

‘spaces that matter: awareness and entropia in the imaging of place’

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“All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warning or explanations. It simply is. Take it moment by moment and you will find that we are all, as I said before, bugs in amber.”

Kurt Vonnegut.¹

“Allow me to direct your attention to your present experience, to how it is with you at this moment when (as far as possible) you drop memory and imagination and desire, and just take what’s given.”

John Harding²

paris, a few years ago

Rummaging through bric-a-brac at a flea market in the north of the city I chanced upon an old cardboard box full of musty letters which I had, at that time, no inclination to read. For no particular reason, I started searching through these letters. At one end of the box my eye fell upon a black and white photograph of an elderly woman wrapped in a shawl, seated in a cane chair with a clock on the mantel-piece behind her. The experience of her image captured me. Excited by my discovery I searched through the remaining letters; and yes, at the other end of the box of letters was a second photograph of this anonymous woman, the clock on the mantelpiece behind indicating a passage of time, her hands now holding a pair of glasses, resting on a book with the French word ‘demain’, tomorrow, inscribed on it’s cover. These small, gem like photographs were like a ‘re-velatio’. It did not occur to me to *read* the letters within the box with the possibility of finding out more about this woman, for somehow I did not desire that her *jouissance* should be constituted through another language; or perhaps it was because I never even thought about this at the time, so excited was I by my discovery. I wonder what insights those letters could have provided into the spaces between the now and then, between the ticking of the clock and the expressions of the face, between the mortality of the body and the word ‘demain’, the physical, spatial separation of images by text. Would my re-velatio, the glance of my experience have turned to stone? Would my awareness of signification, of memory, and imagination have been immobilised in the fixity of a prolonged gaze of desire?

a revealing awareness

According to Norbert Schneider in his book, *‘The Art of the Portrait’*, “since early Christian times the curtain had been seen as a ‘velum’, whose function was either to veil what was behind it, or, by an act of ‘re-velatio’, or pulling aside of the curtain, to reveal it.”³ In my everyday experience of the photographs of the elderly woman a metaphoric veil had been pulled back on the ‘true nature’ of the sitter. This is not always the case with photographs as surfaces abound, are bound, by the awareness of the photographer. Two dichotomous images can be proffered as examples. One is a photograph of Arnold Schwarzenegger taken by Robert Mapplethorpe in 1976,⁴ and the other, taken six years earlier by Diane Arbus, is titled, “A naked man being a woman, N.Y.C., 1968.”⁵ In Mapplethorpe’s photograph Schwarzenegger is placed on bare floorboards with a heavy curtain tied back to reveal a white wall behind him. The photograph reveals nothing about his identity, his inner self or his state of mind save that he is a bodybuilder with a body surface made up of large muscles that has been posed for the camera; his facial expression and look are blank, much like the wall behind him. It is a barren landscape.

Compare this photograph with the photograph by Diane Arbus. Again a figure stands before parted curtains in a room. Here we see an androgynous figure of a man being a woman surrounded by the physical evidence of his/her existence. The body is not muscular but of a ‘natural’ type, one leg slightly bent in quite a feminine gesture, a hand on the hip. Behind the figure is a bed covered with a blanket. On the chair in front of the curtains and on the bed behind lies discarded clothing and the detritus of human

existence. We can also see a suitcase behind the chair leg, an open beer or soft drink can on the floor, and what looks like an electrical heater behind the figure's legs. We look at this person's place of living, of sleeping, the space where this person possibly has sex. Framed by the open curtains the painted face with the plucked eyebrows stares back at us with a much more engaging openness, the body placed within the context of its lived surroundings, unlike the photograph of Schwarzenegger which has very little context. Much is revealed about the psychological state of the owner, how he lives and what he likes to do. The black and white shading behind the curtains reveals a yin/yang dichotomy (in Eastern mythology yin/yang is both/and, being transformable and interpenetrating whilst in the West black/white is either/or not both, being exclusive and non-interactive), the opposite and the same of this personality far better than the blank white wall that stands behind Mapplethorpe's portrait of Schwarzenegger.

Arbus has made *us* aware of the paradoxical nature of his/her life by revealing something more than surfaces, something more than an act of repetition, a 'performativity',⁶ a photograph that is both text and texture, a textu(r)al response to the act of visuality that upsets a ritualised production of equilibrium. In this, re-velatio can be linked to Barthes 'punctum' or prick of consciousness that takes us out of ourselves,⁷ that achieves Barthes' 'absolute subjectivity' as we allow ourselves, "to say nothing, to shut [our] eyes, to allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness."⁸ Here, the photographers trained eye is perhaps more of a hindrance than may at first be thought. The photographer may struggle with, "a sense of *intense inevitability*, insofar as this kind of image seems to be one that the photographer 'could not *not* photograph'.⁹ Awareness may become a double bind for the photographer. It may force the photographer to photograph because he can do nothing else, because he is aware of the presence of 'punctum' within a space, even an empty 'poetic space', but this awareness may then blind him, may ossify the condition of revealing through his directed gaze, unless he is very attentive and drops, as Harding says, "memory and imagination and desire, and just take what's given."¹⁰ The object, as Baudrillard notes, "isolates itself and creates a sense of emptiness ... and then it irradiates this emptiness,"¹¹ but this irradiation of emptiness *does* require an awareness of it in order to stabilise the transgressive fluctuations of the ecstasy of photography (which are necessarily fluid), through the making of an image that, as Baudrillard notes, "may well retrieve and immobilise subjective and objective *punctum* from their 'thunderous surroundings'."¹² Knowledge of awareness is a key to this immobilisation and image making. The philosopher Krishnamurti has interesting things to say about this process, and I think it is worth quoting him extensively here,

"Now with that same attention I'm going to see that when you flatter me, or insult me, there is no image, because I'm tremendously attentive ... I listen because the mind wants to find out if it is creating an image out of every word, out of every contact. I'm tremendously awake, therefore I find in myself a person who is inattentive, asleep, dull, who makes images and gets hurt - not an intelligent man. Have you understood it at least verbally? Now apply it. Then you are sensitive to every occasion, it brings its own right action. And if anybody says something to you, you are tremendously attentive, not to any prejudices, but you are attentive to your conditioning. Therefore you have established a relationship with him, which is entirely different from his relationship with you. Because if he is prejudiced, you are not; if he is unaware, you are aware. Therefore you will never create an image about him. You see the difference?"¹³

Now apply this attention to the awareness of the photographer. If he does not create images that are prejudice, could this not stop a photographer 'not *not*' photographing because he sees spaces with clarity, not as acts of performativity, spaces of ritualised production overlaid with memory, imagination, desire, and nostalgia?

Here an examination of the work of two photographers is instructive. The first, the early 20th century Parisian photographer Eugene Atget, brings to his empty street and parkscape visions that elude the senses, visions that slip between dreaming and waking, between conscious and subconscious realms. These are not utopian spaces, not felicitous spaces that may be grasped and defined with the nostalgic fixity of spaces we love,¹⁴ but spaces *of* love that cannot be enclosed because Atget made no image of them. I believe Atget moved his photographs onto a different spatio-temporal plane by *not* being aware of making images, aware-less-ness, dropping away the appendages of image making (technique, reality, artifice, reportage) by placing the camera exactly where he wanted it, thus creating a unique artistic language. His images become a blend of the space of intimacy and world-space as he strains toward, "communion with the universe, in a word,

space, the invisible space that man can live in nevertheless, and which surrounds him with countless presences.”¹⁵ These are not just ‘localised poetics’¹⁶ nor a memento of the absent, but the pre-essence of an intimate world space reinscribed through the vision (the transgressive glance not the steadfast gaze) of the photographer. Atget is not just absent or present, here or there,¹⁷ but neither here nor there. His images reverberate (*retentir*), in Minkowski’s sense of the word, with an essence of life that flows onward in terms of time and space independent of their causality.¹⁸

The second photographer is a man who sought to be attentive to fundamental truths, the American photographer Minor White (active 1938-1976). After studying Zen Buddhism, Gurdjieff, and astrology, White strongly believed in the photographers’ connection to the subject he was photographing and the subject’s connection back via the camera to the photographer thus forming a circle.¹⁹ When, in meditation, he felt that this connection was open and that he was seeing the object for what it was and what it could be, he would expose the negative hopeful of a numinous moment of “revelation” of spirit in the subsequent photograph.²⁰ Working with images which stood as ‘equivalents’ for other states of consciousness, of being-in-the-world, and with sequences of images using what he called ‘ice-fire’, the tensional spaces between images (which the Japanese call ‘ma’, the interval which gives substance to the whole), White lets his awareness of the image drop away. In re-velatio his images open ‘poetic spaces’ that are not composited or flattened, in which the alienation and opposition of inside and outside, of objectivity and subjectivity are seen to be disconnected. This produces a transgressive desire within and for these spaces, not objects (the photograph, the space, the language) of desire that have been (re)turned to stone.²¹

‘entropia’ and contemporary australian photography

In recent years there seems to have been an explosion of photo-artists in Australia whose work explores notions of the ‘poetics of empty space’; the photography of absence and the invisible, of the traces of things that tempt the imagination with their (in?)frequency.²² Emerging out of these artists’ work have been articles and exhibitions that showcase and critique such a movement. Different curators have focused on different facets of this frequency. Blair French, for example, curated the exhibition ‘*Perfect Strangers*’ (Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, August 2000; Canberra Contemporary Art Space, February 2001). This exhibition sought to illuminate the way we presence ourselves before the camera as ‘perfect strangers’ in daily encounters, encounters that confuse the boundaries between private figure and public space.²³ French comments on the apparently meaningless scenes of boarded-up windows, dead-end alleys, abandoned shoes, shop windows, and empty stairwells that are presented in the work of New York photographer Tim Maul and tenuously establishes a link to Atget’s Parisian street scenes.²⁴ Further, curator and writer Daniel Palmer’s article for the April 2001 issue of *Photofile* titled ‘*Between Place and Non-Place: The Poetics of Empty Space*’²⁵ was then followed by an exhibition of the same name which Palmer curated with Kate Rhodes at the Victorian College of the Arts Gallery in October 2001. This exhibition focused on interior spaces, “unoccupied or abandoned buildings, empty consumer venues and purely imagined vacant spaces.”²⁶ More recently artists Jack Sweetman and James Cecil’s exhibition ‘*Location*’ at the CCP in May 2002 explored the notion of the spaces of home and “the traces left behind by familiar routines,”²⁷ while Paul Knight’s exhibition ‘*Krater crater*’ in July 2002 at the same venue cast, “an analytical gaze over spaces, and their various traces of human action [presenting us] with a perspective not necessarily or solely spatial, but also emotional and existential,” exploring “the unconscious of spatial experience,” through an ability to “actualise a certain awareness involved in our aesthetic experiences.”²⁸ In the physical actualisation of this ‘certain awareness’ I suggest that the ‘poetic’ work of these artists has a common thread - the notion of void(s) and their photographic representation: voided people, voided places, traces of memories and the history of things that might and could possibly have been. As Blair French notes, “Every image is both conjured by and creates its own absence.”²⁹ My comments below attempt to offer a different perspective on the nature of this voided ‘poetic’ representation being equally applicable to both the portraiture of, say, Alan Kershaw’s ‘*Tourist Monument*’ series of 1999, or the spatial portraiture of Sandy Nicholson’s ‘*Lift*’ series, 1998/2000, as moments of presentation in photographic imaging.

Entropia is a term I have formulated to verbalise the spatial qualities present in the images of photo-based artists working within the void of the 'poetics of empty space' (this does not mean these spaces are empty!). The term combines utopia (the longing for paradise) and entropy (the loss of energy from a system), to analyse the visuality, the dialectic of the gaze of these artists.³⁰ While I agree with Daniel Palmer that there can be a 'poetics of empty space', a resonance of the unconscious, it is in attempting to *name* this resonance that photographers may become *too* aware of its emotional disclosure. They may have become trapped into an in-sight, a knowledge not just of the present experience of the 'Thing Itself',³¹ not just of a creation made "without thought."³² I would argue that the language of their collective gaze seems to be directed towards the naming, longing for, and solidification of, a 'poetic space', a formal construction of space that immobilises 'punctum' through awareness,³³ possibly in order to deny the fluidity and fragmentation of space present in the ephemeral images of a media-rich informational society. As Daniel Palmer notes, "The broad evidence suggests that an acute awareness of place may be the result of its contemporary displacement by today's ephemeral spaces of circulation, as well as by electronic real-time images ..."³⁴ Palmer also suggests that, "Perhaps this fascination with spatial memory traces (or their conspicuous absence) is the 'real' returning to haunt the mobile flows of informational capitalism?"³⁵ But what if we invert this question. What if we were to suggest that it is the horizon square³⁶ of the computer screen that is haunting our vision of the 'real'? As Vivian Sobchack observes,

"Our experience of spatial contiguity has also been radically altered by digital representation. Fragmented into discrete and contained units ... space has lost much of its contextual function as the ground for the continuities of time, movement, and event. Space is now more often a "text" than a "context."³⁷

The empty, poetic spaces of these artists' photographs may represent a transference of this digital dimensionality onto the text of their photographs, a taxonomic system that causes an (ir)reversibility of poetic presence: it is here (traced in our digital imagination?) and we must accept it as such for it has been seen. Again, could this be a visuality that has no context save for the need of its own awareness of that vision which then increases the 'truth' of the photograph as souvenir, as evidence, by means of the significance of its (non)narrative.³⁸ Here we may cite Paul Virilio's comments about the industrialisation of vision and the "the sharing of perception of the environment between the animate (the living subject) and the inanimate (the object, the seeing machine)."³⁹ Or note Sherry Turkle's comments on the intertwining of technology and human in which the traditional distance between man and machine is becoming harder to maintain.⁴⁰ As she observes, "*We have sought out the subjective computer.* Computers don't just do things for us, they do things to us, including to our ways of thinking about ourselves and other people ..."⁴¹ or, further, "Computers ... lead us to construct things in new ways."⁴²

Although photographers have always used machines (camera, enlarger, printer) to mediate between themselves and the world the computer as a thing-to-look-with has forever changed our visuality and our topography as image makers.⁴³ I suggest that there has been a re-sighting in the production of vision, causing a paradox in the imagery of these photographers. On the one hand they seek security in the 'truth' of the image⁴⁴ in the fundamentalism of the sublime, homogenising gaze linked to the indexicality of traces, mortality, mark(et)ing, of the not-so-emptiness of void(s) opposing the ephemeral-reality of simulation, fragmentation, and the surface representation of digital imagery; on the other hand there seems to be a transference of an ordering and quantisation⁴⁵ of digital spatio-temporal dimensionality onto the surface of the analogue image. The photographer becomes a compositor and design overwhelmingly influences the composition of the picture plane, the act of creativity becoming more "the organisation of the conditions in which form can appear and be selected."⁴⁶ Here is an assembling which arrests the 'reverberation' of the real, the glance of desire, reinscribing space/place with an artifice and a static existential significance beyond its narrative presence. Both these processes solidify the gaze of desire, fixing the ecstasy of the image in a utopian space/place. Could it be that in the fixity of their gaze are these photo-based artists caught in an act of ritualised production, one that denies the glimpsing other contexts, other ways of seeing in the spaces they wish to illuminate? Could there be a loss of energy from the system through the withdrawal of the subject into the 'reality' of the simulation through an all too conscious awareness of a utopian 'poetics of emptiness'? If there is, how can we combat this entropia?

a/voiding awareness

One of the most fascinating contemporary buildings that I have ever visited is the new Jewish Museum Berlin by the architect Daniel Libeskind. I was lucky enough to visit this building when it was completed but empty and it has left a strong impression; the magical spaces of light and dark that flow through the galleries, the angular floor of the basement, the sanctity, reverence, and stillness of the Holocaust tower infiltrated by light and sounds from outside, and the osmotic spaces of the 'Voids'. The 'Voids' are an integral part of the building's construction and are critical to its success. I believe that they allow the building to address the issue of the entropia of spatio-temporal environments. They are, physically, "negative spaces arranged along an absolutely straight line through the entire convoluted structure. Only the first two and the last, the largest and smallest Voids can be physically entered; the two inbetween are inaccessible, though they can be looked into from the upper floors, through windows resembling gun slits."⁴⁷ Psychologically they are much more than this, the interlocking of inside and outside providing the key to the orientation of both viewer and structure, being 'neither here nor there', echoing the evidence of world space noted earlier in Atget's photographs. In his essay on the structure Bernhard Schneider observes that,

"In such a complex interior, orientation is a key factor. It is provided by the frequent views of the surrounding city, the old building, and especially the projecting sections of the new museum itself, which are often due to its zigzag shape. Yet here, too, the principle of noncongruence between exterior and interior comes into play. Neither in the window or slit through which we gaze nor on the section of facade opposite do we find points of reference familiar from conventional buildings, by which we judge distances and dimensions, and see an obvious conformance between inside and out. Thus our perception of space and structure, and our own vantage point, is no longer a matter of course - it becomes a new experience."⁴⁸

The 'Voids' are critical to Libeskind's understanding of the importance of spatio-temporal orientation in his building, as our perception of space and our awareness of positioning "is no longer a matter of course - it becomes a new experience." This is one possible way that we could combat entropia: by a/voiding an all too common awareness of it. If we look to photography for examples of such an a/voidance, one that compliments Libeskind's noncongruence, I would offer an obscure set of anonymous black and white photographs taken from an early American gay pornography magazine of October 1973.⁴⁹ Illustrating articles on the cities of Philadelphia, Vancouver, and Los Angeles there are 87 black and white photographs in square and rectangular format, all reproduced approximately 5.5cm wide, which image the spaces of male to male contact, spaces of transgressive desire and forbidden impulses: gay bars, cruising grounds, beats, saunas, and sex clubs. It is apparent that the images were not taken by professional photographers, professionals whose trained eyes judge the spaces set before them for the image makers seem unfettered by normal conventions, having no pretensions towards an awareness of the significance of the spaces they are photographing. Here the camera is placed in incongruous positions, the angles of pavements and facades at odds with the visualisation of space by the Australian photo-artists - think Carravaggio's paintings with their huge foreshortened elbows and buttocks confronting parishioners at eye level as they entered the church, disrupting the integrity of an insular image plane. The image becomes the site of intensive disruptions⁵⁰ through exposure to abjection,⁵¹ leading to a unique way of seeing. What is not intentionally privileged within the image plane is of the essence for these spaces are dynamic, they challenge symbolic codes of representation, they break apart Butler's 'performativity' of ritualised production. Like the photographs of the anonymous woman, these images engage *not* because of their nostalgic appeal to the traces of narrative or human marking but because of their eidetic and visual vitality, *mise-en-scène* stirred by an *élan vital*, confound it!

spaces that matter

The creativity of new technologies such as multi-media and virtual environments may offer other ways in which still photography can elide the actions of entropia, through "possibilities of gradually mapping, invoking, revealing and recording 'new modes of

consciousness',⁵² which could help image makers destroy the pre-known language of signs with which photography speaks. As Hervé Fischer observes,

“Everything has changed with the digital revolution, including art. History has become evanescent, fading from sight. We cultivate histories and memories in order to reassure ourselves; we compile information in order to put our new technological powers into perspective ... As artists, we face the possibility of mastering new aesthetics involving interactive technology and newly developing forms of multimedia.”⁵³

The video installations of Bill Viola are a good example of a multi-media artist imaging a personal spatio-temporal language, one in which an awareness of ego falls away leaving an “artistic practice [that] relies on craft, clarity, and a vision of the world that springs from beneath the surface of observable phenomena.”⁵⁴ This is not a language that recites learnt ideas about space and time, but reinvents, as artists must, a new language in opposition to the thought of his age. Drawing his inspiration from Eastern and Western religions, “the physics of optics and the mechanisms of perception,”⁵⁵ Viola’s video/installations such as *The Reflecting Pool* (1977-79)⁵⁶ and *Passage* (1987)⁵⁷ redefine the space/time continuum in a way that is analogous to the world space present in Atget’s photographs, the glimpsing (being not a doleful awareness of the static gaze) of a timeless spirituality that “touches the knowledge that resides within everyday experience.”⁵⁸ As Viola notes, “It only takes an instant for an impression to become a vision.”⁵⁹

One Australian multi-media exhibition that explored, “the poetics of space, time and technological mediation, with reference to new psychologies of perception and the artistic possibilities of distraction”⁶⁰ was *Octopus 3: Still time* curated by Charlotte Day at Getrude contemporary art spaces in Melbourne in July 2002. As Day notes in her catalogue essay the artists “adapt effects upon perception - acceleration, compression, distortion, repetition, reflection, motion, scanning - to create discreet psychological spaces for contemplation ...”⁶¹ to (in)form discontinuity which they see as an essential part of the contemporary human condition. Two of the most interesting and successful works in the exhibition were by artists Shaun Gladwell and Sarah Ryan. Gladwell’s work *Self Portrait Spinning (real time)* 2001-2002 shows looped digital video of the artist spinning on his skateboard in front of different Paris locations on four separate floor monitors. The images are mesmerising in their perspective as the video camera zooms in on the whirling dervish, “ending in near obliteration as the figure eventually dissolves in to pixels,”⁶² the blending of the gestural figure with the spatial distantiation of the back-ground becoming a ground-less-ness. Ryan’s work *Garden* 2002 and *Never Stop* 2002 are an example of the successful transference of different ‘modes of consciousness’ created through the use of multi-media technologies onto the body of the still photographic image forming a fluid viewpoint of the ‘poetics of empty space’.

Charlotte Day observes that Ryan, “Has developed a photographic technique that synthesises ten separate views to produce a stereo lenticular effect. The resulting photographs have a shimmering and flickering surface that provides a visual jolt as the image moves slightly in relation to the changing position of the viewer ... Ryan’s images are purposely open-ended, utilising the unstable and elusive qualities of the lenticular process ... Yet Ryan does not give too much away as the familiar is made strange through severe cropping and the assembly of images without clear narrative.”

Remembering, those wonderfully kitsch 1970’s 3-D postcards of flowers and religious figures that distorted our perceptions: the still image made strange, spaces of entropia combated through a re-velatio of shimmering desire, the visual as unstable as when we hold a book too close to our face, blurring the line between still and moving images.

Another example of a successful transference of different ‘modes of consciousness’ created through the use of multi-media technologies onto the body of the still photographic image was Daniel Crooks recent exhibition *Time Slice* at the CCP in June 2002. Triggering “a perceptual shift in our viewing of the space/time continuum,” Crooks “explores alternative visual perceptions of space/time by blurring the line between still and moving images ... Thin slices are extracted from a moving image stream and then spatially and temporally offset ... a 4 pixel slice is taken from each frame [of video] and consecutively added to the image ...”⁶³ until finally the assembled space-time lapse image becomes a rhythmic, organic, multitarian photograph. At more than 3m high by 20cm wide the digital photographs Elevator 1.1 and 1.2 were two of the most interesting images in the exhibition. Created through the assembled time slices of figures entering and leaving a lift the images evince the suffused beauty of stained glass windows. The

anamorphic resonance of the ribbon like creatures created by such assemblage disrupted the quantification of 'shut space',⁶⁴ forming a nexus between fluid identity, time and space; the ossification of the utopian image was denied, and the images refused to comply to a loss of energy as "time was smeared across the page."⁶⁵

New technologies *can* offer an evolution in the way in which we conceive of space,⁶⁶ sidestepping the usual quotations of spatial entropia for here is an architecture of ground-less-ness that evokes an atmosphere of aware-less-ness creating a 'poetics of space' far removed from the language of entropia. Tom Kovac comments on this spatial ground-less-ness in a recent issue of Architectural Design on '*Poetics in Architecture*':

"The possibilities of a spatiality of ground-less-ness change our concentration from the specific to the very unspecific ... The release from inert rationalist geometries towards continuous topological space is a reterritorialisation and rematerialisation of the actual world. It impacts on our internal poetic understandings of space. Experiencing this new world promotes an evolution of the way in which we conceive of space. Stable, utopian and rational idealism gives way to malleable daydreaming, a world of liquid transformations realised through the shifts between matter and substance and between real time and experienced, sensual time. In the intellectual pursuit of habitation, we shift from current poetic contexts to a porous spatial realm that responds to the change in cultural texture brought about by the new technology. An emerging desire for sensibilities outside the slipstream of convention ..."⁶⁷

In the context of this new porous spatial realm Kovac is proffering a 'releasement toward things',⁶⁸ a coexistence between a conscious and unconscious way of perceiving which sustains the mystery of the object confusing the distinction between real time and sensual time, between inside and outside, input and output becoming neither here nor there. The mystery of the image is *not* to be found in its emasculation (in the sense of it's deprivation of vigour) but by being attentive to the dropping away of awareness, of memory, imagination, and the fixed gaze of desire through the glimpsing of a coexistence between a conscious and unconscious way of perceiving, a 'releasement towards things' which enables the seeing of the 'Thing Itself'. I believe that this process could lead image makers to explore "the idea of the tantalising image, of things you half see, of flashes in your mind,"⁶⁹ explorations that may reveal liminal moments,⁷⁰ moments that destroy the predictions of entropia, that avoid the frequency of common intensities, instead illuminating spaces and languages where new cultural symbols and meanings can emerge: spaces that matter because they matter to us all.

endnotes

¹ **Vonnegut**, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse Five*. London: Johnathan Cape, 1970, p.61.

² **Harding**, Douglas. "On Being Aware." n.d. The Headless Way Organisation website, articles section. Sighted at <http://www.headless.org/English/main.html>. 05/07/2002.

³ **Schneider**, Norbert. *The Art of the Portrait*. Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994, p.67.

⁴ **Mapplethorpe**, Robert. "Arnold Schwarzenegger, 1976," in Ellenzweig, Allen. *The Homoerotic Photograph*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p.139.

⁵ **Arbus**, Diane. "A naked man being a woman, N.Y.C. 1968," in An Aperture Monograph. *Diane Arbus*. New York: Millerton, 1972.

⁶ "I would suggest that 'performativity' cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms ... This iterability implies that "performance" is not a singular "act" or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance."

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter*. New York: Routledge, 1993, pp.94-95.

- ⁷ **Barthes**, Roland. Camera Lucida. (trans. Richard Howard). New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, p.26.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.55.
- ⁹ **Barthes**, Roland. Camera Lucida. (trans. Richard Howard). New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, p.47, quoted in Zurbrugg, Nicholas. "'Apocalyptic'? 'Negative'? 'Pessimistic'?": Baudrillard, Virilio, and techno-culture," in Koop, Stuart (ed.). Photography Post Photography. Melbourne: Centre for Contemporary Photography, 1995, p.79.
- ¹⁰ See Endnote 2. I believe that this form of attentiveness to present experience is *not* the same as Featherstone's fragmentation of time into affect-charged experiences of the presentness of the world in postmodern culture.
- "Postmodern everyday culture is ... a culture of stylistic diversity and heterogeneity (comprising different parts or qualities), of an overload of imagery and simulations which lead to a loss of the referent or sense of reality. The subsequent fragmentation of time into a series of presents through a lack of capacity to chain signs and images into narrative sequences leads to a schizophrenic emphasis on vivid, immediate, isolated, affect-charged experiences of the presentness of the world - of *intensities*."
- Featherstone**, Mike. Consumer Culture and Postmodernism. London: Sage Publications, 1991, p.124.
- ¹¹ **Baudrillard**, Jean. The Transparency of Evil. (trans. James Benedict). London: Verso, 1993, quoted in Zurbrugg, Nicholas. "'Apocalyptic'? 'Negative'? 'Pessimistic'?": Baudrillard, Virilio, and techno-culture," in Koop, Stuart (ed.). Photography Post Photography. Melbourne: Centre for Contemporary Photography, 1995, p.80.
- ¹² **Baudrillard**, Jean. The Art of Disappearance. (trans. Nicholas Zurbrugg). Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 1994, p.9, quoted in Zurbrugg, Nicholas. "'Apocalyptic'? 'Negative'? 'Pessimistic'?": Baudrillard, Virilio, and techno-culture," in Koop, Stuart (ed.). Photography Post Photography. Melbourne: Centre for Contemporary Photography, 1995, p.83.
- ¹³ **Krishnamurti**. Beginnings of Learning. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978, pp.130-131.
- ¹⁴ **Bachelard**, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. (trans Maria Jolas). Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, p.xxxv.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.203.
- ¹⁶ **Palmer**, Daniel. "Between Place and Non-Place: The Poetics of Empty Space," in Palmer, Daniel (ed.). Photofile. Issue 62 ('Fresh'). Sydney: Australian Centre for Photography, April 2001, p.47.
- ¹⁷ **Bachelard**, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. (trans Maria Jolas). Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, p.212.
- ¹⁸ See the editor's note by **Gilson**, Etienne (ed.) in Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. (trans Maria Jolas). Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, p.xvi.
- ¹⁹ **Bateson**, Gregory. Steps To An Ecology Of Mind - Collected Essays On Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology. St. Albans: Paladin, 1973.
- ²⁰ See **Bunnell**, Peter. Minor White: The Eye That Shapes. Boston: Bulfinch Press/Princeton University, 1989.
- ²¹ "The only defence against transgressive desire is to turn either oneself or the object of desire to stone."
- Wilson**, Elizabeth. "The Invisible Flâneur," in Watson, Sophie and Gibson, Katherine (eds.). Postmodern Cities and Spaces. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1995, p.75.
- ²² Artists such as James Cecil, Max Creasy, Justina Gardiner, Bill Henson, Annie Hogan, Alin Huma, Alex Kershaw, Paul Knight, Naomi Kumar, Cathy Laudenbach, Sandy Nicholson, Selina Ou, Kenneth Pleban, Tara Shield, Jack Sweetman, and Celeste Treloar for example.
- ²³ **French**, Blair. "The Things That Bill Sees," in Perfect Strangers. Canberra: Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2000. Exhibition catalogue essay.
- ²⁴ "Or furthermore, there's something of Atget's Parisian streets in these images, as if we have here details from the edges and corners or from beneath the imperfect resolution of these old prints, a close inspection for traces of bodies erased from the boulevards."
- French**, Blair. "The Things That Bill Sees," in Perfect Strangers. Canberra: Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2000. Exhibition catalogue essay.
- See also **Maul**, Tim. Traces and Presence. Paris: éditions Florence Loewy, 1999.
- ²⁵ **Palmer**, Daniel. "Between Place and Non-Place: The Poetics of Empty Space," in Palmer, Daniel (ed.). Photofile. Issue 62 ('Fresh'). Sydney: Australian Centre for Photography, April 2001, pp.46-51.
- ²⁶ **Palmer**, Daniel and **Rhodes**, Kate (curators). Between Place and Non-Place. Melbourne: Victorian College of the Arts, October 2001. Exhibition catalogue essay.

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- ²⁷ **Anonymous**. Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne website March 2002 archive notes for Jack Sweetman and James Cecil exhibition 'Location'. Sighted at <http://www.acmi.net.au/CCP/#05/07/2002>.
- ²⁸ **Palmer**, Daniel. Paul Knight: Krater crater. Melbourne: Centre for Contemporary Photography, July 2002. Exhibition catalogue notes.
- ²⁹ **French**, Blair. "The Things That Bill Sees," in Perfect Strangers. Canberra: Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2000. Exhibition catalogue essay.
- ³⁰ "The gaze, the look, the visual field are all conceived, to a greater or lesser extent, as being inscribed within a semiotic nexus of signs, language, and socialisation."
- Solomon-Godeau**, Abigail. "Written on the Body," in Iles, Chrissie and Robersts, Russell (eds.). In Visible Light: Photography and Classification in Art, Science and the Everyday. Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1997, p.69.
- ³¹ "Recording unfelt facts by acquired rule, results in sterile inventory. To see the *Thing Itself* is essential: the quintessence revealed without the direct fog of impressionism,- the casual noting of a superficial phase, or transitory mood ... So in photography,- the first fresh emotion, feeling for the thing, is captured complete and for all time at the very moment it is seen and felt." Edward Weston.
- Newhall**, Nancy (ed.). The Day Books of Edward Weston. New York: Aperture Books, 1990, pp.154-156.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p.169.
- ³³ Perhaps the spectacle of these images is one of ultimate alienation, the image (re)turned back to the photographer as commodity, as stilled distraction, a second-hand experience of the second hand of reality. Entropia could represent a fixing of the punctum of Lefebvre's 'unalienated production', of poesis.
- See **Shields**, Rob. Lefebvre, Love and Struggle. London: Routledge, 1999, pp.99-100.
- ³⁴ **Palmer**, Daniel and **Rhodes**, Kate (curators). Between Place and Non-Place. Melbourne: Victorian College of the Arts, October 2001. Exhibition catalogue essay.
- ³⁵ **Palmer**, Daniel. "Between Place and Non-Place: The Poetics of Empty Space," in Palmer, Daniel (ed.). Photofile. Issue 62 ('Fresh'). Sydney: Australian Centre for Photography, April 2001, p.51.
- ³⁶ Paul Virilio suggests that the square horizon of the computer screen is a bug in our memory of places, causing disorientation in our world as near and far, inside and outside are confused. Perhaps the solidification of space in the photography of empty space is an attempt to deny this confusion. After Lefebvre we might argue that the colonization of socially produced 'everyday space' through capitalism, commodities, images, and dreams is being accelerated as the computer becomes ever more a thing-to-look-with. In the respatialization of the horizon line as the radical 'other' of the horizon square of the computer screen, 'the beyond' of the spatiality of the computer screen is each day becoming less 'other', but 'both-and', the sublimation of difference into a homogenising exchangeable 'contradictory space', a space of quantification, of flattening, and of repression. What, therefore, are the 'politics of space' of the computer screen? From square horizon to square horizon, what does the computer reach out to touch in it's line of sight, in it's 'corporeality of vision'?
- See **Virilio**, Paul. Open Sky. (trans. Julie Rose). London: Verso, 1997. p.26.
- See **Shields**, Rob. Lefebvre, Love and Struggle. London: Routledge, 1999, p.176, 181.
- ³⁷ **Sobchack**, Vivian. Screening Space. New York: Ungar, 1991, pp.231-232 quoted in Springer, Claudia. Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996, p.44.
- ³⁸ Similar but not the same (other?) as Lacan's 'inside-out structure of the gaze', where the gaze is external to itself, where the subject sees itself seeing itself, through exteriority. See **Lacan**, Jacques. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis. (trans. Alan Sheridan). New York: Norton, 1978.
- ³⁹ **Virilio** Paul. The Vision Machine. (trans. Julie Rose). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, pp.59-60.
- ⁴⁰ **Turkle**, S. Life on The Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995, p.21.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.26.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p.47.

⁴³ “We no longer perceive ourselves as continuity but as location ... It is no longer possible to be rooting in history. Instead we are connected to the topography of computer screens and video monitors.” **Olalquiaga**, C. *Megalopolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, p.93 quoted in Shields, Rob. *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*. London: Routledge, 1999, p.176.

“Traditional photographic imagery is based upon the mirror theory of representation, that ‘which conceives of representation as the reproduction, for subjectivity, of an objectivity that lies outside it’. Just as this theory of knowledge is coming under increasing criticism, technological developments themselves are also threatening it ... still photography, video and computer generated imagery, *are all beginning to merge*. The implications of these changes need to be thought about, for it becomes increasingly less relevant to think about these as separate image producing technologies, particularly to treat them theoretically and historically as if they were discreet. In the past, they were distinct, but to bring an historical understanding into the present and future, they need to be thought of together ...” (My italics)

Willis, Anne-Marie. “Digitisation and the Living Death of Photography,” in Hayward, Phillip. *Culture, Technology and Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century*. London: John Libbey and Company, 1990, p.198.

⁴⁴ “Despite the possibilities offered by new digital technologies, this work tends to be very conventional in its technique. Note the burgeoning interest amongst many artists in medium or large format cameras and the return of large seductive prints - the desire for an index of the ‘real’.”

Palmer, Daniel. “Between Place and Non-Place: The Poetics of Empty Space,” in Palmer, Daniel (ed.). *Photofile*. Issue 62 (‘Fresh’). Sydney: Australian Centre for Photography, April 2001, p.50.

Speaking on the nature of ‘truth’ David Smail suggests that, “Though the truth is not just a matter of personal perspective, neither is it fixed and certain, objectively ‘out there’ and independent of human knowing. ‘The truth’ changes according to, among other things, developments and alterations in our values and understandings ... the ‘non-finality’ of truth is not to be confused with a simple relativity of ‘truths’.”

Smail, David. *Illusion & Reality: The Meaning of Anxiety*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1984, p.152.

⁴⁵ Quantisation is the privaliging of certain forms of data (either through digital code and/or cultural biases built into the means of representation) leading to a compression of space. Perhaps the quantisation of pixels in digital technology can be linked to Lefebvre’s rendering of space as homogenous, comparable, exchangeable, and subordinated to money and capital implying quantification. See **Shields**, Rob. *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*. London: Routledge, 1999, p.180.

⁴⁶ **Fry**, Tony. “Art Byting the Dust,” in Hayward, Phillip. *Culture, Technology and Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century*. London: John Libbey and Company, 1990, pp.171-172.

⁴⁷ **Schneider**, Bernhard in Fuchshuber, Julia and Wurm, Katharina (eds.). *Jewish Museum Berlin: between the lines/Daniel Libeskind*. (trans. John William Gabriel). Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1999, p.51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.57.

⁴⁹ Anonymous black in white photographs in **Lorrimer**, John (ed.). *Ciao! The World of Gay Travel*. Vol. 1. No. 5. New York: QQ Publishing Co., Inc., October 1973, pp.7-26.

⁵⁰ “Modes of greatest intensification of bodily zones occur, *not through the operations of habitual activities*, but through the unexpected, through the connection, conjunction and construction of unusual interfaces which re-mark orifices, glands, sinews, muscles differently, giving organs and bodily organisation up to the intensities that threaten to overtake them, seeking the alien, otherness, the disparate in its extremes, to bring into play these intensities ... In this way, the subject’s body ceases to be a body, to become the site of provocations and reactions, the site of intensive disruptions ...” (My Italics)

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Space, Time and Perversion: The Politics of Bodies*. New York: Routledge, 1995, pp.198-200.

⁵¹ “In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva describes the “abject” as: “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules ...” Abjection, therefore, transgresses the body and commingles self and other in a breakdown of boundaries.”

Kristeva, Julia. Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection. (trans. by Leon Roudiez). New York: Columbia University Press, 1982, p.4, quoted in Davis, Melody. The Male Nude in Contemporary Photography. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991, pp.104-105.

⁵² **Zurbrugg**, Nicholas. “‘Apocalyptic’? ‘Negative’? ‘Pessimistic’?: Baudrillard, Virilio, and technoculture,” in Koop, Stuart (ed.). Photography Post Photography. Melbourne: Centre for Contemporary Photography, 1995, p.76.

⁵³ **Fischer**, Hervé. “A Crisis in Contemporary Art,” 1999. Sighted at: <http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/isast/articles/fischer.html> 05/07/2002.

⁵⁴ **Ross**, David. Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999. Exhibition catalogue notes.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ “A man emerges from a forest and stands before a pool of water. He leaps up and time abruptly stands still, suspending him in midair. From this point on, all movement and change in the otherwise still scene is limited to the reflections and undulations on the surface of the pool. A series of events occurs that are seen only as reflections. Finally, the man emerges from the water without ever having fallen in, and he walks back into the forest.”

Anonymous. Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999. Exhibition catalogue notes.

⁵⁷ “A long narrow corridor leads to a small inner room where a large projection fills and entire wall. A videotape of a young child’s birthday party is being played back in extreme slow motion, taking seven hours to unfold. The room’s architecture places the viewer uncomfortably close to the image, and the deep rumbling sound of the child’s voice fills the narrow space.”

Anonymous. Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999. Exhibition catalogue notes.

⁵⁸ **Ross**, David. Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999. Exhibition notes.

⁵⁹ **Viola**, Bill quoted in Ross, David. Bill Viola: A 25-Year Survey. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999. Exhibition catalogue notes.

⁶⁰ **Delaney**, Max. Octopus 3. Melbourne: Gertrude contemporary art spaces, July 2002. Exhibition catalogue notes.

⁶¹ **Day**, Charlotte. “Still time: temporality, transformation and the possibilities of distraction,” in Octopus 3: Still time. Melbourne: Gertrude contemporary art spaces, July 2002. Exhibition catalogue essay.

⁶² “The four monitor digital video installation *Self Portrait Spinning* presents a four minute loop of the artist performing 360 degree skateboard spins in front of various Paris monuments. The loops are fast, short clips that zoom in on the spinning figure and, in particular, his gestures. The installation shows multiple and shifting perspective with the close ups ending in near obliteration as the figure eventually dissolves in to pixels.”

Day, Charlotte. “Still time: temporality, transformation and the possibilities of distraction,” in Octopus 3: Still time. Melbourne: Gertrude contemporary art spaces, July 2002. Exhibition catalogue essay.

⁶³ **Crooks**, Daniel. ‘*Time Slice*’. Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, July 2002. Sighted 08/07/2002. Exhibition notes.

⁶⁴ **Grosz**, Elizabeth. “The Future of Space,” in Koop, Stuart (ed.). Value Added Goods. Melbourne: Centre for Contemporary Photography, 2002, p.99.

⁶⁵ Op. cit.

⁶⁶ For example ‘Liquid Architecture’ in VR environments, where objects can have unfolding dimensions, and containers can be bigger on the inside than on the outside. See **Benedikt**, Michael. Cyberspace: First Steps. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1992, p.42.

⁶⁷ **Kovac**, Tom. “Curve Gallery,” in van Schaik, Leon (ed.). Architectural Design. Vol. 72. No. 2. (‘Poetics in Architecture’). London: John Wiley and Sons, 2002, p.60.

⁶⁸ “We stand at once within the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself just in approaching us. That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery ... Releasement towards things and openness to the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way ...”

Heidegger, Martin. Discourse on Thinking. New York: Harper & Row, 1966, pp.55-6 quoted in Baracco, Mauro. "Completed Yet Unconcluded: The Poetic Resistance of Some Melbourne Architecture," in van Schaik, Leon (ed.), Architectural Design. Vol. 72. No. 2. ('Poetics in Architecture'). London: John Wiley and Sons, 2002, p.74. Footnote 6.

⁶⁹ **Callas**, Peter. "Peter Callas - Interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg," in Continuum. Vol. 8. No. 1. 1994, p.119 quoted in Zurbrugg, Nicholas. "'Apocalyptic'? 'Negative'? 'Pessimistic'? Baudrillard, Virilio, and techno-culture," in Koop, Stuart (ed.), Photography Post Photography. Melbourne: Centre for Contemporary Photography, 1995, p.82.

⁷⁰ **Turner**, Victor. The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure. Chicago: Aldine, 1966.