

## RADICANT AESTHETICS

The major aesthetic phenomenon of our time is surely the intertwining of the properties of space and time, which turns the latter into a territory every bit as tangible as the hotel room where I am sitting right now or the noisy street that stretches beneath my window. By means of these new modes of spatializing time, contemporary art produces forms that are able to capture this experience of the world through practices that could be described as "time-specific"—analogous to the "site-specific" art of the 1960s—and by introducing figures from the realm of spatial displacement into the composition of its works. Thus, today's art seems to negotiate the creation of new types of space by resorting to a geometry of translation: topology. This branch of mathematics deals less with the quantity of spaces than with their quality, the protocol of their transition from one condition to another. Thus, it refers to movement, to the dynamism of forms, and characterizes reality as a conglomeration of transitory surfaces and forms that are potentially movable. In this sense, it goes hand in hand with translation as well as with precariousness.

### AESTHETIC PRECARIOUSNESS AND WANDERING FORMS

Of all the sociological phenomena of these early years of the twenty-first century, the generalization of the disposable is no doubt the one that goes most unnoticed. It even tends to be regarded as a cliché, a legacy of the first ecological alarm bells sounded in the 1960s. Be that as it may, it is a fact that the lifespan of objects is becoming shorter and shorter, their turnover in the marketplace ceaselessly accelerated, their obsolescence carefully planned. Social life seems more fragile than ever, and the bonds that make it up seem increasingly tenuous. The contracts that govern the labor market merely reflect this general precariousness, which mirrors that of commodities whose rapid expiration now permeates our perception of the world. Originally, the term "precarious" referred to a right of use that could be revoked at any time. It must be admitted that each of us now intuitively perceives existence as a collection of ephemeral entities, far from the impression

of permanence that our ancestors, whether rightly or wrongly, formed of their environment. Paradoxically, however, the political order that governs this chaos has never seemed so solid: everything is constantly changing, but within an immutable and untouchable global framework to which there no longer seems to be any credible alternative. In an immediate environment that is constantly being updated and reformatted, in which the short-lived is overtaking the long-term and access is overtaking ownership, the stability of things, signs, and conditions is becoming the exception rather than the rule. Welcome to the disposable world: a world of customized destinies, governed by the inaccessible mechanism of an economy that, like science, is developing in a state of complete autonomy with respect to lived reality.

Until well into the 1980s, a fashion in clothing or music had time to develop before giving way to another that was equally distinct. By contrast, today's trends constitute a kind of continuous, low-amplitude motion, whose content no longer corresponds to behavioral or existential choices, as it did for the great pop culture movements of the last fifty years of the twentieth century. In the contemporary cultural tide, the waves no longer cover each other forcefully, forming hollows and crests. On the contrary, countless little wavelets wash up on the beach of a "now" in which all trends coexist without animosity or antagonism. The cultural choices are options that can be combined and superimposed. Nothing *counts*, since nothing really binds us or requires us to commit ourselves. Let us recall the great Nietzschean question of eternal return: are you willing to relive for all eternity the moments you are experiencing right now? Transposed to the realm of art, this question entails a commitment to values, a space traversed by conflicts, by wagers with consequences for the future. That question no longer arises. And yet it introduced tragedy into culture, for at that time artistic propositions, like the statements that accompanied them, bore the stamp of irreversibility; they had weight and a cutting edge [*tranchant*]. Now that the era of commitment is past, we find it

pathetically difficult to retain anything at all in a cultural environment that is marked by its volatility—except proper names, which increasingly function as brands.

Various authors have sought to delineate the contours of this precarious universe. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman defines our industrial cult of the ephemeral as constituting a "liquid modern society" in which "the waste-disposal industry takes over the commanding positions in liquid life's economy."<sup>65</sup> In this society where everything is disposable, a society "nudged from behind by the horror of expiry," nothing is more frightening than "the steadfastness, stickiness, viscosity of things inanimate and animate alike." And the driving force of this "liquid life" is needless to say that globalized consumerism whose glorious face is the shopping malls and whose miserable underside is the flea markets and the slums, in a universe of global competition between disposable employees who are alternately consumers and consumed. As early as 1984, the German thinker Ulrich Beck described a "risk society" in which the individual—under the weight of "menacing possibilities," whether ecological or economic—becomes the object of an "invisible impoverishment" generated by universal precariousness.<sup>66</sup> Nor is private life far behind. Global capitalism, writes Slavoj Žižek, "clearly favor[s] [a] mode of subjectivity characterized by ... multiple shifting identifications," a development that turns queer theory, MySpace culture, and the avatars of Second Life into the objective allies of a society governed by the quest for perpetual novelty.<sup>67</sup> Michel Maffesoli relativizes the emergence of this social changeability, regarding it as simply a polytheistic and pagan, eclectic and pluralistic "period," a

65 ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *LIQUID LIFE* (CAMBRIDGE: POLITY PRESS, 2005), 3.

66 ULRICH BECK, *RISK SOCIETY: TOWARDS A NEW MODERNITY*, TRANS. MARK RITTER (LONDON AND NEW-BURY PARK, CA: SAGE PUBLICATIONS), 1992.

67 SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, *THE SPECTRE IS STILL ROAMING AROUND: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF THE "COMMUNIST MANIFESTO"* (ZAGREB: ARZKIN, 1998), 25.



"sign of vitality" that follows quite logically the totalizations of modernism. "The emblematic figure of this moment," he writes, "points to an identity in motion, a fragile identity, an identity that is no longer the only solid foundation of individual and social existence, as it was for modernity."<sup>68</sup>

This "liquid" modernism became a reality at the beginning of the 1990s, when the economic crisis relegated the themes of consumption and communication, which had dominated the 1980s, to the background. Using disparate sculptural means, Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, Cindy Sherman, and Haim Steinbach had all set the social play of shopping—whether it be that of identities (Sherman) or that of exchange value (Steinbach), ideology (Holzer), or the marketing of desire (Koons)—on durable supports. But as soon as the decade was over, the works of Cady Noland, which stood midway between the icy aesthetic that had prevailed until then (recognizable by its perfect finishes and sophisticated packaging) and the aesthetic of the flea market (which would soon become the formal structure most commonly employed by artists), formed a perfect transition to the 1990s, which would oppose the luxurious forms of the art of the preceding decade by exalting the precarious against the solid, the use of things against their exchange under the aegis of the language of advertising, the flea market against the shopping mall, ephemeral performance and fragile materials against stainless steel and resin.<sup>69</sup>

In these early years of the twenty-first century, it is clear that the oppositions are less marked. All forms coexist peacefully, and artistic production no longer even seems to be organized by that pendulum swing between the solid and the precarious that continued to echo

the alternation of classical and baroque, a "fundamental principle of art history" according to the historian Heinrich Wölfflin.<sup>70</sup> For such "fundamental principles" can only fully operate in a radical world, or a world that retains a memory of that radicality. In a postmodern universe, everything is equivalent. But in a radican universe, principles mingle and multiply by means of combinations. No more subtraction, but constant multiplication. That profusion, that absence of clear hierarchies, is in keeping with this precariousness, which can no longer be reduced to the use of fragile materials or short durations but now imbues all artistic production with its uncertain hues and constitutes an intellectual substrate, an ideological backdrop before which all forms pass in review. In short, precariousness now pervades the entirety of the contemporary aesthetic. Is this a paradox? Officially, if I may say so, precariousness is the sworn enemy of culture. Let us recall certain axioms of Western culture which hold that the cultural object is defined by its enduring character, or simply by its opposition to the world of consumption. Hannah Arendt's writings are a good example of this attempt to rank things according to their degree of solidity: "Culture is being threatened when all worldly objects and things, produced by the present or the past, are treated as mere functions for the life process of society, as though they are there only to fulfill some need."<sup>71</sup> In other words, art must absolutely resist the process of consumption: "An object is cultural to the extent that it can endure; its durability is the very opposite of functionality." Zygmunt Bauman makes the same argument, but he targets the enemy with greater precision: as the new purveyor of cultural criteria, the marketplace of consumption "propagates rapid circulation, a shorter distance from use to waste and waste disposal, and the immediate replacement of goods that are

<sup>68</sup> MICHEL MAFFESOLI, *DU NOMADISME* (LIVRE DE POCHÉ, 1997), 109.

<sup>69</sup> FOR MORE ON THE MARKET AS HEGEMONIC FORM OF THE ART OF THE 1990S, SEE THE AUTHOR'S *POSTPRODUCTION* (NOTE 36).

<sup>70</sup> HEINRICH WÖLFFLIN, *PRINCIPLES OF ART HISTORY: THE PROBLEM OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF STYLE IN LATER ART*, TRANS. M. D. HOTTINGER (NEW YORK: DOVER, 1950).

<sup>71</sup> HANNAH ARENDT, *BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE: EIGHT EXERCISES IN POLITICAL THOUGHT* (NEW YORK: VIKING, 1968), 208.

no longer profitable."<sup>72</sup> Operations that, according to Bauman, are radically opposed to "cultural creation." But is this dichotomy between the enduring and the functional still relevant today? Is it capable of establishing a distinction between what belongs to culture and what is hostile or alien to it? Is precariousness in itself a bad thing? Are there cutting edges [*du tranchant*] to be found in the precarious universe?

Paradoxically, precariousness is inscribed in the culture by the many mechanisms that seek to remedy it, and attest to it at the same time. We live in a "ctrl+S universe," a society with "automatic backup" in which the recording and archiving of cultural phenomena are widespread and systematic. If it is true that, as Bauman writes, "among consumer society's industries waste production is the most massive,"<sup>73</sup> the same might be said of the industry that reflects it, that of preservation. Thus, a dense network of journals, museums, websites, and catalogues is turning the art world into a kind of hard disk that stores, recycles, and reuses the most precarious productions. Here too, the culture of precariousness privileges the replayable (which depends on access) over the durable (which involves the physical possession of things). Today, the function of the art museum has less to do with the storage of objects in a physical space than with the maintenance of a database of information. A performance by Vito Acconci from 1970, of which nothing survives but photographic documents and eye-witness accounts, potentially represents the same value as a sculpture displayed in the rooms of a museum—specifically that of a replayable score, but also that of an artistic event whose shock wave cannot be reduced to its physical duration. Today, when Tino Sehgal recruits actors to interpret his interactive scenarios, he requests that no visible traces be left behind. This insistence on the

"here and now" of the artistic event and the refusal to record it are a challenge to the art world (whose institutional character is now becoming indistinguishable from archiving); they are also the assertion of a positive precariousness, or even an aesthetic of uncluttering, of wiping the hard disk.

If Hannah Arendt's criteria for the definition of culture—its enduring character, its distance from social processes, its rejection of function and commercialization—are applied to contemporary artworks, it is clear that nearly all of them fail to satisfy it, as does the system in which they are involved. Does this mean they are merely a parody of culture? Or on the contrary, that they are defining new territories in response to a new and unprecedented situation? For when we examine the phenomenon of artistic production today, we find that there seem to be new types of contracts being concluded between the physical duration of the artwork and its duration as information, contracts that shatter the foundation of certainties on which critical thought has hitherto been based. It is my contention that art has found a way not only to resist this new unstable environment but also to draw new strength from it, and that new forms of culture and new types of formal writing could very well develop in a mental and material universe whose backdrop is precariousness. For this is the situation in these early years of the twenty-first century, in which transience, speed, and fragility reign in all domains of thought and cultural production, giving rise to what might be described as a precarious aesthetic regime.

A modern moment took place at the end of the nineteenth century: the brushstroke became visible, expressing the painting's autonomy and magnifying the human hand in reaction to the industrialization of images and objects. It may be that, in these early years of the twenty-first century, our own modernity is developing on the basis of this collapse of the long term, at the very heart of the consumerist whirlwind

72 ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *LIQUID LIFE* (NOTE 30), 59.

73 *IBID.*, 9.



and cultural precariousness, countering the weakening of human territories under the impact of the globalized economic machine.

#### NO FIXED FORM (HOMELESS MATERIALS)

A history of the use of precarious materials in art since Kurt Schwitters's subtle compositions of found objects would fill multiple volumes. Here, however, we are interested in the contemporary meanings of the practice. It is certainly true that twentieth-century artists made abundant use of waste and everyday objects, but they did so for many different aesthetic reasons. Thus, Joseph Cornell's surrealist boxes have nothing to do with Rauschenberg's "combine paintings," which sought to bridge the gap between art and life from a very Duchampian perspective. The industrial waste amassed, compressed, or packaged by the New Realists of 1960 sought to create an expressive lexicon of the new industrial nature, while the natural precarious materials manipulated by the Italian artists of Arte Povera in the latter half of the decade were a response to the consumerist optimism of American Pop Art. As for the precarious compositions produced by the various members of the Fluxus movement, they valorized everyday life against its capture by artistic means and introduced a poetics of the next-to-nothing that would later find its most forceful expression in the works of George Brecht and Robert Filliou. And today?

Here is a gigantic shambles without beginning or end... The most heterogeneous objects—some used, some not—accumulated, isolated, or connected by tubes or wires within a structure that has no symmetry or overarching form but abounds in little compositions that are partially or totally hidden beneath the mass of the materials. The first time I saw an installation by Jason Rhoades—in Cologne in 1993—I was puzzled. What was he getting at? And yet all of the elements of this precarious aesthetic were right before my eyes: clutter, indeed saturation; the use of "poor" materials; a failure to distinguish between scraps and objects of consumption, between edible

and solid; and the rejection of any fixed compositional principle in favor of installations that seem nomadic and indeterminate. At the time, the allusions to homeless encampments seemed to be justified by a difficult economic situation. In New York in that same year, Rirkrit Tiravanija turned a gallery into a soup kitchen, inviting passersby to come in and eat in the guise of an exhibition. But what remains visible of Tiravanija's installations is not unrelated to those of Rhoades: kitchen utensils, minimal furnishings, and various objects in a state of apparent disorder unstructured by any discernible composition. As if in a world completely saturated with objects one could only compose negatively, by hollowing out: Rhoades, a Californian who died in 2006 at the age of forty-one, and Tiravanija, a Thai artist born in Argentina, are sculptors who bring figures to light by eliminating, by scraping away and eliding. For them there is no such thing as a blank page, a pristine canvas, or material to be worked. Chaos is preexisting, and they operate from the midst of it.

In 1991, an album by the group My Bloody Valentine, *Love/less*, expressed this new aesthetic tendency in the medium of sound. Within an undifferentiated aural chaos of electric guitars, the melody of each piece seemed to emerge by a series of subtractions, by emptying out, as if carved from some dense, preexisting magma. Reflections on a civilization of overproduction, in which the degree of spatial (and imaginary) clutter is such that the slightest gap in its uninterrupted chain—whether it be a disused urban area, a barren expanse (jungle, desert, or ocean), or an impoverished area—immediately becomes photogenic, even fascinating. The "few" or the "little" [*le peu*] is the ultimate icon, even in the midst of abundance. Here the artistic *laissez-faire* of a Jason Rhoades assumes the status of a moral act.

Fragile compositions, then. But that was not the final word of an aesthetic that insists on this fragility, not in an effort to highlight art's capacity to immortalize, but on the contrary, because it sees art as

the exaltation of instability. Born of the general excess, these compositions are in keeping with what the urban landscape has become, a precarious, cluttered, and shifting environment. Just as much of contemporary video deliberately models itself on the practices of amateurs, privileging raw documents and shaky images and restricting itself to the most rudimentary editing, in the same way, Jason Rhoades's installations assert that they only differ from life itself by a slight symbolic displacement. In a world that records as quickly as it produces, art no longer immortalizes but tinkers and arranges, throwing the products it consumes on the table pell-mell. Millions of people shoot, compile, and edit images with the help of software available to everyone. But they freeze memories, whereas the artist sets signs in motion.

Thus, Gabriel Orozco's photographs are merely stills from the great film of the precarious world. He frames ephemeral sculptures, collective, anonymous, and lowly compositions: a suspended plastic bag, water in a burst balloon, bunches of bicycles on a sidewalk. Orozco's subject is the collective as producer of forms, but at precisely the point where it cannot be distinguished from natural phenomena. Human agency or inclement weather—how can one tell them apart? Thus, as an artist he stands in the tradition of Jacques Villeglé, who collected the results of that "anonymous tearing" that provided the basic material for his project of unsticking posters, and Bernd and Hilla Becher, who created the visual yearbook of disused industrial structures. Human activities, sometimes indirectly, produce subtle compositions that the artist is content to simply frame, thus inscribing them within the register of duration, as with the series of *Monuments* conceived by Thomas Hirschhorn: "I wanted to show that monuments come 'from below,'" he explains. "I love anonymous altars, where people bring flowers and candles." One of these models was the improvised altar to Lady Di that came about after her accidental death in Paris, the reproduction of the flame of Bartoldi's Statue of

Liberty that her admirers spontaneously occupied because it was conveniently located above the tunnel where the media-friendly princess lost her life. Hirschhorn constructed a replica of it using his materials of choice (cardboard, aluminum foil, brown tape) before going on to realize more complex installations dedicated to authors such as Gilles Deleuze, Georges Bataille, Baruch Spinoza, and Michel Foucault. "It's a critique of the classical monument, in its choice of whom to memorialize and in its form. The monumental tradition celebrates warriors and men of power in the central squares of cities; I make monuments to thinkers in locations on the outskirts, where people live, precarious monuments that don't try to impress anyone and eschew the immortality of noble materials, marble or bronze."<sup>74</sup> The precarious aesthetic comes "from below" and cannot be distinguished from a gesture of solidarity.

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla make impressions in sand of signs etched on the soles of shoes (*Landmark—Footprints*) or encourage passersby to draw with white chalk on the asphalt of city streets (*Chalk Project*). One of their videos, *Amphibious (Login-Logout)*, produced in 2005, shows a procession of seemingly trivial forms and events winding along a river and watched by turtles that have climbed up on a makeshift raft.

At the invitation of the Tate Gallery, Mark Dion recruited volunteers to collect the slightest artifacts trapped in the mud of the Thames at the foot of the British institution—pipes, plastic objects, old shoes, oyster shells... These archaeological excavations made it possible to raise the cultural and industrial history of London back up to the surface (*Tate Thames Dig*, 1999). While the horizon of Dion's work is the global environmental crisis and the sociopolitical relations between the rich

<sup>74</sup> THOMAS HIRSCHHORN IN CONVERSATION WITH VALÉRIE SAINT-DO, AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [HTTP://WWW.HORSCHAMP.ORG/ARTICLE.PHP3?ID\\_ARTICLE=1300&VAR\\_RECHERCHE=HIRSCHHORN](http://WWW.HORSCHAMP.ORG/ARTICLE.PHP3?ID_ARTICLE=1300&VAR_RECHERCHE=HIRSCHHORN).



countries and the Third World—which he finds forms for in installations inspired by the museography of natural history and zoology—he too depicts our world as an enormous pile of assorted debris that the artwork then sets about collecting, classifying, and interpreting. This same perspective informs George Adeagbo's installations, constellations of trivial objects rescued from some abstract disaster, as well as the samples taken by Jeremy Deller from the folk culture of the United States.

While some artists seem to distance themselves from this precarious aesthetic, often they are only separated from it by their works' degree of material solidity. Take the trio of superstars consisting of Jeff Koons, Maurizio Cattelan, and Damien Hirst. What do they have in common besides the fact that their exhibitions are major events, unless it be their shared ambition to take an iconography born of contemporary precariousness and render it monumental? Thus, Jeff Koons takes children's toys and endows them with an enormous physical weight that contrasts with their frivolousness. His subject is heaviness: he turns the lightest of gadgets into untransportable monoliths, inflatable objects into lead, cheap junk into jewelry, as if he regarded aesthetic surplus value as a kind of gravity. For Koons, the density of matter becomes the quintessential code by which to organize the visible. An obsession with precariousness compels him to turn it into spectacle—that is, accumulated capital, gold value. As for Damien Hirst, the magnificent visual means he employs, the flawless finishes of his huge glass cages, and the luxurious formats of his paintings only serve to underscore the morbidness or fragility of the subjects he pins or imprisons there. Formaldehyde immortalizes, so he uses it to protect art against putrefaction. A butterfly catcher, the curator of a museum of cadavers, and the brilliant interior decorator of the hospital of the twenty-first century, Hirst is the great denier of precariousness, which he thus highlights as our actual horizon. Subodh Gupta's gleaming installations, realized using the most ordinary kitchen utensils to be found in the Indian state of Bakar; Nari Ward's heartbreaking

assemblages, produced by collecting used materials from New York City's African-American neighborhoods; Bertrand Lavier's chromium-plated African masks; and David Hammons's subtle arrangements of objects—even though they all belong to the category of sculpture, all of them contribute to the iconography of the precarious world.

It is equally clear that Cattelan works at the very heart of that universe. He derives the bulk of his material and the resources for his Chaplin-esque irony—the irony of the vagabond set loose in the universe of power—from the unstable status of the artist, the fragility of his position within the mechanism of the production of value. Thus, his life-size reproduction, above the municipal garbage dump of Palermo, of the letters that spell out "Hollywood" in the Los Angeles hills (*Hollywood*, 2001) may be seen as an emblem for his work, which is haunted by social precariousness and frequently orchestrates collisions between luxury and poverty. The emblem of this collision between two worlds is vanity, and it is coming back into fashion in these early years of the twenty-first century. Subodh Gupta's *Very Hungry God* (2006) represents an enormous skull with the help of an assemblage of chromium-plated implements. Piotr Uklanski has done the "portrait" of a collector—specifically François Pinault—in the form of an X-ray image; earlier he produced a photograph in which intertwined nude bodies form a skull and crossbones. In the context of luxury, vanity acquires new meaning. When social cynicism reaches heights like these, the artist becomes a kind of pre-Socratic philosopher, the only one who can say to the emperor, "get out of the way, you're standing in my sun."

#### URBAN WANDERING

When future historians study our era, they will no doubt be struck by the number of works that depict life in the big cities. They will note the countless images of streets, stores, markets, buildings, vacant lots, crowds, and interiors that were exhibited in galleries in our day. From this they will infer that the artists of these early years of the twenty-first

century were fascinated by the transformation of their immediate environment and the "becoming-world" [*devenir-monde*] of their cities. They will compare this period to the second half of the nineteenth century, when Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Georges Seurat depicted the birth of industrial civilization, also by painting scenes of urban life from the immediate outskirts of the cities. The Impressionists' views of boulevards and Parisian cafés bear certain similarities to the post-industrial landscapes of Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, Beat Streuli, and Jeff Wall. And going beyond contemporary photography, one could define nearly all contemporary artists by reference to the Baudelairean maxim "to distill the eternal from the transitory." For the omnipresence of precariousness in contemporary art inevitably pushes it back toward the sources of modernity: the fleeting present moment, the shifting crowd, the street, and the ephemeral. In his most programmatic text, Baudelaire attempts to sketch the profile of this *artiste mutant*: "a man of the whole world, a man who understands the world and the mysterious and lawful reasons for all its uses," he is "interest[ed] ... in things, be they apparently the most trivial." A flâneur who is able "to become one flesh with the crowd," that is, "the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite,"<sup>75</sup> this artist is "a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life."<sup>76</sup> From Gabriel Orozco to Thomas Hirschhorn and from Francis Alÿs to Jason Rhoades—all of them artists whose formal universes are nonetheless clearly dissimilar—many contemporary artists would embrace this definition of Baudelairean modernity, indexed to the urban, wandering, and precariousness. And the figure of the "kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness" might have been expressly

invented to describe the viewer of a work by Rhoades or Tiravanija, who is able to break down and reconstruct the movements that unify the thousand and one elements of an installation that would seem, to a more stationary gaze, to be nothing but pure chaos.

"Perhaps you know what an *erre* is?"\* asks Jacques Lacan. "It's something like momentum. The momentum something has when what was formerly propelling it stops."<sup>77</sup> At the end of the 1970s, when the modernist engine stopped, there were many who proclaimed the end of the movement itself. Thus, the postmodernists walked around the vehicle, deconstructed its mechanics, broke it down to spare parts, and formed theories regarding the nature of the breakdown before strolling off into the surrounding area and announcing that everyone was now free to walk however they liked, in whatever direction they chose. The artists under discussion here intend to remain the car, in the same direction as modernity, but while operating their vehicle according to the reliefs they encounter and with the aid of a different fuel. The *erre* would then be what remains of the forward motion initiated by modernism, the field that is open to our own modernity, our altermodernity. Thus, the work of Gabriel Orozco is riddled with allusions to the erratic movements of the urban pedestrian. *Yielding Stone* (1992) is a plasticine ball that is rolled across the asphalt surfaces of the city and collects the tiny debris that lies in its path. Consisting of a thin layer of minute materials, peelings, and dust, *Yielding Stone* is intended to reach the weight of the artist over the years, so that although it is not anthropomorphic it acquires the density of a portrait of the artist as flâneur. In a magnificent series of paintings begun in 2005 and entitled *The Samurai Tree*, Orozco uses gold leaf and tempera to paint a central circle, around which the compositions then develop by

75 CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, *THE PAINTER OF MODERN LIFE AND OTHER ESSAYS*, TRANS. AND ED. JONATHAN MAYNE (LONDON: PHAIDON, 1964), 6–12.

76 *IBID.*, 9.

\* TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: THE WORD *ERRE* IS RELATED TO *ERRER*: TO WANDER, AND *ERRANCE*: WANDERING, BOTH OF WHICH ARE IMPORTANT WORDS IN BOURRIAUD'S TEXT.

77 JACQUES LACAN, "LES NON-DUPES ERRENT," SEMINAIRE XXI, NOVEMBER 13, 1973, UNPUBLISHED.



following the movements of the knight in chess, adding new circles of various sizes until the edges of the surface are reached. Each of the paintings describes a series of subtle spirals and undulating lines that evoke both Joan Miró's *Constellations* and Piet Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*. Utilized here as a compositional principle, the knight is a recurring figure in Orozco's work. *Knights Running Endlessly* (1995) consists of a chess set with 256 squares, all occupied by knights. The movement of this chess piece, which seems so fanciful and arbitrary but is actually strictly prescribed, functions as a metaphor for wandering, for sidling through the crowd of the big cities, for which the works of the series *The Samurai Tree* are icons.

If wandering practices are becoming so important today, even to the point of providing art with compositional models, it is in response to the evolution of the relations between the individual and the collective in the contemporary city. Walter Benjamin, who characterized the artwork's aura as "the unique phenomenon of a distance,"<sup>78</sup> describes its progressive disappearance in spatial terms: the space of human life is undergoing a metamorphosis; the distance between things and living beings is diminishing; the modern city, whose vital element is the crowd, introduced "perception in the form of shocks"<sup>79</sup> as a formal principle that found its aesthetic and technological expression in film. The immensity of the crowd, writes Benjamin, destroys the bond between the individual and the community, and it can only be recreated by an intentional, even artificial act. Thus, one might say that the contemporary megacity, as depicted or set in motion by the artists of today, is the effect of a political *erre*, of what remains of the movement of socialization when its own energy has vanished, giving way to an urban chaos. Moreover, each of these megacities displays the features of the world economy in concentrated form: the true borders are

now internal, and they bring about subtle forms of segregation between social or ethnic classes in the city itself.

For years, John Miller has been photographing scenes of daily life during the lunch break, wherever in the world he happens to be. The series *Middle of the Day*, which now numbers thousands of photographs, brings together images of this pause in the workday, this interstitial moment in which the employee—on parole, as it were—occupies the public space, eating lunch on a bench or strolling through the city. This period in which industrial production is suspended was also the subject of Georges Seurat's painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884–86). A depiction of the weekly day off in the nearby Parisian suburbs, a pointillist allegory of the birth of the leisure society, the work of this French post-Impressionist was realized using pictorial means that themselves evoked the division of labor. With his punctual brushstrokes mechanically applied to the surface of the canvas, Seurat attempts to reproduce the movement of industry in painting. His dream was that it would be possible to reproduce his paintings ad infinitum, as if on an assembly line, by applying the dots of color to the canvas one by one. In a certain sense, Seurat anticipates the pixel. Today, when John Miller sets out to depict the midday lunch break, he too uses means that are perfectly homothetic to his subject: an amateur camera and framings that are sometimes approximate. And he displays these views of city centers and downtown areas by the hundreds in the most ordinary formats, in simple wooden frames. And where were they taken, these images of semi-occupied pedestrians with their sandwiches, against a backdrop of shopping malls or strolling around in the park? While a sign sometimes offers a vague clue, it is hard to tell if these are photographs of Amsterdam or Moscow, Hong Kong or Buenos Aires. John Miller depicts Seurat's Sunday enlarged to planetary dimensions and confined to the legal hours of *flânerie*.

78 BENJAMIN, "THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION" (NOTE 20), 222.

79 WALTER BENJAMIN, "ON SOME MOTIFS IN BAUDELAIRE," IN BENJAMIN, *ILLUMINATIONS*, 175.

Since 1991, Francis Alÿs has made his walks in Mexico the starting point for a body of work that is equally divided among painting, drawings, photographs, films, and actions. "Walking," says Alÿs, "is one of our last remaining intimate spaces." He sometimes records his strolls or collects found objects and images that he will later use in his paintings. Why is it that the contemporary equivalent of landscape painting is so often based on action and narrative at the expense of representation? Alÿs offers this explanation: "My paintings, my images, are only attempting to illustrate situations I confront, provoke or perform on a more public, usually urban, and ephemeral level. I'm trying to make a very clear distinction between what will be addressing the street and what will be directed to the gallery wall. I tried to create painted images that could become 'equivalents' to the action, 'souvenirs' without literally representing the act itself."<sup>80</sup> The artist of the precarious world regards the urban environment as a container from which to separate fragments. How many Florentine painters used terra sienna to depict the landscapes of Tuscany? Today, working *sur le motif*, or in nature, as the Impressionists did in their day, means entering the motif itself and moving according to its rhythms. The Slovenian artist Marjetica Potrč doesn't represent the slums of Caracas; she spends time there in order to study them from within, gathering or reconstructing fragments of them and then, in a second phase, proposing alternative solutions. The Danish group Superflex doesn't represent the power relations or commercial flows within countries of the Third World, but sets up structures for producing *soda de guarana* in Brazil and bioelectric power plants in Africa.<sup>81</sup> When speaking of these artistic interventions in urban reality, one is tempted to recall the famous formula of Karl Marx from his *Theses on Feuerbach*: "the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it." Be that as it may, here we

clearly find ourselves confronting another of the central figures of modernity.

To capture the city in an image really means following its movement. Remember Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's long tracking shot along the river in *Riyo*. In a sequence from the series *The Needle Woman*, Kim Soo-Ja is filmed from behind as she impassively confronts the advancing wave of an Asian crowd. In his video installation *Electric Earth* (1999), Doug Aitken retraces the promenades of a solitary walker through a nocturnal urban landscape that is just as difficult to identify and from which all human presence seems to have been erased. What remains is the non-place (for example, the parking lot of a shopping mall) and machines (satellite dishes, laundromats) that little by little seem to take control of the flâneur, a contemporary zombie threatened and unsettled [*précarisé*] by the metaphysical indifference of his environment. Urban lighting seems to be Aitken's building material: harsh and cold, light is omnipresent here, and the pale streetlights leave streaks and smears on the sidewalk. Aitken's treatment of light is the opposite of that of Seurat, who sought to eliminate light's iridescence, its luminous halo, retaining only the definite color of the object under precise atmospheric conditions. The contemporary city, by contrast, must be represented in motion, and that goes for its light as well.

Like an insect colliding with a pane of glass, the wanderer quickly runs up against those territories in which the amount of (shared) public space is growing smaller every day. The South African artist Kendell Geers displays the flip side of the contemporary city in a number of

<sup>80</sup> FRANCIS ALÿS, "FRANCIS ALÿS: STREETS AND GALLERY WALLS," INTERVIEW BY GIANNI ROMANO, *FLASH ART* (INTERNATIONAL EDITION) 33, NO. 211 (MARCH / APRIL 2000): 72-73.

<sup>81</sup> MANY FURTHER EXAMPLES COULD BE CITED—I WILL MENTION ONLY A FEW OF THEM HERE: THE TURKISH ARTIST CAN ALTAY TAKES PHOTOGRAPHS THAT DOCUMENT DERELICT AREAS AND OTHER SITES WHERE TEENAGERS CONGREGATE; THE JAPANESE ARTISTS OF ATELIER BOW WOW INVENTORY THE INTERSTITIAL SPACES PRESENT IN THE URBAN FABRIC; AND THE GROUP OF FILMMAKERS AND ARTISTS RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, BASED IN NEW DELHI, CONSTRUCTS LONG-TERM PROJECTS INVOLVING VARIOUS COMMUNITIES.



his works of the 1990s: photographs of private security systems as well as works that are haunted by danger—such as *Mondo Kane* (2002), a minimalist cube covered with broken glass—or even literally dangerous, as with works that are made of razor blades or have an electric current running through them. Francis Alÿs's universe also exhibits the city's mechanisms of control and standardization, but it does so by gathering images of precariousness: homeless people, dropouts, stray dogs. His slide show *Sleepers II* (1997–2002) depicts eighty such figures dozing on sidewalks, photographed at ground level, surrounded by blurred asphalt that alters our perspective on the city.

The *erre*, an invisible line that cuts across city centers and downtown areas, groups together all those with nowhere to go—vagabonds, nomads, gypsies, marginalized individuals, and illegal immigrants. Thus, the wanderer very quickly finds him- or herself associated with the world of criminality. And if Baudelairean *flânerie* is a brief time out for the person of leisure, wandering quickly carries its practitioners beyond the pale of legality. Indeed, precarious artists often choose to define their work in terms borrowed from the world of criminal vagrancy: petty theft, poaching, robbery, and a refusal to seek paid employment. Kendell Geers confesses: "When I work with an existing image or object and shift it, I don't conceive it as sampling in a DJ sense, or even plagiarism as the Situationists did, but as pure theft. It is about stealing the images from Hollywood, from CNN, literally taking images and reworking them."<sup>82</sup> Bruno Serralongue works as a newspaper photographer, except that because he has no official credentials, he is forced to place his camera at the outskirts of the event, visually marking the line that separates the artist from the journalist whose methods he pretends to adopt, the professional from the mere citizen. Thus, he makes his way toward the margins of

information and assumes the role of witness, as when he produces portraits of illegal immigrants or striking workers. Serralongue photographs the line that separates information—the official *communiqué*—from the periphery of the event that serves as its pretext. He places himself outside the law.

Contemporary art commits its most serious act of breaking and entering against our perception of social reality. It essentially renders everything it touches precarious; such is its ontological foundation. By laying hold of the elements that make up our daily lives (corporate logos, media images, urban signs, and administrative procedures) and making them the materials from which they compose their works, artists underscore their arbitrary, conventional, and ideological dimension. We exchange objects for money, we live in this or that manner, but did you know that we could also do otherwise? By making the elements of the ordinary mechanisms of lived reality operate in different ways, art functions as an alternative editing bench for reality.<sup>83</sup> By formalizing behaviors, social interactions, spaces, and functions, contemporary art lends reality a provisional and precarious character. Unlike the ambient discourse, which comes down to Margaret Thatcher's famous formula—"There is no alternative"—art preserves intact an image of reality as a fragile construction and carries the torch for the notion of change, the hypothesis of a plan B. If contemporary art is the bearer of a coherent political project, it is surely this: to introduce precariousness into the very heart of the system of representations by means of which the powers that be manage behaviors, to weaken all systems, to endow the most well-established habits with the appearance of exotic rituals.

Art is thus a kind of primitive editing bench that apprehends social reality through its forms. In more general terms, these works produce

<sup>82</sup> CONVERSATION BETWEEN KENDALL GEERS, DANIEL BUREN, AND NICOLAS BOURRIAUD, IN KENDALL GEERS, EXH. CAT., MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA, ROME (MILAN: ELECTA, 2004).

<sup>83</sup> A THESIS I HAVE DEVELOPED IN GREATER LENGTH IN *POSTPRODUCTION* (NOTE 36).

the fiction of a universe that operates differently. This fiction might be said to introduce the dimension of the infinite into the continuous ribbon of social reality, just as language allows us to carve into tiny pieces this or that physical reality that for animals is a continuum, a one-dimensional space. Because we have been humanized by language, we know the element in which we move is not indivisible. The room in which I am writing these lines may be broken down into floor, table, drawer, handle, wood grain, mementos, and so on, ad infinitum. In the same way, the fictional dimension of art pierces the chain of reality, returning it to its precarious nature, to the unstable mixture of real, imaginary, and symbolic that it contains. This fiction augments reality, allowing us to keep it in perpetual motion and hence to introduce utopia and alternatives into it. For fiction is not just the imaginary, and the fictional cannot be reduced to the fictive. For example, the Duchampian readymade belongs to the order of fiction, but its nature is not different from that of the reality it presents, except with respect to the narrative by which Marcel Duchamp causes it to enter a fictional regime. The *fictive* is opposed to the reality that inspires it; the *fictional*—which is the regime of stories and narration—subtles or dubs it, without erasing it.

Thus, wandering represents a political inquiry into the city. It is writing on the move and a critique of the urban, understood as the matrix of the scenarios in which we move. It creates an aesthetic of displacement. The term is admittedly well-worn today, a century after the Duchampian readymade, which was the act of displacing, or transplanting, an everyday object to the legitimating mechanism of the system of art. But if Duchamp used the museum as a kind of optical device that allows us to see a bottle rack differently, it is clear that the museum today is no longer a dominant apparatus, buried as it is beneath a mass of processes for capturing and legitimating that did not exist in Duchamp's day. We have seen that Walter Benjamin links the loss of the aura to the emergence of mechanical techniques for capturing

images, that is, to the emergence of the cinematographer as a model of control. Today, he continues, anyone can be filmed on the street, a surprisingly prescient anticipation of the systems of surveillance in use in most cities today. The mass-produced object inserted into the recording device of the museum (Duchamp) has its contemporary counterpart in the bodies of urban wanderers and the forms they carry with them as they move through the generalized telegenic space of the twenty-first century.

Hegel saw human history as a single path, evolving through an organized sequence of progressions and advances toward an eventual conclusion. The Hegelian vision of history, which is so persistent in twentieth-century art, may be represented by the image of a highway. As a formal compositional principle, wandering points to a conception of space-time that is opposed to both linearity and flatness. Both the linear time of history as well as the vision of a one-dimensional space of human life are rejected by works constructed on the model of progressions, itineraries, and a meandering navigation among different formats or circuits. The notion of the painting as a window, which dominated the classical age and which organizes the visible around the perceptual channel of monocular perspective, is to space what the Hegelian vision of history is to time: a tension modulated toward a single point. At the end of the nineteenth century, pictorial modernity begins to obstruct perspective, diverting the linearity of space toward time. Henceforth, it is flatness that will govern pictorial space, while the representation of history (time) will be oriented around a linear account. In an important text, Leo Steinberg dates the appearance of post-modern space to Robert Rauschenberg's first "combine paintings,"<sup>84</sup> in which painting becomes a network of information. Neither windows that reveal the world nor opaque surfaces, Rauschenberg's works

84 LEO STEINBERG, *OTHER CRITERIA: CONFRONTATIONS WITH TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART* (NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1972), 82–91.



effectively inaugurate a wandering of meaning, a stroll through a constellation of signs.

To describe this new figure of the artist, I have coined the term *semio-naut*: a creator of paths in a landscape of signs. Inhabitants of a fragmented world in which objects and forms leave the beds of their original cultures and disperse across the planet, they wander in search of connections to establish. Natives of a territory with no a priori borders, they find themselves in the same position as the hunter-gatherers of old, those nomads who created their universe by tirelessly crisscrossing space. In her documentary *The Gleaners and I*, Agnès Varda tailors her method to her subject. Shooting a film on the ancient practice of gleaning and its contemporary forms, she wanders from one person to another, one place leading her naturally to the next, patiently constructing an analogy between her profession as filmmaker and the act of gleaning, the tolerated piracy of a system of production.

Seth Price, whose practice oscillates among seemingly incompatible forms, from writing theoretical essays to compiling mix tapes, conceptually associates wandering with the multiplicity of cultural forms available to works today. He writes: "Suppose an artist were to release the work directly into a system that depends on reproduction and distribution for its sustenance, a model that encourages contamination, borrowing, stealing, and horizontal blur? The art system usually corrals errant works, but how could it recoup thousands of freely circulating paperbacks?"<sup>85</sup> Price employs the term "dispersion" to describe his artistic practice, which involves disseminating information in various forms. Thus, the work *Title Variable* takes the form of albums, essays, and files, all of which are consultable online. Just like

an installation by Jason Rhoades, an exhibition by Rirkrit Tiravanija, or most of Pierre Huyghe's works, *Title Variable* cannot be confined within a unitary space-time.

In the works of Kelley Walker, Wade Guyton, and Seth Price, forms appear as copies, forever transitory. They seem to be suspended, poised between two translations, or as if they were permanently translated. Taken from magazines or websites, they seem ready to return there, unstable, ghostly. All formal origins are negated here, or more correctly rendered impossible. The mix tape is the symbol of this culture of postproduction. Seth Price has made a number of them, and Peter Coffin also puts together a lot of thematic compilations on CD. Navigating through a network of photocopies, printouts, screens, and photographic reproductions, the forms appear as so many transient incarnations. The visible appears here as essentially nomadic, as a collection of iconographic phantoms, and the work as a kind of jump key that can be connected to any support whatsoever and is capable of infinite transformations. The practice of these three artists, which discourages any attempt to assign their works to a precise and stable place in the chain of image production and processing, continues in more radical form the "rephotography" that Richard Prince has been practicing since the 1980s. But it is surely Kelley Walker who has taken Warhol's demonstration of the artist faced with the machine to its logical conclusion. Instead of identifying with it, as Warhol proclaimed, Walker presents himself as a minimal subjectivity, in motion, ceaselessly customized by the products it consumes, and operating within an entirely mechanized environment. Constructing chains of visual objects caught up in a never-ending process of reconfiguration, he depicts a deracinated reality through works that are merely freeze-frames of an emerging utterance.

<sup>85</sup> SETH PRICE, *DISPERSION* (2002), AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [HTTP://WWW.DISTRIBUTEDHISTORY.COM/DISPERSION2008.PDF](http://WWW.DISTRIBUTEDHISTORY.COM/DISPERSION2008.PDF).

#### CODA: REVOCABLE AESTHETICS

One might justifiably wonder if the true master narrative of our era—the presence of which is so blinding, we fail to perceive it—is actually this: that there is not, and can no longer be, any master narrative.

The fragmentation of everything and everyone in a confused mass that forms an information bubble would then function as a totalizing ideology for our antitotalitarian world. Which is why we find it so difficult to conceive of history on the move. Who is recounting it? And for whom? And who could the hero of this narrative be, given that no people or proletariat can lay claim to that title any longer, and there is no longer any universal subject?

The general precariousness may be understood in connection with a culture in which there is no longer any master narrative—historical or mythical—around which forms can be organized, unless it be that of the *archipélisation* of iconographies, discourses, and narratives, isolated entities connected by filigree lines. We are confronted with images of a floating world, like the *Ukiyo-e* of Hokusai. Within these aesthetics, which are henceforth deprived of any grounding in a “master narrative of legitimation” (Lyotard) and partially or completely cut off from any local or national origin, every work must help to produce its own context, to signal its own coordinates—shifting meridians. In the order of aesthetics, this principle of deterritorialization points to that kaleidoscopic vision that Baudelaire describes as the very essence of the modern: positioning and value judgments take place in changeable, precarious, and revocable contexts. It is enough to make the sedentary residents’ heads spin. But aren’t they already experiencing it themselves, assuming they perceive something of this transformation?

In the early 1990s, mass marketing—supported by the Internet, which was still in its early days—embarked on a strategy of individualizing products while making the act of purchasing them as immaterial as possible. Thus, in luxury boutiques, the objects grew scarce in an

artificial attempt to place the consumer outside the world of mass production, which was embodied in the aisles of the supermarket. Thus, marketing’s final ruse consists in denying the existence of quantity, creating the illusion of scarcity, and playing on the obscure nostalgia for privation. The diagnosis of these marketing experts seems entirely justified: the precariousness that affects the entire cultural landscape surely stems, at least in large part, from the process of cluttering that distinguishes our era. It is a function of mass production, and its antithesis—the impression of solidity—has more to do with an object’s isolation than with the material from which it is made. A matchstick on a pedestal will always seem less precarious than a heap of marble.

Precarious: “that which only exists by virtue of an authorization that may be revoked at any time.” Which is as much as to say that contemporary artworks do not have any absolute rights when it comes to obtaining “legal status.” Is it art or not? This question, which delights the customs officers and border guards of culture and thrills its jurists to no end, is essentially the equivalent of a police investigation: what right do you have to enter art’s soil? Do you have legal documents? But the question could be formulated differently: what constitutes a real presence as it traverses the space-time of art? Does this new object that has entered the artistic bubble generate thought and activity, or not? Does it have an influence on this space-time, and if so, what sort of productivity does it generate? These are the questions, it seems to me, that are more pertinent to ask of a work. Whether or not the object exists, whether or not it holds up and has a story to tell, coordinates, produces... Does something pass or come to pass? Let’s set aside the reflexes of the policeman and the legislator and look at art through the eyes of a curious traveler, or those of a host receiving unfamiliar guests in his or her home.



Does the general context of clutter in which artworks appear to us today, which determines their modes of production and the manner in which we receive them, cause us to judge them differently? We'll come back to this question in the third part of this book. For now, however, consider the example of John Armleder's exhibition at MAMCO in Geneva in 2006. Organizing a retrospective of his work, the artist takes apart the entire corpus that can be identified as "the work of John Armleder" and puts it back together. By piling up and juxtaposing his work, by bringing some together and separating others, Armleder dramatizes the interchangeability of their positions and underscores a fundamental principle: the artwork is no longer a terminal object but merely one moment in a chain, the "quilting point" [*point de capiton*] that more or less solidly connects the various episodes of a trajectory. Armleder's rereading of his own work suggests that one of the surest criteria by which to judge any artwork is its capacity to insert itself into different narratives and translate its characteristics—in other words, its potential for displacement, which permits it to engage in productive dialogue with a variety of different contexts. Or in still other words, its radicantity.

## JOURNEY-FORMS

THERE IS AN IMAGINARY CONCEPTION THAT JUST BARELY ACCOMMODATES THOSE INTENT ON NOT BEING DUPES OF THE STRUCTURE: THE IDEA THAT THEIR LIFE IS BUT A VOYAGE. LIFE, IN THIS VIEW, IS A NOMAD'S EXISTENCE, THE CONDITION OF THOSE WHO DWELL AS FOREIGNERS IN WHAT'S CALLED "THIS WORLD."

(JACQUES LACAN)

### THE JOURNEY-FORM (1): EXPEDITIONS AND PARADES

On July 9, 1975, Bas Jan Ader's sailboat departed the east coast of the United States in an attempt to cross the Atlantic as part of his project *In Search of the Miraculous*. But three weeks after his departure, radio contact was lost. And on April 10, 1976, rescue teams found only the artist's half-submerged boat. The dramatic disappearance of an artist who was one of the most promising of his generation was

reminiscent of the helicopter accident in which another great pioneer, Robert Smithson, had perished three years earlier. They had in common that spirit of travel and adventure, that taste for great expanses, that was highlighted by the tragic circumstances of their deaths. Thirty years later, these two major bodies of work are unexpectedly being echoed in the works of those artists for whom the journey has become an art form in itself, or who find in the barren expanses or no-man's-lands of post-industrial society surfaces for inscription much more exciting than those offered by art galleries—an attitude already evinced in Smithson's colossal site-specific works of the 1960s, just as much as in the expeditions of Bas Jan Ader.

Today the journey is everywhere in contemporary works, whether artists borrow its forms (journeys, expeditions, maps), its iconography (virgin territories, jungles, deserts), or its methods (those of the anthropologist, the archaeologist, the explorer). If this imaginary universe is born of globalization, the democratization of tourism and commuting, let us underscore the paradox in the fact that this obsession with the journey coincides with the disappearance of any *terra incognita* from the surface of the earth. How can one become the explorer of a world now covered by satellites, a world whose every millimeter is now registered and surveyed? And more generally, how do artists take account of the space in which they live? Here the form of the expedition constitutes a matrix, in that it furnishes a motive (knowledge of the world), an imaginary universe (the history of exploration, subtly linked to modern times), and a structure (the collection of samples and information along a path).

Speaking of his film *A Journey that Wasn't* (2005), which retraces his expedition to the Antarctic, Pierre Huyghe insists that "fiction is a means of capturing the real."<sup>86</sup> It constitutes a means of locomotion that enables him to generate new knowledge of the contemporary

86 PIERRE HUYGHE, INTERVIEW BY GEORGE BAKER, OCTOBER 110 (FALL 2004): 86.