composition for 2 Musicians* and *Siberian Symphony, 1st Movement*. Incidentally, it was at the first Zero demonstration at Galerie Schmela that Beuys and Nam June Paik met for the first time. I mention this festival because it was a significant historical marker in the early development of Fluxus, indicating a shift away from its initial conceptual formulation as a forum for the performance of objects or things towards a more focused concern with the live event. This move was undoubtedly connected to Zero's night work.

Comparison with a very different Düsseldorf-based demonstration may shed a little more light on the temporal specificity of Zero's night work. The work I am thinking of is *Living with Pop: A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism,* the one-day event staged by Gerhard Richter and Konrad Leug in a large furniture store in Düsseldorf in 1963. A full three floors of the shop's usual display were exhibited with the addition of a waiting room set up with two papier mâché figures representing the American President John F. Kennedy and the art dealer Alfred Schmela. One by one, visitors were called into a fully furnished living room where the two artists sat in suits and ties, placed on display amongst pieces of furniture on pedestals. Visitors were then taken in small groups on tours of the so-called 'exhibition rooms'. This demonstration was one of a number of collaborative and performative projects Richter realized under the slogan 'Capitalist Realism', it served as a backlash to Socialist Realism. The demonstration for Capitalist Realism was both an attempt to erase the trauma of the recent past and a critical reflection on contemporary conditions that emerged, like Zero's night work, in the midst of

Germany's first period of reindustrialization and unprecedented material growth. In light of Richter and Leug's demonstration, we might wonder whether what is at stake in Zero's night work is merely a spectacularization of trauma. Yet in contrast to the Capitalist Realist event, Zero's nocturnal demonstrations were perhaps less an erasure of the past than an attempt to articulate the particularity of this conflicted historical moment, to reconfigure night-time into a space of positive inter-personal encounter. Paradoxically, it is Zero's only daylight demonstration that offers further clarity of the temporal specificity of its nocturnal production.[174]

In 1964 Mack, Piene and Uecker appeared in a traditional town carnival procession in Düsseldorf the day before Shrove Tuesday. They were dressed dramatically in rigid black Zero costumes and top hats with their faces painted white. Together they pulled a small cart labeled *Zero-Prunkwagen*, or 'chariot of magnificence', in which they each took turns to ride. Little documentation of this demonstration exists beyond a clipping from a local newspaper in which Mack, Piene and Uecker appear in their most theatrical mode (figure 2.6).[175] In its emphasis on temporary public manifestation, their participation on this occasion

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[174] Here it is important to note that Uecker's training was rooted in Socialist Realism, in the paintings of objects, figures and ideological subjects that formed the visual vocabulary of Agit-Prop. Born in Wendorf, part of the administrative district of Wismar, a region which, after the war, belonged to the Soviet sector of Germany, Uecker attended a technical college in Lübz where he studied painting and commercial art before enrolling at a technical college for the applied arts in Wismar. There he designed slogans for window displays and contributed to the visual aspect of political processions. One such example included a twenty-foot high portrait of Stalin for a celebration of the Socialist Unity Party, the SED. Conscious of the discrepancy between ideological and social reality, Uecker moved to the western sector of Berlin in 1953 where he applied, and was accepted, to study at the Staatlichen Kunstkademie Düsseldorf the following year. See Dieter Honisch and Heiner Stachelhaus, 'Behauptungen: Ein Dialog über Zero: Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker (August 1994),' reprinted and translated as 'Assertions: A Discussion about Zero: Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker,' in *ZERO aus Deutschland 1957-1966. Und heute.*, *op. cit*, p.57.

[175] Newspaper cutting, ZERO Foundation, Düsseldorf. Source unknown.

was in keeping with the broader project of Zero's night work. It was also in keeping with the idea of producing an artwork in which time is made manifest and not compressed into objects or finite, fixed forms. Yet there seems to be something more complex at play here. Zero's absurd and rather sinister carnival appearance points to a tension at the heart of its night work – to a push and pull between past and future being worked out in the present tense of a live medium. Carnival, following Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation, is a form that allows 'mass action' and 'free and familiar contact between people'. A victory over fear, it is 'the people's second life.'[176] Carnival entails a temporal suspension, a form of release, an escape from rigid historical patterns. 'During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom.' Bakhtin wrote.[177] Not just an act of negative escapism, the special condition of carnival is instead one of revival and renewal characterized by a heightened sense of collectivity. It is this condition that was crucial to Zero's night work.

In its aesthetic, Zero's carnival appearance is clearly indebted to an earlier instance of collective nocturnal activity born amidst great socio-political upheaval. The archaic use of white face-paint and over-sized top hats was a deliberate nod to Dada's performative work at the Cabaret Voltaire. In his diaries, Hugo Ball acknowledged Dada's performative work as 'both buffoonery and a requiem mass', a description which might equally apply to Zero's night work. Zero's act of parody is significant, for it might be read as a deliberate aesthetic enactment of historical memory. In his reading of the neo-avant-garde's negotiation of the dialectical tension between reification and spectacle, as well as the post-war imperative to

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[176] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. and (ed.) Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984), p.10.

[177] Mikhail M. Bahktin, *Rabelais & his World*, trans. and (ed.) Helene Iswolsky, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.7.

preserve critical distance, Benjamin Buchloh argues that parody and the appropriation of historical models are driven by 'a desire to establish continuity and tradition and a fiction of identity.'[178] Correspondingly, the carnival demonstration's deliberately absurdist appropriation is indicative of the way in which history played out in Zero's night work through a complex layering of time. In consciously evoking the pre-war avant-garde, Zero's carnival appearance deliberately addresses the experiential condition of a historical moment caught in a tension between past and present, and between negation and renewal. Following Michel Serres' theorisation, every historical era is multi-temporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic; it is precisely this state of affairs that the stratification of time staged in Zero's carnival demonstration emphasizes.[179] The live temporal structure of the Carnival demonstration was a means of creating distance from the past while grappling with the advent of a new and yet unknown age.

On the night of the 15th June 1962, Zero staged a demonstration in Düsseldorf on the banks of the Rhine. Officially titled *ZERO fest auf den* Düsseldorfer Rheinwiesen (ZERO party in the Rhine meadows), the event was specifically conceived for television and broadcast as part of a documentary about Zero produced by filmmaker Gerd Winkler.[180] As befitted what was to all intents and

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[178] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Parody and Appropriation in Francis Picabia, Pop, and Sigmar Polke,' in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), p.348.

[179] See Michel Serres, 'Second Conversation: Method' in *Michel Serres with Bruno Latour: Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* trans. Roxanne Lapidus, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p.59. The book was originally published in French, as *Eclaircissements* by Editions François Bourin in 1990.

[180] The Rhine demonstration features in the first five minutes of the documentary that was broadcast in Germany by Hessischer Rundfunk on 27th June 1962. *'0 x 0 = Art': Maler ohne Farbe und Pinsel* (0x0=Art: Painters without Paint and Brushes), Gerd Winkler, 33', Hessischer Rundfunk. 1962.

purposes a visual manifesto, the demonstration was a spectacular event aesthetically unified in its monochromatic arsenal of Zero props and tropes. Uecker restaged 'Zones of White', the action first realized outside Galerie Schmela the previous year, and created a provisional structure of flags made of white sheeting. In place of a hot-air balloon, on this occasion five hundred white balloons were released into the sky. A procession of participants carried black Zero flags. Mack created a 'light plantation' – a large-scale installation of aluminium foil situated in the meadows.[181] Lit by powerful spotlights from above, the flags moved with the wind, frenetically illuminating the night sky. The so-called 'Zero maidens' appeared again, wearing ankle-length black Zero tunics over their ordinary clothes, but this time they were joined by a parade of plain clothed men and women blowing soap bubbles and holding bunches of balloons.[182] With this nocturnal event Zero imaginatively reconceived the exhibition as a transitory light theatre, as a *son et lumière* temporarily constructed at dusk, a staged play of light in which art momentarily sprang into life in a lunar park of experimentation. 'There were about a thousand visitors,' Gerd Winkler recalled, 'and they stayed until well after midnight. They were experiencing a spectacle of art and non-art here, of wit and

ZERO Foundation archive, Düsseldorf. For a discussion of the demonstration's relation to the mass media, see Margriet Schavemaker, 'Performing Zero' in *Zero: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s-60s*, op. cit. (note 3), pp.44-55.

[181] On the subject of the installation, Mack explained: 'A light plantation by night expanded our dreams and hopes right into the open space, which was also a metaphor of a free space and just the opposite of what we have had experienced during the last year in WW II. There was also the intention to reach all citizens of the town. Later, which means nowadays, one could call these demonstrations a kind of anticipation of sky art.' Heinz Mack, email to the author, 6th November 2012.

[182] The original 'Zero maidens' who featured in ZERO EDITION EXPOSITION DEMONSTRATION outside Galerie Schmela in 1961were students from the Modeschule (School of Fashion) in Düsseldorf where, after graduating from the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1953, Piene taught for thirteen years. Otto Piene, interview with the author, 2nd July 2012.

irony, of seriousness and fun – action made up of light and movement, a multimedia show, a mixture and juxtaposition of various facts, varieties of art and intentions.'[183] The collaborative nature of the demonstration extended to the active participation of its audience. 'The visitors were doing something that became the accepted thing at happenings: they influenced and changed events according to their tastes,' Winkler said. He described the event as a 'six-hour mammoth demonstration for art that was open, life-affirming and doubtless idealistic'.[184] Footage of the Rhine demonstration conveys a sense of collective endeavor, festive collaboration, and makeshift joining-in. On the subject of the demonstrations, Piene explained: 'they are accessible to a larger audience than the one private utterances, such as paintings, drawings, gouaches, allow […] more exposed to the elements […] they invite audience participation, and they serve a public function.'[185] The temporal suspension at play in this demonstration functioned in parallel with the suspension of hierarchical structure, a characteristic that Bakhtin identifies as vital to carnival's criticality.[186] On the banks of the Rhine, instantaneity of production fused with the immediacy of the live event to create a work that mobilized its audience as active participants. In 1964 a further nocturnal demonstration took place, this time in Berlin.

With a total of forty-forty participating artists, the exhibition in Berlin was Zero's largest to date. A manifesto titled 'Zero the new idealism' was published on the occasion of the exhibition and distributed at the festival, a nocturnal

[183] Gerd Winkler, 'When the avant-garde becomes classics. The ZERO group and the consequences', 1969, reprinted in Renate Wiehager (ed.), *ZERO aus Deutschland 1957-1966 und heute = ZERO out of Germany 1957-1966. And today,* exh. cat., New York, 2000, p.71.

[184] *Ibid.*

[185] Otto Peine quoted in *Otto Piene – Lichtballet und Künstler der Gruppe Zero*, exh. cat. (Munich: Edition Heseler, 1972), n.p.

[186] See Bahktin, *Problems of Doestoevsky's Poetics*, op. cit (note 71), p.10.

demonstration which took take place both inside and outside the gallery. 'We want to have a big exhibition, which will include not only those directly involved in Zero, but also reveals the sense of depth and broad dispersion of, as we like to call it, the drug Zero,' Piene wrote.[187] The exhibition, which was organized jointly by Mack, Piene, and Uecker, opened with a Zero demonstration on the night of 20th March 1963. The poster and invitation card was provocatively printed with the proclamation: 'Zero – the new idealism.' Galerie Diogenes had opened in Berlin in December 1959 under the direction of actor Gunter Meisner and had previously presented solo exhibitions of the work of both Mack and Piene who had met Meisner whilst he was performing at the Düsseldorf Schausspeiler. Meisner founded the gallery as a space for the visual arts, and Theatre of the Absurd in particular. Meisner's gallery was therefore a fitting platform from which Zero could consolidate its previous night work in the form of a Zero festival, the group's first night work in Berlin. To mark the opening of the exhibition, a Zero flag was hung in the courtyard to the rear of the gallery, Zero maidens featured once again as did the use of soap bubbles. Together with aluminium banners, dramatic lighting, and music, they combined to form a demonstration that served as a collective statement of intent, one that reinforced Zero's core concerns and aesthetic aims. To underscore the provisional nature of the live event, Mack created an ephemeral sculpture in the form of a column of foam and a Zero parade took place along the adjacent *Kurfürstendamm*. A supporting programme was organised in parallel with the exhibition that included a slide talk given by Piene on the subject of 'Zero the new idealism' and a screening of Winkler's film *0 x 0 = Kunst*. Photographs

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[187] Letter from Otto Piene to Henks Peeters sent with a list of participants, 11 Feb 1963 reprinted in Zell, 'The Zero Traveling Circus Documentation of Exhibitions, Actions, Publications 1958-1966 ', op. cit. (note 32), p.103.

documenting this night work recall the first Zero demonstration at Galerie Schmela; a jukebox to provide music was placed inside the exhibition space where crowds of visitors to the demonstration gathered and danced. 'Zero is at home right here in the golden sixties' one reviewer of the exhibition commented.[188]

In its dynamic synthesis of individual artistic manifestations and multiple agencies, Zero's night work established the live space of the present moment as a creative arena, and mobilized the night as an allegorical space in which to navigate the complex socio-historical particularity of post-war Germany. Critically engaged in the sense of being self-conscious rather than explicitly negative, the Zero demonstration may be read as an act of aesthetic opposition realized through the language of affirmation over negation. What is at stake here is an aesthetic enactment of historical memory conceived as an affirmative act of renewal.

Reading photographs that document Zero's night work today, it is tempting to ask whether what is at play here is really a spectacularization of trauma, the making of light shows and parties from the memory of a war-torn night sky. This is one possible reading, but the alternative, I think, is more powerful. The visual imagery surrounding Zero's demonstrations conveys a strong sense of white on black rather than black on white, a kind of reversal akin to a photographic negative. Read in light of Zero's proximity to war, what is being dramatized here may be a negation of a negation. The question in this case is this: do two negatives necessarily create a positive? The answer I think is yes, but the positive made manifest here is not without criticality. In its absurdity Zero's actional agenda was serious in its intent. In the demonstration, Zero found a vehicle for collectively processing the recent

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[188] Heinz Ohff, 'Die goldenen sechziger Jahre: die Gruppe 'Zero in der Galerie 'Diogenes'', *Der Tagesspiegel,* 2nd April, 1963 reprinted and translated in Zell, 'The Zero Traveling Circus Documentation of Exhibitions, Actions, Publications 1958-1966 ' in *ZERO, op.cit.* (note 32), p.99.

past from a contemporary perspective: an imaginative space in which to navigate a state of flux in the present tense of a live medium.

The germs of Zero's night work would later generate a number of nocturnal productions and situations in increasingly spectacular form. Following the group's official dissolution, in 1967 Mack, Piene, and Uecker began to find new spaces in which the early experiments of Zero's collaborative nocturnal work could develop, more permanent platforms in which its work could be staged. In contrast to the Zero demonstrations, these multimedia performances were less spontaneous, more carefully choreographed, and necessarily interwoven with the culture of spectacle, yet they maintained the core strategies central to Zero's night works: the principles of collaboration and mutiple agencies brought together to create events to be experienced live that were future orientated in their approach. In 1967 Uecker developed the principles of Zero party into an actual nightclub, a collaboration with the filmmaker Lutz Mommartz and media artist Ferdinand Kriwet, named *Creamcheese* which opened in downtown Düsseldorf in July 1967. Due in part to its limited documentation, the history of *Creamchees*e remains largely unexplored.[189] Named after Suzy Creamcheese, the stage name of a peripheral member of Frank Zappa's support band, The Mothers of Invention, the club hosted performances by artists including Joseph Beuys and Valie Export and played an important role in the beginnings of Düsseldorf Krautrock with early performances by Neu!, Can, Cluster, and Kraftwerk staged in the club. Unlike the Zero demonstrations, *Creamcheese* existed as a fixed site, a semi-permanent platform for

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[189] Two notable exceptions are Stephan von Wiese, 'Creamcheese. Eine Kneipe als Forum der Kunst', in *Brennpunkt Düsseldorf*, (Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, 1987), pp.120-121 and Tiziana Caianiella, *Der Lichtraum (Hommage à Fontana) und das Creamcheese im museum kunst palast* (Zur Musealisierung der Düsseldorfer Kunstszene der 1960er Jahre" (Bielefeld 2005). The club ran until 1976. A Creamcheese Manifesto was published in 1968.

an experimental synthesis of the arts that remained open until 1976. The space was at once a club, a bar, and a performance space. Mack designed a twenty-meter-long bar behind which young artists Blinky Palermo and Katharina Sieverding served drinks. A bank of twenty-four television monitors broadcast live images of what was taking place in the so-called 'action space' in the back of the club. In an interview Uecker explained, 'Anyone should be able to do whatever they want here […] Action space means they have the freedom to be themselves.' In terms reminiscent of Zero's night work, and Mack's theorisation in particular, he referred to the club as 'a dynamic sculpture' one composed of live performance, experimentation, sociability and personal interaction.[190]

Parallels have been drawn between Uecker's 'dynamic sculpture' and Andy Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, the peripatetic series of late night live performance experiments that debuted at The Open Stage on St Mark's Place in Manhattan's East Village in April 1966. A collaboration between Andy Warhol and The Velvet Underground and Nico; the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* toured across the United States between 1966 and 1967. The connection is a valid one given that Uecker had witnessed the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* when he travelled to New York in 1966; and yet it is important to note that the nightclub as a new medium, and a site of cross-media artistic experimentation had emerged simultaneously in Europe as well. One of the most notable experimental nightclubs to open in the 1960s was the Piper Pluri Club in Turin, a multi purpose site for cinema, theatre, art, and live music. As Teresa Kittler has shown, the Piper Pluri Club emerged as a response to widespread calls within architectural practice in Italy to transform

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[190] Uecker quoted in Marie Beckmann, 'Art is Entertainment is Pop is Creamcheese', *SchirnMagazin,* published online at: http://www.schirnmagazin.de/en/German_Pop_Art_Creamcheese_Club.html (accessed 11th August 2015).

social relations through the aesthetic development of social and interactive space. Designed by STRUM group architects Pietro Derossi, Riccardo Rosso and Giorgio Ceretti in 1966, the club was built on the utopian premise of an ideal community.[191] In a period when music and its associated dance forms had been responsible for creating new public spheres, the Piper Pluri Club presented a new and constantly shifting sense of space, mimicking the effects of synaesthetic experience through a series of changing installations and exhibitions. Uecker conceived of *Creamcheese* on similarly idealistic grounds, principles that echoed the formative thinking on which Zero's night work was based albeit on new explicitly commercial terms.

The correlation that has been drawn between the Düsseldorf nightclub and Warhol's live show is, I believe, symptomatic of the prevailing tendency to ground the history of performance and live art in specifically North American territory and to root the beginnings of the shift towards live making in the emergence of the New York Happenings in particular. The term 'happening' was first used by Allan Kaprow in 1958 to describe what he perceived to be a radical move from the making of abstract expressionist paintings to the orchestration of live events. In his influential essay, 'The Legacy of Jackson Pollock', Kaprow argued that Pollock's mural-scale paintings took on the aspects of environments, turning observers into participants and indicating a way of transcending or abandoning the pictorial plane. Kaprow's first Happening, titled *Eighteen Happenings in Six Parts* took place at the Reuben Gallery, New York in October 1959.[192] For this and subsequent Happenings organised in the early 1960s, Kaprow has been written into canonical narratives of the history of performance as the founding father of live exhibition

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[191] See Teresa Kittler, *Living Art and the Art of Living: Remaking Home in Italy in the 1960s* (unpublished PhD Thesis: University College London, 2014), pp.139 – 160.

[192] See Allan Kaprow and Jeff Kelly (eds.), *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003).

making. And yet simultaneously, and wholly independently of Kaprow's live experiments, Zero's night work took form.[193] The point I am trying to make here is that the impetus behind the methodological and ideological shift in artistic production towards performance and live making has a far broader, more complex, origin than the existing narratives of the history of live art and performance have tended to suggest. Moreover that ideological and methodological shift was catalyzed by the particular circumstances of the post-war period, by the drive to create critical distance from the recent past and to establish an alternative expressive idiom that was future orientated as opposed to directly representative of recent historical experience. In this respect, we might conceive of the Zero demonstrations as important historical precursors to the Happenings of the 1960s and understand its night work as a form of proto-pop. In contrast to the Happenings, importantly, the playfulness of Zero's celebratory and sociable demonstrations also operated as a model of subversion, a mode of social critique formed as a response to the particularity of a historically conflicted moment; as an aesthetic enactment of the temporal confusion of contemporary conditions articulated in the present tense of the live medium.

1967, the year Creamcheese opened, marked the inauguration of another live initiative, one that was similarly rooted in Zero's night work, a platform for inter-media performances named the Black Gate Theater established by Piene together with Aldo Tambellini in downtown New York. It was at the Black Gate Theater that Piene's archaic *Light Ballet* developed into a series of inter-media performances, experiments in multi-sensorial environments choreographed for a

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[193] Piene confirmed that Group Zero's night work developed without knowledge of Kaprow's work. 'I met him in the United States, we became friends. That was much later in 1975.' Otto Piene, interview with the author, 9th July 2012.

live audience. At the opening of the theater, Piene presented *The Proliferation of the Sun*; a performance of hand-painted 35mm slides rhythmically projected for an audience who experienced the work lying flat on cushions on the floor.[194] In 1969 Piene was commissioned to produce a work as part of an experimental television broadcast titled *The Medium is the Medium,* an early example of a collaboration between public television and emerging video art in the United States.[195] The programme was produced by WGBH-TV in Boston who commissioned Piene, alongside Tambellini, Kaprow, and Nam June Paik, to create an original work to be broadcast on television on 23rd March 1969. Titled *Electronic Light Ballet*, Piene's contribution to the programme was an experimental video work, a logical extension of the *Light Ballet* that incorporated the human body for the first time. The video features a single protagonist, the cellist and performance artist, Charlotte Moorman who appeared dressed like an astronaut in a white space suit, suspended from a large balloon in an image that evokes the first Zero demonstration at Galerie Schmela, in 1957, during which Uecker's homemade hot air balloon was launched into the night sky.[196] In this 4'38" video, the radiating stencil formations of Piene's *Rastebilde* appear as animation creating an eerily a-temporal cosmic space in which a single figure is pitched against an abstract animated backdrop that evokes the nocturnal sky. Suspended from a parachute, Moorman floats in and out of the

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[194] *The Proliferation of the Sun* was shown back to back with Tambelini's *Blackout* (1967).

[195] *The Medium is the Medium* was the first presentation of works by independent video artists aired on television. The programme was produced by Fred Barzyk, Anne Gresser and Pat Marx. The thirty-minute program included Aldo's "Black" along with works by Allan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, Otto Piene, James Seawright, Thomas Tadlock. The title is a play on the phrase 'the medium is the message' coined by Marshall McCluhan in his pioneering study of media theory. See Marshall McCluhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London and New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

[196] For a discussion of Moorman's life and work in performance see Joan Rothfus, *Topless Cellist: The Improbable Life of Charlotte Moorman*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014).

frame, merging and morphing with an animation that mimics the perforated form of the *Rasterbilde* from which the first *Light Ballet* originated. Beyond the sensorial appeal of these technicolour abstractions, what is most striking about Piene's *Electronic Light Ballet* is the negative image of Moorman descending through the frame. Whilst her performance is confined to the fixed frame of the videotape, the space evoked here, once again, is specifically that of the infinite expanse of the nocturnal sky. 'My greatest dream', wrote Piene, 'is the projection of light into the vast night sky, the probing of the universe as it meets the light, untouched, without obstacles – the world of space is the one to offer man practically unlimited freedom.'[197]

Although the work was produced after Group Zero's dissolution, I mention Piene's *Electronic Light Ballet* because it represents a significant move away from experimental live production, towards an engagement with a temporality of production and reception of a very different kind; that of the mediatised television broadcast. With this work the present tense of the live medium was superseded by the televisual imaginary. The nocturnal theatre of the night sky became mediatized; Moorman's singular presence, broadcast as live transmission, became virtual. That which was experienced 'live' by the viewer was merely a mediatized representation. On the cusp between the live and the mediatized, the *Electronic Light Ballet* prefigures the televisual as the foundational experiential vocabulary that would come to define subsequence performances of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rooted in the logic of the live, the defining principle of Zero's night work, this short video is emblematic of the transitional moment in the history of

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[197] Piene, 'Paths to Paradise', 1958 reprinted and trans. in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO, op.cit.* (note 33), p.232.

live art in which it was made; a moment that Zero's night work immediately prefigured.

Let us return now to Group Zero's collaborative production via a monographic work Uecker made in 1964. The film *Die Treppe* (The Stairs) (1964) records Uecker in the act of making a simple performance, one that echoes his first action as part of the inaugural Zero demonstration, ZERO: EDITION EXPOSITION DEMONSTRATION, outside Galerie Schmela three years earlier. Shot by Manfred Borchardt, the film documents Uecker as a solitary figure hammering his signature nails into a single line of white paint, one continuous, seemingly infinite mark, that, like that first Zero demonstration, begins outside on the cobbled street. Working rhythmically he follows the line, hammering nails one after another. The provisionality of the white line is pitched against the permanent fixity of the nail. 'Our projects of today are the realities of tomorrow,' wrote Uecker, 'To obtain widest participation, the production of art must cease to be limited to the individual, as it has been till now.'[198] Uecker conceived of his works as 'a spatial reality' and 'a zone of light', a means to overcome the personal gesture, to objectify, to create the conditions for freedom.'[199] The camera follows Uecker from an exterior location where he works nail against cobble in the rain to a wooden staircase to which the title of the film refers. In keeping with Zero's work, the materials are rudimentary and the action is simple; and yet something about this film speaks to the urgency of Zero's night work. The painterly white monochrome is transformed into a platform for live action. Uecker moves from outside, to inside, and from day to night; only the sound of a passing train hints at the film's location. A brief

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[198] Günther Uecker, 'Untitled' first published in *ZERO* vol.3 (July 1961), n.p. reprinted in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO op.cit.* (note 17), p.220.

[199] *Ibid.*

glimpse of the building's façade reveals it to be a railway station – the stage for the very last Zero demonstration that would be held two years later. In hindsight it is almost as though Uecker's performance is demarcating the territory of the group's final night work, the last 'zero zone.'

The final demonstration was staged in Bonn, at the Bahnhof Rolandseck Remagen, on the occasion of the opening of an official survey exhibition, *Zero in Bonn*, at the Städtische Kunstsammlung on 25th November, 1966.[200] The cover of the catalogue for that exhibition pictures Uecker, Mack and Piene at night encircled by Zero maidens theatrically spot-lit on a provisional stage created by Uecker's action *Zone of White*. This image chosen to mark Group Zero's final cohesive presentation returns us to the first collaborative night work EDITION DEMONSTRATION EXPOSITION, the first demonstration that would come to define Zero's night work, the work that established the temporality of the live as integral to Zero's actional agenda. Located fifteen kilometres outside Bonn, the Bahnhof Rolandseck Remagen was no longer in use as a working station. After the Second World War, the station was converted into a centre for the visual arts and music in 1965.[201] It was in this space that Zero's final demonstration was staged, an

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[200] One final demonstration was planned but never realized: an ambitious open-air exhibition conceived as an 'international manifestation of Zero artists' from some ten countries titled *ZERO op Zee (ZERO on the sea)* scheduled to open on a pier in the town of Seveningen, Netherlands in 1966 organized by Henk Peeters, co-founder of the Dutch NUL group. Stormy weather meant that the exhibition had to be abandoned. In a letter to Mack, Uecker referred to ZERO on Sea as a 'festival of life.' Günther Uecker, 'ZERO on Sea: Aus einem Breif an Heinz Mack,' in Stephan von Wiese (ed.), *Schriften: Gedichte, Projektbechreibungen, Reflexionen,* (Sankt Gallen, 1979), p.64. Quoted in Dirk Porschmann, 'Where no man had gone before: Utopia Zero' in Valerie Hillings (ed.) *ZERO Countdown to Tomorrow 1950s-60s* (New York, New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2014), p.65.

[201] Following World War II, the art collector and gallery owner Johannes Wasmuth who had been based in Bonn since the early 1960s set up an initiative to save the station building from demolition. His vision for the centre was a 'theater in which to unite all the arts, to create the miraculous.'

event described on the invitation card as '*Einen Zero Mitternachtsball'*: a Zero Midnight Ball. At a press conference Mack proclaimed the demonstration to be the last Zero exhibition conceived and realized jointly by Mack, Piene, and Uecker, who then went their separate ways. The event marked the end of the Zero zone, the ultimate expression of its supposedly 'limitless expectations'. Zero's collective idealism had proved ultimately impossible to sustain.[202] A specially customized Zero train ran from Düsseldorf to the West German capital, its journey forming an art pilgrimage to an event that marked Zero's last hurrah. On arrival a large black Zero serving as an entrance ticket was stamped on the traveler's hand. Zero signage flanked the station's façade (figure 2.7) and hundreds of white balloons decorated the interior where a midnight ball was staged for two thousand people. Humorously titled *Zero ist gut für dich* (Zero is good for you), Piene described the event as a practical application of the last sentence of *ZERO III*, which translates as 'for anything possible that can keep us from killing each other.' 'We were the last ones who were ever naïve,' he emphasized.[203]

In the final year of Zero's cohesive existence, Mack drew a small diagram, a personal memorandum which might be read as a master scheme of the group's work and central concerns. (figure 2.8)[204] This visual schema headed 'Zero possible

Uecker was one of a number of artists on the founding board. Since 2007 the station has been part of Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck.

[202] On the subject of the final demonstration, Mack claimed: 'It was my personal idea to cancel the existence of the Zero group in a very optimistic atmosphere. We had been very young and enjoyed wild dancing. It really was a phenomenon and almost not understandable that several hundred people came and joined the party. Zero was from the hour it began a dimension of infinite space in which one could float without a place, supported only by boundless ideas. A wonderful liberating experience, which remains in one's memory, as something unrepeatable.' Heinz Mack, email to the author, 6th November 2012.

[203] Otto Piene, interview with the author, 2nd July 2012.

[204] Heinz Mack, *untitled*, photographic document, 1966, ZERO Foundation archive, Düsseldorf.

concepts' plots the group's unifying formal concerns: light and shadow, movement and kinetics, and the achrome alongside the four natural elements to which corresponding artists' names are assigned according to the nature of their individual practice. Mack and Piene's use of light, for example, is linked to the element of fire, which then logically connects with the work of Klein, Aubertin, Arman, Tinguely, and then returns back to Mack and to Piene. Listed around the edges of the diagram are the main cities with which Zero was closely connected: Düsseldorf, London and New York on the left, Milan, Paris, Amsterdam and Eindhoven on the right. For Mack this diagram was a means of clarifying the confusion of styles and tendencies in modern art and their relationship with Zero, a means of visually mapping this complex moment out on paper, a way of condensing a vast web of intangible activity into a single manageable system. At the centre of this system are four words: 'Action, Demonstration, Manifestation, Collaboration' – the basic structural components of Zero's night work – the means through which the live event emerged as a new communicative medium. This visual mapping foregrounds something vital to Zero's night work: a network of interconnected human activity held by the 'inter-est' to which Arendt refers. This dialogically interwoven system echoes Zero's live agenda through which night-time became imaginatively habitable once more.

I have been suggesting that night-time was not just a practical space of necessity but rather systematically integral to the meaning of Zero's live work. The group's nocturnal exhibitions and demonstrations may be seen as transient arrangements of a shared sensibility that formed in response to the structure of feeling, to the specific experiential conditions of post-war Germany. Zero's nocturnal production may be read as an attempt to change the cartography of perception, to rephrase the night into a peaceful event. In its live constellations Zero rearticulated night-time as

an allegorical space of affirmation through a critical layering or stratification of time. A systematic operation, Zero's night work was a means of renegotiating the past through a medium of maximal contact with contemporary reality. A product of history, Zero's night work was future-orientated in intent. The collaboratively-produced live work deserves to be repositioned as an important instance of the imperative to live making that emerged amidst a constellation of international activity regenerating artistic production post-1945. Crafted not just in space, but importantly also in time, Zero's night work exemplified a methodological shift in art making towards simultaneous production and presentation, realization and reception, which forms part of a broader transnational impulse towards the crafting of experiential time as a new medium. In this respect Zero is one of multiple beginnings; 'an incommensurable zone in which the old state turned into the new.'[205]

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[205] Otto Piene, 'The Development of the Group "Zero", *Times Literary Supplement*, 3rd September 1964 reprinted in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, MIT Press, 1973), p.xx-xxii.

CHAPTER THREE: JIKKEN KBO'S THE JOY OF LIFE, 1951

On 16th November 1951, the Japanese collective Jikken Kōbō staged its first

collaborative work, a one-time-only experimental synthesis of dance, sculpture,

music, and poetry, performed at Tokyo's Hibiya Public Hall. Titled *The Joy of Life*

(or *ikiru yorokobi*), the performance was billed as a 'homage to Picasso' and

realized as part of a festival of events organized in conjunction with the first

retrospective of the artist's work in Japan. The performance was conceived as a live

interpretation of Picasso's painting of the same title, *Joie de Vivre* (1946) (figure

3.1). What happened on stage that afternoon was conceived as, 'a crystallization of

a totality' in which the dancers, set, costumes, lighting, and music were treated as

integral, component, parts.[206] Accompanied by a live orchestra, the dancers

performed amidst a phantasmagoric projection of coloured lights, their movements

intermittently disrupted by passages of poetry and pre-recorded musique concrète.

Though the performance featured leading contemporary dancers, little prominence

was given to the ballet itself; Jikken Kōbō's concern was not with dance *per se*, but

with the fusion of dramaturgical elements. This cross-disciplinary, inter-media

composition was without precedent in Japan in 1951. Yet today, *The Joy of Life*

exists on the brink of fable, barely present in living memory, in fragments of

photographic documentation and the physical traces of ephemera. 'The ballet,' the

accompanying programme explained, drew 'its inspiration from the picture

(Picasso's *La Joie de Vivre*, 1946), property of the Picasso Museum Antibes, not

included in the exhibition), at the heart of the work is the question: what is it that is

so complicated about a picture of a centaur and a faun frolicking around a beautiful

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[206] Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, 'Butai no Sozo' (Creative Staging), in *Bijutso Hikyo*, no.49, January 1956, p.100.

nymph?' 'The ballet is not an imitation of the painting,' the introductory text continues, 'if Picasso were to see this performance he might be bewildered.'[207]

This chapter is an attempt to answer Jikken Kōbō's ostensibly rhetorical question, and unravel just what is so complicated about this extraordinary translation from painting to performance. I will suggest that within this bewildering act of appropriation there lies a temporal paradox, one that underscores the critical urgency of the live exhibition as a structure of feeling that emerged in the immediate post-war period. I will present *The Joy of Life* as an act of synchronicity that reflected the contemporary condition, both psychic and social. I will situate this inaugural performance within Jikken Kōbō's broader collective output – a body of collaboratively produced forms of spatio-temporal image-making – that I will argue provide further evidence of the beginnings of the shift towards live production that reverberates strongly in contemporary artistic practice today. My contention is that *The Joy of Life* existed as a play of transpositions, historic, geographic, and aesthetic; as an act of temporal cross-contamination and remediation that called the condition of *liveness* itself into question.

The first institutional retrospective of Jikken Kōbō's work in Japan was held in 2012, fifty-five years after the group ceased to exist as a collective entity.[208] Just two small survey exhibitions have since been organized in Europe.[209] The existing

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[207] Shūzō Takiguchi, *Joie de Vivre* programme, 1951, Keio University Archives, Tokyo, n.p.

[208] On the eve of the first Jikken Kōbō retrospective, at Satani Gallery, Tokyo in 1991, Katsuhiro Yamaguchi bemoaned, 'few people know anything of the group except its name, forty years have passed with its real nature remaining unclear.' Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, 'Experimental Workshop & the Deterritorialization of Art', in *Experimental Workshop: The 11th Exhibition Hommage to Shuzo Takiguhi*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Satani Gallery,1991), p.27.

[209] Notably *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958* at Annely Juda Fine Art, London in 2009 which was the first exhibition to introduce Jikken Kōbō's work to an international audience; and *Jikken Kōbō: Atelier experimental* at Bétasalon, the non-profit centre for art and research, Paris in 2011. Curated by Mélanie Mermod, that exhibition was the first outside Japan to present a full range

literature on Jikken Kōbō is similarly sparse, particularly in the English-speaking world. This is largely due to the transient nature of the Kōbō's practice and the fact that very little documentation exists of its predominately live work.[210] Out-performed by the conscious internationalism of the Osaka-based *Gutai Bijtustsu Kyokai* (the Gutai Art Association), Jikken Kōbō currently sits on the sidelines of the history of the Japanese post-war avant-garde, as an occasional footnote to its existing histories.[211] Widespread international interest in post-war Japanese art was catalyzed by a number of museum survey exhibitions in the mid-1980s, and, subsequently, reignited by the exhibition *Japanest Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky* at the Yokohama Museum of Art and the Guggenheim Museum SoHo, New York in 1994.[212] That exhibition, and its later iteration at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art the following year, proved instrumental in establishing the Gutai Art Association as the most influential Japanese avant-garde collective of the

of the Kōbō's activity with archival documentation and ephemera, alongside works by individual artists. For a review of the exhibition, see Sam Thorne, 'Jikken Kobo', *Frieze* Issue 114 (January-February 2012); p.143. A subsequent solo exhibition of Katsuhiro Yamaguchi's work was held at Annely Juda Fine Art in 2013.

[210] The most extensive survey of Jikken Kobo's production to date (published in both English and Japanese) is, *Jikken Kobo: Experimental Workshop,* exh. cat. (Kamakura: The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, 2012). See also *Experimental Workshop: The 11th Exhibition Hommage to Shuzo Takiguhi*, exh. cat., Tokyo, 1991; and *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958*, exh.cat. (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 2009).

[211] One of the few to have acknowledged the significance of Jikken Kobo's work is Jasia Reichardt, who cites the group alongside Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and the Independent Group as highly influential. See Jasia Reichardt, 'Experimental Workshop and the Fifities', in *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958*, *op. cit*. (note 5), np.

[212] Notably *Japan des Avant-Gardes 1910 – 1970* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris in 1989, and Gutai*: Action in Painting*, Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid; Muzej savreneene umetnasti, Belgrade; and Hygoyo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Kobe, 1985-86. The publication that accompanied the 1994–95 touring exhibition at Yokohama Museum of Art; Guggenheim Museum SoHo, New York; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art remains one of the most comprehensive publications surveying Gutai. See Alexandra Munroe (ed.), *Japanese Art after 1945: Scream against the Sky*, (New York, New York: H. N. Abrams, 1994).

post-war era.[213] Early international interest in Gutai developed as a result of the publication of Michel Tapié's text *Continuité et Avant-Garde au Japon* in 1961, followed by its English translation *Avant-Garde in Japan,* in 1962, which included images documenting Gutai's fabled live events and presented the group's work as further evidence of the breadth and international reach of Art Informel.[214] Gutai swiftly entered the lexicon of performance and live art following its inclusion in Allan Kaprow's influential essay *Assemblage, Environment & Happenings* (1966) in which he situated Gutai's performances within his genealogy of the Happening and acknowledged, with some anxiety, the group's chronological priority over his own live work.[215] Since the turn of the millennium, Gutai's legacy has been strengthened by a wave of curatorial investment that has resulted in substantial inclusions of the group's work in a number of museum exhibitions surveying the relationship between painting and performance, and the first retrospective of Gutai in the United States at the Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York in 2013.[216] Gutai

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[213] Established by Jirō Yoshihara in the suburban town of Ashiya, Japan in 1954, the Gutai Art Association was active until 1972 spanning two generations and the work of some fifty-nine artists. See Ming Tiampo's pioneering study of the group: Ming Tiampo, *Gutai: Decentering Modernism*, (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago, Press, 2010).

[214] See Michel Tapié, *Avant-garde in Japan,* (Turin: Edizioni D'Arte Fratelli Pozzo, 1961). The opening of the self-founded Gutai Pinacotheca in Osaka, in 1962, further enhanced the group's international profile when the space became a destination on the itinerary of every prominent artist, critic, curator, and collector touring Japan in the 1960s. For a comprehensive account of Gutai Pinacoctheca, and Gutai's internationalism more broadly, see Ming Tiampo, *Gutai: Decentering Modernism*, (Ibid.)

[215] On the subject of Gutai's early experiments from the 1960s, Kaprow writes: 'the dates accompanying these photographs seem to indicate the priority of the Japanese in the making of a Happening type performance. This is a rare case of modern communications malfunctioning.' See Allan Kaprow, *Assemblages, Environments and Happenings* (New York, NY, 1966), p.

[216] Notably *Explosion! Painting as Action*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2012, *A Bigger Splash: Painting After Performance*, Tate Modern, London, 2012-2013, and *Gutai: Splendid Playground*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2013.

has entered the canonical narrative of the history of performance and live art; and yet Jikken Kōbō's presence remains, for the most part, non-existent.[217] While Jikken Kōbō remains largely unknown beyond its homeland, *The Joy of Life* exists in a state of historical invisibility. Whilst an attempt to remedy this canonical omission is beyond the scope of this thesis; my aim is to position the Kōbō's first collaborative work as an important instance in the history of live art. This chapter, then, is by no means a comprehensive study of Jikken Kōbō's multi-faceted collaborative output; but rather a focused examination of the collective's contribution to the history of live art and performance that has yet to be fully considered. In an effort to decenter existing European and North American focused narratives, I present Jikken Kōbō's work as a significant contribution to the history of performance and live art that underscores the post-war development towards an art of simultaneous production, presentation, and reception as a distinctly transnational phenomenon.

1951, the year Jikken Kōbō first formed, was a significant year in Japanese history marking the final year of the US occupation, the intensive, seven year, period of military subservience that lasted until sovereignty was officially restored on 28th April 1952.[218] During the course of the occupation, US policy objectives shifted dramatically from reform to reconstruction as the initial democratization

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[217] A notable exception was Jikken Kōbō's inclusion in the survey exhibition *Tokyo 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde*, at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012-2013). See Doryun Chung (ed.), *Tokyo 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde*. exh. cat. (New York, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012).

[218] Following its defeat during the Second World War, Japan was left in ruins with close to three million nationals dead. The structural legacies of wartime proved enormous. Japan was fraught with urban devastation, severe unemployment, dire food shortages, and dizzying rates of inflation. See John Dower's history of the post-surrender period: John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War Two, (*London: Allen Lane, 1999).

agenda was abandoned in favour of rehabilitating Japan as a Cold War partner. Jikken Kōbō came into being at this critical moment of socio-political upheaval, against a backdrop of increasing industrialization and modernization and, following the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the latent threat of further atomic warfare.

Jikken Kōbō, or Experimental Workshop, consisted of fourteen core members: painters Shōzō Kitadai, Hideko Fukushima, and Katsuhiro Yamaguchi; printmaker Tetsurō Komai; composers Kazuo Fukushima, Keijirō Satō, Hiroyoshi Suzuki, Tōru Takemitsu, and Jōji Yuasa; poet and critic Kuniharu Akiyama; the photographer Kiyoji Ōtsuji; lighting designer Naoji Imai; pianist Takahiro Sonoda, and engineer Hideo Yamazaki (figure 3.1). The 'virtual workshop' developed from a culture of informal study groups that emerged in Japan at the end of the Second World War. The three founding members Kitadai, Katsuhiro, and Hideko Fukushima first met at a meeting of the *Madan Ato Kaki Koshukai* (Summer Modern Art Seminar), an event sponsored by the Avant-garde Artists' Club, held at Bunka Gakuin in Ochanomizu in the summer of 1948. After this first encounter the trio continued to hold study groups of their own. It was from these initial provisional dialogues that Jikken Kōbō first took form.

The Kōbō described its collaborative productions not as exhibitions but as *happyokai,* meaning presentations or announcements, a term that connotes a collective enunciation articulated in a finite, time-based frame. Between 1951 and 1957 the Kōbō's core members produced some eighteen live works together with dancers, directors, dramatists, and musicians with whom they collaborated in a semi-permeable network. Jikken Kōbō was neither a fixed entity, nor an official group, rather its structure closely resembled that of Group Zero, albeit with a more interdisciplinary makeup. 'There was a core membership of the group, but what

was realized in its name was not necessarily produced by its members alone,' Yamaguchi recalled.[219] From the outset Jikken Kōbō was unique among artists' groups in that its work was realized by project teams of various compositions. Yamaguchi explained that the concept of the 'intermedia' crucial to the Kōbō's methodology essentially referred to its ethos of inter-artistic collaboration, a method of making that involved a project team made up of artists from a variety of different fields and disciplines.[220] Unlike Group Zero, the Kōbō shared no particular common background. Yamaguchi had initially trained as a lawyer, the five composers were self-taught, and none of the artists had a formal art education. In numerous constellations of cross-disciplinary activity executed in an intense period of collaborative production the virtual workshop created works that were unified in their experimental and interdisciplinary approach to live production and inter-play of visual art, music, literature, and dance. 'In the confusion immediately after the war, it was a crucible, a magnetic field of youthful, fresh spirit and individuality,' the Kōbō composer Yuasa recalled, 'a valuable source of encouragement and stimulating interaction.' [221]

The Kōbō's first collaborative work, *The Joy of Life*, developed as a response to a commission by *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, the national newspaper chosen to sponsor the first mid-career retrospective of the work of Picasso in Japan. Newspapers played a significant role in the country's rehabilitation by actively contributing to the effort to assert an image of Japan as a peaceful and cultured nation. The exhibition was held in the Takashimaya department store in Nihonbashi, the

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[219] Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, 'The Experimental Workshop (Jikken Kōbō)' in Jasia Reichardt ed. *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958*, exh. cat, (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 2009), np.
[220] *Ibid.*

[221] Jōji Yuasa, untitled, in *Experimental Workshop: the 11th exhibition homage to Shuzo Takiguchi*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Satani Gallery, 1991). p.93.

commercial heart of Tokyo, and featured Picasso's paintings, drawings, illustrations, lithographs, and ceramics from the period 1937 to 1950. Western art was strategically embraced in Japan as a means of beginning to rebuild international relations.[222] The *Yomiuri Shimbun*'s 'homage to Picasso' was no exception. Brand 'Picasso' was chosen as an international export with excellent democratic credentials. In an indication of the drive to reframe Japan as a liberal 'nation of culture' the exhibition evoked the European artist in the twin role of master of modern Western art and emblematic figure of resistance against war.[223] The exhibition was accompanied by a festival, a spectacular 'homage à Picasso', in which the group that would come to be known as Jikken Kōbō was commissioned to present its first collaborative, live work. In the months leading up to its inaugural presentation, Kitadai put together a statement that summarised the group's future plans, a proposal for an 'exhibition' in the broadest sense of the term, provisionally named 'ATOM', its title a conscious nod to the continuing threat of the atomic age. The statement reads:

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222 Japan's first modern art museum, the Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Modern Art in Kamakura, south of Tokyo, was inaugurated in November 1951, with an exhibition that included works by Paul Cézanne and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. A nationwide initiative was launched to build museums with the understanding that 'providing public spaces for various kinds of modern art offered symbolic value as a peaceful, forward-looking activity that could reconnect Japan to the international community of nations and redeem Japan's international image'. See Laura Hein, 'Modern Art Patronage and Democratic Citizenship in Japan', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 3 (August 2010), p.831.

223 'Nation of culture' was a fashionable slogan in Japan in the early post-surrender period. See Dower, *Embracing Defeat, op. cit.* (note 3), p.63.

> 'The purpose of having this exhibition is to combine the various art forms, reaching an organic combination that could not be realized within the combinations of a gallery exhibition, and to create a new style of art with social relevance closely related to everyday life.'[224]

This statement of intent is crucial, I believe, because it indicates that from the outset Jikken Kōbō's aim was to produce work that was conceived as a direct response to the contemporary condition. *The Joy of Life* can therefore be understood within the context of post-war reconstruction culture, as a means of grappling with both the repression of Japan's political history and the formation of a new, increasingly spectacular, modern culture.

Shortly after Kitadai's statement was drafted in the summer of 1951, the name Group Atom was dropped in favour of Jikken Kōbō, a name that emphazised the experimental and collaborative nature of the group. The name was chosen by the Surrealist poet and art critic, Shuzo Takiguchi to describe a 'virtual workshop', a fluid collaboration of interdisciplinary agencies without a fixed site or a predetermined agenda. Takiguchi played an important role as the group's 'founding father'. Although he did not contribute to the Kōbō's work directly, Takiguchi provided the theoretical foundations on which the group's core methodology was based. On the subject of the 'spirit of experimentation', Takiguchi wrote:

> 'The arts in modern Japan have evolved in a very peculiar way. In order to resonate with contemporary developments in other parts of the world, they need to embrace a much more forceful set of ideas than they have to date. The most important thing in my view is the need to cultivate a spirit of experimentation. Artists must strive constantly to innovate, and society has to be sufficiently tolerant and understanding to nurture their efforts. The arts in Japan have become a muddle of compromise and feeble adaptation […] It has to be in touch with society and the realities of the day. In this post-war era, we need innovation and experimentation in

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[224] Shōzō Kitadai, provisional agreement for Group Atom's first exhibition, reprinted in Jasia Reichardt ed. *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958* (exh. cat, Annely Juda Fine Art, London, 2009), np.

every field of the arts. Jikken Kōbō is a group of young artists in their 20s who have quietly come together to pursue a shared vision of the arts. The way in which they spontaneously embrace and conjoin music, art and poetry presages, I believe, a major new dawn.'[225]

The first opportunity to put Takiguchi's theory into action live on stage arrived when he was approached by Hideo Kaido, the vice director of the *Yomiuri Shimbun* department of culture and asked to organize a ballet to be performed on the eve of this important, and highly symbolically loaded, Picasso retrospective in Tokyo. The resulting performance combined ballet, art, music, and poetry into a single cohesive whole. 'It is time to rethink the stage as an integral spatial and temporal entity' Yamaguchi asserted.[226] As Kitadai had stated, 'the entire exhibition space forms a constitution in which the works are organically interrelated. They are not presented as single entities.'[227] The Kōbō's aim was for the performance space to function as a holistic environment in which the members of the audience could allow their imagination to play freely, an aesthetic approach no doubt consciously conceived as a deliberate contrast to the political ideology imposed on Japanese citizens in the recent past.

The cast of Jikken Kōbō's first presentation consisted of a centaur, played by acclaimed dancer and choreographer Masuda Takashi, a nymph, played by dancer Tani Monoko, a faun, and two children – five embodiments of the figures depicted in Picasso's painting, *Joie de Vivre* from Momoko Tani's ballet company. The

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[225] Shuzo Takiguchi, 'On the Spirit of Experimentation' in *Contemporary Music Concert,* second programme of Jikken Kobo, 20th January 1952, np.

[226] Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, 'The Experimental Workshop (Jikken Kōbō)', *op. cit.* (note 14).

[227] Kitadai Shōzō, untitled, in *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958*, exh. cat. (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 2009), np.

entire production was organized at a month's notice.[228] No documentary footage exists of *The Joy of Life*, the work existed as a single representation. From piecing together what little documentary evidence remains – a maquette of the set designed by Kitadai Shōzō (figure 3.2), costume sketches by Hideko Fukushima (figure.3.3), and conductor Toru Takemitsu's hand-written score – we know that the stage set, designed by Shōzō Kitadai, was minimal and dominated by an enormous static centaur stabile (figure 3.4), constructed from flat sheets of aluminium that was positioned alongside mobiles in the abstract form of reeds (figure 3.5). The dancers wore asymmetric-striped costumes designed by Hideko Fukushima. Music was provided by Aeolian Club conducted by Takemitsu Toru, arguably the most celebrated composer to emerge in post-war Japan. The lighting was designed and realized by Imaji Naoji. Yamaguchi described the group as 'a multi-dimensional team.'[229]

In the existing literature on Jikken Kōbō, the virtual workshop is frequently compared to an earlier predecessor, conceived as 'a Bauhaus without a building' to borrow Yamaguchi's often quoted phrase. In its methodology the Kōbō certainly shares the interdisciplinary approach of the Bauhaus, in its first phase, but it is specifically the writing of László Moholy-Nagy, and his understanding of the notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in particular, that may be seen as an important

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[228] Kuniharu Akiyama later recalled the process behind the making of the musical score: 'First a piano piece was composed in one all-night session. The next morning it was taken to Shirobotan, a recording studio in Ginza, and recorded on the piano for use in choreography […] We came home, slept a little and composed all night. This was repeated over and over. In the end, since the composition was going too slowly. Suzuki took the music that was finished to the Masuda dance company's studio and played it on the piano while the choreography was done. It was like a forced march in the army.' Kuniharu Akiyama quoted in *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958*, exh. cat. (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 2009), np.

[229] Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, 'The Experimental Workshop (Jikken Kobo)', in *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958*, exh. cat. (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 2009), np.

reference point.[230] In the text *Painting, Photography, Film* first published in 1925, Moholy-Nagy defines the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as literally 'an entire work', an all-encompassing life-work compound. In this essay, Moholy-Nagy criticizes the cubist and constructivist projects for being trivial and derivative, severed from their roots in social collectivity. 'What we need,' he writes, 'is not the *Gesamtkunstwerk* alongside and separate from which life flows by, but a synthesis of all the vital impulses spontaneously forming itself into an all-encompassing *Gesamtwerk* (life) which abolishes all isolation, in which all individual accomplishments proceed from a biological necessity and culminate in universal necessity.'[231] What Moholy-Nagy sought was not merely a compensatory reaction to the fragmentation of existence under modernity, but an art of social collectivity and necessity. This notion may be seen to resonate in the transdisciplinary nature of the first work that the Kōbō presented live on stage, and yet to read its work as merely derivative of the Moholy-Nagy's thinking is, I believe, too simplistic. It is my contention that the critical significance of *The Joy of Life*, and indeed the Kōbō's output more broadly, lies in its live negotiation between aesthetic forms past and future. What I am suggesting is that the work may be understood as an act of polychronicity that played out in the present tense of the live medium.

In a summary of the Picasso festival, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper reported:

'over two thousand art enthusiasts assembled on 16th November at 13.30 at the Hibiya Hall' The event opened with the recital of a poem by Jacques Prevert entitled "Promenade de Picasso",

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[230] In an interview with Iguchi Toshio and Sumitomo Fukikiko in 2010, Yamaguchi acknowledged the influence of Moholy-Nagy and that Yamaguchi had been invited to teach at his Institute of Design in Chicago. See 'Interview with Yamaguchi Katsuhiro', Oral History Archives of Japanese Art, 7th March 2010; 7th April 2010; published online at: http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/83-interview-with-yamaguchi-katsuhiro (last accessed 14th July 2015).

[231] Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film* trans. Janet Seligram (Cambridge, MA, 1969), p.17.

followed by a speech by Inosuke Hazama, who talked about his meeting with Picasso. The afternoon continued with the ballet *Joy of Life* where, as if they had stepped out of Picasso's painting, the faun […] and the fairy astutely expressed the passion of Picasso through the medium of dance, accompanied by a round of applause from the audience […] The festival was a great success and came to a close after 16.00.'[232]

According to the festival programme *The Joy of Life* took place after an opening speech by Hazama Insouke titled 'Meeting Picasso' and a reading of Jacques Prévert's poem, *Promenade de Picasso*.[233] The Kōbō's performance was followed by a screening of two documentary films by the Belgian filmmaker Paul Haesaerts: *Visite à Picasso* (1949), and *De Renoir à Picasso* (1950). Whilst the Kōbō's performance was remarkably modern and progressive in its focus on experimental music, lighting, avant-garde poetry, and contemporary dance, the work the performance evoked, Picasso's painting of 1946, was completely out of time – the narrative it referenced as far from 1950s Tokyo as one could conceivably imagine. The subject of a nymph dancing on beach accompanied by a centaur and fauns seems an absurd choice for a Tokyo-based collective intent on progressive experimentation in 1951. Yet it is my contention that this extraordinary formal, geographical, and historical transposition operated through a deliberate temporal instability that underscores the entirely contemporary nature of the Kōbō's first collaborative production. From the Latin *transponere*, to transpose is to change the position or order, to render in another manner of expression, place or situation. What I mean to suggest here is that we might read this play of transpositions as indicative of a post-war consciousness articulated in a new aesthetic register: the

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[232] 'A Painting Celebrating Dance' in *Yomiuri Shimbun,* 17th November, 1951. Reprinted and trans. in Mélanie Mermod (ed.), Jikken Kobo, exhibition guide, (Paris: Bétasalon Centre d'art et de recherche, Paris, 2011), p.5.

[233] *The Joy of Life* programme, 1951. Keio University Archives, Tokyo, n.p.

present tense of the live medium. Jikken Kōbō conceived of *The Joy of Life* as a synchronization of the aural and the visual, with the two being used and treated as equals, and yet this formal synchronicity operated in tandem with a fundamental temporal disjuncture. It is through this temporal dislocation that the Kōbō's first collaborative work might be understood as a chronometer of the very circumstances in which it was made.[234] We might perhaps understand Jikken Kōbō's first live production as an act of historical transposition, as a reimagining or plotting of points of time into transient points of space.

The painting the Kōbō chose as the basis for its live debut belongs to the so-called 'Antipolis' series, a body of work Picasso produced in Antibes in the autumn of 1946 (figure.3.6). Characterized by pastoral scenes executed in a classical vocabulary, the series is dominated by lyrical references to Ancient Greek mythology. *La Joie de Vivre* depicts a single nymph dancing on a sandy beach accompanied by a smiling centaur and dancing fauns, whilst a sailing boat floats on the horizon. The iconography is specifically that of classical antiquity, a deliberate reference to an archaic, Cycladic past. The painting is emblematic of Picasso's return to classicism, a formal and conceptual shift that was highly contested as distinctly reactionary at the time given Picasso's fiercely left-wing political leanings.[235] In fact the Golden Age iconography of *La Joie Vivre,* was less an indication of a utopian escapist fantasy, as the title of the work might suggest, than a form of resistance to nationalist sentiment. As T.J. Clark has shown, Picasso's

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[234] Otami Shogu, 'The Experimental Workshop – The Meeting of Media', *Experimental Workshop: Japan 1951-1958*, exh. cat. (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 2009) np.

[235] Picasso was such a divisive figure in the early 1950s, that plans for a major exhibition of his work in London in 1952 were abandoned entirely. In a letter to the American ambassador in London, John Rothenstein, then director of Tate Gallery, wrote that the gallery's board of trustees decided that the exhibition could not go ahead because the Communist party was active in the area and it was possible that they might try to make 'capital' out of the exhibition.

pictorial thought was indicative of an age, of the particular historic conditions he was living in, of his absolute lucidity about the circumstances in which he was painting. Beyond pictorial syntax, what is at stake in Picasso's painting is a worldview.[236] For Jikken Kōbō, then, *La Joie de Vivre* was a specifically nuanced painting to re-imagine, a work with a distinct critical resonance to transpose. In this seemingly idyllic scene of classical harmony, the Kōbō found a symbolic language of historical transition that it could appropriate on its own aesthetic terms.

What I mean to suggest is that it was precisely the problem Picasso was grappling with, a way of being in history at a moment of socio-political and psychic transition and disjuncture, that played out on stage in Jikken Kōbō's performance in spatio-temporal form. My contention is that this act of (re)presentation shares the structural logic of Zero's night work; and indeed that of the pictorial climate of Pinot-Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter*, a temporal layering and stratification of time that I am arguing defined the work made in the present tense of the live medium in the immediate post-war years.

Picasso's *La Joie de Vivre* was itself a tribute, its title a reference to Matisse's *Le Bonheur de Vivre* (1905-06) (figure 3.7). The allusion to this earlier bucolic scene is significant, revealing a logic that resonates in both Picasso's and Jikken Kōbō's appropriations, I believe, for within Matisse's painting there is a complicated relation with history formally inbuilt. As Alastair Wright has argued, in Matisse's canvas the very notion of a coherent subjectivity is radically brought into doubt. In its spatial and stylistic dislocation, the earlier painting 'refuses all

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[236] See T. J Clark, *Picasso and Truth: From Cubism to Guernica*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

subject formation, or, at least, allows that process to function only fitfully.'[237] Dislocated both spatially, as classical depth and ordered regression collapse into incoherent flux, and stylistically, as classical theme and motif collide with non-classical elements, the contemporary viewer would have been unable to find confirmation of his or her cultural identity as a Frenchman/woman in *Le Bonheur de Vivre*.[238] Wright suggests that the painting may therefore by read as a statement that any attempt to visualize the mythic continuity of national identity at this juncture, was, and continues to be, doomed to fail. *Le Bonheur de Vivre* summons forth the classical tradition while simultaneously calling attention to the impossibility of continuing to practice that tradition under the new terms of modernity. The Kōbō's *The Joy of Life* operated on very similar terms. In its translation from the pictorial register of painting to the spatio-temporal conditions of the stage, *The Joy of Life* galvanized the critical potential of transposition as an aesthetic stratagem, as a means to address the contemporary Japanese condition live on stage.

To return to the Kōbō's original question, then, just what is it that is so complicated about a picture of a centaur frolicking around a beautiful nymph? My answer lies in the act of transposition itself, understood as a *mediation* of previous aesthetic forms. Frederic Jameson defined mediation as the process whereby 'the traditional fine arts are *mediatized*: that is, they now come to consciousness of themselves as various media within a mediated system in which their own internal production also constitutes a symbolic message and the taking of a position on the

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[237] Alastair Wright, 'Arche-tectures: Matisse and the End of (Art) History', *October*, vol. 84, Spring, 1998, pp.44-63; p.57. See also Wright's important study, *Matisse and the Subject of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[238] Alastair Wright, 'Arche-tectures: Matisse and the End of (Art) History', *October*, vol. 84, Spring, 1998, p.57.

media in question.'[239] The Kōbō's performance may be read as one such act of mediation. On stage at Hibiya Public Hall, a cross-contamination of historic, cultural, geographic and aesthetic forms combined in a live work that was mediatised by the very newspaper by whom the performance was sponsored. What was at stake in this one-night-only interdisciplinary performance an act of temporal transposition, a remediation of painting in live form. As the accompanying programme emphasised, the performance was 'not an imitation of the painting', rather it was an act of remediation, a work that existed as the (re)presentation of one medium in another.[240] Picasso's painting was transposed to the provisional reality of the stage.

An interesting counter-point to the Kōbō's *Joy of Life* is posed by the Gutai Art Association's subsequent collaborative stage experiments, in particular the two live exhibitions titled *Gutai Art on Stage*, a series of performances realized after the Kōbō had officially disbanded in 1957 and 1958.[241] Following theatrical convention, *Gutai Art on Stage* was structured as a production in two acts and featured works by individual artists realized in separate scenes. Each performance shared what Yoshihara described as 'the basic idea of a straight, free fight with the stage'.[242] In a review published in *Arts & Architecture* in 1958, critic Dore Ashton described the event as a series of 'uproarious public performances in which theatre

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[239] Emphasis in the original. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

[240] See Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000) in which remediation is presented as the defining characteristic of digital media.

[241] Gutai presented its first staged production at Sankei Kaikan in Osaka on 29th May 1957 followed by a repeat presentation at Sankei Hall, Tokyo on 17th July later that year. A subsequent 2nd Gutai Art on Stage exhibition was held at Asahi Kaikan in Osaka on 4th April 1958.

[242] Jiro Yoshihara, 'Gutai Art on the Stage', *Gutai* no. 7 (Osaka, 1957), n.p.

and "painting" were provocatively combined. Artists doubled as actors, calling on their senses to inspire three-dimensional settings for the performances. In these sketches, the concentration is on the image at work in a spatial environment, that is, the works were fundamentally conceived imagistically.'[243] This comment, I believe, points to a fundamental difference between Gutai's approach to live production and that of its predecessor, Jikken Kōbō. Whilst the Kōbō embraced the potentiality of the live medium as a site of experimentation, as a temporal space to inhabit multi-dimensionally and multi-temporally as a means of critiquing the contemporary condition, Gutai's *Art on Stage* productions were inextricably rooted to the logic of the pictorial plane and to the painterly tradition in which its members were trained.

The Gutai Art Association coined a new term to denote its experimental output, the single word *e*. Translated as 'picture' or 'picturing', 'e' served as a shorthand description for a practice that was not limited to painting, but instead was concerned with its expanded frame. Herein lies the first of two major differences between the two group's approaches. The second concerns the work's method of production and authorship. In contrast to Gutai's work on stage, which existed primarily as a spectacular staging of individual works of monologic authorship, Jikken Kōbō's *Joy of Life* may be read as an act of collective enunciation, a form to which Bahktin's multi-voiced notion of polyphony might usefully be applied. Pitted against classical and romantic theories of creation, the polyphonic form is an open process, a living, active event. The polyphonic form is an inherently democratic structure, a co-presence of independent constituent voices, independent yet dialogically interconnected through the making of the single work on stage. The artistic will to polyphony is a will to combine many wills in a structure in which

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[243] Dore Ashton, 'Japanese Avantgardism,' *Arts & Architecture* 75, no.8 (August 1958), p.11.

every thought is represented as the position of a personality – as a subject with equal rights, not an object or a slave. Importantly, in the polyphonic work the idea is depicted at the level of the human event. In contrast to Gutai's live production which was still heavily rooted in the practice of painting and its expansion into a new temporal frame, Jikken Kōbō's stage production galvanized the live medium itself as a space of potential achronicity and means of articulating an essential quality of the contemporary condition.

The original scale-model of the stage set for *The Joy of Life* designed by Kitadai still survives revealing a single dancer in an asymmetric striped costume standing beside an abstract, centaur-like creature with a mobile suspended overhead (figure 3.3). Kitadai made a series of highly-staged, theatrically lit photographs of the set perhaps as a means of testing how plays of light and shadow might operate on stage. A number of photographs show Kitadai in the process of testing the possible stage set for the Kōbō's first performance, experimenting with variations of composition and chiaroscuro. This process of playful staging or three-dimensional picture making reoccurs again in a series of works Jikken Kōbō made for the *Asahi Picture News* (APN) page of the *Asahi Graph* magazine (figure.3.8).[244] Photo-archivist Kin'ichi Obinata notes that the *Asahi Graph* had the largest circulation of any illustrated magazine in Japan in the 1950s, 'It was a powerful mass medium that kaleidoscopically revealed the social conditions of post-war Japan,' she writes.[245]

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[244] For a detailed discussion of the APN series see Kin'ichi Obinata, 'From Images/To Images: Exploring the Early Achievements of the Experimental Workshop' trans. Stand Anderson in Mizusawa, Tusotomu (ed.). *Jikken Kobo: Experimental Workshop,* (Kamakura: The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, 2012), pp.324-327.

[245] *Ibid.,* p.324.

The APN project began in January 1953 and continued until February the following year encompassing a total of fifty-five issues of the magazine. This body of work sheds further light on the specificity of the Kōbō's work on stage, we might perhaps read these images as pictorial prototypes or test pieces for the workshop's performative motion picture it realized live on stage. The series of mixed media photographic compositions ran as a regular column in the *Asahi Graph* as a form of episodic picture news piece. The APN series offers important evidence of the Kōbō's progressive approach to the exhibition of its work and ideas, moreover it is indicative of its desire to expand its expositional reach beyond the traditional boundaries of the static exhibition and conventional modes of art's publication. Each work in the APN series featured the letters 'APN' in a variety of staged compositions pictured alongside miniature installations of everyday elements. The first in the series, for instance, was constructed from millet husks, soy beans, piano wire, Kent paper, and sawdust. 'Looking at all of the 55 objects made for the APN series, one sees how much it was a relay activity, characterized by resonances, back-and-forth shifts, and interactions between the images, reminiscent of *tsukeai* (linking) in the composition of *renku* linked verse by a group of poets.'[246]

These photographic experiments may be seen as models for future productions, as evidence of the Kōbō's move into the spatio-temporal register within the confines of the pictorial plane. Elements in the APN works – in particular Kitadai's space modulators and stabiles - reappeared on a magnified scale as props or active elements in the Kōbō's live productions operating as static counterpoints to the dance performed on stage. We might perhaps read these compositions as

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[246] Obinata, *op. cit.* (note 26), p.324.

experiments in *mise en scène*, as storyboards for the Kōbō's subsequent collaborations realized live on stage, in particular the futuristic production *Future Eve* (1955).

The Kōbō's maverick approach to live production is evidenced by the cacophony of references that *The Joy of Life* imaginatively combined and reconfigured. The work's relationship to the work of the historical avant-garde offers a case in point. The existing literature on Jikken Kōbō has tended to position its work in dialogue with a specifically western lineage of performance and live art. Due in part to Yamaguhi's own often quoted description of the Kōbō as a 'Bauhaus without a building', *The Joy of Life* has frequently been linked to the German school's teaching in creative theatre, to the performances developed with students in the Bauhaus studios that formed the first ever course on performance to be included in an art school's curriculum. The Bauhaus founding principle of a unification of the arts in a 'cathedral of socialism' might seem an obvious model for the Kōbō's subsequent approach, and yet the Bauhaus stage workshop under Oskar Schlemmer's directorship was markedly different from the work of the Japanese group. It is in their attitudes to the past, to both recent history, and previous aesthetic forms and systems, that the Bauhaus and Jikken Kōbō differ irrevocably. Satirical, parodic, and absurdist, the Bauhaus stage works were defined by a disregard for 'antiquated form'. 'It was probably a legacy of the Dadaists to ridicule automatically everything that smacked of solemnity or ethical precepts.' Schlemmer wrote. 'It found its nourishment in travesty and in mocking the antiquated forms of the contemporary theatre.' The work's tendency, he stressed, 'was fundamentally negative.'[247] The attitude towards the past and the near future

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[247] Oskar Schlemmer quoted in RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art from Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), p.87.

made manifest in Jikken Kōbō's *The Joy of Life* is quite different, defined not by a nihilist attitude to the past, but by a more astute understanding of the specific historical circumstances in which the work was made.

With *The Joy of Life*, Jikken Kōbō not only played fast and loose with the western canon but embraced the history of Japanese live art as well. A work the Kōbō made in 1955, I believe underscores this point. As part of *An Evening of Original Plays by the Circular Theatre* performed at the Sankei International Conference Hall, Tokyo on 5th December, Jikken Kōbō contributed a production titled *Pierrot Lunaire*. Based on the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg's celebrated melodrama of the same title, *Pierrot Lunaire* (Op.21) which was premiered in late October 1912 in Berlin, was a work which Igor Stravinsky supposedly dubbed 'the solar plexus' of twentieth century music.[248] The Kōbō had introduced Schoenberg's work to Tokyo during their 'Experimental Workshop Schoenberg Recital' on 9th October 1954. Like Picasso's *La Joie de Vivre*, Schoneberg's *Pierrot* was a seminal work to re-imagine and an extraordinary choice to transpose to the stage in the mid-1950s Tokyo in the form of a masked play. The production was created by Jikken Kōbō together with Takechi Tetsuji, a radical theatre director renowned at the time for his progressive approach. Takiguchi Shōzō described the performance as, 'the birth of a new form of Japanese verse drama.'[249] The aim was to portray Pierrot 'as a manifestation of the subconscious libido.' A series of colour slides that document the performance was recently discovered. Columbine was played by singer Hamada Yoko from the Kansai Opera Company, the harlequin by the Noh actor Kanze Hisao, and the part

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[248] See Jonathan Dunsby, Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1992), p.1.

[249] Takiguchi Shōzō quoted in Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, 'The Experimental Workshop (Jikken Kōbō)', op.cit (note 14), n.p.

of Pierrot was played by Nomura Mansaku, a kyogen theatre.[250] Jikken Kōbō's production therefore combined three distinct theatrical traditions: the high art of Noh the most conservative and respected of Japanese cultural genres, shingeki (or new-western-style theatre a popular theatre of dialogue), and kyogen theatre (a traditional comic theatre literally meaning wild, or mad words). The performers appeared on a dimly lit, circular stage with lighting designed and controlled by Jikken Kōbō member Imai Naoju. The intended effect was the semblance of the stage floating in space in an a-temporal environment in which the only scenery was provided by an articulated paper screen stabile made by Kitadai who also designed the costumes and masks. Kitadai's modern mask designs transposed the abstraction of human emotion, a characteristic frequently associated with noh masks, to the mid-twentieth century in vividly coloured abstract compositions which he believed would camouflage the irrationality of the human psyche. Together Tetsuji and the Kōbō conceived of the production as a space of emancipation for the suppressed subconscious. This groundbreaking theatrical experiment underscored Jikken Kōbō's commitment to mediating preexisting cultural boundaries and reconfiguring past paradigms in a new aesthetic form.

In this respect Jikken Kōbō had a significant historical precursor in the form of Mavo, the notorious avant-garde artist group active in Tokyo in the 1920s. Whilst the performances of the Bauhaus and Dada feature extensively in the existing literature on the history of performance and live art, the work of Mavo remains largely unexamined. Like Jikken Kōbō, Mavo formed at a moment of intensive social reconstruction, this time in the wake of the impact of the Great Kanto

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[250] For a detailed discussion of *Pierrot Lunaire* see Miwako Tezuka, 'Experimentation and Tradition: The Avant-Garde Play *Pierrot Lunaire* by Jikken Kōbō and Takechi Tetsuji', *Art Journal*, Vol.70, No.3, (Fall 2011), pp.54-85.

Earthquake which devastated Tokyo on 1st September, 1923. A group of largely self-taught artists and writers who 'cast themselves as social critics, strategically fusing modernist aesthetics with leftist politics' Mavo sought to form 'a central voice for cultural anarchism in intellectual debates.'[251] Like the Kōbō, Mavo was neither monolithic, nor static. The original group had five members: artists Murayama Tomoyoshi who was generally recognised as the group's leader, Oura Shuzo, Yanese Masamu, Ogata Kamenosuke, and Kadowaki Shinro, but quickly expanded to a group of ten-to-fifteen 'artist-activists.' Branded left-wing radicals, Mavo's goal was to eradicate the existing art establishment, or the *gadan,* and to reinvent the Japanese art world as a generative source of art.[252]

Murayama Tomoyoshi, a self-proclaimed interpreter of European modernism, was instrumental in introducing modernism to Japan. With an artistic theory that he labelled 'conscious constructivism' (*ishikiteki koseishugi)*, a theory derived from anarchism, Marxism, futurism, expressionism, Dadaism, and constructivism, Murayama sought to construct a nonrepresentational image of modernity, one that was pertinent to the reality of daily life. Central to Murayama's project was the complete social and creative liberation of the individual, which he perceived to be the first step toward realizing his aims – a principle that was echoed in Jikken Kōbō's collective intentions.

Mavo members collectively implemented Murayama's theory, taking it from the realm of aesthetics to the world of radical politics.[253] With an approach that was echoed in the ideology of the Situationist International, Mavo sought to integrate art

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[251] For a full account of the history of Mavo, see Geniifer Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002)

[252] A companion term to *bundan* meaning literary establishment, this term was widely used in Japan in the 1920s.

[253] Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931, op. cit.* (note 25), p.3.

into the praxis of everyday life, yet not through a strategic negation, but rather through an active engagement with contemporary consumer culture. From the outset, *Mavo* recognised the need to forge a link between the aesthetic realm and mass communication in modern society. Cafés, coffee shops, and restaurants were important new social spaces in the urban environment, sites that provided a forum for Mavo artists to integrate art with daily life in front of a live audience. Tokyo's Café Suzuran in particular, was identified as Mavo's 'base of operations', a venue where a series of exhibitions that took place in 1924.[254]

Live art was a crucial aspect of Mavo's strategy. The group's most significant experimental live production took place on 30th May 1925 in the form of a collaborative revue titled *Sanka in the Theater*, one of a number of performances staged by Mavo and Sanka artists during the three years of their collaboration. The performance was composed of twelve unrelated pieces punctuated by interludes in which performers would run out to shake members of the audience by the hand. Little documentation of the individual works has survived beyond the titles, but we know the performances combined the dramatic recitation of prose with poetry and dance. For Mavo stage design was also key: Murayama saw the stage as an abstract three-dimensional construction, one that was distinct from the literal content of the play. He frequently quoted Schwitters's concept of the 'MERZ-stage':

'Absolutely opposite from drama and opera, all the parts of the Merz-stage works are mutually linked together and cannot be pulled apart…Until now, when acting a play, people separated the stage [design], the text, and the musical score. They laboured over these works separately

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[254] For a detailed discussion of these exhibitions see Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931*, *op. cit.* (note 25).

and the [results] gave pleasure separately. The Merz-stage fuses all these elements, and understands the comprehensive work that is created.'[255]

It is a statement that reverberates in Jikken Kōbō's *The Joy of Life*. This approach to the stage as a fusion of dramaturgical elements is echoed in Jikken Kōbō's first production, one that similarly resulted from a culture/context of cross-contamination; a synthesis of historical citation and influence reconfigured in a new aesthetic form. And yet unlike Mavo, the Kōbō set out, not to disrupt the existing art establishment, but rather to imaginatively reconfigure it from within by adopting a mode or production represented by the virtual workshop that was inherently nimble in its working methods and flexible to the expositional contexts in which its work was made.

Looking back on the Kōbō's brief collective history on the occasion of its first cohesive exhibition at Satani Gallery in Tokyo in 1991, Yamaguchi noted that, 'The energy of Jikken Kōbō always radiated in both centripetal and centrifugal directions. By centripetal I mean an inward movement away from the outer-directed teamwork of the group, a return to individual work. By centrifugal, I mean the attempt to combine work in the various fields of art, music, and literature through logically necessary ideas.'[256] My contention is that *The Joy of Life* operated according to a similar logic, by this I mean not just that the work drew freely from a number of disciplines simultaneously, but that the performance was centrifugal in relation to its position in history. As a synchronization of dance, music, poetry, and sculpture that simultaneously referenced the ancient past, recent past, and the

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[255] Quoted in Geniifer Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931* (Berkley, 2002), p.220.

[256] Katshuhiro Yamaguchi, 'Experimental Workshop & the Deterritorialization of Art', in *Experimental Workshop: The 11th Exhibition Hommage to Shuzo Takiguhi*, exh. cat., Tokyo, 1991,p.27.

futurist, *The Joy of Life* made manifest the chaotic, turbulent nature of time that Michel Serres described. What I am suggesting is that *The Joy of Life* demonstrates Serres's notion of the unfolding of time in action. As Serres writes, time doesn't flow, it perculates, 'it passes, and also it doesn't pass', it flows in a chaotic, turbulent manner.[257] It is precisely that complex understanding of the passage of time that is at stake here. It is this polychronic time that *The Joy of Life* demonstrated. The work articulated that unfolding of time in a single act composed of polychronic dislocations. For one night only the virtual workshop utilised the medium of the live event to navigate the temporal space between lost time and a new era.

My contention is that it is in its complex temporal relationality, its very act of *representation* that *The Joy of Life* is at its most compelling, that the live performance made manifest the temporal layering, that stratification of time to which Serres' account of the nature of time attends. By imaginatively, and somewhat absurdly, transposing Picasso's classical iconography to the stage, the Kōbo articulated the socio-political and historical circumstances in which it was made through the act of mediation. It is the very act of mediation here, then, that is key: the representation of one medium in another that may be read as indicative of the shift towards live production that occurred in the immediate post-war period on a transnational scale. This polychronic understanding of time integral to Kōbō's project is further evidenced in the work for which the group is best known, a film made in collaboration with the documentary filmmaker Toshio Matsumoto in

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[257] See Michel Serres, 'Second Confversation: Method' in *Michel Serres with Bruno Latour: Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* trans. Roxanne Lapidus, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p.57.

1956.[258] In an interview, Matsumoto described his intellectual formation as a postmodern critique of the metaphysics of presence since Plato. From the outset, he was fiercely critical of the inauthenticity of studio cinema and of experimental film's preoccupation with the apparatus of representation. Matsumoto's background no doubt meant that he was ideally suited to collaborate with the Kōbō.[259]

Bicycle in Dream (*Ginrin*) (1956) is a twelve minute long commercial shot on 35mm stock commissioned by the Japanese Bicycle Industry Promotion Association to promote the export of Japanese bicycles abroad. The film begins with a scene of a young boy of around eight or nine years of age reading a picture book of bicycles through the ages, flicking through illustrations that range from Victorian Penny Farthings to modern cycle races. Having read from front to back, the boy then reverses the pages, turning them again, this time from back to front returning to the early origins of the bicycle with which the film began. The image, a typical children's illustration, an idyllic garden scene, begins to dissolve as the picture fades to black. The gentle classical arrangement of the opening score morphs into a bleak, minimal composition of *musique concrète* as the picture cuts to a baron landscape, a scene of post-nuclear destruction in which no human life

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[258] Matsumoto was introduced to the work of Jikken Kōbō through Kuniharu Akiyama who was active as a music critic before he became a composer and introduced him to the other members of the workshop. 'At the time, The Jikken Kōbō was making a theatrical adaption of Schonberg's Pierrot Lunaire. They weren't really making films but they were really interested in it as it corresponded to their explorations of the question of adaptation that they were experimenting with [in] theatre.' Matsumato recalled. Toshio Matsumoto interviewed by Mélanie Mermod in exhibition leaflet, (Paris: bétonsalon, 2011) p.12.

[259] After leaving Shin Riken in 1959, Matsumoto was active in organizing film series at the Sogetsu Arts Centrer. In the late 1960s he pioneered expanded cinema in Japan and made some of the earliest examples of Japanese video art. He is best known for the 1969 experimental film, *Funeral Parade of Roses*. For a full translation of Matsumoto's influential essay first published in 1963 see Matsumoto Toshio, 'A Theory of Avant-Garde Documentary' trans. Michael Raine, Cinema Journal 51, No.4, Summer 2012, pp.148-154.

has survived. There is no grass, no vegetation, no semblance of life, only a skeletal bicycle is visible on the horizon. The scorched earth in the foreground is dotted with single bicycle wheels supported on spindly vertical poles, replacements perhaps for the natural life that has been entirely erased (figure.3.9). As substitutes for organic life, these mechanical substitutes recall Yves Klein's *La forêt d'éponges* exhibited at the Galerie Iris Clert in June, 1959 (figure 3.10).[260] Elements that recall Klein's loaded comment: 'keep in mind that we are living in the atomic age, where everything material and physical could disappear from one day to another […][261]

Against this atomic distopia, an alternative future vision is posed as the film cuts to a rhythmic sequence of detached bicycle handlebars which appear floating weightlessly, severed from their counterparts - surreal fragments of the bicycle's whole. Silver ball bearings, or single atoms, follow in fluid formations floating across the picture. The ghostly handlebars appear again, followed by an animation of geometric triangles interlocked in pairs, then by footage of a single spinning wheel, its rotations evoking the rotoreliefs of Marcel Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* of 1926.[262] A sequence of airborne bicycles follows, weightless and ghostly, their aluminium frames glinting in otherwise total darkness. The boy appears again, this time inside his own dream. He watches from within the cinematic frame as futuristic scenes of cycling pass him by. In a gravity-defying montage multiple cyclists are superimposed one over the other (figure 3.11). The boy finally appears on a bike and the dream space morphs into brightly coloured scenes of the Japanese

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[260] For a full discussion of the exhibition *La forêt d'éponges* et les bas-reliefs monochromes, 15 – 30 June, 1959 see Sidra Stich, *Yves Klein*, exh. cat., Museum Ludwig, Cologne and Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1990), pp.160 - 169.

[261] Yves Klein, 'Ma Position Dans Le Combat Entre La Ligne et La Couler' (My Position in the Battle between Line and Colour), 16 April 1958, reprinted and trans. in Heinz Mack; Otto Piene; Howard Beckmann (eds.), *ZERO* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, MIT Press, 1973), p.8.

[262] The work I am referring to here is Marcel Duchamp, *Anémic Cinéma*, 1926, b&w, 6'.

countryside. Continuous tracking shots of idyllic mountains, fields and lakes follow. The film cuts back to reality, to present day Tokyo where the boy awakens from his dream. A close up of the cover of the picture book reminds the viewer of the source of his extraordinary fantasy: *Bicycles in Japan*. With this film the Kōbō presented the bicycle as a symbol of emancipation, as a liberating means of transcending the atomic scene with which the film began.

Recently rediscovered, *Bicycle in Dream* (*Ginrin*) exists today as the earliest example of experimental cinema and the first special effects, colour motion picture ever made in Japan.[263] The film was directed by Matsumoto whilst the concept, script, and soundtrack were devised by Jikken Kōbō.[264] The special effects were directed by Eiji Tsuburaya, best known as the co-curator of *Godzilla* in which American nuclear weapon testing results in the creation of a seemingly unstoppable prehistoric seamonster, the feature film released two years prior to the making of the Kōbō's commercial in 1954. I mention this extraordinary film, which spans the seemingly disparate fields of commercial advertising and pioneering avant-garde experimentation, because it foregrounds an essential quality of Jikken Kōbō's interdisciplinary output, the understanding of the polychronic nature of time articulated in an act of mediation between multiple registers and aesthetic forms,

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[263] The film, which was recently rediscovered, featured in the 8th Gwangju Biennale in 2010, and the exhibition *Ghosts in the Machine* at the New Museum, New York in 2012 (both curated by Massimiliano Gioni).

[264] After graduating with a degree in History of Art from Tokyo University, Matsumoto joined Shin Riken, a film production company that specialized in science documentaries and industrial promotion films. *Bicycle in Dream (Ginrin)* marked Matsumoto's directorial debut. Matsumoto would later go on to create groundbreaking experiments in expanded cinema and video art and become one of the key theorists who inspired the work of the new wave of Japanese filmmakers. See Michael Raine, 'Introduction to Matsumoto Toshio: A Theory of Avant-Garde Documentary', *Cinema Journal* 51, No. 4 (Summer 2012), pp.144-147.

one that was irrevocably tied to the historical circumstances in which it was made. *Ginrin* provides a greater breadth of understanding of the situation in which Jikken Kōbō was working, and the complex crisis in which *The Joy of Life* was made. It underscores what was stake in the workshop members' first spatio-temporal experiment, what it meant to galvanize the live medium itself as a space of potential polychronicity, as a means of articulating an essential quality of the contemporary condition.

The Joy of Life may be understood as a play of transpositions that developed from a specific post-war consciousness, as an act of temporal reflection on the circumstances in which it was made, a negotiation of the epistemic crisis that defined the immediate post-war years, and as further evidence of the transnational nature of the shift towards live production that occurred in the field of art post-1945. *The Joy of Life* serves as important articulation of the beginnings of a cross-contamination between art, dance, music, and multimedia that reverberates strongly in the contemporary art of the past fifteen years.

The work of Jikken Kōbō may be understood as a counterpoint to the development of the live medium that subsequently emerged in Europe in the later half of the 1950s. The context in which the Kōbō's live work emerged was markedly different to that in which *The Void* and the *Cavern of Anti-Matter* developed. Born not of a self-conscious meta-structure that reflected back on the gallery setting, but as a virtual entity, as a project team formed of shared intentions whose work appeared in a variety of media and contexts, the Kōbō's lack of institutional dependence foregrounds an essential aspect of the history this thesis traces. Whilst the work of its successor, the Gutai Art Association, quickly became assimilated within the institution, the Kōbō's production remains outside of that legitimizing framework.

In October 1957, the French art critic Michel Tapié travelled to Japan and met with Takiguchi who informed him of the work of Jikken Kōbō. A meeting was arranged between Tapie and Takiguchi and the members of the workshop. In a report on his trip to Japan published in the art journal *Bijutsu Techo* in November 1961, Tapié wrote:

> 'I think it is good for the two painters Fukushima and Yamaguchi that composers of "musique concrete' and electronic music like Toru Takemitsu, Hiroyoshi Suzuki, Keijiro Sato, and Joji Yuasa and the young critic and poet Kuniharu Akiyama all participate on an equal basis in the same group. In this way, an intelligent dynamic body is formed, full of vitality, and it acts effectively to produce an overall group atmosphere of clarity.'[265]

It is a comment that underscores that the Kōbō was ultimately unclassifiable for Tapié, its work resistant to the categories of the medium, the strictures of *Informel*, and the existing narratives of the history of European art more broadly. In a text summarising the Kōbō's brief history Yamaguchi emphasized, 'The coming of Tapié and the onslaught of art informel were a great shock and stimulus to 'Gutai' Group and to Japanese artistic culture which is now part of history. The activities of Jikken Kōbō different from anything to be seen in Europe during the same period, started three years before the advent of 'Gutai' and were pretty much finished by 1957. The group was ahead of its time in relation to Europe as well as Japan. Jikken Kōbō would have been more suited to the sixties.'[266]

It is the dual status of *The Joy of Life* as both an interdisciplinary structure and a polychronic live form without objects that poses the greatest challenge to the

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[265] Michel Tapié, Bitjutsu Techno (November 1961), reprinted in *Experimental Workshop*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Satani Gallery, 1991), p.28.

[266] Katshuhiro Yamaguchi, 'Experimental Workshop & the Deterritorialization of Art', in *Experimental Workshop: The 11th Exhibition Hommage to Shuzo Takiguhi*, exh. cat., Tokyo, 1991, p.28.

museum yet it simultaneously contains the greatest potential for self-reflexive institutional thinking. The question is what is this work's relation to art's existing canon and institution? What does its absence mean and suggest for the future? Due to its own internal structure, its status as a virtual workshop, the Kōbō has resisted the institutional assimilation by which the Gutai Art Association, and its predominately painterly output in particular, has been fully embraced. The work of Jikken Kōbō predates the provisional realties of Group Zero, Yves Klein, and Pinot Gallizio, yet it is presented here non-chronologically as a means to underscore the problem of institutional complicity central to the history this thesis traces. Above all the Kōbō's historical omission reinforces the precarious relation between live art and the western museum.

As a virtual workshop that embraced the temporal space of live production as a site of aesthetic potentiality and an experimental testing ground, Jikken Kōbō was pioneering in its embrace, not only of alternative methods of making, but of new spaces of exhibition and presentation as well. It was in the context of Jikken Kōbō that Yamaguchi's concept of 'the Imaginarium' first took form. During the period that the Kōbō was active Yamaguchi started to formulate his notion of 'the Imaginarium', a concept that defines 'a network of media in space, rather than a specific place.' The Imaginarium entailed a future vision of art as something tangible, something moving, something that could be addressed, capable of its own internal change. The Imaginarium, Yamaguchi explained, had a precedent in the traditional Japanese collective art form of the *renku* or *renga*, forms of gatherings for improvised poetic composition. Renku gatherings were held spontaneously at venues such as private homes, with an emphasis on live communication. It was the live atmosphere of the site of the gathering that was more important than the verses. At the conclusion of a renku gathering, the sheets of paper on which the poems

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were inscribed would ideally be thrown away leaving the memory of the live event to remain. 'This lively function of a collective imaginary workshop must be reflected in the imaginarium.' Yamaguchi wrote.[267] He conceived of the Imaginarium as 'a global information network one that exceeded the function of conventional art museums and galleries.'[268] Moreover, for Yamaguchi, the Imaginarium would make possible a re-evaluation of how museums function. Initiated in the 1950s and later formalised in 1981, this was Yamaguchi's prophetic vision of the direction in which the visual arts were headed.

Jikken Kōbō's first collaborative work offers a possible way of reconfiguring the relationship between live art of the 1950s and 1960s and the historical avant-garde. The existing literature on the history of performance and live art has tended to position the live works of the post-war period as representative of a point of rupture with the historical avant-garde, the Kōbō's polychronic performance complicates the existing terrain of interpretation by suggesting otherwise. *The Joy of Life* foregrounds a further issue central to the history this thesis traces, the problem of events with no visual or material remainder at all, yet importantly the work of Jikken Kōbō highlights live art's capacity to engage with its own history in novel ways, its ability to address its wider histories with a net that can accommodate theatre, painting, multimedia experimentation, and dance. *The Joy of Life* underscores live art's capacity to exist outside of the 'medium' as it has traditionally been understood, and its ability to critically reconfigure previous histories through an act of negotiation between the distant past and the near future articulated in the present tense of the live medium. As a history without objects, I believe, the work of Jikken Kōbō deserves to be instated as an important precursor

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[267] Yamaguchi,

[268] Ibid.

to the situational tendency that has dominated contemporary art since the turn of the millennium, one in which live art's institutional dependence is rendered explicit.

CHAPTER FOUR: 'WELCOME TO THE SITUATION'
TINO SEHGAL AND THE MUSEUM[269]

The phrase 'situational aesthetics' was first coined by artist and writer Victor Burgin in an essay of the same title published in *Studio International* in 1969.[270] In that essay, written in the context of the emergence of Conceptual art in Britain in the mid 1960s, Burgin identified a new, process-orientated attitude towards the making of aesthetic objects, one that privileged aesthetic systems capable of generating objects over the individual objects themselves. According to this methodology the artwork's 'essential form' was to be found in its *message* as opposed to its materials. This new approach to artistic production evolved through attention to both the conditions under which objects are perceived and the processes by which aesthetic status is attributed. In short, the 'situational aesthetic' describes a process in which art is justified as activity. In this and the final chapter of this thesis, I will transpose Burgin's term to the twenty-first century as a means to describe a mode of artistic production that has dominated contemporary live art over the past fifteen years (2000-2015). The works I will be discussing owe more to the imaginative potential of the live exhibition established in the 1950s than the legacy of Conceptual art yet they share the latter's focus on message over materials and, to some extent, process over form that Burgin described. These contemporary situations echo the temporality of the live events established in the immediate post-war period and prioritise a medium of simultaneous production, realisation, and

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[269] 'Welcome to the situation' was the opening line of *This Situation* (2007) a work presented as part of Tino Sehgal's first solo exhibition in the United States at Marion Goodman Gallery, New York, (30 November 2007 - 10 January 2008). On entering the gallery, the visitor encountered six interpreters who chanted the phrase in unison and followed it with a sharp intake of breath.

[270] Victor Burgin, 'Situational Aesthetics', *Studio International,* Vol. 178, no.915 (October, 1969), pp.118-121.

reception. The works I am thinking of have been explicitly conceived for presentation in mainstream art contexts and are complicit with the organizational frameworks in which they are staged. These works are realized in established exhibition spaces, in galleries, art fairs, and museums, yet, importantly, they utilize these structuring frameworks, not as a means to critique art's institutions directly, but as a platform from which to propose new alternatives by occupying the institution from within. I will be using the term 'situational aesthetics', then, to refer to the specific temporality of the live works I will be discussing, and to acknowledge simultaneously their necessary complicity with the institutions in which they are staged – a collusion that I will be arguing is structurally engrained. This broader tendency will be considered in depth in the following chapter, but first my focus is the work of Tino Sehgal and its unique relation to the institutional framework of the contemporary art museum.

One of the earliest works Sehgal made was a museum of sorts, a piece performed by the artist himself constructed as a spatio-temporal history of twentieth century dance. Realized through movement alone, this precisely choreographed sequence consists of an assemblage of appropriated actions, 'ready-made' movements borrowed from the work of Isadora Duncan, Sergei Diaghilev, Pina Bausch, Merce Cunningham, Yvonne Rainer, and Xavier Le Roy among other canonical figures from the history of choreography and performance. *Untitled* (2000) as the work is most commonly known, has been variously sub-titled depending on its location and iteration: *Section XXième Siècle, Department* in France, *Twentieth Century* in Berlin, *Twenty Minutes for the Twentieth Century,* in Paris, and *Permanent Collection* in Sweden. Initially performed naked by Sehgal himself, the performance begins with the work of Martha Graham and ends with the artist, or performer, urinating directly onto the stage floor in homage to Bruce

Nauman's *Self Portrait as a Fountain* (1966-67). *Untitled* was Sehgal's last explicitly theatrical work, his last 'performance' *per se*. Since the making of this piece, the dance theatre has been superseded by the museum as Sehgal's territory of choice. Although he has chosen to work with the expositional framework of the art fair, the commercial art gallery, and the private collection, it is the work that explicitly engages with the performative apparatus of the art museum that most vividly articulates Sehgal's live agenda.[271] The museum offers fertile ground for Sehgal, allowing him to instigate live performances that strategically engage with the institution as a powerful site of legitimation, a place where core notions of our society are rendered important.[272]

There are no objects in Sehgal's practice; his works are realized in action, in movement, in speech, and in song. Although they are brought into existence without recourse to the transformation of labour into material, Sehgal's works still retain the status of saleable commodities. Sehgal owns his work and sells editions of each piece at contemporary market prices through commercial galleries in Brussels, London, and New York. 'They have to be sold and bought otherwise they don't fulfill their function,' Sehgal has insisted.[273] The critical aspect of his immaterial production lies in the manner in which it maintains and affirms a market economy process while simultaneously altering the material basis of its production

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[271] Notably *Ann Lee* (2011), Sehgal's version of the ready-made Manga character purchased by Pierre Hughye and Philippe Parreno, presented at Marian Goodman Gallery's booth at Frieze New York in 2013; solo exhibitions at Jan Mot, Brussels, and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Paris, and at Villa Reale, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, part of the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan in 2008.

[272] Tino Sehgal acknowledged the importance of the museum in his practice in conversation with Chris Dercon and Jessica Morgan at Tate Modern, London, 31st October, 2011.

[273] See Tino Sehgal interviewed by Maurizio Catalan, 'Tino Sehgal: Economics of Progress,' *Flash Art*, 264 (January-February 2009) pp.90-91.

from within. 'I think that a market economy or capitalism – the system of distribution we live in – is not such a problem: the problem is what circulates within that system,' Sehgal has said.[274] His aim is to question familiar processes of production and consumption and ask what it might mean to circulate something immaterial in the existing system of distribution. In the alternative model of production Sehgal proposes, aesthetic meaning and cultural value is created without ever producing a physical object. His work takes the form of objectless 'situations', to use Sehgal's preferred term, live encounters that are premised on the importance of interpersonal dialogue and social exchange.[275] In place of the prevailing economy of material objects, he offers non-material situations that unfold in space and in time. Sehgal's policy of deliberately avoiding any transformation of labour into material objects extends to gallery wall labels, exhibition documentation, press releases, and written acquisition contracts (his work is famously sold by verbal contract alone).[276] His concern lies not in dematerializing art's object, nor in critiquing its commodity status, but rather in deconstructing the inherently materialistic nature of its production.[277] Sehgal has said he is interested in 'using technologically which is potentially as old as human life, but in being contemporary

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[274] Tino Sehgal interviewed by Jorg Heisser in *Funky Lessons*, (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2005), p.105.

[275] For a detailed account of the structure and mechanics of Sehgal's constructed situations see Dorothea von Hantelmann, 'Object and Situation in the work of Tino Sehgal' in *How to Do Things with Art: The Meaning of Art's Performativity* (Zürich: JRP Ringier; Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2010), pp.130-138.

[276] For a full discussion of the terms of the verbal contract see Daniel McLean, *'Collecting Live Art: Performance and the law',* in Teresa Calonje (ed.), *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art* (London, Konig Books, 2014), pp.85-112; in particular pp.108-111.

[277] In this respect Sehgal's immaterial practice stands in contrast to the artistic strategies associated with Conceptual art. Instead Sehgal proposes a model of production based on interpersonal exchange. See Lucy Lippard, Six Years: *The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, 3rd ed. (London: University of California Press, 1997).

with it.'[278] His situational encounters draw attention to the social and cultural processes of exchange that constitute the 'market'. The alternative form of production he proposes is non-material, established in relations between people, in how they relate to one another, and in what they perceive. In place of material transactions, Sehgal offers dialogic exchange. The situations Sehgal orchestrates have become paradigmatic of a tendency in artistic production that has developed since the early 2000's, one that privileges the instigation of live encounters between people over the production of objects. This tendency, that I am defining as a 'situational aesthetic', is not particular to Sehgal alone but rather identifiable as a shared concern amongst a number of artists born in the late 1970s and early 1980s whose work developed in the wake of, and to some extent as a reaction to, the artistic activity associated with the term 'institutional critique'.

Over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the art museum transformed from the classic nineteenth century European model, a bastion of tradition and high culture, to the global phenomenon that exists today; to that which Andreas Huyseen defined back in the 1990s as 'the museum as mass medium', a site of spectacular mise-en-scène.[279] In this chapter I will focus on the work of Sehgal as representative of the pivotal point at which live art's relation with that institution began to change radically. My aim here is to recast the relationship between live art and the art museum as dialogic in character rather than always or necessarily effective as institutional critique. It is my contention that the change in the role of the museum is both the result of, and a response to, a shift inherent within methods of artistic making rather than a reflexive anti-institutional

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[278] Tino Sehgal interviewed by Jorg Heisser in *Funky Lessons*, *op. cit.* (note 8), p.102.

[279] See Andreas Huyseen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

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impulse. In a continuation of the rethinking of the history of live art's shifting strategies as active rather than reactive central to this thesis, I propose the dialogic as a potentially powerful means to think beyond a narrative of consensuality or dissent and move beyond the anti-museum discourse.

Focusing on three specific case-studies: *This Progress* realized at the Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York in 2010; *These Associations* exhibited at Tate Modern, London in 2012; and the twelve month retrospective, *A Year at the Stedelijk: Tino Sehgal* held at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 2015, all witnessed first hand, I will examine Sehgal's work as a significant instance of the situational aesthetic prevalent in contemporary artistic production since the turn of the millennium. The roots of this live tendency may be traced, not to performance art of the 1970s or 1980s, or those practices associated with 'relational aesthetics' synonymous with the 1990s, but to an earlier moment: to the provisional realities initiated in the immediate post-war years by the neo-avant-garde. The beginnings of this transformation are present in the experimental artistic strategies of the late 1950s and the early 1960s, and are situated specifically in a methodological and ideological shift in art making towards the temporality of the live. The shift that, I have argued in the previous three chapters, occurred in response to the specific climate of a temporally conflicted moment, as a reconfiguration of that epistemic crisis post-1945. The provisional realities instigated by the post-war neo-avant-garde may be acknowledged as important historical precursors, blueprints or prototypes for the situational aesthetic, prevalent in live art since the turn of the millennium, which Sehgal's work has come to embody. In an attempt to complicate existing accounts of the origins of contemporary live art, my aim is to root Sehgal's immaterial production in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the new understanding of the critical potential of the live medium that emerged in the immediate post-war

years. My contention is that the criticality of Sehgal's live production lies in its strategic manipulation of existing codes and conventions of art's exhibition and reception; in a reinforcement of the logic of the contemporary art museum understood as both a collection of objects and a performative apparatus in its own right. In the following pages I will suggest that Sehgal's situations may be defined as parasitic in structure, dependent on the host body of the museums in which they are staged.

In January 2008, Sehgal began his most ambitious work to date, a production of *This Progress* to be exhibited at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York as part of his first solo exhibition in a public institution in the United States.[280] The work was first installed at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in the spring of 2007 and exhibited at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Hamburg later that year.[281] Formally the work exists as a conversation between the museum visitor and a succession of four interpreters: a child, a teenager, a middle-aged adult, and a senior citizen. The conversation is based on the subject of 'progress', however that notion might be conceived subjectively. On approaching the ramp of Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic rotunda at the Guggenheim I was met by a boy, of around eight or nine years of age, who initiated conversation. 'Can I ask you a question?' he asked earnestly, 'What is progress?' A conversation subsequently developed, from my initial answer, which formed the immaterial substance of a work that unfolded temporally and spatially through the full height of the atrium of the museum.

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[280] *Tino Sehgal*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 29th January – 10th March 2010. The exhibition was curated by Nancy Spector who was then Chief Curator of Exhibitions.

[281] In its first incarnation in London, *This Progress* had journeyed through the galleries, stairs, halls, and corridors of the ICA. The installation at the Guggenheim would constitute the first time that the entire work would occupy formal exhibition space alone.

Deploying non-artists, non-actors, and school children as his interpreters Sehgal instigated a network of carefully choreographed inter-subjective encounters. Executed within the specific architecture of the Guggenheim, an otherwise non-material, ostensibly verbal artwork took on powerful aesthetic form. I experienced not just orally and aurally, but also visually as a swarming network of interpersonal meetings between strangers walking in carefully choreographed, yet ultimately ungovernable, formations. The very form and content of the exhibition was dependent upon my response, spiraling out both spatially and conceptually from my initial answer to the child's preliminary question. For the first time in its history, the entire atrium of the Guggenheim was emptied of art objects for the duration of an exhibition. Material artworks were exchanged for one that existed as an objectless situation; a work that 'materialized' in dialogue, and in human encounter. *This Progress* effected a sort of museological *tabula rasa* or at least so it seemed, for further examination of the method behind the work's production reveals the extent to which the work of Sehgal, and the work of the museum, were in fact complexly intertwined.

An important theoretical reference point for Sehgal whilst he was developing *This Progress* was the work of Tony Bennett, in particular his account of the genealogy of the museum first published in 1995.[282] In *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Bennett argues that the public museum, in its canonical form, should be understood, not just as a place of instruction, but as a reformatory of manners in which a wide range of regulated social routines and performances take place.[283] Following Foucault, Bennett argues that the public museum emerged

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[282] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum History Theory Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

[283] Ibid.

in the nineteenth century alongside the prison, the hospital, and the modern school, as a product of the Enlightenment; a 'technological environment' instigated as part of a governmental programme that aimed to reshape general norms of social behaviour.[284] As a space of representation in which man was posited as the ultimate outcome of all evolution, Bennett suggests that the museum set out to construct man 'in a relation of both subject and object to the knowledge it organizes.'[285] In the nineteenth century, the visitor's trajectory through the museum was typically governed by irreversible evolutionary succession. The museum directed the visitor forward through what Bennett describes as 'an artefactual environment in which the objects displayed and the order of their relations to one another allowed them to serve as props for a performance in which a progressive, civilizing relationship to the self might be formed and worked upon.[286] The nineteenth century museum, then, existed as a place for organized walking in which an intended message was communicated in the form of a directed itinerary.'[287] Time, compressed, became visible and was presented as a single teleological trajectory. It is this model of the museum that *This Progress* both formally referenced, and conceptually engaged.

The processional architecture of the Guggenheim's central atrium afforded Sehgal the opportunity to reference a museological model that is virtually obsolete among contemporary art museums today: that highly directed walk through evolutionary time in which the gradual development and advance of knowledge is

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[284] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1991) (first published in French in 1975).

[285] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum, op. cit.* (note 16), p.7.

[286] *Ibid.*, p.186.

[287] *Ibid.*, p.6.

performatively staged through the body of the beholder.[288] This mode of representation situates the museum visitor at the apex of man's evolutionary development, in a position of achieved humanity.[289] It is precisely this teleology that Sehgal set out to undermine by strategically positioning *This Progress* within the performative apparatus of the museum.

Sehgal was invited to exhibit at the Solomon R. Guggenheim on the occasion of the museum's fiftieth anniversary. Early in 2008, together with his producer Asad Raza, Sehgal went to the museum to begin to work through the logistics of installing *This Progress* in the challenging exhibition galleries of the Guggenheim's central atrium. Sehgal is unique among visual artists working with live art today in that he works in collaboration with trained producers, specialists who are jointly responsible for the planning and execution of his work. These producers are entrusted to oversee the installation of Sehgal's work in different locations, in the manner of a 'repetiteur' in a dance context.[290] Raza has compared his role to that of the theatre director who realizes a playwright's work by staging, and imaginatively interpreting, the intentions of the original author.[291] One of the first logistical problems with 'installing' *This Progress*, he explained, was the fact that the work was particularly intolerant to the number of interpreters being too low. The key

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[288] A notable exception is the chronological walk through British Art from 1545 to the present day instigated by Dr. Penelope Curtis in the collection display galleries of Tate Britain, London in 2013. See Penelope Curtis and Chris Stephens (eds.), *Tate Britain Companion: A Guide to British Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013).

[289] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, *op. cit.* (note 16), p.7.

[290] Most notably Louise Hojer and Asad Raza. See Catherine Wood, 'In Advance of a Broken Arm: Collecting Live Art and the Museum's Changing Game', in Teresa Calonje (ed.), *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, *op. cit.* (note 10), p.135.

[291] Asad Rasa in conversation with Jessica Morgan, Curator's Talk: Tino Sehgal, Tate Modern, London, 22nd September 2012. Morgan acknowledged that the role of Sehgal's producers, to some extent, supersedes that of the exhibition curator thereby disrupting the conventional terms of engagement between artist and the exhibiting institution from the outset of the work's production.

question, in the work's formative stages, was whether a 4:1 ration of interpreters to visitors could be achieved, and consistently maintained, throughout the exhibition's seven-week run. A period of extensive information gathering ensued in which the Guggenheim's Visitor Services department calculated how many gallery visitors would enter the ramp at specific moments during the course of the exhibition. This research process involved an analytical dissection of the functionality of an institution that is normally tolerant of any number of visitors.[292] From the outset, Sehgal's work infiltrated the inner workings of the museum by engaging with a department with whom exhibiting artists would typically have little to no contact.

Research into the logistics of exhibiting *This Progress* at the Guggenheim began in parallel with the recruitment of interpreters – a process on which all Sehgal's work is fundamentally based. Conceived as a 'meeting' process, as opposed to a series of castings or auditions, recruitment began in January 2009 and took a full year to complete.[293] Just over three hundred interpreters were chosen, a carefully selected group of children and teenagers from local schools and colleges, and adults, mostly sourced from academic institutions in New York City. Many of the older interpreters worked in the disciplines of philosophy and anthropology; as they were specifically skilled in discursive conversation they were 'well placed to think about this type of work,' Raza said.[294] The success of the work would prove to be dependent on the aptitude of its interpreters, reliant on their ability to transmit Sehgal's own thinking in an apparently 'authentic' way.

Each interpreter underwent an intensive one-on-one interview to ensure that his motivations and his perspective on the subject of 'progress' would allow him to

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[292] As detailed by Asad Raza, interview with the author, London, 1st March 2012.

[293] *Ibid.*

[294] *Ibid.*

participate fully in the piece. 'It was a case of speaking about the form,' Raza explained.[295] On the subject of the selection process he admitted there was some inherent bias, and that the work was to a certain extent self-selecting. Although there were no actors or artists recruited to enact the piece, around twenty of those selected had participated in an earlier work, *This Situation*, when it was exhibited in Sehgal's first solo show in the United States at Marion Goodman Gallery, New York (2007-2008). A number of the interpreters were therefore already well versed in Sehgal's particular methodology. Regardless of previous experience, the essential requirement was that each interpreter should be able to understand the work 'authentically'.[296] Raza described the initial meeting period as, 'an algarhythmic production unit' for the piece itself. 'It becomes a form like anything else,' he said.[297] Throughout the meeting and production period Sehgal and his interpreters talked constantly around the subject of progress, but no written instructions were given. The work came into fruition through conversation alone, deploying the subjectivity of the interpreters as its raw 'material'. A dialogic culture developed, one that was to propagate and ramify through the work and its exhibition.

Sehgal's work has become synonymous with 'delegated performance', the term coined by Claire Bishop to define a tendency in contemporary artistic activity characterized by its reliance on the 'outsourcing of authenticity'. In her thematization of the way in which performance has been outsourced since the late 1990s, with artists increasingly hiring people to perform on their behalf, Bishop cites Sehgal's use of students and university academics as the most famous instance

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[295] *Ibid.*

[296] Asad Raza, interview with the author, London, 1st March 2012.

[297] *Ibid.*

of this approach.[298] The position of the artist within this mode of immaterial production is one akin to that of a human resources manager seeking live participants for contractual paid labour. The role of the artist here then stands in marked contrast to the singular, unpaid, artist performer associated with performance art of the 1960s and 1970s. Bishop suggests that the use of so-called 'amateurs', rather than professional artists or trained performers, is part of 'a de-skilled performance aesthetic', one that seeks to maintain its autonomy from the seamless quality of 'professional' acting. She draws a parallel between this model of fabrication as recruitment and contemporaneous developments in economics and business in which labour began to be outsourced in the 1990s with the primary aim of improving 'performance.' Conversely, Bishop suggests, this strategy has been appropriated by contemporary artists as a way to increase unpredictability in performative works.[299] For Bishop, the logic of this de-skilled aesthetic is 'one of institutional disavowal.'[300] Further examination of the methodology behind the

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[298] See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p.224. Also Bishop, 'Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity', *OCTOBER* 140 (Spring 2012), pp.91-112.

[299] This notion has been taken up by a number of artists working in Britain over the past ten years, notably by Lucy Beech, Edward Thomasson, and Cally Spooner whose work in performance and video problematizes performance in the broadest sense of the term. Spooner's work in particular challenges the notion of performance as promise: to deliver, to arrive, or to achieve. See Isabella Maidment, 'Pending Performance: Cally Spooner's Live Production'*, The White Review*, November 2012, http://www.thewhitereview.org/art/pending-performance-cally-spooner%E2%80%99s-live-production/; Basia Lewandowska Cummings, 'In Focus: Edward Thomasson', *Frieze*, No.165 (September, 2014) published online at: http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/in-focus-edward-thomasson/ (accessed 3rd September 2015); and Richard Parry, 'Lucy Beech', *Frieze*, No. 173 (September, 2015), p.180; also Capucine Perrot, 'Passive Aggressive 2: Lucy Beech and Edward Thomasson', *Metropolis M*, (8th March, 2014) published online at: http://metropolism.com/reviews/passive-aggressive-2/ (last accessed 3rd September 2015).

[300] Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, op. cit. (note 31), pp.219-239.

installation of *This Progress* at the Guggenheim, however, reveals the extent to which the work of Sehgal and the work of the museum are in fact inextricably intertwined. In short, Sehgal's work was active rather than reactive in relation to the institution in which it was staged.

Let us return to the 1950s for a moment, to the point at which the groundwork for Sehgal's immaterial, interpersonal encounters was first established, and compare Sehgal's situational aesthetic to the notion of the constructed situation first defined within the context of the Situationist International. In a programmatic essay titled 'Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation' written in 1958, the year after the formation of the movement, Guy Debord set out the basic parameters of the constructed situation understood as 'a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambience and a game of events.'[301] In this text Debord defines the constructed situation as 'an integrated ensemble of behaviour in time', one 'composed of actions contained in a transitory décor.' 'A constructed situation must be collectively prepared and developed,' Debord writes, 'during the initial period of rough experiments, a situation requires one individual to play a sort of "director role".'[302] This 'director or producer' is 'responsible for coordinating the basic elements necessary for the construction of the décor and for working out certain interventions in the events', he writes.[303] Like Sehgal, Debord is careful to distance the constructed situation from the sphere of theatre and performance: 'These perspectives, or the provisional technology describing them, should not be taken to mean that we are talking about

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301 Guy Debord, 'Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation' (1958) reprinted and trans. in Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley. Calif.: Bureau of public secrets, 2006), pp.49-51.

[302] *Ibid.*, p.50.

[303] *Ibid.*

some continuation of theatre,' he insists.[304] He refers to those living the situation as 'direct agents' whose role is to take part in creating the collective project, and to work on the practical composition of the 'ambience'. 'In chance situations,' Debord writes, 'we meet separated beings moving at random.' The final key element he describes is, 'a few passive *spectators* who have not participated in the constructive work, who should be *forced into* action.'[305] It is almost as though Sehgal has followed Debord's instructions verbatim albeit without the revolutionary intent. Sehgal, then, transposed the form of the constructed situation to a very different context, to the specifically neo-liberal framework of the contemporary art museum.

In its simplest form, the museum was first construed, and still exists today, as a collection of objects selected and collated for their documentary value in staging a historical narrative that leads to its inevitable culmination in the present – a present (ness) construed as an anamorphic point that makes sense of history 'as the prologue to our presentness,' to borrow Donald Preziozi's phrasing.[306] At the Guggenheim, Sehgal strategically engaged with the museum as both a space of representation and a framework of meaning, and deliberately exhibited it as well.

Raza described *This Progress* as 'the ultimate exhibition for the Guggenheim Museum. It represented a total rupture with established ways of behaving in a museum and at the same time it was the exhibition that best worked with the architecture of the museum,' he said. Formally and aesthetically the work did indeed create a remarkable degree of resonance with the architecture of the space. Conceptually it was still recognizably the same piece that was shown in London,

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[304] *Ibid.*

[305] Guy Debord, 'Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation', *op. cit*. (note 34), p.50.

[306] See Donald Preziozi, "Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity" in Bettina Messias Carbonell (ed.) *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), p.77.

simply 'This exhibition' of *This Progress*, yet in comparison to the exhibition at the ICA where its 'all-over' installation functioned in a more interventionist manner, at the Guggenheim the piece existed in a way that activated the space both aesthetically and conceptually. By emptying the museum of its material contents, Sehgal foregrounded the interior of the vertiginous rotunda and heightened the dramaturgy of the architecture. In a small, but significant, gesture, Sehgal requested that the taupe covering the oculus of the rotunda be removed, opening the rotunda to the natural light of the sky. This decision served to heighten the work's climax, bathing my the final moments of my encounter with the work in light as I was shaken by the hand by an elderly male 'interpreter' and thanked for my time. This restoratory act effected a dramatic change, creating a subtle, yet real, dramaturgical shift at the moment when I reached the apex of the museum's atrium. Sehgal thereby underscored the end point of the conversation as a moment of clarity or revelation. This act of theatre also served as a response to the building itself, as a symbolic reference to Frank Lloyd Wright's utopian aspirations – ideals which the thinking behind Sehgal's work supposedly shared.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim offers a quintessential example of an environment that is both exhibitory and performative, its steeply graded, vertiginous rotunda both actively mobilizes and clearly directs its visitor's trajectory. The only choice I faced on reaching its spiral apex, as I finished my conversation with Sehgal's interpreters, was to turn and retrace my steps. By appropriating the ready-made ritual of walking through the museum, *This Progress* overtly referenced the metaphor of the museum as a machine for progress. The work strategically occupied the space between subject and object, and intervened in my subjective encounter with the museum by mimicking its 'progressive' itinerary. Playfully addressing the performative articulation of the museum as a cultural space in which

an evolutionary narrative of progress is performed, *This Progress* simultaneously refused to conform to, and thereby disrupted, the standard logic of the museum. Yet crucially it did so in a manner that was supportive, rather than critical, of the institution whose codes and conventions it strategically occupied. In place of an object that forms its 'truth value' through indirect deferral to some absent circumstances of causality - its place in art-historical evolutionary time - Sehgal posited instead the immediate reality of the conversational exchange. In contrast to the conventional subject-object encounter, a situation in which the object can only confront the subject from a place where the subject is not, in a dialogue between two people the exact opposite may take place. *This Progress* denied the object its place in the historiographic theatre of the art museum and thereby enacted a knowing and strategic refusal of the ideological fabrication of the subject-object relation. *This Progress* fundamentally negated the possibility of the 'object' of art as that which can only exist in relationship to a projected and constructed field of subjectivities. Instead it catalyzed that very field itself: the expositional framework of the museum.

One of the many interpreters recruited to enact *This Progress* was Alexander Nehamas, Professor of Philosophy and Comparative Literature at Princeton University, whom Sehgal persuaded to participate after reading his writing.[307] Some three hundred interpreters were involved in the realization of *This Progress*, but I mention Nehamas in particular because his own work bears a striking resemblance to the ideological motivations underpinning Sehgal's work on this occasion, to both the claim Sehgal made for *This Progress*, and subsequent

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[307] After considering Sehgal's proposition for some time, according to Raza, Nehamas eventually called to say he could not resist being involved and felt that participating in the piece would be more akin to the real practice of philosophy than his professional commitments at that time.[307] Asad Raza, interview with the author, London, 1st March 2012.

situations he has instigated since.[308] In *The Art of Living*: *Socractic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, Nehamas draws on the ancient tradition under which practical action is the core of the philosophical enterprise. He argues that philosophy can be an activity, a way of life distinct from a purely theoretical and scholarly discipline.[309] This is what Sehgal set out to achieve with *This Progress* and yet, importantly, his attempt to put philosophy in action took place within a very specific setting, not on the street, or the public realm, but within the specific dramaturgy of the museum. If *This Progress* succeeded in activating the space of encounter between subjectivities, it did so by strategically manipulating the internal infrastructure of the institution. *This Progress* responded to the museum not just spatially or aesthetically, but ontologically by infiltrating the museum's standard channels of communication – by occupying the role of mediator between the artist and the public.

After the exhibition at the Guggenheim had opened in January 2010, both Sehgal and Raza remained on site for the entire duration of the show give or take a couple of afternoons.[310] This enabled Sehgal to stay in constant dialogue with the museum and maintain full orchestration of his work. Raza was mostly concerned with monitoring visitor flow and with ensuring that the interpreters were 'doing their jobs correctly and doing them well.'[311] Throughout the exhibition Sehgal and

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[308] Notably *This is Critique*, Galerie Jan Mot, Brussels, 2009; *This Variation*, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, 2012; and *These Associations*, Tate Modern, London, 2012 - the two works for which Sehgal was shortlisted for The Turner Prize in 2013. For a detailed account of *This is Critique*, see Jörg Heiser, 'Tino Sehgal at Jan Mot Gallery – or not?' published online at: http://blog.frieze.com/tino_sehgal_at_jan_mot_gallery_or_not/ (accessed 20th August 2015).

[309] See Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucualt*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[310] Asad Raza, interview with the author, London, 1st March 2012.

[311] *Ibid.*

Raza shared an office on the fifth floor of the rotunda, a space usually occupied by the museum's conservators. Virtually every aspect of the museum was actively engaged with the piece – half of the security guard's office, for instance, was appropriated as a make-shift crèche for the youngest interpreters. Perhaps the most remarkable and revealing instance of the work's dialogical functioning with the museum was the involvement of the curatorial department whose staff took on new roles and tasks that expanded beyond their usual professional remit. Each of the curators of the exhibition: Chief Curator Nancy Spector, Associate Curator Nat Trotman, and Assistant Curator Katherine Brinson, participated incognito as interpreters of the work and enacted the piece for a few hours each week. *This Progress* became a matrix of inter-subjective encounters that reverberated with the inner workings of the museum.

Dorothea von Hantlemann has argued that the social efficacy of Sehgal's work is rooted in its negotiation of the performative.[312] Following Judith Butler, she reads context and its underlying conventions as central protagonists in the production of art's meaning.[313] 'Today an art that is ambitious with regard to its societal impact mostly operates under the paradigm of critique,' von Hantelmann writes. 'An art that is conscious of the efficacy of it own performativity could possibly replace it with a more constructive and effective attitude.'[314] Von

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[312] See von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art, op. cit.* (note 9). The title of this book is a play on John Langshaw Austin's seminal lecture series 'How to do Things with Words' held at Harvard in 1955 in which Austin redefined the performative, or reality producing capacity of language.

[313] Writing in the early 1990s, Judith Butler lent a social and political dimension to J. L Austin's linguistic theory of the performative by emphasizing the constitutive and restrictive powers of conventions as prerequisites for performative action. See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990).

[314] Von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art, op.cit.* (note 9), p.193.

Hantelmann suggests that the performative may be understood as a vehicle to conceptualize and discursify the way artworks 'act.' Precisely because it focuses on praxis and change, the performative may be understood as a paradigm that enables us to conceptualize an artistic, cultural, and ultimately, social impact on art, she suggests. Von Hantlemann asserts that an ethical dimension of responsibility articulated in 'the forming of relations to others and oneself' is a defining characteristic of Sehgal's work.[315] She argues that the situations that he orchestrates always imply questions of responsibility and agency within an inter-subjective relationship.[316] She writes: 'His work conveys both a sense of power and powerlessness to the visitor as well as a sense of the possibilities and limits of his or her agency in short it addresses viewers as potent and responsible individuals.'[317] According to this reading it is Sehgal's alternative mode of production, the fact that the work is made differently, i.e. without recourse to the transformation of materials, that ultimately generates a different beholder, one 'who is no longer only a receptive instance, but a figure that shapes and responsibly influences the work.'[318] The new relation created between work and viewer is a direct result of the work's lack of materiality; a consequence of the fact that the artwork and beholder are of the same medium. 'They create a fluid and active movement between player and visitor that constantly changes with any activity outside this relationship.'[319] Von Hantlemann argues that Sehgal functions as the instigator of encounters in which the material object is replaced by a relation between two people; a situation in which one person embodies an artwork, while the other observes the

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[315] Von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art, op.cit.* (note 9), p. 167.

[316] *Ibid.,* p.172.

[317] *Ibid.*

[318] *Ibid.*

[319] *Ibid,,* p.169.

embodiment of the work.[320] In an extension of von Hantlemann's reading, my contention is that Sehgal's work exists, not in the interpersonal encounter itself, but rather in what that very particular encounter does and effects. The new relationship established between work and viewer is not simply the direct result of the work's lack of materiality, but rather the position that the work strategically occupies. Sehgal's situations in fact occupy a space traditionally reserved for the work of the museum, and thereby adopt the role of mediator between the artist and the public. My point is that the work is located in a dialogue that, in turn, operates dialogically with the performative apparatus of the museum.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theorization of the dialogic offers a possible means of reading the relationship between *This Progress* and the specific museological context in which the work was staged. In *Epic and the Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel* first published in 1941, Bakhtin positions the novel, which emerged in the late eighteenth century contemporaneously with the public museum, as the dialogic form par excellence. In his extra-literary reading of its importance, Bakhtin credits the novel with establishing literary images within a 'zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its open-endedness.'[321] The dialogic form, Bakhtin argues, is unique in structuring itself in a zone of direct contact with developing reality. It is defined by its inconclusive, developing status, a condition that means that 'it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding,' Bakhtin wrote.[322] We might perhaps read Sehgal's situation as an equivalent form. Inherently dialogic in its very structure, Sehgal's way of working

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[320] *Ibid.,* p.133.

[321] M.M. Bakhtin, 'Epic & Novel' reprinted in M. Holquist (ed.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, trans. Caryl Emerson, (Texas, 1981), p.11.

[322] *Ibid.,* p.7.

extends from the way his work is realized, to the form in which it is received. An early silent work offers a case in point.

Instead of allowing some things to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things (2000) was the first piece Sehgal conceived explicitly for a visual art context. This live work exists as a single expressive tempo; continuous choreography executed by a solo performer rooted to the ground. The sequence of movements is anchored around the articulation of the spine which forms a spatial axis for a movement that is fluid and considered, its tempo suggestive of slow-motion film footage. Floor-based, resembling an articulated sculpture in flux, the performance can only be viewed in the round, encountered in a state of continuous metamorphosis.[323] Like *Untitled* (2000), *Instead of allowing some things to rise up to your face* (...) is an act of interpretation, a work that incorporates appropriated movements, corporeal citations from historic performances by Bruce Nauman, and Dan Graham, made in the late 1960s and early 1970s, works that include Graham's *Roll* (1970), Nauman's *Wall Floor Positions* (1968), *Tony Sinking into the Floor, Face up and Face Down* (1973), and the *Elke Allowing the Floor to Rise Up Over Her, Face Up* (1973) to which the title of the piece refers. This montage of 'ready-made' movements was the work that marked Sehgal's transition from the discipline of choreography to the field of art.

I first encountered *Instead of allowing some things to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things* as part of *Danser Sa Vie* (Dance Your Life) an exhibition surveying the relationship between art and dance from the

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[323] Here I am describing the performance of the work included in the survey exhibition, *Danser Sa Vie* (Dance Your Life) curated by Christine Macel and Emma Lavigne, at Centre Pompidou Paris, 23 November 2011 – 2 April 2012. During this exhibition, the work was provocatively placed in front of Henri Matisse's, *Le danse de Paris* (1931-1933). See Christine Macel et al., *Danser sa vie: art et danse de 1900 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2011).

nineteenth century to the present day at Centre Pompidou, Paris in the Spring of 2012. Sustained viewing of the work revealed an important structuring principle: the work is executed in shifts. After a certain period of time, around an hour or two, the first interpreter was joined by another, this time a young man who lowered himself to the floor and began to echo the first interpreter's movements. For some three to four minutes they moved together, side by side, performing in tandem. This brief movement of synchronicity functioned like a slow motion passing of the baton. Once the exchange had been made, the first interpreter stood up and walked out of the gallery. Whilst the subsequent enactment of the work was revealed to be an exact formal replica of the first, sustained viewing revealed idiosyncrasies of movement, interpretative details specific to that performer. This brief moment in which the work's viscerally encoded content was exchanged from body to body revealed the work as a sequence of autonomous executions, its content was ultimately dependent on the individual interpretation and personal memorization for its exact form. Even in this 'solo' piece, then, there was dialogic exchange at the core of Sehgal's work.

This dialogic principle realized through the transformation of action – through acts of speech, movement, and song - reverberates in the formal structuring of Sehgal's work, the way in which his situations are enacted by interpreters performing in shifts, passing the work from body to body; moreover this (dia)logic extends to the way in which the work engages with the institutions in which it is staged. Sehgal's situational encounters operate by affecting a consciously structured dialogized zone, one that strategically occupies that which Bakhtin defines as 'the heteroglossia' of the museum. Bakhtin's theorization of the dialogic emphasizes the

primacy of speech and the act of utterance.[324] According to Bakhtin, language

means, or effects, when it exists as somebody talking to somebody else even when

that somebody else is one's own inner addressee.[325] Whilst un-dialogized language

is authoritarian or absolute, a word, discourse, language, or culture may undergo

'dialogization' when it becomes 'relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing

definitions for the same things.'[326] Bakhtin coined the term 'heteroglossia' to

describe the distinctive interaction between the two fundamentals of any

communication, the base condition governing the way that meaning functions in

any act of speech. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of

conditions that will ensure that a word uttered in that place, and at that time, will

have a meaning particular to those circumstances and conditions.[327] The discussion

of progress that Sehgal instigated inside the Guggenheim functioned according to

the same principles Bakhtin described. By this I mean that the provisional reality of

This Progress was realized in a state of becoming, in a condition of maximal

contact with the present. Bakhtin understood the dialogized genre of the novel as 'a

zone and a field of valorized perception, as a mode for representing the world.'[328]

One might draw an analogy here between the novel and *This Progress*, as two

dialogized zones crafted as a consciously structured hybrid of voices. Importantly,

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[324] In a linguistic theory first articulated in a series of lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, published posthumously under the title *How to do Things with Words*, philosopher John Langshaw Austin developed the notion of the performative speech act as it is used today in its canonical form. The study serves as a seminal exploration of the reality producing character of language. See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (eds), Urmson, J.O and Marina Sbisà (Second edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[325] See M.M. Bakhtin, 'Epic & Novel' reprinted in M. Holquist (ed.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, *op. cit*. (note 33).

[326] *Ibid*., p.427.

[327] *Ibid*., p.428.

[328] *Ibid*.

though, the transient conversational encounters Sehgal instigated earned their meaning from the governing structure of the institution, and gained intellectual solidity, and legitimacy, from the very space in which visitor and interpreter met. The point I am making here is that the artwork became dialogized through its implicit, and explicit, engagement with the museum. According to anthropologist Victor Turner, the art exhibition provides its user with scripts or 'doing codes' for the individual to perform.[329] With *This Progress* Sehgal imaginatively sculpted his own 'doing codes' within the heteroglossia of the museum.

Sehgal has frequently affirmed his interest in the political efficacy of the museum as one of 'the main agents of cultural values' a space that he believes may, over time, offer a possibility for long term politics.[330] In order to further examine the specificity of the relationship between Sehgal's work and the museum, to begin to unpack this duality of radical disruption and affirmative accord, it is perhaps useful to pause for a moment to contrast his work with the artistic strategies that have been historically associated with the term 'institutional critique', those activities that took place in the field of art in the 1970s and 1980s that attempted to expose the socio-political and economic conditions on which the museum's existence depends.[331]

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[329] See Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality' *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, Vo.6, No.4 (December, 1979), pp.465-499.

[330] Tino Sehgal quoted in Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art*, *op. cit.* (note 9), p.136.

[331] For one of the earliest discussions of 'institutionalized language' and 'institutionalized frameworks', see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art,' *Artforum*, 21, 1, (September 1982), pp.43-56. Buchloh describes the 'impulse to criticize itself from within, to question its institutionalization,' as one of the 'essential features of Modernism.' p.48.

In 1989, one of institutional critique's key proponents, Andrea Fraser, performed one of her earliest museum-tour pieces, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.[332] At 3pm, on five consecutive afternoons in February 1989, Fraser adopted the fictitious persona of Jane Castleton, a personable volunteer museum tour guide, 'a representative of the museum'.[333] 'While Jane is a fictive docent, I would like to consider her less an individual "character" with autonomous traits than a site of speech constructed with various relations constituting the museum,' Fraser later explained.[334] The humorously scripted tour took the form of an otherwise standard volunteer-led museum visit, except that it was no longer just the material contents of the museum that was exposed: 'We'll be talking about the Museum itself, the "itself" itself being so compelling,' Fraser's tour began.[335]

Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk is exemplary of Fraser's broader investigative practice and its dedication to exposing the customs of art, and the socio-political mechanisms behind its spaces of exhibition. 'Let us not talk about art. Because finally the museum's purpose is not just to develop an appreciation of art, but to develop an appreciation of values.' Fraser's fictitious tour guide

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[332] The work was realized as a live performance and later recorded as a videotaped introduction to the museum. For the full script of the performance see Andrea Fraser, 'Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk', *October*, 57, Summer 1991, pp.104-22.

[333] See Andrea Fraser, 'Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk' in Alexander Alberro (ed.), *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005), pp, 95-114; p.96. The work also exists as a script with stage directions, epigraphs, and extensive footnotes. Fraser abandoned the persona of Jane Castleton in 1990 instead choosing to perform self-consciously under her own name.

[334] Andrea Fraser, 'Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk', *OCTOBER,* vol. 57 (Summer 1991), p.107.

[335] Andrea Fraser, 'Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk' in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser, op. cit.* (note 67), p.96.

insisted.[336] Fraser's performance addressed the museum as that which Preziosi has described as 'a theatre of anamorphic (and autoscopic) dramaturgy; a place in which it is not so easy to tell which is the spider and which the web, which the machinery and which the operator.'[337] Her work exemplifies a core strategy of the practices associated with institutional critique: a mode of engaging with the museum as an interface that generates societal value; and yet the work operated in a manner diametrically opposed to the way in which Sehgal strategically engages with the institution. Fraser's performance addressed the social structuring of art by questioning the conventions of artistic exhibition and dissemination, in an attempt to expose the way the museum nexus defines its subjects in terms of gender, class, and race. As Fraser's alter ego, Jane, emphasized, 'an art museum is not just a building, not just a collection of objects. An art museum […] is a public institution with a mission, with a mandate.'[338] *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Tour* served as a direct commentary on the museum as an institution and its support system, exposing it as a space of a privileged audience. In short, Fraser critiqued both the institution of the museum and the type of viewer it produces. With this and subsequent performances, most notably perhaps, *Little Frank and his Carp* realized at the Guggenheim Bilbao in 2001,[339] Fraser sought to expose the museum as a site of art's ideological foundations, examining its framework in terms of that which

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[336] Andrea Fraser, 'Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk', October, vol. 57, Summer 1991, p.122.

[337] Donald Preziosi, "Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity" in Bettina Messias Carbonell (ed.) *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, p.82.

[338] Fraser, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* reprinted in Fraser, *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, (Cambridge, Mass,: MIT Press, 2007), pp, 95-114.

[339] See Andrea Fraser, 'Isn't This a Wonderful Place? (A Tour of a Tour of the Guggenheim Bilbao)' *Ibid.* pp.233–60.

Pierre Bourdieu has defined as the 'manner of relationship to legitimate culture.'[340]

I mention Fraser's work here as paradigmatic of the practices that have come to define institutional critique, representative of their ideological critique of the museum as a legitimizing agent for capitalist modernization, a challenge that remains just as valid as it was in the imperial past, in the present age of corporate sponsorship.[341] Importantly, too, Fraser's work is representative of the point at which institutional critique acknowledged its own endgame for, as she herself conceded, ultimately strategies associated with institutional critique failed in their endeavours precisely because they remained complicit with the very technology they set out to expose.[342] In complete contrast, Sehgal's work exposes the museum as an ideologically active environment without recourse to critique and it does so through techniques that reveal the work's dependence on the ontological status of the institution as a vehicle for transmitting meaning. As Hans Haacke asserted in 1974: 'Artists are unwitting partners […] They work within the frame, set the frame and are being framed.'[343] Sehgal embraces that notion, and takes it one step further, by actively infiltrating and strategically occupying, the inner workings of that frame.

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[340] Pierre Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984) cited in the script to *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* reprinted in Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser, pp, 95-114.

[341] See Andreas Huyseen, op cit. (note 13).

[342] Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum*, vol.44, no.1, September 2005, pp.278–83. Fraser writes: 'assessments of the instiionalization of institutional critique and charges of its obsolescence in an era of mega-museums and global markets founder on a basic misconception of what institutional critique is […] They necessitate a reexamination of its history and aims, and a restatement of its urgent stakes in the present.' p.101.

[343] Hans Haacke quoted in Andrea Fraser 'From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique', *Artforum International,* Sept, 2005 Vol.44, pp.278-283; p.281. Haacke's work was famously censored by the Solomon R. Guggenheim in 1971. See Lippard, *op. cit*. (note 9), pp.xiii-xiv.

What is at stake in *This Progress* is a critical move away from the inescapability of institutional determinism that extends beyond exposing the museum as a network of social and economic relationships between spaces and people. Sehgal works with the very fabric of that network and animates it to new ends. His work addresses the possibility that 'reality-producing potential' might be created not through critiquing the institution but in activating, and strategically manipulating, the inter-subjective matrix at the museum's ideological core. We might, then, understand *This Progress* as parasitic on the Guggenheim, occupying the host body of the museum.

Michel Serres's notion of the parasite is one that might usefully be applied to Sehgal's work in this instance, and indeed to his nonmaterial output more comprehensively. Written between 1975 and 1979, Michel Serres's theory of the parasite first appeared in French in 1980.[344] In this text, Serres suggests that whilst ontology, the theory of being, leads us to atoms; the theory of relations leads us to the parasite which is the basic fundamental component of all human relations and institutions. In French, the word *parasite* has three meanings: both a biological parasite and a social parasite, the noun also connotes static or interference. The parasite is an insidious infection it takes without giving, and weakens without killing. 'The parasite is an expansion; it runs and grows. It invades and occupies.'[345] Serres wrote. The parasite is the primordial, one-way and irreversible relation that is the base of human institutions and disciplines, science, society, economy, work, and history all of which have the parasitic relation as their basic fundamental component. In order to avoid rejection or exclusion the biological parasite makes or secrets tissue identical to that of its host at points of contact. The

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[344] *Parasite* was first published in English in 1982. Here I refer to the first University of Minnesota Press edition translated by Lawrence R. Schehr (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007).

[345] Serres, *The Parasite, op. cit.* p.253

host no longer reacts; it accepts, it consents to maintain the parasite and bends to its demands. The parasite exists through a game of mimicry, playing at being the same as the host body on which it depends and imposes. We might apply this same principle or process to Sehgal's constructed situations, works that invade and occupy the host body of the institution, that is the inner workings of the museum system. The work Sehgal made in response to Tate Modern's 2012 Unilever Commission articulates this relationship most vividly.

These Associations (2012) was arguably Sehgal's most complex and spectacular work to date, his first situation to combine choreography, dialogue, and song alongside theatrical lighting effects. The doors and windows of the former power station hub were blacked out to allow the work to occupy the hall in its entirety and for the space to be activated as a whole. *These Associations* continuously inhabited Tate Modern's Turbine Hall during the gallery's normal opening hours from 24th July to 28th October 2012. The work marked the first live commission in The Unilever Series, the annual art commission specific to Tate Modern's Turbine Hall.[346] The inaugural commission in the series was Louise Bourgeois's *I do. I Undo, I Redo* (2000) an installation comprised of two tall bronze towers wrapped in spiral staircases, positioned alongside a monumental nine metre high steel spider sculpture titled *Maman*, with which the museum opened at the turn of the millennium, in May 2000. I mention the origins of this commission because, in many respects, its history may be seen as a barometer for the shift in contemporary art, and the changing status between live art and the museum in particular, over the past fifteen years. Its history alone is indicative of the transformation from the

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[346] Sehgal's commission was timed to overlap with the launch of the newly opened Tate Tanks, the first museum space ever dedicated to performance and time-based media, in July 2012. Sehgal's inclusion in the museum's curatorial programme at this time, then, served to underscore Tate Modern's commitment to placing performance and live art at the heart of the museum.

exhibition and preservation of ostensibly traditional artworks, to the staging and production of live works that agitate the very basis of the institution as a collection of objects. That shift was accompanied by a transformation in the nature of museum spectatorship now defined less by passive viewing and, increasingly, by a mode of engagement characterized by varying degrees of participation – a notion which Sehgal's Turbine Hall commission inadvertently problematised.[347]

These Associations was conceived in response to the specific site of its exhibition, and based around the dual status of the Turbine Hall as both the hub of a former power station and a form of modern 'cathedral' to art, a semi-public space of ritualised encounter.[348] Conceived as an immaterial sculpting of the dynamics of social interaction, the work took the form of a swarming mass of interpreters of diverse ages and backgrounds engaged in a series of choreographed 'games' and acts of conversation initiated with visitors to the museum.[349] These inter-subjective encounters took the form of personal acts of storytelling on the subject of a number of themes: a sense of belonging; a sense of arrival; a quality that you admire in someone else, or a sense of disappointment in yourself. On occasion the conversation would begin with the simple statement, 'This is a work by Tino Sehgal, *These Associations* (2012)'. The conversations relied on an 'initial hook' or

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[347] On this topic see Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London; New York: Verso, 2012) in which she charts a genealogy of socially-engaged participatory art from the historic avant-garde to the present day; and Bishop, *Participation* (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006).

[348] Although it was never explicitly stated, the title of the work seems to reference Bruno Latour's analysis of social networks as a web of interrelation and the making of connections. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[349] The description of the structure and methodology of *These Associations* is based on first hand experience of the workshops that took place in preparation for the work's exhibition at Tate Modern in November 2011. For the finer detail of work's final execution I am grateful to Laura McClean-Ferris.

an arresting mental image to capture the visitor's imagination, an opening gambit that might then progressively draw the visitor into conversation. A means of initiating a conversation with a stranger through the telling of a personal anecdote, these highly constructed moments of 'intimacy' were described by one of the work's interpreters as 'nodal points in a work conceived as a meditation on the individual in relation to the mass.'[350] Sehgal referred to these oral prompts as, 'conceits'.[351] Typically a simile or a metaphor, a conceit is a figure of speech, one that forms an extraneous, ingenious or fanciful parallel between apparently dissimilar, or incongruous, objects or situations. The conceit is associated with the 17th Century Metaphysical poets who deployed the form as an intellectual device, a way to set up analogies between a person's spiritual qualities and objects in the world. Sehgal's use of the term, then, is revealing, indicative of what was at stake in the moments of dialogic exchange between the interpreters of his work and the often unsuspecting museum visitors. The conceit was crafted as a means of moving from the micro to the macro, in terms of thought, from a personal anecdote, specific to one individual's autobiographic experience, to a broader philosophical scheme of thinking pertaining to a wider social group.

One of the work's interpreters was writer and curator Laura McLean-Ferris, who was approached to participate in *These Associations* after writing a five-star review of the work in *The Independent*.[352] She recalled that an essential requirement was

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[350] Agnieszka Gratza, 'Conversation Pieces: Taking part in Tino Sehgal's *These Associations'*, *Frieze*, 152, January-February, 2013) also published online at: http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/conversation-pieces/ (last accessed 15 August 2015).

[351] Laura McLean-Ferris, email to the author, 20th August 2015.

[352] Laura McLean-Ferris, 'Tino Sehgal: These Associations, Tate Modern, London', *The Independent*, 24th July, 2012 also published online at: http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/reviews/tino-sehgal-these-associations-tate-modern-london-7972856.html

that all conceits must be genuine memories. In keeping with Sehgal's previous works to date, the interpreters were told not to discuss the piece with the public and to elegantly divert any questions about the nature of the work, its rules, meaning, or structuring principles by deflecting the question back to the visitor with a pointed 'what do *you* think it means?' form of approach.[353] The interpreters therefore evaded all questions about the form of the work and its methodology. In the worst-case scenario they were instructed to simply walk away from their interlocutor. Just as the interpreters dropped into conversation with visitors unexpectedly, so too they were instructed to end the dialogue at an appropriate moment determined by their own intuition. In this way the integrity of the work remained intact, hermetically sealed, confined to the strict rules of Sehgal's carefully crafted scenario.

The choreographic element of *These Associations* extended the overarching principle of social dynamics forged between people, and individual agency versus the work of the team or community. The interpreters' movements, the way in which they occupied the space together as a swarm, were loosely determined by four choreographic sequences classified as A, B, C, and D. One such game was known colloquially among the interpreters as 'triangles', a game that involved trios of interpreters sent into the hall in 'cells'. One interpreter in each cell was tasked with forming an equilateral triangle with two other members of the group as they infiltrated the hall, moving through the space at a tempo determined by that of the other interpreters with whom their physical agency was dependent.

McLean-Ferris emphasized that she viewed her work writing for a mainstream newspaper in the UK quite differently to her other art criticism at the time and resolved to review Sehgal's Tate Modern commission positively, in part, due to the widespread hostility towards contemporary art amongst UK newspapers. Email to the author, 20th August 2015.

[353] Laura McLean-Ferris, email to the author, 20th August 2015.

Another sequence involved the interpreters 'configuring' themselves in a tableaux vivant amongst the museum public, by striking a particular pose that emphasized the interpreter's individuality in relation to the mass – one that had the capacity to potentially alter the social dynamic of the surrounding environment. In a third loosely choreographed formation, one which played on the principles of the children's games, statues, and wink murder, one interpreter in a given group was appointed with the 'power' to freeze the other members who were forced to remain static in the Turbine Hall until another designated interpreter could release them, and bring him or her back to life through eye contact alone. McLean-Ferris described the game as having a 'romantic narrative quality'. It was the game that was most successful in bringing the group together as a single unit, she said. Her comment points to a fundamental flaw within the work's realization, its hermetic nature and dependency on its own internal logic to which the spectator/participant always remains ultimately external.

Over time Sehgal, and his producers switched the choregraphic sequences around, made subtle alterations to the choreography and introduced new elements and 'freestyle' improvised sections, to keep the piece 'alive'. No script, choreographic sequences, or instructions were written down. The work was taught verbally and performed from memory. The corporeal knowledge of the piece developed dialogically, passed from body to body either by Tino and Raza, or, if an interpreter joined the piece during the course of the exhibition, by a fellow participant whom the new interpreter shadowed and learned to mimic. During the exhibition of the piece, the participants were given notes on how best to enact the work each day usually by both Sehgal and Raza, unless Sehgal was otherwise unavailable. These instructions, sometimes given twice a day, were critical to maintaining the energy, or dynamic, of the work. 'If the group became too centered

within itself, too inward looking, they would stop engaging with the public and seem closed off and cultish,' McLean-Ferris recalled.[354] She emphasized that although the work was tightly orchestrated, it remained experimental and capable of responding to particular conditions, quiet evenings, busy Saturdays and so on.[355] The work existed as a live culture that was responsive to the specific climate of the host body of the museum.

At certain points in the realization of *These Associations,* a dramatic interlude was inserted between the choreographic game sequences, and the conversational 'conceits'. The choreographed network of roaming interpreters slowed and the tempo shifted, the work became static; the Turbine Hall lights dimmed, together the interpreters began to sing:

'To to to to day day day day we we we we have / begun to to create / today we have begun to create / natural natural natural / pro pro pro ce ce ce ce ces / of our own / and in in instead of surrounding the world with / de de de fences fences fences / de de fences fences /de de fences de fences de defences against / nature's nature's nature's e-le-men-ta-ry forces / we we we we have / channeled channeled channeled channeled channeled / these forces into the world / we have channeled these forces into the world / itself.'[356]

Taken from Hannah Arendt's text, *The Human Conditions*, these lyrics were followed by an adaptation of an excerpt from Martin Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking* sung in unison, in a hymn-like form:

'Thus thus thus thus. Thus thus thus. Thus thus thus we. Thus thus thus we ask. Thus thus thus we ask now. Even if the old, even if the old, even if the old rootedness rootedness is be-ing lost. In this age, may may, may may, may may not a new, may may not a new new, may may not a new new new ground, ground, ground, be created out of which. Humans! Humans! Humans! / Humans! Humans! Humans! / Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Nature! / Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Humans! Nature! /And all all all their works

[354] Laura McLean-Ferris, email to the author, 20th August 2015.

[355] *Ibid.*

[356] *Ibid.*

works works / all all all their works works works works / all all all their works works works works works works works / can flou-flou-flou-flou-rish-rish-rish-rish/ flou-flou-flou-flou-rish-rish-rish-rish / flou-flou-flou-flou-rish-rish-rish-rish-rish / even in the technological age / even in the technological age'[357]

The crux of the original text, which Sehgal appropriated, is the loss of *autochtony* or rootedness which, Heidegger writes, is symptomatic of the spirit of the age. 'What could the grounds and foundation be for the new autochtony?' Heidegger asks.[358] In this dawning atomic age, a great danger threatens, 'the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday be accepted and practiced *as the only way* of thinking,' Heidegger wrote, 'Then man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature – that he is a meditative being.'[359] What was at stake for Heidigger was man's essential nature; his anxiety at the heart of this text surrounds the issue of keeping meditative thinking alive.[360] It was this same principle that Sehgal sought to achieve by positing *These Associations* in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in an attempt to reassert man's rootedness in the technological age, in an act of social interaction and thinking, in the instigation of philosophy in action once again.

Using cinematographic terms, Raza described the installation of *These Associations*, 'It contains this jump cut from this wide shot of the whole Turbine Hall, and this moving large group, to something like an extreme close-up, or a kind

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[357] See Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Originally published under the title, *Gelassenheit*, (Pfullingen, 1959). Laura McLean-Ferris, personal communication, 20th August 2015.

[358] Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, *op. cit*. p.53.

[359] *Ibid.*

[360] *Ibid.*

of zoom into the subjectivity of this particular person.'[361] It was at these moments of close-up into the personal subjectivity of the interpreters, instances of encounter between the interpreter and the museum visitor that the parasitic nature of Sehgal's work came to the fore most clearly.

Instead of conceptualising social relations according to a model of interpersonal exchange, Serres argues that all acts of interpersonal exchange are based on exploitation. In his study of human relations, Serres replaces Marx's concept of 'exchange value' with 'abuse value', which he defines as 'complete, irrevocable consummation', one that necessarily only operates in one direction. Serres suggests that instead of the social being a two-way process, composed of acts of give and take, each channel of a social relation contains an element of interference which threatens to disrupt the signal. It is this element of interference that the parasite embodies. Such disruption, according to Serres, is potentially capable of leading to the formation of 'new systems', a means of agitating the existing structure to productive effect. 'The parasite has placed itself in the most profitable positions at the intersections of relation,' he wrote, 'its performances are far better in spots where several relations cross or meet. It is at the knots of regulations, and suddenly, it relates to the collective.' The parasite is a thermal exciter, its introduction into a given system instantly provokes a difference, a disequilibrium. Immediately the system changes.[362] 'The new order appears by the parasite troubling the message,' Serres writes. 'It disconcerts the ancient sense, order, and message; and then composes new ones.'[363] This, I believe, is how *These Associations* behaved in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall.

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[361] Asad Raza in conversation with Jessica Morgan, Tate Modern, London, 22nd September 2012.

[362] Michel Serres, *The Parasite* translated by Lawrence R. Schehr (Minneapolis, 2007), p.182.

[363] *Ibid.,* p.184.

McLean-Ferris acknowledged that the so-called 'conceits' were the least successful aspect of the work's realization, a criticism that was widespread in the reception of the work at the time of its exhibition. 'The whole experience feels mediated rather than "real",' critic Alastair Sooke commented.[364] It is this notion of mediation, I believe, on which Sehgal's entire output is premised and which is also key to the work's parasitic relation to the museum. As Catherine Wood noted, despite it's performance of social interaction, the possibility of any real interpersonal exchange in *These Associations* remained elusive. 'It is deeply curious,' she writes, 'that despite being made of people, despite its address towards the individual spectator, despite the capacity invested in his interpreters to respond, pick up on cues, converse with viewers, Sehgal's work always seems to resist connecting people and rest within a solipsistic realm of isolation.'[365] This, I believe, is a result of the way in which the work inhabits the museum system, by its strategic occupation of the inner logic of the museum.

The parasite is 'an elementary relation', one that upsets equilibrium of the host body, making it deviate. Its introduction into a system provokes a difference, or a disequilibrium immediately, that system changes. That change, Serres argues, comes from 'a rupture in equilibriated exchanges.' The parasite operates through interception, the new order appears when the parasite troubles the messages, it disconcerts the ancient/existing order and message; and then composes new ones.[366] The parasite 'excites production; it exalts and accelerates the exchanges of its

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[364] See Alastair Sooke, 'Tino Sehgal, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern', *The Telegraph*, 24 July 2012, published online at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/9421678/Tino-Sehgal-Turbine-Hall-Tate-Modern-review.html (last accessed 9th September 2015).

[365] Catherine Wood, 'People and Things in the Museum' in Mathieu Copeland (ed.), *Choreographing Exhibitions* (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2013), p.115.

[366] Serres, *op.cit*. (note 94), p.184.

hosts', both a producer and an inducer, the parasite is a clinamen, and 'a thermal exciter.'[367] This, I believe, is how *These Associations*, and indeed Sehgal's work more broadly, operates. At Tate Modern, his interpreters' 'conceits' invaded the host body of the museum and occupied a territory on which its existence is premised: the interpretation of meaning, the channel of communication between the artist and the museum visitor. Like the paradigm of noise, or interference, the parasite complicates and refines the central model of translation. It is in this way that Sehgal's work occupies the interpretative channels of the museum, the lines of communication between artist and viewer – a position occupied by the work of the institution. Once inside that system, it mimics the work of the museum and intercepts its own message system. In its live execution, the work attempted to by-pass curatorial agency, and institutional authority, by directly addressed the museum visitor thereby accelerating and exciting the museum's traditional channels and methods of communication. In short, *These Associations* inhabited the museum, as a living system.

Sehgal's parasitic engagement with the institution of the museum was clearly evidenced by the mid-career retrospective of his work realized at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 2015. The exhibition unfolded over twelve months and sixteen 'chapters' or works. For 365 days, Sehgal's work occupied the museum in various different live formations that contaminated the museum's permanent collection. Conceived as a consecutive series of twelve presentations, the exhibition featured a different work or 'situation' from Sehgal's oeuvre instigated in a different gallery space of the museum each month. The retrospective opened with *Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things*

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[367] Serres, *op.cit.* (note 92), p.188.

(2000), a work that the Stedelijk acquired in 2005. At the time of writing, the following works had subsequently been exhibited: *This is Good* (2001); *This is New* (2003); *This is Propaganda* (2002); *This is Exchange* (2002) *Kiss* (2002); *This is so Contemporary* (2004); *Kiss (clean version)* (2006); *This Variation* (2012); *This Progress* (2006); *Ann Lee* (2011), and *This situation* (2007). When I visited the Stedelijk Museum in July 2015 the work exhibited was *Yet Untitled* (2013), a floor-based situation enacted by one male and two female interpreters that recalled *Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things* with the notable addition of a semi-verbal, man-made score. The mostly abstract form of communication akin to beatboxing was interspersed with occasional sung refrains, fragments of recognizable '90s pop songs such as Destiny Child's *Say My Name*. Sound filled the gallery holding the visitors' attention captive, yet they were never explicitly addressed, nor engaged. The work functioned not in direct dialogue with the museum visitor, but rather internally as an act of synchrony between the trio of interpreters focused intently on one another, controlling the slow, contemplative movements of one interpreter through the use of song alone. 'The piece itself is very simple,' Sehgal said, 'two or three people, one singing the other dancing, and they're both kneeling…I'm not interested in a fixed cosmology of religion […] just the simple act of going on your knees puts you in a different mind-set.'[368]

Yet Untitled was the work for which Sehgal was awarded the Golden Lion for the best artist in the International Exhibition 'The Encyclopedic Palace' at the

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[368] Tino Sehgal interviewed on the occasion of the 55th International Art Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia, 2013 published online at: http://www.labiennale.org/en/mediacenter/video/55-b29.html (accessed 23rd August 2015).

Venice Biennale in 2013, an award that signaled the artist's full assimilation into the art institution that, from the outset, his work set out to strategically manipulate. Transposed to the space of the museum's permanent collection, *Yet Untitled* took on a very specific resonance, one that underscored Sehgal's work's particular relation to the institutional framework of the museum. Beyond the announcement of Sehgal's exhibition in the museum's programme online and in print, no signage accompanied the exhibition of Sehgal's work at the Stedlijk Museum; moreover the ticketing assistants I spoke to claimed no knowledge of the exhibition. the work could only be encountered in the thick of the museum, occupying not designated temporary exhibition space, but the permanent collection, the ontological heart of the institution. I found the performance situated in the midst of the Stedelijk's permanent collection, in a gallery between displays of paintings by Agnes Martin and Robert Ryman. The work's location underscored the parasitic nature of the relationship between Sehgal's work and the institution with which it is dependent.

Yet Untitled's hermetic refusal to directly address the museum visitor points to a central problem within Sehgal's oeuvre. Despite its parasitic occupation of the institutional interpretative system, its path of communication between artist and visitor, ultimately it cannot be a substitute for the work of the museum. Like the otherworldly movements of the trio of interpreters at the Stedlijk, the work can only exist as simulation: of real social engagement, philosophical thinking, and the work of the institution it occupies. The work inhabits the museum, but cannot replace the work that it does, and yet what the work can affect, I believe, is a challenge to that institution, by troubling it from within.

Fourteen years after it was first performed by the artist himself, I witnessed Sehgal's *Untitled* (2001) (re)presented in Paris at the Centre Pompidou, in January 2014. The work was interpreted by the choreographers and dancers Boris Charmatz

and Frank Willens.[369] That performance marked the first time that Sehgal's spatio-temporal museum had been reactivated in the context of the institutional framework to which it structurally refers. Danced as two, consecutive, forty-minute-long solos without an interval, the doubling of the piece served to underscore the inherent iterability of Sehgal's work, its strategic defiance of the ontology of performance, and its supposed 'one time only life.'[370] After a fourteen-year hiatus, the presentation of the work in this context felt significant, indicative of a new relationship between live art and the museum that Sehgal's work has come to both embody and effect.

Sehgal's live works are paradigmatic of the situational aesthetic, a mode of object-less aesthetic production that has dominated contemporary art over the past fifteen years, one that is strategically complicit with the institutional frameworks in which it is staged. Live not just in temporality of its realization, production and reception, this work exists as a living system, as a parasite, a live culture that

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[369] Tino Sehgal, *Untitled* (2000) was performed at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris on the evenings of 22nd; 23rd; and 24th January 2014. The work was subsequently presented outdoors at the 45th Edition of the Santarcangelo Festival Internazionale del Teatro in Piazza, in July 2015. Frank Willens's enactment on this occasion met with substantial criticism when a number of critics noted that he appeared to urinate in his own mouth in the public square. See Silvia Bottitoli's statement published online in response to the work's negative reception 24th July 2015, at: http://santarcangelofestival.com/sa15/en/2015/07/24/di-cosa-stiamo-parlando-su-untitled2000-di-tino-sehgal-al-festival-di-santarcangelo/

[370] Phelan argued that the oppositional potency of the medium is inextricably linked to its ontology, the fact that performance becomes itself through disappearance, through its temporariness: its 'one time only life.' For Phelan, it is performance's independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically, and linguistically that gives it its distinct oppositional edge. She argued that the inscrutability and perception of worthlessness is part of the appeal of the performative and performance generally for theorists and artists anxious to inhabit a politically subversive ideological and linguistic field. See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked the Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), in particular chapter seven, 'The Ontology of Performance.'

demands to be cultivated, to be actively negotiated by the host body of the institution. The challenges that this work poses to the museum are considerable and yet its potential to challenge that institution, its ability to rework that system from within, is precisely what makes the situational aesthetic so significant. What does it mean to acquire, to conserve, and to exhibit a work that can only be experienced live? What is at stake in pitting the provisionality of the live situation against the temporal permanency of the museum? Over the past decade these questions have begun to trouble the museum, to agitate and actively challenge its existing systems and methodologies to critically productive effect. At a historical moment at which the existence of public museums can no longer be taken for granted, the situational aesthetic that Sehgal's work embodies offers a possible way forward, and proposes a new paradigm for the institution to embrace. It is in this way that the new live art is catalysing intense debate surrounding the place of liveness in the existing canon, whilst inciting acts of institutional self-reflection on the part of the museum that are both timely and necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MUSEUM AS MEDIUM (OR THE NEW MUSÉE IMAGINAIRE)

The work of contemporary artists allows us to imagine a history of recent art that foregrounds the museum as a medium as effective as any other – whose precursors laid out a set of possibilities for live art that have proven as stringent and productive as older notions of art's internal or autonomous formal properties.

> 'We have the pleasure of announcing to the customers and the curious the opening of the '*Département des Aiges*' of the *Musée d'Art Moderne.* The works are in preparation; their completion will determine the date at which we hope to make poetry and the plastic arts live hand-in-hand. We hope that our formula 'Disinterestedness plus admiration' will seduce you.'[371]

With this letter addressed to the 'Cabinet of Minsters of Culture', on 7th September 1968, Marcel Broodthaers announced the opening of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aiges*, (Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles) a fictitious museum with no fixed location that existed in multiple iterations between 1968 and 1971.[372] The 'museum' in its first articulation, titled the *Section XIXème Siècle (19th Century Section)*, was located in Broodthaers's apartment and studio in Brussels on rue de la Pépinière. The fictitious *Musée* opened with a *vernissage* on

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[371] Marcel Broodthaers, open letter, Ostend, 7th September, 1968, reprinted in Douglas Crimp, *On the Museums Ruins*, (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1993), p.206.

[372] For a full description of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aiges* in its numerous iterations see Douglas Crimp, 'This is not a Museum' in Crimp *On the Museums Ruins*, *op. cit.* pp.200 - 234. See also Benjamin Buchloh's extensive writings on Brooadthaers, in particular: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (ed.) *Marcel Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press/October Books, 1988); Buchloh, 'Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde,' Artforum 18, no.9 (May, 1980), pp.52 -59; Buchloh, 'The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers,' in A.A. Bronson and Peggy Gale (eds,) *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), pp.45-56; and the special issue of *October* on Broodthaers guest edited by Buchloh (no.42, Fall 1987). Also Maria Gilissen and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (eds,), *Marcel Broodthaers: Musee d'art Modern, Department des Aigles, Section Publicite,* (New York: Marian Goodman Gallery, 1995).

27th September 1968, an evening reception for a group of sixty artists, critics, gallerists, and collectors. On arrival the guests encountered Broodthaers's living room stacked with empty wooden shipping crates stencilled with the instructions, 'With Care', 'Fragile', and 'Keep Dry' on their sides. Taped to the walls of the room were thirty postcards of canonical nineteenth century paintings, reproductions of works by Courbet, David, Ingres, and Meissonier among others, items that Broodthaers described as 'overvalued.'[373] A lorry owned by the art shippers Menkes Continentel Transport was parked directly in front of the living room window deliberately blocking any view of the world outside. Legible only from the interior, temporary signage stencilled to the window announced 'Musée'. This flipping of standard gallery front signage, conventionally viewed from the exterior, was indicative of a strategy of reversal, of an inside-out logic central to Broodthaers's 'museum'. In a move that echoed *The Void* Klein created ten years earlier, all the conventional trappings of the *vernissage* were strategically deployed, formal invitations were sent out, drinks were served, speeches were given, and yet no artworks, material or otherwise, were exhibited. In a comment in which he compared his motives to the work of Marcel Duchamp, Broodthaers appropriated the deadpan logic of the ready-made by stating simply, 'This is a museum.'[374] The *Section XIXème Siècle* defied the institution's most basic ontological criterion in that it had no permanent collection. 'The fictitious museum tries to steal from the

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[373] Marcel Broodthaers, open later, Paris, 29th November 1968, reprinted in Crimp, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.211.

[374] Marcel Broodthaers interviewed by Freedy de Vree, Brussels 1969, reprinted in Christina Kravagna (ed.), *The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique*, *The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhanndlung Walther König, 2001), p.35.

official, the real museum, in order to lend its lie more power and credibility,'
Broodthaers later stated in an interview in 1972.[375]

Broodthaers conceived of this fictitious 19th century museum department as a space
of dialogue and discursivity, as a site where art world insiders could gather to
debate the state of art and society post May'68 in a quasi-social setting.[376] At the
opening of the proxy museum, Johannes Cladders, then Director of the Städtisches
Museum Mönchengladbach, delivered a speech in which he proposed that the
museum had come to be perceived widely as 'dusty when not declared dead'.[377] He
suggested that the logical consequence of this state of affairs was that art, nurtured
by so-called 'anti-art', would be responsible for producing the 'anti-museum'. In
reality Broodthaers's *Musée* was perhaps not quite the 'anti-museum' that Cladders
envisaged. Deploying the institution's existing codes and legitimising conventions
as a readymade, as a conceptual shell and a structuring frame, Broodthaers
playfully reconfigured the institutional matrix of the museum. The motivations
behind the work were far from uncritical, as Broodthaers made clear, 'There is, of
course, in this museum an inherent criticism of the State and of museum politics, of
the cultural hierarchy in Belgium,' he said.[378] Elsewhere Broodthaers described the
Musée as a critique of the emergence of a new hierarchical, capitalist approach to

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[375] Marcel Broodthaers interviewed by Johannes Cladders in January 1972, transcribed by Cladders
in May 1972; in *INK Documentation* 4, (Zurich, 1979), p.31 reprinted as 'Musée d'Art Moderne
Département des Aigles' in Kravagna (ed.), *The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique*
(Köln: Verlag der Buchhanndlung Walther König, 2001), *op.cit.* (note 4), p.39.

[376] Rachel Haidu suggests that the fictitious museum may be understood as an investigation of the
ways in which resistance and institutional bureaucracy intertwined in the immediate aftermath of
May '68, and the dilemma such developments posed to the work of art as a result. See Rachel
Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976*, (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press,
2010).

[377] Johannes Cladders quoted in Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976, op.
cit,* (note 4), p.109.

[378] *Ibid.,* p.36.

the production of art and its patronage.[379] By conflating the studio, site of art's production, with the museum, site of art's reception, Broodthaers critiqued the transformation of art into merchandise. His fictive museum's critique was twofold, a challenge to both the institution it mimicked and the marketplace it necessarily involved. In its first manifestation Broodthaers's *Musée* emphasized the nineteenth century as the point of origin for the tension between artist and institution.

The itinerant museum reappeared in a number of iterations, in a variety of 'sections' or departments realised across Europe but never, notably, in the context of a real museum. In an almost exact facsimile of the *Musée*'s first installation, the second manifestation, *Section XVIIème Siècle (17th Century Section)* took the form of the first section dismantled and transposed to the loft space of A379089, an experimental gallery in Antwerp run by Kasper König for the duration of one week. On that occasion the postcards exhibited were ones that exclusively depicted paintings by Rubens. The paradoxically ephemeral *Section Documentaire* realised in 1969 was drawn in sand on a Belgian beach, while the *Section Financière*, created in 1970, was entirely conceptual and comprised an attempt to sell the museum 'on account of bankruptcy'. The sale of the museum was advertised on the cover of an edition of nineteen copies of the Cologne Art Fair catalogue, but no suitable buyer was found.[380]

The *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aiges* existed as a series of absurd situations, as a proxy that parodied the Museum of Modern Art and its institutional

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[379] Marcel Broodthaers interviewed by Freddy de Vree on the occasion of the exhibition Marcel Broodthaers: *Musée* d'Art Moderne, D*épartement des Aigles, Section Cinéma*, Burgplatz 12, Dusseldorf 1971, unpublished. Reprinted in Christina Kravagna (ed.), *The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhanndlung Walther König, 2001), p.38.

[380] See Crimp, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.216. For a discussion of the penultimate installment, *Section Publicité* realized at Documenta see George Baker, 'This is not an Advertisement: Marcel Broodthaers's *Section Publicité, Artforum*, 34, no.9 (May 1996), pp.86-89; 124.

conventions.[381] Broodthaers's *Musée* was a structure of fiction, a museum of modern art that existed in the staging of the sites, rules, and bureaucracy of the institution it performatively mimicked. Neither a site of critique beyond the museum, nor a designated act of resistance staged within the institution's walls, instead Broodthaers's museum adopted a position from within the institution's ideological framework. 'The Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles is quite simply a lie, a deception, but it has endured over the course of four years in the most diverse forms and manifestations: in publications, discussions, post cards, real artistic objects, paintings and sculptures, and in publicity objects,' Broodthaers affirmed.[382] In short the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, *Département des Aiges* addressed the museum as a *system*.[383] I evoke Broodthaers's fictitious museum here as representative of a paradigm shift in the relationship between artistic production and the museum, indicative of the anxiety surrounding the status of that institution in the late 1960s. The *Musée d'Art Moderne*, *Département des Aiges* is one of the earliest historical examples of an attempt to question the institution of the art museum through an imaginative restaging of its conventions, and an important

[381] As Haidu notes the Belgian capital's lack of a Museum of Modern Art was an issue of topical debate at the time of the founding of Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles. See Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976*, *op. cit.* (note 1), p.

[382] Marcel Broodthaers, '*Musée d'Art Moderne*, *Département des Aiges*' taken from an interview with Johannes Cladders in January 1972 reprinted in Kravagna (ed.), *The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhanndlung Walther König, 2001), p.39.

[383] In a polemic written against the conversion of Broodthaers's studio into the provisional museum, Daniel Buren railed against the *vernissage* of the museum that he attended, 'The museum and the gallery on the one hand and the studio on the other are linked to form the foundation of the same edifice and the same system. To question one while leaving the other intact accomplishes nothing. Analysis of the art system must inevitably be undertaken in terms of the studio as the *unique space* of production and the museum as the *unique space* of reception.' See Daniel Buren, 'Function of the Museum', *Artforum International*, No. 1, (Sept 1973), p.68.

prototypical example of the work that came to be defined by the rubric institutional critique.

'I could have sold my museum.' Broodthaers said, 'But at the moment it is impossible for me to do so. As long as I take refuge in and identify with it, I cannot.'[384] Broodthaers's comment is echoed in a statement Daniel Buren made the following year in which the notion of the museum as refuge appears again. Writing in 1973, on the subject of the function of the museum, Buren described the institution as a privileged place with aesthetic, economic, and mystical roles, a place of preservation, collection, and refuge, 'without this refuge, no work can "exist",' he insisted.[385] 'The museum is an asylum. The work set in it is sheltered from the weather and all sorts of dangers, and most of all protected from any kind of questioning.'[386] It is a furtive form of institutional questioning that today's situational aesthetic has initiated.

Thirty years after Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aiges* closed its imaginary doors; Tino Sehgal created his own museum in the form of *Untitled* (2000), the spatio-temporal history of twentieth-century dance that heralded the emergence of a new relationship between live art and the museum. The situational tendency the work exemplifies is not particular to Sehgal alone, but rather identifiable as a shared concern amongst a generation of artists born in the 1970s and 1980s who came to prominence around the turn of the millennium in the

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384 Marcel Broodthaers interviewed by Johannes Cladders, January 1972, op. cit, (note 12).

[385] Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Museum', *Artforum* 12, No.1, (September, 1973), p.68. Originally published in French in Daniel Buren, *Position-Propositionen*, exh. cat., (Mönchenladbach: Städtisches Museum, 1971).

[386] *Ibid.*

wake of those practices associated with institutional critique.[387] The work of Tania Bruguera and Roman Ondák exemplifies this visible tendency prevalent in contemporary art over the past fifteen years, one in which the live situation operates symbiotically with the performative apparatus of the museum. Like Sehgal, both Bruguera and Ondák deploy living, breathing people as their core 'material' as a corporeal means of instigating spatio-temporal situations in the very fabric of the museum. Although distinctly divergent in its intentions, their work is anchored in a shared interest in subverting the conventional behavioural codes of the museum by occupying its institutional framework from within. This chapter focuses on a number of works realised over the past ten years that involve the creative manipulation of the museum as medium: live works that involve the strategic occupation of the museum matrix as a site of public reception and interpretation.

The situational aesthetic that I am identifying exists in stark contrast to the systematic exploration of museological representation that defined the artistic practices of the 1970s and 1980s associated with institutional critique. This work acknowledges the situation that the proponents of institutional critique eventually accepted, that the notion is in fact a paradoxical construction, suggesting a critique of an institution that is itself institutional.[388] This recent strategy is not resistant to the deep entanglement between artists and institutions, rather it is premised on that

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[387] As Isabelle Graw notes, 'In itself Institutional Critique is a paradoxical construction as it suggests a critique of an institution that *is itself* institutional […] The double scene of this critique reminds us of two things – of the deep entanglement between artists and institutions and of the degree to which institutions have determined the shape or direction of works especially made for or about them.' Isabelle Graw, 'Beyond Institutional Critique', in John C Welchmann (ed.) *Institutional Critique and After* (Zürich, JRP/Ringier, 2006), p.141.

[388] For a detailed discussion of the canonisation of institutional critique see Graw, 'Beyond Institutional Critique' *op.cit.* (note 17), p.141.

relationship and a new understanding of the museum as a system within which a set of rules might be imaginatively reconfigured and performatively staged.

The development of the situational tendency evident since the turn of the millennium has been accompanied by the increasing prominence of what has been defined as 'a choreographic turn' in the field of artistic production. A principle in which the traditional structure of the exhibition as a temporal gathering of disparate objects in a given space is radically rethought, it loosely defines exhibitions that are determined not just by the literal incorporation of movement or dance, but by the utilising of the structuring principles of scripts or scores. Perhaps the most famous and effective instance of this approach is the work of the French artist Philippe Parreno, in particular Parreno's exhibition *Anywhere, Anywhere out of the World*, realized at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris in 2013/2014.[389] Since the early 1990s, Parreno has been creating artworks that question the boundaries between reality and the imagined. Working with the exhibition itself as a medium, he conceives his shows as spaces where a series of orchestrated events unfold.

In 1889, when asked where he would most like to live, Claude Debussy replied: 'Anywhere out of the world.' This response formed the basis of Parreno's exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo which marked the first time an artist had taken over the gallery in its entirety. The exhibition was structured according to the tempo of Stravinsky's ballet *Petrushka* composed from 1910 to 1911. The score was played by autopianos dotted throughout the gallery building interspersed amongst works by Parreno and those by friends and collaborators: works by Liam Gillick, Domanique Gonzalez-Foerster, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage which were

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[389] Another notable instance of this approach was Pierre Hughye's retrospective at Centre Pomipdou Paris, which occurred simultaneously with Parreno's exhibition at Palais du Tokyo from 25 September 2013 – 6 January 2014.

carefully crafted or 'choreographed' into a unified whole. Electronic wall labels punctuated the exhibition, injecting philosophical commentary into conventional gallery signage. The gallery lights flickered intermittently as though controlled by some other, greater authority; automatic doors opened of their own accord. Windows onto the 'real world' outside the gallery were frosted and made deliberately opaque. The effect of this remarkable undertaking was haunting and poetic. An exhibition, Parreno suggested, is never a place in itself. It is 'an echo of another landscape, a shifted geography, or another territory altogether'. The self-conscious expositional meta-structure that Parreno created is paralleled by the rise in live works that take the museum itself as a medium. That meta-structure, I believe, first originated in the live expositional experiments of the 1950s, demonstrated, for instance, by the strategical deployment of the form of the *vernissage* with which this thesis began. Over the past fifteen years that tendency has developed into one that self-consciously reflects its own institutional complicity. It is in these situational works and exhibitions that the parasitic relation between live art and the institution is evidenced most clearly, evidence of a mode of artistic production that is challenging the museum's focus and traditional modes of operation more drastically.

On a surface level the work I am referring to might appear to share many similarities with a particular ubiquitous strand of artistic activity in Europe and North America in the 1990s, with the work that Nicolas Bourriaud defined under the rubric 'relational aesthetics'. Bourriaud defined relational art as process-related behavioural activity that chose as its so-called theoretical horizon 'the realm of human interaction and its social content rather than the assertion of an independent

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and private symbolic space'.[390] A type of artistic activity characterised by participatory models aimed at the tightening of 'the space of relations' and the forging of 'hands-on-utopias', relational art emerged, according to Bourriaud, as a solution to the rift in interpersonal relations caused by the reification of social space and experience. Relational art was concerned with moving away from relations within the art world, in an endeavour to experience art's 'capacities of resistance within the overall social arena'.[391] In this supposedly 'subversive and critical form', the artist modelled and disseminated 'disconcerting situations, proposing art as a moment of sociability.'[392]

The contemporary situations I will be examining borrow from the neo-avant-garde the strategy of the unexpected encounter, the constructed situation, and the open form.[393] Like relational art, they privilege process, interactivity, the revision of the artist-audience hierarchy, and the active participation/mobilization of the spectator – strategies which first emerged in the immediate post-war period on a trans-national scale – and yet this tendency is distinctly different. Indeed it calls the bluff of this mode of artistic activity to some extent. Unlike the artistic activity associated with relational aesthetics, the work I will be discussing acknowledges the game in which it is complicit, and subverts its rules knowingly with deliberate and self-reflexive intent. This work reinforces the simple fact that there can be no such thing as a 'relational microterritory' or functioning 'microtopia' within the supportive power structure of the art museum. What follows is an attempt to unravel the institutional context in which live art today is complicit. The new wave

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[390] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du reel, 2002), p.14.

[391] *Ibid.,* p.31.

[392] *Ibid.*

[393] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (1962) reprinted in Claire Bishop, *Participation*, (Whitechapel; London; Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press), pp.20-40.

of artistic activity that Bruguera's and Ondák's work exemplifies underscores the urgent need to think of the museum no longer as simply a treasury of objects, or a permanent collection, but as a *dispositf*, a performative apparatus in its own right.[394] This chapter might be read as an attempt to expand on the critical possibilities that Broodthaers' fictive museum set in motion, to question what it might mean to rethink the institution not as a noun, but as a verb.

In 2003 Ondák wrote a letter to the Slovakian Minister of Culture. 'Dear Minister', he began, 'could you support my intention to establish a Virtual Museum of Contemporary Art?' Immediately reminiscent of the letter Broodthaers sent to the Belgian 'Cabinet of Culture Ministers' announcing the inauguration of the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, *Département des Aiges,* in 1968, Ondák's simple request, a work titled *Letter* (2003) comprised of a single page signed by the artist, stamped and dated by the Ministry on 12th March 2003 to acknowledge its official receipt. The letter is typical of Ondák's practice which actively engages with art's institutional conventions to challenge and subtly distort the social constraints they impose. Although his work also materialises in drawing, and in the making of installations, it is his work that borrows from the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and early 1960s the medium of the situation or the live event to place the temporality of live at the heart of art's institutions that articulates Ondák's situational practice most vividly.

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[394] Here I refer to the notion of the *dispositif* first and most extensively developed by Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality Vol. I* first published in French in 1976 where he first and most extensively develops the term to designate a configuration or arrangement of elements and forces, practices and discourses, power and knowledge, that is both strategic and technical. See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume. I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

Ondák's works effect subtle adjustments, transposing museum furniture from one situation to another, for instance, as in the work *Museum/Storage* (1999); inviting a mother to teach her child to walk in real time in an empty gallery in *Teaching to Walk* (2004); growing vegetation in an inverted mise-en-scène inside the Czech and Slovak pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale; or a simple guided tour in which he left the gallery spaces empty and showed the visitors the surrounding city instead in *Guided Tour (Follow Me)* (2002). Ondák quietly infiltrates art's expositional and interpretative infrastructure in order to create a space for reflection on human relations more broadly. In a significant departure from those practices of the 1970s and 1980s associated with institutional critique, Ondák's work attends not to museological representation *per se*, but rather to the museum as a space of ritualised behaviour in which complex societal drives are encoded.

Ondák's works frequently occupy the human infrastructure of the institution as a means to underscore the way that we inhabit museums and galleries on an interpersonal and social level. With the performance *Tickets Please*, first realised at Spala Gallery in Prague in 1999/2000, Ondák installed an exact replica of the gallery's existing entrance hall ticket desk on the first floor above. The usual ticket seller worked upstairs (figure 5.1), while his place at the desk at the entrance was taken by his eleven year-old grandson (figure 5.2). Both participants sold tickets in a conventional manner with one significant modification: the grandson requested half the usual entrance fee while his grandfather collected the remainder on the floor above. The visitor thereby crossed the symbolic gateway into the exhibition only to encounter it once again upstairs. Ondák further disrupted the temporal structure of the exhibition by reconfiguring the gallery's standard opening hours. They were amended to accommodate the boy's school timetable which prevented him from working before 2 O'clock in the afternoon.

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With *Tickets Please* an exchange that is ubiquitous to the museum visitor's experience of paid exhibitions – the basic transaction of buying a ticket – became a performance in its own right modestly presented as a job shared between two generations.[395] The simple act of doubling served to reflect back on a quotidian exchange that the visitor would typically barely acknowledge. *Tickets Please* exemplifies the coded conduct Ondák instigates which operates in deliberate tension with the standard work of the art museum. His work functions not as critique of, but rather as a dialogue with, the institution, as a subtle adjustment or transposition of existing rituals appropriated as ready-made forms, as crucibles for actions that are so slight that they are barely perceivable as art at all. Jan Werwort observed that the situation of the grandson sharing his grandfather's job evoked the increasingly archaic tradition of a family trade shared across generations. He suggested that the effect of *Tickets Please* is to emphasize how alien that notion is in contemporary society today.[396] Yet the work, I believe, simultaneously operated as a means of foregrounding a universal understanding of temporality, one that disrupted the logic of the museum. By inserting the personal, the biographical, and the familial into the public space of the gallery or museum, Ondák challenges the first and central occupation of the museum: to resist the passage of time.

In *Silence Please*, a work first initiated at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 2004, the museum's own guards went about their daily shifts with one significant modification: each guard was dressed in security uniform dating from the period in which they were born (figure 5.2). Ondák thereby diverted the visitor's attention

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[395] The intergenerational relationship is explored further in Ondák 2003 work *Bad News Is A Thing of the Past Now* (2003). For a discussion of that work see Verwoert, 'Taking a Line for a Walk', *op. cit.*

[396] Jan Verwoert, 'Taking a Line for a Walk', *Frieze*, 90 (April 2005) published online at: http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/taking_a_line_for_a_walk/

away from the artworks on display towards the museum's human infrastructure, to the museum guards, men and women who facilitate art's exhibition and preservation but whose contribution to the work of the museum is typically not publically acknowledged. *Silence Please* is representative of the way that Ondák subtly underscores the inner workings of the museum as a ritualised system, drawing attention to the human basis of the institution that we might otherwise take for granted. By altering the guard's uniform Ondák appropriated the museum staff as a means to display a piece of institutional history that simultaneously reflected back on their own personal biography. Ondák thereby not only distorted the experiential conditions of the museum visit, but through inserting this live situation into the Stedelijk museum, he merged the historic with the contemporary, and the biographic with the institutional and posited a provisional reality within the inner-workings of the museum.

Jessica Morgan has noted the specifically Eastern European context in which Ondák's work first developed. His use of subterfuge, she argues is, to some extent, indebted to the work of former Eastern Bloc artists who were forced to produce work that remained largely clandestine due to the political climate of the 1960s and 1970s. In their subtle adjustment of reality, Morgan suggests Ondák's works reflect his upbringing in the then communist Slovakia and may therefore be read as 'a tactical replication of the propagandist alterations of image and statement that were an everyday fact of life.'[397] She argues that we might, then, understand Ondák's almost invisible works as moments of alterity, as acts of critical dissent. The Slovakian artist Júlis Koller's work, in particular a series of public interventions

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[397]Jessica Morgan, 'What You See Is What You Get: Roman Ondak's Tactical Disappearance' in *The Hugo Boss Prize 2010. Cao Fei; Hans-Peter Feldmann; Roman Ondak; Walid Raad; Natascha Sadr Haghighian; Apichatpong Weerasethakul*, exh. cat., New York, 2010, pp.53-56; p.54.

titled *Anti-Happenings* of 1965 in which he planted cards inscribed 'invitation cards to an idea' around Bratislava, has frequently been cited as a historical precedent for the tactic of disappearance that has characterised Ondák's live output since the turn of the millennium.[398] Koller conceived of the 'anti-happening' as a live form capable of affecting a 'cultural reshaping of the subject' and a heightened awareness of the surrounding world.[399] He coined the formula 'Mini Concepts of Maxi Ideas' to describe his working method.[400] From 1980 to 1989, Koller ran a fictional exhibition space named *U.F.O Galéria*, a gallery that he described as, 'a challenging and hard-to-reach fictitious space for spiritual communication between earthly beings and the unknown cosmic world.'[401] The acronym 'U.F.O' originally stood for 'Universal-Cultural Futurological Operations', but developed to encompass a number of variations.[402] Verwoert has commented on the significance of this constantly shifting reference, suggesting that it became a metaphor for the invasion of reality by the imagination, a notion that might equally be applied to the situations Ondak instigates.[403] In his 1965 manifesto Anti-happening (System of Subjective Objectivity), Koller defined the anti-happening as an act of 'textual designation' that raises a person's awareness of his or her cultural surroundings. Unlike happenings, these acts do not involve the staging of psychologically

398 See Jessica Morgan, 'What You See Is What You Get: Roman Ondak's Tactical Disappearance' *op. cit.* (note 21). Also Jan Verwoert, 'Taking a Line for a Walk', *op. cit.* (note 20).

[399] Júlis Koller quoted in Kathrin Rhomberg and Roman Ondák (eds.), *Julius Koller: Univerzálne Futurologické Operácie*, Cologne 2003, p.126.

[400] For a full discussion of the work, see Jan Verwoert, 'Július Koller: Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany' in *Frieze* no.79, (November–December 2003), pp.98–9.

[401] Júlis Koller quoted in Ruth Noack, Georg Schlhammer, and Roger M Buergel (eds,) *Documenta Magazine, no.1–3, 2007: Reader* (Cologne: Taschen, 2007), p.476.

[402] The 'U' also stood for 'universal' or 'universal-cultural'; the 'F' for 'futurological', 'fantastic', 'functional' or 'fictional'; whilst the 'O' has stood for 'object', 'question mark' or 'revival'.

[403] Jan Verwoert, 'Július Koller: Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany' in *Frieze* no.79, (November–December, 2003), pp.98–99.

expressive performances. Rather the anti-happening creates mini tableaux to denote specific attitudes towards social reality, with the aim of instigating an 'expansion from artefacts to a multidimensional and psycho-physical reality.'[404] The 'anti-happening' as a form of 'cultural situation' is a notion with which we might usefully understand Ondák's live works which operates within art's institutional sites of exhibition and reception, locations where the inner workings of the gallery and the museum can be strategically occupied from within. This institutional complicity is most clearly apparent in his work's negotiation of the unique space of reception that is the museum. The performance *Good Feelings in Good Times* (2003) evidences this most vividly.

Good Feelings in Good Times is a live work that Ondák describes as, 'an artificially created queue'. The work was first realised on the street outside the entrance to the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne to coincide with the museum's inauguration in 2003 (figure 5.3). The work was executed by a small group of twelve men and women who were hired by the museum. Dressed in clothes typical of a gallery visitor, they simulated an ordinary queue whilst behaving as 'normally' as possible. *Good Feelings in Good Times* was led by two participants, one at the 'head' of the line and one at the 'tail' who were each responsible for directing the virtually imperceptible choreography of the queue, the moment when it dissolved and subsequently reformed in an alternative location. It was essential that the queue appeared to be natural to enable the work to blend into the context in which it was formed. Ondák stipulated that those queuing should be 'loyal to the work' and remain acutely aware of everything that was happening in the surrounding

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[404] Júlis Koller quoted in Marian Dzúrik and Ann Stephen (eds.), *After the Spring: Contemporary Czech and Slovak Art* (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994), p.40.

environment. He insisted that there should be no dramatic acting, and the performance should not be 'misused' as a platform for anarchistic self-expression.[405] Accordingly the participants who formed the queue were encouraged to strike up casual conversations amongst themselves, or engage in other typical 'time-passing' activities such as talking on their mobile phones, checking their watches, or reading a newspaper. In short it was essential that the queue appeared as authentically real as possible.

The success of *Good Feelings in Good Times* ultimately depended on the performers' ability to assess the situation in which the work unfolded, and to decide the appropriate way to act and respond. Ondák allowed the queue to take on a dynamic of its own in response to the changing circumstances dictated by the museum's visitors, or casual passers-by in the immediate surroundings. In contrast to the interpreters who enact Tino Sehgal's constructed situations who are conspicuously visible by their self-consciously performative body language and behaviour, in the case of *Good Feelings in Good Times* the performers were chosen precisely for their ability to maintain the impression that they were simply ordinary museum visitors waiting for an unspecified event to occur. The men and women, who formed Ondák's queue were employed to act, to perform a role, rather than utilise or exploit their own personal subjectivity in the manner of Sehgal's interpreters. Instead their role was to replicate typical behaviour associated with the museum as a site of arts exhibition and reception, to mimic ordinary behaviour and construct a situation that was entirely banal.

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[405] Roman Ondák, Tate Records: Tate Collection Artist Catalogue File, T11940.

Ondák has stipulated that *Good Feelings in Good Times* can only take place in conjunction with an existing exhibition in or around the exhibition space.[406] It is essential that the performance is not instantly recognisable as an artwork. The work may not be acknowledged immediately, or even perhaps at all. 'People might read or hear about it later, and that could be where they make the connection between what they've seen and what they've been told.' Ondák has said.[407] The work operates as an anti-happening, as an anti-spectacular live situation inserted into the existing framework of the museum, and a counterpoint to the existing works on view – and indeed performance art as it has been canonically understood – a work in which real-time is sculpted, presented as a live image that is both unfolding and on hold. *Good Feelings in Good Times* attends to the specific temporality of the queue, a form that has been a recurring motif in Ondák's practice to date. As a clearly coded form of social behaviour the queue has very different cultural connotations depending on the context in which it is formed. 'I became interested in the phenomenon of the queue because it is very unstable, but on the other hand it shows a very strong sense of participation.' Ondák said.[408] 'Even if you are not queuing, you are participating as you are facing your memories of queues in the past. It is about feelings, about desire and your desire to be in it and I like this ambiguity of the queue in our society. Also, on your own you think about your time – what I call 'real-time' – which has its own value; but when you go into the queue, you slow down and the time is different' he explained.[409] The notion of inserting

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[406] As described in the certificate of authenticity that accompanied *Good Feelings in Good Times* when the work was acquired by Tate in 2005. Tate Records: T11940.

[407] Roman Ondák, artist statement, 2005, Tate Records: T11940.

[408] Roman Ondák in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, in *Roman Ondák, exh. cat.* (Cologne; Kölnischer Kunstverein: Walther König, 2004), p.17.

[409] *Ibid.*

'real-time' into the framework of the museum is crucial, for it is the temporality of the work that disrupts the logic of the institution in which it is staged, a site that is understood first and foremost as a place of universal historicization, a place of permanency and temporal preservation.

Good Feelings in Good Times sculpted a specific perception of time and duration that was parallel to, and yet simultaneously discontinuous with, what was happening in 'real time' in the surrounding context of the museum. In its specific attention to shared perceptions of temporality, *Good Feelings in Good Times* evokes an earlier work that also took the sculptural form of a real-life queue. The work I am thinking of is David Lamelas's *Time,* a performance first realised in 1970 which takes the form of a line of people standing shoulder to shoulder along a single axis demarcated with tape, chalk, or string. The work begins when the first designated person tells the time to the person beside them. That person 'receives' the time and 'holds on to it' for sixty seconds before announcing it to the next participant in the line. The performance continues in this way until the time reaches the last person in the line who then announces it 'to the world.' Describing the rationale behind the performance, Lamelas stated, 'It is about social issues. We may come from different cultures, be of different color or religion, but we all share the one single time of the present.'[410] Lamelas's performance presents time as a universal, and consciously constructed, entity. The everyday action of telling another person the time is transformed into a systematic relay that emphasizes the nature of time as a man-made construct.

In contrast to Lamelas's performance the notion of shared time that Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good* embodies is specifically that of queuing, not a

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[410] David Lamelas, artist's statement, Tate Gallery Records.

performative, inter-relational activation of time, rather a work that simply articulates time passing. The work's meaning is therefore dependent upon the established behavioural codes of the context in which it is inserted. Like Sehgal's situations, *Good Feelings in Good Times* operates parasitically on the institutional context in which is it staged. In a process of osmosis, *Good Feelings in Good Times*, fits effortlessly within the institutional framework it inhabited and in so doing simultaneously reflected. The work inhabits the museum and manipulates the exposition matrix as a means to subtly subvert it from within. In light of the recent surge of interest in performance and the spectacular site of popular culture and entertainment the museum has come to embody, the subtle coding of this barely visible work took on a new connotation and poetic potency within the ritualised space of the museum. As a liminal space on the threshold of an action or event in which bodies wait together for a future event to take place the queue has both poetic possibilities and capitalist connotations. Frequently deployed by commercial enterprises as a gimmick, as a visible means of conveying popularity, the queue has become a temporal trope of the experience economy. Typically associated with the populist blockbuster solo retrospective, queues that defy rational explanation have become a common feature of the contemporary art museum, its commercial resonance was brought to the fore following its first realisation outside Kölnischer Kunstverein in 2003, when *Good Feelings in Good Times* was reactivated that autumn, at Frieze Art Fair in London where the queue formed in unexpected locations inside the fair's tent every twenty minutes creating the expectation of an event that never materialised (figure 5.4).

As a result of its 'installation' at Frieze, the work was subsequently acquired by Tate in 2005 and became the first live performance to be accessioned into the museum's permanent collection. The acquisition signalled a definitive turning point

in the relationship between live art and the museum indicating the beginnings of its institutional assimilation. As Roselee Goldberg notes, in the revised third edition of her seminal history *Performance Art from Futurism to the Present*, published in 2011, 'the function of the modern museum changed radically in 2000, from a place of contemplative study and conservation to a cultural pleasure-palace of engagement.'[411] By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century performance and live art had become integral to contemporary art exhibitions. Since the turn of the millennium, a surge of new museums have been built in which black box theatres and auditoriums are integral to the institutional architecture, and in 2005, Goldberg founded *Performa*, a non-profit arts organization dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth century art whilst encourage emerging performance practice. Its eponymous biennial, the first to be dedicated to visual art performance, was inaugurated in New York City that year. Despite its geographical positioning to some extent problematically reasserting North America, and New York City specifically, as the epicentre of that narrative, like Goldberg's seminal study, *Performa* has proven instrumental in affirming live art as a medium of critical significance to contemporary artistic production today whilst simultaneously working to reassert its position within the history of twentieth century art. The effect on the museum of this surge of institutional support for live art since the turn of the millennium has been, not just the attracting of large crowds, but, importantly, the instigation of a timely debate on the subject of the role of the institution itself. Central to this debate is the question of the challenge that live art poses to the permanent collection. The past fifteen years have witnessed a surge in live art's institutional assimilation, but with its

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[411] Roselee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), p.228.

heightened profile comes a new set of challenges for the museum. My contention is that it is the temporal logic of the museum, its inherent status of permanence that the acquisition and subsequent display of live work necessarily challenges.

Good Feelings in Good Times is paradigmatic of the institutional complicity on which the situational aesthetic is based. The work was not only created to strategically occupy the museum, but also now permanently resides in a museum's collection. The 'work' was acquired by Tate in the form of a set of instructions, not verbal like Sehgal's work, but a written document that details precisely where, when, and how frequently the queue may be formed, and how the participants employed to form the queue should ideally behave during the course of the work's exhibition. Since the work's acquisition, *Good Feelings in Good Times* has been displayed once at Tate Modern in March 2007 as part of an event titled *Saturday live Actions and Interruptions*. Unlike a painting or sculpture, the frequency and length of the display of Ondák's live work is necessarily limited by the fact that it accumulates more costs for the museum the longer the work is placed on view.

Tony Bennett has argued that the public museum in its original, nineteenth century form existed as a space of representation of 'solidity and permanence' one 'achieved at the price of a lack of ideological flexibility.' In short the museum instituted an order of things that was meant to last.[412] It is precisely this logic that the museum's acquisition of live art disrupts. Moreover the incremental embrace of live artworks, Catherine Wood has argued, has been instrumental in instigating a broader conceptual transition in the way in which we understand not just the idea of the collection, but also the role and function of the museum. A shift that has the potential to inflect the entire collection in new ways and to animate existing objects

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[412] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), p.80.

to new ends.[413] Wood has described the acquisition of Ondák's work and another five live performances accessioned by Tate since as though the work operates 'in drag', that is 'camouflaged in object-form in order to find its way in.' She has compared the accession of live art to a ship in a bottle, 'this kind of work has passed reasonably through the procedures that mark the institution's threshold towards entering the collection, but once inside it has the capacity to open up and fan outward to such an extent that it threatens to shatter open its container.'[414]

Michel Serres' theory of the 'quasi-object' offers a possible way to understand the way in which *Good Feelings in Good Times* entered the Tate collection. The fact that *Good Feelings in Good Times* was accessioned into the museum's permanent collection highlights the status of live the work as a 'quasi object' one that is capable of entering and living within the collection alongside painting, sculptures, photography, installation, and film co-existing with art's existing media as they have traditionally been understood. Serres describes the quasi-object using the metaphor of a rugby ball. 'The ball is played, and the teams place themselves in relation to it, not vice versa. As a quasi object, the ball is the true subject of the game. It is like a tracker of the relations in the fluctuating collectivity around it,' he writes.[415] The same analysis is valid, I believe, for the way that live art behaves in the museum's permanent collection. Serres continues, 'the skilled player knows that the ball plays with him or plays off him, in such a way that he gravitates around it

[413] See Catherine Wood, 'In Advance of a Broken Arm: Collecting Live Art and the Museum's Changing Game', in Teresa Calonje (ed.), *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, (London: Koenig Books, 2014), pp.123-146.

[414] *Ibid.,* p.125.

[415] Michel Serres in conversations with Bruno LaTour, Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p.108.

and fluidly follows the positions it takes, but especially the relations it spawns.'[416] The kinds of relations that are constructed thereby change the nature of the system in which the quasi-objects operates.

The live art object introduces topological variety into the museum collection, its accession reverberates in the existing objects already present. Its assimilation necessarily troubles the existing network of relations between existing objects. That network it is capable of establishing relations between people and objects more broadly. 'It is rigorously the transubstantiation of being into relation' Serres writes.[417] He emphasises that the quasi-object is 'an astonishing constructer of inter-subjectivity', it is precisely this quality that makes live art's accession into the museum's permanent collection so significant. The work operates on 'the tissue of relations.' Just as the work first occupied the museum as a parasite, understood as a mode or form of interference, 'as an aural and visual phenomenon' and 'an art of invention', on entering the permanent collection, the live quasi-object effects a situation of substantial change by troubling the existing system, the collection, from within.

Tate's acquisition of *Good Feelings in Good Times* in 2005 is just one of a number of recent live additions to the permanent collections of museums that indicate an acceleration of institutional efforts to collect live art over the past decade, notably by MoMA, New York; the Van AbbeMuseum, Eindhoven; FRAC Lorraine, Metz, and San Francisco MoMA. This newfound institutional acceptance has been accompanied by some anxiety about live art's future. Questions have been raised about the institutional embrace of practices that previously seemed antagonistic to the museum, not least the difficulty of navigating the work's

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[416] *Ibid.*, p.109.

[417] Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007). p.228.

relationship to the art market. Lois Keidan, co-founder and Director of the Live Art Development Agency in London, has suggested that, 'the biggest challenge is around the potential de-politicisation of an area of practice that is inherently politicized. There is a concern that an institutional embrace will inevitably compromise performance's disruptive intention.'[418] Here Keidan's anxiety echoes Peggy Phelan's rigorous characterisation of the ontology of liveness. According to Phelan it is the fact that live performance is non-reproductive, its inherent 'its inability to participate in the economy of repetition that gives it a 'distinct oppositional edge.'[419]

   The works associated with the situational aesthetic I am identifying destabilize these theoretical oppositions between the live and the mediatised, suggesting that live art is able to exist as both live representation and repetition and to participate in an economy of repetition on which the permanent collection of the museum is dependent. The live works that Tania Bruguera has been initiating since the late 1990s offer an alternative perspective on the oppositional nature of live art today, suggesting that its ontology, its one-time-only 'presentness', is by no means the only criteria, but rather that the museum may be actively instrumentalized as a site for politicized thought and a platform from which to instigate germs of 'real world' change.   Bruguera's situational project is characterized by a commitment to rejecting the boundaries between art and its utility. Her work is remarkable in

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[418] Tessa Calonje in conversation with Lois Keidan in Calonje (ed.) *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, op. cit. (note x), pp.73-74. Founded in 1999 The Live Art Development Agency supports and facilitates live art practices. For examples of the work it enables, see *In Time: A Collection of Live Art Case Studies* (London: Live Art Development Agency in collaboration with Live Art UK, 2010).
[419] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked the Politics of Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), p.148.

transposing the objectives of the historic avant-garde to a situation of institutional complicity.

Bruguera describes her practice with a rhetoric that is rich in political and military connotations; the words 'action', 'confrontation', 'invasion', and 'vigilante' recur frequently, the aesthetic vocabulary she deploys, meanwhile, is hyper-real. An inventory of 'materials' used in her work to date includes former-KGB agents, monkeys, mounted police officers, guns, and Molotov cocktails. With a modus operandi that encompasses activism alongside her work that takes place in the field of art, Bruguera works from within art's established institutions to instigate guerrilla-like actions and unexpected situations. Like Ondák's anti-happenings, the live works Brugeura has made since the turn of the millennium are unified in their strategic manipulating of the institutional viewing conditions with which we are familiar, yet they aim to instrumentalize the field of art as a way to affect a heightened political consciousness. Bruguera defines her work under the rubric *Arte de Conducta*, a term she uses to describe a type of behaviour art with a socially responsible objective. As a counterpoint to performance art as it has been canonically understood, *Arte de Conducta*'s central tool is not the human body, but rather human behaviour.[420] *Arte de Conducta* aims not to represent the political, but to provoke the political. *The Dream of Reason*, a live situation Bruguera instigated in 2006 demonstrates Arte de Conducta's central approach.

The Dream of Reason involved the hiring of real private security officers with guard dogs who were introduced into the grounds of Kunsthalle Wien during the

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[420] Claire Bishop notes that the term *Arte de Conducta* also evokes the Escuela de Conducta, a school for juvenile delinquents in Cuba where Bruguera once taught. See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship,* (London; New York: Verso Books, 2012), p.246.

opening day of a solo exhibition of her work inside the gallery.[421] The work began when one uniformed security guard appeared in the grounds with a guard dog wearing a muzzle, followed by a second guard and his dog ten minutes later. This happened repeatedly until there were fifteen security guards on the premises simultaneously. The guards circulated the grounds of the kunsthalle slowly, appearing to survey something that was ultimately undeterminable for the scenario their presence seemed to indicate was in fact entirely fictitious. At the entrance to the kunsthalle, meanwhile, visitors to Bruguera's exhibition underwent the bag searching and patting down that one might typically experience in airport security.[422] 'There is some political art in the show,' Bruguera explained to the visitors ironically, 'we've got to be careful.'[423] *The Dream of Reason* happened sporadically at various points throughout the day using the signifiers of potential danger as a means to create a heightened sense of threat without an actual event ever taking place.

The work's title, *The Dream of Reason*, references Francisco Goya's *Los Caprichos*; *'The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters'*, a series of prints first published in the Diario de Madrid in 1799. The satirical series focuses on four principal themes: deceit in interpersonal relationships between men and women, poor education and ignorance, society's vices, and the abuse of power. It is a

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[421] Before its successful realisation in Vienna, the performance had been censored first in Paris, where an artist had invited Bruguera to intervene in his solo show at a commercial gallery, and again in a group show in Madrid. For a detailed discussion of *Tatlin's Whisper #6 (Havana Version)* (2009), see Edward Rubin, 'Ruffling Feathers Around the World', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 97, Vol.33 No.1 (January, 2011), pp.78-84.

[422] Tania Bruguera, Portraits, Kunsthalle Wien, 5 April – 28 May 2006, curated by Silvia Höller and Gerald Matt.

[423] Tania Bruguera quoted in Carrie Lambert-Beatty, 'Political People: Notes on Arte de Conducta' in Helen Posner et al., *Tania Bruguera: On the Political Imaginary* (Milan; New York: Charta, 2009). p.42.

description that could equally be applied to Bruguera's *Arte de Conducta* understood as a mode of live production that seeks to expose the invisible operations of political power structures through the manipulation of human behaviour. Crucially these acts of exposure take place in a symbiotic relation with art's institutions, one that is most effective when it is staged in the specific context of the museum.

The most succinct articulation of Bruguera's strategic occupation of the museum to date is the work *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, a live situation that Bruguera first realized as part of a two-day long installment of the itinerant exhibition *Live: The Living Currency (La Monnaie Vivante),* at Tate Modern, London, in January 2008.[424] Visitors to the museum encountered two uniformed mounted police officers patrolling the bridge of the Turbine Hall (figure 5.5). One riding a grey horse, the other a black horse, the police officers marshaled visitors to the museum using crowd control techniques typically deployed to maintain public order in the context of a political demonstration or a riot. Bruguera's situation took place unannounced, without signage or interpretation, so that the visitors might respond to the mounted police as they would in 'real life' outside of the reifying framework of the museum. Orchestrated by the lateral movements of the horses and the officers' authoritative verbal instructions given in the same tone that would be deployed in a civic situation outside of the museum context, visitors were guided into various groups and formations. At times, the entrance to the Turbine Hall bridge was temporarily blocked by the horses, preventing the visitors' freedom of movement.

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[424]Titled *USB Openings: Live The Living Currency (La Monnaie Vivante),* the three day exhibition was curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc and ran from 26th to 27th January 2008, at Tate Modern, London. For a full discussion of the itinerant performance experiment which began in Paris in 2006, see Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, (London: Verso, 2012), pp.232-236.

Using the mounted police as a historically recurrent, universal image of political power, one that recalls, for instance, the Harlem race riots of 1935, the student protests in Paris in May 1968, or the demonstrations surrounding the refugee solidarity movement in London in September 2015; *Tatlin's Whisper #5* transposed a political image, with we as museum visitors would typically be familiar, into a live event, one that was heightened and made strange due to its intervention in the museum. In a further subversion of standard museum conventions at the time, Bruguera invited museum visitors to document the action, and encouraged them to sell their own photographs, videos, or recordings for their own profit thereby subverting the notion of performance art's material relics and market value.

Tatlin's Whisper #5 is the fifth in a series of six actions in which Bruguera has reproduced news images with which the viewer is typically familiar from the media as direct, live situations. Each work is conceived as a 'visual quotation' from a real television news story; an image from current affairs that Bruguera has abstracted from its original context and staged, as realistically as possible, as a live event. The *Tatlin's Whisper* series addresses the need for moments of active citizenship in the midst of the current socio-political climate in which powerful ideologies circulate in the mass media as images to be passively consumed.

The work's title, *Tatlin's Whisper*, explicitly references Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* (1919), the utopian structure conceived as a working monument for the Communist International that was planned but never built. The title too, then, functions as a citation, as a deliberate evocation of the political rhetoric associated with the work of the historic avant-garde and its visionary ethos, as a reference to the unrealized monument as a powerful symbol of utopian thought. This allusion to the failed vision of the constructivist project

serves also to underscore Bruguera's contemporary actional agenda as one driven not by utopian thinking but, rather, by the need to instigate real political change through the urgency and directness of the live situation inserted into the specific temporal context of the museum. As Gerado Mosquera has emphasized, 'the social dimension of her work is not only the subject, it is also concrete action.'[425]

Each subsequent presentation of *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, first at *The 29th Biennial of Graphic Arts*, in Ljubljana in 2011, then at National Museum Wales, Cardiff, and the Museo d'arte della Provincia di Nuoro, Sardinia in 2012, has been specific to the location in which the work is staged. For the performance to function effectively, it is crucial that it has friction with the local 'political attitude' of the situation in which it is activated. Whilst the work may be staged in a museum in any country, it is essential that the performers are not actors, but bona fide police officers dressed in the standard uniforms of the country in which the piece is installed or rather activated. When questioned on the subject of the work's future conservation, on the issue of the ideal method for the work's future activation in fifty, or indeed five hundred, years' time, Bruguera stated that she would be happy for the police on horseback to be replaced by a Robocop figure of law enforcement so long as the work remained authentically true to its time.[426] 'I want to work with reality. Not the representation of reality.' Bruguera has emphasized, 'I want people

[425] Gerado Mosquera, 'Reanimating Ana Mendieta,' *Poliéster*, 4, 11, (Winter, 1995), pp.53-54 quoted in Mosqeura, 'Cuba in Tania Brugera's Work: The Body is the Social Body' in *Tania Bruguera on the Political Imaginary*, op. cit. (note x), p.32.

[426] The question was posed by Pip Laurenson, Head of Collection Care Research at Tate while Tania Bruguera was in conversation with Annie Fletcher and Catherine Wood at the Van AbbeMuseum, Eindhoven, 6th March, 2010.

to not look at it but to be in it, sometimes even without knowing it is art. This is a real situation.'[427]

With *Tatlin's Whisper #5* Bruguera instigated a situation defined, not by a state of convivial participation, but by coercive force. By eliciting the museum visitors' active participation, Bruguera aimed to encourage them to examine our reflexive passivity in the face of authority and to question their conditioned responses. Bruguera sets out to *mobilize* her audiences both physically and intellectually. She described the work as, 'like a vignette where the audience can have a little piece of experience with power.'[428] Conversely, the appearance of the mounted police at Tate Modern implied not an emancipated crowd but rather one that necessarily required control. Bruguera thereby represented the art audience as a potentially dangerous assembly, and staged the museum visitors as a potentially disruptive force. Rather than encouraging an ideal of the art audience as a public, instead Bruguera treated the museum visitors as a mob.[429] Moreover the work addressed the museum visitors, not as individuals, but as a social body, a political people. Through the active mobilization of real police force, Bruguera staged a spatio-temporal image of 'public order' that simultaneously reflected back on the museum which she strategically deployed as a platform for action. *Tatlin's Whisper #5* staged an image of public order, one that amplified the performative apparatus of the museum with which the work was complicit. On the basis of experience, what

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[427] Bruguera, interviewed by RoseLee Goldberg, http://www.taniabruguera.com/cms/46-0-Being+Cuba.htm (last accessed 20th September 2015).

[428] Bruguera interviewed in TateShots 'Crowd control in force at Tate Modern', 1st February 2008 broadcast online at: http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tania-bruguera (last accessed 3rd March 2015).

[429] See Carrie Lambert-Beatty, 'Political People: Notes on Arte de Conducta' in *Tania Bruguera: On the Politicial Imaginary,* New York, 2009, pp.37-47.

was at stake here, I believe, was not institutional critique, but rather an act of strategic institutional repurposing.

Since the work's realization in London, Bruguera has on a number of occasions acknowledged *Tatlin's Whisper #5* as a staging of Tate's collusion with the police force as an emblem of political power.[430] The successful realization of the work was dependent upon certain relationships and complicities specific to the museum. Most significantly, the assistance of the Metropolitan Police which was vital to the work's realization was only made possible by Tate's Head of Security Dennis O'Herne's own personal connections with senior police force. The work was reliant on the active cooperation of the police for its realization, a situation very much contingent on the sociopolitical climate at the time of the work's exhibition which was advantageous in this instance. If, for Bruguera, the aim was to acquire the tools or resources of power in order to effect real world outcomes outside of the artistic field, in this instance she did so by deliberately manipulating the museum as a site of representational power and authority in order to have critical purchase on the real. Central to the work's successful realization was a strategic manipulation of the authority that the museum both holds and symbolically represents. With *Tatlin's Whisper #5* Bruguera reanimated the motivating principles of the historical avant-garde, the rejection of the separation between art and life central to the project of the Situationist International, within the very institutional framework it rejected, and thereby acknowledged the work's co-dependence on the museum. The work underscored a new relation between live art and the institution in its articulation and activation of the museum as a performative apparatus, one capable of being strategically manipulated as a platform for art's instrumentalization from within.

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[430] Tania Bruguera in conversation with Annie Fletcher and Catherine Wood at the Van AbbeMuseum, Eindhoven, Collecting the Performative Network Meeting, 7th March, 2013.

What was at stake in *Tatlin's Whisper #5* was the exercise of power and its homogenous effects. Like Bentham's Panopticon, the work literally displayed power placing it at the heart of the museum. Foucault defined the panoptic schema as 'a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization of disposition of centers and channels of power'[431] 'The panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations function in a function, and of making a function function through these power relations.'[432] Functioning as a laboratory of power, 'the Panopticon may even provide an apparatus for supervising its own mechanisms.' It is a description that might equally be applied to *Tatlin's Whisper #5*. What is remarkable about this work, and indeed Bruguera's practice more broadly, is that it operates not from a position of antagonism in relation to the museum, but rather one of institutional complicity.

It is my contention that *Tatlin's Whisper #5* operated not only as a live image of public order, or act of manipulation of real political power, but also as a form of temporal play that, through the strategic crafting of a scene of urgency, effected a sudden present reality that disrupted the homogenous temporality of the museum. Just as Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good Times* created a sense of expectation, setting the scene for an event never realized, so too Bruguera manipulated the performative political tropes of public order and thereby crafted the visitor's attention through the work's strategic insertion in the temporal space of the museum. My point here it that the work disrupted not the ideological apparatus of the museum, but rather the unique temporality on which the ontology of the museum is built.

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[431] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p.202.

[432] *Ibid.*

Didier Maleuvre has argued that: 'In lifting art out of the hurly-burly of historical survival, the museum strips the artwork of its historical existence. It replaces historicity with historiography. Living historical existence turns into historiographic timelessness. This contradiction explains the twofold character of the museum.'[433] And yet, Maleuvre argues, 'the antinomy of the museum only depends on a particular concept of history. Museums are historically contradictory only if one holds that history exists in homogenous time, that is, only if history is assumed to coincide with the scientific, chronological, notion of continuous time.'[434] Traditionally the art object inhabits the museum as a monument, one separated from history and removed from its native context. 'It is no longer simply in the present, it also gives body to a temporal distance, a rupture, the caesura of history,'[435] The artwork as live situation disrupts the logic Maleuvre describes, it refuses the monumental time on which the museum is based. It is in this respect that live art has the capacity to manufacture its own image of history to some extent. Traditionally the museum has been understood as a technology that monumentalises artefacts, and yet the process of monumentalisation stems from the object's historical displacement – an act that live art actively resists.

In 2009, *Tatlin's Whisper #5* became the second live performance to be accessioned into the Tate collection. The work was acquired as a set of instructions that stipulated the exact specifications for its re-activation and an accumulative archive of documentation accrued each time the work is exhibited. The museum acquired the rights to present the work in public and in private exhibitions following the conditions provided in the contract that accompanied the work's

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[433] Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p.57.

[434] *Ibid.*

[435] *Ibid.*, p.58.

certificate of authenticity. The acquisition agreement stipulates that each time the performance is reactivated, the institution loaning the work is responsible for collating all documentation and literature relating to its exhibition, which is then added to the archive accompanying the work. In order to prioritize the action, neither the archive nor documentation will be exhibited as a substitute for the performance. The archive of reference material supports the understanding of the work and its future life making its institutional history an integral part of the artwork.[436]

On the subject of Tate's acquisition, Bruguera stated that the museum was not collecting an object, or an event, but rather a form that she described as an 'urgency' a term which highlights the insistent nature of live work's institutional address.[437] Whilst emphasizing that she believes that live performance is the most viable medium for a truly 'activist' art practice, Bruguera expressed the difficulty of creating site-specific political work that is able to be understood in a wider context without running the risk of becoming, or being misread, as propaganda.[438] Yet she failed to acknowledge the institution's complicity, or to address the fact that the work simultaneously operated as spectacular propaganda for the museum. Bruguera has on a number of occasions described herself as ' a collaborator with institutions'.[439] It is a comment that underscores the situational aesthetic's institutional complicity. It is that relation that has enabled Bruguera to reconfigure the framework of the institution, to address the museum itself as a medium.

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[436] Tania Bruguera in conversation with Annie Fletcher and Catherine Wood at the Van AbbeMuseum, Eindhoven, Collecting the Performative Network Meeting, 7th March 2013.

[437] *Ibid.*

[438] *Ibid.*

[439] Tania Bruguera in conversation with Annie Fletcher and Catherine Wood at the 3rd *Collecting the Performative* Network Meeting, Van AbbeMuseum, Eindhoven, 7 March, 2013.

'I would like a museum in the not-so-new twenty-first century that abandons the idea of *looking* for the idea of *activation*', Bruguera wrote in 2010, 'one where art entails actual social transformation, instead of merely providing highly speculative strategies for bringing about such transformations.'[440] Three years later she initiated one such site in the form of the *Museum of Arte Útil*, a provisional institution that occupied the Vanabbemuseum in Eindhoven from 7th December 2013 to 30th March 2014.

Arte Útil (or Useful Art) is a pedagogical practice and methodology that Bruguera has been developing since the early 2000s. A logical extension of *Arte de Conducta, Arte Útil* refers to a new model of artistic production that is neither passive nor strictly controlled. The concept evolved through the work of the educational project *Cátedra Arte de Conducta*, a long-term workshop based at Bruguera's own home in Havana Vieja between 2002 and 2009. As Claire Bishop has rightly clarified, '*Arte de Conducta* is best understood as a two-year course rather than an art school proper,' the workshop was a semi-autonomous programme officially under the auspices of the Instiutio Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana though it's connection with the institute was purely bureaucratic.[441]

A variety of curators and critics were invited to the school to meet with students and run workshops that revolved around discussions about political performative art. The *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* was intended as a means to counter the lack of discussion space in which to debate the function and efficacy of art in

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[440] Tania Bruguera, 'Arts Havana', *Artforum*, vol. 48, no. 10, Summer 2010, p.299. (Emphasis in the original.)

[441] The affiliation with the instiution was necessary for Brugera to secure visas for lectures visting from abroad Bishop explained. See Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, *op.cit.* (note x), p.246. For a detailed account of her experience of the school see Bishop pp. 246-250. Situates the project within a broader history of the rise of pedagogic projects initiated by artists and curators since the turn of the millennium that includes the work of Pawel Althamer, Paul Chan, and Thomas Hirschhorn.

contemporary Cuban society, and as a space to enable political discourse and support a new generation of artists and intellectuals. One of the central aims of Bruguera's project was to train artists emerging in Cuba at the turn of the millenium to deal self-reflexively with the situation in which they were working and to be mindful of the global market whilst also continuing to produce work that addressed the local context. The school was initiated in the wake of, and partly as a response to, the sudden surge in consumption of Cuban art by American tourists following the Havana Biennale in 2000 and its rapid assimilation into a Western market. In light of this recent shift the *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* was conceived as a supportive framework with which to help students negotiate the position of their own practices in relation to the global market.

Bishop was one of the art historians invited to contribute to the work of the school. She described the project as one that aimed 'to produce a space of free speech in opposition to dominant authority […] to train students not just to make art but to experience and formulate a civil society.'[442] Conceived as 'a site and political timing specific' long-term project, *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* was concerned with the analysis of socio-political behaviour, and an understanding of live art as an instrument for the transformation of ideology through the activation of civic action.

Following the closing of *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* timed to coincide with the 2009 Havana Biennial during which students from the school presented nine single evening thematic group shows between 5 and 9pm each evening titled *Estado Excepción*, *Arte Útil* subsequently appeared in a new iteration in the form of an

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[442] Bishop, *Artificial Hells, op.cit.* (note 70), p.248. Given the work's dual status as both an experimental pedagogic initiative and an artwork. Bishop raised the question of whether *Arte de Conducta* needs to be identified as a work of art at all. She concludes that 'the entire shaping of *Arte de Conducta* is reliant on an artistic imagination. p.250.

initiative entitled Immigrant Movement International (IM), a partnership between Bruguera and Queens Museum, New York, founded in 2011 supported by the commissioning body Creative Time. IM exists in the form of a community space in Corona in Queens, a neighbourhood with a large immigrant community that offers free educational workshops, health and legal services. In its first year, IM convened a think tank of academics, activists, politicians, and local organizers that culminated in the drafting of a 'Migrant Manifesto' and an open call for pro-immigrant actions on December 18, 2011 which was recognized by the United Nations as International Migrants Day, which involved more than two hundred artists worldwide.

Following on from these two significant initiatives, *The Museum of Arte Útil* represented the first time that the principles of *Arte Útil* were activated in the context of an art institution. Together with researchers based at the Vanabbemuseum, and the group ConstructLab (a collective of architects and designers), Bruguera proposed an alternative model of the museum as a 'social power plant.' Describing the *Museum of Arte Útil*, the exhibition's curator Annie Fletcher said that the model of a social power plant suggests a permeability, 'that what's going on inside the walls of the museum might reflect what's going on outside.'[443] The provisional museum which occupied the Old Building of the Vanabbemuseum was the last articulation of *Arte Útil*, before Bruguera was arrested by Cuban authorities in Havana in December 2014 and detained for eight

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[443] Annie Fletcher interview with Charles Esche, Vanabbemuseum, Eindhoven. Published online on 26th February 2014 at:
http://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/programme/detail/?cHash=06f8a684b62ec29a8535f5487a3e9ff1&tx_v abdisplay_pi1%5Bptype%5D=18&tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bproject%5D=1200 (last accessed on 22nd September 2014).

months.[444] Bruguera compiled a list of the basic criteria of *Arte Útil* which states that its initiatives should:

> 1.Propose new uses for art within society
>
> 2. Challenge the field within which it operates (civic, legislative, pedagogical, scientific, economic, etc)
>
> 3. Be 'timing specific', responding to current urgencies
>
> 4. Be implemented and function in real situations
>
> 5. Replace authors with initiators and spectators with users
>
> 6. Have practical, beneficial outcomes for its users
>
> 7. Pursue sustainability whilst adapting to changing conditions
>
> 8. Re-establish aesthetics as a system of transformation[445]

This last criterion, to 're-establish aesthetics as a system of transformation' is crucial to the situational tendency I am identifying. The *Museum of Arte Útil* directly addressed the museum as an institution with a fraught relationship with history, a principle that chimes with the wider remit of the VanAbbemuseum. Under the directorship of Charles Esche who joined the museum in 2004, the VanAbbe has proven to be exceptional in its commitment to what is perceived to be institutional transparency. Over the past ten years the VanAbbemuseum's exhibition and learning programmes have attempted to challenge the museum itself, to reconfigure the institution as a form of experimental testing ground, and question

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[444] In December 2014 Brugera was arrested following an attempt to restage *Tatlin's Whisper #6* a work that comprises a live platform for freedom of speech, in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución. She was detained with several other Cuban artists, activists, and journalists who participated in the Yo Tambien Exijo campaign. She was subsequently arrested twice more in June and July 2015 and finally released to take up the Yale World Fellowship in August 2015. For a full discussion, see Coco Fusco, 'The State of Detention: Performance, Politics, and the Cuban Public', *e-flux journal*, published online at: http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/on-the-detention-of-cuban-artist-tania-bruguera-by-coco-fusco/ (last accessed 10th September 2015).

[445] Tania Brugera, 'What is Arte Util?' published online at: http://museumarteutil.net/about/ (last accessed 10th September 2015).

the broader efficacy of the museum today.[446] Esche suggested that *Arte Útil* provides an interesting opposition to relational aesthetics, and other movements that happened in the 1990s in the field of art. Comparing *Arte Útil* to the earlier tendency he described relational aesthetics as 'homeopathic' in that it provided a form of ' false cure' and represented an attempt 'to set everything right again.' By contrast, 'one of the things that *Arte Útil* proposes is, to some extent, the abolition of the museum as it currently exists,' he said.[447]

The website that ran alongside *The Museum of Arte Útil* as an integral element of the project describes *Arte Útil* as 'a disrupting process' one that 'stops or hijacks contested social uses, social functions or existing organization' and 'operates through disjunctors, surprises or breakers.' *Arte Útil* therefore follows the logic of the parasite understood as interference, or noise, that Serres's theory defined. 'In the Museum of Arte Útile,' Brugera's text continues, 'this process takes form with the contradiction between the institutional constraints (making an exhibition in a classical way, refusing some projects which challenge the legitimacy of the museum, reproducing standard ways the museum produce a scenography) and the desire of the artists to implement new operations in the museum (for example, employing illegal refugees for the montage of the exhibition to give them a legal status).'[448]

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[446] For a discussion of recent projects, see Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology, Or, What's Contemporary in Museums of Contemporary Art?* (London: Koenig Books, 2013), pp.29-35. In this recent contribution to the field that has been termed 'new museology', Bishop presents the collection displays of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Museo Nacional de Reina Sofía in Madrid, and MSUM in Ljubljana as evidence of a new understanding of the 'contemporary' in contemporary art, and as working models of the way in which the institution might rethink the museum collection as a universal resource.

[447] Charles Esche interviewed by Annie Fletcher, Vanabbemuseum, Eindhoven, *op. cit.* (note 73).

[448] 'Understanding the Social Power Plant', published online at: http://museumarteutil.net/tools/ (accessed 30th May 2015).

The *Museum of Arte Útil* addressed the status of the museum as an institution that has a fraught relationship with history one that is necessarily tasked with looking back and looking forward at the same time. It experimented with the museum as both as history telling institution one that represents a collective memory, that is also simultaneously conscious of making history for the future, responsible for ordering the past and the same time as critically questioning its role in the future. Bruguera's *Arte Útil* offered one possible trajectory, one possible way in which the museum might become an institution that is contemporary with our time. The *Museum of Arte Útil* represented a challenge to the twentieth century order, and the order of modernism in particular, asking what a museum for a new, contemporary paradigm might be and usefully achieve. By parasitically occupying the host body of the existing institution, Brugera's provisional museum simultaneously effected an act of self-reflexion of on the part of the VanAbbemuseum whose collaboration with Bruguera on this occasion was indicative of its acknowledgement of the simple fact that the museum itself has to change, that the old model premised on a modernist paradigm is no longer tenable in the 21st century. Brugeura presented art as 'a working temporary reality' one not critical of, but rather capable of working together with the institution of the museum.[449] This was achieved by troubling the existing system from within. *The Museum of Arte Útil* therefore embodied another instance of institutional complicity between the artist and the museum. By occupying the legitimizing framework of the VanAbbemuseum, Brugera initiated a basis for social transformation in an act of institutional repurposing.

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[449] Bruguera interviewed by Gerald Matt in Matt, *Interviews* (Cologne: Wather Koenig, 2006), p.41.

Writing in 1957 André Malraux conceived of the *musée imaginaire* as an open field into which the viewer's own imaginative, projective play was welcomed. Disenchanted with the mid-twentieth century art museum, that place 'where the work of art no longer has any function other than that of being a work of art', Malraux found a hopeful future in the form of the printing press and photographic reproduction. The work I have been discussing in this chapter proposes a new *musée imaginaire* rooted not in the art object, nor the image, but in the spatio-temporal possibilities of the constructed situation and the transformative potential of the live event.

The work I have been examining is not self-referential on the level of content, as was the case with those practices associated with institutional critique in the 1970s and 1980s, instead it operates symbiotically with the institutional and ideological framework of the museum. The live situations instigated by Burguera and Ondák acknowledge the museum today as no longer merely the keeper of objects, but as a crucial operating system, and a performative entity in its own right. Their work does not seek the systematic exploration of museological representation, nor to critique its links with economic power; rather it agitates the existing institutional framework and in doing so underscores the museum's persistent potential as a discursive apparatus. The live works I have been discussing reveal the new museum today as a testing ground for an aesthetic imaginary rooted in a form of institutional realism, working not against the museum, but in dialogue with its codes and conventions in a manner that is challenging the existing museum paradigm, coaxing it to develop and move forward.

Geoffrey Hodgson has argued that 'By structuring, constraining and enabling individual behaviours, institutions have the power to mould the capacities and behaviour of agents in fundamental ways: they have a capacity to change

aspirations instead of merely enabling or constraining them. Habit is the key mechanism in this transformation […] Accordingly, institutions are simultaneously both objective structures "out there" and subjective springs of human agency "'in the human head".'[450] It is to this notion the institution that I believe Brugera and Ondak's work attends.

The recent institutional embrace of the situational aesthetic has enabled the museum to remain on the side of invention, and allowed the institution to perform its own critique of sorts. Its focus is no longer only on manufacturing an image of history, or on maintaining a space of ritual encounter with the past, but rather in rethinking the museum's societal function and potential as a site of dialogue and invention. Through their parasitic occupation of the host body of the museum, the works I have been discussing in the previous two chapters challenge the existing system, and disrupt it in order to effect changes from within. It is, I believe, as a result of this live art that the museum has begun to engage in acts of institutional self-reflection, to critically reflect on what the future of the contemporary art museum might be. This work is challenging the institution at its core, through the work's assimilation into the permanent collection and through and also through its subsequent future display which necessarily requires new expertise and methodologies of working on the part of the museum. I have been suggesting that the status of the relationship between live art and the museum since the turn of the millennium may be defined not by the logic of institutional *critique,* or *disavowal*, but rather as a strategic form of institutional *repurposing*. 'Can we rewrite a system?', Serres asked, 'not in the key of pre-established harmony,' but rather as

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[450] Geoffrey Hodgson, 'What Are Institutions?', *Journal of Economic Issues*, vol.XL, no.1, March 2006, p.8.

'the book of differences, noise, and disorder.'[451] It is in this way that live art is knowingly disrupting the museum's existing systems and challenging it from within.

[451] Serres, *The Parasite, op. cit.* (note 46), p.13.

CONCLUSION

In the spring of 2015 Boris Charmatz transformed Tate Modern with an exhibition made in motion, a provisional *Musée de la danse* that occupied the museum in its entirety over two days in May. From noon to 10 pm I witnessed mass choreography take over the Turbine Hall, dancers perform solo in the foyers, and the collection displays galleries become newly animated as the museum's existing artworks became prompts for choreographic works. Charmatz's temporary museum performed a remarkable exercise of institutional repurposing by superimposing a provisional museum of dance over the existing expositional framework of the institution. One of a generation of conceptualist choreographers and dancers who has collaborated with Tino Sehagl on a number of occasions, Charmatz is renowned for a practice that is characterized by the exploration of dance's institutional frames.[452]

Charmatz first articulated the notion of a dancing museum in 2009 when he was appointed director of the *Centre chorégraphique national de Rennes et de Bretagne*, a French national dance institution which he promptly renamed *Musée de la danse*. In typically avant-gardist tradition, Charmatz wrote a manifesto for his new institution, a proposal to transform the National Choreographic Centre into a 'Dancing Museum'. In this text Charmatz describes his institution as a museum of complex temporalities one that, 'deals with both the ephemeral and the perennial,

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[452] For a detailed study of Charmatz's work see Catherine Wood, 'Boris Charmatz: An Architecture of Attention', *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, Issue 37, (Autumn/Winter 2014), pp.120-132. For Charmatz's writings on dance see Boris Charmatz and Isabelle Launay, *Undertraining: On A Contemporary Dance* (Dijon: Presses du reel, 2011).

the experimental and the patrimonial.'[453] Active, reactive, and mobile, it is 'a viral museum', one capable of being 'grafted onto other places'.[454] 'We are at a time in history when a museum can modify *both* preconceived ideas about museums *and* one's ideas about dance,' Charmatz wrote.[455] It is a statement that would have been unthinkable without the historical development of live art and the institution that this thesis has traced.

This project first began with the work of Tino Sehgal whose objectless situation I encountered by chance at the Guggenheim Museum, in New York, in 2010. From the outset *This Progress* clearly demonstrated a pivotal shift, a point at which live art's relation with the institution had radically changed. This thesis has attempted to unravel the complex relationship between live art and the museum that *This Progress* so vividly articulated, to trace the historical lineage in which Sehagl's immaterial practice is rooted. My aim has been to historicize live art's institutional assimilation today, to chart an alternative narrative of the history of live art and the institution understood through the lens of the prominence of 'liveness' in contemporary artistic production since the turn of the millennium. The work of Sehgal has enabled a history to be traced from the sidelines of the existing narratives of performance as it has been canonically understood. From the outset my concern has been the specific temporality of live production, what was at stake in creating a live artwork or exhibition in 1951 or 1957 and what does it mean to do so now, in 2015, within the context of the art museum?

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[453] Boris Charmatz, '*Manifeste pour un Musée de la danse*' (Manifesto for a Dancing Museum), 2009, p.5. Published online at: http://www.borischarmatz.org/en/lire/manifesto-dancing-museum (last accessed 27 September 2015)

[454] *Ibid.*

[455] *Ibid.,* p.3.

I began by deploying the neglected ritual of the *vernissage* as a discursive framework, a way to articulate the immediate post-war period of the 1950s as the entry point to this alternative history, as a pivotal point at which the live exhibition emerged as a new aesthetic paradigm on a transnational scale. Through the work of Yves Klein, Pinot Gallizio, Group Zero, and Jikken Kōbō, the first three chapters of the thesis demonstrated that the live event emerged as an aesthetic form of new significance post-1945. The opening night of *Le Vide* at Galerie Iris Clert in 1958 functioned as a point of departure for a history that is inextricably bound with rituals both social and institutional. Through a detailed analysis of the *vernissage* in the work of Klein and Gallizio, I suggested that the strategic appropriation of the temporal framework of the exhibition's opening night may be understood as a self-conscious expositional meta-structure, one that reflected back on its own gallery condition.

That meta-structure is echoed in the work of Tino Sehgal, Roman Ondák, and Tania Brugera whose work I argued is catalyzing a wave of institutional self-reflection on the part of the museum. The formative situation in the 1950s is echoed, then, in the relation between live art and the museum today. I have argued for an expanded use of the term situational aesthetics as a means to describe the emergence of a tendency in artistic production since the turn of the millennium in which live situations operate symbiotically with the existing apparatus of the museum. That relation I have argued is defined by a mode of parasite engagement in which live artworks occupy the host body of the institutional frameworks in which they are temporally staged and permanently housed.

Throughout this thesis I have been demonstrating that the relationship between live art and the museum may be understood as dialogic in character rather than necessarily effective as institutional critique. To that end, the work of Ondák and

Brugeura was used as evidence of a new approach to the institution with which I have argued the history of live art is complicit, one identifiable since the early 2000s that is defined, not by artistic strategies of critique, but rather by acts of institutional repurposing. I focused on two significant live works realised over the past decade that involve the creative manipulation of the museum as medium: Bruguera's *Tatlin's Whisper #5* (2008), and Ondák's *Good Feelings in Good Times* (2003), two works that I suggested involve the imaginative manipulation of the museum matrix, that have also subsequently been acquired and assimilated into the permanent collection of the museum. I argued that the recent situational aesthetic that Bruguera and Ondák's work exemplifies underscores the urgent need to think of the museum no longer as simply a treasury of objects, or a permanent collection of artworks, but as a *dispositif,* a performative apparatus in its own right. The question of 'liveness' is challenging the institution, forcing the museum to reassess its own systems in a multitude of ways from the role of the permanent collection to the very principles and methodology on which its work is based. To paraphrase Charmatz, live art has entered the museum like a Trojan horse, it might simulate the qualities of a sculpture, but it contains a living army.[456] I believe the provisional realities I have been examining have the capacity to trouble the existing canon in a similar manner.

The term 'provisional reality' is borrowed from Gallizio, from his ambition to construct a provisional reality premised on the collapse of the old world order. I use the term again now, transposed to the twenty-first century, to define a more recent history, that of the live situation since the turn of the millennium, to describe a live

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[456] Boris Charmatz, 'Manifeste pour un Musée de la danse' (Manifesto for a Dancing Museum), op. cit. (note 2), p.3.

tendency that is troubling the existing order through the medium of the present tense once again. Whilst linking the formative live works of 1950s to work made in the present day, I have used the provisional to describe not only the temporality of the work's production, realization, and reception but also to underscore its precarious relationship with the institution.

Jikken Kōbō's inclusion underscored the precarity of live art's institutional assimilation, its recent retrospective in Japan in 2013 being the only instance of its institutional reception. I discussed the virtual workshop's 1951 'homage to Picasso' *The Joy of Life* as a play of transpositions, one that underscores live art's capacity to exist outside of the medium as it has been canonically understood. In highlighting the work of Group Zero and Jikken Kōbō in particular my hope was to complicate the existing terrain of interpretation to emphasize that the history of live art is composed of multiple histories, a complex web of interconnected intentionality. I positioned the transnational impulse towards the crafting of experiental time as a new medium as a means of creating critical distance from the past whilst grappling with a new and yet unknown paradigm, a way of processing the recent past from a contemporary perspective.

What is so compelling about the history of live art, and the narrative of the situational aesthetic in particular, is that the temporal layering, or stratification, of time central to the logic of the live work of the neo-avant-garde is evident, too, in historical resonances between periods. Just as the artists of the 1950s reconnected with key trigger points of the historical avant-gardes, so, too, artists like Tino Sehgal, Roman Ondák, and Tania Burgera are deploying the existing strategies established in the 1950s, revisiting those temporal forms and rituals and appropriating them to new ends. Like the live artwork itself, the trajectory I have been tracing is defined by acts of historical transpositions made manifest in new

mediated live forms. In consciously evoking the historic, pre-war avant-garde, whether it be Group Zero's absurdist reference to Dada, or Jikken Kōbō's appropriation of the language of Picasso, I suggested that the formative live experiments of the post-war neo avant-garde simultaneously drew from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic as a response to the way in which history played out through a complex layering of time. It is through the lens of today's situational work that these otherwise forgotten histories may be animated once again.

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