

The Prosumer Complex

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning. Where other sources have been used, they have been fully acknowledged.

Isobel Harbison
September 2014

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Finally, thank you to my mother and to my husband, for everything.

Abstract

'The Prosumer Complex' regards prosumerism as a new productive mode of online image work. Prosumerism, I claim, recuperates practical elements of artistic practice and looking as labour, and puts these to work in a new kind of viewing. As prosumers we are discouraged from assessing the function of our viewing, the nature and outcomes of our production. On websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram we 'share' personal images as a form of interplay on prosumer platforms that claim to enable communion, communication and creative freedom for users.

In this thesis, I regard the recent history and changing meaning of the term 'prosumerism', the new industry of images it has created and how its recent critiques relate to theories of the capitalist recuperation of artistic labour. I outline specific film and performance works by artists Mark Leckey, Frances Stark and Ericka Beckman and analyse how they probe, dramatise and disturb the activity of prosumerism. The intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of prosumerism are played out within the work and thus become reflexive, showing the social and economic conditions in which they are produced and performing the exhibitionary tendencies those conditions create.

These reflexive works elicit a more complicated and differentiated mode of viewing than the uniform regard prosumerism encourages. They provide unique models for exhibition making that expose a common contemporary subjectivity with a voracious, growing appetite for images as well as its relationship to productive display platforms for and from which these images are produced and consumed. Manipulating and exposing this co-production by implementing the curator's subjectivity and agonist display architectures, 'The Prosumer Complex' becomes a curatorial form of 'détournement' where the exhibition visitor sees prosumerism at work within the exhibition's elements. Thus the prosumer complex becomes a mode of reflexive curating and an affective advance from prosumer critique.

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Introduction

This thesis began when I attended Mark Leckey's performance of 'Cinema In The Round' at Tate Modern's Starr Auditorium in 2007. The performance had a substantial impact on how I viewed what Jonathan Beller has since called, 'the audio-visual economy', and my place as a very willing and self-indulgent agent within it. This work pointed me toward several aspects of the research. Initially it pushed me towards the relatively new social and economic phenomenon of prosumerism and the various companies and few industries that benefit significantly from the affective labour of others. It also sent me out in search of other art works which were as complex, dynamic and reflexive as Leckey's, works that pointed towards the culture and industry of images from which it came, but which also directed its questions towards the work's viewer, somehow implicated as catalyst in new, productive modes of viewing. The research steered me towards a host of other artists' practices, to eventually settle on analyses of the works of Frances Stark and Ericka Beckman, all quite individualistic within their own practices but sharing affinities for performance and moving images, as well as each containing a similar critical dynamic to Leckey's within their works (in the appendices, I include a number of interviews I have conducted with Ericka Beckman since 2012 because of a relative lack of material published about her work to date, in contrast to the already significant coverage of works by Leckey and Stark). Finally, upon close inspection, the artists' works seemed to offer critical and intelligent models for a new kind of reflexive exhibition making, a curatorial mode somehow antagonistic towards prosumerism, which not only reflected on its own, new conditions of production but which also implicated the viewer as a key agent within the exchange. These different directions are explored across the three sections of this thesis.

The first section has three chapters and regards the term 'prosumer' from its coinage in the late 1970s by Alvin Toffler and its adaptation by Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams in 2008. The term now describes how we work on the Internet and how particular online 'platforms for innovation' might capitalise on prosumer activity. The results of this new productive mode is perhaps most strongly evident in the industry of

microstock images, primarily sourced through prosumer websites, a bold development to which I turn in the second chapter. The changing nuances of the term 'prosumer' correspond with the increasing capitalisation of creative practice, or 'affective labour' in post-Fordism. In the third and final chapter of this section, I look at various diverse critiques of prosumerism and affective labour, both capitalist recuperations of artistic practice, where flexible labour adapts various aspects of its lifestyle, work and aspirations into an often unregulated and exploitative mode of production across industries. I map recent critiques of prosumerism in this context, and particularly how this activity markets itself to image-workers as providing 'creative and communicative opportunities' while providing little remuneration for those efforts.

In the second section of this thesis, chapters four to six, I look at specific contemporary artists' works by Mark Leckey, Frances Stark and Ericka Beckman. In different ways, these 'prosumer-artists' works dramatise the occupation of prosumerism. Adopting the prosumer as protagonist, altar ego or avatar, their works reflect on how prosumerism operates intrinsically and extrinsically, through rapidly expanding, self-perpetuating display platforms and the voracious image appetites of a common prosumerist subjectivity: both aspects mutually co-productive. In the fourth chapter I describe and contextualise distinct film, video and performance works by each artist. In the fifth chapter, I look at how they map and expose the intrinsic operations of prosumerism, its appeal to our subjectivity, its creation of fetishes and desires and its ease and accessibility through different image-making tools and platforms. In the following sixth chapter I look at how the more extrinsic mechanisms of prosumerism are rendered within the work, how the artists' protagonists test out the prosumer website as a new exhibition space for this 'creative activity' to find a stage for innovation, with reference to their (or their protagonist's) own practice, studio and exhibition experiences. I establish the works as sophisticated *mise-en-abymes* where the 'creative' practice and exhibitionary tendencies of the prosumer are shown within the working or living conditions of the protagonist-as-artist, the work representing an architecture of 'détournement'.

In the third and final section, there are two chapters. In the seventh chapter I trace the productive mechanism of what Tony Bennett calls the 'exhibitionary complex', a

museum's architecture of display which generates and maintains a self-regulating, self-surveilling and self-disciplining crowd. I propose that this 'complex', this productive display platform and its corresponding psychology, is also evident in prosumerism. I address how, by exposing both aspects of the complex, these exemplary artists' works are creating new and reflexive modes of exhibition making, in what I call 'The Prosumer Complex'. This, I claim, might be adopted as a radical new curatorial model. In the final eighth chapter, I look at how the prosumer complex can challenge current productive modes of contemporary art curating, testing the limits and asserting new ambitions for critical practices, challenging a number of recursive binaries within curatorial discourse and advance significantly from current examples of prosumer critique by asserting and manipulating prosumerism's affective mechanisms. The prosumer complex elicits a more striated or differentiated mode of viewing than the uniform regard prosumerism encourages, and the contemporary art exhibition, taking its lead from these reflexive artists' works, might now curb prosumer productivity by providing a crucial rehearsal space for the self-conscious and judicious viewer.

Colour Plates

Fig. 1, 2, 3

Mark Leckey, 'Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore', video stills.



Fig. 4, 5, 6

Mark Leckey, 'Parade', 2003, video still.



Fig. 7, 8
Mark Leckey, 'Cinema in the Round', video stills.



Fig. 9
Mark Leckey, 'Cinema in the Round', documentation of performance.



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Mark Leckey, 'Cinema in the Round', video stills.

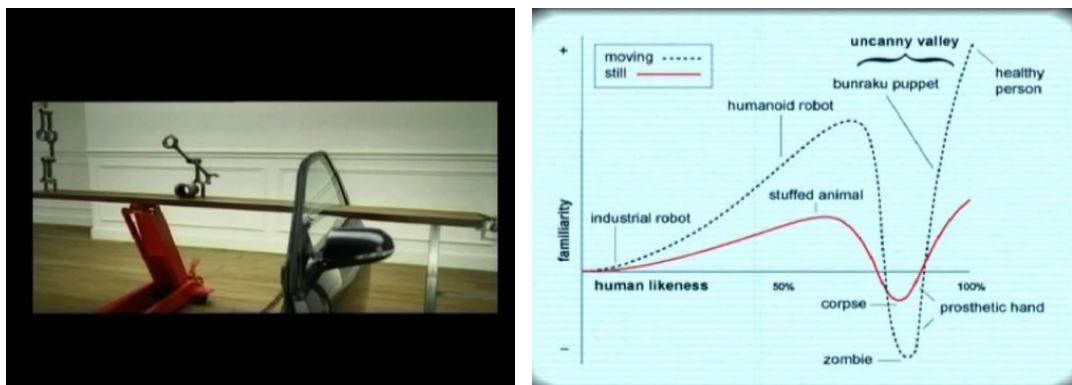


Fig. 12, 13, 14

Mark Leckey, 'In the Long Tail', documentation of performance.



Ericka Beckman

Fig. 15, 16

'We Imitate, We Break Up', film stills.

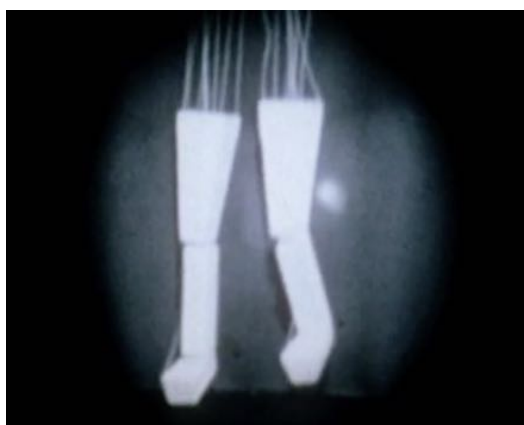


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Fig. 23, 24, 25
Ericka Beckman, 'Cinderella' film stills.

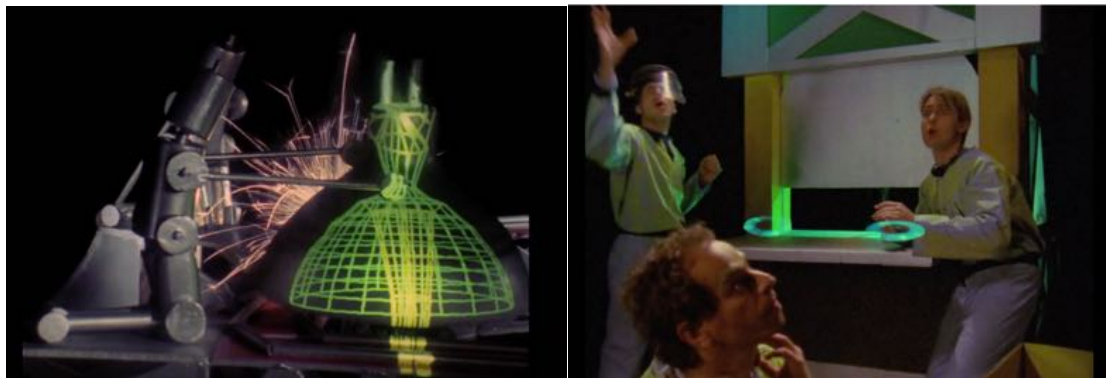


Fig. 26
Ericka Beckman, 'Hiatus', film still.



Fig. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
Ericka Beckman, 'Hiatus', film stills.

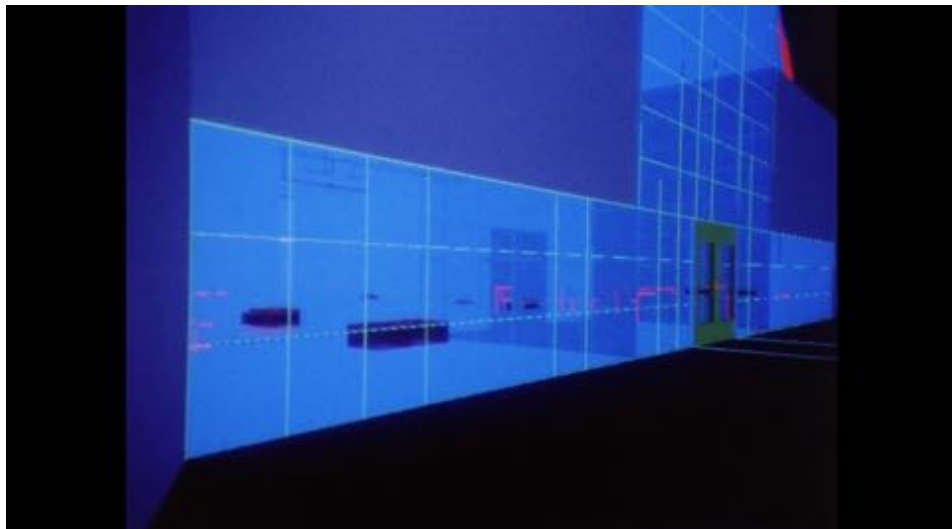
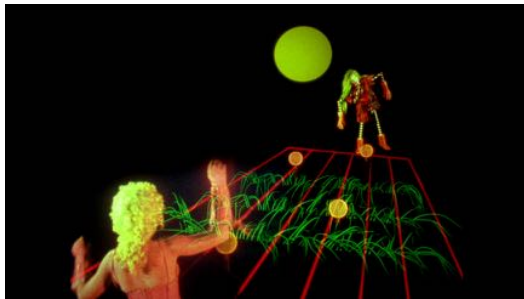


Fig. 32, Frances Stark, 'I've Had It And A Half', performance documentation.

Fig. 33, Frances Stark, 'Why Should you Not Be Able to Assemble Yourself and Write?'



Fig. 34 – 37.

Frances Stark, 'My Best Thing', video still and installation shot [36].

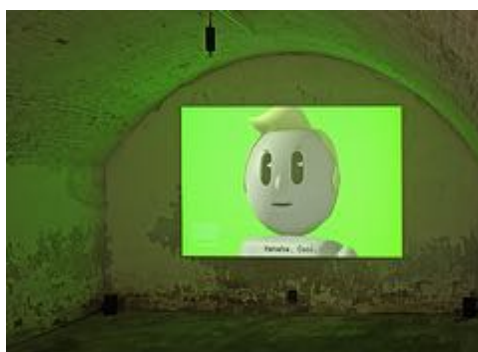
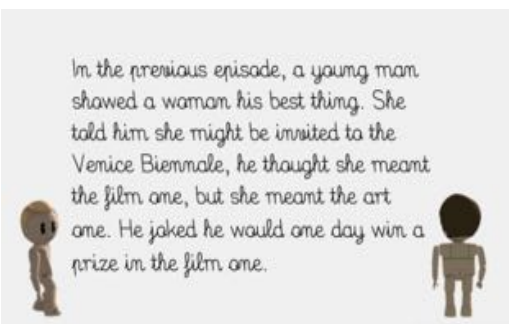
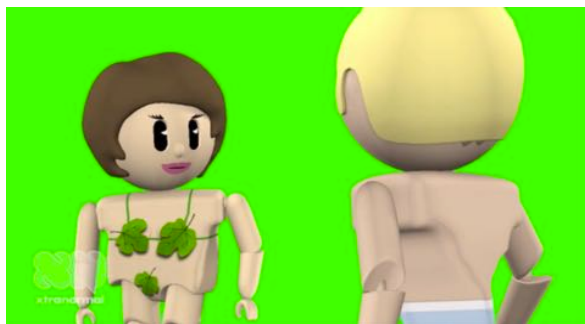
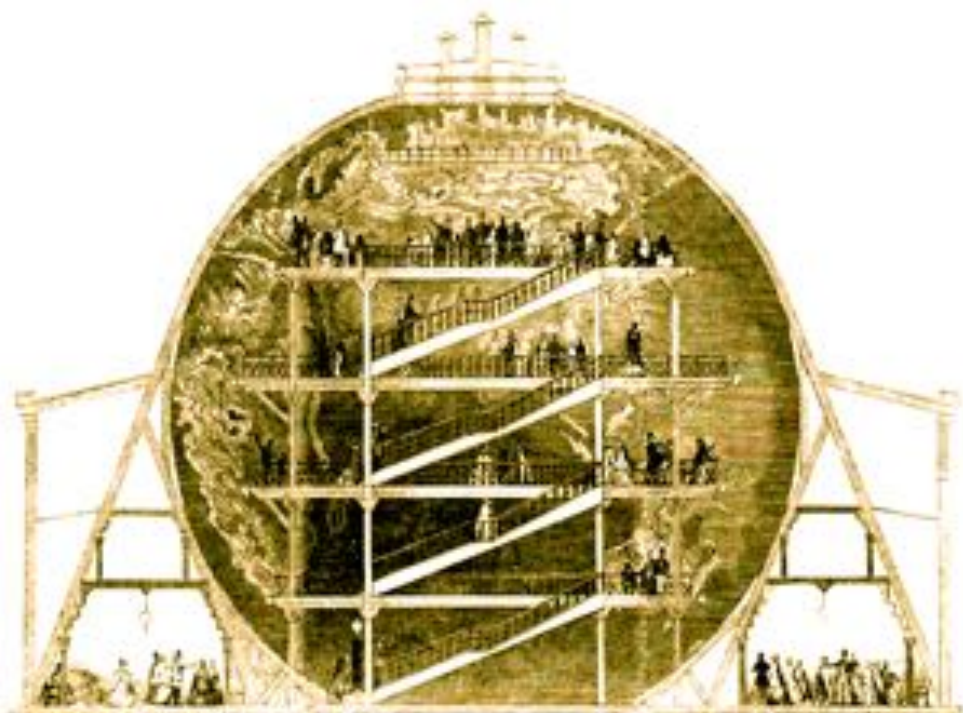


Fig. 38
Exterior View of Wyld's Great Globe, Leicester Square, 1851



Fig. 39
Interior of Wyld's Great Globe, Leicester Square, 1851



- SECTION ONE -

Chapter 1 - The Prosumer

1.1 Alvin Toffler's Prosumer

1.2 Tapscott and Williams' Prosumer

1.3 Toffler and Tapscott and Williams: comparative analysis

In 2008, British artist Mark Leckey was interviewed about his approach to producing work by Creative Time New York, a public art commissioning agency.¹ He answered,

I think of myself as a kind of 'prosumer', where you produce and consume at the same time, and [digital technology provides] the tools that prosumers use. It's not professionalism; it's something else, in-between, something less and more than that. [As an artist] you're consuming it, looking at stuff, making it, sending it out and it's coming back to you, this is a kind of loop or cycle that you're in.²

In this chapter I look at the term 'prosumer', its coinage by an American futurologist, its adaptation several decades later by two North American economists, the differences between these two definitions and usages, and the broader significance of that shift. In the following chapter I will identify a shift in an industry in which this mode of production is fully operative. And in the third chapter, I will map how the shift from an early form of 'prosumption' to the current mode of 'prosumerism' reflects how artistic practice has been recuperated by capitalism into forms of affective labour, through a range of critiques that document and object to this change.

1.1 Alvin Toffler's Prosumer

The term 'prosumer' was coined by American writer and futurologist Alvin Toffler in his book 'The Third Wave' (1980).³ The book was a commercial success at the time, forecasting the ways in which the average citizen, able to maximise on various

advances in technology, health and science, would be living and working over the next few decades. Toffler's ambition was to reach as large a readership as possible with this positive message, the radical potential of living in the 'third wave', newly defined by the activity of prosumerism. This term described 'proactive consumers', consumers proactively improving or co-opting goods and services to their own specifications beyond the marketplace. Examples of this, for Toffler, might include people making their own clothes, cooking their own food, repairing their own cars and hanging their own wallpaper: growing, adapting or installing a product. It dated back to the pre-industrial revolution and before the advancements of the service and management industries, where people had the skills and tools to do much of their own domestic work, repairs, building, growing and maintenance.

Toffler's writing predates developments of the Internet and his examples predominantly refer to skilled labour aided by earlier technological developments. 'The Third Wave' is a meditation on the influence of societal, financial and technical developments on contemporary economics and social lives in the 1970s, and Toffler's predictions of what the future holds in all of these interconnected spheres are consistently optimistic. It is motivated by Toffler's distinct disapproval of the control of an increasingly depersonalised, corporate financial sector. In his thesis, the third wave is a new frontier in which Western civilisation was about to enter, and reads as instructional as it was prophetic.

Toffler establishes three historical industrial stages, the First, Second and Third 'Waves'. The First corresponds to pre-Industrial revolution, to early agricultural and rural living whereby most people produced their own sustenance and provisions, food as well as farming equipment and household items (this relative self-sufficiency broadly correlates to what he later calls 'Sector A' of the economy). His Second Wave, represents the industrial era, spanning the specialisation, synchronisation, concentration and centralisation of industry, the creation of the 'service industry' which distances the worker from their produce and results in what Toffler sees as a market-driven crisis in the late 1970s. This productive sector he refers to as Sector B. The distinction between Sector A and Sector B's mode of production has given rise to much inequality in gender roles and living standards, Toffler maintains, for example

female domestic labour he associates with Sector A (to produce goods or services for oneself), activity that is not prioritised, acknowledged or remunerated like Sector B (which is to produce goods or services for trade or exchange) within the Second Wave. Sector A comprises all that unpaid work done directly by people for themselves, their families or communities. Sector B comprises all the production of goods and services for sale or exchange through the market.⁴ Both Sector A *and* B exist in both First and Second waves, however, whereas B was subsidiary to A in the First Wave, that relationship is reversed in the Second Wave, the labour of producing necessary goods oneself being no longer remunerated financially and therefore validated socially. In Toffler's theory, much social exclusion and discrimination arises from these emergent divisions. The Third Wave, by contrast, he foresees as a period when science, technology and industry will be used to better effect by the prosumer, where strategically implemented activities will profit the individual, self-sufficient worker. Here, the citizen will exploit new technologies to self-serve, to heal, repair, alter, make, etc. When writing about 'prosumption', Toffler claims this is the activity that has defined the First Wave and which will come to define the Third Wave. His focus is on the positive, socially enabling aspects of this recuperation of Sector A work.

Toffler's theory identifies the 'marketisation' of the economy as the cause of the crisis of the second wave period. The market is a recent social construct, he proposes, very different to its original significance, 'The Marxist emphasis on class struggle has systematically obscured the larger, deeper conflict that arose between the demands of producers (both workers *and* managers) for higher wages, profits and benefits and the counter-demand of consumers (including the very same people) for lower prices.'⁵ Toffler claims that Marx did not foresee the level of service industry development, and the development of the whole intermediary management strata so fundamental to The Second Wave. Toffler identifies this executive stratum as 'the Integrators'. Industrialism, he claims, 'broke society into thousands of interlocking parts – factories, churches, schools, trade unions, prisons, hospitals, and the like. It broke the line of command between church and state, and the individual. It broke knowledge into specialist disciplines. It broke jobs into fragments. It broke families into smaller units. In doing so, it shattered community life and culture.' He claims that this created – or was created for 'new kinds of specialists whose basic task was integration. Calling

themselves executives or administrators, commissars, coordinators, presidents, vice-presidents, bureaucrats, or managers, they cropped up in every business, in every government and at every level of society.⁶

The 'integrators' are a workforce whose job, on the whole, is to maintain 'production' and 'consumption' as separate processes, despite the lexicon of integration and connectionism associated and used by this role. There is a certain cost to these integrators, he tells us later, which presumption can curb, 'The costs of exchange itself, even as conventionally measured, are now outrunning the costs of material production in many fields. At some point, this process reaches a limit. Computers, meanwhile, and the emergence of prosumer-activated technology both point to smaller inventories and simplified, rather than more complex, chains of distribution.'⁷ Toffler creates a metaphor for the market as a large network of pipelines, whose interconnected and expanding structure has been developed over the past three hundred years, spanning continents, creating the service industry and, in many respects, blocking the immediate connections between producers and consumers or 'prosumers'. He writes of 'intermediaries' as general managers and executives that generate profit but alienate prosumers, a tier that must be overcome in his third wave.

Toffler is very attuned to developments in technology, particularly broadcasting, computing, bioengineering and how their advancements effect the individual, not only in terms of self-help or self-servicing (his initial example is home pregnancy tests, developed during the 1970s), but about how technologies might enable a 'homework' economy, where many workers find themselves newly liberated by communications technologies, able to spend more time at home. He writes in detail about what he terms a new 'electronic cottage', where the financial and personal overheads of long office commutes are abolished and where, once the professional work is complete, the prosumer will have more time everyday to invest in personal leisure activity. He sees these two areas – professional and personal time – as remaining distinct, despite their coupling within the same architectural space: the worker's home. Now connected to the outside world through technology, this is the new centre of creative cottage industries and society at large.

Toffler foresees associated changes in societal behaviour, individual relationships and processes of self-identification with the kind of currencies traded in the new 'electronic cottage', or what he also calls, 'image warehouses', for what technology enables seems significantly visual. Information is the new currency in this Third Wave, Toffler contends. Capital is now derived through the exchange of personal information; 'information', he writes, 'has become the world's fastest growing business'⁸;

An information bomb is exploding in our midst, showering us with the shrapnel of images and drastically changing the way each of us perceives and acts upon our private world. In shifting from a Second Wave to a Third Wave info-sphere, we are transforming our own psyches. Each of us creates in his skull a mind-model of reality – a warehouse of images... These images do not spring from nowhere. They are formed in ways we do not understand, out of the signals or information reaching us from the environment. And as our environment convulses with change – as our jobs, homes, churches, schools and political arrangements feel the impact of the Third Wave – the sea of information around us also changes.⁹

As the 'sea of information' changes, Toffler writes, so do our responses to it and this becomes a self-perpetuating or productive cycle. Toffler claims that in the Second Wave, where began 'mass media' there is a strain, and potential, in the Third Wave to 'de-massify' the media, that is for people to cultivate their own specialised interests outside the mainstream, by reading specialist micro-magazines, watching cable or special distribution TV, or by playing responsive and interactive video games tuned to the individual player. The 'de-massification' of the media Toffler frames as positive and beneficial, controlled by the user rather than the mass media. 'New information reaches us and we are forced to revise our image-file continuously at a faster and faster rate... This speed-up of image processing inside us means that images grow more and more temporary. Throwaway art, one-shot sitcoms, Polaroid snapshots, Xerox copies, and disposable graphics pop up and vanish. Ideas, beliefs, and attitudes skyrocket into unconsciousness. [...] It is difficult to make sense of this swirling phantasmagoria, to understand exactly how the image-manufacturing process is changing. For the Third Wave does more than simply accelerate our information flows;

it transforms the deep structure of information on which our daily actions depend.¹⁰ Toffler calls this 'blip culture', where 'modular blips of information, ads, commands, theories, shreds of news, truncated bits of blobs that refuse to fit neatly into our pre-existing mental files. The new imagery resists classification, partly because it often falls outside our old conceptual categories, but also because it comes in packages that are too oddly shaped, transient, and disconnected.'¹¹

There are issues of inequality that Toffler diagnoses as being a symptom of the divide between Sector A and B, the continuing discrimination of 'prosumer' activity in Sector A, unremunerated and unrecognised activity that supports activity in Sector B. The former he correlates with women's work, and the latter, men's work,

[...] during the First Wave, Sector A – based on production for use – was enormous, while Sector B was minimal. During the Second Wave the reverse was true. In fact, the production of goods and services for the market mushroomed to such an extent that Second Wave economists virtually forgot the existence of Sector A. The very word 'economy' was defined to exclude all forms of work or production not intended for the market, and the prosumer became invisible. This meant, for example, that all the unpaid work done by women in the home, all the cleaning, scrubbing, childrearing, the community organizing, was contemptuously dismissed as 'non-economic', even though Sector B – the visible economy – could not have existed without the goods and services produced in Sector A- the invisible economy.¹²

Toffer's claims prosumption exists prior to the Third Wave, identifying it as labour that services oneself – it is not a labour form validated by the economy. Toffler writes about labour in terms of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' or subjective work. His argument is not motivated by the liberation of women from domestic labour but he uses it as a means of understanding the processes of 'prosumption'.¹³ Toffler maintains that what divides women's work and men's work is a similar force that divides prosumers from producers and this is what he calls a 'giant wedge', this alienating force of capitalism, or the capitalist. 'The same giant wedge that split producer from consumer in Second Wave societies also split work into two kinds. This

has an enormous impact on family life, sexual roles and in our inner lives as individuals. One of the most common sexual stereotypes in industrial society defines men as 'objective' and women as 'subjective'. If there is a kernel of truth here, it probably lies not in some fixed biological reality but in the psychological effects of the invisible wedge.¹⁴

Another group that has typically been affected by 'the invisible wedge', Toffler writes, are those developing countries whose potentially profitable and progressive 'prosumerist' activities have been grossly undermined, discouraged and ostensibly modernised by 'developed' Second Wave economies. 'More than once, we have seen naïve attempts to "develop" a basically First Wave country by imposing on it highly incongruous Second Wave forms – mass production, mass media, factory-style education, Westminster-style parliamentary governments, and the nation-state, to name but a few – without recognizing that for these to operate successfully, traditional family and marriage customs, religion, and role structures would all have to be crushed, the entire culture ripped up by its roots.'¹⁵ He asserts that these developing economies are not benefitting from Second Wave interventionism. 'By astonishing contrast, Third Wave civilization turns out to have many features – decentralized production, appropriate scale, renewable energy, de-urbanization, work in the home, high levels of prosumption, to name just a few – that actually resemble those found in First Wave societies.'¹⁶

One problem that Toffler anticipates with 'prosumption' is that it challenges traditional conceptions of welfare, how and to whom it is provided as well as other issues like steady incomes, poverty, or unemployment. He asks, 'If a person lives half-in and half-out of the market system, which products, tangible or intangible, are to be regarded as part of his or her income? How meaningful are income figures at all in a society in which prosuming may account for much of what the average person will have? How do we define welfare in such a system? Should welfare recipients work? If so, should all this work necessarily be in Sector B? Or should welfare recipients be encouraged to prosume?'¹⁷

In this regard, Toffler forecasts how prosumers will be paid: ‘the more people in the paid labor market – higher “labor participation rates”, as the economists put it, may very well go with reduced hours per worker. This casts the whole question of leisure into a new light. Once we recognize that much of our so-called leisure time is, in fact, spent producing goods and services for our own use – prosuming – then the old distinction between work and leisure falls apart. The question is not work versus leisure, but paid work for Sector B versus unpaid, self-directed, and self-monitored work for Sector A.’¹⁸ Toffler’s theory doesn’t elect any specific state, legal or managerial agent for overseeing the fair implementation of prosumption, as if this radically new economic reality will materialise or self-organise without intervention. He also pre-supposes an optimistic level of responsibility on ‘the government’ for underwriting this process, ‘To increase the “productivity” of the prosumer, governments need to focus scientific and technological research on prosumption. But even now they could, at remarkably low cost, provide simple hand tools, community workshops, trained craftsmen or teachers, limited communications facilities and, where possible, power generation equipment – plus favorable propaganda or moral support for those who invest “sweat equity” in building their homes or improving their bits of land.’¹⁹

Given that his theory is predominantly concerned with the economics of the new phenomenon of prosumption, Toffler doesn’t entertain possible capitalist beneficiaries. He doesn’t connect this activity with the marketisation to which he is reacting. He refuses an evaluation of how prosumption might be exploited and how technologies might be turned against people for productivity levels, the resulting deterioration of the welfare state, and the continuing divisions among workers. Instead his manifesto is intended to instigate positive and practical outcomes, ‘Third Wave civilisation begins to heal the historical breach between producer and consumer, giving rise to “prosumer” economics of tomorrow [...] it could – with some intelligent help from us – turn out to be the first truly humane civilisation in recorded history.’²⁰

Toffler’s three waves of capitalist still resonate almost forty years after they were first published, between the 1970s and 1980s, so significant in finance and technology. Much rests on Toffler’s distinction between the ‘prosumer’ and the ‘integrator’, the

former as a self-sufficient worker, the latter as a dependent exploiter whose role is validated by the divisions of producers and consumers despite the vocabulary with which they work, which implies their fundamental role is to bind these two activities. As a result of the integrator, Marx's 'means of production' (the technologies, tools, skilled workers available) turns into Toffler's 'means of integration', where this middle tier of integration workers maintain divisions within the workforce.

Early on, Toffler is alert to the social repercussions of developing technology: the 'homework economy' an interesting forerunner of the term 'precariat', coined by British economist Guy Standing in 2011.²¹ This describes the situation of a self-employed, home-worker benefitting from none of the previous advantages of full-time employment or the safety net of the welfare state. Toffler speculates about lifestyles and the leisure time that technology-enabled home-working will afford. He writes about the 'electronic cottage' as a positive space, a retreat free of the trappings of the urban commute. Here the work is exchange of information and that has a new currency too. The major side-effect being that in our minds we now have 'warehouses of images', images are compressed, disposable, transient and disconnected and this shift also changes our general psychic and sensory perceptions of things.

At the time of writing, Toffler was influenced by writers and critics Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt's earlier speculation that the consumer would become increasingly engaged in commodity production, and that this new productive mode would have significant impact on personal lives, in their publication 'Take Today: The Executive as Dropout', where McLuhan and Nevitt observed, 'It is in this new dimension of "software" design that the difference between the old mechanical industry and the new electric circuitry becomes manifest. It is a difference not only of speed and diversity but also of knowledge and of the programming for special, personal needs.'²² At the time of writing, computers were large, immobile objects that required punch cards in order to operate, so this foresight was quite remarkable. Their style and areas of analysis have much in common, along with their sociological concerns about how new technology would impact social behaviour and organisational systems. Toffler's manifesto might also have been influenced by the somewhat earlier

and popular publication of Stuart Brand's 'Whole Earth Catalogue' and a trend in American publishing for technology-alert manifestos for new ways of living.

A bestseller in its own time, much of Toffler's argument and the details within his description of 'prosumption' seem worth revisiting with particular attention in relation to Leckey's initial claim. At the time Toffler provided a road map of how to move forward as prosumers in ways that would benefit the individual and independent worker, a road map since abandoned. The model he produces, however, has strong affinities with what might be generally understood as artists' practices or creative lifestyles, referencing divisions between work and leisure, between creativity and productivity, and the new warehouses of images that impact our inner lives or budding phantasmagoria generated in blip culture, 'enabled' by technology, a point to which I will later return.

1.2 Tapscott and Williams' Prosumer

The meaning of Toffler's term takes a turn when its context was expropriated by Canadian business writer Don Tapscott in his book 'The Digital Economy' (1997). Tapscott identified a voluntary, semi-professional online worker who might be recognised, encouraged and put to work by the savvy capitalist. As Tapscott wrote his new management theory, the Internet as we know it today was in its infancy and with it digital technology was being combined and utilised by increasing volumes of people.²³ In the late 1990s, divisions between commercially developed and highly copyrighted software and open source software were growing and the primary difference was in the working methods of their very different developers.

Open source is a development model that promotes universal access to a product's design or blueprint and open redistribution of that design or blueprint, including subsequent improvements to it by anyone. It was developed in response to a culture of copyright, intellectual property laws and policies governing copyright. Generally, open source refers to a computer program in which the source code is visible and accessible to the general public for use or modification from its original design. Open source code is modified by programmers trying to improve upon or alter the code and,

as regards commercial property, is the antithesis of proprietary software owned by corporations. A main principle of open source software development is peer production, ideally with the end product, source-material and documentation made available and visible online and at no cost to the public. Linux is one well-known computer operating system assembled under the model of free and open source software development and distribution released by Linus Torvalds in 1991 (with some controversy around its naming), based on the earlier software Unix.²⁴

The open source movement is one that challenges traditional notions of property, but also presents a radical change in how computer users are considered, valued and employed. Open source predated the Internet²⁵ but when it was brought to the early Internet, its development could have gone two ways, firstly, as hypertext designer Ted Nelson sought with his linking system Xanadu (which he had been developing since 1960), where original sources of code were always attributable and remained visible. This meant that there would be a two-way, more transparent means of developing online environments, but that it would also 'guarantee that the owner of any information would be paid their chosen royalties on any portion of their documents, no matter how small, whenever they are most used'.²⁶ Instead, the Internet's HTML model that took hold and still exists today, is one where code is not attributable, where the extent of modification or reproduction of the original is illegible, where authorship is not identifiable, where plagiarism abounds, often to the advantage of the corporation rather than the online user. Nelson has stated, 'HTML is precisely what we were trying to PREVENT [his capitalisation] - ever-breaking links, links going outward only, quotes you can't follow to their origins, no version management, no rights management.'²⁷ Technologist Jaron Lanier explains the difference between the two versions, 'A core technical difference between a Nelsonian network and what we have become familiar with online is that [Nelson's] network links were two-way instead of one-way. In a network with two-way links, each node knows what other nodes are linked to it... Two-way linking would preserve context. It's a small simple change in how online information should be stored that couldn't have vaster implications for culture and the economy.'²⁸ For Nelson this two-way model of programming, where source is always visible or traceable, is the only legitimate way in which programmers

or content-providers can fully disclose their sources, and therefore protect their output.

Sociologist Thomas Streeter writes about the phenomenon of open source development in terms of the philosophy of property, a subject that throws into question the oft-exploited principles of property in the sphere of communications technology. Streeter writes,

[The 1990s] was the period when Linux, the open source movement, and music downloading raised both excitement and consternation in many legal and management circles. By pitting free communication against property rights, these developments called into question the premises of the market fundamentalism that had been driving most political economic thinking associated with the Internet at that point. All of a sudden, freedom and the market were no longer synonymous and, in fact, seemed like they might, in some cases, be opposed.²⁹

Streeter maintains that ‘the Internet did not just create *new* problems for intellectual property. It brought slumbering dilemmas with property to the surface.’³⁰ According to Streeter’s essay, Nelson’s model provided the ideal open source in terms of protection of the originator, ‘With Xanadu, according to Nelson, each individual contribution to the system would be perfectly preserved and perfectly rewarded: the computer system itself is supposed to prevent the possibility of unattributed theft of ideas because each “quotation” is preserved by an unalterable link that, not only allows readers to instantly call up intellectual sources, but also ensures direct payment for each use.’³¹ Streeter’s synopsis of the productive and potentially arbitrary notion of property rights in relation to information technology is supportive of Nelson’s version of open source.

While Streeter’s focus is on the historical, political and philosophical problems presented by open source software based upon different aspects of how it challenges notions of property, the associated changes to labour run parallel. While, in the late 1990s, technologists and programmers felt compelled to modify and adapt open

source software, he maintains, motivated by peer recognition as well as natural curiosity and competitiveness, this tendency came to the attention of commercial software developers like Apple and IBM who then utilised it for their own financial gain. He traces various key moments that mark the shift, one of which was the publishing of the manifesto 'Netizens' by Michael and Ronda Hauben, 'an important book that compellingly detailed the numerous ways in which the internet embodied, not capitalist self-interest, but forms of spirited and deliberately collective action. Unix, they showed, was designed from the ground up to enable collaboration and the sharing of interoperable software tools so as to encourage collective improvement of the system. The Internet appeared, not just because of various non-profit arrangements but because of its deliberate design, on both a technical and social level, as an open system built for shared collective effort. Usenet and other non-profit collaborative communication systems both spread much of the knowledge that made the global Internet possible and taught a generation of technical professionals the value of online, citizenly collaboration.'³² And while this publication noted the ideals of open source developing and its sizeable impact, other writers and programmers went further. Unix programmer Eric S. Raymond wrote about his motivations and experience in his essay 'The Cathedral and the Bazaar' several years later, in 1997. This was an evaluation of the difference articulated though both personal and economic terms, which went on to have an enormous effect on the overlapping of open source and commercially developed software. According to Streeter,

It is significant that the arguments of 'The Cathedral and the Bazaar' are not communitarian. In contrast with Stallman or the Haubens, Raymond dismisses appeal to altruism out of hand. The central rhetorical accomplishment of the piece, rather, is to frame voluntary labor in the language of the market; the core trope is to portray Linux-style software development like a bazaar – the archetype of a competitive marketplace – whereas the more centralised and controlled software production as hierarchical and centralized – and thus inefficient – like a cathedral: static, inefficient, medieval. Raymond thus disarticulated the metaphor of the market from conventional capitalist modes of production and reconnected it with a form of voluntary labor, of labor done for its own sake... For an essay about such a dry and technical topic as the

management of software development, there's an awful lot of reference to the internal feelings, psychological makeup, and desires of programmers.³³

Several months after its publishing, Netscape open-sourced its browser and Apple, IBM and Sun Microsystems designed their new operating systems around open source. Raymond himself was taken on by many of these companies as consultant strategist. What changed in the latter stages of the 1990s, therefore, was the marketing rhetoric of open source programming, which now emphasised not the ideals of open source programming but rather the technical and financial benefits of open source productivity and therefore the potential profitability to corporations of employing open source programmers.

It was in this context, in the burgeoning crossover of open source programming and e-commerce and the rapidly changing nuances of its marketing rhetoric, that Don Tapscott's 'Digital Economy' was published. Taking these key arguments outside the framework of information technology to a much broader readership of entrepreneurs and financiers, the pop-economist alludes to the kind of profits that can be made by exploiting the free labour of open source programming, using a new generation of technology-savvy Internet users as primary examples. Thus, 'prosumer' is the term Tapscott attributes to this online agent when he returns to the subject in his later book 'Wikinomics,' co-authored with 'strategic advisor' Anthony D Williams in 2008.³⁴ In Tapscott and William's different formulation to Toffler's, the composites of the word 'prosumer' change from the original 'proactive consumer' to 'producer-consumer'. Now, it is not the adaption or customisation of a product but is instead where 'the consumer actually co-innovates and coproduces the products they consume, self-organising to create their own wares.'³⁵ The later version of the term is specifically applied here to the technologically moderated online marketplace, the commerce-enabling Internet. Tapscott's usage is intended to be understood as an activity for the entrepreneur to profit from, the online business developer deriving as much labour from online 'prosumers' as possible in order to generate and increase profits.

When first published, 'Wikinomics' claimed to present 'the new art and science of collaboration', proposing new ways for its target reader to exploit the professional

potential of online users and browsers in the development of their business to maximise their potential profits. This is a very nuanced and strategic usage of the term 'collaboration' which does not mean equal contribution or partnership in every sense, in fact Tapscott and Williams' 'prosumerism' profits from the inequality of both parties in monetising prosumer activity. Instead of relying upon their own material resources and permanent staff members, prosumer-capitalists would be able to employ those online, by using open source technology such as wikis, while extolling the merits of 'online collaboration'.³⁶ In their thesis, Tapscott and Williams put forward four principles of Wikinomics: openness, peering, sharing and 'acting globally'.

Vocabularies of sharing are used to optimum effect by Tapscott and Williams, emphasising the importance of 'shared' intellectual property and collaborative working in creating a new organisational structure to replace more traditional ones, instigating a new mode of production as the 'economy's primary engine of wealth creation.' The text is full of neologisms that describe a new set of labour conditions. 'Workplace peering is here to stay', they claim, 'peering' meaning the reduction of hierarchical and supervisory management structures in the workplace, replaced by online prosumers embroiled in a new labour of looking. Again, this is a dubious use of the term 'peer', suggesting but perhaps not delivering any real workplace equality between parties. In the fourth chapter, 'ideagoras' are introduced as online spaces for prosumers, 'marketplaces for ideas, innovations, and uniquely qualified minds.' Here, the authors imply that extra profitability will reward those who open out their 'research and development' processes to online communities. In the case of the chemicals industry, this might mean fielding several problems out to an online conversation or 'message board' of researchers with scientific interest, both professional and amateur, who might then provide the answers in the form of new formulas or solutions. If successfully brought to production, their efforts and solutions would be rewarded with modest one-off payments and this is where corporations or 'employers' costs are cut down immeasurably.

Tapscott's 'prosumerism' is a creative, productive form of production ripe for exploitation. An example provided is of a 'Second Life' architect, interested in large-scale digital architectural animation environments, who invests in it by expanding its

virtual landscape from the original blueprint or code provided.³⁷ This Second Life architecture is both consumed and produced, and presents a world that other users feel compelled to subsequently consume and produce: in its developments it attracts and instigates the activities of other prosumers and therefore becomes a self-perpetuating structural development. The authors claim that, 'this new way of learning and interacting means [consumers] will treat the world as a stage for their innovations... static, immovable, non-editable items will be anathema, ripe for dustbins of twentieth century history.'³⁸ They foresee a new era for bedroom DJs, online bloggers, citizen-journalists and other budding 'creatives' and therefore a new market for consumer-controlled media. The authors encourage capitalists to harness new technologies, and, 'after gaining some experience with this new world of prosumption, you'll realize that your real business is not creating finished products but innovating ecosystems.'³⁹ 'Wikinomics' was written before the development of Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites, the slightly more advanced social networking and image-sharing platforms that have, in the intervening period, come to update and replace Second Life. Wikipedia was the only example given by Tapscott and Williams of a productive prosumer platform, but what is omitted is that Wikipedia was not originally created to generate profits, but rather as a creative commons endeavor.

1.3 Toffler and Tapscott and Williams: comparative analysis

There are significant differences between Toffler's coinage of the term the 'prosumer' and Tapscott and Williams' 2008 expropriation. Toffler's coinage came forty years earlier, at the end of what he calls the Second Wave and in anticipation of what he hopes is a liberating (for the worker) and socially progressive Third Wave. His 'prosumption' is a dual mode of production, where an individual produces for use (their own) and for profit (by working in the services of others, whatever industry that might be).⁴⁰ One's labour is divided between these two, and part-time work, when balanced with new capacities for self-service via technology, is enough to support a household. Tapscott and Williams' 'prosumerism' is a very different mode of production, where the individual is put to work for the capitalist for little remuneration but motivated by creative aspirations and competitive nature, again enabled by technology.

Toffler's distinction between Sector A and B work provides another clear point of distinction between their coinages of the term. Sector A is household work, unremunerated and largely acknowledged, and therefore often associated with women's work. Sector B, by contrast, is work outside the home in the services of others that generates profits and is acknowledged as work in the public sphere. This is associated with men's work. In the second wave, the differences between these two kinds of work has been emphasised by 'the invisible wedge'. Prosumption, by his account, will eradicate those differences by employing those involved primarily in Sector B work, back into Sector A, self-servicing in mechanics, electronics, pharmaceuticals and financial services though increased access to advancing technologies. Prosumerism, a new kind of DIY ethos, will render domestic, self-serving labour as visible and acknowledged as work that takes place outside the home, or in the provision of services to others. Toffler makes a distinction between 'inside-out production' and 'outside-in production' and emphasises the latter as prosumption.⁴¹

Toffler's prosumption produces two kinds of value, personal value and financial value, so that 'while the production or market ethic praises single-mindedness, the prosumer ethic calls for roundedness instead.'⁴² Developments in technology allow Toffler's prosumer greater financial autonomy, a re-evaluation of general priorities, dissolving the gap between producers for market and personal use and with it, dissolution of gender divisions in the workforce, enhanced living standards and a greater sense of the community, for a truly 'humane civilisation'. What is facilitated in Tapscott and Williams' prosumerism through advancing technology, is the greater productivity of online prosumers, the easier access to them for capitalists and therefore the higher yield and an increasing profit margin for these entrepreneurs putting prosumers to work. In Toffler's version, prosumerism dissolves the market as a dominant economic and social institution whereas Tapscott and Williams' prosumerism represents the antithesis, a neoliberal management system *par excellence* where free-market capitalism is the dominant institution.

Toffler's prosumption sought to eliminate the gap between Sectors A and B, because the B worker was now as productive in A. What happened through Tapscott and

Williams' version however is that prosumerism began to reproduce all the unremunerated, unacknowledged 'feminised' aspects of Sector A work. Rather than the elimination of the invisible wedge, its force is strengthened, and rather than Sector A work being confined to a certain demographic, work-at-home women, prosumerism becomes a non-gendered, unacknowledged unremunerated and often exploitative form of labour that traverses whole societies, and here I speak predominantly of Western societies with ready access to both digital technology and the Internet.

Whereas Tapscott and Williams' prosumerism was rooted in the HTML model of Web 2.0, where websites' templates could be made strategically open and adaptable, Toffler 'prosumption' encompassed many broader changes in technology. While his prediction of the 'de-massification of the media' is, arguably, still a utopian notion, he did anticipate how 'blip culture' would develop through the multitudinous platforms that would facilitate image-transfer, leading to the enormous volumes of images that we would channel and exchange through our phantasmagoria. While this is not the only mode of prosumption he foresees, it does resonate strongly with the forms we might most easily identify with today. This association changed the second wave image consumer, or viewer, into a more productive agent: one for whom the processes of consumption and production were to run simultaneously as they parsed and contributed images to and through blip culture. While this new kind of productive viewer is not isolated in Tapscott and William's later 'prosumer', it does strongly resonate with the most contemporary and productive forms of prosumerism. In the following chapter, I will look specifically at the some of the companies that are capitalising on what Toffler earlier earmarked, 'blip culture' and the key agents of their expansion: the prosumer. I regard, in particular, changes to the stock image industry's acquisition policies, and the factors behind them, over the past decade, as an extreme example of how prosumer productivity has been put to work to create a whole new functioning economy of images, which uses those who generate and feed this 'warehouses of images' that Toffler early foresaw.

While the history and literature of prosumerism and the history and sociological aspects of the stock image industry have, to my knowledge, never been associated critically, I claim that these two phenomena are by-now inextricably linked. It is

prosumerism's new form of unleashed and unregulated productivity that enables changes in how stock is produced and consumed, how it has become an enormous global industry and how its circulation has a huge impact on how we receive and generate images. The stock image industry used to be relatively specialised, however pervasive its contents, but by now we as productive-viewers, or prosumers, are the main catalysts of its enormous growth and increasing restrictions. The transition of the meaning of the term 'prosumer', from Toffler to Tapscott's version, underlines some of the technical and ideological changes that facilitate these changes, but they also map out the difference of how we, as prosumers who indulge in images, have become, rather than self-sufficient, utilised and exploited by this process.

In principle and in practice, the changing aspects of Toffler's prosumer to Tapscott and Williams' version echo similar changes in affective or Post-Fordist labour developing over the same decades. In the third chapter, I will look at how this recuperation of Sector A work also resonates with the recuperation of artistic practice and how this latter recuperation has been theorised from various different perspectives. From these, I address recent critiques of this pervasive productive mode and ask in what more *affective* form new critiques might emerge?

Chapter 2 – Blip Culture

2.1 Stock images

2.3 Stock Post-2003

2.3 Post-2009: Stock's 'Big Bang'

In 1989, American moving-image curator Martin Heiferman wrote the following in the catalogue essay of an exhibition on art and media culture,

The sun comes up. The screens go blank. The plane comes down. Another day in Image World begins. Today, more than 10,500 Americans will be born and at least 5,800 will die. This morning, 260,000 billboards will line the roads to work. This afternoon, 11,520 newspapers and 11,556 periodicals will be available for sale. And when the sun sets again, 21,689 theatres and 1,548 drive-ins will each play for 7 hours, and 41 million photographs have been taken. Tomorrow, there will be more.⁴³

This was written the same year as the mobile phone was invented but long before it was widely available, several months before Tim Berners-Lee implemented the first successful communication between a Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) client and server via the Internet as we know it today,⁴⁴ six years before DVDs or web TV were brought to market, twelve years before the iPod came to spawn the many 'smart' hand-held music and communication devices we use today, sixteen years before Youtube, and Facebook went live and seventeen years before the world's major newspapers and broadcasters created their online platforms. This was written eighteen years before the stock image industry began to source from amateur photographers 'sharing' their photographs online in microstock photography, marking an explosion in digital image production the likes of which the world has never before seen. Heiferman was writing in the early days of digital technology when the number of images the average working North American both generated and absorbed might have somehow still seemed calculable. Now with the capacity of digital technologies to produce large quantities of images and their online sites through various social and

sharing platforms, their fixed number becomes incalculable. How many images are we generating during our 'leisure time' on hand-held devices and light, portable computers, and what are the boundaries of leisure, when the activities of leisure and professional productivity become increasingly difficult to distinguish?

A recent statistic suggests that more digital photographs were produced in 2012 than all the photographs from all the preceding years of photography, since its early-nineteenth century inception.⁴⁵ The reasons for this are many; the technologies to do so are available to an increasing number of photographers. The Internet also allows for the development of websites as platforms for the exchange of images with relative ease. And whereas traditionally, established media were solely responsible for publishing images, now new social networking and image sharing websites allow and actively encourage enormous numbers of images to be uploaded and 'shared'. Volumes grow at exponential rates. Behind the new statistics, who are the surplus producers? What 'content' is being produced? And whom does the volume ultimately serve? Here, the producers of images are key, as are the circumstances and mode of their production. We are now image 'prosumers', activity that has dramatically influenced the direction of contemporary capitalism. In this chapter, I look in greater depth at new image online distribution or 'sharing' mechanisms that define and influence a new generation of image-prosumers.

In 1975, Kodak released its first digital camera, invented by American electrical engineer Steven Sasson. This early prototype was the size of a small coffee machine with an opening on its side where cassettes were to be loaded.⁴⁶ Digital images are essentially two-dimensional numeric representations of two-dimensional images. They can be of 'vector' (usually text) or 'raster' (generally photography) types, or, as in advertising posters, a combination of both. The digital raster image contains a fixed number of rows and columns of pixels. The pixel is the individual unit that represents the brightness of any given colour at any specific point. Typically, these images can be created by a number of devices, camera, computer, scanner, sensor or radar. They can also be synthesised from non-image data, such as mathematical functions or three-dimensional geometric models, the latter of which is used to create CGI or graphic animations (for example 'Pixar' productions). Raster images are stored in computer

memory as a raster map, and then transmitted in a compressed form. The higher the resolution, the heavier the image and the more difficult it is to email or transfer it. Therefore the purpose of image compression is to be able to store or transmit the data (or image) in a more speedy and efficient form whilst maintaining as much foreground detail and clarity as possible. Inevitably, one side-effect is that some of the image's background detail will deteriorate, compressing 'natural images' so that their primary features become unrecognisable. The term 'lossy' has emerged in computing terminology to identify the process of losing some of the visual clarity through this compression.⁴⁷ As the human eye is thought to perceive space through brightness rather than colour what is reduced is often the colour spectrum as the digital image can afford marginal losses of it while maintaining recognisable qualities. Compression may occur several times in the life of any one image and so as the quality of an image deteriorates, many of the details are lost. These repeated compressions are referred to as 'compression cycles'. Compressed images might be more easily exchanged and distributed at higher speeds. On the surface of the 'natural' image, its foreground is privileged over details of light and colour, and the complexities of its background. If these minor losses corrupt and the image compression – or individual pixel - becomes visible, these corrupted images are called 'compression artefacts', confined to debris through over-compression.

Digital image compression allows for greater speed of distribution and productivity. This link between the production and distribution of images is crucial to prosumerism. The technology that enables digital images to be uploaded and shared (or distributed) so quickly fuses these processes and enables the increasing volume of their production. Whereas these processes may have been separate in previous technological eras, within contemporary image-prosumerism they are connected. And the ease with which image-upload might be carried out, the potential instantaneity of its display on prosumer websites and the relationship of those prosumer-exhibitors to one another, are some of the factors influencing the gross production of images. What I will now identify are some of the display platforms capitalising on this new 'creative' phenomenon. In this area, I propose that the contemporary stock and microstock industry provide both the ideal technical infrastructure and financial mechanisms.

2.1 Stock Images

Historically, stock photography has been around since the mid 19th century invention of the half-tone printing press. In 1920, American entrepreneur, H. Armstrong Roberts set up the first organisation, his main suppliers being commercial photographers' outtakes from magazine and editorial shoots. Influenced by the boom of the advertising industry in the 1950s, stock agencies adapted their photographic compositions to include open space in the images' upper and side margins, pre-empting the superimposing of a campaign's copywriting upon the image. Henceforth, stock photographers' compositions were designed for easier, quicker captioning on photographs. In the 1990s, two companies, Corbis and Getty Images, began to establish themselves as market leaders, compiling seasonal selections of stock images in catalogues and distributing and selling them on CD-Rom, using, exchanging and altering digital photography.

Sociologist and writer Paul Frosh has written extensively on the subject, specifically about stock's contribution to visual culture, picking up on the subject in the 1990s and publishing his research first in 2003 and revising it in 2013. Frosh defines stock photography as 'a global industry which manufactures, promotes and distributes photographic images for use in marketing, advertising, sundry editorial purposes and increasingly for multimedia products and website design.'⁴⁸ Frosh clarifies the distinction between 'visual content industry' and that of stock photography, as it was developed in parallel with advances in technology and the advertising industry. He writes, 'Stock photography is being subsumed within a globalised and digitised "visual content industry" whose ramifications include, among many other things, the accelerated blurring of boundaries between previously distinct institutional and discursive contexts of production and distribution: in particular, between fine art, news and advertising images, between historical and contemporary photographs.'⁴⁹ Therefore, he claims, in its evolving online platforms, stock images might encompass 'images' from a range of sources and disciplines, from 'fine art' reproductions to advertising images, their reach and market far exceeds the limits of the advertising industry. 'Visual content' represents an expanding spectrum of images that are not immediately reducible to any particular original media, composition or style.

Frosh's theory of productive 'visual content' references French theorist, Michel Foucault's concept of productive 'discursive formations' developed in his 'Archaeology of Knowledge'⁵⁰.

'Archaeology of Knowledge' was written in 1969 to address what Foucault saw as common and unsatisfactory methodologies in the history of ideas and in human sciences. It adopts the terms of speech-act theory to address 'discourse' as a palpable, constructed entity inherited over time, generated to reinforce political divisions and reproduce particular systems of governance. The 'statement' is adopted as the basic unit of discourse, which makes speech-acts meaningful. Statements both depend and reflect upon the social relations in which they are generated. Large bodies of statements are called 'discursive formations' and Foucault's analysis addresses statements *within* rather than independent of these formations. The unity of these statements is, paradoxically, a system of dispersion and a discursive formation 'is a distribution of gaps, voids, absences, limits, divisions.'⁵¹ Rather than looking for meaning in individual formations, his writing is concerned with what political conditions produce them. These are identified through specific historic periods – the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the twentieth century – and also in relation to specific disciplines that practice the 'diagnosis' of others, notably psychology.

Discourse, Foucault proposed, is produced and circulated in the form of the document, which 'is no longer an inert material through which it ties to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only the trace remains; history is now trying to define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations... history is one way in which a society recognises and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.'⁵² He proposes that history, via discourse and by documentation, is a product and a justification fashioned by those who stand to benefit from it. 'Archaeology analyses the degree and form of permeability of a discourse... It does not challenge, for example, the relation between the Analysis of Wealth and the great monetary fluctuations of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: it tries to show what, in these crises, could be given as an object of discourse, how those crises could be conceptualised in such an object, how the

interests that were in conflict throughout these processes could deploy their strategy in them.⁵³ Archaeology is proposed as a new kind of historical methodology, to dig away at the strata of discourse's density.

Foucault's discourse is composed of statements; statements are composed of unfixed matter; both elements are continually re-configurable. They are defined by the order of their appearance, and by how these appearances may be resituated. A statement might appear in similar guises but at different times and therefore independent and different from its preceding statement. It is very connected to the temporal, changing its sense according to the time and context in which it appears. Foucault elaborates that '[it] must not be treated as an event that occurred in a particular time and place, and that the most one can do is recall it – and celebrate it from afar off – in an act of memory. But neither is it an ideal form that can be actualised in any body, at any time, in any circumstances, and in any material conditions.'⁵⁴ It is man-made, one of 'those objects that men produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose, and recombine, and possibly destroy', and 'thus the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realisation of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry.'⁵⁵ The statement resembles a currency, one whose real value is in flux, and which is always subject to political and economic changes influencing an expansive (global) market. They are 'things that are transmitted and preserved, have value and which one tries to appropriate; that are repeated, reproduced, and transformed; to which pre-established networks are adapted, and to which a status is given in the institution; things that are duplicated not only by copy or translation, but by exegesis, commentary, and the internal proliferation of meaning.' As such, different meanings or values are attached to the rarified statement, dependent upon the context, or particular discourse, of that moment.

Frosh focuses his writing on the cultural significance of visual content, photographs generated and circulated within new industry and economy of images and how that produces particular classifications, hierarchies and social norms as much as it reflects them. It is in this context that he references Foucault's 'discourse' in passing in the first section of his argument, 'these terms are discursive in Foucault's sense, providing a

way of speaking about photography that also governs its practice.⁵⁶ Frosh's mention of Foucault is brief but his analytic structure for 'visual content' perhaps resembles Foucault's form of 'discourse'. Like content, discourse is made up of individual 'statements', like stock images classified by their aesthetic content. Discourse, comprised of these statements, is both produced by and productive of the 'history of ideas', a broader terrain like the economy of images Frosh describes. Visual content is not solely aesthetically produced but it is also socially productive. Frosh's intention with this particular reference seems to be to generate within it a framework for analysis of the visual qualities of stock and its sociological implications, implications that stock (like discourse) would otherwise disguise.⁵⁷

Frosh intended to create an awareness of stock as a highly commercial industry as opposed to simply a platform for creative practice, as it is most commonly marketed. Early on, Frosh observes that despite their awareness of and attention to individual images through advertising, marketing, etc, the public are generally unaware of the industry of stock, '[stock] enjoys what appears to be a powerful ideological advantage over other sectors producing contemporary visual culture: *invisibility*... most viewers have never heard of stock photography, and are blissfully unaware of the provenance of the pictures that surround them. The industry's system of production and distribution effectively shields it from the ultimate consumers of its images, veiling the beliefs, interests and power-relations that help shape their manufacture.'⁵⁸ The invisibility of the industry, also relates to the invisibility of the number and source of images which he calls 'the wallpaper of popular culture.'

Frosh maintains that stock photography, by the very nature of its title, 'represents an exemplary standardisation and systematisation of photographic practices on quasi-industrial lines, and a consequent abstraction of photographic images as exchangeable signs and cultural commodities...' A stock image is literally kept 'in stock' in real agency archives, stored and ready for distribution like a manufactured product in a factory or warehouse. He continues, 'the word "stock" also connotes the appearance of these images: instantly recognisable iconographic combinations that rely upon, and reinforce, "clichéd" visual motifs and stereotypes that are drawn from a far broader cultural archive or image-repertoire. Hence the "specific case" of stock photography is

actually a privileged case. It provides the ideal conditions in which to comprehend the enmeshing of photographic practices and images within contemporary consumer societies.⁵⁹ The industrialisation of stock photography is a result of subject-standardisation, the repetition of clichéd motifs and subjects. It also means that more and more images build up in the warehouses of stock agencies. There is a form of industrial revolution of the stock image, Frosh would imply, particularly since the Corbis or Getty-isation of the industry.

Stock images are symptomatic of broader cultural production, which, Frosh claims, includes 'an advertising image, a pop song, a film script, a news format, a commercial photograph' and requires 'the multiple constructions of a potential product's meaning (by different people at different stages), and the anticipation of its diverse interpretation by others is integral to the design and manufacture process: meaning is not what is produced, meaning is always in production as part and parcel of a material-representational practice.'⁶⁰ Being open to interpretation is what generates the stock image's commercial value, not being too context-specific while retaining some fundamentally recognisable qualities. It must also be easily read, while not demanding too much attention, as such it will transition smoothly from producer's rhetoric to viewer's attention, subtly assumed and assimilated.

The stock image's openness to interpretation means that it can be deployed in two phases, Frosh contends, exemplified by two kinds of rhetoric. By rhetoric he implies promotional appeal, first to corporations or clients, secondly to consumers. Frosh proposes 'system rhetoric' and 'mission rhetoric' as distinct phases in the commercial life of a stock image,

This 'system rhetoric' is geared primarily toward meeting the economic considerations and cultural assumptions of diverse cultural managers, rather than toward the product's ultimate audience. The latter is addressed by a parallel 'mission rhetoric', the product's self-justification before consumers (its claim to their attention), which the system rhetoric structures, utilises and subsumes within its own self-promotional strategy.⁶¹

'System' and 'mission' rhetoric divide the production-acquisition-circulation-consumption process of photographs as they are taken, consigned to stock agencies (all 'system' rhetoric) before being sold to advertising agencies and published, broadcast or otherwise released ('mission' rhetoric). He claims, 'In practice these two rhetorics are clearly intertwined, but by separating them out we can discern the complicated communicative strategies which are designed to *materialise* images across institutionally segregated sites of production (the photographer), distribution (agencies, libraries, archives), circulation (ad agencies, marketing departments, designers) and ultimately reception.'⁶² When Frosh distinguishes between 'system' and 'mission' features of a stock image he bases it on the fact that, at the time of writing, 'the material manufacture of stock images *does* have a clear cut off point: the point at which the image is put into circulation by ad agencies to be encountered by viewers in moments of reception. Everything related to the 'internal' demands, constraints and enabling techniques of the production process up until that point I characterise as 'system': this includes a preliminary moment of materialisation when the image is offered to stock agencies by the photographer.'⁶³

Frosh observes that the stock image assumes meaning after its production and at different stages of its circulation, contingent upon those parties who acquire it who impose on it particular meanings, texts or contexts. Its provenance becomes non-attributable. Frosh pays attention to stock images' proliferation and how the industry is as productive of visual culture as it is produced by it. He describes a contingent image that might fit multiple purposes and its circulation within increasingly unremarkable visual environments. Frosh states that he hopes 'to rethink and generalise the figure/ground distinction, resurrecting the significance of the ordinary, unremarkable and overlooked 'ground' in our understanding of the way in which many – if not most – advertising images communicate, and to replace the isolated object of the consumer-critic's interest with an unremarkable but enveloping visual environment.'⁶⁴ By re-evaluating the 'figure/ground' distinction⁶⁵, Frosh means focusing on the background of the 'unremarkable but enveloping visual environment' and the socio-political implications of its unremarked assimilation. Because while a 'stock image' might be assumed to be unremarkable, Frosh contends, it is highly socially productive.

The stock image, he maintains, is perpetuated through ‘pseudo-cyclical consciousness’, a form of inattentiveness or assimilation of ‘content’ rather than an alert focus on subject. Stock’s unremarkable visual environments inspire Frosh to repurpose Guy Debord’s notion of pseudo-cyclical time, ‘the time of consumption [that] also appears as the primary mode in which time is itself spent, it is consumption “exclusively dominated by leisure and vacation”. As spectacular time, it is both “the time of consumption of images in the narrow sense” and “the image of the consumption of time in the broad sense.” This consumption is “explicitly presented as the moment of real life, and the point is to wait for its cyclical return.”’⁶⁶ Just as Debord proposed a future-orientated time in his ‘Society of the Spectacle’ (1967), through its cycles of consumerism, stock images materialise at certain key moments dependent upon and productive of, ‘pseudo-cyclical consciousness’. Stock images are self-perpetuating, circulating fluidly around visual economy and populating the ‘enveloping visual environment.’⁶⁷

So within this relatively and purposefully ‘invisible’ industry, who or what organisation is regulating and monetising the circulation of ‘visual content’ from the ‘pseudo-cyclical consciousness’ that fuel their demand? Who is profiting from these image circuits? As Frosh proposes, ‘any technology takes its form within pre-existing and often dynamic systems of power, practice, knowledge and representation, and can be shaped by these systems as it affects them in turn. Stock photography, conceived as a cultural industry and as a mode of visual presentation, is such a system.’⁶⁸ That stock photography or visual content might reconstitute and benefit capitalist organisations already active seems a logical and somewhat obvious conclusion. Content is after all just content, seemingly innocuous material which, without reorientation, will service the capitalist structures already in place. The more technology evolves, Frosh predicts, the more classification or cataloguing systems of stock images will break down. This would require that those dealing stock images find new varieties and forms of image control and regulation. In a prophetic concluding observation to his 2003 study, Frosh maintains, ‘the more that photographs, films, illustrations, and paintings become easily interchangeable and alterable content – by virtue of technical capacity and cultural convention – so the need to control exactly *who* can transfer and alter *what* becomes

ever more crucial to those seeking to profit from content's sale.⁶⁹ When this was published its focus was predominantly on stock images that were advertised and distributed through postal catalogue and CD Rom, before Internet browsing allowed instant sale and delivery. Even at this earlier stage, Frosh recognised the increasing pressure for stock agencies to control the transfer of images in order to generate profit, through strict image-mining techniques and reinforcement of image copyright.

Frosh's writing was published when Getty Images (alongside Corbis) were beginning to dominate the international stock image market, but before they were effectively employing their own and other websites as online platforms for acquisition and distribution.⁷⁰ His research did not anticipate this significant development and analyses instead the productive nature of stock images as they were acquired and distributed in paper-bound catalogues and CD Rom. His research is based on interviews with several industry professionals, with attention to various newspaper and magazine articles about the industry and in aesthetic and semiotic evaluation of images and their various categories in a number of stock image catalogues.⁷¹ At the time of publishing, Frosh was alert to the changes in technology and how they might affect the industry however he didn't pursue any in-depth analysis. His writing does provide the first practical overview of the early production process of stock images and their productive nature as visual content. However, many of the practicalities of his sociological research are now outdated due to the impact of the Internet, as well as digital imaging and distribution technologies. So what it also provides us with is a really good backdrop for the differences in the industry over the course of the past decade, and how these changes are really impacting the workers now involved in stock production.

How Frosh identifies the processes of production and consumption of stock – in mission and system rhetoric – has changed radically. These processes are no longer distinct and their principle productive agent is the prosumer. What evolves after his analysis in 2003 is a radical change in stock imagery, not only in how images are taken, harvested and distributed by agencies, but more significantly for the purposes of these arguments, the role of prosumers in their production. What is highlighted by this industry above others is the potential threat of the phenomenon of image-prosuming on creative practice, behind the rhetoric of creative opportunity. Image-prosumers'

toil is encouraged by large multi-national corporations as a form of creative and communicative exchange but those same corporations, like Getty Images and Corbis, aren't sourcing from photographers directly, they are doing so through a back door, via the image-sharing and social networking platforms with whom they are contracted. What we are marketed as a means of communication and sharing with friends is actually now a highly monitored production mechanism, from which increasingly small and wealthy number of stock image agencies harvest and profit.

2.2 Stock Post-2003

The kind of images Frosh studies are analogue in form. Since his first published writing on the subject, this has changed dramatically. In the past decade, the stock image industry has made the most rapid and politically significant developments of its genesis thus far, by exploiting new technology and the Internet for all stages of its production, circulation, distribution and remuneration. These technologies have also changed the way we approach and retrieve images, as well as the producers, subjects and content this industry makes of us all.

Digital image modification is an essential process to maintaining the semantic openness of a stock image. Modification technology has changed enormously over the past twenty years. New image-editing software allows immediate capture, erasure, conversion, editing and enhancing. There are many different kinds of software that facilitate colour, texture and compositional modification. The previously time-consuming process of photographic post-production is significantly reduced. Prior to the 1970s, changes or additions to photographs were done manually through 'rotoscoping', an animation technique where animators trace over footage frame by frame for live-action and animated sequences.⁷² Offset lithography printing was another means of image-compositing in the pre-digital, often used in commercial photography in the late 1960s and early 1970s allowing for the images of objects to be suspended anywhere on the composition. Now digital technology provides alternatives to manual roto-scoping and offset printing. Green-screen technology creates similar effects to both image-compositing processes, where a green screen behind a subject may host a variety of moving images digitally superimposed after the action sequence has been

shot.⁷³ Compositing, editing and modifying software make the image an increasingly malleable thing. Image modifying has also become a cultural norm; hybrid compositions and enhanced subjects are both normative and generative. Fashioned to appeal wide-ranging corporate clients, stock images reproduce familiar compositions and industry stereotypes to fit into the aesthetic categories in which they are filed and then sold. As much of the editorial attention paid to the phenomenon of stock images focuses on how amateur photographers might best sell images to agencies, the most frequent advice to new producers is to focus on generic or 'frequently used themes'.⁷⁴ What this creates are enormous portfolios of uniform images of familiar subjects in recognisable compositions to appeal to the greatest cross-section of clients from a range of industries, demographics and territories. In parallel with technological developments, the impact of the Internet and the many websites onto which these digital images might be uploaded and distributed has created a new financial system of upload, distribution, circulation and monitoring of stock images.

Although stock photography has existed for over a century, in its current form it is entirely dependent upon digital technology for easy, swift modifying and on the Internet for accumulation, distribution, circulation, remuneration and regulation. Stock images are defined by the fact they exist in bulk and are distributed and licensed for specific uses rather than because of any form, content, fixed origin or destination. They would seem to anticipate future events so the business of producing, amassing and selling stock is financially speculative. Whereas before the stock catalogue provided browsers with images they might use, now that browsing is possible through low-resolution images online. The stock agency's website is a means of swift distribution to and remuneration from a number of clients in a range of places simultaneously. If there are newsworthy upcoming world events with few corresponding images available in an agency's portfolio, then they will often commission photographers or begin sourcing elsewhere for appropriate images, so as to have 'stock' to sell to various news corporations.⁷⁵

Frosh returns to this subject in 2013, in his essay 'Beyond The Image Bank',⁷⁶ where he regards stock's changing technological capacities and regulations, and how the 'super-agencies' such as Getty Images and Corbis, are pitching themselves. This manifests in

various ways he contends, from Getty remarketing themselves as news-providers rather than stock provider, pitting themselves 'not just against Corbis but also against the three main global wire services: Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and Agence France-Press (AFP).'⁷⁷ This association qualifies 'part of the rhetoric used to position itself as the ultimate 'one-stop shop' for newspapers as well as advertisers and marketers, Getty has shifted away from its former promotion of visual content as an abstract universal and is reinstating discourses of field-specific expertise and cultural authority as a way of expanding into new markets.'⁷⁸ Frosh's interest remains in stock's power within cultural production, as the kind of mechanism that produces societal norms, maintaining divisions, hierarchies or prejudices. His evaluation still hinges on the aesthetic divisions of stock imagery, evidenced in 'the expansion of [stock photography, which] has become increasingly institutionalised, as has the apparent blurring between the three great photographic fields of art photography, advertising photography and documentary photojournalism (known in the trade as 'editorial photography').' His evaluation of stock and its recent changes is anchored in the visual aspects of the stock image whereas my purposes for reflecting on the stock image industry and its recent remodelling, is to regard how the creative labour of non-professional photographers, or prosumers, is instrumentalised or put to work by these 'super-agencies'.

Getty Images and Corbis are currently the two largest stock agencies in the world due to their aggressive acquisition of other stock agencies and historical photographic archives. Their market leadership is as much to do with their financial operations policing specific copyright policies (or Intellectual Property rights) of the 'content' they provide as much as its actual accumulation and provision. These agencies sell images by both professional and amateur photographers across industries, territories and demographics. Images are now grouped in financial categories of exclusivity and then sub-grouped in aesthetic categories (such as 'business', 'dads' and 'pleasure'). Costs of images escalate from the moderately priced 'Royalty-Free' (RF), where rights to an image can be acquired, but that image can be used by any other buyers in an unlimited number of ways, to 'Rights Managed' (RM), where individual licensing agreements are negotiated.⁷⁹ A client's payment for a stock image will increase to secure the rights for exclusivity of that image. However a number of clauses to contract often allow the

stock agency to renegotiate its initial status, depending on the popularity and market of any particular image. The market therefore defines the cost, not the subject or intrinsic 'quality' of that image. Exclusive rights on an RM image will be more expensive because they are for more public campaigns and because the agency is speculating that the image would not have made more money had it remained in circulation.

An agency will negotiate licensing fees with its client on the photographer's behalf in exchange for a percentage of costs from that photographer, or in some cases will acquire and own that image outright. Image pricing is determined by estimated volume of viewers, the length of use, country or region where they will be used and whether royalties are due to the photographer or image creator. On occasion the financial categories of images can be upgraded, however negotiations are solely undertaken by the agency and cannot be instigated by photographer or client. Those clients who have acquired images legitimately *before* an agency decides to upgrade its financial category will not have to upgrade according to the agency, and this is also true of images with creative commons licenses that are later registered with commercial agencies. In short, stock agencies, rather than image producers, are contractually the only parties who can legally renegotiate the financial value and copyright status of an image.

There can be a number of rights holders on any given image. Rights holders are not only the photographers and their 'representative' agencies, but they can also be the various subjects or subject matter inside the photograph. For example, the models in the photograph usually own and control the use of their likeness. Permission from models is granted through 'model releases'. Marks in images, that is words, visual symbols or logos registered to different corporations and companies are also copyrighted, as are artworks, as are designs, be they of a chair or a building or a dress and if any of these objects are found in an unlicensed image, the user of that image is liable for copyright infringement. A property release form gives consent to use the image of a copyrighted artistic work and also claims to protect against infringement of copyright or trademark for buildings depicted in an image. One of the primary ways that stock agencies market themselves to clients is by providing clients indemnity

against copyright infringement and whatever legal action necessary to maintain it. Frequently stock agencies will list the penalties and liabilities that users will encounter if they employ randomly sourced online images, demanding that all non-professional and voluntary organisations pay for image-use. It is through liability-threats that they police their images and expand their client portfolios: pitting producers against consumers and positioning themselves as judicial intermediaries.

Copyright is commonly understood as a form of protection provided by the law to the authors of 'original works of authorship.' By the 'Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works', an international copyright agreement originally signed in Bern, Switzerland in 1886, works are protected in all 160 countries of the Convention, as well as various other laws such as the US copyright act. Stock imagery is continually 'fingerprinted' by agencies through online image search engines so that particular stock can be tracked and found if it is in illegal use, modified or used in part. While technology now enables copyright owners to identify unlicensed imagery and act to protect their rights, fining users for copyright infringement is another means of remuneration with dedicated legal teams policing and fining infringement. One might reasonably claim that these many infringement possibilities are a form of scare-tactics to convince people to employ super-agencies. Copyright, in this industry, explicitly protects the commercial interests of corporations rather than creative producers or authors.

Getty Images and Corbis current market leadership has as much to do with their aggressive financial acquisition policies as it does the 'content' they police.⁸⁰ Since its formation in 1993 by Mark Getty and Jonathan Klein, Getty Images (then Getty Communications) has maintained an aggressive acquisition policy, initially co-promoting their images with French organisation Agence France-Presse. In 1997 they merged with PhotoDisc Inc, to make Getty Images. In 1999, it acquired Tony Stone Images; the online art seller Art.com; the sports photography agency Allsport; the journalistic specialists Liaison Agency; Newsmakers, the first digital news photo agency; Online USA, a specialist in celebrity shots; and the Hulton Picture Library, the former archive of the British photojournalistic magazine Picture Post. The Hulton collection has originally been sold by the BBC to Brian Deutsch in 1988, when it was

renamed Hulton Deutsch. In 1996, it was purchased by Getty Images and renamed Hulton Getty, giving Getty Images ownership of the rights to some 15 million photographs from the British press archives dating back to the nineteenth century. In 1999, they branched out into stock audio and video with the acquisition of EyeWire and Energy Film Library. In 2000, Getty acquired Archive Photos of New York, whose collections included archive images from The New York Times, Metronome and George Eastman House. In 2004, Getty purchased image.net and in 2006, the microstock photo website iStockphoto. In 2007, Getty purchased its largest competitor, MediaVast, for \$207 million. With it, Getty Images gained control of WireImage (entertainment, creative, and sports photography), FilmMagic (fashion and red carpet photography) and Contour Photos (portrait and studio photography). Getty Images also acquired a host of other subsidiaries including Master Delegates who include Gallo Images in Johannesburg, Touchline Photo in Cape Town, Isifa Image Service in Prague and Laura Ronchi in Italy. In late 2008, Getty Images bought Jupiter Media's online images division for \$96 million, including the sites stock.xchn and StockXpert. In December 2008, it was announced that Getty Images was acquiring Redferns Music Picture Library, the London-based music photography collection. The same year, Getty were themselves acquired by private equity firm Hellman and Friedman, and Getty Images common stock ceased trading on the New York Stock Exchange at the close of the acquisition. In 2009, they announced their partnership with Flickr, an amateur image-sharing platform. This particular acquisition is perhaps the most significant and certainly the point at which Tapscott and William's 'prosumerism' is put to work.

'Microstock' is the term that describes a recent development allowing stock agencies sell larger quantities of photographs at increasingly lower prices. What defines a microstock company is one that sources its images through the Internet, images that amateur photographers have posted online, as opposed to those consigned to these agencies by professionals. Given the increase in 'stockists', microstock agencies sell their images at a very low rate (anywhere from 20p - £10) for a royalty free image.⁸¹ Now, distinction between stock and microstock is dissolving, since Getty Images' 2009 acquisition of Flickr and its huge and growing repository of amateur photography. Flickr users have traditionally uploaded their image portfolios and shared them among friends online. Since Flickr's acquisition, users can now also submit their pictures to the

Getty collection by clicking their 'request to License' after uploading pictures, which alerts Getty editors to new portfolios. If they are selected and consigned to Getty, which employs individuals to trawl through these images systematically, the agency will receive upwards of 80% of the revenue of the sale once the photograph has been purchased. This guarantees a much higher profit margin for the agencies and lower margin for the photographer than was previously negotiated.

This process will ultimately prove detrimental to 'Creative Commons' (CC), a non-profit organisation 'that assists authors and creators who want to voluntarily share their work, by providing free copyright licences and tools, so that others may take full and legal advantage of the Internet's unprecedented wealth of science, knowledge and culture.'⁸² CC was established in 2001 in the US, with the aim of making it easier for people to share and build upon the work of others, consistent with the rules of copyright. Flickr, who originally licensed its photography under CC, now allows photographers to change their license from CC license to 'All Rights Reserved' as a by-product of this acquisition. Getty does not accept any content under a CC licence, as it is not in their commercial interest to try to sell stock photographs under this kind of agreement. If an image was under a CC license and it is uploaded to the Getty collection, then it will automatically be changed to 'All Rights Reserved', and lose its CC status. However, if it was originally a CC licensed image, then its previous users will retain the rights to the image they have already acquired. By stating clearly that any CC licensed picture will be only eligible for the cheaper royalty-free licensing option, Getty has created a disincentive to license under CC. What results is a two-tier system within amateur photography 'sharing' sites, of CC-licensed images and financially-incentivised content, with all significant shares of profit going to the super-agency. This development will inevitably undermine the appeal, standards and efficacy of CC, while completely overturning the notion of copyright so that it protects multinational distributors rather than actual producers.

This recent merger of stock and microstock photography has led to some industry criticism. John Toner, of the National Union of Journalists has said, 'we would be seriously concerned that this could be an attempt to exploit amateur photographers. Amateurs are not necessarily *au fait* with the value of their images, and could be

persuaded to license them to Getty for low rates, thereby undermining the rates that professionals work so hard to achieve...We would advise amateurs to become informed of what their images are potentially worth before they discuss a licence with Getty.⁸³ In response, Allen Murabayashi, CEO and founder of microstock agency *PhotoShelter*, has said, 'I don't think professional photographers are in denial about the fact that there are a lot of talented amateurs out there and that the economies of photography have changed for good. No one is going to get rich off of this deal, but it's a great way to reward the community... It's a continued democratization of photography, which could be bad news for pros, but in truth, these images aren't being sold as microstock, so it's not contributing to price deflation. It's merely introducing different types of images into their collection, and I think that's good for image buyers.' This argument supporting the microstock industry is to be expected of Murabayashi, the only representative party positioned to yield significant profit from these exchanges.

Murabayashi's statement is representative of the common rhetoric around the developments of microstock photography: the 'democratisation' or financial potential of this industry for amateur photographers. But between the two views, his and Toner's, there seems a significant kind of conflict of interests when images that have been taken by amateur photographers are sold back to the same demographic for a significantly higher price than they yielded, the vast majority of profits funnelled by super-agencies. The negative impacts of the microstock industry to professional photographers and exploited amateurs are overpowered by Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' statements and claims about the 'open creative opportunities' and 'democratisation' of the industry by microstock representatives, for whom this development ultimately serves. Contrary to common claims that new and affordable advances in technology mean that there is an increasing democratisation for the image-producer and user, these stock agencies aggressively discourage the kind of distribution enabled by new technology. So what stock and microstock agencies claim the democratisation of industry actually represents the labourisation and exploitation of image-producers, involved in taking and uploading their personal photographs on public, highly-monitored sharing platforms.

Furthermore, these aggressive corporate acquisitions create a new form of image colonialism. In the case of Getty Images alone, the past ten years of image acquisition has harvested huge archives of images from all around Europe, including Germany, Italy and the UK, as well as large image-banks of South Africa and in Asia. The banks of images being collected are not only contemporary digital images, but archives from the past 150 years that have gradually been consigned and digitised in various archives, their cultural value monetised and acquired by larger and more aggressive agencies, who assign and control the market price and critical, or political, context of their reproduction in editorial and commercial usage. What impact this will have on longer-term speculative and academic research, on journalism and print and online publishing remains to be seen, or unseen, but if each image is priced, then it seems reasonable to assume that broader, speculative research and publishing will inevitably suffer, newly dependent and indebted to these large reserves, whose control centre is in North America. So from stock's territories, historic as well as geographic, images are harvested from both professional and amateur photographers, but as well from image archives: so its growth is two-fold. Stock agencies are not just responsible for their proliferating stock, but for vast bodies of historical archival images too (this range is another reason that any purely or primarily visual analysis of stock is no longer tenable). As such the market leaders might be said to be both monopolising and colonising vast territories of images, creating a 'world view' that is centralised from their North American holdings.⁸⁴

As the nature and power of picture editorial continues to grow in the media, the availability of images that, in part, reveal aspects of national, industrial or cultural history will be significantly limited by this financial control mechanism. Aside from its acquisition on the free-market, there is no geographic or independent regulation of these images. As the number of stock consigners and stock users increases daily, and the smaller agencies are bought out, a huge, pervasive and aggressive image-privatisation scheme takes place. It is not within the scope of my argument to address the ethics of the ownership of national historic archives, however it is clear that some new problems arise from this kind of unregulated flow, as stock agencies voraciously gather photographic heritage as booty for privatised exchange and financial reward.⁸⁵

Considering some of the historic, geographic or socio-economic aspects of industrial photography or the stock industry, stock agencies represent a new kind of governance. Super-agencies act as a valve and toll for the flow of increasing numbers of digital images, reinforced by various licensing and copyright laws. Their acquisitions combine images of our everyday lives, now treated and traded as commodity. But the stock image is no longer the solid commodity it was in the 1960s and 1970s, but more like a tradable asset valued within a portfolio. National and historical archives are available for publishing only to the highest bidders. And although stock images have been tradable assets since their nineteenth century inception, now, by virtue of the speed of Internet distribution, stock closely reproduces the financial stock model. The moment of Flickr's acquisition by Getty, when stock turned to microstock, created a huge deregulation of the labour and industry of stock images, that this was essentially the moment that 'image-capital' became unleashed.

2.3 Post-2009: Stock's 'Big Bang'

The 1970s marked a period of significant transition for the western market economy. Following various political upheavals in the 1960s and 1970s, the US dollar, valued against gold as an international gold standard since 1871, was destabilised.⁸⁶ Until then, there had been little fluctuation since the Bretton Woods Convention in 1944 (which had founded, among other financial regulatory institutions, the International Monetary Fund)⁸⁷, where against the advice of British economist John Maynard Keynes to create a single world currency outside any one nation's control, US delegates insisted upon retaining the position of the US dollar as the international gold standard. So after the Second World War, the price of gold was fixed at approximately \$35 per ounce, all currencies pegged to the dollar also had a fixed value in terms of gold. However, under the administration of the French President, Charles de Gaulle (1962-1970), France traded in its dollar reserves for gold from the US government, reducing US economic influence abroad.⁸⁸ Confidence in the gold standard was undermined and after a series of international finance meetings, all major currencies were floated against the dollar in 1973. Here, the world's financial architecture began to change, effecting options trading of commodity futures such as oil, gas, wheat and currencies. Access to financial indices such as the Dow Jones highlighted volatility in the market

for derivative traders and this period saw the creation of many more, including the FTSE. Historically, derivative trading revolves around the trade and exchange of immaterial assets rather than material production and distribution; options are bought and sold on the basis of current and future worth, a phenomenon significantly accelerated by these developments in financial indices. These technological catalysts led to an expansion of the terrain of options trading and a radical geographic deregulation took place too, enabling the trans- or multinational trading irrespective of national boundary or territory, taxation, labour law, and then existing architecture of commerce. My claim here is that stock images traded by stock agencies reproduce these same changes, characterised by their rematerialisation from physical commodity to asset, their fluctuating value based on current and future worth, and the technological advancement and financial and geographical deregulation allowing a fluidity in trading these 'semantically available' images as online data at relatively high speeds, a process governed by multi-national corporations and unregulated by any state or similarly sanctioned authority. The stock image's value fluctuates according to political events and market confidence and consigned as part of a portfolio, traded internationally on the basis of daily worth, is a tradable asset like any other.

David Harvey has closely examined the events leading up to the 2008 financial crash, the knock-on material effects of the changes and deregulations of global financial instruments since the 1970s, from his perspective as a Marxist geographer. Harvey observes that developments of land use, property ownership and acquisition and the dynamics of urbanisation, all of which seem motivated by the capitalist's search for surplus capital, accurately forewarn massive crises across the globe. Harvey evaluates the shift in the economy before and after the deregulation of territorial constraints, 'integrating global as well as national financial markets was also seen as vital and this led, in 1986, to the interlinking of global stock and financial trading markets. The 'Big Bang', as it was called at the time, linked London and New York and immediately thereafter all the worlds major (and ultimately local) financial markets into one trading system. Thereafter, banks could operate freely across borders.'⁸⁹ As a result, the 1990s saw the proliferation of what Harvey calls the 'shadow banking system', as hedge funds, deposit banks, structured investment vehicles and other non-deposit banking systems began to trade or support financial transactions outside the reach or

regulation (in the shadows) of existing state-sanctioned banking.⁹⁰ Lending organisations became intermediaries between borrowers or investors, channelling funds irrespective of geographic domain and often generating a profit on the interest levels of the loans. He claims that the last thirty years have witnessed ‘a dramatic reconfiguration of the geography of production and the location of politico-economic power.’⁹¹ Within the framework of this new financial system, Harvey proposes capital as fluid or mutable form, ‘capital is not a thing but a process in which money is perpetually sent in search of more money’. Liquid capital is capital ‘unleashed’, that is set free from any form of regulation or authority other than its own incentive or drive to find surplus capital and therefore, financial profit.⁹² He elaborates that the ‘continuity of flow in the circulation of capital is very important. There are also strong incentives to accelerate the speed of circulation. Those who can move faster through the various phases of capital circulation accrue higher profits. Innovations which help speed things up are much sought after. Our computers, for example, are becoming faster and faster’.⁹³

His definition of capital as a fluid *process* resembles the context of the stock image, better defined by its liquidity rather than anchored by any fixed photographic subject. Microstock is financially effective through the strategic accumulation of photographic archives and diverse portfolios. It generates income from their sale and by the monitoring of their intellectual property rights, policed by advanced monitoring software. Microstock derive profits from intellectual rather than physical property, a derivative or ‘rentier’ rather than generative form of capitalism. This is no longer a commercial photography industry but a process of capital circulation; images sent out in search of more images, patrolled, monetised.

Harvey’s condemnation of contemporary finance capitalism is based on his observations of how trading ‘immaterial’ assets still manifests physically on the land (and therefore being still, in some ways, material), and how its real effects are felt by the people who inhabit it when the process goes wrong. Applying his materialist-geographic approach to the stock image industry might disclose a number of revelations about the socio-economic conditions in which stock is produced, and what it produces. The acquisitions of smaller stock agencies by their larger foreign

equivalents are glaring examples of the locations and dynamics of power; its new technology-enabled control mechanisms will impact and restrict the information economy, the rights to access images for publication, editorial and filmmaking. And given the increasing role of amateur photographers in producing stock photography, we also need to ask what role we play in stock as image-prosumers. When we upload images to share with friends on Facebook or Flickr or Instagram, we are signing away the same images that will be sold back to us, via super-agencies like Getty and Corbis. We are producing the goods without deriving any real financial reward, feeding the crop of stock images amassing in online image-warehouses. And in doing so, whether out of ignorance, disregard or a genuine belief in the agencies' rhetoric that it champions and channels our 'creative freedoms', are we actually perpetuating the many socio-political issues tethered to this increasingly dominant industry? If the financial architecture of stock images, like the financial architecture of the stock market, has changed so dramatically, then where are the critical mechanisms we might find that allow us to see and feel the implications of this kind of image prosumerism *on the ground?*

The dynamic of stock since Frosh's first publication on the subject in 2003, is quite different to the earlier stock model. Frosh's earlier distinction between different points in its mode of production, or 'system' and 'mission' rhetoric as he termed it, needs to be drastically revised (which is not something he attempts in his more recent essay). This earlier distinction was based on the fact that (then) 'the material manufacture of stock images *does* have a clear cut off point: the point at which the image is put into circulation by ad agencies to be encountered by viewers in moments of reception. Everything related to the 'internal' demands, constraints and enabling techniques of the production process up until that point I characterise as 'system': this includes a preliminary moment of materialisation when the image is offered to stock agencies by the photographer.'⁹⁴ The dual advancements of digital technology and the Internet within Stock has led to a deregulation resemble Harvey's 'big bang', best exemplified through Getty's acquisition of Flickr in 2009, where there are different, and possibly little identifiable, 'points of materialisation'. Stock is no longer simply 'offered' to the agency by professional photographers. Rather it is produced by prosumers, sharing images online. These personal, as opposed to professional, images are then sourced by

the super-agencies accessing the various image-hosting platforms and social networking sites, such as Flickr and Facebook. These images have been legitimately acquired by these agencies as their users will have consented to their potential consignment when they have signed up to the websites. However I claim that the weight of the rhetoric promising creative opportunities for amateur photographers and image prosumers really overshadows and outweighs some of the key issues and exploitative aspect of this new turn in stock's production. Frosh's 'point of materialisation' is now non-determinable, as its locus is many and varied. In microstock, it is the agency that is solely responsible for validating that point of materialisation, before which point the image has been something else entirely: a means of communication, creative sharing, representation or self-expression between friends mediated through the prosumer website as an informal stage or exhibition platform.

Just as stock is produced by amateurs it is also consumed by amateurs too. Stock buyers are not solely corporate businesses but now operate on many different levels from amateur blogs to more established commercial websites. Images wallpaper all kinds of voluntary, recreational and amateur websites, images that are rights-managed and controlled by fewer and fewer agencies with pervasive image-policing technologies. Prosumerism, the production and consumption of images by online users, reaches its only tangible point of 'materialisation' in the financial transactions of the super-agency. Here, across the world, images we take, and images that have been taken by many photographers around and before us, are being put to work in the name of 'creative freedom' for the sake of financial profit.

Although prosumerism can presumably take a variety of digital forms, from text, to music or sound bite, my claim is that it is both invasively and exploitatively capitalised through the digital image. The microstock industry is perhaps the most visible and tangible example of where and how this activity is exploited. Getty and Corbis' recent sourcing agreements with prosumer websites such as Flickr and Facebook show just how huge the potential for profit from microstock is through sourcing from amateur prosumers on these websites. The key point for the subject of this research is neither the socio-economic manifestations of the stock image industry (of which there are

many), nor the ramifications of advances in digital photography and the various consequences of the enormous volumes of images that it produces, but rather how the industry clearly represents the increasing manipulation and exploitation of image-prosumers, the enormity of an industry (and primarily two corporations) growing through image-prosumerism, the kind of rhetoric that masks this exploitative labour as a creative opportunity and its financial safeguarding as a form of creative protection. As Tapscott and Williams so convincingly contrived, prosumerism can be marketed as 'a stage for innovation' that would appeal to those involved in various creative pursuits and to a certain degree, that rhetoric still holds. Thus, Frosh's 'image factory' has been opened up to such an extent over the past decade that it has made workers of us all.

How the viewer's attention produces and derives value through prosumerism, as I aim to have evidenced through stock, is slightly different from how human attention derives value in what has been labelled the 'attention economy' and a brief extrapolation might help distinguish the online browser from the new mode of prosumer. In 2001, TH Davenport and JC Beck outlined an approach to information management that treats human attention as a commodity: this is not specifically how attention is diverted or attracted online but rather how attention is applied within more general work environments. Davenport and Beck adopt advertising as a primary example, typically treated as something to 'consume'. 'Attention' is positioned as the first stage of the advertising process defined by the acronym 'AIDA': Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. Thus, they identify attention in two respects: firstly as a primary resource of workers, which can be put under stress by the various different workplace distractions and which managers should primarily be looking to channel and exploit (prioritising attention-management over time-management). Secondly, attention was to be recognised as a form of capital, and the harnessing of the attention of others could be a profitable enterprise. More recently, that secondary aspect of the 'attention economy' has become a huge site of financial profit online: the attention of Internet users is routinely harnessed and regularly monetised by search engines like Google as well as social networking websites like Facebook.

These search engines sell attention in different ways; the subjects of users' searches are useful to marketers in profiling potential future customers. This is one way of

monetising users' attention. These websites or search engines also appeal to our attention by selling advertising space to companies, information that directs our gaze toward the screen's header or side bar.⁹⁵ This is another kind of revenue derived from how we browse the Internet. It resembles, although differs from a more fully-fledged prosumerism, where the viewer's attention motivates a further level of production, that is by actually contributing images, text or other information to these platforms. So although prosumerism encompasses these initial stages of 'consumption', and the initial stages of this activity may generate value within the 'attention economy', both labours of looking, prosumerism, as I define it, is a further evolution and more active contribution to a new industry and economy of images. Both aspects represent new forms of looking as labour. And prosumerism is a looking-labour that intends to create a uniform or non-differential viewer, a viewer who does not discriminate between the various appeals to her attention or the agents behind those appeals, the kind of perpetually distracted viewer that Frosh describes with a 'pseudo-cyclical consciousness', who inattentively assimilates 'content'.

Toffler's description of how, in 'blip culture', new image environments seep into our phantasmagoria, resembles how we parse through 'stock' or it passes through us, and how, beyond the attention value of looking, it motivates us to reciprocate and become productive. How we look at images as viewers is now also being put to work as prosumers to greater degrees, but the creative rhetoric and relative anonymity of the industry means that this kind of work remains discrete and largely unrecognised by those of us doing it, maintaining the industry or 'discourse'. Producers and consumers are the same people, our output and demands policed and exploited by stock agency market leaders. And while Tapscott's 'prosumers' fit the kind of profile detailed in 'Netizens', specialised programmers hunting for new challenges and resolutions, new image-prosumers are non-specialised amateur photographers, 'sharing' their photographs between one another online.

In the next chapter I will ask how we might better understand this contemporary mode of production. What are the limits of prosumerism, as we now know it? I ask what actually motivates and perpetuates the image-prosumer, how that relationship to images trigger production and how *that* relationship might be evidenced and

critiqued? What Alvin Toffler early on alluded to as a natural psychological attraction to images, self-perpetuating image appetites in blip culture have been capitalised to such a degree, via Tapscottian prosumerism, that Toffler's initial roadmap for the self-sufficient, self-contained prosumer working in her electronic cottage seems no longer attainable.

Chapter 3 – Prosumer Critique

3.1 New Modes of Production

3.2 Recuperation of artistic practice

3.3 Workerist critique

3.4 Digital Humanism

3.5 Prosumerism as Free Labour

In this section I will contextualise the emerging field of prosumer critique within broader theories of how the labour of looking and flexible labour – modelled on artistic practice - has been recuperated by capitalism over the course of the twentieth century. I will address how various productive forms of viewing derive value and ask what parties are best situated to address these new modes.

3.1 New Modes of Production

In establishing prosumerism as a new mode of production, I will look at several theories, both of the labour of looking and also of how artistic practice has been recuperated by capitalism. But before I look to contemporary theories of looking as labour and recuperated artistic practice, it bears acknowledging two different key sources upon which much of this contemporary theory rests. The first is Marx's labour theory of value, and the second is Debord's theory of the spectacle, or perhaps more relevantly, how Debord depicts the spectator within the spectacle as newly productive. Debord's spectator puts into new context distinctions between productive and unproductive labour, distinctions with which Marx had grappled a century before.

Marx's adopted and adapted the labour theory of value in order to test out the fundamental inconsistencies of capitalism's exploitative mechanisms for profit. In the labour theory of value, a commodity should be objectively measured by the number of hours of labour taken to produce that item. In principle, therefore, the labour theory of value should be able to value of all commodities including that which the workers sell to capitalists as a wage, or 'labour power'. Labour power should be relative to

labour hours calculated that would provide the worker the means to afford their basic human needs. However, if all commodities were to be sold at prices that measured their true labour-hours' value, then how would capitalists enjoy profit? Marx used the 'labour theory of value' to show how, in order to gain profit, capitalists must be extricating surplus value from workers in order to enjoy profit themselves. Therefore, negotiating and analysing at the level of the worker, Marx's politico-economic theory shows the capitalist system to be calibrated in favour of the capitalist, who owns the means of production that brings commodity to market, and is therefore capable of exploiting the worker. Marx thereby distinguishes two kinds of labour, productive labour and unproductive labour, the former of which derives profits for the capitalist and the latter of which does not.⁹⁶ He writes, 'productive labour, in its meaning for capitalist production, is wage-labour which, exchanged against the variable part of capital (the part of the capital that is spent on wages), reproduces not only this part of the capital (or the value of its own labour-power), but in addition produces surplus-value for the capitalist. It is only thereby that commodity or money that is transformed into capital, is produced as capital. Only that wage-labour is productive which produces capital.'⁹⁷ Crucially here, it is only wage-workers of *productive* sectors of the economy who produce value.

This theory comes under duress when the productive mode in which it finds context, the industrial, changes and the forms of labour within them adapt accordingly. It is necessarily revised when brought forward a century, into different political and economic circumstances. Guy Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle' proposes a new productive mode, the new agent of which is the spectator. Here, the spectacle is the term for a society at large, where everything has become mere representation. This productive mechanism by which the 'social relationship between people [...] is mediated by images', is a relationship that is produced by and productive of advanced capitalism, where all that was once lived has 'become mere representation.' The key qualifying feature of the spectacle is that it communicates *visually*, that its 'job is to cause a world that is no longer directly perceptible to be *seen* via different specialised mediations' and so it must 'elevate the human sense of sight to the special place once occupied by touch; the most abstract of the senses, and the most easily deceived, sight

is naturally the most readily adaptable to present day society's generalised abstraction.'⁹⁸

What Debord proposed was that by meddling with our perception of the spectacle, capitalism was not just a financial system but a dominant state of alertness, that intervenes in our daily lives through the immediacy of our senses; powerful primarily because it is visual. In contrast to Marx's labour theory of value, Debord's writing proposes that in the all-encompassing, all-engrossing spectacle penetrating us through our visual perception, experience and labour are commodified as material goods. The spectacle is united and divided in its appearances, often conveying a sense of disruption, only for that to be settled, and re-instrumentalised once more. Through the *appearance* of disruption and the vocabulary of liberation, the spectacle retains its control. This is a capitalist strategy of 'recuperation', where capitalism seizes (or produces in 'sham battles') examples of social and political critique and then swiftly reassumes and commodifies them back into the mainstream, deactivating any instances of disobedience or civic discontent. 'Spectacular consumption preserves the old culture in its congealed form, going so far as to recuperate and re-diffuse even its negative manifestation; in this way, the spectacle's cultural sector gives overt expression to what the spectacle is implicitly in its totality – *the communication of the incommunicable*'.⁹⁹ Debord aims to counteract these control mechanisms through a critical methodology he called 'détournement', which is in direct contrast to the forces of 'recuperation' already at play. I will return to Debord's oppositional strategies of 'recuperation' and 'détournement' later in the writing.

Principally, many contemporary theories around the 'labour of looking' carry forward some basic elements of the productive aspects of Marx's labour theory of value before analysing new means and modes of production when many forms of online labour and 'communication' are now unremunerated and reconciling this with the productive aspects of Debord's spectator. To be clear, there are vast differences between the theorist's works on productive labour – Marx did not theorise the affective modes of capital production and did not understand recuperation in Situationist terms: recuperation or retaliation was, for Marx, revolution by seizing the very means of production. But for the purposes of a broad introduction, both political theorists

theories of productivity are brought to bear in a number of writings by contemporary theorists regarding how viewers or spectators have become the late twentieth century's new agents of capitalist production in Post-Fordist or digital labour, analysing their various modes and means of production, their capacities for implementation and their vulnerability to exploitation. Various writers, many of whom I will detail across this chapter, assert the difficulties in distinguishing between 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour, as Marx divided them, when occupations such as prosumerism present new forms of often voluntary labour, which, even if they are not deriving wages for the looking-labourer, are generating profits for companies like Google and Facebook.

Jonathan Beller approaches the 'labour of looking' through a Marxist materialist analysis of both its means and mode of production, which he updates, re-contextualises and rephrases as the 'Cinematic Mode of Production' (CMP). Here, he situates a new period of productivity through attention to the 'cinematic', when and where the image establishes itself as the new form of capital. Beller proposes that his CMP began in the 'cinematic spectatorship' of the late 19th century when cinema, 'surreptitiously became the formal paradigm and structural template for social, that is, becoming-global, organisation generally'.¹⁰⁰ His use of the term 'cinema' is incredibly broad, encompassing early, avantgarde and experimental cinema right up, '[to] its succeeding, if still simultaneous, formations, particularly television, video, computers and internet, de-territorialised factories in which spectators work, that is, in which they perform value productive labour.'¹⁰¹ Beller's theory spans the full twentieth century, from experiments in early cinema by the Lumière brothers in 1895, to developments in e-commerce, his recent example being Google's monetisation of online 'content'. He regards,

[the] method of gathering, weighting, and bundling little pieces of attention more and more thoroughly distils units of abstract time to a universe of time/attention buyers. This computerised advance over the niche marketing practiced by film and TV is linked to the practice of what Google calls the monetisation of content – where every instance of content on the web can, in principle, be treated simultaneously as a commodity and a medium. This means that every

page view, every image if you will, is slated to be sold as a medium of labour power. Google has found its true function in the sifting and parsing of not just data but of human subjective activity. Under the guise of making information available to users, Google has made these users available to capital and thus have made them productive of capital.¹⁰²

In a brief synopsis, he writes, 'what the accretion of gazes on the surface of the image-commodity shows, precisely, is that the gaze is an economic medium, its lingering is productive of value. The gazes of others create this value: *to look is to labour*.'¹⁰³

Beller historically aligns his cinematic-economic theory to three fundamental movements in market capital as identified by Ernst Mandel, 'the stage of imperialism, the stage of neo-imperialism and the stage of what one might call neo-totalitarianism, respectively... the cinema has its origins in the shift from market to monopoly and reconstitutes itself in the shift from monopoly to multinational capitalism.' Beller makes no distinction between digital and analogue images but asserts that, 'another useful index of the character of these transformations in the evolving logic of capitalised production and circulation is the mode of image making itself, the indexicality of the photograph, the analogue electronic signal, and the digital image.'¹⁰⁴ This shift underpins his claim that the commodity has become dematerialised to the point that it exists primarily as image.

His theory anticipates many recent developments in social media and networking platforms outlined in the previous chapter and the CMP is situated as simultaneously the production of a new kind of subjective experience of images and a new mode of capital production, those two developments perpetually reconstituting one another. We have passed thoroughly, Beller claims, from an industrial mode of capital production to a cinematic one where basic economic processes are newly *mediated* in and by the 'cinematic'. Beller attempts to establish a whole new 'visual economy' mediated through images. In setting out its basic principles, he returns to many of the basic economic processes of Marx's political economy and often quotes '*Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*.' (1858)¹⁰⁵ Beller's new economy is based on the extraction of value through surplus labour as exploited by capitalism. In Beller's

version, Marx's 'labour theory of value', the commodity's value relative to the labour required to produce it, becomes, 'the attention theory of value' as the labour of looking is harnessed and exploited to generate profit or value in a new productive mode of capitalism. Cinematic spectatorship, or looking-labour, is extracted from those in regular contact with screened images, on television, video, cinema, the Internet or advertising hoardings. Labour therefore extends well beyond office hours, into the hours and homes of people's personal lives; their 'attention' is the commodity sold.

The exchange-value of the image-commodity is something like its aesthetic appeal, or the value it derives as a brand, as an object of prestige or emulation. Beller proposes that the commodity increasingly tends to the status of an *image*. 'In perceiving the fetish component of the image, we also perceive the value accrued to it from the looks of others. Thus the media, as a de-territorialised factory, has become a worksite for global production. The value of our look *also* accrues to the image: it sustains the fetish... it is an innovation in productive efficiency.'¹⁰⁶ Through and because of this new mode, social relations become mediated through images. 'As cinema mediates the apparent world, it also structures perception... The generalised movement of commodities through the sensorium and of the sensorium through commodities is cinematic. Thus cinema means mediation between the world system and the very interiority of the spectator.'¹⁰⁷ As commodities become mediated through images (from basic items, to celebrity identities, to branding, etc), he maintains, we develop a new relationship with the image itself, image-commodity-fetishism generates new image appetites, and attention is remunerated by the 'pleasure' derived from those images.

According to Beller, the cinematic mode of production is regulated through cinematic consumption of any screened image. Neither production nor consumption of this image-commodity are separate events but rather bound in a self-perpetuating circuit. Cinematic production is not the beginning point, just as for the earlier commodity Marx wrote, 'production appears to be the point of departure, consumption as the conclusion, distribution and exchange as the middle, which is however itself twofold, since distribution is determined by society and exchange by individuals...production is

also immediately consumption, consumption is also immediately production. Each is imminently its opposite... a mediating moment takes place between the two.¹⁰⁸ In Beller's new economy, images are produced and consumed as inseparable processes. The production of the image creates the motives for its consumption. He writes, 'the image is productive in two distinct ways 1) through the labour of looking and 2) through the self-modification embarked upon by spectators as they retool themselves.'¹⁰⁹ Although the term is not mentioned in Beller's text, what might also be said to be emerging is a new 'cinematic mode of prosuming'. According to Beller, production and consumption, *vis-à-vis* the cinematic, has become an increasingly dematerialised process. Just as profit was once derived through the exploitation of surplus labour, now profit is derived from exploiting the new cinematic spectator's surplus attention. This kind of labour is simultaneously productive and exploitative of cinematic spectatorship, which, Beller, calls 'disguised wage labour'.¹¹⁰

Beller looks at how capitalism's advances manifest in social relations increasingly mediated through images. He refers to Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle', where relations between commodities have replaced relations between people, where production line workers are so alienated from natural time, stimulus and other aspects of human life that they identify principally with commodities, as mediated by images. Beller advances this so that the spectacle is no longer a means of commodification but a mode of social production. 'If Debord's attention to the spectacular and the visual as the paramount field of capital exploitation is to be properly understood, then that which he calls "a ruse of commodity logic", which over time allows for the liquidation of the specific materialities of commodities as it brings the commodity-form toward "its absolute realisation" (as image), must be shown in its socially productive aspect.'¹¹¹ Beller is concerned with the absolute dematerialisation of commodities into images, the change from commodity-consciousness to image-commodity-consciousness and the cinematisation or labourisation of the subject within this transition.¹¹² He claims that 'if we combine such a thesis [as Jean-Joseph Goux's work delineating the homologous structures of psychoanalysis and political economy] regarding the cinematisation of the subject with Guy Debord's insight that "the spectacle is the guardian of sleep" then it becomes clear that the terrain of cinematics is at once macro- and microscopic, that is, world-systemic, economic and historical, as

well as individual, perceptual and psychological.¹¹³ Beller cites Debord's proposition that, "the spectacle is *capital* to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image", as the basis of his economic theory that, 'cinema valorises this higher order of capital – it is the organisation and extension of the spectacle': in this sense cinema is Spectacle's functioning currency. Beller uses Debord's proposition to frame his own extension, claiming, 'the complete political economy of the image remains to be written.'¹¹⁴

Beller's theory is useful in as much as it diagnoses our relationship to images and our appetite for viewing images as a new mode of capitalist production. This mode is related to the kinds of 'attention value' introduced in the previous chapter, however he grounds his analysis of where the cinematic mode began in specific examples early avantgarde film by Russian directors Sergei Eisenstein and Diego Vertov. Specifically he regards how these directors' deployment of the intrinsic elements of film puts the viewers to work in an altogether revolutionary way, a way since thoroughly recuperated by capitalism. Early Soviet features such as Vertov's 'Man with a Movie Camera' (1929) and Eisenstein's 'The Strike' (1925) provide him examples of how the mode of cinematic production came into being, albeit for very different original purposes.

Beller claims that, 'for Vertov, film is the technology that will provide the utopian inspiration and practical means for the arrival of socialism'¹¹⁵. 'Man with a Movie Camera' depicts a journey through a day in the life of a soviet city (an amalgamation of Moscow, Odessa and Kiev), 'through the production and reproduction of social life in general.'¹¹⁶ By using a variety of cinematic techniques including acceleration, deceleration, double exposure, rapid montage, with shots of celluloid being edited and the use of both still and moving cameras, Beller claims, 'Vertov represents both film technology and montage itself, the concrete and abstract machines of cinema, as on a developmental and conceptual continuum with other productive technologies and operations of the period. Cinema is treated as an extension and completion of the general logic of socio-industrial production.'¹¹⁷ In brief, Beller claims that Vertov's film incorporates the logic of its own conditions of production, conditions that are articulated *through* the formal and technical composition of this film. This 'cinematicity

of production' is the early synthesis of the cinematic and industrial modes. Beller praises Vertov's efforts, to 'bring forth the repressed or unconscious elements and bring them to the level of consciousness' through film.¹¹⁸

Through Vertov, Beller also articulates some of his major claims. Here, capital is cinema, and within this, 'film is like money – an eloquent, highly nuanced, highly differentiated, multivalent organising form for giving expression to the forces of social mediation that develop out of capitalist industrialisation... it is fragmentary in its distribution and use and yet unified as a medium – it extends equally as far as the social extends.'¹¹⁹ Beller continues, 'it is the film frame (the screen) that allows the images to circulate; film is the money of cinema (and the frame is the unit). The affective dimensions of capital circulation are distilled and experienced in their most purified form in the cinema.'¹²⁰ In order to actually understand cinema, film and frame as versions of capital, money and price, one needs to adopt an abstract understanding of both sets as dynamic organising forms operating or circulating within a particular tiered politico-financial system. But through this, we begin to understand Beller's theory of how capital circulates anew, through the technologies that allow images to circulate.

Through Vertov's theories, Beller also expands on changing relations between the human body and technology, 'generally opposing moments [of materiality and consciousness] are conceived as nodes in a coextensive cybernetic system that finally, through full creative utilisation, can be made self-conscious. The cinema represents a dialectical convergence of men and machines – a general materialisation of thought. By making social practice cognitive, cinema was to oppose the logic of reification by creating a circulatory form alongside capital circulation.'¹²¹ This circulatory pattern of images *within* and *among* human bodies operating *alongside* capital provided a mechanism for presenting the mechanical configurations and conditions of a modern, industrial state, 'precisely here in the mediate, the sensual, and predominantly the visual that this struggle is waged most intensely.' For Vertov, according to Beller, the film is at once analogous and alternative to capital circulation, an optical intensification and an abstraction of the socio-economic processes that underpin it.¹²² Images create a physical and psychic experience through which capital operates.

Framing the productive aspect of Beller's image circulation, he quotes Marx, "for circulation two things are necessary: firstly, the premise of commodities as prices; secondly, a circuit of exchanges, rather than isolated acts of exchange; a totality of exchanges in constant flow and taking place over the whole surface of society; a system of acts of exchange."¹²³ Beller claims that, 'circulation is no longer simply "the image of a process occurring behind it", for in becoming image, the work of circulation such as that of truck drivers and stock boys is passed on to spectators and circulation becomes a for-profit service, ever more completely taking on the characteristics of production.'¹²⁴ Beller continues, 'in and of itself, [Marx's] circulation cannot produce value because the creation of surplus value takes place at a deeper level, in the production process itself, at the work's site. However, I am suggesting that the production process no longer occurs uniquely *behind* the image created by the commodity form in motion; it occurs in the dynamics of the image itself – its circulation, movement and incorporation.'¹²⁵ Applying this dynamic to Vertov's work, Beller contends, there is a visible 'effort to construct a viable circuit of exchanges... but circulation cannot sustain itself by itself but requires production, that is, productive labour. What Vertov did not figure out is how to get (enough) productive labour into the system of cinematic circulation to valorise the medium.'¹²⁶ Beller diagnoses Vertov's failure as not harnessing the latent productive labour of his viewers in order to perpetuate the fluid circulation of images.

This is where Beller moves from Vertov's project of showing film's conditions of production, to the projects of Sergei Eisenstein, who succeeded where Vertov failed, by making 'workers of its spectators'. Eisenstein's 'The Strike' is based in a pre-revolution Soviet factory and the events marking a workers' strike. The movement of the camera angles, shots, and subjects is a key device. "The Strike" is the first film that rigorously adopts the emerging paradigm of movement as signification to be the fundamental animating principle of its organisation. In so doing, "The Strike" attempts to incorporate the spectator into its very movement. As the worker in the Fordist factory becomes a component of the factory's orchestra (orchestration) of movement, a part of the machine, so also does the spectator become a component in the movement machines of Eisenstein. These films inflict their movement on and into the

spectator who, though capable of reading their “meaning”, realizes their significance only in and as bodily activity.’¹²⁷ Manipulating and emphasising the essential movement of film, Eisenstein sought to penetrate the audience’s imaginary and this is where he would be able to manipulate given ideologies. According to Beller, Eisenstein’s capacity to penetrate the viewer’s psyche by deploying various cinematic devices (movement, music, etc) was what ‘makes “The Strike” an ideal case study for the contention pursued there that cinema, subjectivity and corporeality come to operate on a continuum correlated via what Eisenstein calls “manufacturing logic”. This manufacturing logic, characterised simultaneously by the rational control of motion and the regulated production of consciousness, also turns out to be the logic of commodification.’¹²⁸ For the director’s purposes this logic would have been used to political ends, and it is for this purpose that Beller picks Eisenstein’s project: the political instrumentalisation of avant-garde film.¹²⁹

Eisenstein is noted to have manipulated film to psychologically condition his audience. Beller regards his interest in the reflex studies of Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov who established that reflexes might be trained (through a number of experiments on animal’s reflexes); and the similar aims of scientific management studies of American mechanical engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor. Beller writes, ‘...with Eisenstein’s relationship to reflexology and Taylorisation, film discovers new ways to do things to bodies. It is less *representation* than *presentation*; “signalisation” in Pavlov’s terms. Cinema as a process, a complex of movement, bodies and consciousness, which I will refer to as cinematic process, becomes the dominant mode of production itself... global production is *organised* as cinema.’¹³⁰ These specific control mechanisms were put to work in film, as Eisenstein’s social experiment. As Beller’s Cinematic Mode would show, this early, artistic radicalisation of a productive capitalist mode has since been recuperated to capitalism, via the cinematic. Beller notes of this shift, ‘in Eisenstein’s period, the dominant mode of production becomes the dominant mode of representation, and, in doing so, the dominant mode of production achieves a qualitative shift.’ This shift instigates a back-and-forth between artistic critique, qua film, and capitalist profit. A half-century later, these filmic efforts inaugurate a new mode of production. Beller writes, ‘in placing the commodity-image in dialectic relation to the worker-spectator, cinema becomes the organisational paradigm of

capital. In the process [...] the industrial mode of production is superseded by the cinematic mode of production.’¹³¹

The switch *back* from cinematic reproduction to cinematic production means, according to Beller, that we are living through a new age of image-imperialism, where ‘cinema and cinematic technologies (television, telecommunications, computing, animation) provide some of the discipline and control once imposed by earlier forms of imperialism, but the media work to organise these previous forms of discipline and control that remain extant plus innovate entirely new forms.’¹³² This imperialist regime is not geographically delineated so has increasing scope for financial profit and growing threat of exploitation for the individual worker. Concurrent with these economic shifts, Beller addresses the adverse effects on the image-worker in terms of their own subject formation, ‘bodies, which are reduced to their pure particulars, mark their disappearance from materiality with their reappearance as images. Having conferred nearly all of their subjectivity, all of their living labour on a world that sweeps it away from them, they are, in their absolute impoverishment, not even present as subjects, therefore their objectivity fades into the state of relative non-being called the imaginary.’¹³³ Beller maintains that the subject is historically produced, as a product of specific early twentieth century socio-political conditions. Now, there is a radical change; where one generation’s ‘consciousness’ has been replaced by another generation’s state of screen-bound, image-saturated unconsciousness. He writes, ‘let me pursue my reversal of the [Lacanian] assumption that historically cinema and cinematic form emerges out of the unconscious by saying that the unconscious emerges out of cinema. This reversal restores a lost dimension of the dialectical development of each... As the circulation of programmatic images increases, there’s more unconscious around.’¹³⁴ Now, facilitated through the new corporeal sites of production, the cinematic mode of production expands across new frontiers. ‘From the standpoint of capital, as geographical limitations are in the process of being fully overcome by capital, capital posits the human body as the next frontier. By colonising the interstitial activities of bodies, each muscular contraction or each firing neuron is converted into a site of potential productivity.’¹³⁵ He points out that ‘media bytes realise their value as they pass through the fleshy medium (the body) via a mechanism less like consciousness and more like the organism undergoing a labour

process – call it a haptic pathway. Media bytes are thinking money, or better, affective money.¹³⁶ Here as we engage with, see, view, read or consume images and inadvertently, or unwittingly, reproduce them in how we present ourselves in new communication channels. We are thus feeding into this system, pushing the ‘frontiers’ of its development, and also participating in a new kind of subjective space of the ‘unconsciousness.’¹³⁷

While Beller’s ‘Cinematic Mode of Production’ might be said to relate broadly what TH Davenport and JC Beck previously coined as the attention economy, its working mechanism would also seem to illuminate how prosumerism operates, how it produces beyond how it is enabled. Beller is concerned about a new form of disguised wage labour that comes about through how the cinematic image is put to work. In his theory, the cinematic image is productive in two modes, through the labour of looking and through self-modification by spectators as they ‘retool themselves’. Prosumerism would evidence this first mode, but perhaps better relate to, and expand from, that second mode, as image-spectators begin to produce, to act, to ‘retool’. Beller’s observation of a new image-commodity consciousness shows his ‘cinematics’ to be at once macro- and microscopic, and prosumerism might be said to work on these different levels too – functioning through the personal motivation to prosume, through the subjective, personal relationships with images and manifesting in large quantities of images channelled through the global ‘super-agency’. Through Vertov, Beller proposes the cinematic an extension of logic of socio-industrial production, that film is capital and that the human body provides an alternative circulatory system for that capital. Where Vertov failed in making workers of his spectators, Beller implies, Eisenstein succeeds, and in this director’s work, cinema, subjectivity and corporeality work together in a continuum with ‘manufacturing logic’. This was the first instance where global production was organised as cinema, a shift that has since dramatically, and adversely, been reversed. What results is what Beller frames as a new form of image-imperialism exemplified through the operations of companies such as Google. Now that the cinematic *produces* subconscious to capitalist gain, the human body, he concludes, is resistance’s final frontier.

Beller's theory advances on Adorno and Horkheimer's theory of the 'culture industry', addressing how mass-culture might be purposely produced in order to reinforce capitalism.¹³⁸ Mass-culture generates in those who 'consume' it specific fetishes and commodity-desires which then motivate consumers and reinforce capitalism. Adorno and Horkheimer make critical distinctions between mass culture as a generative force, and high art as a more critical and reflective one. In contrast, in Beller's theory, cinema and capital are constantly co-producing; capitalism produces mass-culture but mass-culture also produces capitalism.¹³⁹ Beller does not outline the limits of the expanded 'cinematic'. He does not delve into the kinds of workers that might be perpetuating these cycles or circuits. As regards 'image-makers' who feed the 'cinematic mode of production' there is little distinction or segregation between those who might be using images strategically, and those who are being used as image generators. Beller's fundamental concern is the new visual economy's mode of production but he pays little attention to the agents of these exchanges, the image-worker.

In one instance, Beller does use the term 'prosumer' to describe how, as spectators, we both consume and produce images and how this kind of image-prosumerism not only changes subjective experience and social encounters but also actively produces and sustains a new 'visual economy'.¹⁴⁰ He maintains, '...this prosumer finds his/ her first incarnation as a spectator, who produces and reproduces his/ herself by exercising the "freedom reflex", desire, intention, the unconscious, what-have-you, while valorising media pathways; s/he produces value for capital through attention – both as commodity that is bought and sold in advertising, is speculated on via the promotional budgets of blockbusters, and as a medium that reconfigures various corporeal-mental-chemical structures that allow him or her to go back to work in a situation of hyper-flexible accumulation.'¹⁴¹ Beller's description deals only with the 'first incarnation' of the prosumer (as spectator), rather than the further modes of prosumer activity, which I have outlined in the previous chapter. His prosumer is absolutely symptomatic of financial capital put to work in a situation of 'hyper-flexible accumulation'. Beller does not attend to the actual workers or working conditions of 'hyper-flexible accumulation' but his theory clearly responds to conditions of what is regarded as 'Post-Fordism', a dominant late twentieth century form of economic production and consumption, definitions and accounts of which are greatly contested.

Succeeding Fordist production lines, the subsequent version arguably responded to changes in the Western financial infrastructure of the 1970s alongside advances in technology, collectively leading to approaches of 'flexible accumulation' and 'flexible specialisation' a new mode of dynamic and fast-adjusting production and small-scale manufacturing enterprises.¹⁴²

3.2 Recuperation of artistic practice

Beller's is an ambitious account of how the productive mechanisms of capital are radicalised through film and how that cinematic mode is then recuperated by capital. While it is quite unique in its attention to avant-garde filmmakers, it resonates with other theories of how late capitalism recuperates artistic work or practice. Beller's film theory depicts a back-and-forth between capitalist methods of control and modes of production and critical artists' practices. As such, it relates to a large body of late twentieth and early twenty-first century social and political theories regarding how the artist's practice and/ or working life has been thoroughly absorbed by capitalism as a model for labour within new digitised work environments and changing visual economies. This is also the context for an emerging body of prosumer critique, which I will come to at the end of this section.

In the social context of late twentieth century France, flexible working processes are aligned with the qualities of the artistic lifestyle, or 'artistic critique' by sociologist Luc Boltanski and management consultant Eve Chiapello, first published in 2001 as 'The New Spirit of Capitalism'. Here flexible labour is represented by the qualities of what they call, 'the connexionist city', outlined from the perspective of the worker. This 'city' encourages workers to be dynamic and fluid, to adapt to flexible working conditions, disregard any distinction between personal and work time and to use their own personal network to benefit the corporation. As they describe it, it encourages workers to disconnect from their personal lives, relocate frequently, travel often and relinquish any aspiration for a traditional family life. Boltanski and Chiapello note that 'today local roots, loyalty and stability paradoxically constitute factors of *job insecurity* and are, moreover, increasingly experienced as such'.¹⁴³ The new spirit encourages an individual sense of competition to ensure fidelity to the enterprise, rather than more

antiquated forms of control through surveillance and patrol. These working conditions offer short-term contracts with few social, health and pension benefits. So, in place of the more secure working environment demanded by the *soixante-huiters*, one which offered flexibility and movement inside firms, access to promotion and training as well as security, and individually-tapered tasks and personal job satisfaction, this spirit of capitalism converted these social and artistic demands into more financially profitable, precarious working conditions.¹⁴⁴ Within the connexionist city, there is fluidity between networks and rewarded are those who build it, use it, travel through it, connect and expand it, in a way that was consistently seen to benefit their employer. So the conditions of the 'connexionist city', where one conceptualises oneself as an abstract entity, 'in the manner of a text that can be translated into different languages'¹⁴⁵, is both a by-product of artistic demands of 1968 and, they imply, potentially remedied by some future artistic critique.

Spanning the 1960s to 2000, the 'New Spirit' considers these conditions under Francois Mitterand's Socialist government (1981 - 1995), which promoted the provision of the arts, culture, social life, health care, education as a political responsibility and civic right. 'New Spirit' is written with little direct acknowledgement of technology and Internet based communication and consumerism however it does detail many working conditions resembling prosumerism. Boltanski and Chiapello assert three ages of capitalism. The first is an early capitalist phase at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, the phase of the Entrepreneur who could profit from expanding industry by establishing his own business. The second phase between the 1930s and the 1960s corresponds with the proliferation of expanding, nationalised firms: this is the age of Manager, or the 'cadre' (management executive). Boltanski and Chiapello's third phase or 'new spirit' is defined by the hyper-flexible worker, the conditions for whom have been massively impacted by the artistic and social demands of the protestors of May 1968. The survey charts how social and artistic 'critique' initially positively impacted labour conditions only to be recuperated soon after by capitalism. The study comes from a particular moment in French politics when Mitterand's government were investing into cultural and artistic institutions, meaning that 'artistic demands' were the basis of a shared political vocabulary. Accordingly, Boltanski and Chiapello assert the necessary reprisal of artistic critique and its vital

antagonism towards the recuperative strategies of capitalism, although their writing provides little evidence of the former.

Initially, what was demanded of new jobs were that, like artistic labour, they provide individual satisfaction, autonomy and some degree of authenticity of production. Integrated with aspects of social critique, demanding better or equal opportunities and job security, were to provide more humane working conditions for the proletariat. But these improved criteria were dissolved into a more flexible labour that prioritised productivity over welfare, whilst also demanding new flexibility over-extended into family or 'personal' life. The new spirit adapted 'artistic labour' as it saw profitable: it required of its worker strategic and creative collaboration, as opposed to the private creativity that might require time and isolation. And whereas artistic critique demanded that the worker be autonomous and use their intellect, instead in the new spirit any boundary between professional and personal dissolved, 'labour can no longer be treated as a commodity separate from the person of those performing it'.¹⁴⁶

In order to rectify these untenable working conditions, Boltanski and Chiapello encourage social and artistic critique to reassert its position. New critical positions are necessary to replace those of 1968, continually repurposed by what they term 'cycles of recuperation'.¹⁴⁷ Boltanski and Chiapello point out that the opposition between intellectuals and artists on one side, and the economic elites on the other, is, 'if not losing all relevance, then at least fading rapidly'.¹⁴⁸ They write,

Capitalism recuperates the autonomy it extends, by implementing new modes of control. However, these new forms of oppression are gradually unmasked and become the target of critique, to the point where capitalism is led to transform its *modus operandi* to offer a libertarianism that is redefined under the influence of critique. But, in its turn, the "liberation" thus obtained harbours new oppressive mechanisms that allow control over the process of accumulation to be restored to a capitalist framework. Cycles of recuperation thus lead to a succession of periods of liberation *by* capitalism and periods of liberation *from* capitalism.¹⁴⁹

They establish constant oscillation between capitalist control and liberation. Critique becomes essential to the continued maintenance of capitalism, as a mechanism for self-regard and self-regulation.¹⁵⁰ Boltanski and Chiapello urge for these 'recuperation' cycles to be overcome.

What seems significant beyond their outline of the labour norms and average worker's experience within 'connexionist cities', the broad historical analysis of its development and their description of patterns and priorities of 'networked working', is their mapping of how embedded the qualities of artistic work is to 'connexionist' work, where that artistic labour and production is assumed or recuperated as 'hyper-flexible' production. Whereas Beller's theory aimed to address how cinematic production was recuperated to productive, capitalist ends, this study establishes the points where critique has been recuperated in worker's conditions. What surfaces the following decade, deriving from a school of philosophers in central Europe, is a call to arms for a new kind of 'multitude', singular and many, exploited by but with access to communicative technologies which could support their revolt. Here, the 'virtuoso' or performance artist can begin to reassert their critical position, antagonistically to this 'hyper-flexible' work.

3.3. Workerist critique

Coming from an alternative political context and with entirely different methods and ambitions for his writing, Paolo Virno's 'A Grammar of the Multitude' (2003) frames the recuperation of flexible, artistic labour by capitalism in order to provoke his readers into collectivised refusal or counter attack. Virno is one of a number of Italian philosophers associated with the 'Operaist' or 'Workerist' movement who, during the 1960s and 1970s, derived what is termed 'Autonomist Marxism'. This called for self-organised groups of workers to take direct action against political situations or policies which exploited or threatened them, rather than rely upon specific political parties to represent them, a movement that has since disbanded but whose legacy and various strands continues to develop particularly in relation to theories of labour. Early on, writers associated with the movement, like Paolo Virno, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri reacted against the exploitation of what they termed 'affective labour',

representing new, collectivised forms of labour, little remuneration for which was redistributed back to those who provide it.

Virno contextualises 'the multitude' in contrast to more historical taxonomies of 'the People' or the proletariat. The multitude is a grouping without unity, where people come together according to what they have in common but without becoming One, without subordinating their singularities or negating their differences. The multitude is not imposed upon individuals, but rather allows individualism. Virno takes the concept of the multitude from Spinoza, and argues that this form of organisation has great affinities with a networked society, what calls 'post-Fordist' society. The multitude, he writes, 'is a *mode of being*, the prevalent mode of being today: but, like all modes of being, it is *ambivalent*, or, we might say, it contains within itself both loss and salvation, acquiescence and conflict, servility and freedom. The crucial point, however, is that these alternative possibilities have a peculiar physiognomy, different from the one with which they appeared within the people/ general-will/ State cluster.'¹⁵¹ He adopts a theoretical framework of 'Labour – Intellect – Politic (al Action)', a division originally set out by Aristotle and then reworked in the twentieth century by Hannah Arendt's 'The Human Condition' (1958). He distinguishes between the three,

Labour is the organic exchange with nature, the production of new objects, a repetitive and foreseeable process. The pure intellect has a solitary and inconspicuous character: the mediation of the thinker escapes the notice of others; theoretical reflection mutes the world of appearances. Differently from Labour, political Action comes between social relations, not between natural materials; it has to do with the possible and unforeseen; it does not obstruct, with ulterior motives, the context in which it operates; rather it modifies this very context.¹⁵²

These divisions of these relations have been altered by a new way of work, a way best represented by the 'virtuoso' or performance artist, whose task is not a primary, secondary or even tertiary activity, but a further fourth dimension, where what is produced is an illusive 'affect' rather than product or service. Advertising executives might be said to have the same productivity of 'affect' as church ministers. He defines

it 'First of all, as *an activity which finds its own fulfilment (that is, its own purpose)* without objectifying itself into an end product, without settling into a "finished product" or into an object which would survive the performance. Secondly, it is *an activity which requires the presence of others*, which exists only in the presence of an audience. [Virno's italics]¹⁵³ He contends that his labour theory differs to Marx's, 'in that Marx virtually accepts the equation work-without-end-product = personal services. In conclusion, virtuosic labour, for Marx, is a form of wage labour which is not, at the same time, productive labour'. He goes on, 'Virtuosity is open to two alternatives either it conceals the structural characteristics of political activity (lack of an end product, being exposed to the presence of others, sense of contingency, etc), as Aristotle and Hannah Arendt suggest; or, as in Marx, it takes on the features of "wage labour which is not productive labour"'.¹⁵⁴

Virno contends that affective labour is so pervasive that, by now, the culture industry is synonymous with post-Fordist labour. He writes, 'the informality of communicative behaviour, the competitive interaction typical of a meeting, the abrupt diversion that can enliven a television programme, has become now, in the post-Fordist era, a typical trait of the *entire* realm of social production... What is left to question if anything, is what specific role is carried out *today* by the communication industry, since all industrial sectors are inspired by its model.'¹⁵⁵ Here, 'the virtuoso begins to punch a time card. Within the sphere of the culture industry, in fact, activity without an end product, that is to say, communicative activity which has itself as an end, is a distinctive, central and necessary element. But, exactly for this reason, it is above all within the culture industry that the structure of wage labour has overlapped with that of political action.'¹⁵⁶ When Virno writes of the 'culture industry', he, like Beller, adopts Adorno and Horkheimer's productive model, which Virno believes, 'fine-tuned the paradigm of post-Fordist production on the whole... the mode of action of the culture industry became exemplary and pervasive. Within the culture industry, even in its archaic incarnation examined by Benjamin and Adorno, one can grasp early signs of a mode of production which later, in the post-Ford era, becomes generalised and elevated to the rank of *canon*'.¹⁵⁷ Capitalism's highest achievement, he maintains, is that it 'can mechanise and parcelise even its spiritual production.'

Virno's central hypothesis is that the culture industry is an industry among others, which specialist skills and techniques, however it is also 'the industry of the means of production.' He writes, 'this is the role of the communication industry once post-Fordism has become fully entrenched: an industry of the means of communication.'¹⁵⁸ This is the state of affairs when 'subjective' cooperation becomes the primary productive force, when, 'labour activities display a marked linguistic-communicative quality, they entail the presence of others. The monological feature of labour dies away: the relationship with others is a driving, basic element, not something accessory.'¹⁵⁹ Virno writes of two principle consequences of 'this paradoxical situation.' Firstly, the exploitation of the Intellect, 'deprived of its own true expression by that very Labour which at the same time reclaims it as productive power', changes the political apparatus or administration too, newly dispossessed, it 'represents an authoritarian coalescence of the *general intellect*, the point of the fusion between knowledge and control, the inverted image of excess cooperation.'¹⁶⁰ The second consequence relates to the nature of the post-Fordist regime. He maintains that since the 'publicly organised space' (as opposed to the public sphere) opened up by the intellect is constantly reduced to labour cooperation, 'the nullifying function of the "presence of others" in all concrete operations of production takes the form of *personal dependence*', and virtuosic activity begins to 'show itself as universal *servile work*.' And when "the product is inseparable from the act of producing" this act calls into question the personhood of the one who performs the work and, above all, the relation of this personhood to that of the one who has commissioned the work or for whom it is being done.'¹⁶¹ By putting to work 'intellect and language' the technical division of tasks is rendered fictitious and induces a viscous personalisation of subjection. So here we see similar implementations of the creative labourer, and the putting to work of their subjective responses to images, as both Beller and Boltanski and Chiapello diagnose, within virtuosic, 'performative' or affective labour. Relating back to his original theoretical framework, Virno's central question is whether it is 'possible to split that which today is united, that is, the (general) Intellect and (wage) Labour, and to unite that which today is divided, that is Intellect and political Action? Is it possible to move from the "ancient alliance" of Intellect/ Labour to a "new alliance" of Intellect/ political Action?'¹⁶² How, he asks, 'is non-servile virtuosity possible?'

Virno's manifesto has been critiqued for a number of reasons, as overly Eurocentric, as maintaining a bourgeois humanist perspective at the expense of class analysis, and as using the proletariat as monographic, positivist term at the expense of greater analysis of a diversity of affective labourers.¹⁶³ I will return to some specific critiques by Andrew Ross and Angela McRobbie later on in the chapter, within the framework of prosumer critique.

Like Virno, philosophers working on from Autonomist Marxism, Hardt and Negri have appealed to individual communications workers to recognise their own part in the new age of capitalism, and to use these communications systems to their own radical ends. They also adopt the term 'multitude' to describe new legions of individuated workers.¹⁶⁴ Like Virno, the 'multitude' is not any one people, nation or class, but rather many people 'living under capital', divided and disconnected by international neoliberal governance. They propose that individuals should unite in their diverse struggles, and commandeer new forms of communication systems put in place by 'Empire'. These same systems can produce 'the common', a communication platform that is both a body of knowledge and a platform of political resistance. They claim that, 'the networks of information, communication and cooperation – the primary axis of post-Fordist production – begin to define the new guerrilla movements. Not only do the movements employ technologies such as the Internet as organising tools, they also begin to adopt these technologies as models for their own organising structures.'¹⁶⁵ 'Multitude' develops from Hardt and Negri's earlier collaborative work, 'Empire' (2000), regarding power that exerts its force is within new forms of communication, symptomatic and productive of new forms of labour. 'Communication not only expresses but also organises the movement of globalisation [...] by multiplying and structuring interconnections through networks. It expresses the movement and controls the sense and direction of the imaginary that runs throughout these communicative connections; in other words, the imaginary is guided and channeled within the communicative machine.'¹⁶⁶ Like Virno's theory, Hardt and Negri contend that the virtuoso worker is the agent of production within Post-Fordism's new machinery of communication.

Hardt and Negri's main claim is that a newly discontent and displaced proletariat are sufficiently equipped and networked to revolt, 'the immediately social dimension of the exploitation of living immaterial labour immerses labour in all the relational elements that define the social but also at the same time activate the critical elements that develop the potential of insubordination and revolt through the entire set of labouring practices. After a new theory of value, then, a new theory of subjectivity must be formulated that operates primarily through knowledge, communication, and language.¹⁶⁷ 'Proletarian internationalism'¹⁶⁸ has been constructed by a powerful political machine that pushes beyond the hierarchies of the nation-states, they claim broken down into 'supra-national' powers.¹⁶⁹ 'Abstract labour' is an activity without a place but *with* the power of capitalising on concrete and abstract intellectual forces.¹⁷⁰ Hardt and Negri discuss two forms of immaterial labour, firstly the intellectual and linguistic labour involved in problem solving and cognitive acts and secondly affective labour, a labour that produces or manipulates affects, producing feelings of ease, satisfaction or excitement in colleagues or clients; 'communication' being commonly shared medium.¹⁷¹ In a sense, prosumerism might be closely aligned to 'affective labour', motivated or powered by the affect of information, technology and images. Affective labour, to join Hardt and Negri's theory up to Virno's, displays similar qualities to the work of the virtuoso, or 'performance artist'.

Hardt and Negri introduce new forms of subjectivity that produce 'the common'. 'Subjectivity is produced through cooperation and communication and this produced subjectivity itself produces new forms of cooperation and communication, which in turn produce new subjectivity, and so forth. In this spiral, each successive movement from the production of subjectivity to the production of the common is an innovation that results in a richer reality.'¹⁷² Penetrating this productive subjectivity, is a form of collective resistance that can open up 'the common'. 'The common' does not conform to modern patrimonial concepts of the disciplinary state. Instead, they define it 'as the productive activity of singularities in the multitude', which, 'breaks the continuity of modern state sovereignty and attacks bio-power at its heart, demystifying its sacred core. All that is general or public must be re-appropriated by the multitude and thus become common.'¹⁷³ In this sense that Hardt and Negri call for a revolutionary co-

opting of the communication systems put in place to build Empire.¹⁷⁴ There is a call for a new model of political resistance against this new form of Empire.

Hardt and Negri's theory, like Virno's, attempt to assert new modes of production that originally borrowed from artistic or virtuoso practices but that can be infiltrated and re-radicalised within Post-Fordism. While Boltanski and Chiapello provide us with a survey of how, in the French system, post-Fordism recuperated and capitalised creative labour, these workerist theories aim to provoke and collectivise this new kind of creative worker without formalising them into regressive or static unions. None of these latter theories explore how the 'performance artist' might newly assert their position, and radically redefine their relationship to affective labour, as well the 'publicly organised space' that maintains and encloses it, nor do they turn their attention to what kind of subversive activities might take place in the spaces in which these creative labourers work.

3.4 Digital Humanism

A more recent manifesto of how artistic labour has been recuperated and exploited to capitalist ends within the most common site of productivity comes from Jaron Lanier, in 'You are not a gadget' (2010). His thesis is very different liberation manifesto for the creative worker. Lanier argues that online platforms like Wikipedia create a culture of destructive anonymity, leading to piracy of creative work and trolling (targeting offensive anonymous posts at individuals on public forums online) against innocent others. Instead he calls for a complete redevelopment of how we produce and consume online, in order to achieve what he coins, 'digital humanism'. Lanier's manifesto appeals to Internet-users to recognise and challenge a new financial hierarchy developing from cloud-based businesses, which, he contends, will eliminate the 'creative middle classes' and emphasise the divisions between economic classes. Cloud-based entrepreneurs will succeed where other workers lose out, creative livelihoods becoming increasingly threatened. 'The implications of the rise of "digital serfdom" couldn't be more profound. As technology gets better and better, and civilisation becomes more and more digital, one of the major questions we will have to

address is: Will a sufficiently large middle class of people be able to make a living from what they do with their hearts and heads?'¹⁷⁵

Born in 1960 in New York, Lanier contributed early on (from 1979 to 1980) to a research project at New Mexico State University focused on 'digital graphical simulations for learning' and was the creator of early Virtual Reality (VR) 'avatars' in California in the 1980s. He later developed medical and surgical applications of VR technology. His 2010 publication is, among other things, a sprawling subjective account of the early days of the Internet, the limitations of the primitive version of early Internet encoding, and the resulting 'lock-in' that this encoding, in turn, generated for Internet users (as opposed to the 'two-way' Nelsonian system, see Lanier's description, Chapter 1). He maintains that early software engineers' design decisions continue to shape contemporary users' behaviour, which become 'frozen into place by a process known as lock-in.' Lanier's perspective is radically different to those aforementioned sociologists and political theorists, however it is still concerned with the recuperation of the creative worker in the realm of communications and affective labour, and he uses his personal background as a programmer as the basis for an evaluation of how open source technology has since been redesigned, manipulated and exploited by technology capitalists. Lanier's concern is that North America is losing its 'creative middle classes' (he provides no exact sociological or economic definition of what or whom this class actually constitutes), dividing itself between an elite of 'computing cloud overlords', who spy on traffic to sell ads via the attention economy, and a vast majority of 'digital serfs' uploading content for free. In the latter, we might position the prosumer. This division, he claims, sets up the destructive 'hive'. Encouraged to threaten online identities and enterprises of individuals to grossly negative personal and political effect, the hive represents a mainstream 'culture of sadism'.¹⁷⁶

Lanier claims that organisations such as Wikipedia suppress individual voices by having no clear authors for each entry and that the rigid format of Facebook turns individuals into 'multiple-choice identities.'¹⁷⁷ He claims that the 'wisdom of crowds' is a tool that should be used selectively, but not glorified for its own sake. Of Wikipedia he writes that 'it's great that we now enjoy a cooperative pop culture concordance' but argues

that the site's ethos ratifies the notion that the individual voice (even the voice of an expert) is eminently dispensable, and 'the idea that the collective is closer to the truth.' Online culture 'is a culture of reaction without action' and rationalisations that 'we were entering a transitional lull before a creative storm' are just that: mere rationalisations. 'The sad truth,' he concludes, 'is that we were not passing through a momentary lull before a storm. We had instead entered a persistent somnolence, and I have come to believe that we will only escape it when we kill the hive.'¹⁷⁸

Lanier evaluates how the uploading, 'sharing' and downloading of music, films and literature disadvantage those who create them, and eliminate the possibility of gaining a livelihood as a professional artist. He distinguishes between 'first-order' expression and 'derivative' or 'second-order' expression, 'first-order expression is when someone presents a whole, a work that integrates its own worldview and aesthetic, something genuinely new in the world.' In contrast, 'second-order expression is made of fragmentary reactions to first-order expression... I don't claim I can build a meter to detect precisely the boundary between first- and second-order expressions. I *am* claiming, however, that the web 2.0 designs spit out globs of the latter and choke the former' [author's own italics].¹⁷⁹ Lanier's argument echoes that of Marshall McLuhan that technologies are 'extensions of ourselves', or the earlier thesis of Walter Benjamin ('The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction' (1936)) when he prioritises the experience of the physical object against the poorer experience of seeing it represented in a photographic reproduction. Lanier's theory aims at Internet designers and engineers to 'support humanistic alternatives' by building computer software that regulates and protects creative online resources. Although it is unclear exactly how or what Lanier means by 'anti-human', he writes 'online culture is filled to the brim with rhetoric about what the true path to a better world ought to be, and these days it's strongly biased toward an anti-human way of thinking.'¹⁸⁰ He concludes that, 'there hasn't yet been an adequate public rendering of an alternative worldview that opposes the new orthodoxy ['so-called open digital politics']... I hope the volume of my contrarianism will foster an alternative mental environment, where the exciting opportunity to start creating a digital humanism can begin.'¹⁸¹

Lanier provides us no extensive definition or methodology for a 'new digital humanism'. It is not clear what particular discipline of 'humanism' he is referring to, whether in a philosophical, religious or intellectual lineage, other than a vague demand that society adopt a general sense of awareness of the value of a society as a whole, rather than the profits of an individual using cloud-based software. So what does 'digital humanism' represent in this context? By my interpretation, Lanier's manifesto is a reaction against the exploitation of open source programming and all the modifiable social and image-sharing platforms based around this model. His claim is that this mode of production that encourages free online work, which might be substituted for Tapscottian 'prosumerism', is anti-humanist, and that a new kind of online financial regulation system must be created and upheld in order to counteract it, and preserve the creative work of individuals (here, he is speaking specifically about the music industry). In this sense, what Lanier calls for, if realised, would essentially return to the kind of economy for which Toffler was appealing in his 'Third Wave', one where prosumerism would serve the individual rather than the corporation, would be creative and also remunerative where creative work was attributed and attributable, and would achieve a degree of financial self-sufficiency, rather than the reputation as a creative pursuit and leisure activity.

Lanier's theory would suggest that any call to arms for the multitude (or 'the hive') is a potentially flawed endeavour. En masse, the hive has degenerated into a negative force turned against one another, despite communication technology's basic enabling potential.¹⁸² Lanier's 'new digital humanism' is a system that would reward non-autonomous, individual expression. A critical mass must therefore, 'buy into a reciprocal social contract in which all find mutual benefit from the idea that people can earn money from brainpower,' Lanier claims,¹⁸³ via a universal micropayment system overseen by the (American?) government that would provide access to content at reasonable prices. Where the Autonomist theorists call for mobile flexible workers to cooperate, creating an active social subject, Lanier calls for the hive to be destroyed, for the financial regulation of online prosumerism, and the productive solitude of the individual. In both formulations, the 'common' produces the activities of what resembles the Tapscottian prosumer, an unmoored, hyper-flexible, fluid, unremunerated worker encouraged to exchange personal and professional

information online, ultimately to the benefit of 'communicative' display platforms and the profit of the super-agencies or global media corporations that build them. In both formulations, the authors call for radical change.

3.5 Critiques of Prosumerism as Free Labour

In the last five years prosumerism, its economy, the terms and conditions of its employment and labour have been evaluated by a number of academics, perhaps most notably the American academic George Ritzer.¹⁸⁴ Ritzer's attention to prosumerism is exclusively as an activity that takes place online. Ritzer argues that we should view all current economic activities as a continuum of prosumption and he establishes prosumption as production (p-a-p) and prosumption as consumption (p-a-c) at either ends of the process. Increasingly in modern parlance the term denotes the changing site, nature and activity of e-commerce.¹⁸⁵ Ritzer's prosumerism revisits Tapscott and Williams' rather than Alvin Toffler's version, where prosumers are identified as Internet-users that actively contribute to various websites' structural mechanisms, co-creating and rapidly expanding different user-generated online platforms rather than simply embellishing them, developing the kind of pro-active Internet user that has built or 'co-innovated' companies like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, where users provide the content. Users attract other users to prosume, and so the framework expands. Whereas Tapscott advocates this activity for the exploitation of the capitalist, Ritzer condemns the exploitation of the prosumer from a sociological perspective. Ritzer doesn't differentiate between the primary data or material produced by prosumers but suggests that the material of prosumerism is predominantly image-driven, supplying the content of those websites he mentions from Pinterest, to Facebook, to Google. What is being sought is the Internet viewer's gaze and from that trigger, production and from that production, value derived.

In Ritzer's essay, 'Are You a Digital Drone?' (2013), he contends that 'while you might not see yourself in this way, there are those in sociology and other fields who are coming to look at much of the Internet as a "factory" and what you do there as a form of labour or work. From the latter perspective, you are seen as spending hours every day slaving away on such tasks as updating your Facebook page and checking recent

additions to other's pages or detailing your most recent fashion choices on Pinterest. To some observers, you seem to resemble worker-bees tirelessly toiling away at a never-ending series of tasks.¹⁸⁶ In this observation, the labour of prosumerism is used to others' advantage, but also under the premise that this is quality personal time for the Internet user. The 'content' that prosumers generate are often in the information-bites of digital images. Ritzer continues,

In addition to thinking about what you do on the Internet as a fun, leisure-time activity, you might also see it as a series of tasks that you perform largely for yourself. They therefore seem to stand in contrast to traditional occupational activities in which you are working for others and in the process enhancing *their* interests while gaining little for yourself except for the pay involved. However, many critics now view what you do on the computer as very much like such work since you are often working for others and in the process making them wealthier. However, one important difference is that you are not working for a wage; on the Internet you are usually engaging in 'free labour'; you are working for nothing.¹⁸⁷

What Ritzer finds troubling is 'the much greater amount of such work that you do even though you are unaware of doing it.' Here he also references the aggressive tactics of Google in their 'various data-mining techniques (web crawlers, personalized algorithms) to track all of many things that you click on'.¹⁸⁸ The results are used to determine the kinds of advertisements that appear on computer screens, where, 'Google earns money, lots of money, from those advertisers'. He introduces the productive activity of prosumerism here, as soon as the Internet-user clicks on any directing links, or on the various consent or opinion pole links that websites like Facebook provide. He writes, 'the value of these computer-based businesses is based largely on the "work"- those clicks and likes- that you do for them free of charge. In a capitalist world you ought to be paid by all of them, but of course you are not paid. From the perspective of the critics of capitalism, you are being exploited by firms such as Google and Facebook.'¹⁸⁹ So, Ritzer really updates this definition of prosumerism, whose productive mode is active from very early in their engagement or attention to prosumer websites.

Ritzer's recent observations pool together the writing of other academics and researchers, largely involved in the nascent area of study of 'digital labour', a term coined at a conference in New York's New School in 2009, organised by academic and writer Trebor Scholz. Assimilating the viewpoints of many of its contributors into a subsequent critique of the phenomenon of prosumerism, Ritzer observes that, 'low paid work often yields great profits, but work that is unpaid leads to an even higher rate of profit. As a result, Google earns huge profits with a comparatively small workforce and while Facebook is not yet nearly as profitable, it has a market value of \$100 billion even though it only has about two thousand paid employees.'¹⁹⁰ He claims that 'while you might regard sites such as Facebook and Pinterest as playgrounds, you might feel a bit different about them, and perhaps behave differently, if you also thought about them as modern-day factories and yourself as unpaid drones slaving away on those sites for the benefit of their corporate owners.'¹⁹¹

The term 'free labour' that Ritzer cites as a compelling aspect of digital labour, is a concept borrowed from writer, academic and campaigner Tiziana Terranova, who describes it as, 'the moment where knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into excess productive activities that are pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited'.¹⁹² Identifying Internet users' participation on online websites as 'labour' is, Terranova contends, a political decision rather than an empirical fact. Within Terranova's estimation, the status of the prosumer is problematic; it fuses the process of production and consumption, a union that undermines and problematises the payment of wages for performing labour. She suggests that for this specific kind of social labour (on image-platforms and social networking sites) there should be forms or means of social payment or, 'as the wealth is generated by free labour as social, so should the mode of its return.' However she also points out the main obstacle to this, in the fact that other people or corporations are monetising or capitalising upon this work. She proposes that, 'social networking platforms should be de-privatised – that is, that ownership of users' data should be returned to their rightful owners as the freedom to access and modify the protocols and diagrams that structure their participation.'¹⁹³

This traditional association of the worker and the factory is disturbed within the new critical framework of digital labour or prosumerism, particularly as common conceptions of prosumerism do not strictly adhere to that of labour. Instead, this activity is often conceived as resting somewhere between work and play. Prosumers produce and consume in a circuit punctuated by subjective rewards, motivated similarly to what Ritzer has elsewhere written about as 'banana time',¹⁹⁴ where the lure of simple games were used to distract and enthuse poorly paid workers in monotonous jobs.¹⁹⁵ Digital labour aspires to dissolve boundaries of work and play and Scholz' subsequent publication of essays, 'Digital Labor; The Internet as Playground and Factory' looks at how the factors and repercussions of this dissolving. Scholz observes that where large multinationals like Google derive value from digital labour, online work is more often unpaid than paid. The concerning thing about this new form of labour, he writes, is that it 'does not feel, look or smell like labour at all'.¹⁹⁶ He asks, 'can we really understand labour as a value producing activity that is based on sharing creative expressions?' With this question Scholz seems to imply that 'sharing creative expressions' may *not* be a form of labour, or not a form that might be recognised as producing value and while this is not his conclusion, it does highlight the problematic: if it's in part play, then it's not work, and we need seek no financial reward. This is a key indeterminacy that allows for the rhetoric of creative opportunity and leads to exploitation of prosumerism. Scholz' productive critique conflates Marxist theories of labour value with subjectivist theories of play: play and work are no longer framed in opposition, but rather as theories that demand and provide reciprocal reframing.¹⁹⁷

Internet prosumerism is, in every sense, according to Ritzer, real work no matter how much it is marketed as play. More politicised and feminist readings of this particular activity come from sociologists and writers Andrew Ross and Angela McRobbie. Like Scholz, Ross has also questioned whether a Marxist theory of labour is the correct framework for evaluating the kind that takes place online. He asks, in this context, what role does the unpaid form of labour play within an appropriate or contemporary definition of capitalism?¹⁹⁸ Or, phrased differently, how do theories of capitalism need to be reworked to encompass the kinds of 'free labour' that are evident through activities like prosumerism? This situation presents, he contends, a major dilemma for creative workers who are trapped between the promise of free expression on one

hand, and one the other, the necessity to generate an income in order to survive. But even identifying exploitation in this terrain has become problematic. He asserts that, 'in most corners of the information landscape, working for nothing has become normative and largely because it is not experienced as exploitation.'¹⁹⁹ In the same essay, Ross asked whether an economy that is based around free labour could be identified as (what is regarded in theories of post-Fordist labour as) the 'feminisation of work'.

Academic Angela McRobbie has picked up this subject in greater depths, most recently in 'Reflections on Feminism, Immaterial Labour and the Post-Fordist Regime'.²⁰⁰ A central question of McRobbie's is, 'what kind of role do women, especially young women now play in the urban-based new culture industries?' much of which she positions as online creative labour. Her theory critiques the 'gender-blindness' of discourses by theorists like Virno and Hardt and Negri. She provides an example-led survey of the feminisation of various aspects of precarious labour and the many problems of its undertaking, as well as a demand that the historical records of generations of feminists who combined work and political activity under the auspices of 'social enterprise' be noted and referenced when redefining the histories and new boundaries of affective labour. McRobbie challenges those associated with the Workerist theories for their insistence on class as 'the defining meta-concept for understanding contemporary work and for imaging a radical political future', especially when these class evaluations rarely take into account the specificities of women in the workforce prior to and following second wave feminism. Her major criticism of this movement is that 'Hardt and Negri are locked within a class model which permits no space at all for reflecting on the centrality of gender and sexuality in the post-Fordist era, with the result that there is a failure to consider the meaning of what is often referred to as the feminisation of work'.²⁰¹ The results of this gender-blindness are that, 'in spheres of activity where it looks as though women have made considerable gains, such as the new service sector or the creative and new media industries, where they are highly visible and numerous, and where there is, to draw on a phrase from J-L Nancy, a "sense of equality", it becomes tempting, for activists as well as sociologists, to succumb to the wider current of opinion which is that gender is no longer a "problem" implying that there is no particular need for a renewed feminist critique.'²⁰²

McRobbie's criticism of Hardt and Negri is based on their framing of how the worker's struggle manifested and how its legacy succeeded in subsequent generations, a reading that she implies is inaccurate, and optimistic at best. She contests claims about the increasing meaningfulness of work as a result of protests by the work force, and the Operaist narrative about how, 'such a dispensation or permission-to-think segues into the transition to post-Fordist technology and new forms of communications and information-based production... The successes of the class struggle result in higher wages and a more participatory and intelligent role in the workplace.' McRobbie outlines the alternative, 'more usual account' of the effects of Post-Fordism, evident through a heightened degree and pressure of consumerism. Accordingly, she asks, 'Are these psycho-pathologies [of Berardi, Virno *et al*] also gendered? How do young men and women experience distress differently in their attempts to make an independent living in these new informal fields of work? Or even in the institutions of higher education where the short contract is also normalised? Might these emotional states tittle over into anger and rage and opposition to the etiquette required of the public relations machine? This is implicit in the *Operaismo* writing but it remains under-developed. How would such affective states be analysed?' Furthermore, she asks, 'is the "gendered neo-liberal subjectivity" a good or a bad thing? Has the creative economy been good or bad for women? Are they ambassadors of this new capitalism? Or are they simply flexible workers in the new creative economy?'²⁰³ McRobbie's purpose is to develop a new kind of critical vocabulary where 'is it possible both to move on from past discussions of "women and employment" and fully to engage with new forms of precarious work which are emerging, in a sense, on top of the older forms experienced by most women across the boundaries of ethnicity and class?' Her argument with regard to future feminist approaches to gender and precarious work is that 'it is imperative to explore the actual points of tension - the levels of anxiety, the new realms of pain and injury - which accrue from the excessive demands of these multi-tasking careers.'²⁰⁴ So, to bridge this with Ross' critique of theories of affective, and re-apply it to prosumerism, we might ask how and in what format might we best explore the actual points of tension of prosumerism, perhaps through the anxiety, pain and injury (or, perhaps equally, levels of self-indulgence, contentment and euphoria) of the prosumers, given that so much of this work is *affective*? Adopting McRobbie's

approach, we might perhaps also gage whether this occupation is experienced differently in terms of gender.

In this chapter I have contextualised how theories of the 'labour of looking' carry forward different elements of the productive aspects of Marx's labour theory of value with those of Debord's spectator to assert viewers or spectators as the most contemporary agents of capitalist production. This mode of production, a prosumerist mode, strongly recuperates aspects of artistic labour and lifestyle across the twentieth century, where the subjective affect of images are put to work in the production and circulation of capital through images. There exist profound difficulties in distinguishing between 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour in this new context, when occupations such as prosumerism are no longer forms of wage-labour, even if, for companies such as Google and Facebook, they do generate significant profits. A number of theorists from vastly different perspectives and in significantly different styles all point towards how this mode is newly exploitative rather than liberating, but few propose methods or sites in which this productive and affective mode can be radically or effectively critiqued. All seem unified in their concern that new forms of affective labour be urgently addressed and overturned within the productive modes of post-Fordism.

- SECTION TWO -

Chapter 4 – The Prosumer-Artists

4.1 Mark Leckey

4.2 Ericka Beckman

4.3 Frances Stark

In the first chapter, I looked at Toffler's identification of the 'proactive consumer', which describes a labourer for whom technology enables better working conditions and greater leisure time. Toffler's prosumerism was to improve second wave capitalism for the benefit of the individual worker. It would also break from distinctions between Sector A and Sector B work, and counteract prejudice against specific forms of productive and unproductive labour, supporting universal and equal opportunity. Prosumerism, by Toffler's 1980 account, is a positive labour form, which can yield profit whilst also being anti-capitalist (by 'de-marketising' labour) and feminist (by eliminating 'the invisible wedge'). The prosumer is a term that Toffler does not so much apply to a particular demographic or profession but promotes as a future mode of employment potentially beneficial and liberating to all. Tapscott and William's later version, by contrast, is applied to a group of individuals, inspired by open source computer programmers, whose competitive instincts might be pitted against one another and encouraged to modify and expand open source software (or its later iterations). This 'prosumer' is an Internet user working among a community with whom they are trying to establish their technical skills and capacities. These prosumers do not identify themselves, but are rather identified by capitalists as a means of free labour to improve their software for no financial reward. This corporate mobilisation of free workers cuts down financial overheads and increases revenue.

So, after the reality of the latter term overtook the meaningful ideals of its predecessor, and beyond recent theses calling for change, where everyone's image-labour is ripe for exploitation, what kind of agent might be uniquely equipped to

advance from forms of prosumer critique within its highly contested image-environs? Before moving on to some examples of artworks where the nature and substance of prosumerism is rendered in different ways, it is worth considering how an artist might be equipped to critically engage with the kind of 'work' involved in prosumerism. Making art has always fallen somewhere outside the rubric of 'labour' proper. While it has always depended on some degree of patronage, it has also hardly conformed to what is understood as labour: it would have, for example, no place in Boltanski and Chiapello's evaluation of labour in France under the 'New Spirit of Capitalism', despite their general appeal for emergent forms of 'artistic critique'. Making art does not (necessarily) generate a steady salary or a pension, it doesn't earn or qualify for welfare benefits or entitlements that other salaried jobs might. Its payment is precarious and often irregular. What then qualifies artists' works, or rather this evaluation of artists' works, to accurately or adequately identify and manipulate the terms, conditions and produce of this new form of free labour? Well, it is precisely these difficulties of distinguishing between the productive and unproductive aspects of creative or artistic practice, both as a semi-professional, semi-vocational lifestyle but also as creative, communicative endeavours which initially influenced the development of post-Fordist ways of working and which now uniquely qualify it to reflect back on this new productive mode of image-work. So here, when artists identify this new kind of labour within their work, or begin to relate to it in different ways, prosumerism's recuperated form of 'creative' labour is exposed anew.

In this chapter I describe the works of three artists at some lengths, firstly a selection of works by British artist Mark Leckey, secondly two works by American artist Ericka Beckman and one final work by another American artist Frances Stark. In different ways these works adopt a prosumer as their central protagonist, be that dramatised as an alter ego, a fictional lead or an avatar. In each work, the artists use still and moving images to illustrate their protagonist's subjective experiences of this activity, those images created by or representative of different forms of prosumerism. In different ways, these case studies depict and problematise, dramatise and undermine prosumerism's methods of display and exhibition and the subjectivities that are both produced by and productive of those displays. In the following two chapters I will look at the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of prosumerism, respectively, and how they are

brought together and exposed through these specific works.

When I reference the works of Leckey, Stark and Beckman, I sometimes collectively refer to them as works by the 'prosumer-artists'. Although there are many different ways in which a contemporary artist might chose to embody, perform, parody, subvert or otherwise critique prosumerism as a new mode of production, I propose that these particular case studies have a specific and complex relationship to prosumerism, showing the new kinds of subjective responses, technical tools, social behaviours and exhibitionary practices involved in the activity, creating a sophisticated evaluation of its affective properties. They are each structured around fixed narratives and do not require of me, as a viewer, any degree of cooperative participation or co-production of the work, as I might be required to produce as an online prosumer. I will elaborate on the critical significance of this distinction later in the thesis. Suffice to say at this stage, that by 'prosumer-artist' I mean that these artists are making sophisticated, dynamic works from the substance or stuff of prosumerism, rather than necessarily continuing the job of prosumerism within the work or demanding their viewers perpetuate that activity.

The works that I have selected represent the affect of the image, the appeals and disturbances which this activity brings and the different agencies that encourage and capitalise upon this activity. In showing the variety of prosumerism's myriad affects, its allures and pitfalls, they exhibit a critical distance from this activity. Theirs is a very self-conscious form, showing their protagonists' experiences as prosumers, articulating the highs and lows of these experiences. While recognising the affect of the image upon their protagonists, the viewer of this work might also acknowledge their capacity to have a similar mixed response in their own life, as prosumer. I will go on to assert that these works do not immediately renounce or condemn prosumer platforms in the same vein as chapter three's prosumer critique, nor demand we do the same, but instead provide a different, reflexive viewing experience.

Also, for clarity sake, these artists are working with a range of images, creating, sourcing or reproducing the mode of online work of prosumers outlined in the previous chapters. However, they are not explicitly working with 'stock' photography

and if so, this is not necessarily highlighted during the course of their work. What links their work to the microstock industry and ‘big bang’ I describe in the second chapter, is their protagonists’ role in the mode of production, through representing the experience of developing or fostering a voracious appetite for images and a greater capacity and instinct to generate them, or as Frosh observes the new ‘pseudo-cyclical consciousness’ that underpins stock’s assimilation and production. These artists are positioning their protagonists as agents like the micro-stock producers, where the experience of their encounter with images is drawn out, dramatised and performed.

* * *

4.1 Mark Leckey

Mark Leckey is my first example of the artist as prosumer, and the only one who directly claims the term to resemble his working process, thinking about himself as ‘a kind of prosumer, where you produce and consume at the same time and with the tools that prosumers use’.²⁰⁵ It is more than simply this claim, however, that qualifies my interest in his work.²⁰⁶ His identification as a prosumer, as a producer and consumer of images, is in keeping with his long-term evaluation of the cycles of image-consumption and production, not specifically from the perspective of an artist but rather as a malleable and willing consumer. It is from this experience as a consumer that he evaluates in first person narratives accompanied by the same images that provoke them, the phenomenological effects of the consumer-directed image and, by proxy, how those effects keep him producing and in turn, the wheels of prosumerism turning. While this is a process that he names as prosumerism in 2008, it is a cycle that is evident in his work from its beginnings in the late 1990s.

The title of one his earliest works, ‘Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore’ (1999) (Fig. 1 – 3.), refers to an Italian sports clothing brand, emblematic among particular groups of young people involved in an underground dance music scene in the early 1980s. This brand could have been substituted for any other, he maintains, the important aspect being this process of identification with a commodity *through* their image, as ‘brands imprint themselves on your psyche. They’re just sort of there. I share brands as much as I share archaeology and ancient sites. Those two things are what make me up. It

seems impossible not to acknowledge them, but not in any kind of critical way. *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* basically says that a brand made me transcendent. That's what I meant by the title.'²⁰⁷ The artist's articulation of his relationship with the branded image as a form of spiritual transcendence is a claim that reappears consistently throughout his later work. While we cannot dispute any claim about the kind of subjective relationship he has with images, the artist's language clearly plays on how consumerism, or *consuming* an object via its image, might provide a spiritual encounter, an alternative to organised religion and a cultural form irrespective of class. Leckey has said of the period prior to which he made 'Fiorucci', that '[...] in those ten years I was looking for a way of responding to the world. Trying to find something I could make, to find a language of communication.'²⁰⁸ During that time, Leckey was involved in music production and DJ-ing before returning to make art, retaining the methodology of sampling but this time in more visual terms. He says, 'the main influence on me at that time, that gave me a structural way to make it, was Johan Grimont. *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997) had a massive influence on me when I saw it. And Craig Baldwin who worked at this place Artists Television Access and he made what he calls cargo cuts, which are based around this idea of found footage. *Fiorucci* is about the culture of the used, sampling. All the music is made through sampling and through those kinds of techniques.'²⁰⁹ So, in these quite early stages of Leckey's artistic career, he begins to blend moving images from a variety of sources, in a way that closely resembles music sampling, or editing of found footage. It is quite specifically in the substance of that mass produced, or publicly broadcast audio and visual material that Leckey was interested at this point, cutting material from diverse sources and transfiguring it into his very own work, an approach that has remained with him throughout his career.

'Fiorucci' was made from excerpts of video cassette reels of different concerts and gigs compiled from friends' archives, excerpts of documentation of the Northern Soul dancehalls of the late 1960s and early 1970s, discos of the mid 1970s and underground rave scene of the 1980s.²¹⁰ Manually sampling and editing VCR to produce works marks the early development phase of Leckey's image 'consumption', a phase that predated new sampling and editing techniques facilitated through digital technology's marriage with the Internet. The work follows dancers 'caught on camera, moving to

increasing tempo, their expressions intensifying according to their immersion in the music. The varying tempo of each clip is emphasised through the original time gage seen at different corners of the footage on screen, which slows out of pace with the viewer's real time. Purposely out of sync, his subjects' enthralment is emphasised. The crowds' euphoria is exaggerated as if participating in an almost spiritual ceremony. Congregation through music is conveyed as a visceral, spiritual experience.²¹¹ Later on in his work, Leckey performs the euphoric participant, articulating and emphasising his immersion in images through a willing and purposeful over-identification with them, 'Using these brands is a way of figuring out what my relationship is to these things. But at the same time they magic up these things that are incredibly beautiful. Or that can be used in a way that is transformative... when I use that stuff it's because I'm very ambivalent about it. I don't know what its power is and I can't just be critical of it because it's part of the fabric of the world I live in. I don't know how to step beyond that wall or be detached from it.'²¹² He claims (unlike the many critics have responded to the work²¹³), that this is not a capitalist critique, but rather an effort to identify or perform some of the 'transformative' affects that images or commodities have through marketing or advertising. The work raises some propositions about the branded image as a form of communion and a means of transcendence. The moving image is edited to reproduce this transcendental moment.

In his later 'Parade' (2004) (Fig. 4 – 6.), this assimilation of the image is shown to physically transfer through the protagonist's body, played by Leckey, via his appearance. 'Parade' is set in a round, dark film studio, at the back of which a large screen plays image sequences rotating on loop. A glamorous man appears at intervals, walking against the direction of the projections shot from a camera pivoting at the studio's central point. The soundtrack is marked by the steady beat of his footsteps between a synthesised voicing of the work's title and other, asynchronous beats. Projected images behind him include a nightscape of audio-visual stores on Tottenham Court road, black female rappers soliciting the camera's gaze and the display window of a gentlemen's luxury clothing store. These images are also brought forward as rostrum shots as if travelling through Leckey, and as the work develops Leckey's appearance channels the sheen of these images: his costume, originally entirely black, becomes increasingly lavish in colour, decoration and texture, his hair has been

treated, he is wearing make-up and his skin appears airbrushed too. The transition from external image to its assimilation and representation as external appearance is presented here as an ongoing cycle. It is a complicated dynamic that curator Catherine Wood noted, 'rather than presenting a coherent identity, the film proposes its subject to be lost in a struggle to distinguish between interiority and surface.'²¹⁴ It is here, struggling to distinguish between the image's (and his own) interiority and surface that Leckey's work identifies the transcendental power of the consumer image. 'Parade' refuses to distinguish an original or 'true' over its representation. Here, the artist's 'original' appearance is altered during the process of his image-assimilation. There is a *mise-en-abyme* here, where an image appears within another image. Leckey's appearance is ever more artificially rendered, airbrushed, glamorised. The proximity and flux between a man and his image becomes clear. Although Leckey's appearance in 'Parade' is not a drag performance: the work would suggest that 'identity' is both the cause and effect of our image-performances.

Several years later, Leckey begins to use a different method of image-sampling to explore the impact of the image on self-perception and self-representation, the inherent sculptural or three-dimensional quality of those images themselves and the very substance of that appeal. 'Cinema In the Round' (2006 – 8) (Fig. 7 – 11.) was an ongoing series of lectures performed in a cinema or film auditorium, a work that now exists as a video (2008). Its first incarceration was at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival in 2006, where Leckey was asked to curate a programme of moving images. He had been invited by British film curator Ian White, who was devising a programme of screenings that would question the viewing conditions for art in a cinema context, a series called 'Kinomuseum'. Guest curators were asked to conceptualise the cinema as a temporary museum in which images might be objects, where, fuelled by the imaginations of an audience, any inversion might be temporarily plausible, so that not only does the cinema become a museum but that also, conceptually, 'the museum *becomes* a cinema of multiple points of view, its content the very nexus of its meanings'²¹⁵. The museum itself, the project might claim, is performed and we the audience are embroiled in that performance.

White invited five different contributors to work within this programme, artists and curators to interpret the project's conceptual playfulness.²¹⁶ White regarded Leckey's as fundamentally underpinned by the question of the relationship between image and object, their different material status.²¹⁷ Leckey envisaged the performance as a formal museum lecture, based on conversations with students he was teaching at the Stedelschule in Frankfurt.²¹⁸ The title alludes to 'theatre-in-the-round', an architectural construction where theatre audiences surrounded the stage from 360 degrees. Originally a device in Roman and Greek theatre, the architectural structure is often used in contemporary productions, intended to provoke stronger audience engagement or integration. Adopting this same conceit, Leckey pitches the auditorium as a museum of inclusion. The screen becomes a display case for image-objects, a museum vitrine for historical artefacts or collectable curios to be spot lit. The title refers to this new imaginary architecture providing an immersive engagement with the image as object. Leckey begins, dressed in a tuxedo and spot lit at a screen-side rostrum at the side of a dark auditorium, 'This presentation is an attempt, by me, to try and grasp a particular experience that I have with certain things in the world, things that I mistake for images or pictures but that somehow impose on me their actual weight, density and volume – their being in the world [...] How does an image find that presence? And - in turn – channel its effects through my body?'²¹⁹

Leckey reads from a script; the presentation formally divided in four titled chapters, each a separate sequence of moving images. 'Meat & Potatoes' is writ across the introductory image, superimposed like a rudimentary handwritten scroll, large and in capital letters so as to fill the screen entirely, the outlines of the red and black letters appear uneven and painted. And so begins a slideshow of Philip Guston paintings from the late 1960s and 1970s, ('Head, Bottle, Light' 1969 'Friend to MF', 1978, 'Painter in Bed', 1973, 'Shoes', 1980) and as it progresses the artist begins to speak, his register beginning to shift from knowing expert to responsive poet; an oscillation that continues throughout the presentation,

They are MEAT and they are POTATOES

They're down to earth and they're flesh and blood

They are DUMB and they are DUMBERER

They're thick as a brick and a bit puddin' headed
They are MENTAL and they are MATTER
And that's because they are images AND they are things.
So they are Grey and they are Pink,
They are Dense and they are Rude,
They are Earthy and they are Hearty, And as paintings that feel like sculptures –
*or as the Campbell's ad at the time said: *They are soup that eats like a meal.**²²⁰

He continues, 'How can something that is flat and two dimensional and as unnaturalistic and LIGHT as a cartoon suggest something so physical and so HEAVY? How does an image find that presence? And – in turn – channel its effect through MY body?' His chapter moves from black ink drawings of Guston's shoes, to Guston's painting 'Two Fat Feet' (1967, Fig.7.), to George Baselitz' 'PD Fuss' (1963), on which he comments, 'these figures contain a sensation that otherwise you only encounter through trauma: of the body being an entity, an arrangement of individual neighbouring parts – for example, your LEG to your HEAD or your ARM to your KNEE. Your CHEST to your BACK or your FOOT to your ARSE. All Throbbing & Pumping away single-handedly... Baselitz's dismembered feet walk by themselves with deep satisfaction of sensation.' Next comes footage of a man using a 'mirror box', creating false perception through visual reflection to help alleviate 'phantom limb' pain. From here, an extract from 'The World of Gilbert and George' (1981) shows a basin of floating vegetables. Leckey claims. 'I've sandwiched this piece, which is about a lack of something, smack-dab in the middle of these other parts which are all about an excess – of things exceeding and exaggerating themselves – in order to draw attention to their presence, their being-in-the-world. They threaten to spill *out* of themselves, frustrated with their limited beings.' This chapter is an exploration of how various two-dimensional representations of living, organic or corporeal matter exert their heaviness, or are *felt* by the viewer. The concept of 'consumption' is emphasised in particularly masticatory terms.

The next chapter, 'Sacks of Fur', combines seemingly disparate images of the feline form. Leckey proclaims, 'there is something about the cat – the living ones – that is kind of already like a sculpture. I don't know if it is because its form is so simple and

basic, or because their serenity and unnerving stillness can sometimes lead to confusion about their vitality. But they always seem to bring about a fascination with making them COME TO LIFE. Either as statues or cartoons.²²¹ Leckey links images of an Egyptian cat statue, with a 1920s cartoon image of 'Felix the Cat' and the later digital rendering of 'Garfield' for an animated film (2004, dir Peter Hewitt). Leckey describes his interest of Felix' predecessor, 'Krazy Kat' (1913 – 1944), which also fascinated Guston, interested in the impression of this cartoon rendering. Leckey describes the process by which the later Felix animation was transformed to doll form for the earliest television broadcast. The rudimentary transformation, from drawn image to sculptural or round object, to projected animated image, all draw the elementary cat shape and underpins Leckey's broader concerns of the image's sensory impressions and how this is impacted by technological developments. How are these images felt or understood when they change so fluidly from image to object to moving image again? What kind of impressions do they make upon the senses? He refers to Eisenstein,

Eisenstein talked about the ecstasy of sensing and experiencing the primal omnipotence, the element of coming into being and the plasmaticness of existence within the cartoon-animated world from which anything can arise. He says of Disney's animations that they are 'beyond any image, without an image, beyond tangibility – like a pure sensation.' It is that 'without an image' that entrances me – what does that mean?²²²

In the next chapter 'The WARP and the WEFT' (originally titled 'THE 3s AND THE Ds' in the Oberhausen version), the artist explores his difficulty in distinguishing the 'horizontal' (of the image, that it be essentially flat) from the 'verticality' (of the object, that it be upright, or somehow self-supporting), especially when the flat is projected so as to look upright and animated to appear more three dimensional.²²³ This chapter begins with the familiar heightened sounds of Viacom film distributors, and Leckey's theory about James Cameron's film,

Titanic is a time-travel film that shuttles between the bookends of the twentieth century. Leonardo DiCaprio is contemporary with us – all the other actors are playing period. The theme of the film is based on Marx's phrase: *all*

that is solid melts into air. Cameron uses this idea to describe how the manifest materiality of heavy industry at the beginning of the century dissolves into the impalpable, intangibility of software production by its end. Where everything has *become an image*.²²⁴

In this work, images are used not solely for their representational function but also as conceptual paradigms. 'Titanic' is a mainstream historical-reconstruction film expropriated by Leckey as a vessel for more complex ideas. Screening the animated sequence of the submergence and sinking of this large ship, Leckey claims that it represents how animation moves from horizontal to vertical thrust over the twentieth century. Leckey exploits it as a graphic emblem of this transition from flat 2D image to upright, moving and seemingly 3D image; still image to projected animation. The appropriation of a familiar icon as a graphic emblem for difficult or abstract principles is what distinguishes his form of image-sampling from surrealist or conceptual strategies of collage or appropriation. Leckey's manipulations each serve the visualisation of his philosophical abstractions.

In his concluding chapter, 'ROCKS ARE SLOW LIFE', Leckey addresses the perceptual contractions provoked by cinematic or animated depictions of organic matter, some of which appear living, others entirely plastic. He addresses the curious life of animated rocks, stones and metals versus the strangely inert emptiness of vegetable life rendered in a range of material. This section includes images of elements from Swiss artists' Fishli and Weiss 'Raft' series (1982), a collection of assorted objects carved from polyurethane, a ubiquitous modern material, 'made of the same base material robs each of them of their usefulness, or utility, it equalises them all. They are all just ... *stuff*.' Leckey uses this material to gain perspective on the uniform materiality of 'things', 'you can zoom out from [these objects] to the whole wide world which then is *itself* just a GLOB hanging in a mass of other vaster and greater GLOBS within a whole universe made of the same lumpy, globby, blobby, STUFF!' Here, in Leckey's narrative, the image becomes an equalising currency in which any object can appear as convincing as the next. There is no structural 'reveal', everything is embraced as potential illusion.

Leckey introduces a video derivative of Fischli and Weiss' video 'The Way Things Work' (1976) (Fig. 10.). In Fischli and Weiss' original, assorted tools and mechanical components are lined up on a floor like dominos providing a carefully arranged assault course along which a cog travels. Each element it encounters somehow maintains this dynamic. In the late 1990s, a Honda advertisement called 'The Cog' recreated this work, except that in the advertisement each of the components belonged to the Honda and the ending is marked by a strap-line of endorsement (rather than the completion of the cog's course). Leckey distinguishes between the two based on their affect upon him, the later advertisement appearing 'flat' as opposed to the other's effect of seeming full, or 'round'. He claims, 'this [advertisement] version is the reverse of the Swiss duo's work, because it appears to me flat and frieze-like, all on ONE plane like [Marcel Duchamp's] *Large Glass*.' Leckey quotes Duchamp, "'Always there has been a necessity for circles in my life ... for rotation. It is a kind of narcissism, this self-sufficiency, a kind of onanism...'" From Fischli and Weiss' roundness and the obsessive circles of Marcel Duchamp, Leckey's sequence moves on to a Tex Avery cartoon. Here he shows the animated form of a boulder that rolls down a rocky mountain path. Leckey again makes a distinction between the animated boulder's 'organic roundness' and the 'inorganic angularity' of the Cog advertisement. At the point in his presentation, as if to further distort the distinction of 'round' and 'flat' in these assorted images, Leckey plays 'The Cog' advertisement's soundtrack over the image of the Tex Avery cartoon.²²⁵ This concluding chapter ends with the full seven minutes of structuralist filmmaker Hollis Frampton's 'Lemon' (1969) where a light source slowly circles a lemon otherwise suspended in darkness. He claims, 'this for me is like a magic eye test. The lemon will go from pure horizontality – an image – to total verticality – an object ... in all its voluptuous pulchritude and lemonyess.'²²⁶

Cinema's endnote might be interpreted in a number of ways. Frampton's original intends to draw a viewer's attention to the emotive devices of cinema, especially the impact of the lighting pouring down upon the subject, traditionally a cinematic ploy to embellish and dramatise human expression and garner sympathetic responses.²²⁷ The work confronts this illusion, deconstructing it by slowly revealing its mechanism. Leckey presents a provocative counter-interpretation, admiring 'in all its voluptuous pulchritude and lemonyess'. This is a very playful use of the paradigm of art history,

within his project of articulating the material confusion of the image encounter.²²⁸ It is perhaps a similar approach to the making of 'Fiorucci' where the familiar brand might be more imaginatively entered to generate some kind of transformative moment. Between assimilation or 'consumption' and (re)production, the circular forms of his cogs and boulders, or in the camera the works around the lemon each become emblematic of the cyclical effect of the cinematic, projected or animated image on human perception. Through this work, we are taken from the idea of an image as an isolated representation to a phenomenon having its own distinct visceral or corporeal effect on those who encounter it. This work in particular seems to resonate with Beller's contention that the contemporary unconscious emerges out of the cinematic.

While 'Fiorucci' might be described as an exploration of the transcendental image or brand, 'Parade' meditates on the assimilation of the image in the formation of identity. 'Cinema in the Round' then, regards how the image impresses upon the viewer's psyche with its inherent sculptural qualities, its dimension-defying appeal, or put simply, its 'plasmaticness'. Leckey's subsequent work, 'In the Long Tail' was in production when he identifies himself as a prosumer.²²⁹ His image-prosumption then, comes into greater focus through the performance of the image's phenomenological effects, and by using various images found online paradigmatically to explore this social and economic phenomenon. Here, the 'Long Tail' is both the economic theory and paradigmatic symbol that instigates and structures the work.

Leckey performed 'In the Long Tail' in the theatre of the ICA, London in January 2009 (Fig. 12 – 14).²³⁰ It was delivered like a lecture, animated with still and moving images and objects or props, to illustrate and dramatise his points. Behind Leckey, he used a freestanding blackboard to draw the tail of a cat (Fig. 12), as well as directing our attention toward projected moving image sequences, demonstrating his various points. He begins, 'The long tail is a theory about the Internet and I spend a long, long time on the Internet, longer and longer actually, and this is what I am constantly thinking about – what my uses are, why I use it and what I get out of it. These are my reflections about its history, its present and its future.'²³¹ He presents an image that he claims instigated the research, the first broadcast test image from the television archives. It is black and white, with a model of Felix the Cat propped on a stool and

surrounded by over-sized mechanical photography equipment. He was so obsessed with this image, he claims, that he has remodelled the scene on stage and demonstrates this rudimentary animation process for us, the cat spinning on his rotating plinth as spotlights pulse upon it, the sound of whirring dramatising this process (Fig. 13.). At length he describes how Felix becomes ‘more rounded, atomised and dispersed into the ether.’ Like the validity of this historiography, which ultimately serves his narrative and conceptual paradigm, the actual operational efficiency of Leckey’s on-stage model is dubious, but the point is the metamorphosis of the object into a broadcast image and the visceral experience of witnessing that, rather than the technical efficiency or historical accuracy of his props. In general, the assorted objects and images that Leckey includes are necessarily slipshod, put to the service of his enquiry rather than serving their original function. What instills our belief in them is his confidence as orator.

His interest with the transcendent capacities of the image persists. Leckey quotes Hungarian artist Károly Tamkó Sirató’s (1905 – 1980) Dimensionist Manifesto of 1936, ‘animated by new feeling for the world, the arts collective fermentation each has found new form of expression that extends into all the dimensions of space, in the interest of vaporising sculpture. The requirements that rigid matter is abolished and replaced by gauzified materials.’ This ‘dimensionist’ tendency earmarked several early metamorphoses within the arts, Leckey proclaims, literature leaving the line and entering the plane, painting leaving the plane and entering space and sculpture stepping out of closed immobile forms. He quotes Sirató, ‘and after this, a completely new art form will develop, cosmic art, the vaporisation of sculpture, the artistic conquest of 4D space which to date has been completely art free.’ Summarising, Leckey claims ‘these [are the] two amorphous solid ideas that I feel have become the principle engines of the Internet’, which include the dematerialisation of rigid matter and the ‘the creation of a space of infinite dimensions with a viewer and creator, or producer and consumer of one and the same, which is summed up best in YouTube motto, “broadcast yourself.”’ So, he continues, Felix was the first broadcast image and the original avatar of broadcasting, an image sent out to attract or generate audiences for a television network, ‘his body composed of nothing but light; a celestial body leaving a long vaporous trail...’ Leckey draws a large arc in white chalk, tying together

cultural quotation and conceptual proposition, 'this vaporous trail is actually a Pareto curve: a graph that states that a large number of things have a small impact, and a small number of things have a large impact. The head is where you should get your number ones, your hits, blockbusters, top of the pops, at the low end, this is where you should get your specialised interest, non-hits. This is called the tail.'

'In The Long Tail' adopts its title from Chris Anderson's economic theory about Internet consumerism and the global distribution of goods, first published in Wired magazine in 2004 and later in an eponymous book.²³² It provides a graphic key and a typically anthropomorphic emblem to explore the artist's dual interests in the Internet as 'sculpture in the expanded field' and the place where niche markets and fetish images can spore online.²³³ Like his prosumerist approach in 'Cinema in the Round', images from art history, popular culture and current economic theories are sampled between more abstract sections where Leckey performs their affect. At these intervals his language becomes more playful, and his register changes from that of academic or 'expert', to sentient, interpretative first person. After reference to the changes in the shape of the economy from the 'head' of the mass market to the newly expanding long tail, Leckey projects an image of an unknown doughy material vibrating and mutating on a speaker. Here, Leckey riffs, 'tumescant peaks and slumps echo the fluctuations of the stock market, or more specifically the irrational exuberance of an economic meltdown. Through YouTube the Internet itself is enacting its own trauma, engram, definite permanent trace left by distressing psychic experience left by protoplasm of a tissue.' In his own lyrical, abject style he re-imagines familiar web terminology as lumpen or fluid sculptural form or process. 'Peer to peer networking' becomes a process scientifically known as 'stigmergy', the natural world's method of leaving a mark that others will follow, a mark that forms a path. Like ants do with pheromones, he claims, we can now do it using uploads, peer-sharing and peer-seeding, implanting our fantasies into the next, anonymous imagination. 'Libidinal energies course through the network' forming 'torrents', the peers' 'swarm' growing and developing a murmur, 'the murmur of the multitude'. After this medley the artist's voice is synthesised and deepened, reverberating, 'he is the swarm, the swarm is he, my searches, he is searched. He sees his own actions, reflected back in giant compound eye. Reverberating in the swarm, peers hearing, murmuring, in vibration,

reverberating, swarming, sounding, surging, it all comes back way back, longing, longing its way to the tail.' Sonic percussive elements accompanying the passage grow louder, and there's a clear change in the performance's tone and dynamic.

Leckey skips to an unidentified projected image of a heterosexual couple silhouetted in black on a blue background, holding hands walking on a grid towards the horizon line vanishing point.²³⁴ They represent 'familiar figures in unexpected congress with technology... the grid they're in is only part of a far greater grid.' They can see that environment they're in is perpetuated by machines, it is not a natural landscape. Following cursory history of utopian cybernetics²³⁵ the artist makes an association between cybernetic space and surrealist space; divided but enclosed, rigid yet fantastic, a space imposing on the psyche of their dwellers. He quotes Surrealist artist Hans Bellmer, 'that desires have same anatomy as dreams both composed of deformations, divisions, coalescences, permutations and compensations.' Desire, Leckey proposes, has a modular structure that can be reconfigured in its various parts in infinite ways, much like surrealist compositions or cybernetic systems, it 'sees the body as resembling a sentence which invites you to disassemble it into component parts, so that its true content may be revealed again and again into an endless stream of anagrams.'²³⁶ He continues, 'the dissolution of all rigid matter increases the unbound imagination, reveals appetites surplus to nature's purpose; dematerialisation ushers in irrationality. So the systems thinking of cybernetics built an engine, a desire apparatus that as Bellmer put it, "endlessly propels and entertains, liberating both imagination and graphic compulsion so they each simultaneously feed off and invest in each other.'" Leckey moves from regarding the almost-unfathomable effects of the 'plasmaticness' of images, to looking at how desires generate, as well as are generated by, the Internet. This is a machine for generating desires via images, a development impacting society via its haptic pathways.

A final section explores the Internet's epic expansion and its capacity to generate tastes and desires, including sexual and animalistic fetishes²³⁷, these fetishes increasing the 'long tail' span. New appetites for increasingly niche images, free commodities from the mass market so that anything and everything is attainable on the 'cosmic grid'. However, those who travel through it are only getting a sense of its

expand through their own subjective tastes or passages rather than some external view of its entirety; a contradiction that creates an 'autistic grid'. This 'cosmic-autistic spectrum' influences our world view dramatically as 'those who inhabit the tail find themselves caught between these two fields, bounded in a nutshell and kings of infinite space.' With images of liquid crystals swarming on screen projected large behind him (a screen-grab of a familiar computer screensaver), Leckey describes the affect on him, accompanied by loud, swarming sounds, 'I am carried away, transported, I have lost all care all shame...I can experience past lives, lived dreams, soul travel, I am the minotaur made manifest in the multitude, reverberator, debaser, I am sensory precursor, accumulator, evaporators, I am a seed of the torrent, we are the sewers of the system [a male Automaton chorus begins] *here in the long tail.*' This shamanistic delivery, emphasised by the accompanying chorus and visuals, suggests that new developments in technology reconnect to a more primitive, pagan imaginary. The work proposes the Internet, as a receptacle collecting and dispersing images as evidence of fetishes and desires, creates new ritualised experiences with images. The work concludes with Leckey's adoption of the guise of spiritual guru or new faith healer, delivering the 'Nine Consciousnesses of Felix', phases of technological development illustrated through images of animated cats; a highly flamboyant and theatrical ending.²³⁸

Like 'Fiorucci' and 'Cinema', this work visually samples found moving images to illustrate their phenomenological affect on Leckey's person. The image and its subject are co-productive. 'In the Long Tail', the Internet, as the image's new organisational mechanism, also comes into the frame as a complex organism with potentially profound economic and psychological impacts. This presentation dramatises Leckey's personal dependency on it by proposing it as a swarming mass, a curious supernatural hybrid and co-producer of man's dreams and desires. As in 'Cinema In the Round', Leckey assumes the guise of someone conscious of the image's material status but also subject to its affect. His performance emphasises the productive reciprocity between the Internet and human desire, mediated through the exchange of digital images. Whereas the 'consumption' of the image is illustrated through the behaviour of the crowd in 'Fiorucci' and in the appearance of his protagonist in 'Parade', that material conversion is exposed in 'Cinema', in 'In the Long Tail' this imbibing relates to a

grander societal phenomenon, where the production of niche images is carried out by the same agents of its consumption: prosumers.

While the consumption and production of the image consistently underpins Leckey's work to date, how that is fused as prosumerism really materialises in 'In The Long Tail'. His is a very in-depth and necessarily subjective exploration of how an image performs upon him, a poetic and esoteric exposition of the image's 'plasmatic' quality, emphasised by the developments of recent technologies. The Internet's long tail allows fetishes and desires to proliferate and expand, feeding image-appetites and increasing the productivity of its users. His depiction of the reciprocity between image and person, one performing upon the other continually, is symptomatic of the late stages of this role of prosumer, and requires us to regard that process at a certain remove, rather than immediately participate in this process as 'proactive consumers'. Here, regarding Leckey's *mélange* of sampled images strategically arranged, our prosumerist or 'uniform' viewing is challenged. We must disregard the taxonomies of images, just as Leckey does, and instead focus upon and discern just what impact those images have upon us, what vistas they allow and what they obscure.

4.2 Ericka Beckman

Ericka Beckman's work, earlier on, attends to 'image consumption' and identity formation as catalysed by developing technologies. While Leckey's 'In the Long Tail' marks the apotheosis of Internet consumerism, or rather image-prosumerism modified through the Internet, Beckman's work over five decades looks at how we perform the image and how different image-technologies help define that relationship. Her work reflects this process in relation to early film, to television and later, significantly, in online gaming and digital culture. She focuses on how these shifts inform the experiences of female protagonists.

Beckman has said of her work throughout her career that it is about 'performing the image', and equally both performance and the moving image have been its two primary media.²³⁹ This performance of the image varies wildly in her characterisations

and dramatisations from the 1970s until present day. In her early films, Beckman originally assumed the role of performer as well as artist-director, a role later taken up by male artist collaborators, and then by female actresses as protagonists. Her films adopt the structuring mechanisms of games, her sets, costumes, choreographies, camera movements, narrative, scoring and sound-tracks represent and blend particular kinds of games and their competitive and productive atmospheres. In the 1970s these are children's games, repeated schoolyard activities that represent or illustrate the theories of developmental psychology in which she was initially interested. In the early 1980s, these become games of memory formation and retrieval, moving on to competitive adult games, ball sports, slot machine gambling, and computer gaming, that reflect an increasingly competitive capitalist culture and the forms of entertainment that it develops and encourages. Through these various structures, Beckman's work examines some of the psychological urges and social pressures that drive participation in games. Beckman's films explore the perverse blending of leisure and professional life through the productive mechanism of games and her cast members are consistently referred to as 'players'.

Beckman's 'Hiatus', made in 1999, is perhaps the most crucial work in relation to the concept of prosumerism, developing on from many of the structural and narrative threads that emerge in her earliest works of the 1970s. It reflected how, by the late 1990s, labour and image technology were integrating. For the work, Beckman did research at the NASA Ames Research Centre with scientists exploring virtual reality for the first time, and at a Los Angeles game company who were manufacturing interactive console games for girls. 'Hiatus' portrays a female protagonist trapped in what the artist has described as a girl's 'identity game.' The film takes place between the protagonist's day-lit living room (with her computer on a desk) and the dark virtual reality of the game's action. The female protagonist directs her online avatar from her computer in her living room. Rendered in film, the narrative between the two worlds is fluid and legible. Protagonist Madi maintains the work's narrative voice, her avatar Wanda (both played by actress Madi Distefano) does not speak or mime, instead a mute conduit for Madi's competitive strategies.

The task of performing the image, targeted particularly at women, develops early on in her work, as early as her 'Piaget trilogy', of which 'We Imitate; We Break Up' (1978) (Fig. 15 – 16) is a vital part. The trilogy was completed just after her 1976 graduation from Cal Arts, and is named after her reading of Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget's 'genetic epistemology' and his practical tests measuring how repetitive children's activities generate or activate collective meaning. The practical tests manifest in the 'logical systems' she devises to structure her works.²⁴⁰ In her early films, characterisation, action, costumes, sets and scores all emphasise a sublime connection between childhood and adulthood, achieving a scrambled effect of pantomime euphoria and Lynchian phantasmagoria. Whereas that takes on quite remedial forms in early work – a school uniform or basic utilitarian play costumes with materials in primary colours and decorated or embroidered with elementary shapes – this becomes increasingly sophisticated and sexualised in the burlesque 'doll' costumes of her later avatars in 'Cinderella' and 'Hiatus'. There is often interplay between a character and their fantasy image within the narrative of her films where the fantasy image being performed is also the one being (re)produced.

In, 'We Imitate...', Beckman performs as the female protagonist. The film revolves around the interplay between Beckman's figure and one called 'Mario'. Mario is a large-scale puppet, fabricated from plywood, painted in gray, and handled from above by off-screen puppeteer (Fig. 15.). His is a makeshift but functional representation of a generic body, depersonalised and featureless, a figure with two legs and two arms, a bare anthropomorphic form. Mario proceeds with a number of basic movements, and Beckman's character, dressed like a schoolgirl in uniform with shirt and tie on her upper half and skirt, socks and shoes below, begins to mimic them. This choreography is accompanied by increasing pace and pitch of a female chorus, like cheerleaders egging the imitator along. Spotlit and suspended in dark space, there is an intensity to this duel and a profound relentlessness to Beckman's task. The activity becomes overbearing, the space claustrophobic. As the title implies, the further Beckman goes towards perfectly re-presenting Mario's movements, the further she travels towards her own breakdown.²⁴¹

The games that Beckman devised in her films changed dramatically from the Piaget trilogy, to the dark environment of later works such as 'You The Better' (where a team of sporty male players take on 'House', representing 'the Capitalist system', in a game that fuses the physical movements of a softball game with the rules, rounds and psychological pressures of a casino poker game²⁴²), to the virtual landscapes and repetitive sequences of 'Cinderella' and 'Hiatus'. Her players' characterisations change dramatically too. Of the evolution, Beckman says,

In my game research there comes a distinction between games for girls and games for boys once the participants are past ten years of age. Before that it is games for all genders. There are many variations of competitive sports for boys that develop for these young athletes, with few new initiatives for girls, aside from gymnastics, cheerleading, skating and other forms of choreographic display. After 'You The Better' I wanted to explore stories told through games for girls. It was a conscious choice to represent myself in the work and to embrace that gendered perspective.²⁴³

Beckman talks of the context for that change in her research, '[In 1986] Lizzie Borden had just moved to LA to direct porn for women for the Playboy channel as I was completing "Cinderella". There was a lot of energy about for women to create new media for their voices. "Cinderella" marked a turn for me in that I stopped working with male centred competitive games. Instead I turned to the game format to describe an essential feminist story.' She continues, 'Cinderella stories were chronicled in two large volumes collected by two women. In those volumes I found that it was a story that was read to young women, to teach a young girl how to be strong if she lost her family and found herself independent.' Beckman carried out extensive archive research about the various forms the 'Cinderella' story had taken historically. She says 'I found the stories horrifying actually, in that early on she was purposely familiarised with the concept of torture and disgrace. So instead of making a dramatic film, I decided to set the essential message in a form of communication that could replace the story as a teaching aid; the game. "Cinderella" was a critique of this familiar story and its use for the perpetuation of the notion of women as a commodity worth acquiring.'²⁴⁴ What is significant is not simply her revision of the Cinderella fairytale

and how it reflects on labour norms for women through different centuries, but her decision to adapt its narrative into a game structure, and more specifically how she renders this as an interactive computer game, with levels deciding Madi's progression or confinement.

Beckman summarises the work as designed around 'an interactive narrative game for girls... modelled so that the linear storyline would intersect vertical indices where the story could pivot and change.'²⁴⁵ To clarify, 'Cinderella' (1986) (Fig. 17 – 25.) is shot on 16mm and is not, in any sense, participatory for the viewer as a video game might now be. The 'interactive' element is depicted for the protagonist within the narrative. As the Museum of Modern Art's screening notes on the work read in 1999, 'Cinderella presents several versions of the popular story and compresses them into game motifs. After a few trials, the female player discovers how to command and order these motifs in a narrative sequence that releases her from the confines of the Cinderella myth itself.'²⁴⁶ 'Cinderella' opens with an exterior shot of a rural industrial forge, shot from a pastoral exterior (Fig. 17). Inside the forge is much darker, where a small group of workers move in time to music, led by a long-time collaborator, artist Mike Kelley, as a jester accordionist. Alongside his music, the workers' hammering provides dynamic percussion (Fig. 18.). This filmic space is theatrical, at the centre of which is the fire or furnace around which people work, moulding molten gold into solid coins. Cinderella, played by actress Gigi Kalweit, is the sole industrious female, fanning the fire for the furnace in time to the accompanying rhythm.

The soundtrack, scored collaboratively with artist Brooke Halpin, is divided into percussive tracks and choral scores, both male and female. Most of the narrative finds form through explanatory lyrics sung by off-screen vocalists and corresponding with the actions of on-screen characters. In 'Cinderella', a male voice begins. He chants from the direction of the fire, '*Watch me and I'll save you from this company, stoke the fire feed the flame I can teach you how to play this game, Cinderella now's the hour, come the fire, come your power*' [italics where script is sung].²⁴⁷ As this chorus begins, a gift slides out of the fire and on to the hearth in front of it, and Cinderella and the audience are informed '*the gift will guard each play*'. Cinderella opens it to find a green dress of satin and tulle, '*the dress, the dress, try to keep the dress, if you catch*

the prince, you win the dress.' As the music recommences, Cinderella is transformed into the dress, her hair a blonde bob reproducing the outline of the forge's bell. But from the outset, antagonism: '*Cinderella*', a female vocalist screams from the direction of the fire, '*give back the dress, give back the dress, robber, robber, robber*'. 'Hup-Da', Kelley as jester pushes his accordion, the repetitive beat of the production line continues, the activity only interrupted by a dissatisfied forge owner who announces the production of coins is of an inadequate standard, and the workers must stay on late to repeat the process overnight. And the male vocalist begins again, '*Cinderella fan the fire, Cinderella, it's the hour, come the fire, come your power*', another gift box bearing the dress appears from the forge's hearth. A female chorus chants that the game has begun, but a more ominous male chimes in behind that 'just as the game board opens, it can shut down.'

The familiar tenets of this well-known fairytale narrative appear, with its pressurised work environment and adverse conditions, and Cinderella's pre-midnight opportunity to eschew it. The rules are explained to Cinderella, again by this anonymous chorus, '*you gotta get outta sight before the clock strikes midnight, are you ready for that? X marks the spot you get stuck in the game*'. Cinderella reappears enrobed and travelling through the dark in a giant pumpkin car that glides along upon a grid of neon-blue cross-hatching, a strategically lit reconstruction of the early latticing of 3D animation. As Cinderella is thrust into this virtual game, maquettes of the letter 'X' fly towards her menacingly. These represent makeshift signs of danger, where, if struck by them, she might become 'stuck in the game'.

The next 'game' sequence is set in a reconstruction Louis XIV ballroom where synthesised chamber music plays and young men and women waltz. The prince, clad suitably for this neo-Versailles in ornate formal white suit with gold sequined shoulder details, is dancing with a string of eligible women (Fig. 19.). Cinderella observes this from afar but flees by midnight on a white horse at the palace's exterior, a darkened space rendered with the same cross-hatching as before. And so this scene is repeated several times, each with minor variations as Cinderella begins a series of broken curfews and unsuccessful attempts at this level, until her lives run out and she finds herself elsewhere altogether (Fig. 21.). 'You didn't make it' the score announces as 'X's

hit her between animated headlines, 'NOT HOME BY MIDNIGHT', 'NOT WITH THE PRINCE' and 'LOST'. Cinderella, frustrated, bursts into song: *'I'm not the kind of girl want the kind of girl you thought, I made some fine mistakes, I turned out differently, I'm just a product of all that I've been taught, what starts out positive soon turns into not, all things twisted soon turns into knots...'* She runs away from the forge, arriving at a factory building labelled, 'HOME OF THE CINDERELLA DOLL' (Fig. 22.). The interior hosts a doll manufacturing line operated by an animated rendering of a stylus. It brings the factory line produce to life, outlining the cylinder of a doll's skirt, rendering it three dimensional, spinning in the dark (Fig. 23.). The doll wears the same green dress and Cinderella wore to the ball, and her blonde hair has the same dramatic bell-shaped silhouette. Living Cinderella, now dressed in civvies, finds refuge in a garbage room. As this diversion takes place, another duet strikes up between the doll *'I'm a model, perfect model, it all generates'* and the stylus, *'I make records, perfect records, I record the company, I pass over and return from the centre to the edge, bands of circles bands of certainty, endlessly returning, I keep moving, I leave spaces, over the product that he traces, I keep records, keep things moving.'* To this score, the rounds of the records are superimposed onto the rounds of her dress, by the nib of the tool encircling both, an effect achieved through a complex layering of post-production animation onto the same film-reel.

Later, Cinderella's silhouette is juxtaposed against the animation of the new doll. Both Cinderellas address one another in the same frame. This juxtaposition is a common device within Beckman's work, where a protagonist is both filmed and sculpturally rendered, and that rendering is scrutinised within the same frame. This device is one that depicts a protagonist viewing and reflecting on their relationship to their own image. It shows depicts, for the viewer, the perplexing experience of self-scrutiny, a device that first appeared between her protagonist and model 'Mario', in 'We Imitate'. Her characters are seen to literally 'perform the image'. In Cinderella's case, it provokes a revelation about how to entrap the prince. He appears mesmerised by the silhouette of the spinning Cinderella Doll rather than the living protagonist. She concludes, *'Look at what I see, he wasn't after me, this is my discovery... This is where I got it wrong, I tied myself into a web, I should be getting out instead.'* Through a series of choreographies and choruses, the protagonist realises the extent of her

subordination and untangles herself from her latticed skirt and the restrictions of the game. The film concludes with the image of an uprising of her and the other factory workers, *I feel something rising up, rising, rising through the crack, pushing its way to the top, nothings going to hold me back*' integrated with a chorus line of male factory workers dressed in overalls, chanting and hoisting their tools in synchronicity, *'no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no'* (Fig. 25.).

Some of the visual references might seem initially incongruous; a Cinderella narrative, carried out in pop-operatic tones, set within industrial production lines of forge and factory with predominantly male labourers, structured and animated to resemble a 1980s computer game. But the Cinderella video game narrative helps to reinforce the effort and tenacity needed by her protagonist to escape from this repetitive labour and virtual imprisonment. While Leckey's work foregrounds the condition of the online image-prosumer, Beckman's work draws together the idea of a recreational space – like the ballroom – potentially being a productive space, requiring strategy, strength, tenacity, and so on, to escape especially if the mission is to succeed. Here, although work and play are interwoven the latter does not disguise the former, rather it provides a crucial escape: strategic play is the means to escape the exploitative work made originally of play. The factory line and the computer game level are rendered together in narrative, appearance and tempo. Beckman's work emphasises the breakdown between leisure and toil in this highly competitive atmosphere and the difficulties involved in navigating through these new dark spaces, particularly as a woman.

In 'Hiatus' (Fig. 27 – 31.), this relationship between the subject and her image, between hard work and 'play', and their dual realignment within an ultimate quest for liberation reappears. Its opening sequence shows electricity sparks running through a green circuit board, an icon that reappears on several occasions mapping the protagonist's pursuits in virtual space. The protagonist enters her apartment, powering on her computer and attaching wire padding to her torso, arms and legs. The scene cuts to the dark virtual space, where a Geisha painted and clad entirely in green welcomes her *'we are so happy you are back to play with us, it's been two days... we've saved your score... a hundred points, such a good score'*. Japanese string music

plays in the background and spinning flowers appear, a recurring symbol of energy. These are animated too, so as to appear semi-transparent, suspended like the 'X' symbol in Cinderella. Madi is ready to play. In deep space animated objects appear spinning mid-air, a green flower and a telephone wire awash with blue. The Geisha announces, 'I went to deep spaces, I searched for the numbers, I made those connections you wanted, and now you have flowers, your programmes are flowers, and the garden you wanted is made'. Madi's deep space avatar is Wanda, dressed in a red bustier and black leggings with red grid (similar to those she put on in her real-time apartment but without the corresponding wires – this *is* the representational space). In deep space her skin is painted red and her hair a wig of dramatic blond ringlets (Fig. 27.).

Laughing optimistically, Wanda pushes her wheelbarrow around her virtual garden harvesting the spinning flowers. 'FORGET-ME-NOT' appears inscribed forebodingly on the 'ground'. A male automaton voice, the off-screen games-master, speaks, 'shall we start? Here is your garden, by your memory's sweetness and worth you can return and be regenerated by it many times over. Are you ready to move out of the garden?' A different voice chimes in to advise her, with the accent of Native American. Represented by a green anthropomorphic totem pole, this icon begins to speak as advisor, 'Many young men and women have been sent in search of this power. Here's what happens. You wait for the signal from the tepee that your energy supply is recorded on your totem pole and then runs off the windmill. You take this plot of land and make your garden grow'. Accompanied by animated symbols, the purpose of the game is to irrigate the land to maintain its productive force. In this animated landscape, a river, the sunshine and a watermill spin to the sound of wind chimes. Wanda 'waters' her garden and birds arrive in flocks. Wanda introduces a scarecrow to protect her garden, dressed menacingly with a wig of green curls, red bodice, black and white striped stockings and red gloves and boots (Fig. 29.). Assuming her land protected, Wanda leaves in search of more power and discovers different pipelines and irrigation systems. Her prospecting is rewarded as 'points' gather at her feet, represented by round orange balls.

Then adversity; the sun falls behind the scarecrow and the landscape grows darker. Lightning strikes as the outlines of electricity pylons appear against a dark background, electricity crackling through their steel veins, the sounds of short-circuiting hissing aloud. The power surge extends to Wanda's bodice, her power and balance failing. Through flashes of light, a blue cowboy appears, first animated as a dummy and then coming to life, 'Well, that was quite alright', he exclaims in a Texan accent (Fig. 28.). Dressed in a bright blue suit and fedora, his skin painted a matching shade, he introduces himself, as 'Blair 33 from Euston, but I prefer if you call me Wang. I was admiring your pretty little garden a few days ago, the way you merged with nature.' As he speaks Wanda leans forward to shake his hand, but he fades slightly, as if a hologram and her body falls through his semi-transparent figure. He continues, 'those sweet little objects make me feel so ecstatic, but this is a different sort of place, natural attraction doesn't work here, look at all those great distances, a power field for the taking.' And so Wang colonises Wanda's land as his own, proposing instead she partners with him in his '[f/ph]armacological adventure...' He puts her to work, throwing a watering can at her and giving her plastic gardening tools, 'a woman shouldn't waste her talent on such a harsh game', he declares, as he leans in to kiss her. She objects but he refuses to let her go, 'so when you change your mind, give me a call... take my number', he says, as he plants a power-defeating gadget in the back of her corset and a business card in her décolletage. He sympathises, 'not even enough memory to hold copy, that's some sorry shape you're in Wanda.'

Wanda begins her quest to retrieve her power and reassert her authority in this unfamiliar terrain. The image of her virtual garden fades, replaced by a newly animated CAD set, a 3D architectural model (Fig. 31.). Our view comes through Wanda's perspective, panning around the unfamiliar set of Wang's house. She is filmed stepping inside this new virtual reality, an effect achieved by projecting the animated image onto the wall of the set and having Beckman's cast move around it. Here in this analogue rendering of virtual space, Wanda meets various workers in a range of workrooms. To each she enquires whether they have seen her power source, the spinning 'forget-me-not', but each man, dressed in boiler suits and involved in various unskilled tasks, directs her to the next. Wanda crawls down through tanks in search of 'my foundation, my water supply', through tunnels of pipelines. This physical

action corresponds to Madi's in her day lit apartment, crawling under her desk only to find a wall blocking her passage. Both protagonist and avatar scream with frustration, trapped. Wanda eventually finds the metal wheel to a power valve, which she turns, diverting pressure from the garden's original power source. Having found the means to irrigate her land, Wanda distracts Wang through seduction and retraces her earlier steps past the 'property line' towards a central operating system. 'Copy the files quick', Wanda instructs Madi, as Wang discovers he's been duped. In a final scene, Wang is transfigured into an oversized fish trapped in a goldfish bowl and Madi sits contentedly in her apartment, satisfied with her victory.

Moving on from Beckman's 'Cinderella', where the labour is concealed as leisure time, and the ongoing appeal of the game perpetuates power relations and gender divisions already in place, this work adds to this terrain the aspect of property, of the competitive and highly contested property of an early version of Web 2.0. Second Life is the ground where the action takes place. Here avatars like Wanda represent players like Madi, and the avatars fulfil an idealised version of themselves, for example in Wanda's particularly fantastical garb. Wang, by contrast, is dressed head-to-toe as a blue Texan cowboy. This promises to be a space of unchartered frontiers, where whims and desires can be indulged and satisfied, a new virtual gold rush and this work revolves around that gold rush or land grab of Wanda's garden by Wang. Virtual life is not infinitely available to all but highly contested, labour and technology's new alignment does not liberate us from private property but exacerbates the hierarchies and struggles between ownership and serfdom.

Beckman completed 'Hiatus' in the late 1990s, when open source programming was widely encouraged and beginning to be recuperated to capitalist ends by companies such as Apple and IBM and where 'Netizens' were identified as 'prosumers' by management consultants like Don Tapscott. In fact, the form of labour in which both Wanda and Wang are engaged, work set up as a game that then develops competitively and compulsively into something more serious and time consuming, exactly resembles the kind of prosumerism to which Tapscott originally refers. Tapscott's first examples of prosumers are those who aid the expansion of architecture on Second Life by playing a game of architectural expansion carried out by voluntary

players whose labour would become self-perpetuating and ultimately serve those developers who created the original template. Albeit very different to Leckey's work, Beckman's strategic convergence of performance and film show the activity and effects of prosumerism, of consuming and producing or performing the image, the labour of that work and its misleading framing as a recreational encounter and creative opportunity.

4.3 Frances Stark

To this selection of work I bring one more, 'My Best Thing' (2011) by Francis Stark, made using prosumer animation technologies and representing relationships formed on Internet chat forums. While Leckey indulges his enormous appetite for images and recognises his activity as prosumerism in dramatic performances and Beckman shows the locus of prosumer activity as a hierarchical and patriarchal site for contestation within the filmic space, Stark's radical approach to the prosumer is different again. Her works toy with the boundaries of personal and professional life played out within prosumerism, as well as how, by inverting the personal-professional standards of quotidian prosumerism, those formations and relations might be alternatively exposed, exhibited and put to work.

'My Best Thing' (Fig. 34 – 37) is animated using the online animation software 'Xtranormal'. The work focuses on a dialogue between two characters, in the first instance a woman and a man, in the second instance the same woman and a different man, with some continuous subject matter led by the female protagonist. Visually, the figures are depicted in a basic 3D animations resembling toy 'Playmobil' figurines. These avatars are seen to be partially 'clothed'. In the first instance the pair are sparsely dressed in fig leaves like a latter day Adam and Eve and in the second section, a white pair of underpants are animated onto the second man. These characters are composited onto a green screen, conspicuously devoid of other features or any attempt at animating naturalistic settings. The soundtrack is composed almost exclusively of their dialogue, voiced by a computer programme to sound like automatons. As their conversation meanders, occasionally clips from other features and videos mentioned in conversation are composited, as if projected on a screen

playing in front of them; this is another form of *mise-en-abyme*, where the moving image is superimposed within another moving image (rather than montage, where shots are juxtaposed against one another, usually within a linear sequence).

The script appears to have been transcribed from a woman's encounters on Internet sex chat forums. As such, there are allusions throughout the work to sexual activity and climax, but this activity is not represented visually, in this work there is no video exposure of the either characters' actual bodies or their mutual engagement in any form of sexual or other physical activity. The two avatars' figures instead represent relatively inactive stand-ins and the incongruity is striking. There is a sense of awkwardness and comedy in watching how this depiction is replaced by the remedial body movements of animated Playmobil people, the incongruity of their stocky yellow barrel forms standing side by side but representing the mutual seduction of consenting adults interacting sexually online. The absurdity of these toy avatars embodying a passionate encounter is fitting representation of the kind of adaptations taking place between sexual activities of two individuals connecting in this manner online.

Although it is never confirmed that the female protagonist is based on the artist's own encounters with strangers on an Internet chat forum 'Chat-Roulette', the particular forum mentioned late-on in the video, many of their personal and professional concerns and anxieties correspond with those of her biography, as do practical details of where her works will be exhibited at the Venice Biennale that year. The difficulty of identifying boundaries between biography and fiction is a subject in which the artist has been consistently interested throughout her career. In many works she has fused the writing of her autobiography and her self-portraits in drawing and collage with other figurative display elements, in collages, drawings, sculptures and installations. Works explore the scripting of the female subject, the activity, status and economy of artistic production, professional gender distinctions within that, the discrepancies between artistic labour and more generalised productivity, and all with regard to artists' own work. 'My Best Thing' might be interpreted as a written work too. It pays attention to various translations, the translation of sexual activity and climax into written documents online, how this encounter might be inscribed into a work and how interaction online is also subjected to various translations and differences in language.

Much of the script is transcribed phonetically as both male characters are Italian and communicate with broken English. Humour and innuendo is lost in translation between the protagonists, but the lost nuances stress for the English-speaking viewer, the quasi-inside joke. Accompanying subtitles render linguistic mistakes obvious with typos and errors included to reflect the priority of speed over grammatical accuracy in contemporary online communication.

This work is Stark's first feature length video and her first significant use of this medium outside her 'Cat Videos' series (1999 – present). It is divided into ten episodes, motivated by the female protagonist's open anxiety about the average attention span of the viewer who will first encounter the work at the Venice Biennale, competing with an enormous volume of other artworks for the viewer's attention. Each consecutive chapter represents a different online encounter. The breaks emphasise the work's meandering storyline and provide intermittent synopses of the work thus far achieved through short interlude texts projected on white background, like a PowerPoint projection within the narrative, with diminutive versions of the characters appearing like icons on the bottom corners of the text boxes (Fig. 35.). These chapter breaks have both a retrospective and projective function, creating consumable ten-minute sections as an alternative to the work's full hundred-minute duration, catering to the meandering attention spans of the Biennale viewer of which the female protagonist seems painfully aware.

The first chapter begins with a staggered conversation. Lapses in dialogue imply the two figures are otherwise engaged, a virtual sex act taking place outside the dialogue and hidden from our gaze. From the very beginning of this work there is sense of secrecy or doubt: all is not what it seems. She then announces to her male counterpart that she's going through a 'dancehall phase', interested in a dance move originating in the West Indies where aggressive sex between two partners is simulated on stage. An accompanying superimposed video of Beanie Man performing 'dagging' moves appears. The idea of 'dagging' is in strong juxtaposition to what we see on screen, this Playmobil woman twisting the contours of her yellow barrel, more farcical than seductive. This is just one of the ways that the image we're presented with, that of the infantile animated characters, suggest obfuscation rather than illustration of the life of

the female protagonist. As such the 'truth' of the narrative and the narrator is destabilised.

As the narrative develops, topics of human relations, sexual affairs, fidelity and loyalty are discussed. Asynchronous sound aided by subtitles obscure whether this soundtrack is diegetic or extra-diegetic, and that discrepancy also triggers doubt about the authenticity of the dialogue, and how staged the conversation. In the second chapter the male protagonist, whose first language is Italian and speaks in broken English, asks, 'can a relationship between two people be formed in this way?'²⁴⁸ The question remains unanswered but, by virtue of his doubt, implies the authenticity of the male protagonist and his investment into this relationship. This creates segue for a confession. She replies, 'I want to ask you something strange that relates to your question, I started to do this virtual stuff in the summer. I find it interesting, and satisfying and frustrating, and to be honest, I waste a lot of time with it. I want to start writing about it and its good but I think I also need to stop doing it. And the other day I said I really need to stop but because I had not known you very long I thought I could not stop...' What is 'interesting, satisfying and frustrating' about how she spends her 'free time' are questions literally put to work, through the script. It asks, what kind of commitment is necessary to participate in non-committal relations. The female protagonist demands, 'I don't believe you don't have other virtual women' and with that raises the issue of fidelity relative to online partnerships. This point is left unresolved, tested later by a mention of the female protagonist's long-term partner, when she states, 'I have had a serious boyfriend for six years', and answers affirmatively and unhesitatingly to her counterpart's question, 'do you love him?'

The first pair of protagonists agree to collaborate on a film, an occupation in which he appears interested. She claims, 'I was thinking about it because I have to do a performance in New York in November [a date that corresponded with the schedule of Stark's 2011 performance at New York's performance biennial, Performa], which will mean a lot of attention, pressure, more than I really want and I was thinking about it because I did it once before.' She asks provisionally to see his work, but then decides, 'maybe that's not important, what we do together is not based on our ideas but on sexual attraction, I think that from sexual attraction can be borne an idea.' And she

continues, 'I am thinking a lot about sex vs. work. Yes I think it is possible, we can have sex during it. I am talking really, really sex on stage or really being part of it. Sublimated sex on stage...I am actually, seriously thinking about this.' This is one way in which the unclear professional-personal boundaries of her work as an artist, where she is legitimately able to exhibit anything as work, is raised. It echoes similarly blurred personal boundaries that these anonymous socialising websites create.

The female protagonist begins to introduce him to her studio surroundings, 'do you want to see the paintings I am making?' She describes the work in her studio, 'it's kind of me looking a bit post-coital, it's a sketch you cant see much, she has her feet up, above her head is a painting of five nude guys.' What we see is consistently moderated through her avatar in this green-screen environment and their activities don't always correspond. The woman discloses information about her work mode to the man that might more strategically remain undisclosed, including information on how to increase her work's market value. The experience of watching this piece resembles watching Reality TV or reading the correspondence between other people on social media, voyeurs on the superficially exposing but strategically 'shared' interface between two people and speculating on the relationships that may come of them.

As the video progresses we learn that the female protagonist has based her drawings on 'the work of a feminist artist in the 1970s.' The exact feminist artist is not named. How might this representation of her female protagonist, as an Internet-dependent, daggering, soliciting, masturbating female artist bare upon this identification with a second wave feminist artist? The question lingers, frustratingly and perhaps purposely, as the male protagonist responds, 'I am too stoned to write more than four words in English'. And with that the conversation veers off into the subject of their physical meeting and the possibility of his residency at her studio. He will not commit, 'I am in a serious "rebel period". In Italy we have political terrorism and some think it will happen again. I think its possible to have a riot, more serious. I hope, I am thinking a lot about this dark period.' The sequence ends with his footage projected on the green screen, as if he's sending it to her via email or image sharing software, 'the poetry is this [cue film footage of a riot and political turbulence, riot police come along a road

where motor bikes on fire, the footage is shaky, distorted as if taken on a camera phone]’. Their relationship in this film ends with a brief final dialogue:

Female: So I’ve finished these paintings. I do not like to admit this but now I’m sad.

Male: I am sorry I have had some great problems with the law. I spent last night in hospital I was hit by a police car. I took beatings to my head. Nothing vital, luckily.

F: Fucking hell.

M: You must stay quiet. I have now some great problems in my life.

F: ... You thrive on this perhaps

M: What are you doing right now?

F: I am searching for life

M: I am going to bed it is 6am

The second section is marked by a new character, another young, male Italian counterpart for the female protagonist, whose avatar very closely resembles the appearance of the first. She divulges, ‘I am very interested to speak to the son of an artist as I have a son myself’. She talks about her work, her move to art from ‘translation after philosophy. I was learning intellectual property then fell in love with Nietzsche, then art, etc’, ‘Me, too’, her new counterpart confers, ‘“Thus Said Zarathustra” turned my brain upside down.’ She continues, ‘Have you read Rancière’s “The Ignorant Schoolmaster”? It’s about emancipation from the tyranny of knowledge... I just made that up, it’s not the best description.’ Art, she claims within this same conversation, isn’t a system of knowledge production. It demonstrates just how people have learned to think they cannot or do not know things.’

The conversation reverts to sex, the female expressing that she is ‘embarrassed for yesterday and writing dumb stuff... I hope we can have some sex.’ After another period of short statements (‘I like you’ to, ‘I like you too’) and suggestive silences, she again proposes a collaboration, the basis for this work that ‘must be able to hold a distracted viewer... I like the attention focused... It’s digital, digital isn’t really my thing but I have made some film before where my voice wasn’t present but my words were on screen.’

She describes a digital video resembling the one we are watching, replete with Playmobil figures that only know each other through 'Camsex' (an abbreviation of 'camera sex'), soundtrack pre-empting form. 'The story will take at least 30 minutes to tell but I want to do it in short sections. I am really struggling with this idea that nobody can really afford to pay attention.' He asks her a little more about her working process, she replies that she writes as part of it, but 'I don't feel smart. I have lost my ability to write or even think clearly. But so many weird stories were being born through sex.' He asks, 'can you stop and fuck during editing? The more you fuck the easier the editing: there is your solution... I have to go and play soccer in a while.' The relationship moves on, they identify one another from online research based on clues they have provided each other, 'I know who you are... I think. And I know who your parents are... I think – that wasn't too difficult to piece together.' 'What is my name?' 'Stark'.

Towards the end, the female's awareness of the many possible channels of entertainment available to her and her online partners provokes some degree of annoyance. To her counterpart's question of whether, 'if a sexy girl comes along am I not to reply?' she accuses him of being 'spiritually bored' and tells herself, that she is 'really barking up the wrong tree... So I shouldn't be surprised if someone I know to be incredibly ambivalent is not paying any attention to me... hahhaahahah.' He defends himself against her accusations of apathy on the basis, that 'I am not speaking my native language... It may [also] be a mechanism to economise my cognitive effort.' The woman questions herself again, 'I was thinking why would I spend energy on you... trying to understand this fixation.' She establishes, 'a holding pattern in your life.... Like I am waiting to find out what I'll do.' He suggests to her that her 'fantasy is that you'll be a master to a lost soul', to which she replies, 'your ennui is palpable, can you Google translate that? It also means aimless and disaffected. His response, 'Maybe it is my essence to be slightly indifferent. But I also get disgusted with people who are too much like that.' She concludes, 'maybe it is and yet I appreciate that paradox.'

Their dialogue continues later, her at work, 'somehow always here... in this chair. At the table, with my laptop trying to pull this story together. Would you like to pick a name for yourself?' And so the man reveals a previous experience where he played his

father's son, in one of his films, which he found disturbing. 'Artists', he surmises, 'can be inconsiderate.' They discuss various related subjects, nihilistic authors and artists including Wittgenstein, Robert Walser's 'The Robber', Fellini's director in *8 ½* who 'gets to the table with the microphones, and then shoots himself', Picasso's lifelong competition with Matisse and Thomas Bernard's 'The Loser'. She asks, 'why do they all kill themselves?' and the question is left hanging. In a final section, the female shows the male protagonist an excerpt from the work she's developing, presumably, the same section we are watching now. She is curious about his reaction to the work. He is amused by the computer voices, confused by some of the content, disturbed and slightly ashamed by his own contributions. The female reassures him, 'If anyone looks bad in this it's me. And I've got my name in it... the attention whore' He responds, 'If only my dick could be in it.' She is anxious,

'I have a lot of energy invested in this, it seems silly or superficial...'

'No it doesn't, it seems the opposite'

'What can the viewer do with this combination of suicide and sex chat?'

'They think cool, it's 21st C art...' (Fig. 37.)

The dialogue is capable of substituting the characters inner life, reflecting insecurities or anxieties that arise from or are aggravated by these image-mediated social encounters. The female protagonist concludes that the work is 'not just a record of video sex chat' but rather 'a reflection on the subject'. In the piece's final encounter she claims, 'I am not saying it's great art, but I am saying that it is art. I raise the doubt constantly, so every once in a while I have to drop it and reassure myself... Art is maybe the opposite of working – productivity – masturbation', but before she can elaborate, he interrupts, 'I just won poker...'

This work is consistent with how Stark has previously played with the conventions of various writing tropes, here prosumer websites offering a new kind of writing experience that gives her both access and agency within the lives of others. Stark uses the new norms of prosumer participation as a kind of writing and that process as a means of teasing, toying, undermining and potentially abandoning the pressures or apathies of prosumerism, in a work that is itself rendered in prosumer images, through

its animation tools. Whereas Leckey used his work to probe what relationships he formed with images, their affect upon his person and how prosumerism mediated and catalysed this process, and Beckman regards how potentially reductive or exploitative this process might be, Stark's work allow her regard the relationships she forms through images, the kind of social lives this creates, new convergences between Internet-users' personal and private lives and how the modes of prosumer production echo, at times suspiciously, artistic modes of production.

Chapter 5 – Prosumerism’s subjective appeal

5.1 Prosumer narratives

5.2 Prosumer images & tools

5.3 Film and performance: psychic space

5.4 Participation in the digital realm

5.5 Détournement

The works of the ‘prosumer-artists’ outlined in the previous chapter use the materials of prosumerism to reveal its productive mechanisms. The works are highly constructed, concisely scripted and scored narratives, which reflect the expropriations of prosumerism anew, rather than inviting us, as viewers, to participate in its co-production. Here the allure and distresses of this flexible, unpaid image-labour are highlighted through the most appropriate of media – performance and the moving image. The artists cast their respective protagonists as image-prosumers in quite different dramatic versions of online experiences, framing the productivity of viewers within their frames. What their protagonists exemplify is how the seductive image-play is so smoothly converted into image-labour and how that transition creates a contemporary mode of production through the individual’s increasing image-appetites. By first focusing on the subjective appeal of the image, and how those relationships are put to work in prosumerism, particularly in ‘In the Long Tail’, ‘Hiatus’ and ‘My Best Thing’, the protagonist’s quotidian productivity comes into view.

In the next two chapters, I will look at how prosumerism’s productive mechanisms are explored and exposed within those artworks in greater detail. In this chapter, I will address how they depict the subjective experiences of their prosumer protagonists, co-opting the personal narratives and rendering them in prosumer images, tools or materials. I will look at how these intrinsic, internalised aspects and the tools that harness them are exposed during their *denouement*. In the following chapter, I will analyse how these artists’ works then capitalise on the more extrinsic elements of prosumerism, bringing the conditions of its ‘creative’ production into frame.

Reflexively, combining intrinsic and extrinsic elements within their complex *mise-en-abymes*, these works present to us the experience of sceptical or self-conscious viewing.

5.1 Prosumer narratives

Prosumerism operates through a subjective response to images, a desire for images that are channelled through what Beller calls, our 'haptic pathways', this blip culture which Toffler foresees and Tapscott exploits, where, as prosumers we can find a stage for our innovations, the technologies for production and boundless platforms on which to share, exchange and exhibit the fruits of our production. Prosumerism does not happen simply because technology evolves and multi-national capitalism knows exactly how to steer it into profit making productivity. A significant part of prosumerism depends upon the subjective appeal of images, their affect upon our person, the curious 'plasmaticness', which Leckey so perversely and repeatedly scrutinises and the part of us prosumers that wants to indulge in that process of consuming and producing images online in a tireless series of exchanges. I will now look at how the various works are scripted and composed to reflect their protagonists' indulgent, if precarious, relationships with the image, a relationship which is at the very core of the prosumer's occupation.

Leckey's work might constantly describe his immediate reactions to images in quite personal and unrestricted terms but his presentation of them is highly structured.²⁴⁹ His are reflective pieces of prose, scripted arguments divided into chapters, developing in a linear narrative, embellished or subverted appropriately with image and sound. His performance-lectures are not immediate, intuitive responses but well-rehearsed subjective response to particular images. In 'Cinema in the Round', what is emphasised is not the fixed subjects or specific provenance of the images but a general state of material confusion derived from experiencing them on cinema screens, browsers or monitors. Entertaining aspects within his presentation are underpinned by serious juxtapositions and propositions. His register as a performer constantly switches from the comedic and playful, to the quite serious and profound. Directed by the artist through his first-person narrative, alongside image montages projected in the

darkness, he creates the impression that we have gained access to his private thoughts and inner monologue.

In 'Cinema in the Round', Leckey's intention of identifying *why* or *how* particular images might be perceived as more weighted or voluminous than others might seem quite arbitrary. Why does the 'Cog' advertisement feel flatter than the Fishli and Weiss piece from which it is derived? This remains unresolved: there is no rationale or resolution for his gut feelings or intuitive responses. It is about visceral, physical, dimensional responses to two-dimensional images. These observations are emphatically and purposefully subjective. The image has a tremendous and sometimes dubious appeal, to which, as consumer and artist, Leckey's protagonist, played by himself at a lectern, seems bound. 'In the Long Tail' raises similar issues but this time also poses questions about the cause and effect of the Internet as the gross, expanding image repository that seeds these relationships, depicted as a curious living organism. Moving on from the individual image, how does the Internet's mass impose upon its users its 'weight, density and volume'? How is this network of images and information felt as both an infinity space for travel, desire and exploration but equally, a claustrophobic place where one is 'bound in a nutshell'? The dynamics of the 'cosmic-autistic spectrum', which entraps the prosumer as much as it liberates them, are teased out in his on-stage show, through poetic, funny passages and slipshod special effects.

Images in his two performances are not categorised according to discipline, genre, subject matter or origin, instead, perversely, they are ordered by weight and volume, effective spatial illusions and sensory affect. There is more wilful perversity as his quotations jump, un-cited and undated, from one area to the next. This is not a critical endeavour carried out in a traditional academic mode, but a performance of sensory relations based on the artist's experience spread across different taxonomies of images, from those of highly valuable art historical works by painters like Philip Guston, to incidental or niche music videos or unattributed fetish shots fished from YouTube. His image-appetite seems voracious and non-discriminatory toward historical provenance, his images, in both 'Cinema In the Round' and 'In The Long Tail' are grouped according to their sculptural qualities and often also used as conceptual

paradigms. Leckey's character seems to want greater access to the image than viewing will provide, to somehow get *inside it*, crossing the threshold within the ritualistic ceremonies of his performances.

Leckey's performances have originated from curatorial opportunities, screenings and public events.²⁵⁰ They adopt a traditional art history lecture format where slides are contextualised by a lecturer within a darkened auditorium. By gradually introducing increasingly subjective and poetic passages, Leckey's own reactions become the centrepiece, subverting the focus from the expert, objective opinion to the importance of subjective experience. And content then echoes form; lecture-format becomes an exposition of assimilation, a performance of producing and consuming. What we are regarding is him playing both producer and responsive, immersed consumer. There are historical precedents for Leckey's performed pedagogy. We might compare his lectern and blackboard presentations to performances by artists such as Matt Mullican or Guy De Cointet, whose interests in developmental psychology manifested in questions about how consciousness is formed and what repetitive activities inherits this presentational style. This also resonates with the more abject personas developed by Michael E Smith or Mike Kelley whose performance exposed the dire personal consequences of internalising and attempting to reproduce idealised popular and media personas. Aligning Leckey's performances to these particular practices, we might frame his work as not just responsive to the changes in image-technology and the new social formations it creates but also as regarding how deeply the new machineries of representation effect internal life and subjective experience.

Like his 2008 reference to the 'prosumer', Leckey's performance vocabulary is strewn with terms and phrases that circulate in popular culture, similarly dispersed and non-discriminatory (in terms of academic provenance) to how he sources his images. Although he makes no explicit citations of Hardt and Negri, Leckey's reference to the 'murmur of the multitude' describes his position as an individual in relation to a vast body of other dynamic individuals connected through the communications platform of the Internet. And although their style of writing in coining the phrase was prosaic, in Leckey's treatment the anthropomorphism of the crowd is taken further, is absolutely theatrical, this murmuring which comes to him 'like a thief in the night'. Hardt and

Negri's 'multitude', in Leckey's usage, is described from the subjective position of someone within it, almost to the point of parody. 'Multitude' is quite typical of the kind of literature or theory to which Leckey often gravitates; Anderson's 'In the Long Tail' and Tapscott's 'prosumer' both represent serious theses on the political-economy all intentionally written for the non-academic reader. They are also somehow configurable into collapsible, animated or caricatured forms. Anderson's theory becomes Felix The Cat, Tapscott's prosumer becomes an unwitting artist and Hardt and Negri's multitude becomes a swarming gang that Leckey can join during a midnight reverie. This echoes Leckey's expropriation of visual material, and consistent with the populist appeals of his source materials. These terms do not simply describe new economic or political trends, but each one functions around the moving image or image-exchange: the central nexus in Leckey's conceptual endeavours. His performances all extend from these, alluding to how these new exchanges are *felt* by those who implement them. His narratives are articulated from the image-ground, up.

Leckey's adapts Eisenstein's term 'plasmatic' to describe his difficulty in distinguishing objects on-screen and in 'real life', the effect of high definition screens on objects rendered as images, which he calls their 'plasmaticness.' Leckey's 'plasmatic' is an enjoyable state of suspension that is simultaneously disruptive of the spectator's material understanding of things. Eisenstein coined the term 'plasmatic' when observing Disney cartoons, encountered in the early 1930s on a first visit to the US in his capacity as commissioned film director.²⁵¹ Eisenstein proposed that the contours of Disney's animated forms were plasmatic in the Freudian sense. Freud's 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', credited the fundamental drives of human instinct to the primordial urge to return to the plasma of an originary amoeba cell, from which came the death drive and from which human motivation and behaviour was relative and identifiable.²⁵² Similarly, Eisenstein regarded Disney's cartoon characters' outlines morph and coalesce with their surroundings in time with music, like some form of amoeba. He concluded that its audience would experience an involuntary subconscious reaction to its fluid configurations and transfigurations. The more fluid the animated character's outline, the stronger their emotional appeal to the audience and potential for ideological manipulation.²⁵³ This protoplasmic form would be useful to Eisenstein's broader analysis of the 'correlation of the rationally logical and the

sensuous in art: ... in the structure of a work, in the process of its perception'.²⁵⁴

Eisenstein speculated that the mutability of Disney's characters could create a motivating dynamic that might successfully rouse North American audiences from professional slumber and political inertia, numbed and enslaved, as he observed them, by Fordist production lines.²⁵⁵

Eisenstein's plasmatic referred to the animated contour and its coalescence with its animated environment, coinciding with synchronised score, the total synthesis of which could have profound kinesthetic effect on its viewers, interested in the provocative potentiality of this effect and how it might be implemented to create collective social action. Leckey makes no such explicit claims but uses this term to describe the re-orientation of cinematic affect.²⁵⁶ Leckey contends that it is the gossamer surface (rather than its internal contours) of the cinematic image that impresses upon viewers the threshold of the image. Despite their different historical contexts and purpose, both forms of 'plasmatic' describe the screened image as mediating surface suspended between the social conditions of the outside world, and the individual's internal perception of it. What is essential to the plasmatic is the fluidity of form and the ongoing exchange between viewer and image, motivating their production and consumption. The plasmatic describes a viscous threshold between image and vision significant to Leckey's work, so concentrated on the affect of images, how they are interpreted, weighed, subjectively felt and then made manifest in human behaviour. Here, the image is a tangible thing.

In one of the most extensive critical readings of Leckey's work published to date, Kirsty Bell writes, 'The phenomenological questions brought up by the slippery passage from flat image to rounded object or still to moving image are key subjects in Leckey's work. In his pinpointing of the physiological nature of his own perception, he is proposing an extreme subjectivity of response and a privileging of imaginative potential over realistic depiction. As his works themselves assume a singularly subjective position, they demand in return an equivalent response.'²⁵⁷ Leckey's extreme subjectivity of response and privileging of the imaginative potential is key to understanding his approach. However, Bell's claim that the work demands an equivalent response to the material is inaccurate. The connection between Leckey's montages of still and moving

images are tangential, their selection idiosyncratic and his identification with the material overly emphatic, so that any equally powerful subjective reaction to it on the part of the viewer would be impossible. It demands less a viewer's equivalent response to the images presented to us, than the viewer's empathy with Leckey's submission to the image's allure. What we empathise with is not the collated material in and of itself but the confession that accompanies them, revealing the desires and indulgences of his prosumer's immersion.

Leckey's use of language is very particular and strategic, both in the terms he adopts and how he repurposes them. It allows him some purchase on various popular theories around new economies of images but also allows him to repurpose them into far more subjective, nuanced and poetic scripting. This is echoed by how he uses the internal forms of images anew, to mount conceptual paradigms for the prosumer-level theories he is trying to activate. The character he creates for himself is something between sentient browser, new wave healer and errant pedagogue, meditating upon the profound visceral effects of images. The slippage between Leckey's own personality and the orator of his performances is difficult to discern. But while they do describe the impression images make upon him, there is nothing improvised about them; they are scripted, edited, timed and rehearsed, the choreographed responses of an image-prosumer. Through the dramatic monologues and skewed image taxonomies, what we are presented with, first and foremost, is the prosumer's human condition.

Beckman's prosumer-protagonists are, of course, very differently characterised to Leckey's dramatic onstage persona. Beckman's *mise-en-scenes* have each been produced over several years, and in them she casts artist-collaborators or actors in her lead roles. In the previous chapter I outlined three protagonists including a schoolgirl played by Beckman in 'We Imitate, We Break Up', Kalweit as the title role in 'Cinderella', and Distefano as Madi/Wanda in 'Hiatus'. All three female protagonists perform a choreographed series of movements or directives and also move in response to their own image. In the first, Beckman repeats Mario's moves, in the second, Cinderella encounters a doll-like representation of herself and in the final work, Madi operates the virtual reality game through her avatar Wanda, who behaves according to her virtual directions. Beckman's characters perform what it is to confront

their own representations, the positive and negative effects of performing one's self-image. In 'We Imitate', the results of mimicking Mario are exhausting and devastating, in 'Cinderella' the protagonist begins to understand the limitations and subjectification that result from this image game, and in 'Hiatus' Madi's fantasy self-image or avatar, Wanda, is threatened and disenfranchised rather than empowered by the power games of online life. The various realisations and subsequent confrontations by each heroine suggests, in each case, a wilful assertion of their own political subjecthood. In later works, this encounter inspires the protagonist to take action. In Cinderella there is a pivotal moment where she breaks from the traditional *denouement* of the well-known fairy tale. The prince, she realises, is in no sense in search of her but rather her image. The latticed skirt of her ballgown is restrictive, both physically and symbolically (Fig. 21). Hers is a purposeful escape from this particular image-game of self-display.

And this message, disturbingly, is conveyed with the same chorus, pomp and vigour of a prime-time variety show. Because, in a very different register to how Leckey vocalises his prosumer tendencies, Beckman's protagonists' thoughts are often delivered through chorus lines or with extra-diagetic song. In 'We Imitate, We Break Up', the main expressions of the work are conveyed physically, through the body movements of Beckman imitating Mario, expressed through her exertions, emphasised by a rising percussive score. These repetitive physical activities were in keeping with her interest in Piaget's strategies for developmental activity and her scores in this period remain quite minimal. Later on, they became more complex, following collaborations with artists such as Julia Heyward and Michael E Smith, for whom the human voice was an expressive but duplicitous tool, articulated in their respective spoken word performances. Beckman was influenced by Heyward's early solo performances of scripted monologue and cappella singing, wild narratives that would change with the voices Heyward chose to imitate and intonate. Heyward writes about her work, 'This is my Blue Period' (1977), "'Blue Period'" is a metaphysical walk through the artist's body moving from the womb to the stomach to the heart and finally to the brain. Along the way the performer fluctuates between a young brat, an ancient one, a girl next door, and a red neck among others. In this mindscape the sound is often fractured and looped. There is humour, beauty, discomfort, and singing in this stream of consciousness rant.²⁵⁸ Beckman's chorus lines also represent her 'players'

mindscales. From the late 1970s they introduce persistent dark forces to the films' narratives. Collaborating with Halpin on many scores, as well as Heyward, Paul McMahon, David Linton, Sonic Youth and others, the lyrics and pitch combine in her work to create a creeping sense of panic and claustrophobia.

In 'Cinderella', nuanced narratives are carried through the score, in vocals by Beckman and Heyward among others, voices that direct the protagonist, that advise or trick her and which also give her a singing voice to express her frustration and escape plans. The chorus' pitch also creates a deep intensity within this dreamlike psychological space, shot in a darkened studio, where only the characters and props are illuminated in spotlights. In 'Hiatus', there is less use of the choral. The characters are given a voice, which is used to express their various wants and needs and a means by which we understand the communication between Madi and her avatar. Sound effects, such as gurgling water in the irrigation pipelines, or bird song in the virtual garden, or lightning in the electricity storm, increase the dramatic intensity of the images we see before us. As far as dramatic action is concerned, we are constantly observing the dilemmas her players are confronting, and their decisions for strategic resolution. We are witness (not co-player) to how this game is being subverted. Unlike Leckey's performed immersion into this perplexing 'cosmic-autistic spectrum', in Beckman's later works her characters' identify and then withdraw from of her image-games' restrictive nature.

Beckman's works examine the various ways in which we perform images and they perform upon us, and how this pattern or cycle establishes how the political subject is formed. The works also allude to the external forces that encourage and benefit from our participation in these games, activities of self-representation that become self-perpetuating. In 'Hiatus', Wang, named after an eponymous 1980s operating system, is portrayed as a prospector or cowboy in this virtual terrain, a property tycoon by virtue of his aggressive monopolising.²⁵⁹ In her game world whole areas come under dispute by this tycoon against whom it is very difficult, if not impossible, to win. He resembles 'House' in her earlier work 'You The Better', which she has said represents 'the capitalist system'.²⁶⁰ House, an off-screen games master who guides players like a Casino card-dealer is impossible to defeat despite her players continued efforts, and in

'Hiatus' it is only by employing her powers of image-manipulation (in her hologram) and sexual seduction that Madi actually manages to defeat Wang. Accordingly, her film-sets are built like the parameters of a game, in early works an enclosed playground game, then a court game, and finally in 'Cinderella' and 'Hiatus' a computer game, with various levels. Within these physical, architectural confines, the players are forced to make decisions under pressure and confront the various challenges imposed by these capitalist or patriarchal forces. This abstract, filmic space represents the internalisation of overwhelming social pressures.

To go back to McRobbie's proposition of analysing affective labour through the pressures it exerts on those who undertake it, Beckman's works seem quite an apt illustration of this. They detail both the appeal of the image game and the challenge and potential trauma that it imposes upon its players. Both Madi and Cinderella's disaffection is clear in their experience of these games, but rather than accepting it, they identify and challenge it. Leckey's work might also be said to depict some degrees of trauma, surfacing within his 'cosmic-autistic spectrum', the images of the 'traumatic' plasma reverberating on his speakers, or within the general anxiety or confusion he has about the plasmaticness of images. This said, his traumatic encounter with images is less tangibly to do with societal pressures to embody them, as Beckman's characters experience. Aspects of the games Beckman creates for her characters appear to be early indicators of the perils of a Tapscottian form of prosumerism. Beckman's work anticipates the technological developments enabling prosumerism and the kind of participation it requires, prosumers' personal human motivations for taking part, the initial pleasures of competitive participation and ultimately, the challenges and exploitations it yields. What her work also does, quite early on, is forewarn the many dangers of this kind prosumerism, from a woman's perspective. As the title itself implies, 'Hiatus' implies the gap between these worlds, the bright apartment juxtaposed against surreal dark virtual lands, and the moment they are bridged through the simultaneous activities of the protagonist and her avatar. Beckman's 'Hiatus' depicts a protagonist and her self-representation working together to overcome the pressures on her by a patriarchal, capitalist system maintained online.

With Stark's 'My Best Thing', the protagonist's subjective experience as image-prosumer is conveyed neither as a direct address, nor a dramatic fictional characterisation. Rather, it operates somewhat shrewdly between the two. Stark's animated female protagonist represents the artist's altar ego or avatar, and although biographical elements of Stark's personal life appear in the female protagonist's *mise-en-scène* from references to her name and occupation, to her research interests and previous works, to the location and layout of her studio, and indiscrete references to her personal or family life, it is unclear to what degree her encounters, and therefore her persona, is truly fictionalised. Although we might be tempted to directly substitute the artist in here and see the work as a direct self-portrait, there remains some ambiguity to the crossover between artist and avatar and we are left asking, as viewers, whether these online encounters have ever actually taken place. There is some doubt as to the parameters between fact and fiction within the work, a quirk that ensures that we, as curious viewers, remain attentive to the details. This is consistent with Stark's previous works, where the artist often alludes to her personal and working life, studio, friendships and other relationships so one might assume that the only thing masking the artist's biographical elements from us as viewers are the animated figures and their computer-simulated voices.

Stark works across media, often structured around elements of her writing. In an interview with in the New York Times published after 'My Best Thing's first screening at the 2011 Venice Biennale, the artist claimed, 'I got fascinated by feeling so intensely for people I didn't know. I was never into Internet sex, but because it's a form of seduction that took place through typing and interacting visually, I got hooked.'²⁶¹ Stark's writing is not only a means of narrative development but also embodies a more political form, relating to other feminist practices occupied with how political subjectivity might be provocatively written *into* a work. One such artist is Chris Kraus, whose writing style is often purposefully casual and self-referential. Since her move from New Zealand to New York in the early 1970s, Kraus has been involved with making and staging performances and films, blending theatrical techniques with Dada, literary criticism, social activism and performance art. In her later essays, films, books 'I Love Dick' (1997), 'Aliens & Anorexia' (2000) and 'Torpor' (2006), these tropes all emerge through a confessional, diaristic style. 'I Love Dick' is structured around a

series of love letters to an elusive addressee with whom the female writer is obsessed and with whom her long-term partner also becomes obsessed. With some retaliation from the subject of their mutual affection, the three-way – instigated and pursued unapologetically by Kraus’s semi-fictional persona – becomes increasingly complicated. Kraus’ complex and unstable position as protagonist navigating various relatively taboo sexual situations is emphasised and complicated by the personal writing style, and creates quite a differentiated reading of the text in ways that the central tenets of Stark’s ‘My Best Thing’ require a kind of double or dual-attentive viewing, firstly taking the work in at face value and secondly at its dubious remove. There underlies in both love-triangles a sense of the obscuration of truth, and we are aware that every or any layer of Stark’s work, like Kraus’, could be just an elaborate fiction.

In a catalogue entry on her work for the show ‘All of this and nothing’, curators Ann Ellegood, Douglas Fogle, Charles Long, and Corrina Peipon observe that, ‘using text as both material and image, [Stark] examines themes of communication, interpretation and the practice of making art, confronting the conflict between our desire to be understood and language’s inadequacy to aid expression from a philosophical position. The paradoxical oppositions that she finds in language are encompassed by the larger tension at work in her practice... she continually wrestles with a discomfort with her role and perceived failures through the very mediums of which she is so wary.’²⁶²

While this was written some time prior to her making ‘My Best Thing’, her approach is consistent and this analysis holds strong. In this more recent work, that writing is tethered to the very process of making this film and the simultaneous construction of both is stressed throughout. Through clever editing, Stark’s protagonist introduces her counterparts to the film and their listless and apathetic responses play out in real time. Moments that, upon reflection, are clearly constructed initially give the work an inverted sense of realism.

Stark’s work reveals not only its own construction, but the construction process of the avatar, a device which reflects upon the means and intervals at which one constructs one’s own image, at which it is presented and made to work in social encounters. This is both entertaining and awkward in ‘My Best Thing’ as the female protagonist comes across as both assertive and vulnerable, waiting for her counterparts to appear,

respond and interact in each episode. This knowing construction of the self has appeared before in her work. A self-portrait of the artist in ink and collage, with long dark hair and patterned dress is rendered from above, reads the following statement from a piece of paper, legible within the drawing too (and appears as its title), 'Why should you not be able to assemble yourself and write' (2008) (Fig. 33). Here, as Ellgood *et al* observe, 'Stark may not only be "assembling [her]self to write" but perhaps even assembling her *self* in the process as well.'²⁶³ Writing, for Stark, like Kraus, becomes a political ontology, one that echoes, undermines or emphasises the scripting of the self in relation to others and therefore highlights and potentially undermines gender difference.

In a recent article Mark Godfrey has written about this aspect of her writing practice in relationship to 'My Best Thing', 'she recognised immediately that her typed chats, while in some ways recalling Socratic dialogues, were a new kind of text, with particular conditions and conventions. The transcripts were full of new acronyms; there were frequent miscommunications between her and her partners, thanks to their varying command of English and many dialogues were typed out with one hand while the other was otherwise occupied.'²⁶⁴ Stark's text adopts the shorthand of abbreviations and acronyms that appears on prosumer websites, where speed of connection, communication and productivity is essential. What is emphasised by her Italian counterparts is that this new kind of shorthand is a global phenomenon and here linguistic mistakes by foreign correspondents are barely noticeable. Just as Boltanski and Chiapello's connexionist city encourages, everyone reduces their communication (and is reduced by) this new language of abbreviation.

There is also a particular quality of self-awareness to Stark's writing in 'My Best Thing', which is symptomatic of changing culture norms. According to Godfrey, 'It is hard to think of another artist so nakedly present in his or her work, and it can seem staggering that Stark is so willing to disclose intimate details. She says, "There's just no separation for me in terms of what is personal and what is my art." But for all the disarming lack of inhibition, the unrequested confession, we are as far as can be from the old tropes of expressionism, or angst-ridden self-portraiture, or the kind of privately autobiographical art that is annoyingly off-putting (think of Tracey Emin, for

example).²⁶⁵ Godfrey contends that this is due to how she presents herself, as a simple outlined figure in earlier drawings, or as a crude Playmobil animation, so that what we see before us is incongruent with the clichéd image of a tortured artist. She adopts a common register as, 'she realises that this culture is obsessed with the confessional. As subjects, we are increasingly expected to display our "private" tastes and pry on others' intimate confessions. In this context, to reveal her own penchant (whether for Italians or dancehall stars) is not to make any claims about her special status, but just to take her place among other subjects.'²⁶⁶ There is some substance to Godfrey's claims and perhaps this confessional is another very opaque kind of subject-formation, where the diaristic or confessional is just another means of imposing or presenting oneself to a public. What is more significant than Stark's 'naked presence' is the fact that self-representation online, through strategic image placement and abbreviated captioning, is not only a mode of self-representation but also a condition of participation. Her self-representation in this register is not straightforward, its rendering here is somewhat perverse, slippery and impermanent. It is revealing of her personal life and foregrounds the kind of exhibitionism embedded in prosumerism. Stark is not (simply) confessing to us the intricacies of her personal life but is showing us her occupations, the kinds of labour she's involved in, the motivation to participate in this forum, and the satisfaction and apathy that brings.

Stark's self-rendering as author as well as (fictional) protagonist within this work, comes from a twentieth century deconstructionist or postmodern literary tradition and in some passages, her dialogue references other works in this lineage. The first male protagonist asks if the female protagonist has seen Fellini's, '8 ½', a significant element of its concluding scene. Compositing an excerpt of the footage into the work, Stark's female protagonist watches a projection of the recommended excerpt. The episode synopsis describes, 'the scene she watched was the one in which the director character shoots himself at his own press conference when he can't manage to find the words to describe his film in progress'. This statement and the passage itself adopt this self-acknowledging authorship, but also highlight the artist's anxieties about articulating the substance of her own work to others. The work has been structured so that the viewer might feel complicit in its making, learning about the complexities and anxieties of its conception, writing, editing and screening processes at various strategic

points. In a later reference, the female protagonist explains to her counterpart, 'I am unproductively obsessed with [David Foster Wallace's] "Infinite Jest" and just like you the character has an avant-garde father protagonist... [within the novel] 'Infinite Jest' is [a revolutionary form of] isolated entertainment taken to the furthest extreme – supposedly if you start to watch the film you can never stop watching it. It is close to Camsex in some ways.'²⁶⁷ Her film, 'My Best Thing', this reference would suggest, is attempting something similar: highlighting the process of its own formation. She articulates of Foster Wallace's fictional construction that, 'is supposed to be like ecstatic birthing memory, perpetual becoming, but I think there is some positive side to this, perhaps I am deluded.' The plot of Wallace's novel revolves around this eponymous central film and the missing master copy of its film cartridge, referred to in the novel as 'the Entertainment'. It is supposedly so entertaining that viewers lose all interest in anything other than viewing it and eventually die, so that it becomes a potential weapon of mass destruction. Stark's work builds humorously upon similar addictive tendencies of viewers, and reflects upon image-absorption as a potentially violent political instrument. But instead of the trance-like viewing it depicts, the work's sophisticated construction creates a striated or differentiated mode of viewing for us. Stark's *mise-en-abyme* adopts a central fiction (the chatforum encounters) within a more speculative analysis of it (the artist's animated rendering of the chatforum encounters), the splicing together of which creates a complex, reflexive narrative.

Stark's own fictionalised avatar steers us, as viewers, between these two constructions, at once engrossed in its content and simultaneously alienated by doubt. Through her animation Stark's protagonist employs obscuration devices for her female protagonist, perhaps testifying to a kind of self-consciousness created by media representations of the female form. It would be difficult to unpick this strategy, or her others, through McRobbie's method of analysis for affective labour, because Stark is constantly subverting the kind of pressures imposed on her as a (female) image-prosumer through her looping *mise-en-abymes* and her aversions toward direct self-representation, a method in stark contrast to Beckman's overt opposition and Leckey's exploratory assimilations. Stark's practice is better described by strategies of image-deflecting, performed within the image itself, upturning prosumerism to her own ends.

While Stark's rudimentary animations avoids naturalistic representation of her protagonist, her female protagonist does still assert her need for sexual activity in this form. Like Leckey's voracious appetite for images, harnessed and encouraged by the Internet's vast repository, Stark's protagonist performs the role of voracious image-prosumer, in search of new (images of) consumable partners. Her protagonist is the pleasure-seeker rather than the subject of that pleasure sought by us, the viewer. This experience of this work disturbs the traditional subject-object binaries and upsets any latent voyeurist tendencies that we may have as viewers, where we become aware of our own programmatic pleasure-seeking, and the kinds of sexualised images we anticipate from sexual dialogues. Stark's work is one of strategic suggestion and obscuration, perverting prosumerism's *modus operandi* through its very own material.

5.2 Prosumer-images and tools

In divergent ways, these three artists characterise the prosumer as protagonist within their work, from Leckey's performed monologues about voracious image appetites, Beckman's dramatised protagonists antagonising that process, to Stark's avatar subverting the activity in critical and inventive ways. Their respective constructions reveal a range of subjective prosumer responses to the image. Crucially, each protagonist's subjective response to images anticipates their subsequent productivity, illuminating the transitions that activate prosumerism's productive mode. Another aspect of these works is how they use the images and tools of prosumer websites within the works. This is perhaps more apparent in Stark and Leckey's works, artists whose output coincides with the development of these open access technologies, however I will also look at how Beckman uniquely depicts technology-enabled image-games in her analogue process, as early as the 1980s.

In her rendering, Stark uses the prosumer animation programme 'Xtranormal'. Her figures were animated from this openly accessible online animation software which translated her script into an animated movie using text-to-speech and animation technologies. Xtranormal was established as 'a storyboarding tool for writers and film directors' from which Stark programmed the images of her characters, their voicing and different camera scripts, angles and close-ups.²⁶⁸ The incongruity of the adult

subject matter and the juvenile rendering adds to the work's immediate intrigue. The distinctly DIY aesthetic masks those images of the protagonist engaged in social and sexual encounters online. The script seems based on their encounters on 'Chat Roulette', 'where you can interact with new people over text-chat, webcam and mic'.²⁶⁹ Stark's avatar protagonist and her Italian counterparts allude to this interactive device in their physical recognition of one another yet this is different to how they are rendered for us in this rudimentary animation. None of these primary images are presented in 'My Best Thing', if they exist at all. So there is a distancing effect achieved by using one prosumer platform within (or against) the other, when what is depicted is, already, a clear dramatisation of the 'real' online encounter. Stark's female protagonist admits to being addicted to this chat-forum activity, which provides a unique technology for writing a character into existence, and we presume her interest in Xtranormal also stems from this capacity of rendering her characters from nothing. The 'creative' potential of these forums become spaces she has difficulty leaving as she forges her avatars identity and with it forms links to anonymous partners. However this dependency finds itself depicted as a kind of 'apathy' through the second male protagonist, where he has over-committed to too many chat websites. This over-productivity to the point of apathy seems to be a natural evolution of prosumerism's productive mode.

While Stark's prosumerism is evident from the content and appearance of her work, it is conveyed differently in Leckey's work and general output. His prosumerism is a jobbing, practical kind where he has parsed, downloaded and sampled the images within his work. We do not encounter his activities as a prosumer but rather the results of his activity. In 'Cinema' we see a diversity of imagery pulled from a variety of locations. Of poor resolution, many of these images, we presume, have been downloaded from Youtube. Similarly, 'In the Long Tail', is animated with a range of still and moving images, gathered together in strategic linear sequence to animate his animated theory of the giant repository from which they come. Leckey describes his encounters with images as appealing, joyous, claustrophobic and, at times, troubling.²⁷⁰ His enquiry of the seduction of images is articulated *through* those images, presented like forensic evidence of the moment of rapture, preceding the

disillusionment. His exposition is about the moment that image infuses, imposes, weighs upon us, instigating the prosumer process.

Both Leckey and Stark's approach to the visual production of their works, when compared directly to Beckman's, raises the question of the difference or merit in manipulating images as a prosumer, as opposed to shooting one's own image as an artist or film director. Leckey clearly identifies with the process of prosumerism within his own process of assimilation and online image sampling, an activity that he employs within his essayist compositions and performance lectures. Although Stark does not claim to be a prosumer outright, she is exploiting prosumer technology to make 'My Best Thing', and is offering a perspective on this new productive mode. Beckman is quite different. Looking at 'Hiatus' and 'Cinderella', these are films that she has made predominantly on film. Beckman does not implement prosumer websites and recent, associated digital technologies in the same way as Leckey and Stark but what she does depict are the virtual architectures that new technologies create for their users from the 1980s onwards, and some of the profoundly visceral effects that they can have.

According to screening notes, 'Hiatus features a woman playing a Virtual Reality interactive game with logged-on game players and game identities, which confuse and trick her into consciousness. In this game, Madi enters Level One, where the player has been asked to create a habitat that she feels most comfortable in, that she has complete control over and which empowers her. Madi creates a "virtual garden" and a construct of herself to move around in his world.' Later, in Level Two, 'she enters an, "identity game" using technological power for the benefit of the entire community rather than her own gain. Here she encounters an adversary, Wang, who threatens her field, property and power with his own aggressive and expanding encoded architecture... A Virtual Reality sketch of Wang's Palace was built in CAD, rendered and modelled on AVS software and runs on VR software written for the DEC Alpha system 5000 workstation.'²⁷¹ The film was shot largely in 16mm from Beckman's dark studio and like many of her previous films, animated icons were superimposed onto the film stock, rewound and shot in the dark areas of the frame, recorded in carefully timed sequences. According to the artist, 'I keep a notebook where I draw each live action frame and use that as a visual reference for the animation. I never see how any

of this turns out until I get the film back from the lab... In my film "Hiatus" I shot up to 16 layers.²⁷² In 'Hiatus', the CAD animation of a virtual house has been film by Beckman from her computer, then this reel was projected onto her sets and the actors were filmed moving before them within the set's purpose-built architecture. (Fig. 31.)²⁷³

Beckman had been highly regarded in the 1970s and 1980s for creating sophisticated visual effects with an economy of means, and 'Hiatus' is no different. What appears before us is a filmic depiction of 'real' human bodies moving around the dark caverns of early virtual reality architecture. Different formats are brought together in a way that would still be difficult to achieve with developed image-modification software. Beckman has spoken about analogue film as being, visually, 'more advanced' than digital video as it creates a unique sense of spatial recession to host dramatic action. Her early works were all shot in her darkened studio where props and sets are hand painted and additionally spot lit through coloured gels creating a vivid luminescence, a quality quite different to that achieved by digital treatment (in this respect Beckman says she is 'waiting for digital to work more like film.')274 Through her cinematic ingenuity, fusing new video game technology with analogue film, Beckman pictures the physical experience or human encounter with virtual space in the digital realm. This depiction was quite intentional, its significance a keen interest for the artist and an extension of her earlier enquiries into how – on a very basic level – we are programmed to 'perform images'. With new machineries of representation come different pressures and modes of this performance. Beckman has spoken of how, during the period in which she was researching 'Hiatus' all virtual reality developers were consumed by the question of how best to build space in virtual reality, because without realistic spatial coordinates, corners, ground, ceiling, etc, the player or user would experience debilitating cognitive dissonance, a kind of sickness.²⁷⁵ Beyond the 'perceptual research' Beckman was undertaking on the developments of virtual reality, she has said, 'Hiatus is a story about the coordination between technology and technical experience and how it becomes subject to corporate control', and beyond these economic aspects, how she might portray an empowered female character operating shrewdly within this set of relations.²⁷⁶

All three of these artists use technology in diverse ways to frame the process or output of prosumer image-making within the work. So, like their writing of the various subjective responses to prosumerism into the narratives of their respective protagonists, the images that illustrate and populate these narratives become, in different ways, quite reflexive too. The subjective accounts and the production and arrangements of images have distinct and strategic relationships to one another. In Leckey's work both elements correspond and attend to his theories of affectivity and plasmaticness, in Stark's work they compliment her political strategies of diversion and obscuration and in Beckman's work, her films succeed in bridging the gaps between life online and life in the round and the simultaneous image performances required of women in both.

5.3 Film and performance: psychic space

Beckman describes film as the best means to explore the convergences between technology, capitalism, and feminised labour. She has claimed, 'The ultimate challenge women face is to harness the power of technological knowledge to a feminist agenda while struggling against the subordination of technology and labour to private corporate interests, to empower those workers in technology to work on behalf of the right kind of social change.'²⁷⁷ Hers is quite a different approach to representing the architectures or platforms of prosumerism than Stark or Leckey but is equally effective in mapping out its psychic space within the cinematic. From early works onwards, Beckman's oeuvre acknowledges a cycle where images are consumed and then reproduced in our performances of them. But whereas Leckey plays an active prosumer willing to indulge and succumb to the appeal of the image, ready to let that filter through him both physically and intellectually, Beckman's characters experience a point of antagonism while embodying or performing the idealised image. Both artists bring together traditions of performance with the medium of moving image, but they do so in very different ways, Leckey assuming the abject persona of a willing yet sometimes vulnerable mediator of images, Beckman's characters retaliating against the affective image's patriarchal forces. Although he refers to the physiological impact of the image, Leckey's is not a physical performance. Beckman's on the other hand, is very attentive to how the body, especially the female body, responds to the image,

staging troupes of actors or artist collaborators in highly choreographed performances. J Hoberman observed, in 1981, 'There is something undeniably calisthenic about her vision.' And this 'calisthenic' approach that Beckman has carries through to her later works, where there is a fitness and dexterity to her female protagonists in *Hiatus*, whose challenges are as physical as they are intellectual.²⁷⁸

This calisthenic approach exposes the various external pressures and threats that her protagonists are internalising. In 1975, Beckman herself performed in Vito Acconci's groundbreaking 'Red Tapes', a video exposition of the relationship between self and state, where she observed the construction of his filmic space as an expression of his identity²⁷⁹. Participating in the making of this work was pivotal to the artist, who understood the deep space of the film set as potential metaphor to the physiology or 'map' of the mind. Observing Acconci, Beckman's characters and their actions were illuminated amid the set's darkness. This meant that their physical gestures could be understood at face value, but also – suspended in this surreal cavernous set – in more symbolic terms. Acconci's dark studios emphasised the 'inner world' of his characters and Beckman adopted this as a filmic device.²⁸⁰

It is during the 1970s, that a new generation of predominantly North American and European artists began to film these highly choreographed performances, which represented a much wider assimilation of broadcast or cinematic image into the performance of everyday life. This period when video and broadcast technologies were rapidly advancing was formative in what Beller coins the cinematic mode of production. In her works, shooting physical activity in the darkness created a surrealist aesthetic but also allowed for DIY animation process superimposed after initial action shots. Curator Douglas Eklund has observed of Beckman's practice, that 'through the constructed nature of her films – with their brightly coloured, toy-like props and their emphasis on rewinding and on going backward, for example – Beckman miraculously conveys the ways in which we are always shaped by our experience. Within each work, the kinetically expressive movements of the actors are based on the "task-orientated" choreography of Lucinda Childs and Trisha Brown, for Beckman is primarily concerned with drawing an image in space that unlocks an underlying emotional experience of great poignancy.'²⁸¹ Beckman herself has acknowledged the influence of Trisha Brown

and Yvonne Rainer in her work, artists who had really considered the body as a site of subjectification but also as a potential site of action.²⁸²

But unlike Rainer and Brown's choreography, based on (if subversive to) normative quotidian activities and performed by troupes of specially trained performers, Beckman's choreographies introduced her protagonists to sculptural or pictorial renderings of bodies, depicting, for example, how a woman might encounter or confront her own image. In this sense her works bridged the gap between these early feminist choreographers, and the more recent performance and video practices, like those of Mike Kelley and Michael E Smith. Smith was a performer who created his own alter egos, one of whom was 'Mike', who acted as a conduit for the mixed messages broadcast by daytime television talk and entertainment, the results amusing and often pathetic. Eklund observed of Smith's work 'Down in the Rec Room' (1978-2009), that 'part of the shock of the Mike persona, a sad-sack Everyman who dresses up with nowhere to go and embodies the terminal point in the trickling down of trends and fashion in American culture, was how relentlessly it went against the entire culture of hip and the attendant idea that whoever was performing for you lived a freer and more unconventional existence than you did.' Eklund identifies the similarities between Smith's abject personas and Beckman's assertive protagonists, in that 'their works are similarly concerned with the relationship between individuals and images and how images structure our perception of ourselves and of reality rather than vice versa.'²⁸³ He summarises that, 'what was unique to Smith's generation was their maturation in the era of television, which acted as a structuring mechanism for how the self is viewed, insidiously fostering new patterns of consumption that provided the illusion of belonging while only increasing the isolation that demanded yet more gestures of symbolic participation.'²⁸⁴ Beckman's work foresees new modes of image prosumerism far beyond the scope of broadcast television, as early as 1986, in 'Cinderella' where she explores the nature of female participation in aggressive and competitive computerised 'identity games'.

What was new to the 1970s was the artists' interplay between moving image and live performance to reflect the new reciprocity between person and broadcast image which was becoming, as Eklund puts it, a new 'structuring mechanism for [seeing] how

the self is viewed.' Works by the artists I have mentioned, Smith, Kelley, Heyward and Beckman in particular, were not purely rebuttals, critiquing the broadcast media by expropriating and parodying its output, but also open admissions of cooperation, participation and complicity through a performed dramatic identification.²⁸⁵ Here, monologue and physical choreography testified to the all-encompassing nature of this subjective experience. Whereas Kelley, Smith and Heyward all performed their own protagonists, or abject personas, in Beckman's case this observation of the 'cinematic mode of production' was dramatised, scripted and choreographed with casts of actors and collaborating artists. Crucially, none of these characters or personas was portrayed as an inactive, passive or victimised subject. They all played quite willing, indulgent, if somewhat naïve participants.

Leckey and Stark similarly exhibit elements of this performative reciprocity between subject and image in their works. Leckey very clearly claims Beckman's sometime collaborator Mike Kelley as an, 'art hero', and adopts much of his performative characteristics from the American artist's conceptual references to the physical.²⁸⁶ In Leckey's conceptual paradigms, the body is often referenced, with material or information *passing through it*, and the artist as a conduit for these brands or branded, idealised media personas, often falling short of the mark. In 'Cinema' his four chapter titles allude to the body and yet the images they are carrying are only tangentially connected. Leckey regularly adopts this vocabulary of physically imbibing images to describe how they are sensed and in turn what relations they produce.²⁸⁷ To 'consume' and 'produce' an image is, in this lexicon, like a metabolic (as opposed to purely economic) process, as material that might pass through the artist's body, or come from the body and circulate it back to the world. As Ralph Rugoff wrote of Kelley before him, 'unlike many of his peers, Kelley chose not to appropriate media imagery but instead registered the devastating effects, the shame and degradation, wreaked on the image and object consumer. Kelley doesn't simply depict pathetic – his works are so limply anaemic, so plainly suffering for a bad case of rejectionitis, that you can almost feel sorry for them as *art objects*. Despite evidence of the artist's secondary personas, there's no coyness or sense of psychological remove. In a society fuelled by pictures of success, these images of failure generate the anxiety which surrounds the taboo.'²⁸⁸

In 1992, American critic John Hanhardt writes about Mike Kelley's work being motivated by a 'crisis in self-representation' in consumer society. Handhardt writes about Kelley's work 'Kappa' (1986), a video with Kelley performing the eponymous protagonist, mixing icons of Shinto folklore with themes in popular psychology. Handardt writes, 'the transformation of the Kappa character and the movement of the Kappa between high and low culture situates Kelley's characterisation in close proximity to David Kronenberg's *Videodrome*, where television is depicted as an absorbing technology that literally invades the body and consumes the television viewer (the consumer himself).' He addresses 'the enunciation of the body on Kelley's videotapes and performances' and 'how the body is recorded and articulated describes a crisis of definition and self-representation within contemporary society.'²⁸⁹ He continues, 'Mike Kelley captures in his desperate and brilliantly inside-out deconstruction of the so-called American dream as the nightmare, or backside, of American consumer culture.'²⁹⁰ What Hanhardt refers to as an 'inside-out deconstruction' of Kelley's assimilation of the American dream through its products or consumables, might perhaps lend to a concise description of how these prosumer-artists are depicting this occupation from the 'inside-out', by exploring the subjective appeal and trauma of prosuming images, rather than the external or diagnostic mode of chapter three's various theorists and writers.

Frances Stark has claimed to be influenced by several of Beckman's contemporaries too, Cindy Sherman and Sherrie Levine in particular, artists who share with Beckman a loose association with what is now generally referred to as the 'Pictures' generation, following the eponymous exhibition and subsequent essay by Douglas Crimp in 1977 and 1979 respectively.²⁹¹ Stark has a tattoo on her right inner arm just above the elbow that reads 'Me Edith', in simple cursive letters. The significance of this tattoo was observed in an article by Leah Ollman in the LA Times in 2010, as a key to understanding Stark's work. Edith was Stark's grandmother, an amateur photographer. 'There's a sepia-tone print of her in a bathing suit looking really cute,' Stark explained. 'She was a big woman, but she wasn't so enormous when she was 16, or however old she was in the picture. I think she thought no one would recognize her, so what she did was lean the picture on the vinyl tablecloth and take a Polaroid of it. She wrote on the back, "Me Edith."' Stark discovered the Polaroid in the late 1980s, just as she was

learning about Cindy Sherman's multiple self-portraits and Sherrie Levine's re-photographing other people's images. What her grandmother did struck her as an authentic form of conceptualism, 'about her looking at herself, thinking about photographs, and thinking about other people looking at her.'²⁹² 'Me Edith' was the title of Stark's first exhibition, as an undergraduate at San Francisco State University and the term anticipates the conceptual and methodological maneuvers of 'My Best Thing'. Both indicate a series of transitions; of the artist looking at an image of herself, becoming conscious of this activity of looking at it and of presenting or translating that experience online, consuming and producing that image, of considering how she might represent the complexity of this process while subverting the focal point. What Stark also presents, a generation after Beckman, is a new 'structuring mechanism for [seeing] how the self is viewed.' In 'My Best Thing', the filmic space – her very basic animated video – reproduces the psychic space, and the complexity of how the filmic and the psychic are fused within the activity of prosumerism.

What I have tried to convey over this chapter so far, are the various ways in which these artists represent the internalised aspects of prosumerism, deconstructing and depicting it. In each of these works, quite differently, the artists allude to their different motivations for prosuming images. In Leckey's case it emerges as a very primitive instinct, a physical appetite, in Stark's case that appetite is construed as a personal, sexual one, as well as a long-standing professional curiosity and appetite for images which might be satisfied on these new platforms. In Beckman's case, much earlier on, 'Madi' seems motivated to participate in the virtual reality as a means of fantasy and escape, an interest in a novel technology, but also in the creative, physical and competitive challenges of the image-game. In every instance, this process of prosuming appeals to the protagonist's curiosities and creates powerful and motivating subjective responses. The activity of image parsing, consuming and producing promises a kind of primitive or physical pleasure and a means of creative play, inevitably leading to a sense of potential threat, ill-feeling and hazard. From there, the activity of a jobbing prosumerism which stems from these responses is represented as a mixed experience. At certain points, through the pairing of prosumer images and intense, claustrophobic or disillusioned interior monologues, the artist's convey this occupation as a complicated, contested and exploitative one. In each of

the narratives, come inevitable turning points where the promises of prosumerism are disregarded through the protagonist's actual experience: Stark's is ignored, Leckey's is confined, Beckman's excluded.

All of the works create or achieve an internal dynamic, where the material combinations of performance and image that actually compose and comprise the work also reflect on the protagonists' prosumer condition: the condition of what it is to feel compelled to perform images through their voracious consumption and active (re)production. Elements of the works such as the subjective narrative, the sampling or rendering of images from prosumer websites, and the physical choreography and allusions to how the human body navigates between them, all reflect on the conditions of prosumer production. These artists find a way of exposing the allure of images, the relationships that they establish with and between people, the forms of image-dependency that that engenders, and how indulging these relationships, the habit of image-consumption and image-production comes to anticipate and perpetuate a whole new productive mode.

5.4 Participation in the digital realm

Through their works, the artists' protagonists seem not only to question their impetus for prosuming images, but also the darker forces behind the various platforms that encourage or 'facilitate' this. In Beckman's 'Hiatus' the extra-diegetic voices that represent games-masters and adversaries (the blue cowboy, the Geisha, the Native American informant) become dark forces, ever more sinister and oppressive. In Stark's work, the chat-forum she's invested in creates obvious distance and compromises between herself and her partners, her protagonist ultimately left alone. And in Leckey's 'In the Long Tail', the Internet's search and acquisition capacities assume the same omnipotent force as a pagan deity, capable of the same liberation and oppression, instilling fear or ecstasy on the many who use it. Although theirs are quite different platforms – the virtual reality game, the chat forum, the Internet search engine, respectively – they are all platforms for productive prosumerism.

These prosumer-artists' works address various subjective compulsions to prosume, while, in critical theory, the motivations and effects of this form of participation becomes a greater source of interest. Sociologist Nancy Thumin evaluates 'self-representation' in digital culture²⁹³ by prosumer platforms, which she sees as a whole new productive and institutionalising genre. While claiming to provide a platform for creativity and liberation, she contends, companies like Twitter or Facebook actually only protect and build their monetary value through encouraging users' participation. There is a deceptive turn she implies, in the concept of self-representation, which 'contains an even more explicitly political claim than *representation* [author's own italics] and this is because the term itself contains a challenge to the idea that it is the job of one set of people to represent another set of people. This challenge is present in the implicit (and sometimes explicit) claim that in self-representation people are "doing it for themselves".²⁹⁴

Thumin's is a critical analysis of how digital platforms mediate self-representation and perpetuate existing hierarchies. Her research identifies how the practice of 'self-representation' on digital platforms are evident in broadcasting, museum and online social networks (she names Facebook),²⁹⁵ implemented by encouraging 'ordinary people' to share their stories. The motivating factor for public institutions displaying a multiplicity of representations is also its legitimising factor, 'for the institutions, the facilitation of self-representation contributes to their legitimacy today.'²⁹⁶ The common and binding assumption for each self-representational practice is that there is an audience. Thumin's research is grounded in audience studies, particularly 'Stuart Hall's encoding/ decoding model and subsequent notions of a circuit of culture (Hall 1973, 1997). The makers of self-representations in today's digital culture are [also] members of the audience or, as Jay Rosen (2006) has argued, they are the "people formerly known as the audience".²⁹⁷ Thumin disputes the proliferation of self-representational platforms as one of social progression, that 'seeing this history of one of linear progress from the authority of the expert male voice to the authority of a plurality of ordinary people's voices; rather, the history is one of tension over the place and the use of other voices in the spaces of the cultural sphere.'²⁹⁸

Focusing on Facebook as a digital mediator, she observes that, as 'participatory media become more and more a part of our daily lives, the requirement for self-representation is only likely to be extended.'²⁹⁹ She questions the accountability of these privately-owned mediators and the accuracy in their claims of being truly representational institutions, as well as warning that other public institutions will suffer as a direct consequence of these claims. She also regards the different means by which they entice or 'include' users, 'the role of public cultural institutions in facilitating self-representation is challenged by the argument that commercially run social media sites allow the creativity (including self-representation) of ordinary people on a massive scale and (it is claimed) subject to fewer processes of mediation.'³⁰⁰ In simpler terms, new 'institutions' like Facebook or Twitter would imply that they offer more inclusion and better creative opportunities for the general public than the more established institution of the (non-specified) museum. Thumin questions the motivation of the institutions that make these claims, stressing that people who represent themselves through the prosumer platforms she identifies, 'are doing so from a structurally different power position from those people, and institutions, and companies which facilitate the participation.'³⁰¹ The impetus for self-representation, the belief that particular platforms will do so, and that this participation will be newly liberating are ideas brought through in both Stark and Beckman's work in particular. The managerial hierarchy is audible within the work of Beckman, scored through her particular and often menacing choral arrangements. Stark's relative powerlessness comes through at different points in the work's denouement, particularly at its conclusion. Leckey approaches this power play through degrees of vision in his 'cosmic-autistic' spectrum, where an Internet user might feel their scope infinite it is technically restricted by the number of connections any one page might provide towards another. Leckey's scheme implies that some bodies might have a greater perspective, or access to a perspective of the whole than others; a scheme to which his perspective seems locked in.

A very different theory about the political instrumentalisation of practices of self-representation was written in 1999 by a group of French philosophers Tiquun (including Julien Coupat) who identified with lineage of the Situationists.³⁰² Tiquun regards the activity of self-representation in relation to self-profiling. Their concerns

are similar however their theory has a radically different conclusion to Thumin's, accusing the promise of social participation through self-representation as illusory and deceitful and as ultimately concealing the political activities of Empire (as defined by Hardt and Negri). 'Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl'³⁰³ is a contemporary theory that, according to its writers, might be assumed by any gender or class, a general condition that is historically inscribed; the Young-Girl is essentially Empire's pacifying construct.³⁰⁴ They write, 'the Young-Girl is explicitly *not* a gendered concept... the Young-Girl is simply the *model citizen* as redefined by consumer society since World War I, in explicit response to revolutionary menace. As such, the Young-Girl is a *polar figure*, orienting, rather than dominating, outcomes' [author's own italics].³⁰⁵ There is a scourge in society, a 'biopolitical monopoly on all medical know-how, the constraint of all deviance by an army ever better equipped with psychiatrists, coaches, and other benevolent "facilitators."' This is what they identify as the 'anthropotechnical project of Empire', which is, '*a matter of profiling its citizens*'.³⁰⁶ By identifying the 'Young-Girlisation' of society, Tiqqun addresses this anthropo-technical project and aims at combating its resultant political inertia. 'Our task is less a matter of converting Young-Girls than to tracing all of the dark corners of the fractalized face of Young-Girlization.'³⁰⁷ The theory is based on the assumption that the Young Girl is a constantly self-profiling narcissist and politically passive, a mindless consumer and a symbol against which rebellion appears 'barbarous, indecent, and even completely totalitarian.' Thus she also pacifies others. Her appearance occupies the field of the visible, in a military sense: 'Among the troops occupying all visibility, Young-Girls are the infantry, the rank and file of the current dictatorship of appearances.' Tiqqun writes that, 'it is precisely because she represents the total acculturation of self, that the Young-Girl constitutes the most advanced carrier of the ethos of the Spectacle, and of its abstract behavioral norms.' Furthermore, she is 'a summons to every person to maintain her/himself at the height of the images of the Spectacle.'³⁰⁸

The Young Girl, Tiqqun wrote, represents a 'modern kind of work', specialising in the mimicry of advertising images. This is all part of Empire's grander scheme. Tiqqun ask how would capitalism have 'managed to mobilise affects, molecularising its power to the point of colonising all of our feelings and emotions, if the Young-Girl had not proposed herself as *intermediary*?' There is a significant implication that 'affect' and its

physical manifestations is produced by but also actually productive of particular economic relations within capitalism. Despite Tiquin's claims that 'Young-Girl' is not a gendered concept, its value has been contested on these grounds. Taken up literally, this theory, scripted by established by white male philosophers, accuses the historically and politically non-visible young girl of obscuring and perpetuating the extended wrongdoing of patriarchal hierarchies. Nina Power questions why, if 'all the old figures of patriarchal authority, from statesmen to bosses and cops, have become "Young-Girlified"', the book is precisely not called 'Theory of the Wizeden-Pope'. She claims that Tiquin's 'equation of the social with 'youthitude' and 'feminitude' perpetuates the kind of misogyny it claims to be critiquing. Power asks, 'What, ultimately, would it mean to let the Young-Girl speak for herself and not through the categories imposed upon her by a culture that heralds her as the metaphysical apex of civilisation while simultaneously denigrating her, or even the categories that Tiquin mobilise to take her apart in a subtly different way?'³⁰⁹ Power suggests, 'it is easy to expand their analysis to encompass developments in social media that have taken place since the book's original publication: the direct facial and self-valorising imperatives of Facebook, the endless mimetic re-postings of Tumblr, fashion blogs, and so on.'³¹⁰

What Power misses, nor does the theory itself adequately convey is how the Young-Girl might manifest in the body of others who are not young girls, in the bodies of men and women of different ages, genders, ethnicities, sexualities, and so on and by this I do not mean in any explicit drag performance, but how those contentious characteristics of the Young-Girl, the narcissistic self-profiler, might now be embedded as a productive mode and labour norm for all prosumers irrespective of gender on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and so on. While Tiquin's theory might be based in a reductive stereotype of a young girl, its essence or purpose is not tied to gender but describes a productive mode of prosumerism as an obscuring-device that turns our attention away from the political mechanisms behind the spectacle. Here, Tiquin establishes a field of play where seemingly banal representational activity conceals political subterfuge. Their provocation intended to foreground the media culture of juvenile exhibitionism and how we are encouraged to indulge that in order to feel a self-validating form of social participation and political visibility.

Although radically different in style and purpose, Thumin and Tiqqun's theories suggest how prosumerism, the basic architecture of which is a platform for self-representation, might also falsely promote itself as a mechanism for political representation. Ultimately this is not a question about the homogenisation of the human body, but of the universal pacification of the subject involved in activities of self-representation billed as participatory. Both Stark and Beckman seem to represent this distinction well, how their female characters perform images resembles contemporary forms of labour. In Beckman's work she describes 'Hiatus' as an, 'identity game'³¹¹, one that is competitive and not always beneficial to the player. Madi's performance of the image (of Wanda), and Cinderella's performance of the image (of the virtual doll) creates a central antagonism within the image itself, and proposes that this kind of self-representation has no logical or successful conclusion. The idealised image is a self-perpetuating yet unattainable construct. Her work is sceptical about the platforms encouraging this kind of participation, implying their false promise of liberation. This appears early in 'We Imitate', later in the 'Cinderella' game and culminates in 'Hiatus', where the computer game for girls presents extra challenges rather than institutional support. There is something particularly misogynistic about Wang's character and he represents this hostile online environment in which Wanda must be very strategic. This platform for her 'identity building' is a highly contested ground, little concerned with her actual identity or political subjecthood. Although there are no explicit prosumer platforms evident in her work, online mediators appealing to users desire for creative outlet and connective output is something that Beckman depicts early on, through Madi's initial euphoria at this activity in virtual reality, which then later turns to a sense of entrapment. Although Beckman's works don't go so far as to claim that these mediators (perhaps embodied through her games-masters) ultimately maintain the status quo, there is a deep sense of claustrophobia maintained throughout her productions. Early on, Beckman's works are sceptical about the Janus-face of prosumerism in a highly sophisticated and original fashion.

Leckey's work might provide a more complex articulation of Tiqqun's theory. Returning to 'Parade', where his own physical appearance gradually assumes the textures and

qualities of the images that circulate behind him, he presents not an exegesis on the performance of gender, but rather the different tonal qualities that appear, that are produced by the subject, when performing the consumer image. Catherine Wood's deft synopsis of this work is perhaps usefully requoted here, observing that 'Parade', 'proposes its subject to be lost in a struggle to distinguish between interiority and surface'.³¹² His own in relation to the interiority and surface of the image is the subject to which he returns in 'Cinema', evaluated through his adapted term, the 'plasmatic' and later, through the giant image repository of the Internet. The viscosity between that interiority and surface; the appeal of images, their affect and its internalisation, and their subsequent externalisation through self-representation inform the many concentric layers of his works. In Tiqqun's theory the Young Girl represents a relatively passive but highly destructive conduit for the spectacle, as while she showcases and self-profiles in the spotlight, the dark powers of Empire are free to roam and conquer in her shadow. Leckey's Young-Girlisation, evident first in 'Parade' and in later works as his prosumer-protagonist, plays not a passive, ignorant and destructive subject, but rather a knowing, alert but nevertheless self-indulgent one, recognising, performing and visualising his instinctive, physical urges for his consumption and production of images between the camera and the screen.

Here, how the appeal or allure of images is felt by the prosumer at different stages is exposed in a variety of visual and literary ways, reflexively showing the protagonist's own relationship to images within their general conditions of production. This productivity is framed within the protagonist's growing awareness and intuitive sense of the pervasive outside pressures harnessing it. The prosumer-artists' works represent not only our immediate and subjective responses to images that draws us toward productive activity but also how the imposing power dynamics of the new institutions that encourage or 'enable' it seep into this quotidian experience. What is sophisticatedly deconstructed within these works is the new institutionalisation of prosumerism as experienced from the prosumer's ground up, or the 'inside-out'.

5.5 Détournement

In this chapter, I have regarded how each of these artists attend to the internal workings of prosumerism. I have detailed how they have scripted or scored their protagonist or avatar's subjective responses to images, the appeal or allure that it held and its affect upon their protagonist's person. I address the various ways in which prosumer technology or images have been strategically put to work in these different performance or moving images, media consistent with the particular affective and performative labour of image-prosumerism. I have looked at how, through sophisticated means, the artists also represent their protagonists confronting their obsessions and occupations, of acknowledging that impetus for self-representation, for exhibitionism, and intuiting where that pressure comes from.

At various points the protagonists' experience some anxieties about their participation as prosumers, and the pressures exerted on them by various different image-platforms. What I have alluded to on separate occasions within the writing is how, in various ways, each artist uses the structural device of a *mise-en-abyme*. This is a French term originally used in literature but also applicable to art and film, where an image is composited within an image, and becomes a recursive or reflexive image, like a story within a story, or a film excerpt within a film frame, a device in which the piece's own mode and means of production, own construction or authorship, comes into the frame.³¹³ Leckey creates this effect by depicting himself as a man physically imbibing or assimilating images in his performance work littered with these same images. Beckman's *mise-en-abyme* appears when her female protagonists confront their various sculptural or pictorial representations. In Stark's work she implements it in various corresponding ways, explicitly in the film excerpts she plays within her video frame of Fellini's '8½' referencing self-referential filmmakers. This reflexivity is compounded by digitally animating her female protagonist as a Playmobil avatar, standing in for, and therefore also partially obscuring, the photographic image of her as sex-forum prosumer. Here the *mise-en-abyme* aids the conceit of the self-referential author or artist, simultaneously reconstructing and deconstructing their own presence within the narrative.

The prosumer-artists are representing the subjective appeal and subsequent activity of prosumerism by externalising or exposing its internalising devices within their own

work. The 'image games' that protagonists play out are transposed within the frame. Theirs are sophisticated deconstructions of the power dynamics of prosumerism. Leckey's convergence of performance and video seems the most appropriate medium for his exposition of the disturbed prosumer and the same might be said of the works of Beckman and Stark. Leckey's persona is both critically aware and overtly sentient, reserved and entirely immersed. His works neither appeal nor relate solely to art audiences and artists, respectively, but to anyone who might have knowledge or experience here, living 'under the image'. Equally, in both appearance and subject matter, Stark and Beckman's work render the stuff of prosumerism to represent this common quotidian activity and the individual subjectivities that perpetuate it.

This structural conceit and its effects on the viewer might find some kinship with Guy Debord's coinage and use of the term 'détournement', first mentioned in the third chapter, which means to turn something around from its normal course or purpose, elaborated in his 1957 essay, the 'Mode d'emploi du détournement' [A User's Guide to Détournement].³¹⁴ Debord's 'détournement', describes the dynamics when the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of an artwork (and Debord originally implies works of art to be expansive and encompass all forms including literature, film and architecture) are reconfigured so as to provoke or activate their viewer. This détournement, this turning something aside from its normal course or purpose could mean simply changing one intrinsic quality of a found element to altar its entire meaning, for example, applying an advertisement slogan to a new image thereby creating a new provocation (what he called, a minor détournement), or it could be the somewhat different gesture of changing an extrinsic element, where an artwork shown completely out of context would change its meaning entirely and thereby somehow renew its critical agency or potency (what he referred to as, a deceptive détournement).³¹⁵ In 'minor' or 'deceptive' forms, he contends, détournement works in direct opposition to the capitalist strategies of 'recuperation', which is the process by which once radical statements, ideas or works of art have been commodified and capitalised. Thus, Debord proclaimed in 1957, '[détournement] re-radicalises previous critical conclusions that have been petrified into respectable truths and thus transformed into lies.'³¹⁶ This détournement is an artistic composition of the intrinsic or extrinsic elements of the spectacle, elements that were originally radical but have,

in some unstated interim period, been recuperated and petrified by capitalism. Although Debord's *détournement* outlines no specific way in which the audience or viewer might respond to this newly potent work, the second 'law' of his manifesto does observe that 'the main impact of a *détournement* is directly related to the conscious or semiconscious recollection of the original contexts of the elements'. In order for *détournement* to take effect, therefore, the material which the artist is presenting must be relatively familiar to the popular imaginary or common subjectivity.

So, Debord's *détournement*, as an artist's work, 're-radicalises these [popular or familiar] elements', rejuvenating them, and thereby exposing or exhibiting the purposes or motivations of its rhetoric. This description of *détournement* comes when Debord still believes in the radical potential of an artwork, although exactly what he sees exemplifying *détournement* is not prescribed. My understanding of it is as a work that, irrespective of medium, is able to contain and display the means through which the spectacle operates, showing us the images which circulate within it and the rhetoric that promote and perpetuate them, and allowing for these two elements to collide in full view, rather than sail smoothly into our 'pseudo-cyclical consciousness' as perhaps slick advertising campaigns might have done, then as now. Rather than facilitating and perpetuating the mono-directional flow of the spectacle, this *détournement* creates a barrier, a blockage, or a receptacle, so that the spectacle's forces cannot flow so smoothly, but so that its chief mechanisms of seduction, the appealing image, remains still in sight. And by encountering this we perhaps recognise our self-indulgence as viewers and become aware of ourselves as part of this productive process. Regarding the dynamics of this *détournement* as a kind of reflexive structural conceit like a *mise-en-abyme*, the indulgent uniform viewing and cyclical consciousness of prosumerism is confronted, disturbed or somehow differentiated.

The idea of *détournement* is suitably loose and openly interpretable to be, by this stage, highly romanticised but it is perhaps useful in thinking through the structural dynamics of the prosumer-artists' works, their depiction of charmed and later disturbed prosumers through their manipulations of popular or prosumer imagery as well as other choreographic and filmic devices, and the various subjective, self-

indulgent and sometimes political motivations of prosumers that these works show. Also, it might help us to move forward and understand how these works also present to us an alternative architecture of display, a crash site where the contradictions and compromises of prosumerism are shown to collide and where that collision is, in fact, the thing on show. Now, I will begin to look at how other extrinsic elements of prosumerism are displayed within these works and explore how, as works, they represent innovative architectures of détournement.

Chapter 6 – Prosumerism’s platforms exposed

6.1 The artists’ reprisals

6.2 Critical metonymy

6.3 Sites of artistic productivity

6.4 Productive display platforms

6.5 Capitalising on prosumerism

6.1 The artists’ reprisals

In the previous chapter I focused on how the works exposed the intrinsic aspects of prosumerism and its subjective operations on its agent by playing out the affect of the image, scripting specific monologues and manipulating prosumer images, tools and platforms. In this chapter I look at the various platforms in which the works were produced and address how they feature in the work through the various protagonists’ working or studio environments. I assert that here the different sites of image production for the prosumer and the artist, the browser and studio, are shown to have a rapport. They appear one within the other, depicting how thoroughly the spaces of artistic practice have been recuperated by prosumerism’s new mode of flexible labour. Rather than attempting to reclaim that studio as a sanctified, isolated space, these prosumer-artists’ have chosen to unite the two architectures within their work and represent their overlaps or collisions through dual exposition.

I address how the exhibitionary aspects of prosumerism, the prosumer’s impetus to show or share images is drawn comparatively against the artists’ motives and tendencies to exhibit their work, these dual exhibitionary modes depicted within the same frame. Again this reflects the recuperation of artistic labour, via exhibitionary practices, into the display mechanisms and promotional rhetoric of prosumerism. I look at the various sites of production, the personal browser and the studio, the exhibition space and the prosumer website and how the artists diversely reprise and then capitalise upon these ‘creative’ and exhibitionary spaces. Expanding from the Debordian détournement, I claim that the prosumer-artists’ works create an

architecture of *détournement*, which might be taken up as a new model of critical exhibition-making.

But first, let me be clear about what I am referring to when I use the terms 'recuperate' and 'reprise' in this particular context. As I have tried to establish in the first section, prosumerism is a productive mode and affective labour that originally takes its lead from the practice and lifestyle of the 'virtuoso artist' as she was described by Virno *et al* in the late twentieth century. That is, prosumerism inherits its working dynamics (independent, flexible working, affective labour, creative aspirations, communicative impetus) from those of the virtuoso artist. Therefore we might say that prosumerism represents the 'recuperation' of a general conception of artistic practice (not incidentally, 'recuperation' was the term Debord used to describe the dynamics of capitalism's appropriation of artistic material, to which 'détournement' was to originally coined to respond). What is being reprised by the artists within these works, is their assertion of their work as creative practice since moderated by prosumerism.

What the works establish, by showing us these prosumer images and affects within various, simultaneous sites of production, is the artists' (or protagonist's) role as both progenitor and inheritor of this 'recuperated' form of 'creative' prosumer practice. Leckey, Stark and Beckman's attention to this recuperated mode of production cannot be a return exactly to that model of the 'virtuoso artist', because it would be difficult to prove that this model ever actually existed, it being more of a generic and functional pastiche of the artist used by *Operaist* writers and New Spirit thinkers post-1968. Such a notional or utopian return would be impracticable, and seems far from the artists' agenda, but their depiction of their creative practice, sites of production, and platforms for exhibition, simultaneously as artists and as prosumers does present an interesting perversion or subversion for this recuperated creative mode, setting up an interesting juxtaposition that contrasts prosumerism's claims against creative realities. The works they are producing, as artists, is made from the materials and experiences that they have had as prosumers but what they bring together is far more cohesive and provocative than any prosumer's deluge of images.

One might reasonably ask whether the prosumer-artists' works 're-radicalise' artistic practices in the same way that Debord's détournement promises to 're-radicalise previous critical conclusions that have been petrified into respectable truths and thus transformed into lies'? Well, possibly not, because the kind of artistic practices extolled in theories of affective labour are non-specific and romanticised, and therefore, arguably, non-radical to begin with. For Debord, presumably, re-radicalising conclusions meant that aspects of détournement's central elements were originally radical, and that they had been dulled or anaesthetised by the commercial appearance or rhetoric of the spectacle, for example – lets say – provocative images used in advertising. If prosumer-artists are not 're-radicalising' artistic practice, then they are certainly addressing prosumerism radically and explicitly as artists, rendering for us prosumerism's Janus-face, its dual appeal and extortions, and showing themselves, or their protagonists, as its compromised but still willing agents. So while it might not be 're-radicalising' artistic practices in this very general Debordian sense, there is enormous critical significance to their depiction of prosumerism's *recuperated* productive environments and exhibition architectures, co-existing within the original and the reprised.

6.2 Critical metonymy

What are the artists' claims for the works relative to 'prosumerism', given that Leckey is the only one of them who openly or explicitly identifies with the occupation? How are these works alluding to and operating upon this phenomenon? Within each of the prosumer-artists' work, particular images function as metonyms for larger societal conflicts and, in different ways, these artists use the moving image to assess the relationships between images and identity politics. Writer Timothy Martin has observed this of Beckman's works, 'The structure of this Beckman trilogy is that of metonymy, that is, attributes and correlatives substituting for signs, constructing a zigzag of meaning. Each sequential element is perceived not next to each other but on top of each other; a newly visible impression superimposed on the retained image. Furiously animated objects, architecture and persons are presented as a ready-made sign system, into which a subject is then introduced. Each film recounts a peculiar psychodrama, whose *mise-en-scene* is an idiomatic physical world, propelled by

repetitive chants and reflexive cadences.^{'317} Indeed, Beckman has proposed, of 'Cinderella', that she aimed, 'to find a folktale that could be a metaphor for women and technology, the history of industry. It was easy to overlay the symbols of the story with industrial and post-industrial motifs. The Forge is an extension of the hearth in the factory.'³¹⁸ There are a number of motifs that appear in Beckman's work, in the costumes, character names, props, sets, and score, motifs that are quite figurative and which represent different symbolic elements of her meta-narratives.

In 'Hiatus', for example, many of the fictional characters, plotlines and narrative structures are derived from real social events or corporate enterprises that motivated the artist to make the work. Madi is a woman who works as a virtual reality developer in her professional life, whose character materialised as Beckman encountered the various researchers at NASA when undertaking the work itself, struck by how few women there were working there. The Geisha who appears in the work's opening sequence, was Beckman claims, 'a representative of the Asia markets and the garden. The geisha was initially designed a beanstalk geisha, someone who represented the rising stocks (stalks) of the pan-Asia markets. I have a lot of drawings exploring the coupling of the female figure with the growth of a beanstalk, connecting two worlds that of labour below and corporate power above.'³¹⁹

In 1995, Beckman was invited to give a lecture in the Wexner Center, Ohio. She was in the process of making 'Hiatus' at the time, and revealed, 'I am predominately concerned with issues in virtual reality; with its promises for communication, shared imagination building a world rather than talking about it, like Jaron Lanier.'³²⁰ 'Hiatus', she claimed, represents, 'a technological encounter on the Internet, where gender issues follows a woman online.' Later on in the same lecture, she summarises her concerns that, 'the ultimate challenge women face is to harness the power of technological knowledge to a feminist agenda while struggling against the subordination of technology and labour to private corporate interests', and stated her ambition, 'to empower those workers in technology to work on behalf of the right kind of social change. In the age of intelligent machines and ubiquitous computing, a multiplicity is called for that acknowledges power differentials but is not ruled by them, that reduces differences; and finally that understands gender as automated and

intelligent, a being capable of achieving some kind of autonomy from both biological sex and a rationalistic tradition.³²¹ Hers are a very specific set of interests, the purpose and importance of which still resonate today. They play out in the work through the strategic use of symbolic images embedded within the narrative.

Stark's practice might be interested in a similar area; unpicking the crossovers between women, work, imagery and identity formation, bound together through historically inscribed technicities of viewing. Hers is particularly attuned to the viewing conditions the work will succumb to once it leaves her studio, and the relationship between the viewer and the work once encountered. Artworks are predestined as focal points, as objects rather than, necessarily, subjects and in recognising the metonymy between this dynamic and the objectification of women, Stark toys with how either or both might be contrarily regarded. The voyeuristic nature of these two regards are very subtly referenced in 'My Best Thing', where we, as viewers, are brought into the narrative as offending voyeurs. Stark seems highly conscious of any viewing situation being potentially productive or reductive, and so her works operate on two levels, as objects to be encountered, but also as antagonistic subjects within a broader constituency of images.

There is a purposeful distortion within Stark's role-play as artist-come-director and artist-come-actor. She plays out both characters within the same work, coming together at the points in which she 'reveals' her creative processes and studio environment to her co-protagonists. Her dual role allows for ambiguity and complexity. By inserting herself simultaneously into the position of object as well as subject, character and director, she perverts or dissolves the traditional subject-object binary often referenced within feminist filmmaking practices, impactful distinctions between the male gaze and the female subject.³²² Just as Stark upends traditional binaries she also creates a series of role-reversals, casting muses in the form of unorthodox male protagonists. This surfaces as the relatively unengaged Italian partners with whom she forms successive relationships in 'My Best Thing', and also in more recent works with her references to the character Bobby Jesus, who we are led to believe is some form of drug dealer, and who appears in several drawings, performances and videos.³²³ Their professional activities are often clandestine and

these muses seem relatively apathetic towards Stark and what she does. Their apathy poses interesting questions about her relationships to them, and their relationship to her art production: does their collaboration signify a de-professionalisation within the work, or a greater degree of visibility into the curiosities of the artists' biography, and therefore add value? At what level is the artist's biography marketed and capitalised within the artworld, and how might playing with the dynamics of these relationships test those boundaries? How closely are the personal and professional integrated and how can these distinctions be upturned within the work?

Writing about her performance work immediately prior to 'My Best Thing', Canadian curator and writer Jenifer Pappararo has observed that, 'questioning her own production, her relationship to art-making and writing, and her self-identification as an artist and writer has been the instigation for much of her work, as well as a point of struggle, a means for battling her relevance against her inadequacies and counter-intuitively as a means to determine a subject that centres on her as the author, but resonates outside of herself. This single or multifaceted reverberating subject is still uncertain and I think better left undefined, but it increases in density the more Stark shows her vulnerabilities.'³²⁴ In the drama of 'My Best Thing', Stark's female protagonist plays the aggressor, trying to develop casual online sexual relations into more formal 'collaborations' and exploiting her relationships within her professional life. She acts illicitly and insists upon the viewer's reservation of moral judgment, tested by the female protagonist's remorselessness regarding her own possible infidelity, particularly when she mentions to her new partner an ongoing long-term partner with whom she has a child. Her role-reversals effectively pervert a number of traditionally gendered binaries, a strategic substitution and sophisticated ploy. To understand Stark's ultimate political aims, we must regard these works on several levels simultaneously.

Leckey's own abstractions of the image from the contexts in which they are inscribed are equally provocative and require a similar kind of creative viewing. His works explore the affect of images, the toll they have upon him, as unifying or alienating social forces and what role art might have in exacerbating or illuminating those differences. Leckey's earlier work examines the crossover between subculture and

consumer culture, how youth culture was bound by branding; young people communing through transcendental images like the 'Fiorucci' brand. This regarded the means with which people might identify with one another, and how class is one manifestation of that. Leckey often assumes the position of an art world outsider, applying his every-man, consumer-informed perspective onto curious or niche aspects of a relatively exclusive art world. His enquiries are wedded to the popular appeal of images but as he delves into the 'plasmaticness' of an image, the platform that hosts it, and us as its viewers, is brought into relief. The institution in which it is seen, is made plasmatic too. In 'Cinema', Leckey makes a meal of the museum's taxonomies of images, labelling them in chapters like 'meat and potatoes'. The museum is framed as a canteen for serving images, at the centre of which is the activity of production and consumption. That an artist might *consume* images (assimilating them during research) as well as *produce* them (through video montage, collage or sculptural assemblage) presents an alternative to how the terms might be used by economists. Leckey adopts an abject persona to play off this metaphor, his persona a sometimes embarrassingly self-indulgent agent of mindless consumption, devouring the fodder of images. Here, in a similar way to Stark, his works operate on several levels. As visual artworks, they are autonomous and entertaining. Once exhibited, they are also potentially antagonistic towards the productive taxonomies or historical classifications with which they may be displayed.

In these works the political subject and the discursive formations that produce it are rendered metonymically. Their structures are not open to co-production like a prosumer platform. Rather, they are sealed spaces with narratives that are specific and fixed, linear and highly structured but whose internal elements work together to deflect outwards, to show the conditions in which it has been produced, the conditions that have produced it. They require a differential viewing that can absorb their simultaneous narratives and metonymies, in the symbolic as well as the literal realm.

6.3 Sites of artistic productivity

In Stark's 'My Best Thing', Leckey's 'Cinema' and 'In the Long Tail', and Beckman's 'Hiatus', the sites of artistic productivity come into the frame. Aspects of artistic

practice, flexible labour, de-professionalised lifestyles (or personalised professional lives), creative aspirations and the labour of looking once recuperated by affective labour (or Tapscottian prosumerism) are here rendered by the artists' protagonists playing out the role of the prosumer within the work. This is another curious *mise-en-abyme* or *détournement*, if not 're-radicalising' what was once recuperated by prosumerism, then certainly probing the mimesis of its central productive mechanism. Here, the browser co-exists with or substitutes the architecture of the filmset, theatre space or studio. This is particularly evident in Stark and Leckey's work. In Beckman's case this is more nuanced, particularly as the context in which she has been producing work since the 1970s is quite different to the two younger artists.

Stark's 'My Best Thing' was commissioned for Venice but was performed as a work-in-progress for the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles on 21st April 2011, titled 'I've Had it and a Half' (Fig. 32.). This early iteration was composed of a series of readings by the artist of transcribed conversations she claimed were based on her own experiences online. The work aimed to be a live 'game' of image-roulette that Stark stages between scripts, including images of her own previous works like 'The New Vision' (2008), and a final short animation of her Chatroulette partner's dialogue made with Xtranormal.³²⁵ For this performance Stark took to the stage. She presented very similar extracts of dialogue from her protagonist's online encounters in 'My Best Thing', but staged some of these encounters live, with a text feed implying her online presence. During this performance she plays the part of the artist revealing her interests to a relatively anonymous counterpart. According to Pappararo, 'They talk about her career as an artist; the other person wants to know more and after a "hmm," she sends her website's URL. He likes the work. The conversation progresses, turning briefly to sex online; they sullenly come to the conclusion that two monologues don't make a dialogue. He should let her work. She says, "I am working." He retorts, "fucking artists."'

In 'My Best Thing' we are shown the various ways in which the artist uses her desktop to facilitate the dual composition of images and texts. This activity manifests in different forms throughout this performance, from evidence of her chat excerpts, to her exposition her own work from her digital image archives, to her capacity to

animate her excerpts in free animation programmes. As discussed in the previous chapter, her image-compositing Fellini's '8½' presents a *mise-en-abyme* of the protagonist-as-director cross-referencing other works in film and literature where the director references their own creative processes, as well as obstacles that arise from it. But this is not just an internal reference to the artist-as-director's literary ploy, but also an exposition of the process and site of the artist's work. While the artist's studio in California has been mapped into previous works ('The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art', 2002) as part of its internal narrative, here her activity as an prosumer, her new work hub and the kind of activity she does in it, are brought into frame as research method and site of production. One particularly pivotal moment of 'My Best Thing', is where the female protagonist 'shows' rushes of her film to the male protagonist. Nothing changes on our view of the work on screen, but the narrative implies that the male protagonist is being shown work on his browser 'backstage' in Chatroulette. Performing this crossover where we seem to have a greater purchase or perspective on the situation than her unknowing Chatroulette partner, Stark would appear to bring us in to the production as accomplices. By bringing her working process into the narrative, so similar to her prosumerist mode, we are able to see just how close these two productive modes have become.

The artist's labour is related to the activity of prosumerism in many ways. Stark's protagonist enjoys a flexible working day, where she can indulge in these online encounters as a legitimate part of her research process. Hers is a creative labour, teaming dialogue with image compositions to animate films, on a website designed for aspiring filmmakers. Through her predatory search for images and her opportunities to produce and exhibit them there is a clear crossover between her sexual instincts and her professional life, muddying the distinction between her work as a prosumer and as an artist. Not incidentally, the predatory nature of her female protagonist shows this kind of work to be no less assertive or aggressive than any other speculative occupation. But what distinguishes this work from a Tascottian servility, is the fact that Stark, or her female protagonist, is very clearly using this prosumer process and software to make her own work and I will return to this point later in the chapter.

'Cinema in the Round' and 'In the Long Tail' implies similar transition of the artist from his studio into the performative browser space. In many of Leckey's earlier works ('Parade' and 'Made in 'Eaven', '2004') the architectural details of his London studio featured, Georgian period alcoves on either side of a mantelpiece animated into the large cartoon eyes and nose of a Disney bunny. The studio featured as a recurrent image of his work, a reference to the place from which the work came developed into a recognisable icon. 'Cinema in the Round' marks a departure from that architecture and re-positions the artist as errant pedagogue, delivering his sermon in a darkened auditorium, conveying his argument, culminating from a strategic selection of moving images. His is not a straight academic lecture, but written prosaically, with humour. His presentation alludes to the kind of flexible labour required of a freelance or independent contemporary worker, and the necessary 'stage for their innovations', artists being no exception here, touring with their personal theses or manifestos. What is presented to us is also clearly the results of online sampling from prosumerism, with his potent mix of low-grade images, converted and compressed. His chapter classifications are basic too, perhaps reflecting the simplified descriptors of online searches. Here, ancient Egyptian statuary is classified under the same heading as Felix the cat, historic classifications overruled by the very basic descriptors or organising principles of new image-searching technology. Here the parsing of images through prosumerism is repositioned as a curatorial gesture, under Leckey's deft guidance, showing both activities' potential for creative subterfuge.

Beckman's oeuvre is more difficult to contextualise in this vein. Her work is without explicit reference to her own studio practice. Although she identifies herself as an artist rather than a filmmaker, hers is and was not a studio practice. Beckman has consistently made films since graduating from Cal Arts in 1976, so any degree of self-referentiality as to the artist's site of production is, in Beckman's case, illustrated through reference to the process of filmmaking itself, rather than any paradigm of the artist's studio. Her work looks at different sites of production in relation to a (prototypical) form of prosumerism, and how that is an exploitative form of labour. In 'Cinderella' the inherited narratives that produce the idealised feminine subject is depicted within an industrial site of production. By her own admission in her Wexner lecture, Beckman proposes, 'the Forge is an extension of the HEARTH in the factory

[her capitalisation]. The Forge critiques the feminisation of technology.³²⁶ She continues 'technology has had a contradictory effect on women's lives. It has increased the opportunity for new jobs, but it down graded and deskilled the level of worker to attend to those new machines.'³²⁷

Beckman remedies her concerns for the feminisation and exploitative potential of technology by rendering it through the challenging, labyrinthine structures of the multi-level computer game. Through the viewer's identification with a player's journey, they might experience the inspiration for transformation and liberation themselves. This does not mean that Beckman's works are open and available to be played like video games but rather that they re-articulate the experience of that process in an appropriately confined and competitive register. Beckman has proposed, 'I am interested in how the rules of a game impose structures on the player and how, with "interactivity", the player is better able to use those rules to create their own satisfying version, as opposed to simply adapting to these rules in the game, and achieving in spite of them.' She has said, 'I want to see a person effect the rules in the game, and not just respond in a feedback 'push' button, in a linear sequence... The goal is to internalise the situation, so the player can absorb the game itself, and with exposed tools create their adventure and new outcome, invent a solution to a problem in the game.'³²⁸ This gaming structure is updated in 'Hiatus', where Madi seems completely embroiled in her virtual reality game and where the environment of her apartment is ignored and inconsequential. Madi, as a player, is obsessed by her interactive gaming platform, indulges its creative potential by co-producing various aspects of it, from maintaining and expanding her land, to developing a fantasy avatar who wishes to dress up like, as Beckman describes, a '1990s wonder woman'. Madi's professional life as a computer programmer filters through to her desire to play online and to some degree, early on, we see the boundaries between personal and professional life fade: certainly the toil involved in rectifying her online exploitation is framed as recreation. Madi is engrossed in the labour of looking, enabled by early Google glasses, regarding Wanda's virtual reality, rendered in full frame. Beckman shoots this VR as she would a film so it appears in the same scale as her protagonist's day lit apartment. Film is very deftly used here to convey the equal sense of reality between a New York living room and the virtual reality of an online world. Both

represented through 16mm film, we make no material distinction between how the real world and its online counterpart are experienced. Here, the cinematic frame is used strategically to focus simultaneously on the jobbing prosumer and the images they both project and perform.

6.4 Productive display platforms

In this section, I look at how the works reflect further sites of production, that is the exhibition spaces of the gallery and the website, extending from the more personal architectures of the browser and studio. I ask how these sites are related to one another, how they cross-over and emphasise the latent exhibitionism or 'show' of prosumerism, the aspect of publicly 'sharing' one's private images, a form of exposition which reprises another aspect of artistic practice earlier recuperated from it in prosumerism's affective labour.

Prosumerism's primary marketing ploy, tactically pronounced by Tapscott and Williams' in 2008, was that was that it allows as 'a stage for innovations': fundamentally, therefore prosumers must be allowed or enabled to exhibit. And this innovation platform is consistently touted as prosumerism's central purpose and primary facility. Prosumerism not only encompasses various 'creative' aspects of artistic practice but also represents a new form of exhibitionism. Showing one's images or creative works on an ostensibly public platform is marketed as a democratisation of the creative process but what happens when these prosumer-artists render the allures and pitfalls of these productive display platforms within the work, as well as the pressures or compromises involved in showing their work on the more traditional display architectures of the gallery or museum? Just as creative processes of the artist and prosumer were pictured within one another in the browser-come-studio, the exhibitionism integral to the prosumer mode is also exposed within these works.

In 'My Best Thing' Stark's fuses the tools of online prosumerism and with the melodramatic narratives of online exhibitionism in a work bound for a more traditional kind of exhibition, in this particular instance, a long-established international biennial. And the pressures of producing a work for that kind of public exhibition are also re-

routed back into the piece's narrative. What began as a diary of her personal encounters on an Internet sex and chat-forum, read aloud in a museum in Los Angeles, has become a work which reflects a whole complex of relations established by a new industry of images. Details of the premiere of 'My Best Thing' in the Biennale's Arsenale, was woven into the narrative content and structure of the work.³²⁹ It is a fact discussed between the female protagonist and the second male protagonist. This male protagonist is familiar with the Venice Biennale so the cultural, political and economic significance of this remains unspoken. However, Venice Biennale's formidable reputation lingers throughout the work. It validates the female protagonist as an artist of some standing and suggests that despite the work's rudimentary DIY appearance it is one of both cultural and financial value. Its symbolic importance also inspires a particular form of stress on the female protagonist when premiering her work there. The biennial will be seen by a particular constituency of expert art visitors who might want to show the work in subsequent exhibitions. It will establish the work's market value, and be considered by for acquisition by collectors. So the professional pressures of participating in this historically established and culturally weighted exhibition underpins parts of the narrative.

What is also evident is the pressure to convey her idea to an audience with a limited attention span. The female protagonist expresses her anxiety about the average visitor's concentration span, competing as she is for their attention among the works of countless others. This, we are led to understand, is why she structures the work into ten episodes. Viewed sequentially or in individual components, the basic *mise-en-scène* might be gleaned by a partial or segmented viewing. This structural conceit reproduces the serialised conversations between her online strangers. And it alludes to the attention deficiency that these kind of brief engagements create. In the narrative, the attention-deficit of the online prosumer reflects that of the art audience as they view the work. The biennial viewing presents an interesting counterpoint to the kind of fatigue felt by the Internet prosumer as they browse the different images and forums available. Both represent enormous image repositories, the comprehensive viewing of which is often a practical impossibility. By reflecting on how the voracious and physically impractical appetites of viewers, both as prosumers online and art viewers

here, the work achieves a sophisticated degree of reflexivity. The viewer is implicated in the narrative, culpable of distractedness, attention-deficit, bordering on apathy.

Within the work, Stark's female protagonist plays a jobbing artist who encounters the naïve ambitions and creative affectations of the other prosumers online. Their divergent aspirations and anxieties are juxtaposed. Her partners express their desires to make or collaborate on films as she goes through the process of making one, doing so within the (fictional?) boundaries of a prosumer website, one which claims to be a public-facing 'stage for innovations' but which seems, in fact, closed and often highly monitored. This rhetoric of providing public-facing display-platforms, a form of exhibition architecture which sells prosumerism is equally tested when juxtaposed with the different pressures and conflicts involved in bringing a work to an art exhibition. The work exposes those contradictions within its production, from aspects of the artist's productivity online, the cultural value of the work and how that is validated, to the associated pressures of the biennial within that distribution circuit. The limitations and compromises of both original and recuperated forms of exhibition-making are played out within her work.³³⁰

Leckey's work also performs a similar series of transitions, but where one particular exhibition context was woven into the narrative of Stark's work to convey multiple layers of exhibition anxiety simultaneously, in 'Cinema In the Round' and 'In the Long Tail' the staging is quite different. There is an inherent exhibitionism in Leckey's performance of errant-pedagogue, animating for us his theories. In both works, he is performing his prosumerism to a large audience at a public event, the kind of exposure or visibility that websites like Youtube imply as stages for innovation. Here, this idealised prosumerism is staged within an auditorium. This embodied prosumer presents to us the fruits of his online harvesting of diverse imagery. His material might have been 'curated' on a prosumer platform, be it a Youtube channel, a Pinterest board or an Instagram profile and his accumulated images reflect this aspect of 'show-and-tell' on prosumer websites, but for one major difference: here he performs it for a real audience, rather than the assumed online audience or consumers that platforms boast but which perhaps never materialise.

Leckey's performance of 'Cinema in the Round' emerged from curator Ian White's 'Kinomuseum' project at the Oberhausen Film Festival in May 2006. This project challenged Leckey to envisage the cinema auditorium as an imaginary museum, to treat it with the visionary potential of a museum, to subvert the economies which institute and influence it, 'leading to a differentiated cinema, a museum based on the principles of impermanence, immediacy, the temporal and the temporary, manifested in the minds of an audience who experience it in the space and time of the auditorium that is the museum's permutating exhibition hall, and who are its active, defining agent.'³³¹ White demanded that we readdress the nature of the museum through the multiple perspective points of 'differentiated cinema', allowing it become a new space of radical potentiality. In this vein, Leckey's 'doubly exploits cinema's capacity to yoke together wildly diverse content (like the images of objects in a book) in order to wrestle with (name, institute) the moving images it gathers together – their description of tangible mass, tangibility itself – as its perverse yet cohesive collection'³³² White emphasises moving images' capacity to institutionalise wildly diverse content and Leckey exploits this capacity with his own collection of material so that we, as viewers, must wrestle our tendencies to accept and reinstitute prescribed associations. Leckey exploits this conceptual flexibility at various levels. Where taxonomies of images mutate, guided by his convincing narrative, so must our relationships to them. Leckey advances White's museum critique into his own cohesive and autonomous work of art, breaking down art historical taxonomies of images by exploring them according to his own subjective responses. White's commission was for a film festival auditorium, but several months later, re-constituted at Tate Modern's Starr auditorium, the work became something else. Operating *within* the museum, this work potentially challenged it, becoming an agent unto itself, antagonistic to the works or working classifications around it, as well as the museum conditions that produce them.

Ericka Beckman's exhibition history is significantly different to Leckey and Stark, as are the conditions of production referenced within the work. Beckman's films were most often shown in film festivals.³³³ The culture of experimental filmmakers championed by groups like the New York Filmmakers Coop, would have brought diverse films together in screenings. Similar to the London Filmmakers Coop, the New York

organisation was run by artists who intended to instigate and regulate their own market outside those of commercial film and art. Ian White has written about the meaningfulness of this distinction, ‘...through the establishment of the film cooperatives in the late 1960s practitioners were aesthetically and physically operating in a space between the auditorium and the art gallery, employing both or neither – not just as a necessity for getting work shown, but often as an inseparable, political or theoretical constituent of the work itself.’³³⁴ But contrary to this argument (and the long-held manifesto of those experimental film cooperatives) that the film cooperatives provided an alternative and politicised site of production and distribution, Beckman has spoken of the relative exclusivity of these distribution channels, that ‘the [isolationism of the] American avant-garde [...] helped to preserve, protect a certain type of work that had its place in the art world, alongside serial art works, conceptual art works, language and photo-text based work, for whatever reason the art world at the time was unwilling to support and nurture. My peers and myself had to overcome this, and we lost years of recognition due to this divide.’³³⁵ Beckman continued making film but, outside the museum network and these niche film distribution channels, was never commissioned by a public institution or biennial platform in the same scale as Leckey or Stark. When her work does refer to the conditions of its production, it points immediately outward toward the greater sphere of image production within popular culture, firstly broadcast media and later Internet platforms, rather than referencing any intermediary curatorial or exhibition platforms that have supported it.

However, since 2012 Beckman has become newly established within a canon of seminal artists making work between film and performance in New York in the mid to late 1970s and several exhibition-making opportunities have arisen.³³⁶ In summer 2013 came her first full solo retrospective exhibition in Kunsthalle Bern, followed by a similar installation of works in le Magasin, the Centre National d’Art Contemporain de Grenoble, early in 2014. In late 2013, I curated a screening of her works over the course of a weekend at Tate Modern’s Starr Auditorium. Viewers watched the works from a darkened auditorium, arguably the films’ ideal screening conditions. The dark fantasy spaces of Beckman’s ‘Cinderella’ and ‘Hiatus’ representing online, or Virtual Reality, ran seamlessly into the dark space of this auditorium, the lighting of which was

carefully controlled and the film technicians ensuring that the original sound and luminosity of the film, the primary colour costumes, sets and props, were seen and heard at their optimum levels. The immersion which Beckman's characters experience within the games in 'Cinderella' and 'Hiatus' was afforded the viewer with the similar immediacy and intensity. Here, in this theatrical space Wanda achieves the kind of spectacle she dressed for in her burlesque, showgirl costume. In a sense this 'image-game' finds its natural habitat within this public auditorium, and when the protagonist finds herself subjectified and exploited by the grotesque Wang, the problematics and exploitations of prosumerism's display games are underlined and make for suitably uncomfortable viewing.

In Grenoble, the works were exhibited in a more traditional exhibition format and here Beckman, by playing with the installations, seems to align the productive architectures of the museum with that of the Internet. Inside Le Magasin's exhibition space, itself built in a nineteenth century industrial hanger, Beckman's works appear in sequential screening rooms.³³⁷ Sculptural arrangements of the film's props are spot-lit to accompany each projection. In the 'Cinderella' room, these were original props, tools of the industrial forge, a bucket of gold hanging from a long heavy chain, hoisted from a ceiling mounted shackle was suspended over a pile of tools sitting on the floor.³³⁸ Fabricated in plywood and painted in bold primary colours, the arrangement was spot lit from above, suspended behind the hanging screen. The ambition was to heighten the affect of the film and impose the pressures of that workroom into the darkened viewer's space. In the 'Hiatus' room, Beckman's intervention suspended the model of a plane from the ceiling, its green bulbous form rounded as if a cartoon version of itself. Although this specific object did not appear at all in the original film, Beckman added it here for interpretative qualities. Of its importance she claims, 'the plane in Le Magasin's "Hiatus" room is the first time I have ever used a non-prop. The plane represents the experience of being ungrounded, between places, travel. It was a visualisation of the title.'³³⁹ Encountered sequentially, similarities appear between the various productive architectures, from the forge as a site of industrial labour, to the plane as a vehicle for transporting oneself online. Beckman's work is no less critical, nor less attentive to the seductive mechanisms of prosumerism and the institutionalisation of image-labour than Leckey and Stark, but it does not relate

directly to that intermediary exhibitionary mode of the museum, or institution, because it did not, until very recently, find foothold there. These prop-installations are later additions to works, but perhaps begin to articulate how we might understand looking labour as an updated form industrial labour and their potential for gendered exploitation no less threatening.

How the exhibition is an inherent aspect of prosumerism's productive mode is intelligently worked through the fabric of Beckman, Stark and Leckey's narrative presentations. The works detail the impetus to make exhibitions, to show work, as being integral to both productive modes. Here, like studio and browser, the terms and conditions of their quite different exhibitionary platforms are worked together, juxtaposing their differences.

6.5 Capitalising on prosumerism

As I have previously articulated, these three artists' are not prosuming within their work but rather using the material of prosumerism in order to make works, works which reflect on the seductiveness and appeals of images and how that seduction anticipates and fuels new forms of labour. Neither are aspects or elements of the work left open for the viewer's prosumerism or co-production. These works eschew the dynamics normally encouraged of viewers-as-prosumers. Their work provides open evidence of their prior engagement with prosumer websites: in Leckey's work we see evidence of this activity through his unquenchable appetite for diverse images; in Beckman's 'Hiatus', Madi seems completely embroiled in her virtual reality existence; and in Stark's work the female protagonist's online sexual and social encounters are frequent and compulsive. The artists pull together various intrinsic and extrinsic strands of prosumerism's productive mode, dramatising and composing those strands into a scripted, scored, edited and completed work. The completed work is not immediately and exclusively returned to these prosumer sites for further co-production. Rather it is removed from these sites of production and modification into various platforms for display, in museums and galleries, as well as online. These works might, at whatever stages of inception, satisfy the artists' prosumer tendencies but

upon completion it also satisfies their own professional needs to produce and show work.

While, I have established, prosumerism has recuperated generalised aspects of artistic practices, these particular artists' practices reprise prosumer activity and use it curiously and shrewdly to their own ends. When Leckey, Stark and Beckman refashion prosumer material into their completed work to exhibit where they see fit, this transgresses the first Tapscottian principle of prosumerism. Tapscott's prosumerism maintained that this activity not be put to work not by the prosumer herself, but by the capitalist creating the templates of those display platforms and profiting from its traffic. A question might reasonably be posed about how these artists operate differently to the corporations that capitalise on image prosumerism by companies like Facebook, Instagram, and so on, stocking images to Getty Images or Corbis; Do these works merely re-implement the neo-liberal principles of free-market capitalism of these global corporations, profiting from prosumerism, or can they be seen to operate in any more distinctive or exemplary way? I argue that the primary distinction lies in whose affective labour the artists are capitalising upon, as well as the claims they make and the kind of display platforms or architectures they build and expose within their works.

Exhibiting their works in art galleries, museums and institutions, these works affirm their position in the art market where the works are sold³⁴⁰, so certainly, what these prosumer-artists are doing on one level is capitalising from image-prosumerism. However prosumerism, as I have established, is an occupation which has already capitalised aspects of artistic practice and is an activity which regularly undermines and makes redundant many professionalised forms of artistic labour. Therefore prosumerism, re-deployed in this way, manages, on another level, to reprise or reclaim the agency or independence (as well as the remunerative potential) of artistic practice. What these artists are principally capitalising upon is their own subjective responses to images rather than – and this is quite explicit within their work – the collective subjective responses of others: the affective labour of other, anonymous prosumers. They have exploited or dramatised their own experience as prosumers to inform their protagonists' narratives and expropriate prosumer imagery and tools in order to

render these experiences whole, and in doing so reveal how the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of prosumerism work together upon their viewer. As I have attempted to convey, this inversion, reversal or collision of contexts is what Debord might have referred to in his *détournement*.

This manifests in a variety of ways. Stark uses the prosumer software for amateur filmmaking and photography to make her video, which, perhaps playfully aware of its own DIY aesthetic, is validated by her commission at the eminent biennial. Stark thus reclaims her amateur prosumer output to her own professional ends. And while Leckey's lecture-performances employ a kind of jobbing prosumerism to sample his material and structure his narratives, the results are edited together, strategically performed or projected in a range of sites, from the museum to the commercial gallery, the auditorium to the Internet. The accessibility and visibility of prosumer platforms as exhibition architectures feature largely in prosumerism's marketing rhetoric and yet the weakness of those claims is stressed when that prosumer material is transposed within alternative, or more traditional exhibition architectures. The kind of work that Stark, Leckey and Beckman do, operating flexibly between exhibitions, between commercial and public contexts, is entirely in keeping with Alvin Toffler's earliest description of prosumption, as part-time work that divides productivity into two categories: production for market and production for use. Dividing their work between gallery and market, between fair and lecture hall, exemplifies what Toffler meant and might be distinguished from how Tapscott claims prosumers are to be capitalised.

While comparisons between parties who capitalise upon prosumerism might be legitimately drawn, the purposes of the corporations that facilitate prosumerism and the artists that draw upon it are easily distinguished. The rhetoric of a prosumer-corporation is one of disguise: what is marketed are the forms of visibility it enables through image-exchange, enabling platforms for social connections and political representation. Underpinning the rhetoric is what Beller calls the 'audio-visual economy' where attention value, the labour of looking, is capitalised. Conversely, the prosumer-artists' narratives are exaggeratedly and performatively open, the connectivity and sharing which they have experienced is outlined in great depth to the

extent that its negative effects or repercussions are also brought into the frame. On a personal level, Leckey might claim this process is cathartic, for Stark it seems quite antagonistic and for Beckman it is dramatic. None of them renounce or deny the allure of prosumerism but, for all of them, articulating, probing and addressing the nature and basis of this appeal appears a political necessity, each artist with quite distinct interests in how image-prosumerism newly effects their own identity politics. While prosumer-corporations succeed through obscurity, prosumer-artists' surely succeed through their performative over-identifications. Through strategic obscurity, the prosumer-corporation's capitalisation is maintained, through over-identification the multivalent aspects of the prosumerism are exposed and in its exhibition, the highs and lows, the motivations and forces behind prosumerism becomes tangible to its key workers. Again, this brings me back to *détournement*, which is – as I interpret it - a work, an object, an art object or some other kind of critical receptacle in which the spectacle's rhetoric is splayed and displayed against its images, its recuperated context re-shuffled and contorted, so that its undercurrents are disturbed and exposed. The protagonists' over-identification with prosumer material, the transcendental experience it ought to provide, the voracious appetites it seems to elicit, the exhibitionary desires and disappointments it seems to provoke are all part of these works, activating and complicating their internal dynamics.

The prosumer-artists' reprisal and capitalisation of prosumerism, of that activity which originally recuperated aspects of *its* practice, perhaps also rectifies the problem that Lanier earlier identifies about the destructive gap between first and second order expression and the capitalisation of second order expression by various online corporations. Here, the prosumer-artists are quite open-handed about putting second order expressions (Leckey's Youtube samples, Beckman's second life games, Stark's chatforum encounters) back to work in their first order expressions. In these artists' works, we can see how the more subjective, personally experienced aspects of prosumerism can be interestingly reprised. Whereas Lanier is concerned about the slippage from 'first' to 'second' order expression he does not foresee any variation on that direction, or, in the case of Leckey *et al*, how those two orders can be abused, diverted and simultaneously rendered within the same 'first order' frame.

Ritzer *et al* write about how, in prosumerism, the productive architecture of the factory is now frequently confused with the playground and how, with an occupation that has also become a recreational activity, we struggle to find the means to identify and critique this mode of production. However, in these prosumer-artists' works, their studio practice is aligned with their browser activities, their recreational exhibitionism blends and is disturbed by the professional pressures to show and tell, and, at the worst of times, both seem like hard work. These dual sites of production, the browser and the studio, the display platform online and in the museum, appear simultaneously within the works.

What I have tried to outline in this chapter is how the platforms of prosumerism are rendered by these diverse works, are somehow reprised and operate reflexively upon these sites in which they are partially produced. Here, to invert Handhardt's phrase, we're guided around the conditions of the works' production from the 'outside-in', the studio which was brought into the browser is repositioned as studio-practice once more and the exhibition-making impetus of prosumerism displayed and performed within the work, itself destined for diverse exhibition architectures. By exhibiting their conditions of production as artists, the relative inefficacy of prosumerism's creative, communicative and exhibitionary claims, presents itself in plain view. These works, I claim, create an architecture of 'détournement', necessarily understanding the term 'architecture' in its most flexible usage, as a space, a structure, and a rhetoric or language. These prosumer-artists' works present an architecture of collisions, a space which is reflexive, which does not perpetuate prosumerism, but rather creates a halting site, a site of collision, a receptacle where prosumerism's claims or rhetoric rebounds against its materials, and where the prosumer's subjective experience of it is dramatised within, as its primary agent, willing and indulgent, unknowing and exploited. This architecture is both familiar and alien, comfortable and alienating, it is one of self-gratification and critical confrontation, progress and relapse, barrier and flow.

Here we, as viewers, are shown prosumerism's affective mechanisms rendered within its own material. Crucially these works do not ask us to participate as prosumers, but rather to cast our gaze around, inside and out, and see how prosumerism has petrified

'critical conclusions into respectable truths and thus transformed it into lies.' These artists' rework prosumerism's petrifying conclusions, unpicking its subjective appeals, creative rhetoric and productive devices and reconfiguring them all within their frame.

As we watch these work play out on several levels and with such forceful internal dynamics our gaze must work harder, our viewing striated or differentiated, our prosumerism disturbed.

- SECTION THREE -

Chapter 7: The Prosumer Complex I

7.1 The Exhibitionary Complex

7.2 The Complex of Prosumerism

7.3 The Prosumer Complex

In this chapter, I regard how aspects of Tony Bennett's seminal essay on 'The Exhibitionary Complex' resonate with the productive mechanisms of both the museum as an institution and the new institution of prosumerism. Both combine the subjective appeal of imagery, a psychological complex, with productive display platforms, an architectural complex, to create productive viewers. Both prosumerism (as Thumin's 'new institution') and the museum (as the established exhibition-making institution) employ common contemporary subjectivities, through the affective labour of looking, into forms of contemporary production. In the concluding part of this chapter, I will look at how the selected artists' works operate as exemplary exhibition-models and new forms of affective critique.

7.1 The Exhibitionary Complex

In 1988 Australian sociologist Tony Bennett wrote his essay, 'The Exhibitionary Complex'. It was provoked by American critic Douglas Crimp's essay, 'On the Museum's Ruins' (1985), which reviewed and revised Foucault's writing on the asylum, the clinic and the prison as institutionalised articulations of power and knowledge relations. It reasserts Crimp's concern for how the standard North American museum little represents Western society's diversity, particularly with respect to gender politics. Bennett takes up Crimp's reference and expands on Foucault's theory of how 'discursive formations' reinforce societal hierarchies, or 'archaeologies of knowledge' by introducing various classifications and integrations of objects and subjects within exhibition displays. He regards how (relatively) new academic disciplines such as

biology, geography and anthropology are made manifest through the displays of their evidence in museums: one impact of this being the reinforcement of imperial power and the distancing of the white, bourgeoisie from the 'other', other races, ethnicities and nationalities. Bennett's purpose for his elaboration of how museum architecture works upon us is to force a re-evaluation of the politics and strategies behind museum practice. But unlike Crimp, who claims the fundamental similarities between the disciplinary institutions of the prison with those of 'the museum', Bennett claims their *modus operandi* is very different. The distinction Bennett makes upturns Foucault's theory of the 'carceral archipelago', embedded within post-nineteenth century disciplinary institutions, and replaces it with what Bennett calls the 'exhibitionary complex', evident in the nineteenth and twentieth century museum. He condemns Crimp's suggestion that the museum be interpreted as a site of incarceration. He writes, 'museums may have enclosed objects within their walls, but the nineteenth century saw their doors open to the general public – witnesses whose presence was just as essential to a display of power as had been that of the people before the spectacle of punishment in the eighteenth century.'³⁴¹

Thomas Prasch summarises Bennett's perspective, whose 'argument works to finesse the tension between a Foucauldian perspective on power/ knowledge and a Gramscian understanding of hegemonic relations in civil society'.³⁴² Bennett's writing positions museums as supportive of an emergent public sphere, as resources which governments might instrumentalise in controlling its population. Bennett's pivotal historical moment is when the judicial punishment of man stops being a visible event on the stocks or gallows, and is 'withdrawn from the public gaze as punishment increasingly took the form of incarceration'. No longer inscribed within a public dramaturgy of power, the body of the condemned comes to be caught up within the inward looking power relations...³⁴³ He highlights, 'the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society.'³⁴⁴ Bennett challenges Foucault's generalisation that 'the penitentiary merely perfected the individualising and normalising technologies

associated with a veritable swarming of the forms of surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms' bestowing society with a new political economy of power. Instead, it was a much more subtle refinement, 'the intrication [of surveillance and disciplinary technologies] with new forms of spectacle produced a more complex and nuanced set of relations through which power was exercised and related to – and, in part, through and by – the populace than the Foucaultian account allows.'³⁴⁵ The exhibitionary complex's intention of regulating a populace was similar to the carceral archipelago, Bennett writes, but its mechanisms were different, approaching it as, 'a question of winning hearts and minds as well as the disciplining and training of bodies.'

[Its constituent institutions] sought, through the provision of object lessons in power – the power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display – to allow the people, and *en masse* rather than individually, to know rather than to be known, to become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge. Yet, ideally, they sought also to allow the people to know and thence regulate themselves; to become, in seeing themselves from the side of power, both the subjects and objects of knowledge, knowing power and what power knows, and knowing themselves as (ideally) known by power, interiorising its gaze as a principle of self-surveillance and, hence, self-regulation.³⁴⁶

This is the nuanced power dynamic that Bennett regards, which creates this self-regulating public. Asserting themselves as viewers, the public also establishes themselves as objects to be viewed. And with that shift, the museum creates its own framework for pacification. Visitors interiorise power's gaze, they automate that surveillance-system, gazing upon themselves. This was achieved through the museum's display platforms, or 'technologies of vision embodied in the architectural forms of the exhibitionary complex.'³⁴⁷ Nineteenth century exhibition architecture becomes the focus of Bennett's research and the means by which he articulates this theory. More specifically, he attends to the development of permanent displays in museums and galleries and later, temporary displays in universal exhibitions. He focuses on displays that allow viewers space to see the objects or images of the museums' collections, but that are also open enough for the viewers to see themselves within those objects and among a crowd of other visitors, in order to feel that they are

very much part of the institution as its personal constituency. Bennett looks at the specific buildings of the time and references various architectural and social historians' accounts.³⁴⁸ He quotes Graham Davison's attention to the Crystal Palace, as an 'emblem of an architectural series which could be ranged against that of the asylum, school and prison in its continuing concern with the display of objects to a great multitude,' which, according to Davison, reverses the panoptical principle by fixing the eyes of the multitude upon an assemblage of glamorous commodities. The Panopticon was designed so that everyone could be seen; the Crystal Palace was designed so that everyone could see.'³⁴⁹

Bennett notes the increasing involvement and ambition of the state in the provision of public spectacles from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, rendering the whole city visible (through public tours of catacombs, sewers, tunnels and slaughterhouses) in order to confer their citizenry with an imaginary control over the city. To see it, in this way, was to have purchase on it. This tendency extended out towards museums and galleries, so that exhibitions were to play a pivotal role in the formation of the modern state, fundamental to its conception as a set of educative and civilising agencies. The exhibitionary complex provided a context for the permanent display of knowledge and power through the permanence of these institutions.³⁵⁰ What Bennett emphasises throughout, is the nation-state as the instigator of the exhibitionary complex, and the one best served by the effects it generated in a population that believes itself to have a greater degree of ownership or agency over their constituency than perhaps they actually did. 'This power thus subjugated by flattery, placing itself on the side of the people by affording them a place within its workings: a power which placed the people behind it, inveigled into complicity with it rather than cowed into submission before it.'³⁵¹

Although he provides no one clear example within any particular museum display, the exhibitionary complex was to work upon viewers' bodies just as it worked upon their mind. It borrows from Foucault's observations of the panopticon as a piece of architecture, 'to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of

power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them.³⁵² The working mechanism of the panopticon is updated in the exhibitionary complex, 'in its incorporation of aspects of those principles together with those of the panorama, forming a technology of vision which served not to atomise and disperse the crowd but to regulate it, and to do so by rendering it visible to itself, by making the crowd itself the ultimate spectacle.'³⁵³ Bennett quotes from 'A Short Sermon to Sightseers' distributed at the 1901 Pan American Exposition, instructing its visitors to 'please remember when you get inside the gates you are part of the show'.³⁵⁴ This principle, he claims, was shared by museums and department stores, which, 'like many of the main exhibition halls of expositions, frequently contained galleries affording a superior vantage point from which the layout of the whole and the activities of other visitors could also be observed.'³⁵⁵

The exhibitionary complex creates dual vision, 'to see and be seen, to survey yet always be under surveillance, the object of an unknown but controlling look'. Thus, 'as micro-worlds rendered constantly visible to themselves, expositions realised some of the ideals of panopticism in transforming the crowd into a constantly surveyed, self-watching, self-regulating, and as the historical record suggests, consistently ordered public – a society watching over itself.'³⁵⁶ The fundamental difference between the carceral panopticon and the disciplinary exhibitionary complex, was that in the former there was a 'hierarchically organised system of looks... in which each level of looking is monitored by a higher one,' so that the inmate constitutes the lowest point at which all these looks culminate and the prison governor, or those presiding over him or her, potentially the highest point. The incarcerated individual is unable to move to a higher level of vision: the structure creates a clear, vertical hierarchy. The exhibitionary complex by contrast, 'perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, in which the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorising the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power – a site of sight accessible to all.'

The exhibitionary complex showed early signs of being employed by commerce as well as the state as early as the nineteenth century. It was adapted as an architectural device to aid and increase consumption, cultural consumption turned to commodity

consumption through display strategies of department stores.³⁵⁷ To that ends, quoting Manfredo Tafuri (surely borrowing from Walter Benjamin's 'The Arcade Project', 1940), Bennett isolates and highlights the arcades and department stores of Paris, which, 'like the great expositions, were certainly the places in which the crowd, itself become a spectacle, found the spatial and visual means for a self-education from the point of view of capital.'³⁵⁸ The spectacle, shown strategically *within* the spectacle, created a society watching over itself, ostensibly for their own pleasure but ultimately for their self-regulation and the financial benefit of the few who built and maintained the spectacle's display platforms.

The hierarchy of the exhibitionary complex is not entirely horizontal – but it adopts that guise and rhetoric. Bennett chooses as one example of this, Wyld's Great Globe, 'a brick rotunda which the visitor entered to see plaster casts of the world's continents and oceans' built as a commercial undertaking in Leicester Square London in 1851, to capitalise on growing numbers of curious visitors to London's Great Exhibition the same year (Fig. 38 – 39.). It rendered the 'whole world' visible but also, through openings in display platforms, the visitors themselves circulating through it. The Great Globe, a large, free-standing spherical structure, openly constructed with various levels and flights of stairs commanded just such an open architecture where all of these displays and crossing sight lines where possible, provided, an 'elevated vantage point over a micro-world which claimed to be representative of a larger totality.' This 'global' platform, Bennett claims, created an 'imaginary dominance over the city' and 'the substitution of observation for participation was a possibility open to all.' He concludes that Foucault's principle 'of Spectacle rendering a small number of objects accessible to the inspection of a multitude of men' was in fact surpassed by the museum, 'through the development of technologies of vision which rendered the multitude accessible to its own inspection.'³⁵⁹

Bennett is looking at the museum as a means of production, and is not very specific about disciplines or infrastructures within museum itself, nor does he provide examples of specific exhibitions, be they temporary or permanent. When he does attend to specific museums, it is regarding their classification and production mechanisms, i.e., the architectural innovations of the Crystal Palace's (for the Great

Exhibition), 'consisted in the arrangement of relations between the public and exhibits so that, while everyone could see, there were also vantage points from which everyone could be seen, thus combining the functions of spectacle and surveillance.'³⁶⁰ There are no specific art museums mentioned. Indeed, this essay's significance does not immediately resonate with the art museum, the artists' works mentioned over the previous three chapters, or the specific institutions in which they have been shown. But what I will come to, is how these artists' works are within themselves, innovative examples of reflexive exhibition-making which reverse or skew the dynamics Bennett identifies in his exhibitionary complex. However, for the moment, I want to separate these different associations with the museum – Bennett's critique of the productive museum from the specific contemporary examples mentioned in the previous chapter – in order to focus on the central insight in Bennett's essay, which is about the productive function of display platforms, and their mechanisms for strategically channelling the attention of its visitors in order that they see themselves represented among a constituency of others, and therefore believe themselves represented. This architectural conceit creates a system of self-surveillance, or self-regulation. It is a 'complex', fusing the architectural and psychological, the two reinforcing one another perpetually.

7.2 The Complex of Prosumerism

Bennett's exhibitionary complex resonates strongly with the productive mechanisms of prosumerism. Just as I claimed that the activity of prosumerism borrows from the idea of artists' creative practice, in its flexible lifestyle and labour, its creative aspirations and its conflation of personal and professional lives, the display platforms through which prosumerism function (the 'exhibition space' provided by the likes of Facebook, Instagram, Flickr and so on) borrow from this other aspect of art, the exhibition, or 'exhibitionary' space. And like that display platform of Bennett's productive museum, the platform that prosumerism provides is not designed without agenda. It has a very specific aim of channelling the attention of those who view and are viewed within it. Here, aided by strategic display platforms, visitors are directed to see themselves as 'both the subjects and objects of knowledge, knowing power and

what power knows'. Although the prosumer platform is situated online, it is still a very structural platform, a strategically refashioned version of open source programming where prosumers place images of themselves among other images of objects, and among images of others, creating a self-regulating system of surveillance which ultimately benefits the 'institution' or corporation that generates the platform. Traditionally, this institution was the general museum, but as Thumin identifies, the social networking platform, like Facebook, is the new institution of self-representation. Bennett's example of the fair which advertised to its patrons, 'Please remember when you get inside the gates you are part of the show'³⁶¹ might seem an appropriate alternative caption for a number of popular contemporary image-sharing and social-networking sites, albeit perhaps less strategic than their current, more altruistic sounding mission statements; 'Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life', or 'Capture and Share the World's Moments', as on Instagram.³⁶²

In general, the architectonics of online living generate consumerism in far greater degrees than even Debord imagined within his spectacle (which is what Beller alludes to when he writes that 'the full political economy of the spectacle remains to be written'), where even non-commercial websites can draw revenue through advertising streams. By accruing a certain amount of attention they attract advertisements and revenue, so even what begins or is ostensibly not a commercial site, has this potential. Where prosumers work, there is no division between 'public' and 'private' sectors or spaces. How we live here is as productive viewers and sedentary consumers. Reading, viewing, prosuming we are not just assimilating information we are also creating value. The financial architecture of prosumerism is rooted in the HTML model of the Internet I addressed in the first and second chapters and to which Jaron Lanier objects, where a template can be formatted and co-operatively produced by any number of anonymous users, where their labour remains unidentifiable, non-attributed and thus, trading in this anonymity, 'free'. The prosumer websites' architectural structures are perpetually open to prosumers uploading images and information and they display this uploaded material among open or partially open networks, formatted like ever-turning wheels. As we 'upload' our material, it appears at the top of its slowly turning axis and down that material falls as it ages or dips in popularity with other viewers, and down through it we might scroll to parse images and information, as this wheel rolls along, weighing

downwards as its upper margin is 'refreshed' with new additions, rolling indefinitely into the future. The prosumer platforms appears like a carousel where images are posted, to see and be seen, where we parade and are paraded through contributions or else regard externally. Behind these gestures of exhibitionism and acts of voyeurism, come very explicit forms of commerce that shifts goods, material, services, etc, to the consumer from the comfort of their browsers, mobile or static. The exhibitionary architectonics of prosumerism do not resemble architectural structures as we may have once understood them: they are dynamic, modular, flexible, transitional, they are necessarily adhesive, modifiable and adaptable.

The 'exhibitionary complex' reinforced a dominant and overt power structure in order to discipline its subjects, but disguises itself as such through its strategy of 'winning hearts and minds'. In prosumerism the same dynamic applies, where the rhetoric of a viewing constituency sharing the objects on display and benefitting socially seems sometimes at odds with what the actual institution stands to benefit from. In the example of prosumerism, it is often the parties that stand to financially profit that make these claims. And this tendency or desire to see and be seen that Bennett describes in his exhibitionary complex, which begins in the Great Exhibition or world fairs, assimilated by public museums and which is swiftly afterwards introduced into the commercial architecture of large department stores, which sets off the voracious appetite of images or vistas of oneself among others, an appetite or desire that contemporary prosumerism is built upon. Bennett's example of Wyld's Great Globe, a large, free-standing spherical structure, openly constructed with various levels and flights of stairs commanded just such an open architecture that provided, an 'elevated vantage point over a micro-world which claimed to be representative of a larger totality' (also, he claims, evident in the Eiffel Tower). Similarly, sites like Twitter, Flickr or Facebook propose to their users a similar vantage point over a micro-world. Wyld's Great Globe might serve as a structural paradigm for the Internet, and specifically the prosumer platforms that have recently been developed there. Allowing the controlled circulation of certain constituencies, this architecture purports to be an open platform but delivers a very strategic panorama.³⁶³ And like the Great Globe, prosumer platforms are commercial enterprises, where the developer's principle objective is of

lucrative mass attendance, generating revenue from various streams within the attention economy.

Bennett's 'exhibitionary complex' presents a concise history of the strategic exhibition architectures that capitalise on an individual's desire to see and be seen (and feel represented) among others. The encounter he described was a physical as well as intellectual one, where the viewer saw and felt themselves as a body among other bodies, where power's gaze became internalised. In the Benjaminian sense, Bennett's Globe or tower, the exhibitionary platform, 'becomes a site for a sight; a place both to see and be seen from, which allows the individual to circulate between the object and subject positions of the dominating vision it affords over the city and its inhabitants.'³⁶⁴ Prosumer platforms, where personal and found photos create the impression one can see and be seen among groups of others provides a similarly affective display architecture. Companies like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Flickr and others combine the idealised regulatory mechanism of the panopticon with the impression of the panorama, where prosumers get the sense that they can look around this landscape.

In prosumerism making oneself visible is essential to this process, however edited or strategic that visibility might be. These images are consumed and produced, submitted into public prosumer forums, material that might then be openly surveyed – seemingly primarily by one's social network, but is also, and this is how prosumer commerce actually works, surveyed by the organisations who have programmed or designed those templates in the first place. For the companies that design them, the prosumer templates are like nets for catching fish, that catch being personal information, marketable as consumer profiles. This aspect of self-surveillance differs from Bennett's 'exhibitionary complex', which saw a 'dual vision' newly enabled by museum architecture. Differing to the observational platforms in the panopticon allowing prison guards clear one-way views of the inmates, in the museum the viewpoints appeared to be reciprocal. But what remained implicit in the latter is that the reciprocity of these sight-lines were superficial: in fact all was not visible, they articulated clear political agendas. Bennett's complex made self-surveillance self-perpetuating, as a form of political control. Prosumerism is an advanced version of this, where that architecture becomes viral, self-extending across geographic boundaries, and where that level of

control is swiftly converted to revenue from the material prosumers send out on those platforms, quite voluntarily. In prosumerism, self-surveillance and self-expression are inextricably bound, but immediately financially productive.

This rhetoric of 'dual vision' or reciprocity between viewer (or prosumer) and institution (or prosumer platform) remains evident in prosumerism, despite the fact that content is highly regulated, mapped and monetised by one party only. This semblance of a 'dual vision' might instill confidence in its users, or visitors, and a subsequent belief in the horizontal management structure of both enterprises, however neither fully function this way. This 'elevated vantage point over a micro-world' is a theatrical construct: a shrewdly manufactured experience. Just like the timber jousts and buttressing that holds up Wyld's Great Globe, the prosumer viewing platforms are fabricated and strategic. Prosumerism promotes itself as an altruistic, enabling communicative and creative platform: never does its corporations mention the economies driving them. Prosumerism would not be seen as spectacle's productive mechanism disconnecting human life from its essential aspects but rather the opposite, the means of reconnecting with one's social and creative life. And that is what I am trying to articulate is partially revealed through the prosumer-artists' works: prosumerism's bluff.

The exhibitionary complex's architecture of reflection was purposely designed to imply the sense of shared power without actually distributing it, 'a [rhetoric of] power which placed the people behind it, inveigled into complicity with it rather than cowed into submission before it'.³⁶⁵ To this end, what both the museum and the prosumer platform use is the rhetoric of civic complicity by virtue of our shared visibility to what we see before us. The institution markets itself to us as a sharing platform. In the case of the nineteenth century museum, as opening up shared cultural heritage or an industrial future, in the case of the website, a shared experience of sociality and creativity. Here, as Bennett noted, observation has been almost entirely replaced by a constructed or highly strategic rhetoric of participation.

Bennett's exhibitionary complex develops at the mid-point of the nineteenth century where its strategies of showing the spectator to herself, within and as part of, the

spectacle, was best exemplified at the Great Exhibition of London (1851) and subsequently incorporated into museum display in the South Kensington Museum. This complex then begins to manifest beyond the state-owned museum, in the commercially driven architectures of industrial fairs and department stores. The state's architectural complex, disciplining its populace into the population's self-regulating psychological complex, is recuperated by the capitalist creating a structural complex instigating a consumer's self-regulating complex. This is by now a fully commercial mechanism and prosumerism seems its absolute apotheosis. The exhibitionary complex which began around the Great Exhibition might continue to perpetuate the ideology of the state, but its productive mechanisms have been so thoroughly recuperated by capitalism that the museum now represents only a microcosm of its operation.

In Bennett's argument what was being produced by the generalist museum was a citizenry who supported a particular notion of the nation state and were soothed by the appearance of themselves within it, whereas in prosumerism, this faithful citizenry have more immediately financially productive ends. It is this aspect of the exhibitionary complex that I would like to adopt for the purposes of this argument, that is how a complex, architectural and psychological, creates a productive workforce, and how rethinking that exhibition architecture and the subjective responses it engenders might reverse and make visible that complex. My claim is that the works of the prosumer-artists combine and, in so doing, expose the dual operations of prosumerism's complex and create an exemplary critical model of exhibition-making.

7.3 The Prosumer Complex

In the fourth chapter I identified, contextualised and described three artists' works, and in the subsequent two chapters I looked at how these works exemplified the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of prosumerism, respectively, or, reframed through Bennett's text, the psychological and architectural aspects of the complex, respectively. What I am trying to establish, through these works, is a new affective form of exhibition-making that functions as a new form of prosumer-critique but elicits in *its* viewers, through an exposition of the affective, altogether mixed responses.

What I call the 'Prosumer Complex' is a mode of exhibition-making that takes the dual aspect of the complex of prosumerism and configures it anew to mirror and expose its productive mechanisms. As an exhibition model, it is exemplified first through these artworks. Crucially, this is not 'prosumer critique' in the straightforward or direct sense, as a thorough and absolute renouncement of prosumerism, a clear demand for the abandonment of all its affective powers and subjective appeals. Rather, the prosumer complex implements them to show the ongoing appeal of prosumerism and thereby associating the depth of its allure with the extent of the problem. In this way, it resembles *détournement*, as I understand it, as a form of resistance and a defiling of the activity of prosumerism, by re-routing its original source material: a resistance through exposition, and a work that functions like a receptacle to gather and show the various contradictory claims, promises, indulgences and shortcomings of prosumerism.

In the prosumer complex, the complex's productive mechanisms are rendered visible through the artists' subjective accounts as well as their strategic use of prosumer tools, images and platforms. While theirs is not an explicit condemnation of the industry, the economy that supports it, and the neo-liberal ideology which sustains it, their works provide appraisals of the complexities and problematics of the activity of prosumerism, presented at the level of an individual's subjective response. Bennett's text presented questions about the productive operations of the exhibitionary mode but did not decipher just *how* the 'complex' motivates the visitor at the level of subjective response: it asserts a distance or remove from the site of production, whereas this is precisely where these artists' works are positioned. These works create a form of *détournement* that might illuminate for its otherwise productive viewer the extent and complexity of the problem. They create a differential viewing, distinct from the uniform views that the attention economy encourages, that undiscerning or distracted gaze led by the subject's voracious and increasing appetites for the images that those platforms continually host.

In Bennett's text, the complex is a productive critique of the museum and more specifically, a study of how the museum is the site of political pacification and indoctrination. Since its writing, it has been quoted and adapted by various critics, scholars and artists to critique the productive nature of the art museum. It has been

used to substantiate forms of 'institutional critique', an established genre of both art criticism and practice, criticising the museum as a productive institution and looking for artist's practices, theories and sites which might challenge or subvert that productive mode. It is cited in relation to critical art practice (Fraser, 2005), in defining different notions and degrees of 'publicness' of the museum, qua sites of exhibition (O'Neill, 2007; Welshman, 2006; Groys, 2008) in terms of 'radical' museum display (Bishop, 2013) and in general histories of museum criticism (Smith, 2012; O'Neill, 2012). The point of referencing Bennett here is not to contest the terms of his critique at the time of writing, nor to reassert the political agendas he identified in the contemporary art museum (which is, anyway, quite different in terms of its social ambition, internal composition and political purpose). Rather it is to transpose the dynamics of the complex he describes to prosumerism and then to understand how, playing those out or exposing them, might lead to what I call the prosumer complex.

The prosumer complex, exemplified by the works of Leckey, Stark and Beckman, allows for greater complexity and internal dynamic than previous artist-led critiques of the productive and civilising institution. While I am not claiming their work as exclusively institutional critique, they could all be understood as regarding the productive mechanisms of prosumerism and of the museum in tandem. What is key (and unique) to this grouping of artists' works is how their dynamic and sometimes conflicted renderings of this productive complex creates an appropriate level complexity for the situation, which is where I argue, institutional critique failed. Andrea Fraser is an American artist widely associated with the school who proposed that, 'museums define legitimate culture and legitimate cultural discourse and accord me, and other authorised individuals, an exclusive prerogative to produce legitimate culture and to possess limited opinion.'³⁶⁶ Fraser has sought to challenge this by distinguishing her artistic practice from the more common cultural production by turning her work into services, 'artistic practice resists, or aims to resist, functioning as the representative culture of a particular group... it resists serving as the means of reproduction of particular competencies or dispositions. Instead it aims to function as analytical and interventionary.'³⁶⁷ Fraser, and a generation of artists around her, responded to various movements from 'post-studio' and 'site-specific' art to different forms of community and public art. In 1994, she created a project called 'Services' with Helmut

Draxler. She writes, ‘the strategic advantage of using the term “services” to ascribe that labour was that it provided a basis for identifying the value of that portion of and artists activity which did not result in a transferable product. Motivating the project was this conviction that this dimension of contemporary artistic work, as something intangible in a field still dominated by things physical and visible, was going largely unrecognised and uncompensated.’³⁶⁸

Fraser frames the museum as a factory and establishes what subversive role she might play as a factory-worker. She does so predominantly through her own performances within the museum, but institutional critique has manifested in a variety of material approaches from installation, to video and performance, to wholly assumed artistic identities in the case of Walid Raad’s ‘Atlas Group’. This is an imaginary foundation whose aim is to research, document, study and produce audio, visual and literary artefacts that shed light on the contemporary history of Lebanon, an approach that adopts the conventions of museum display in order to upturn a whole plethora of cultural assumptions. Writing about this work, Mark Beasley comments that, among other facets, it ‘exploits the notional understanding of the gallery or institution as the site of venerated liberal truths.’³⁶⁹ Although the breadth and depth of institutional critique is by no-means limited, its purpose of undermining the productive function of the museum was universal, as were the ambitions to destabilise and undermine the viewer’s confidence in the museum as an open repository of objects and cast it instead as a carefully schemed and productive mechanism. As art critic, Terry Smith writes, in relation to Andrea Fraser, ‘the oppositional artist whose art is entirely a practice of critiquing institutions may well become absorbed by an institution that welcomes critique of itself.’³⁷⁰ And this inverse validation of the museum was, arguably, the unanticipated by-product of Fraser *et al*’s critical practice.

By contrast, Smith writes, ‘the artist who maintains a non-utopic, partial and paradoxical, yet also critical complicity with everything, including his or her own motivations and achievements, is always already partially-institutionalised although maybe *at the same time* sufficiently otherwise engaged to be substantially un-institutionalisable.’³⁷¹ And this is perhaps a closer description to the prosumer-artists I have described, and their ‘partial and paradoxical’ relationship to the institutions in

which they show works, the institutions which resemble, to varying degrees, the sites where their protagonists prosume. And, accordingly, the key difference between the prosumer complex and institutional critique, beyond the cultural scope of the former, asserts itself along these lines. Whereas, with artists like Fraser and Raad, institutional critique would assert its own politics in order to overthrow those of the museum, and have the exhibition visitor doubt, undermine and turn against the institution in which they are viewing work, the prosumer complex, evident in the works of Leckey, Stark and Beckman, proposes a muddier, more complicated relationship to it, acknowledging the productive viewing institution (museum, like prosumer website) as a site for viewing that is conflicted, productive and potentially exploitative but also one that provides enormous amounts of pleasure, satisfaction and self-indulgence. The prosumer complex challenges viewers to go beyond earlier binaries or ultimatums set by institutional critique, to reflect more closely on their viewing habits, and therefore look more laterally at the various contexts in which they are programmed to view.

What I am claiming as the exposition of the 'exhibitionary complex' in the prosumer-artists' works comes from the opposite direction to how Fraser, Raad, *et al.* Leckey *et al* engage with the exhibitionary complex, not through Bennett's museum study but rather as it manifests in prosumerism, working in the currency of the audio-visual economy, with still or moving images. Stylistically, the prosumer-artists' works centre around their own subjective response to images as prosumers. They depict prosumerism's 'display platforms' and how they invoke and channel these responses, Stark with Xtranormal, Beckman with the early virtual reality game and Leckey with his Youtube and Google samplings. They are evidencing and dramatising this exhibitionary mode in which they are or have also participated; Stark's promiscuous female protagonist is an artist who becomes obsessed with online chat-forums, the activities of writing and picture-making and how this provocative show and tell might lend to new kinds of sexual encounter. Beckman's female protagonist is a capable and aggressive player, looking for a forum for creative challenges in which she can compete and win, and Leckey's errant pedagogue is trying to decipher and find the appropriate language to describe the imposing effects of diverse images on his person. Their various characters indulge and perform the subjective effects of images facilitated through these viewing platforms, and also the motivations and urges to

engage with them. What they all show is how the complex is simultaneously indulgent and reductive. They emphasise the prosumer's desire for images as partially responsible for prosumerism: chatforums grow, gaming environments grow, image-sharing websites grow, harnessing and perpetuating the prosumer's desire for images. And their participation on these platforms, their 'shared' information and images displayed alongside those of others, engenders new desires or fetishes.

The prosumer-artists' works do not position themselves directly against these productive viewing institutions, they also frame themselves and their common contemporary subjectivities as part of the inherent problem: unlike those artists of institutional critique, they admit or acknowledge their own self-indulgence as a form of culpability. And strategically displayed, the prosumer complex might thus change the role of the productive viewing institution entirely. It might no longer serve to manipulate the viewer into being a productive worker, seeing and reassuring themselves as objects among others displayed on its platforms, but rather the inverse, the prosumer complex might newly trigger the viewer to see themselves, recognise their desires and fetishes alongside their anxieties and disillusionments, identify with these varied but common subjective responses and how these are co-produced by and productive of the strategic display platforms around us. The prosumer complex *shows* its viewer her role as prosumer, exposing both prosumerism's indulgent appeal and manipulative ploys. Whereas Bennett's architecture was manipulative through its displays but disguised its own mechanisms, here in the prosumer complex, the workings of the complex reflects back on itself: exposes itself as a site of indulgence and manipulation. The prosumer complex is not about 'winning hearts and minds' (irrespective of whatever politics), in the way that Bennett describes the museum's ploys or perhaps Fraser *et al* campaign to their audience or viewers, but rather about exposing the conflict of the productive viewing institution as well as some of the inner conflict of knowing that and enjoying or indulging in it anyway. Thus, the display platform becomes an open architecture of upheaval and revelation, overconsumption and ambivalence.

Debord's theory of détournement represents the 'fluid language of anti-ideology', its purpose or cause is 'nothing but its own truth as critique at work in the present.'³⁷²

Here, I propose that, if we hold up the prosumer-artists' works as a model for innovative and critical exhibition-making which upturns or reverses productive viewing modes by carefully rendering its dynamics, curatorial practice might also aim to achieve a similar form or détournement. The prosumer complex, is an exhibitionary model capable of 'détourning', diverting or rerouting the complex which makes the institution productive, which 'makes plastic the emotional use of détourned objects',³⁷³ and that acknowledges and fully instrumentalises that individual's (artist or curator's) subjective and sometimes illogical or multi-rational responses to images in order to do so effectively.

The prosumer complex materialises when prosumerism's intrinsic and extrinsic elements are exposed to reflect how it operates on us, and how we operate it as productive viewers. This is a space where strategic display platforms are themselves put on display, where subjectivities are utilised and their relationship to the affective labour of looking spot lit. This is a viewing complex re-routed, reversed, turned upon or against itself. The prosumer complex can be sited on any stage or institution where prosumerism functions, where it can also be rendered, depicted or enacted, disrupting its development and perpetual harvest. The space or architecture of détournement evident in the prosumer-artists's work is the basis for the prosumer complex as a new curatorial approach.

The prosumer complex might provoke curatorial questions both conceptual and practical. How does the complex advance from previous critiques of institutionalising viewing? How does it impact curatorial discourse and force the curator to expose and exploit their own subjectivity relative to the strategic display platforms of the complex? How does the prosumer complex encourage curatorial practice to acknowledge its own role within the production or perpetuation of prosumerism? How might the curatorial role resemble that of the prosumer, and, equally, how might the curator distinguish herself from the role and function of the prosumer? In the prosumer complex, nobody is logically or rationally distanced from the material they consume and produce nor are they abstracted or removed from the business of production. And within the radius of the seductive image nobody maintains a superior rationale or higher ground than any other. By asking and addressing these questions,

the prosumer complex pulls contemporary curatorial discourse towards some difficult questions and into more complicated, imbricated terms. And as an active or affective viewing experience, it also vitalises, updates and expands current forms of prosumer critique, so that this productive complex and we, its primary agents, are unapologetically exposed.

Chapter 8: The Prosumer Complex II

8.1 The curator as prosumer

8.2 Advances from prosumerist curating

8.3 Challenging curatorial binaries

8.4 Agonist architectures and implemented subjectivities

8.5 Advances from prosumer critique

8.6 Prosumer recalibration

8.1 The curator as prosumer

In this chapter, I propose that the prosumer complex is a model of exhibition-making. This détournement within Leckey, Stark and Beckman's work creates the central dynamic of the prosumer complex, where both the strategic display architectures and the subjective appeal of images are rendered together within the same frame and exposed to the viewer to create a new form of differential viewing. The prosumer complex would employ the common contemporary subjectivity as a new curatorial register and rethink display architectures in their broadest sense, in order to make judicious and self-conscious, rather than productive, the viewer-as-prosumer. Because if prosumerism is a complex that employs display platforms to create common, productive subjectivities, then the question of how we, as a society, might recognise ourselves as prosumers and redress the industry and mechanisms of prosumerism, is a curatorial one.

Briefly, but significantly, it might be worth some reflection on my subjective experience as a curator and how I recognise aspects of that role in processes of prosumerism: both emerging from a kind of productive viewing, a viewing that creates surplus value. For as a prosumer, I create value through the attention economy, and as a curator making exhibitions and supporting or marketing artists' practices I create surplus value in the cultural economy and art market. Over the past five years, I have become conscious of myself prosuming and have affiliated some of its gestures with

those of the curatorial, in perhaps the most generic sense. I have caught myself routinely 'prosuming' images, for a variety of reasons, social, professional, 'creative' and have also actively contributed to prosumerism's various display platforms. I have felt entertained, attracted, amused, diverted by this process just as I have felt tested, aggravated, bored and exploited. I have sensed the increasing non-privacy of my images suspended there, on prosumer platforms, and the invasive claims that various corporations have subtly made on them. In fact, from the moment my material was exhibited, my contributions became licenced 'content' to use and exchange however those corporations saw fit. And this seemingly benign practice of contributing content and keeping it afloat in a sea of images is, in its worst sense, what it is to work as a contemporary art curator, be it independently or for an institution, where there is a certain emphasis on remaining productive (and visible) by keeping the works of artists' afloat in a tide of international exhibitions. In both practices of productive viewing, the prosumerist and the curatorial, I have begun to suspect and align my role as a sort of intermediary floatation mechanism, rather than the autonomous, creative and critical agent their respective institutions would ostensibly have me.³⁷⁴

Prosumerism is connected, or it is certainly not disconnected, to the terms and conditions of curating and the shortcomings of that role with its promises for autonomy, creative freedom, agency and choice. Both practices would (ostensibly) allow me to decide upon what material I post, mount, assemble and share.

Prosumerism, like the institution, would claim the productive viewer, or curator, endowed with the privilege to choose material, material which would, displayed on its stages for innovation, produce an audience or following, creative visibility or critical viability. But perhaps those promises are simply promotional rhetoric, which leads to nothing but a form of productivity by the curator, consistent with the prosumer, to keep images or artworks circulating in order to create a surplus value generated by the looking labour of others, but which ultimately does nothing more but perpetuate the power and maintain the discourse of the institution (be that a prosumer corporation, a museum, a commercial gallery, or whatever party ultimately derives that surplus value).

The question of how we exhibit material to one another and who benefits from the

spectacle's latent exhibitionism is a curatorial one, a curatorial question for everyone. And that's precisely what I claim the prosumer-artists' make visible as exemplary exhibition-makers, exhibition-makers whose work shows us to ourselves, showing off to one another, playing image games, performing the image, engrossed in our own prosumerism. They are taking this nebulous, potentially reductive and invalid 'creative' process and making from that something far more complex, complicated and valuable. Recognising themselves as prosumers, productive viewers wading through surplus material, they derive from that nuanced, detailed narratives in performance and moving image works as receptacles for these observations. Their protagonists self-indulge and purge, enjoy and are alienated, desire and are repulsed, their about-turns are as unresolved and complicated as the situation itself. Because prosumerism is a situation and activity which, working through our haptic pathways and appealing to our subjectivities beyond the rational or logical realm, might take more to understand and confront than the stern disavowals of what currently exists as prosumer critique. The prosumer complex therefore needs to create a viewing experience that is dynamic and self-reflective in the same way as prosumerism in order to meet and go beyond this occupation.

Prosumerism is a basic kind of curating, in the very generic sense of the word (and that word, like the role, has itself become generic, used to describe selectors, programmers and self-appointed connoisseurs of all kinds, in and beyond all creative disciplines). But we as curators must also recognise ourselves as prosumers and then ask what exactly distinguishes the curatorial role from that of the prosumerist? Turning to confront curatorial gestures or activities as prosumerist, I ask how contemporary art curating might redefine itself in the face of prosumerism, as more than just productive 'sharing', consuming and (re)producing content *ad nauseum*. The prosumer complex would ask of curating what else could it be, what more can it be? How can the prosumer complex provoke, deepen and antagonise curatorial practice? Taken up as a reflexive form of exhibition-making, the prosumer complex can illuminate and manipulate the productive aspects of the complex shared by curating and prosuming: the subjectivities that drive it and the display platforms that enable it. Here, treating curating not as a distantiated, objective, rarefied, knowledged-based privilege, but as mode of production much like prosumerism, it might be most critically, evaluated and

retooled.

In their work, Leckey, Stark and Beckman bring the two emotional registers of the prosumer together, the immersed, quotidian image-user, and the disappointed, disgruntled, exploited or apathetic image-worker. Their protagonists' responses to images are both positive and negative, their subjective responses oscillate at any given moment and defy any one fixed rational or logic. The images that induce these effects are posted and circulated on display, on platforms to which the protagonists systematically return, indulging their desires and reinforcing their concerns. These platforms are a source of entertainment and seduction as well as disaffection or estrangement. The images they present, the frameworks they are presented upon and the responses they inspire are recognisable to those of us familiar with how and where popular or niche images are channelled online. Theirs are works made from the stuff of the everyday, what they render with that is not refined, abstract or esoteric. In them, we identify with the wavering emotional registers of the prosumer, the seduced and the disaffected. We recognise how those registers are played out in the sets, compositions and architectures before us. Familiar to us as viewers, we might apprehend prosumerism's complex: the architectures we visit to consume and (re)-produce these images and the complicated relationships with images that pre-empt and ensue from these encounters.

Within these prosumer-artists' works there are no binaries created between popular material and the material transposed as a work of art. The exploration is in the penetrative evaluation of material and of how it takes hold on us as viewers. Neither is there any moral or intellectual frameworks for judgment about the kind of material the artists' protagonists feel drawn to, on grounds of historical or cultural provenance, or materially, in the quality of image resolution. Instead, what is judged is how singularly still and moving images weigh or impose themselves upon a prosumer. Their perverse evaluations defy logical or empirical evaluation and while the protagonists' subjective responses are perfectly defensible and comprehensive, at times they veer into the irrational. As such, the works draw from and appeal to a common contemporary subjectivity and express themselves in the nascent terms in which we might also understand ourselves embedded in prosumerism, both pleasurable and

disturbing. The terms I call nascent, because the encounters that prosumerism sets up, the modes and sites of engagement, participation or attention it requires and the affect from which it draws its productivity is relatively new. The terms for how this is experienced, like the experience itself, is not purely reducible to purely academic terms, and so finding those terms in this form of analysis of the instrumentalisation of the prosumer's subjectivity is not straightforward. What is worth maintaining though, is the usefulness of the artists' (via their protagonists) subjectivity in probing the prosumer's relationship to her material, the new dependencies that are forming between them. This is not subjectivity for subjectivity sake: it is very strategically co-opted and dramatised to articulate the strength of this new mode of production.

There are no ethical binaries imposed by these artists' works: they do not imply that prosumerism is right or wrong. What is quite particular to these works' multiple registers is that there is no concrete disavowal of the activity of prosumerism: neither the works nor the artists' claims for them are anti-prosumerist. Its activity fluctuates between an absolute indulgence and source of revulsion, a labour that is more complicated and convoluted, more plasmatic and perverse than the standard forms of prosumer critique conveys, a critique which suggests we should recognise, refuse and protest against it. In the prosumer-artists' works, the allure of prosumerism is often greater and the thresholds between us and it, between surface and interiority, between prosumer and image is, in every respect, fluid. By watching these prosumer-artists' works we might not, as viewers, be immediately turned off our prosumerism, for what is exposed in the work is what we perhaps see in ourselves, I saw in myself, self-indulgent image-addicts curiously content to toil away feeding our desires and actively producing images in abundance. These works are not, strictly speaking, anti-prosumerist but reveal the promises and pitfalls of its condition and endeavour to untangle how, within us, the prosumer complex operates. No higher moral ground or superior perspective is established between the artist and the viewer-as-prosumer, nor is prosumerism's indulgence condemned.

To clarify, Leckey, Stark nor Beckman make no claims about being curators, about purposely adopting a curatorial mode: their works are explicitly and self-consciously those of artists. Leckey insists that his process of sampling material and structuring it

around in-depth enquiries is essayistic rather than curatorial. But in many respects, his research approach, accumulative materialist tendencies, in-depth enquiries of the productive cultures of prosumerism and art, and his deep interest in *how* people look at images and things, show a very serious curatorial aspect. With that in mind, it strikes me as curious that so few examples exist of contemporary curators who similarly co-opt and use visual material, the art historical mixed shrewdly with the more populist, in a similar self-serving and strategically subjective mode. For the purposes of this research, in fact, I have found none, a finding which confirms to me the importance of the prosumer complex as a proposition rather than a *fait accompli*. So my claim is that these prosumer-artists' works, as models of reflexive exhibition-making, might be considered interesting curatorial prototypes that accurately represent, or penetrate new productive modes of viewing, by teaming purposely subjective monologues with the clever display architectures that co-produce them. Just as the prosumer-artists expose the image's affect upon their protagonist's person, curators might use their resources and subjective experiences to potentially, albeit differently, do the same. In fact, why would the curator not mine their own subjective experiences as prosumer, just like the artist, to more profoundly reflect on a whole new order, labour and economy, of looking?

It is perhaps significant that, in the first instance, the prosumer complex is evident in artists', rather than curators' work. The prosumer complex would disavow the agency of the expert in any logical or rational terms: we are prosumers by virtue of how images weigh upon us. What first qualifies us to identify the prosumer complex is not any privileged intellectual vantage point over the material but rather our subjective responses to them. As such, within the prosumer complex, nobody and nothing is logically or rationally distanced from the material (work or image), nobody enjoys a higher rationale or stronger logic than another. This levelling out is one way in which the traditional curatorial register is challenged. The prosumer-artists', in order to articulate the full thrust of the prosumer complex, needed to isolate, taper, dramatise and emphasise their own subjective responses to images via their protagonists and in order to achieve this critical paradigm, a curator would need to adopt the same approach. In contemporary curatorial practice, the subjective position of the image-worker is at present relatively non-existent. In professional practice, conferences,

publications and other public debates curatorial discourse most frequently adopts the vocabulary of the objective expert who enjoys a critical distance from the art works and the exhibition visitor's quotidian experience and is uniquely able to marry these two elements while framing the former for the latter in esoteric, philosophical or poetic terms. Adopting the prosumer complex as a curatorial mode requires an altogether different extrapolation of the subjective, a realignment of the curator's proximity to her material, emphasising to the non-objective position of the curator and her non-empirical research process, and her accessing a common contemporary subjectivity, before the affective labour of prosumerism might be usefully redeployed.

The prosumer complex is an exemplary kind of exhibition-making that reflects on how the exhibitionary complex works through strategic display platforms within the institution in which it is viewed: in the new institution of prosumerism but also, simultaneously, the more established institution of the nominal gallery space. The prosumer complex presents a curatorial question about a whole new image economy and its *modus operandi*, a way of looking at this complex simultaneously across productive display architectures, existing online as they do in museums, and of addressing how to divert them back on themselves so that its mechanisms becomes evident and fully disclosed. It also might raise the question of who to tackle when addressing prosumerism, when so much of its thrust depends on the individuals that partake, as much as those who strategically channel and exploit it. The prosumer complex would abandon any rhetorical claims that a museum or website might make about providing opportunities for communication and creativity which ultimately obscure its own motivations for attracting prosumers but it must also abandon the concept that prosumers are being thoroughly exploited and instead regard more broadly what is involved in the exchange.

As a curator, one might ask practically how can *détournement's* intrinsic dynamic be echoed in exhibition-making, to show how the labour of looking finds form through the strategic combination of affective imagery and display platforms and to do so in a way that is conceptually ambitious as well as practically operable. The prosumer complex might not necessarily include works by the prosumer-artists but if it does would go significantly further than the exhibition contexts of the examples outlined

earlier in London, Venice and Grenoble. There, the works were commissioned either as part of a peripheral performance programme or as part of a group exhibition and were produced or curated as a straightforward mode of exposition rather than with any explicit curatorial desire to reflect back on the productive nature of the institution or exhibition in which they were hosted or the curatorial endeavour that selected or 'consumed' them. No curatorial practice that shows these 'prosumer-artists' work achieves the prosumer complex just by virtue of that fact.

The prosumer complex is a mode of exposing the Janus-face of prosumerism. It is not a logic-based critique of either the new institutions of prosumerism or the established institution of the museum. It is not a direct critique of the role of prosumerism in the financial world, in how it has evolved and been instrumentalised within the economy since Alvin Toffler's coinage of the term in 1980. And while it does reflect the ways in which we as consumers and as a public are put to work with images, neither is the prosumer complex a sociological appraisal or economic analysis of the changing organisation of labour since post-Fordism in the same vein as the political and philosophical writings introduced across the first three chapters of this thesis. Instead, the prosumer complex is a curatorial proposal, an architecture of 'détournement' that implements the curator's subjectivity and strategic displays in order to provide new ways to understand and re-imagine our role in this visual, social and economic phenomenon, as producers of currency in a mode more affective than logical.

8.2 Advances from prosumerist curating

The prosumer complex, as I endeavour to convey it, is a model of exhibition-making that *shows up* or exposes rather than directly adopts prosumerism's productive mode. The prosumer-artists are not exemplary prosumers: far from it. Rather, they are artists making work from the materials and mechanisms of prosumerism. And similarly, I would distinguish curators managing to achieve a similar prosumer complex within their curatorial practice as not being exemplary prosumers, but rather working against it by using the materials and mechanisms of this productive phenomenon. It might help to look briefly at two models of curating that are currently being held up as radical, but which I contend are actually prosumerist in tendency and therefore non-

progressive. Interestingly and perhaps inaccurately, both are defined as different forms of 'museology': radical and post-critical, respectively.

Museology is traditionally the social and anthropological study of museums, addressing their symbolic and social functions as well as their changing administrative policies. Two contemporary theories by different writers, 'Radical Museology' and 'Post-Critical Museology', regard how curatorial practices might be instrumentalised by the museum to different effect. 'Radical museology' is a term coined by art historian and critic Claire Bishop, describing the practices of museum directors as curators who have designed particular 'radical' exhibitions without necessarily including artworks. She refers in particular to recent exhibitions of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Reina Sofia in Madrid and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Metelkova, or MSUM in Ljubljana, by their three directors Charles Esche, Manuel Borja-Villel and Zdenka Badinovac, respectively. The exhibitions she studies are composed of archival displays of collated and sampled material, documentation, film, images and other diverse archive materials. Their curatorial projects, she claims, buck the trend of larger North American and European institutions showing reductive, market-orientated, exhibitions, exemplifying what she then coins as 'presentism', the less-critical, market-driven, sensational and spectacular counterpoint to her radical museology.³⁷⁵ By contrast, her three museum directors-come-curators focus their exhibitions not on the trends of the market but rather on the site-specificity of the museum, its exhibition history and the local political conflicts that have impacted its administration. This they demonstrate through exhibiting 'constellations' of archival material, allowing past documents be considered displays for 'future facing politics'. This, she proposes, represents a radical form of curatorial practice, where what must be confronted by the viewer is the conflict that has faced that particular museum in recent history. What I would argue results is the same potential problematic of Fraser *et al*, which is that this notional 'radical' practice in fact reinforces the very particular politics and inherited hierarchies of the museum, perpetuates it as a hermetic space of closed discourse. While the constellation of materials on display might document previous conflicts, they progress no further *through* that material, and maintain the curatorial position as a distanced, privileged one. I would argue that this material has been 'shared' in the prosumerist sense, taken from one archive and transposed onto the other, accruing a

surplus cultural value from that transition but lacking a reflexive look at what it means for that curator to take that material and re-produce or reconfigure it within that context. The selection of this material is based on subjective criteria and yet *the material of that subjectivity* is abandoned within the display. Put more simply, what is lacking from these 'radical museologists' are their own subjective accounts of their relationships to this assorted material, as it is selected and displayed within the space, and therefore an exposition as to what this material might produce now, as opposed to then, a gesture which makes for the continuation rather than challenge of productive viewing, regardless of whatever the politics of those curators' claims.

Their relatively standardised archival displays pay little attention to how those archive materials once functioned for their viewers and readers as opposed to how they might now be physically negotiated in a gallery by visitors-come-prosumers, supposedly illuminated by archival news reports from their locale. This is surely productive in the very same way that Bennett critiqued in 1988, and represents antiquated rather than radical form of curating. Problematically, it simply reinforces the notion of the museum director as conduit of knowledge, of superior perspective, ultimately maintaining the discourse of the museum. Although similarly, it might pool from diverse sources, the prosumer complex, by contrast, would endeavour to present more subjective, partial, and potentially problematic relationships to the material it gathers, be that constituted through artworks alone or in combination with documentation and ephemera. The prosumer complex would endeavor to use materials strategically within display architectures as provocative and alluring, disturbing and alienating as those encountered elsewhere, online prosumer sites, for example, but in a more critical fashion, asking the viewer to reflect upon not just what is on show, but how so, what kind of viewing has produced it and what viewing dynamic it engenders. And by virtue of a more partial, open and problematic curatorial subjectivity, the prosumer complex would appeal to a shared contemporary subjectivity and a wider range of experiences than those generated historically by that particular institution.

While Bishop would surely reject my claim that her curatorial examples are perpetuating rather than challenging prosumerist curatorial practice, a new theory of

'post-critical museology' would, by contrast, almost certainly embrace it. Andrew Dewdney, David Dibosa and Victoria Walsh propose that curatorial practice should absolutely emulate the new display mechanisms of prosumer websites. They claim that 'in thinking about art museums of the future it will be necessary to rethink audiences simultaneously as individuals, consumers, collectivities, as well as in the more particular sense of being users and even 'prosumers'³⁷⁶ and that, in response, the curator must submit to its visitors, 'distraction and hyper-attention', while plotting, 'a means for a transactional relationship with [these] audiences.'³⁷⁷ What precisely is meant by setting up a 'transactional relationship' between the exhibition and the visitor remains unspecified within the text but follows from the forms of 'participation' modelled on that of websites like, they mention, Facebook: forging interactive displays where self-profiling or self-publishing is available to the exhibition visitor, so that she feel some greater purchase on what is presented before her. That the institution might be under pressure to increase visitor numbers and better utilise social media in order to do so is an inevitability, but what I am arguing is, that contrary to what Dewdney *et al* propose, the curator would be well advised to *not* submit to the kinds of superficial 'participation' that prosumerism promotes, but, just the opposite: to make the exhibition a space in which participatory and productive viewing are thought about in their full complexity, and in their exploitative as well as enabling manifestations. That the viewer be provided the mechanism to fully consider the productive aspect of their viewing, of the 'prosumer' mode, is crucial to the prosumer complex. Contrary to this recent theory that digital prosumer platforms provide an exemplary participatory model for the viewer, I would argue that the curator would act more radically by carefully rethinking the basis and conditions of that model, a model of show and display which has only, after all, been very shrewdly remodelled upon it. In the prosumer complex, the curator (like the prosumer-artists before her) might establish the metonymic potential of the exhibition as a surrogate productive viewing space, one that encourages the voracious image-appetites of its visitors, and as such, becomes a potent and enabling rehearsal space for differential viewing where the productive prosumer is recalibrated into a sceptical, self-conscious viewer.

8.3 Challenging curatorial binaries

As a curatorial mode, the prosumer complex might challenge and advance some recursive binaries that underpin many debates in contemporary curatorial practice. Firstly it obscures binaries between the artist and the curator, a distinction often threaded through a number of curatorial discussions, from Terry Smith's 'Thinking Contemporary Curating' and Paul O'Neill's 'The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures' which both afford the artist a greater degree of independence in flexing their subjective and intuitive approach to materials for exhibition-making than the professional curator. Both imply some implicit, unspoken hierarchy where the artist's intuitive decision-making and selection process has more intrinsic value than the curatorial one. More interestingly, Boris Groys, in his 'Art Power' toys with the curious opacity of the curatorial role as a kind of 'nil-curating'. He writes, that 'the independent curator is a radically secularised artist. He is an artist because he does everything artists do. But he is an artist who has lost the artist's aura, who no longer has magical transformative powers at his disposal, who cannot endow objects with artistic status. He doesn't use objects – art objects included – for art's sake, but rather abuses them, makes them profane. Yet it is precisely this that makes the figure of the independent curator so attractive and so essential to the art of today.'³⁷⁸ His is a strong critique of the institutionalising and productive role of the curator, relinquished (if ever in possession) of her critical agency. He writes that, 'curating cannot escape being simultaneously iconophile and iconoclast. Yet which is the right kind of curatorial practice? Since curatorial practice can never entirely conceal itself the main objective of curating must be to visualise itself, by making its practice explicitly visible. The will to visualisation is in fact what constitutes and drives art. Since it takes place within the context of art, curatorial practice cannot elude the logic of visibility.'³⁷⁹

While Groys doesn't accompany this statement with any substantial curatorial examples, his is an interesting call to arms to make that subjective curatorial position visible and therefore critical or else to self-combust, to be destroyed in order to get past its own nil-ness, to expose this aspect of the curatorial that just treads water producing exhibitions, creating surplus attention value without actually producing anything critical or coherent in and of itself. His use of the term 'aura' is complicated and problematic, but we recognise what he means. Mine is the claim that works by artists like Leckey, Stark and Beckman have within them – if not an aura – then an

auratic quality that is alternatively their subjective quality, a particular roundedness that could have been lost in their prosumerist tendencies, their voracious appetites for nebulous, unrestricted imagery. The productive prosumer keeps the profane, profane: they do nothing with this material only keep it afloat online, but the prosumer-artists do something different with that, they make it sacred, or to use a term that Leckey returns to often, they isolate and refine from within it what is 'transcendent' and enframe that transcendent quality with that which is also claustrophobic. The curator, many curators, like prosumers, I claim, keep the profane, profane, doing nothing with the material only keep it afloat in a wash of exhibitions, online or in galleries, just as long as they are seen to 'participate' and therefore remain visible.

But, through what I want of the prosumer complex, the curator might achieve what the prosumer-artists do, and find a way through the deluge, create a critical form that is truly affective. The curator who is prosumerist in her tendencies, in her productive and quasi-creative practice must disappear, instead acknowledging, practicing, attempting the prosumer complex. As curating is undeniably a subjective process and activity unable to legitimately conceal itself, it must become strategically visible through the overt and open subjectivity required in the dual aspect of the complex. What the prosumer complex demands is the implementation and exposition of the subjective element of curating which is so often ignored or denied in contemporary discourse, the curator's capacity for a partial, non-logical, multi-rational interpretation of materials, which is always connected to the common contemporary subjectivity. This is not to propose a form of curating that is more impulsive and less intelligible than its predecessors, but rather one that does not adopt the guise of some kind of objective intelligence.

Similarly, the prosumer complex might also extricate curatorial practice from the ethical frameworks in which it is often evaluated, where one creative constituency (the artist) is granted more entitlement than another (the curator) to subjective visual selections in exhibition-making processes: in the prosumer complex that subjectivity is not a discrete privilege afforded to a minority, it is a common feature and its overt implementation a common practice. To employ this subjectivity is therefore not overstepping any moral or ethical boundary, or breaking some unspoken professional

contract. To exercise a reflexive subjectivity, a subjectivity that is self-conscious and which is cognisant of the productive conditions that have formed it is a political choice and, I would argue, a critical necessity.

In the prosumer complex distinctions between global and local might be challenged too, given that viewing influenced by prosumerism is, in a sense, the ultimate localisation, personalisation or subjectivisation of a global phenomenon. Here, what Smith calls 'worldly contemporary art' must be simultaneously both worldly and homely, playing out what Leckey phrases as the Internet's 'cosmic-autistic' spectrum. Smith summarises, albeit somewhat reductively, several movements in contemporary curating; a 'retro-sensationalist and spectacularist' current 'which continues to predominate in Euro-America and other modernising art worlds and markets with widespread effect both inside and outside these constituencies'; a second that responds to, 'art created according to nationalist identitarian and critical priorities', which 'came into prominence on international circuits such as biennials and travelling temporary exhibitions: this is the art of transnational transitionality.' The third, he claims, results from new informational and communicative technologies that have led to 'the spread of small scale, interactive, DIY art that is concerned less with high art style or confrontational politics and more with tentative explorations of temporality, place, affiliation and affect – the conditions of living within contemporaneity on a fragile planet.'³⁸⁰ He isolates three curators as recognising those tropes and pioneering adept curatorial responses, Kirk Varnedoe, Okwui Enwezor and Nicolas Bourriaud respectively, who, he claims, 'insisted on a continuity of modernist values within contemporary art, the arrival of a worldwide postcolonial constellation, and the small scale yet portentous emergence of a relational aesthetics.'³⁸¹ He writes that these three curators quickly understood 'that each of these tendencies required different kind of exhibition making, respectively understood as: expand the white cube, de-colonise the biennial, domesticate the gallery space.'³⁸² Whether or not their individual responses and strategies were as crude or basic as Smith describes, the prosumer complex relies not upon an external prognosis and purely architectural remedy, but rather that a by-now global condition is navigated through first-hand experience of the material and mechanisms which prosumerism presents on a daily basis. *Through* this material, the prosumer complex can reveal many aspects of the complexities of

prosumerism, issues like the changing financial mechanisms of a whole economy of images, new forms of image colonialism, the de-professionalisation of photography that it instigates and lack of regulation behind its 'big bang'. All of these global issues and perhaps many more might come into relief from the very productive, subjective ground where this new industry, or economy, is perpetuated.

The prosumer complex might dissolve any pre-existent boundaries between a 'socially-engaged' practice and work or forms of exhibition-making that prioritise aesthetics, playing out how the 'socially-engaged' is so deeply, in the prosumer mode, connected to ways of looking. The rudimentary distinction between socially engaged and aesthetic practices in the realm of the digital is the basis of another analysis by Bishop in her article on the 'Digital Divide'. In it, she recalls curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud's writing on 'relational aesthetics' which 'set artists' desire for face-to-face relations against the disembodiment of the Internet; the physical and the social were pitched against the virtual and the representational.³⁸³ Over the past decade a gap has emerged, she writes, where,

[...] socially engaged art has tended to favour inter-subjective exchange and homespun activities, with the aim of reinforcing a social bond fragmented by spectacle. Yet social relations today are not mediated by mono-directional media imagery (the mainstay of Guy Debord's theory) but through the interactive screen, and the solutions offered by 'useful art' and real-world collaborations dovetail seamlessly with the protocols of Web 2.0, introduced in 2002: Both deploy a language of platforms, collaborations, activated spectatorship, and 'prosumers' who co-produce content (rather than passively consuming information devised for them).³⁸⁴

This 'language of platforms...' Bishop implies, comprises the newest 'socially engaged practice', a form, she claims, devoid of aesthetic awareness or appeal. Bishop's observation of media imagery's advancement from the 'mono-directional' to the interactive screen over the past half-century is quite consistent with my own, however, she conceives the effects of this 'interactive screen' manifesting within critical artistic and curatorial practice is very different. She provides as her example the

Seventh Berlin Biennale curated by artist Artur Żmijewski in 2012. Here, the curator invited Occupy activists into the KW Institute for Contemporary Art for the duration of the biennial to literally 'co-produce' some of the exhibition programme, from which Bishop deduces, 'the results of such co-productions are difficult to contain within the traditional format of the exhibition'. Media imagery's transitions through the interactive screen, of which I am framing prosumerism as emblematic, touches on a much more complicated set of social and economic relations than Bishop's synopsis allows. Her exemplification of its tendencies as an isolated (and perhaps superficially functional) curatorial co-production is inadequate.

There is an evident divide, Bishop maintains, between (artistic and curatorial) practice focused on the socialising aspects of digital technology and the aesthetically motivated work of art. In her thesis, they simply do not tally. She quotes Lev Manovich's question of whether 'the Internet asks us to reconsider the very paradigm of an aesthetic object: Can communication between users become the subject of an aesthetic?'³⁸⁵ And she resolves that, 'the centrality of this question to social practice is obvious: Does work premised on a dialogic, prosumer model, seeking real-world impact, need to assume representation or an object form in order to be recognised as art?' Bishop concludes that it does not, that 'at its most utopian, the digital revolution opens up a new dematerialised, de-authored, and unmarketable reality of collective culture; at its worst, it signals the impending obsolescence of visual art itself.' My conclusion to the same question of Manovich's is quite different. The 'digital revolution' is both material and authored, albeit largely unattributed. Its most utopian potential does not lie in dematerialised or de-authorised reality of 'collective culture': as Lanier *et al* report, this model has not been viable since the inception of Web 2.0. This concept is mythical, utopian, unreal. Rather, given that the currency of this new form of communication between users is, in its very essence, driven by image-exchange, then art work premised on, or otherwise rendering, a prosumer model has no intelligent option but to assume representational or 'object form'. Furthermore, I believe that across all critical forms, prosumerism is most provocatively and effectively rendered through art. Here, in the prosumer complex, the boundaries of 'social practice' are opened up through their aestheticisation, provoking questions of politics and

economics via the prosumer mode and they are absolutely not, as Bishop contends, 'allergic to the aesthetic'.³⁸⁶

The prosumer complex might usefully challenge any superficial distinctions made between 'new media' art (art facilitated through the Internet and/or digital technologies) and art made in more traditional media. This distinction might be illuminated by a debate sparked by Bishop's 'Digital Divide' article. Soon after it was published, critic Brian Droitcour, and 'digital projects' curator, Lauren Cornell co-wrote a letter to Artforum's editors, interpreting Bishop's distinction between digital practice and 'visual art itself' as a fundamental unwillingness on her part to research and engage with the scope of 'new media art'. They write, 'why does this work remain invisible to Bishop? It is partly due to her focus on a "mainstream" ... Still, we would argue that even here the "divide" she describes is actively being bridged and, because of a critical blind spot, she is forcing it back open.'³⁸⁷ Cornell and Droitcour contest Bishop's proposal based on the evidence of, 'countless organizations, publications, and artist communities dedicated to this [new media] work', and claim that her article was poorly timed, 'as art that critically engages network technologies proliferates and art institutions recognize the undeniable importance of the Internet.' Bishop herself retorts, in the same publication, 'the overwhelming response to this article has been one of indignation from proponents of new media, who protest that I did not seize the opportunity to celebrate the unsung creative forces in digital arts... but this is beyond the purview of my article... the core question [of which] was why so little mainstream art reflects on what it means to think, see, and filter affect through the digital. I'm not talking about individuals and institutions using new media, but about how new media changes us.'

In the original article, Bishop's waded in on a subject, she confesses, which she had not extensively researched but be that what it was, this ultimate distinction between how artists or institutions use new media and how new media use us is vitally important. It's worth maintaining this distinction as especially relevant to the prosumer complex. This thesis does not aim to perpetuate or advance any discourse or distinctions based upon media, or be saddled with loose criticism based on that reductive binary. Rather it aims to advance far beyond that and look instead at how curatorial strategy might

borrow from artists' works that look precisely at how media changes us into a society of image-workers and exhibition-makers and as curators, how we might learn from works of art that are as complicated, contrived, perverse, ambivalent and unresolved as the situation itself. Leckey, Stark and Beckman have all worked with moving images, both analogue and digital and fused them with performance at different stages and in different ways throughout their careers. To reduce description and evaluation of their work based principally on media would be to miss the central dynamic, and fundamental critical achievement of their work. The prosumer complex is derived from and aims at exposing the different kinds of viewing produced by prosumerism, which is, in itself, a product of capitalism's marriage of digital technology and the Internet. However, the prosumer complex does not need to be reduced to narrow debates around 'new media' art, art of the digital age, 'Post-Internet art'³⁸⁸, or any of the terms circulating that might have some literal connection with the technological aspects of prosumerism. The prosumer complex, which the artists first recognised through the *stuff* of prosumerism and which I propose as a curatorial model, manifests in works in a variety of media, a variety which might fruitfully continue to expand and advance.

The prosumer complex would look deeply at what the ramifications of this phenomenon is for a society of image-users, of viewers-come-prosumers and use strategic subjective accounts alongside more shrewdly arranged displays so that the exhibitory aspects of prosumerism are made to be openly reflexive and self-exposing. The prosumer complex, exposes the reciprocal function of display platforms and affective images, and as such the scope for where, how and with what materials this complex might be rendered needs to be understood far beyond the boundaries prescribed in the aforementioned curatorial binaries.

8.4 Agonist architectures and implemented subjectivities

The prosumer complex pre-supposes that the exhibition visitor is already, before entering, a prosumer. Given the extent to which prosumerism now extends its boundaries, particularly in a Western context, I think this very general assumption is fair. Here, the exhibition is no less a factory or playground than the browser, capitalising on the labour of looking. And, returning to those sites of its production, the

prosumer complex, as a curatorial strategy might transform or redevelop those sites for viewing into sites of agonism, anxiety, unrest and unease. The prosumer complex should be achievable wherever the dual complex of prosumerism is evident, within the (art) museum, non-profit space, commercial gallery, biennial, prosumer websites or online display platforms, among many other possible spaces. The artists' works show that the prosumer complex is possible both within the space of the public art institution but also within the psychic space of the auditorium and the still or moving image work played on the browser screen. The 'architecture' for the prosumer complex, in this sense, is meant in the most broad terms possible, as broadly as the new dynamic, molular architectonics of prosumerism, beyond the structural and infrastructural aspects of a building, in a space that encompasses any media. Put simply, there should be no prescription for where the prosumer complex takes place, the focus being how it re-diverts the spatial aspects of the complex and puts them to work. Any productive prosumer architectures might become a critical space or agonist platform.

Chantal Mouffe writes about agonistic platforms for art, in relation to her theory of agonism as a new way of 'practicing the political'.³⁸⁹ Rather than thinking of democracy as a negotiation of interests or a utopian political consensus, 'agonism' resembles 'antagonism' in that both represent 'a conflict without any rational solution'. However agonism is distinct as, 'a conflict which is going to be played out in a different way because the people who are in conflict see themselves not as enemies but as adversaries... while disagreeing, they accept the legitimacy of the demands of their opponents.'³⁹⁰ And she extends this framework to 'agonist' public space as a place for artists' work in her essay, 'Agonist Politics and Artistic Practices'. Adopting the framework of Virno's 'Grammar of the Multitude' she contends, 'today, the boundaries between pure intellectual activity, political action and labour have dissolved, and post-Fordist labour has absorbed into itself many of the characteristics of political action.'³⁹¹ Mouffe proposes that this transformation opens the way for novel forms of social relations in which art and work co-exist, where, 'the objective of artistic practices should be to foster the development of those new social relations that are made possible by the transformation of the work process. Their main task is the production of new subjectivities and the elaboration of new worlds.'³⁹²

This would provide an altogether promising proposition, the production and exposition of new subjectivities in post-Fordist labour as something which artists and curators might be uniquely qualified. This would certainly resonate with the prosumer complex as I identify it in the works of Leckey *et al*, and an approach I would propose that curatorial practice usefully follow. However, how Mouffe then prescribes ‘agonism’ manifesting within artistic practices once tethered to exhibition space is both restrictive and limited. She writes, ‘what is needed in the current situation is a widening of the field of artistic intervention, with artists working in a multiplicity of social spaces outside traditional institutions in order to oppose the program of the total social mobilisation of capitalism.’³⁹³ She suggests that the social mobilisation of capitalism is removed from or exterior to ‘traditional institutions’, the art gallery or museum, and that an artist’s (or for my purposes, the curator’s) intervention is more judiciously targeted at sites where the mobilisation of capital is identifiable or tangible. She doesn’t specify where but the distinction is short-sighted and potentially damaging. As I have documented throughout the writing, prosumerism is evidence of a new mobilisation of capital, and any institution or platform facilitating productive viewing presents a site of political mobilisation. While Mouffe has previously alluded to the fact that ‘space does not need to refer to geographical location’³⁹⁴, her aversion to the art institution is both prescriptive and restrictive. The prosumer complex might create this ‘agonistic space’ far more provocatively within an institution of productive viewing (the art museum, as one example), where of course capital is mobilised, rather than in Mouffe’s conservative and quite fixed understanding of alternative ‘social spaces’ outside it.

The prosumer complex as a curatorial model needs to be untied from fixed concepts of exhibition architectures, be they in the museum, online or in ‘public’ spaces, particularly since the features of an institution of art and the new institution of prosumerism share so many qualities: how succinctly does Tate Modern exemplify Chris Anderson’s economic theory of the ‘Long Tail’, using all its spaces – gallery, bookshop, souvenir shop, auditorium, members room, reading rooms, etc – to attract new visitors and create new fetishes, to promote the labour of looking and profit from the appetites that develop there?³⁹⁵ Like the artworks before them, the prosumer

complex as a curatorial strategy is reflexive about the conditions of its own production, its own subjective framework and the productive display platforms that co-produce them. It is generous and open in allowing that agonism to play out: as an architecture of détournement, it is in itself an agonistic space. The prosumer complex does not immediately condemn the productive institution for being productive but ruminates at length on prosumerism's promises of transcendence and highlights and dramatises what ensues; it embraces and indulges, undermines and exposes this mode of viewing, working as steadily and as shrewdly upon it as prosumerism before it.

In this thesis I do not prescribe particular exhibition sites in which a prosumer complex can rest, is it necessarily agile and applicable to a variety of contexts. Practicable across platforms, the prosumer complex is an architecture in which interior display platforms might be reconfigurable, in some way reflexive or agonistic within its surrounds. I do not prescribe how an 'architecture' be interpreted. The architecture and its display platforms might be welded together, inextricable one from the other, or resting against one another like on-screen lumens thrown against a wall. An architecture might exist as a social encounter, or a critical framework, a paradigmatic image illuminated or distorted by a fictional narrative, it might be a performance or moving image work. In whichever event, the architecture would stage, show, display or include work of all or any kind, and strategically exploit the subjective responses of those who have gathered it in combinations that guide its viewers to reflect upon the conditions of its formation and leads them to a differential or striated form of viewing.

And just as I cannot prescribe how the display platforms and host architectures of the prosumer complex are used and diverted, neither can I prescribe those manifestations of the subjective which a curator might strategically use to reflect on this new form of productive viewing. Employing different subjective devices, dramaturgies, narratives, choreographies, scoring, fictionalisations, depictions, choruses and strategic obscurations, a prosumer's subjective account will necessarily vary. It might be voiced in the first person or through protagonists, avatars and altar egos or infinite other personal or pictorial paradigms. Those subjective accounts may take any literary, musical or cinematic form, just as they might be expressed entirely through movement in whatever media. Over the research I have found no examples of curatorial

subjectivities, which have themselves been generated in or by post-Fordist or affective labour, implemented as strategic, critical frameworks to reflect on this new way of working. But I propose that not only is this feasible but in fact, critically manipulating subjectivities induced by image-labour is a really important curatorial endeavour. And, as I claim at the beginning of this chapter, the question of how we recognise and realign ourselves as a society of prosumers is a general curatorial one. The individual curator's response to this phenomenon, their implementation of subjective response and the provocative displays that elicit them, might present visitors to the complex a unique and pivotal experience.

Although the prosumer-artists' works I previously outlined might sit within the prosumer complex it must also remain necessarily open to the accumulation of artworks, images and objects it shows. Those works might be potent and dynamic when shown on their own or among or upon various others. Ultimately, the prosumer complex's curatorial arrangement must play reflexively with intrinsic and extrinsic elements, with its displays, with its visitors, and with the individual's subjectivity that has brought it here. In prosumerism, traditional image taxonomies, materialist principles and art historical classifications no longer hold: appetites for images are voracious as prosumers roam and track, produce, tamper, edit and upload irrespective of these different categories. In the prosumer complex established historical and theoretical classifications are unbound and abandoned, inverted and transposed. Like Leckey, who considers individual images according to their 'weight and volume', post-Fordism's new productive subjectivities might be playfully penetrated. The prosumer complex would consider prosumerism's elements, the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of its complex, and reshape them into undisguised subjectivities and agonist architectures, strategically disarranged and newly disruptive.

The prosumer complex cajoles and teases prosumerism's productive mode. As a *détournement* or *mise-en-abyme*, it reflects back upon the conditions of prosumer production. It exposes us as primary mechanism or agent. In prosumerism, the viewer feels compelled to represent herself or be represented as image or object among others. This attendance is highlighted in the prosumer-artists' works, all of which depict the protagonist as viewer as well as addressing *the work's* viewer at some point,

perhaps most directly by Stark. The viewer is thus implicated within the exhibitionary architecture, the prosumer complex might reflect upon the mixed experience of encountering herself as an image among others and how that has become a productive mechanism. The prosumer complex prompts its viewer to look not solely upon the dynamics within the work, but back toward herself as prosumer and asks of her, of us, what role we play as viewer, what extent our toil as image-worker.

8.5 Advances from prosumer critique

The prosumer complex changes the terms and conditions of prosumer critique. In the prosumer complex, prosumerism's own affective mechanisms are identified and strategically used, embraced and undermined, complicated and unfurled, scrutinised and re-evaluated. In the prosumer complex anywhere that to look is to labour is a viable and propitious curatorial site. The curator realises the prosumer complex in a subjective manner resembling the prosumer-artists' works, in scripts, scores, monologues, choruses, essayistic or convoluted narratives. They represent what it is to feel the allure and appeal of the image and the desire to perform as a prosumer, to produce and contribute images to a broader economy and the feeling subsequently or simultaneously, of disaffection, pressure, claustrophobia, isolation or exploitation. They express these responses while utilising the images, tools or platforms that produce it and thereby explore and divert the activity. These experiences are represented visually, creating, if not the same productive affect of prosumerism, then a testament of it within a viewing environment. This functions on a very different level to those critiques detailed in the first section. While the theories of post-Fordist, affective labour and prosumerism reflect upon the problematics of different kinds of productive viewing, the writers do so from the perspectives of non-prosumers, as outside experts diagnosing a workforce in which they do not assert themselves as part.

This is certainly true of Beller with his hypothesis on the cinematic mode, and also evident in the writing of Virno, Hardt and Negri who diagnose rather than necessarily empathise with the workers or singularities within the multitude. Virno describes the qualities of the 'virtuoso' and how that performance artist becomes the model for a new worker in cognitive capital, combining Intellect, Action, and Labour in her daily

activities. Virno identifies the characteristics of this labourer but provides no examples of what professional arena that might feasibly be challenged, or what kind of workers might be able to recuperate those characteristics to their own ends. Beyond this identification, Hardt and Negri outline the broader framework of 'communications' in which this kind of worker operates, within the 'multitude'. Their theory calls for a collective uprising, where workers of the multitude use their new communications platforms to unite and self-organise against the new non-governmental capitalist supra-powers who exert their force over them. This is a theory of how the artist's creative tendencies and the infrastructure of their daily lives have been co-opted by capitalism and imposed, in their least agreeable manifestations, on the average workers' professional lives. They do not try to observe how exemplary artistic or creative practices are functioning *now* in the face of these changes. Lanier also removes himself from the workings of the 'hive' and affords himself a more privileged position hypothesising loosely formed financial infrastructures as new economic alternatives. And that is equally true of the academics, social theorists and writers who are turning to look at prosumerism as a new affective mode or 'free labour' within digital capitalism. While I do not mean to denigrate their efforts and contributions, many of which are invaluable, what it does leave is an enormous amount of space – if not a gap – for critical reflections articulated in the same register as this productive mode exerts itself: through the visual.

The prosumer complex does not create or assert moral positions against prosumers or prosumerism. Their critical incisions are made at the very heart of prosumerism, through the force that guides it, that is in the currency of the visual. Theories like those of Tiqqun, whose 'Young Girl-isation' while perhaps not as gender-blasphemous as their critics have condemned, reads as slightly pejorative in their assertions of the activities and occupations of a naïve, apathetic or morally conflicted type of image-prosumer whose self-indulgence with images impacts and undermines her capacities to see what political forces are in operation behind it. When critiquing prosumerism somewhat differently, George Ritzer alerts his readers to, 'the much greater amount of such work that you do even though you are unaware of doing it.' And among those writing of the various labour conditions and exploitations of prosumerism, McRobbie is the one of the only writers who challenges us to identify this work not in terms of what

is explicit but rather the aspects that are internalised through its, 'psycho-pathologies'. McRobbie addresses affective labour by measuring the 'pain and injury of flexible workers' and calls for reading of the 'distress of precarious workers' as one possible means of ascertaining points of inequality within its limits. What perhaps all the above miss or avoid through their diagnoses, is the prosumer's mixed experiences with images, the mixed emotions one feels once subjected to its affect, and it is this very complex internal dynamic which drives prosumerism's industry, which underpins all of the prosumer-artists' works and at which the prosumer complex as a curatorial strategy would also aim. And while Ritzer, McRobbie, *et al* writing about prosumerism relative to affective labour, do not revert to the kind of petty gender-provocations of Tiqqun, there is still a critical distance exercised and maintained within their analysis. What is taken up is the topic of how this labour is exploitative, or how we might contextualise this exploitation within already existent forms of anti-capitalist or feminist critique. Instead, what the prosumer complex presents is a less academic but perhaps more ambitious account of how this occupation comes to penetrate one's inner psyche and from that penetration, comes to form a habit or activity carried out in daily life for the financial benefit of others. The artistic or curatorial perspective of the prosumer complex is not one of expert diagnostics, psycho-pathologist or ethical superior but rather of image-prosumer or fellow addict. For the artists I've considered, this ploy isn't accidental: their scripts are not first-hand, unedited, straightforward diaristic accounts, they are highly scripted and orchestrated performances that operate reflexively on the conditions and agents of their own formation.

The prosumer complex's new and affective form of critique is unusual in many respects. It is quite different to those of the prosumer critiques mentioned in the first three chapters. Perhaps it returns us to an unresolved boundary, the semiotic contradiction within Foucault's 'Archeology of Knowledge', and to which Paul Frosh blithely refers, whereby these individual images comprised something like Foucault's individual statements, which combined to form a regulatory and productive discourse. Like Frosh's stock industry, Foucault's 'discourse' was an object that could be excavated from its context, in order to evaluate its role in social production. This evaluation pointed at to two roles; that of the authority, the owner, inventor or manipulator of discourse, and role of the subject which discourse claims to represent.

So within Foucault's 'property of discourse', there are two bodies, the owner of the property and the dweller of the property, in discourse's 'abode'.³⁹⁶ Foucault's interest was in both the governance of discourse, of the 'synthetic activity of the subject', and of the promises, or 'ideological use of history by which one tries to restore to man everything that has unceasingly eluded him for over a hundred years', and this is clearly Frosh's intention in his evaluation of the new visual economy of stock.³⁹⁷ But this is also the source of the text's main internal contradiction. To see the object removed from its context, one must be at least partially aligned with discourse's creators rather than its subjects and therefore one's critique, potentially, reinforces their productive relations. Foucault's position at the vantage point of discourse's outer-limits is one of privilege and distance: it is removed. The prosumer complex challenges this kind of removed position and forces that expert from the margins and onto the ground, to indulge in the affective nature of image-prosumerism, to recognise its inconsistencies and incongruence, to see or touch the plasmaticness of the image's surface, to submit or succumb to the irrationality or illogic of that image's bearings, and to make of and within these difficult, fluid boundaries, a work of intelligibility that both appeals to and disturbs prosumerism's common contemporary subjectivity.

By abandoning that remote position of the expert, the prosumer complex is a more ambitious and encompassing exposition of this new mode of affective labour. In front of it we see ourselves as viewers, whose basic and potentially irrational subjectivities are put to work in a highly effective audio-visual economy and we might see just how complicated and inextricably bound these two elements of the complex. They cannot help to become ever more, and perhaps disturbingly, apparent. And because I claim the prosumer complex more ambitious does not mean I claim it any more resolved than prosumer critique. In using and exposing the terms and conditions of its operation – the subjective appeal of images and the display platforms that support them- it is a more nuanced, more complicated and less resolved proposition than that those historically, economically, socially and theoretically weighted accounts of institutionalised or institutionalising viewing put forward by Ritzer, Ross, McRobbie, *et al* (or, in a different critical terrain, Fraser and Raad, or Bishop and Dewdney). It regards this contemporary economic, social and visual phenomenon through the perspective of its primary agent, the unresolved, addicted image-prosumer, and in so

doing presents a situation more nebulous and multifarious than previous critiques of prosumerism ever allowed. The prosumer complex provides a rudimentary mapping of how deeply and where deeply prosumerism takes hold.

I outlined earlier how Bennett proposed the exhibitionary complex internalised the gaze of power, an internalisation mechanism I propose since co-opted by prosumerism. The prosumer complex externalises that internalised gaze. It shows how the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of this activity work in tandem. Many of the various critiques mentioned earlier recognise similar mechanisms to the one which Bennett describes, through which affective labour internalises power's gaze to create a self-regulating crowd. However, none of these works of theory, art or film criticism manage to externalise the internalised mechanisms with same means as that which they address. Beller's productive mode perhaps comes closest, articulated through reference to avant-garde film. He identifies the cinematic mode of production as operating through the internalisation of the cinematic in the spectator's 'haptic pathways'. He proposes cinema as a currency that mediates, 'between the world system and the very interiority of the spectator'. But Beller's Godardian example of a work of art that refutes the cinematic mode, by 'relentlessly endeavour[ing] to decode the conditions of their own formation', is flawed because even then, he contends, 'they may still retain their fetish character'.³⁹⁸ By contrast, the prosumer-artists' works are clearly decoding the conditions of their own formation far beyond the bounds of their structuralist or materialist film predecessors. Because more than addressing the conditions of its own formation, they embrace and indulge that 'fetish character' of images, to which Beller seems so vehemently opposed. It is precisely this character of images that becomes the focal point for the prosumer-artists' works, serious evaluations of the magnetism compelling prosumerism's productive mode. Surely by disregarding the prosumer's image-fetishes, the primary and instinctive motivations for labouring within Beller's 'visual economy', a full diagnosis of how it can be recalibrated will continue to elude us. The prosumer complex as a curatorial strategy would be similarly engaged with the 'fetish character' of images and those observations utterly plausible.

Experiencing the prosumer complex, we are confronted by the real terms and conditions of this activity, in which we are, more than likely, actively and daily working as productive viewers. We are presented with its realities within its own terms, the allure and the distresses of our occupation, its materials, platforms and reverberating rhetoric. We can identify with this labour in the very currency through which it appeals, that blip culture of still and moving images. Experiencing this work, in the exhibitionary conditions from which it came, is the prosumer complex and this prosumer complex, I claim, is the most affective exposition of this kind of labour, to date. What is presented is not a stark riposte against this new immersive form of labour, but rather a complicated working through of the sheer strength of an individual's subjective response to images in relation to the platforms that encourage their mingling. The prosumer complex challenges the rhetoric of prosumerism, but it also subverts its productive mechanism *in situ* by recalibrating us from the productive prosumers to more disturbed, sceptical or striated viewers.

8.6 Prosumer recalibration

The prosumer complex materialises at the point at which the viewer encounters the artistic or curatorial work in exhibition. The 'exhibition' is meant here in the broadest and most flexible sense of the term, materially, architecturally and socially. Prior to this chapter, I established the term prosumer as an agent that has been put to work 'proactively consuming', voluntarily collaborating or 'creatively' contributing to different websites, to the financial benefit of the private corporations who develop the prosumer template. As prosumerism evolves, I have proposed, it more frequently involves the production and consumption of images. This puts to work a particular kind of viewer whose desire or appetite for images is voracious and whose capacity to produce volumes of images for prosumer platforms is forthcoming and unhindered. Prosumerism, since Don Tapscott's appropriation of the term, is a highly productive visual mode.

The way in which one views produces a value that I earlier traced within the attention economy. There is, I have established, a uniform kind of viewing that emerges at the

basis of this economy, where parsing images online, or scanning information on search engines becomes a standardised drift, the attention is in a relatively constant state or stream of diversion. The kind of looking that generates this is uniform, where one's immediate labour, personal or professional or both, intertwined, loading imagery to and from sites for 'sharing', is granted the same level of attention as the links planted to entice us from the browser's outer margins, activating clicks and links. Here one is as constantly productive for the attention-capitalist as one is for oneself, and where, perhaps, one does not distinguish between those two productions or the motivations of the platforms that host them. Instead, regarding the prosumer complex, we might reflect upon the different ways in which our gaze is labourised, how the image appeals and its display platforms encourage that. Here, the prosumer complex challenges the kind of looking prosumerism generates and from which the 'attention economy' derives its surplus value.

Prosumerism's uniform viewing would surely suffer from a discretionary, disturbed, striated kind of viewing, where the prosumer sees not only what is presented on display platforms in front of her but questions those platforms' productive modes and, correspondingly, the real value of her harnessed gaze. That discretionary gaze would allow the viewer see herself as a productive (albeit willing) prosumer, consider her gaze as labour and identify the industry that capitalises upon it. This is not to suggest that, from here, she would immediately relinquish all her prosumer activity, but that she sees it better for its complexity and now, might better dispute the discrete and internalised nature of that contract. The prosumer complex, as I have claimed, is not a curt riposte but a fully operable architecture of *détournement*, an agonist space composed by an artist or curator in a variety of potential media, rendering prosumerism's platforms and draws. Scrutinising and evaluating the value of one's looking-labour here is no easy task and the prosumer complex offers no quick solution, but rather an active, dramatic appraisal of its process. In place of a neat edification or condemnation of its productive viewing, the prosumer complex presents the unruly, disordered experience of differential viewing.

The prosumer complex recalibrates the prosumer *back* to viewer, establishes its viewer as distinct from prosumerism's productive viewer. Here, the participation the

prosumer complex invites of those who come to it is not a practical, jobbing kind. Visitors to the prosumer complex are not required to co-produce any material. The requisite attention is intellectual and logical, intuitive and playful. This viewing experience does not require swift interaction, user-generated content, clicks, likes or other material contributions. The prosumer complex, first evident in artworks and potentially evident in curatorial practice, is a critical and reflexive mode of exhibition-making composed of prosumerism's substance, but is certainly not prosumerist in its gestures, nor does it ask us to perpetuate this particular productive mode as viewers. It does not require collaboration or co-production. It does not invite us, as viewers, to be collaborative producers. These works demand of us a differentiated attention, obliging, creative, confused, sceptical, self-conscious and occasionally, inhibited. We do not vote in our responses, nor are we provided the buttons to 'share' and 'like' what we see before us, uninhibited, resolute. The prosumer complex is a whole work that contains within it mixed signals, cross-contaminating one another, unresolved, signals which we must traverse as we watch, see, view, absorb. Here, our participation is not swift, easy, jobbing and productive, through the viewing our perspective becomes, albeit partially, inhibited. As prosumers, we are made wary.

Prosumer critique is essential because to let prosumerism's exploitative occupation go on without regulation will see numerous adverse side-effects including, among many others, the continuing exploitation of free digital labour, the increasing capitalisation of amateur photographer's images by stock simultaneously with the discrediting and de-professionalisation of actual creative labour (like stock, documentary and artistic photography, among others), the monopoly of 'super-agencies' over specialist photographic archives and distributors and the associated threats of new, unregulated forms of image colonialism, the increasing seepage of image-work into notions of recreation, the increasing appetite for image production without distinguishing its actual currency, the perpetuation of participatory websites that propose to provide creative and communicative freedom but that actually monetise all evidence and produce of an individual's attendance there, the de-personalisation of the social and the ongoing objectification of women, and the risk that cultural institutions will amend their curatorial and administrative strategies to reproduce the forms of 'participation' dubiously exemplified by prosumer websites. But how we regard these issues must be

not solely at the level of critical readers but, vitally, at the level of discerning viewers who know and recognize these issues, the value of our attention, the dynamics of our viewing and the actual labour of our looking within the toil of our prosumerism. Because now, in a myriad of ways, our gaze is invaluable. And that is why and where the prosumer complex is so important, as an experience where prosumerism's internal and internalised mechanisms are played out, rehearsed, made visible in all their complexity, confronted and then, somehow recalibrated. Here, prosumerism is felt as more than a social, technological and economic phenomenon, but a daily lived thing, indulgent and polluting in equal measure. And in the prosumer complex one recognises not only the scaffolding of this phenomenon but, disconcertingly, oneself as its agent.

Toffler's prosumption was once posed as a positive, enabling occupation that could 'de-marketise' financial capitalism, that could re-equip the citizen with the means to service themselves and their family, irrespective of gender or class, to build, fix, create what they needed to live well without being overly dependent upon the service industry. Tapscott and Williams' version turned that future-manifesto into a mode of production where an individual's attention, voluntary expertise and digital produce, strategically deployed, presented staggering possibilities for corporate profit. After the prosumer complex, the recalibrated viewer will better judge how and when, as prosumer, she goes to work.

End Notes

¹ This interview with Mark Leckey by Creative Time, New York took place in the concluding stages of his work 'Cinema In the Round' (2006 – 8) and in anticipation of his first performance of 'In the Long Tail' (2009). Creative Time is a public art commissioning agency who were showing a video version of 'Cinema in the Round' as part of 'Hey Hey Glossalia', curated by Mark Beasley in May 2008, including artists Robert King Wilkerson & Rigo 23, Liam Gillick & Tirdad Zolghadr, Ryan Gander & Bedwyr Williams, Adam Pendleton, Frances Stark, Dexter Sinister, Mark Leckey, Ian Svenonius, No Bra, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Chris Evans, Carey Young, Rammelzee, and Vert.

² Mark Leckey, "Mark Leckey: Cinema In the Round" YouTube video, 4:42, posted by *Creative Time New York*, 21st March 2010, accessed 15th January 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lc5YFOKpsMA&list=PL1F0E4DDBB9661289&index=1>

³ Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (London: Pan in association with Collins, 1980).

⁴ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 277.

⁵ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 54.

⁶ Toffler writes, 'Marx, in the mid-19th Century, thought that whoever owned the tools and technology – the 'means of production' – would control society[...] Yet history played a trick on him. For the very same interdependency gave even greater leverage to a new group – those who orchestrated or integrated the system. In the end it was neither the owners nor the workers who came to power. In both capitalist and socialist nations, it was the integrators who rose to the top. It was not ownership or 'means of production' that gave power. It was control of the 'means of integration.' Toffler, *Third Wave*, 76.

⁷ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 296.

⁸ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 167.

⁹ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 167.

¹⁰ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 169.

¹¹ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 177.

¹² Toffler, *Third Wave*, 277.

¹³ Other issues that he connects with the new possible synthesis of A and B within the Third Wave, is the development of the 'nuclear family' to include same sex partners and parents, as well as a progressive version of organised religion in the newly liberated Third Wave.

¹⁴ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 56.

¹⁵ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 299.

¹⁶ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 299.

¹⁷ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 293.

¹⁸ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 288.

¹⁹ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 356.

²⁰ Toffler, *Third Wave*, 25.

²¹ 'The Precariat' is a term combining the 'proletariat' with 'precarious' working conditions, whose presence and prospects are assessed by academic Guy Standing.

The 'precariat' was a term used in France during the 1980s for temporary or seasonal workers, adapted by Standing to label workers, 'flanked by an army of unemployed and a detached group of socially ill misfits', who benefit from little of the social welfare provisions established during the twentieth century. These workers are denizens rather than citizens, with fewer civic rights and existing at the bottom of a society of 'tiered membership', financially dominated by a small plutocratic elite. Standing, Guy, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

²² Marshall McLuhan, *Take Today: The Executive as Dropout*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1972).

²³ Don Tapscott, *The Digital Economy* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1997).

²⁴ Linux kernel is now licensed under the GNU General Public License (GPL), version 2. The GPL requires that anyone who distributes a software product based on GPL-licensed source code, must make the originating source code (and any modifications) available to the recipient under the same terms. GNU/ Linux License FAQs, accessed 6th February 2014, <https://www.gnu.org/gnu/gnu-linux-faq.html>

²⁵ There are previous examples of blueprint sharing and modifying in the automobile industry in the early twentieth century. Eric S Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar: Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: O'Reilly, 1999).

²⁶ Ted Nelson, 'Ted Report' 1997, www.hyperstand.com/Sound/Ted_Report2.html. [link provided since defunct] quoted in Thomas Streeter, *The Net Effect: Romanticism, Capitalism, and the Internet*. New York: New York University Press, 2011: 138.

²⁷ Ted Nelson, "Ted Nelson's Computer Paradigm, Expressed as One Liners", accessed 14th December 2013, <http://xanadu.com.au/ted/TN/WRITINGS/TCOMPAREADIGM/tedCompOneLiners.html>,

²⁸ Jaron Lanier, *Who Owns the Future?* (London: Penguin, Allen Lane, 2013), 227.

²⁹ Streeter, *The Net Effect*, 139.

³⁰ Streeter, *The Net Effect*, 139.

³¹ Streeter, *The Net Effect*, 140.

³² Streeter, *The Net Effect*, 154.

³³ Streeter, *The Net Effect*, 158.

³⁴ Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008).

³⁵ Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics*, 126.

³⁶ The word 'wiki', from the Hawaiian for 'quick', means software that allows users to instantly edit content on the Internet (online encyclopedia Wikipedia is the best-known example).

³⁷ 'Second Life' is an online virtual world, developed by Linden Lab in San Francisco and launched to the public in June 2003, which currently claims to have approximately one million users. "Infographic: Ten Years of Second Life", published by Linden Lab, accessed 20th June 2013, <http://lindenlab.com/releases/infographic-10-years-of-second-life>.

³⁸ Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics*, 127.

³⁹ Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics*, 148.

⁴⁰ Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics*, 398.

⁴¹ Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics*, 284.

⁴² Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics*, 397.

⁴³ Marvin Heiferman, "Everywhere, All the Time, For Everybody", in *Image World: Art and Media Culture*. Edited by John Hanhardt, Marvin Heiferman and Lisa Phillips. New York: Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 1989. 17 – 32.

⁴⁴ Tim Berners Lee began his research into the Internet in the late 1970s, as outlined in several publications and articles including, "Long Live the Web", in *Scientific American* 303, No. 6 (2010): 80–85. For a broader contextualisation of the formation of the Internet within the development of Information Technology, James Gleick produces a historic, philosophical and fascinating account. James Gleick, *Information: a history, a theory, a flood* (London: Fourth Estate, 2011).

⁴⁵ The number of photographic images in international circulation multiplied from 30.4 billion photographs in 2010 to 380 billion in 2011, most of which were taken on camera phones and 80% of which remain unprinted. This statistic was taken from James Esterin, "Communication Technology Update and Fundamentals" in the *New York Times* (September 7th 2012), accessed 3rd November 2013, http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/07/in-an-age-of-likes-commonplace-images-prevail/?_r=0

⁴⁶ In 2012, according to a survey by Samsung, 2.5 billion people around the world had digital cameras, and this was before the number of camera phones are calculated. Storage capacity for digital images has become greater and autofocus technology and shutter speeds have improved, contributing to the fact that people are taking higher numbers pictures of various events. Tom de Castella, "Five Ways the Digital Camera Changed Us", *BBC News* (12th January 2012); accessed 12th January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16483509>

⁴⁷ Daniel Palmer has written interestingly on how the JPEG file format is representative of new forms of labour and exploitation. Daniel Palmer, "The Rhetoric of the JPEG" in Martin, Lister, ed., *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture, 2nd Edition* (London: Routledge, 2013): 149 – 164.

⁴⁸ Paul Frosh, *The Image Factory: consumer culture, photography and the visual content industry* (New York: Berg, 2003): 3.

⁴⁹ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 6.

⁵⁰ Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972). Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁵¹ Foucault, *Archeology*, 134.

⁵² Foucault, *Archeology*, 7.

⁵³ Foucault, *Archeology*, 185.

⁵⁴ Foucault, *Archeology*, 117.

⁵⁵ Foucault, *Archeology*, 118.

⁵⁶ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 17.

⁵⁷ These former proposals are observations which I do not reference here, as they are based on idea of 'proper' photographic techniques, focus, composition, subjects, a form of classification I find untenable and insupportable.

⁵⁸ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 7.

⁵⁹ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 8.

⁶⁰ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 13.

⁶¹ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 14.

⁶² Frosh, *Image Factory*, 147.

⁶³ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 147.

⁶⁴ 'In effect, I wish to reinstate the second moment of the attention-distraction dialectic, recapturing the sense that Walter Benjamin had of distraction as a mode of unobtrusive collective appropriation and gradual sensory habituation.' Frosh quotes Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992): 232-4. Image Factory, 147.

⁶⁵ The figure-ground distinction is a method established in Gestalt psychology, used for judging an individual's perception based on whether or not that individual can distinguish a figure from its background. This is a visual process requiring perception, memory and logic to establish the difference between the figure and the ground.

⁶⁶ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), paragraph 153, quoted by Frosh, Image Factory, 162.

⁶⁷ Frosh, Image Factory, 163.

⁶⁸ Frosh, Image Factory, 172.

⁶⁹ Frosh, Image Factory, 199.

⁷⁰ Getty Images is now the world's largest stock image agency; Susan Berfield, "Getty's Pics: Worth 1,000 Words—and \$3.3 Billion" in *Bloomberg Business Week*, (23rd August 2012), accessed 12th January 2013, <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-08-23/gettys-pics-worth-1-000-words-and-3-dot-3-billion>

⁷¹ Frosh admits to having had difficulty in acquiring any extensive amount of catalogues as academic researcher rather than a commercial buyer. Frosh, Image Factory, 17 – 19.

⁷² The verb 'rotoscoping' comes from an analogue piece of projection equipment called a 'rotoscope' which is made of a frame of frosted glass onto which a film projector would throw its animation, and through which animators would then draw and combine animation sequences. It was an early, analogue, object version of the more recent 'Photoshop', or digital image compositing and modification software.

⁷³ In terms of still image editing, there are a number of software options including, perhaps most famously, Photoshop although many other free online examples exist now such as Pixelmator, Inkscape and GIMP (*GNU Image Manipulation Program*), encouraging amateurs to become familiar and capable of image modification.

⁷⁴ "How to be a Stock Photographer", in *The Guardian*, advertisement feature, not dated, accessed 31st January 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/istock-britain-is/how-to-be-a-stock-photographer>

⁷⁵ Information has been gathered through informal conversations with freelance professional photographers Helen Cathcart and Steve Ryan who have both worked to commission for a variety of editorial and commercial purposes, as well as consigned surplus images as stock to agencies Getty Images and Corbis, among other agencies.

⁷⁶ Paul Frosh, "Beyond the Image Bank: Digital Commercial Photography", in Martin Lister, ed. *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, 2nd Edition (Routledge: London, 2013): 140 – 148.

⁷⁷ Frosh, Beyond the Image Bank, 140.

⁷⁸ Frosh, Beyond the Image Bank, 142.

⁷⁹ Information on these two categories was retrieved from Getty Images website, <http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/corporate/licenseinfo.aspx>, accessed 11th September 2012.

⁸⁰ Carlyle acquired Getty Images in 2012, which trades in more than 100 countries with an archive of 80 million images and 50,000 hours of film footage, Michael J. De La

Merced, “Carlyle in \$3.3 Billion Deal for Getty Images” in *New York Times* (5th August 2012), sourced 12th January 2013, <http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2012/08/15/carlyle-in-3-3-billion-deal-for-getty-images/?src=recg>

⁸¹ Some microstock photography sites offer low-resolution photography free for the purpose of preparing advertising companies ‘comps’ or ‘comprehensive layouts’ produced when pitching to commercial clients to demonstrate a design. Images for ‘comps’ tend to be low-resolution filler images of a non-descript nature, fake graphs, etc.. If the pitch is successful with a client, and the advertiser decides to use the image, the rights to use more specific, high-resolution images with this same provider can then be negotiated or purchased. Stock agencies generally encourage the use of images like this, as they often lead to more exclusive and expensive image acquisition. For example, ‘shots of dogs and cats are generally not welcome, while “lifestyle” photographs — pictures of people at work and play — are usually top sellers. Other subjects of interest include food, sports and fashion.’ Eric A. Taub, “When Are Photographs Like Penny Stocks? When They Sell,” in *New York Times*, (5th June 2007) accessed 5th January 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/05/technology/circuits/05syndicate.html?pagewanted=print&advises>,

⁸² Accessed from Creative Commons Website 12th September 2012, <http://www.creativecommons.org.uk>

⁸³ Article on the impact of Flickr/ Getty partnership, “Flickr Extends its deal with Getty Images” in *British Journalism of Photography* (21st June 2012), accessed 12th October 2012, <http://www.bjp-online.com/british-journal-of-photography/news/1686568/flickr-extends-deal-getty-images>

⁸⁴ Whereas, we could argue, this has previously been the privilege of Western news organisations such as Reuters, sources from which regional and national newspapers gain much of their coverage in a franchise like distribution model, this power seems to be shifting dramatically with super-agencies having far greater hold on ‘information’, historical as well as contemporary.

⁸⁵ Getty Image’s acquisition of the Hulton Press Library, former archive of the British photojournalistic magazine *Picture Post* in 1996 is one example of this. With the acquisition of the Hulton library, Getty Images took ownership of the rights to some 15 million photographs from the British press archives. Acquisition of image archives have been Corbis’ priority since its inception in 1989, and has agreements with many significant museums and national galleries, including The National Gallery, London, for image distribution rights. Sarah McDonald, “Hulton Archive – A History in Pictures”, accessed 11th March 2012, <http://corporate.gettyimages.com/masters2/conservation/articles/HAHistory.pdf>

⁸⁶ The ‘gold standard’ was that against which international currencies were valued and regulated. No longer in operation, it was a monetary system between 1871 and 1971 in which the standard economic unit was a fixed weight of gold, measured against the dollar which financial authorities guaranteed a fixed exchange rate with other countries.

⁸⁷ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is ‘an organization of 188 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world.’ From the IMF website, accessed 3rd March 2012, <https://www.imf.org/external/about.htm>

⁸⁸ This, along with the fiscal strain of federal expenditures for the Vietnam War, the 'Great Society' poverty programs and persistent balance of payments deficits, led President Richard Nixon to end the direct convertibility of the dollar to gold on 15th August, 1971, resulting in the system's breakdown.

⁸⁹ David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital: and the Crisis of Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 20.

⁹⁰ 'Shadow banking' is an unofficial term coined by Paul McCulley of Pimco, according to Bryan Noeth and Rajdeep Sengupta, "Is Shadow Banking Really Banking?". *The Regional Economist, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis* (October 2011): 8-13. It refers to a variety of different finance companies and banks and its terms are disputed in academic literature. It suggests an underhand, black market series of transactions however the companies that make up the shadow banking system are entirely legal, and are often employed by national and public institutions to generate profit and growth. In world finance, Harvey claims, the 'shadow banking system' began to proliferate in the 1970s and now makes up to 30% of the total international financial system, according to the Financial Stability Board (FSB), which is responsible for monitoring the flux in the economy of the world's top twenty countries. According to Harvey, options trading permitted, 'investment in credit swaps, currency derivatives, and the like. The futures market embraced everything from trading in pollution rights to betting to the weather. These markets grew from almost nothing in 1990 to nearly \$350 trillion in 2005 and \$600 trillion in 2008. Investors could now invest in derivatives of asset values and ultimately even in derivatives of asset values.' The large potential for profit on destabilised markets, created further volatility and potential for crisis. The agglomeration of different sections of banking, and the entrustment of private and public capital within this system led to precarious unregulated markets and unleashed capital that resulted in the market crash of 2008. Harvey, *Engima*, 21.

⁹¹ The state is increasingly governed by these financial mechanisms, in what Harvey condemns as, 'the state-finance nexus', referring here specifically to Bush administration and North American political governance. Harvey, *Engima*, 31.

⁹² Andrew Glyn, *Capitalism Unleashed: finance, globalization, and welfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁹³ Harvey, *Engima*, 41.

⁹⁴ Frosh, *Image Factory*, 147.

⁹⁵ The term and function, 'cookies' or 'HTTP cookies' combine both of these processes. They are small pieces of data logged by a website and stored by a user's browser, to reappear in view across multiple sites the user visits: data often shared or sold on by companies across sites. By retaining information of previous commercial searches, cookies not only appeal to the viewer's gaze but remind users of previous searches, reinforcing consumer's wants and needs. "What is a Cookie?" accessed 6th June 2014, <http://www.aboutcookies.org/Default.aspx?page=5>

⁹⁶ Marx adopts the two kinds of 'unproductive labour' outlined in Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations' (Vol. II, London: Everyman's, 2001: 305-06). The first is of 'mental servants, unproductive of any value', labour that 'has value, and therefore costs an equivalent, but it produces no value' and he provides the clergy, the army and the navy as some examples. They are the public servants who produce no value in terms of capitalism. The second examples, are the slaves of Ancient Greece and Rome, 'In the manufactures carried on by slaves, therefore, more labour must generally have been employed to execute the same quantity of work, than in those carried on by

freemen. The work of the former must, upon that account, generally have been dearer than that of the latter.’ Quoted by Karl Marx, in “Concluding Observations on Adam Smith and His Views on Productive and Unproductive Labour” in Chapter IV, “Theories of Productive and Unproductive Labour” in *Theories of Surplus Value, Capital* Vol. 4, 1863, para., 1 – 10, sourced 4th May 2012 , <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1863/theories-surplus-value/ch04.htm#s20>

⁹⁷ Marx, Concluding Observations, para. 2.

⁹⁸ Debord, Spectacle, 17.

⁹⁹ Debord, Spectacle, 136.

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: attention economy and the society of the spectacle*. (Hanover, N.H: Dartmouth College Press, 2006): 2.

¹⁰¹ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 1.

¹⁰² Beller, Cinematic Mode, 234.

¹⁰³ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 181.

¹⁰⁴ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 261.

¹⁰⁵ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie (Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy)*, (rough draft, 1858). Translated by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin & New Left Review, 1973).

¹⁰⁶ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 115.

¹⁰⁷ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Marx, Grundrisse, 89- 91.

¹⁰⁹ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 260 (quoting from Debord, Spectacle, 18).

¹¹⁰ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 115.

¹¹¹ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 278.

¹¹² Beller, Cinematic Mode, 106.

¹¹³ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 26.

¹¹⁴ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 259.

¹¹⁵ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 37.

¹¹⁶ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 39.

¹¹⁷ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 39.

¹¹⁸ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 43.

¹¹⁹ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 45-6.

¹²⁰ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 58.

¹²¹ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 46.

¹²² Beller, Cinematic Mode, 55.

¹²³ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 59, quotes Marx, Grundrisse, 123.

¹²⁴ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 77.

¹²⁵ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 114.

¹²⁶ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 68.

¹²⁷ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 78.

¹²⁸ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 79.

¹²⁹ Beller’s ‘cinematicity’ of production shares the original sense of the term ‘plasmatic’ from Eisenstein’s *Eisenstein on Disney*. Edited by Jay Leyda, translated by Alan Upchurch (Calcutta: Seagull, 1986): 43.

¹³⁰ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 109.

¹³¹ Beller, Cinematic Mode, 130.

¹³² Beller, Cinematic Mode, 198.

¹³³ Beller goes on to give several examples of the violence of this state of 'liquidation', alienation, or dissociation, exemplified through the film 'Natural Born Killers' (1994, dir. Oliver Stone), 'a detailed and subtle analysis of the predication of identity-formation and consciousness on violence in contemporary capitalist society, that is, an analysis of the subject-function as "active annihilation". [Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 268.] Here two young lovers embark on a killing spree across America where their experience is filmed and interrupted with a variety of film-stocks, sound effects and other illusory devices used by contemporary television and film genres. In the film the couple achieve increasing notoriety as they travel and the more people they kill, or in Beller's terms 'liquidate', and for the writer they represent the tele-vision of society, 'their emotions and hopes their moods and affectations are not only *signified* tele-visually, they *are* television... By treating others as images they become icons. Their relationship to the works and to others is in fact not subject/ object, but rather subjective/ image or *god/image*... they select victims the way we would images, wiping them out by remote control when they tire of them. Capitalism turns empathy into television and humans into images.' Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 274.

¹³⁴ Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 256-7.

¹³⁵ Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 202.

¹³⁶ Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 214.

¹³⁷ 'Consciousness today is mere flotsam in the swirling convention streams of the massive tide of unconsciousness that, and here is the point – the excrescence of capitalised mediation (media in the most general sense...) threatens to swallow up all knowing as such.' Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 164.

¹³⁸ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment of Mass Deception" In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Translated by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997).

¹³⁹ Beller makes no such distinction of high brow art and low brow mass culture, using to advance his own theory such examples as 'Beavis and Butthead Do America', 'Natural Born Killers' and the Cohn Brothers' 'Barton Fink'. In different ways, these films represent different levels of immersion within 'the visual economy' and how this changes subjective experiences, or the collective unconscious. Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 267 – 79.

¹⁴⁰ Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 19 – 24.

¹⁴¹ Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 293.

¹⁴² 'At the heart of the New Times, is the shift from the old mass-production Fordist economy to a new, more flexible, post-Fordist order based on computers, information technology and robotics.' Martin Jacques, in *Marxism Today*, ed., Special Issue 'New Times' (October 1988).

¹⁴³ Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2001). Translated by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007): 364.

¹⁴⁴ In a connexionist city, 'loyalty to the self looks like inflexibility; resistance to others seems like a refusal to make connections; truth defined by the identity between a representation and an original is regarded as a failure to understand the infinite variability of the beings who circulate in the network, and change every time they enter into relations with different beings, so that none of their manifestations can be taken as a point of origin with which other expressions can be compared.' Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*, 451.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Adaptability, that is the ability to treat one’s own person in the manner of a text that can be translated into different languages – is in fact a basic requirement for circulating in networks, guaranteeing the transit through heterogeneity of a being minimally defined by a body and the proper noun attached to it.’ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*, 461.

¹⁴⁶ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*, 131.

¹⁴⁷ Boltanski and Chiapello identify that artistic critique’s crisis was, ‘the result of its seeming success and the ease with which it found itself recuperated and exploited by capitalism.’ This is opposed to the recuperation of social critique, which, ‘given the especially strong association in France between the social critique and the Communist movement, the discrediting of the latter was accompanied by a temporary but very pronounced abandonment of the economic terrain by critique. Under fire from the artistic critique, the firm was reduced to the function of oppressive institution on par with the state, the army, the school or the family; and anti-bureaucratic struggle for autonomy at work supplanted concerns about economic equality and the security of the most deprived.’ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*, 178.

¹⁴⁸ Boltanski and Chiapello claim that artistic critique’s original demands for creativity in the workplace has been repurposed in the connexionist city, dissolving labour forms between engineers and businessmen, between intellectuals and cadres. Critique’s demand for liberation ‘found itself emptied of oppositional charge, when the lifting of former prohibitions proved conducive to opening new markets.’ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*, 326.

¹⁴⁹ Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*: 425.

¹⁵⁰ Boltanski and Chiapello quote Jean Baechler’s ‘Le Capitalism’, ‘throughout the course of [capitalism’s] development [anti-capitalism] accompanies it like a shadow. Without courting the slightest paradox, it may be argued that anti-capitalism is the most significant expression of capitalism in the eyes of history’, Jean Baechler, *Le Capitalism*. Paris: Folio Histoire (1995): 268, quoted by Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*, 36.

¹⁵¹ Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: for an analysis of contemporary forms of life* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Semiotext(e), 2003): 26.

¹⁵² Virno, *Grammar*, 51.

¹⁵³ Virno, *Grammar*, 52.

¹⁵⁴ Virno *Grammar*, 54-55.

¹⁵⁵ Virno *Grammar*, 59.

¹⁵⁶ Virno *Grammar*, 56.

¹⁵⁷ Virno *Grammar*, 58.

¹⁵⁸ Virno *Grammar*, 61.

¹⁵⁹ Virno *Grammar*, 63.

¹⁶⁰ Virno *Grammar*, 67.

¹⁶¹ Virno *Grammar*, 68.

¹⁶² Virno *Grammar*, 68.

¹⁶³ Lily Wong, “Book Review: Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*” in *National Central University Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 31 (2007.7): 321- 326.

“The language of retreat: review of Virno’s *A grammar of the multitude*”, in *Aufheben* #16 (2008), accessed 24th January 2013, <http://libcom.org/library/language-retreat-review-virnos-grammar-multitude>

¹⁶⁴ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹⁶⁵ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 82.

¹⁶⁶ Micheal Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 2000): 32-3.

¹⁶⁷ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 29.

¹⁶⁸ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 50.

¹⁶⁹ 'The de-territorialising power of the multitude is the productive force that sustains Empire and at the same time the force that calls for and makes necessary its destruction', so this new machine of communications, Hardt and Negri propose, might also be used antagonistically by individuals within the multitude. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 61.

¹⁷⁰ 'This abstract labor is the cooperating set of brains and hands, minds and bodies; it is both the non-belonging and the creative social diffusion of living labor; it is the desire and the striving of the multitude of mobile and flexible workers; and at the same time it is intellectual energy and linguistic and communicative construction of the multitude of intellectual and affective laborers.' Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 209.

¹⁷¹ Hardt and Negri discuss this issue in relation to biopolitical labour and how it might be exploited. They link this to the death of trade unionism within Empire, where the network becomes the new and unregulated disciplinary form. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 209, 259.

¹⁷² Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 188- 9.

¹⁷³ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 206.

¹⁷⁴ They conclude that, 'there must be a moment when re-appropriation [of wealth from capital] and self-organisation [of the multitude] reach a threshold and configure a real event. This is when the political is really affirmed—when the genesis is complete and self-valorisation, the cooperative convergence of subjects, and the proletarian management of production becomes a constituent power [...] We do not have any models to offer for this event. Only the multitude through its practical experimentation will offer the models and determine when and how the possible becomes real.' Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 411.

¹⁷⁵ Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not A Gadget* (London: Penguin, Allen Lane, 2010): Introduction, X.

¹⁷⁶ In some countries, anonymity and mob behaviour have resulted in actual witch-hunts. 'In 2007,' Lanier reports, 'a series of "Scarlet Letter" postings in China incited online throngs to hunt down accused adulterers. In 2008, the focus shifted to Tibet sympathizers.' Lanier, *Gadget*, 60.

¹⁷⁷ Lanier, *Gadget*, 40.

¹⁷⁸ Lanier has a parallel career as a music composer recording with artists ranging from Philip Glass to Sean Lennon. Many of his examples about how the new culture of the 'hive' is a destructive one is based on his observations on its toll on the music industry and how little it profits artists and musicians to whom this commons is marketed. Lanier, *Gadget*, 90.

¹⁷⁹ Lanier, *Gadget*, 122.

¹⁸⁰ Lanier, *Gadget*, 22.

¹⁸¹ Lanier, *Gadget*, 23.

¹⁸² Karen Frenkel summarises that, 'for Lanier, the "wisdom of the crowd" is like design by committee. An auction, for example, can determine the value of a car because the answer is a single number, but if the same crowd tries to design the ideal car for a market, no one will be satisfied, he says. That is because the wisdom of the crowd only

works when the choices are simple, he adds. Appreciating creative expression, introspecting, asking tough questions, contributing original ideas—being more than a gadget, as the title of his book implies—is hard.’ Karen A Frenkel, “The Wisdom of the Hive: Is the Web a Threat to Creativity and Cultural Values?” in *Scientific American*, (Feb 16th 2010) accessed 16th October 2012, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/jaron-lanier-gadget/>

¹⁸³ Frenkel, *Scientific American*, para 9.

¹⁸⁴ George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson, “Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The nature of capitalism in the age of the digital ‘prosumer’”, in *Journal of Consumer Culture* Vol. 10, no. 1 (March 2010): 13-36.

¹⁸⁵ Ritzer and Jurgenson, “Production, Consumption, Prosumption”, 13-36.

¹⁸⁶ George Ritzer, “Are you a Digital Drone?” in *Introduction to Sociology* (Los Angeles; London: Sage, 2013): 666 – 667.

¹⁸⁷ Ritzer, “Digital Drone”, 666.

¹⁸⁸ Ritzer, “Digital Drone”, 666. Ritzer references Andrew Ross, “In Search of the Lost Paycheck”, in Trebor Scholz, ed. *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory* (New York: Routledge, 2013): 13-32.

¹⁸⁹ Ritzer, “Digital Drone”, 667. Ritzer references Christian Fuchs, “Class and Exploitation on the Internet” in Scholz, *Digital Labor*, 211-224.

¹⁹⁰ Accurate at the time of Ritzer’s publishing, however this figure no longer represents Facebook’s net worth.

¹⁹¹ Ritzer, “Digital Drone”, 667.

¹⁹² Tiziana Terranova’s theory of ‘Free Labor’ identifies, ‘the moment where knowledgeable consumption of culture is translated into excess productive activities that are pleurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited’. Calling user’s participation on online websites ‘labour’ is, Terranova contends, a political decision and choice. Tiziana Terranova, “Free Labor”, in Scholz, *Digital Labor*, 37.

¹⁹³ Terranova, “Free Labor”, 53.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Banana Time’ is an oft-cited ethnographic theory of how the monotony of factory work was broken up by the introduction of short games for workers throughout the day. This was thought to maintain overall concentration and productivity. The title refers to the morning routine of a particular factory, where a banana was stolen from a different worker every morning, and various antics often ensued. Donald F Roy, “Banana Time: Job Satisfaction and Informal Interaction” *Human Organization* Vol, 18 No. 4 (1959): 158–168.

¹⁹⁵ A distinction between leisure players and ‘player workers’ has recently been critically defined by academic Lisa Nakamura in online role-playing games. Here ‘player-workers’ are those who help leisure players to cheat and she associates this kind of work with immigrant groups who cross borders in order to work, ‘their position as virtual service workers mimics that of illegal immigrants and other low-end workers in service economies in the global South.’ Both constituencies are excluded from the benefits of leisure workers, ‘are unable to accumulate avatariial capital since their jobs consists in selling level-ups as well as gold and equipment. The privilege of avatariial self-expression is, like capital itself, unevenly distributed across geopolitical borders.’ Lisa Nakamura, “Don’t Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The radicalization of labour in a world of warcraft”, in Scholz, *Digital Labor*, 189 - 200.

¹⁹⁶ Scholz, *Digital Labor*, 2.

¹⁹⁷ In his review of Scholz' book, Sebastian Seignani writes, 'The idea of substitution of work, for instance by play, presupposes a false notion of work as opposed to non-work and free time, which stems from the experience of alienation of capital. Within play, the basal reference to an object is lost: the free-floating subject may design the rules of the game purely out of his or her will; there is no dialectical return to an object – be it nature or another subject. One of the great achievements of this book is to fruitfully bring both strands together.' Sebastian Seignani, "Review of the Book 'Digital Labor: Internet as Playground' Edited by Trebor Scholz", in *Triple C* 11, No1 (2013): 127 – 128.

¹⁹⁸ Scholz, *Digital Labor*, 26.

¹⁹⁹ Scholz, *Digital Labor*, 17.

²⁰⁰ Angela McRobbie, "Reflections on Feminism, Immaterial Labour and the Post-Fordist Regime," in *New Formations* 70 (Winter 2011): 60–76.

²⁰¹ 'The women's movement reached a peak in the years which coincided with the crisis in profitability for many major companies across the world. And since the structure of patriarchal society at that time had produced gender-segregated labour markets with men generally occupying the better paid and more highly skilled industrial jobs, the shift to a post-industrial economy adversely affected the employment prospects for working class men while having the opposite effect for women.' McRobbie, *Reflections on Feminism*, 66.

²⁰² McRobbie, *Reflections on Feminism*, 62.

²⁰³ McRobbie, *Reflections on Feminism*, 73.

²⁰⁴ McRobbie, *Reflections on Feminism*, 75.

²⁰⁵ "Mark Leckey: Cinema In The Round", YouTube video, 4:42, posted by *Creative Time New York*, 21st March 2010, accessed January 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lc5YFOKpsMA&list=PL1F0E4DDBB9661289&index=1>

²⁰⁶ Many other critics have claimed artists to be interested in or practicing prosumerism, see George Vasey, "Prosumerism", in *Art Monthly* # 369 (September 2013): 21; Nick Warner, "On The Phenomenon Of The Producer/ Consumer In Online Art (PROSUMERISM)", in *Art Monthly* #369 (September 2013): 11-13.

²⁰⁷ Mark Leckey, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Catherine Wood, Martin McGeown and Neil Mulholland, *Mark Leckey: See We Assemble* (London: Serpentine Gallery and Koenig Books, 2011): 34.

²⁰⁸ Leckey, *See We Assemble*, 34.

²⁰⁹ Leckey, *See We Assemble*, 34.

²¹⁰ The work was summarised by Matthew Higgs as it, 'charts the rise of British youth dance subcultures, from the talcum-powdered, amphetamine-fuelled dance floors of '70s Northern Soul all-nighters to the Ecstasy-fuelled raves of the late '80s.' Matthew Higgs, "Mark Leckey: Openings", in *Artforum* Vol. 40, No. 8 (April 2002): 128 – 129.

²¹¹ 'Fiorucci' establishes Leckey's methodology of gathering, sampling and editing which began in the late 1990s, and has evolved alongside developments in technologies ever since. He has said of his approach that 'I think sculpture is what I do. I wouldn't like to say I'm a sculptor that would seem too much. But I think I'm in that field and I try to understand that that field as much as I can.' Leckey, *See We Assemble*, 38.

²¹² Leckey, *See We Assemble*, 36.

²¹³ Melanie Gilligan writes, 'Leckey's commonplace strategies hide an unsettling riddle regarding the status of the commodity today: that it remains the same while the

flimsy, unstable world around it can be dropped in and out; that it is relational, its surroundings adjusting to it while it adjusts to them; that although its context is insubstantial, the commodity is solid and becomes an anchor for a panoply of significations and sense impressions.' Melanie Gilligan, "Mark Leckey", in *Artforum*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (November 2011): 281 – 282.

²¹⁴ Catherine Wood, "Horror Vacui: The Subject as Image in Mark Leckey's "Parade"", in *Parkett*, Vol. 70 (2004): 157 – 163.

²¹⁵ Ian White describes 'Kinomuseum' as this 'fantastic supposition that anywhere is a museum if the audience has a collective agreement or investment in the material put before them.' Ian White, *Kinomuseum: Oberhausen Film Festival Catalogue* (Cologne: Walter König, 2006): 14.

²¹⁶ White claims that most responses strayed quite far from the remit of the invitation. Leckey's was perhaps the closest thing to an autonomous artwork. Mary Kelley's 'Fallout' showed three works in three different auditoria, each examining the traumatic legacies of historical events (the sexual revolution of the 1970s, the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and the Iraq War), AA Bronson's program emphasised his belief in the indivisibility of art and sex and art and artists. Emily Pethick curated a screening 'Hall of Mirrors' around the processes of identification and narcissism, and curator Achim Borchardt-Hume introduced Pierre Bismuth's 'Following the Right Hand of Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in "Casablanca".' (2007).

²¹⁷ According to Mike Sperlinger, who contributed the catalogue's foreword, 'Mark Leckey's curated "programme" took the form of an extraordinary artwork: a performative lecture on the paradoxical physicality of animated images compared to their photographic equivalents. His diverse "collection" of images seemed to spring off the screen as they made the case for their impossible sculptural qualities.' Mike Sperlinger, "Foreword" in White, *Kinomuseum*, 8.

²¹⁸ From a conversation between the artist and the author, January 2013.

²¹⁹ Leckey, quoted by Kirsty Bell, "Cinema in The Round", in *Camera Austria* 101 (May 2008): 9.

²²⁰ From the transcript of "Cinema in the Round", White, *Kinomuseum*, 59. Artist's original italics.

²²¹ The cat is a form and symbol that recurs through several of Leckey's works, drawing together, among other subjects and sources, his use of art history (the sphinx as an early sculpture), the history of television broadcasting (Felix the cat as the first broadcast image), and later, as a distinctive feature that resembles the Pareto curves representing emergent patterns in e-commerce; Chris Anderson *The Long Tail: why the future of business is selling less of more* (New York: Hyperion, 2008).

²²² Leckey quotes Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*. Edited by Jay Leyda, translated by Alan Upchurch (Calcutta; Seagull Books, 1986): 46.

²²³ The idea of horizontality vs verticality relative to Titanic Leckey credits to American art critic, Jerry Saltz who originally expressed this opposition in an article on Matthew Barney in an article of magazine *The Village Voice*, whereby Titanic 'is a story of a form going from pure horizontality to total verticality.' Leckey, "Cinema In the Round", in White, *Kinomuseum*, 64.

²²⁴ Leckey, "Cinema In the Round", White, *Kinomuseum*, 64.

²²⁵ In the edited video version of this work, at this point that he overlays a further soundtrack, an instrumental score composed as if it might accompany a bewitching in

a Disney animation. It plays over his own presentation, so that his own monologue becomes intermittently inaudible.

²²⁶ All transcripts are taken from the Kinomuseum catalogue, unless otherwise stated. Leckey, "Cinema In the Round", in White, Kinomuseum, 59 - 68.

²²⁷ Frampton has said of this piece, 'As a voluptuous lemon is devoured by the same light that reveals it, its image passes from the spatial rhetoric of illusion into the spatial grammar of the graphic arts.' Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in theory 1900 – 2000, an anthology of changing ideas* (Malden: Massachusetts; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003): 436.

²²⁸ Ian White writes of this ambiguous conclusion, 'if this is an assault on the paradigms of art history, it also reveals a paradigm of cinema in which the ultimate object, Leckey's star exhibit, is a spectacular nothing.' White, Kinomuseum, 15.

²²⁹ Leckey, "Mark Leckey: Cinema In the Round", accessed 15th January 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lc5YFOKpsMA&list=PL1F0E4DDBB9661289&index=1>

²³⁰ I attended this, the first of a series of its performances. Like 'Cinema-in-the-Round', the presentation began as a lecture that was then hosted by several international institutions. In January 2009, it took place in the theatre of the ICA London. In October of the same year, Leckey performed it in the Abrons Art Centre in New York, programmed by the Museum of Modern Art and later again that year in the auditorium of the Koln Kunstverein (Cologne). The work now exists as an edited video available through his gallery, and was uploaded onto his Youtube channel in March 2010.

²³¹ Transcribed by the author from the video documentation of Leckey's performance, courtesy Cabinet Gallery, London.

²³² Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail", in *Wired*, 12.10, October 2004, accessed 3rd May 2011, <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>

²³³ 'See the mass market is that, mass, solid weighty stuff that occupies physical space, when things start to get digitised, space is no longer a concern, space is limitless as its replication and distribution. The record, the book unbound from physical form, free from limitations and can be given away, costs so little to reproduce, people become their own distributor, any need can be met, and need can find an audience, special interest, niche markets have accumulated in the tail, taken in the whole become a mass audience that they're attracting... it goes on and on way beyond the physical eye.' Leckey, 'In the Long Tail', 2009.

²³⁴ When asked about this image in conversation, Leckey is unsure of its origin. It comes from a Google search. From a conversation between the artist and the author, January 2013.

²³⁵ Here, Leckey makes brief reference to writer and campaigner Stewart Brand and programmer Verner Erhard, teachers at the centre of research and theory at the Esalen institute at BIG SUR, who were, 'sowing seeds of interconnected cyber system, especially in self' that pre-empted the now ubiquitous feedback system of Wikipedia.' Leckey, 'In the Long Tail', 2009.

²³⁶ From this superimposition launches another theatrical interlude, where the phrase 'the tail itself is an anagram engine' becomes just that: the basic raw material for anagrams 'I am an angel hesitating near, as generating in animal heat, I am an intestinal eagle hang, nightmare in same genitalia, animal heat greasing in neat.' The sentence restructure proposes that, like the Internet, language might be perpetually

reconfigured, modular units providing a malleable form for the writer or artist who combines them.

²³⁷ Accompanying this section are images of 'Furries', a clandestine group dressed in animal costumes in which they perform sexual activities, video evidence of which is circulated online. Leckey's chorus begins, '...deep within the labyrinth here lies Minotaur, mythical creature bull-god, the hybrid offspring of magic and engineering beloved by the surrealists, these creatures too are enchanted by technology.' Leckey, 'In the Long Tail', 2009.

²³⁸ Felix's 'consciousness' maps the evolving lifestyles of television's first animated cat: from pre-Biblical wilderness to proto-mythology; from domestic housecat to comic strip character; from cartoon-mechanics to contemporary-digital; and now, as the pin-up for Leckey's new techno-ecology. The work parses through the concept and etymology of 'broadcast', the subject and foresight of 'dimensionism' and cosmic art, the Internet as a dematerialised matter and a space of infinite immersion where we find ourselves 'bound in a nutshell and kings of infinite space', the positive and negative economic ramifications of this development and the potential for coalescence with this mass of images. Leckey, 'In the Long Tail', 2009.

²³⁹ Isobel Harbison, "Image Games", in *Frieze* 150 (October 2012): 220.

²⁴⁰ Appendix C, paragraph 11.

²⁴¹ As American film critic J Hoberman wrote about the work in 1981, 'there is something undeniably calisthenic about her vision. Beckman's *mise-en-scene* is characterised by sing-song voice tracks, jerky robot motions, repetitive gestures and the iconic use of sports equipment and cheerleaders. My first impression of her best film, the 1978 "We imitate: We Break-Up" was of high school gym class taught by George Méliès in a space designed by Giorgio de Chirico.' J Hoberman, "Review: Out Of Hand", in *Artforum*, Vol.19, No. 5 (January 1981): 76.

²⁴² Appendix B, paragraph 11.

²⁴³ Appendix B, paragraph 5.

²⁴⁴ Appendix B, paragraph 6.

²⁴⁵ Appendix A, paragraph 4.

²⁴⁶ Beckman in conversation with David Rosen, "Video Viewpoints: Art and Technology in the 1990s", screening notes (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1993).

²⁴⁷ All script and lyrics have been transcribed by the author.

²⁴⁸ Script is transcribed by the author from the work.

²⁴⁹ Leckey says, 'I don't think of it as curating, it's just putting things together... I'm not a curator I'm an essayist... "GreenScreenRefrigerator" is an essay about smart technology and "Fiorucci" is an essay about underground culture. I get interested in a thing and I make essays about it.' Leckey, See *We Assemble*, 46.

²⁵⁰ Leckey claims, 'the [lectures] came about when I was teaching at the Stedelschule in Frankfurt... Everyone wanted to understand the epistemology or ontological questions of art making... So the lectures were a way of being able to talk about things, to talk about those kinds of questions in a very broad way [...] They were surplus to work and I couldn't make a work out of them because they were too enormous, so I just had to put them into a lecture.' Leckey, See *We Assemble*, 43.

²⁵¹ Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*. Edited by Jay Leyda, translated by Alan Upchurch (Calcutta; Seagull Books, 1986): 46

²⁵² Sigmund Freud, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle and other writings*. Translated by John Reddick (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

²⁵³ In animation Eisenstein believed these were, 'the most omni-appealing works [he] had ever met.' He wrote about transformations of fish turning into tigers in 'Merababies', or 'Willie the Operatic Whale', as he took to the stage at the Met, in New York (c 1944), or '... a being which has attained a definite appearance, and which behaves like the primal protoplasm, not yet possessing a 'stable' form, but capable of assuming any form and which... attaches itself to any and all forms of animal existence.' Eisenstein, Eisenstein on Disney, 46.

²⁵⁴ This was also part of Eisenstein's project that aimed to define what he called the 'attractibility' of art, that is, the attractiveness and the 'affectiveness' of a work. 'The dialectic of works of art is built upon a most curious 'dual-unity'. The affectiveness of a work of art is built upon the fact that there takes place in it a dual process: an impetuous progressive rise along the lines of the highest conceptual steps of consciousness and a simultaneous penetration by means of the structure of the form into the layers of profoundest sensuous thinking.' From his address at the Creative Conference of Soviet Film Workers in 1935. Eisenstein, Eisenstein on Disney, Introduction 1.

²⁵⁵ 'In a country and social order with such a mercilessly standardised and mechanically measured existence, which is difficult to call life, the sight of such 'omnipotence' (that is, the ability to become 'whatever you wish'), cannot but hold a sharp degree of attractiveness.' Eisenstein, Eisenstein on Disney, 48.

²⁵⁶ The term 'plasmatic' is interestingly expanded by Leckey in examples in 20th Century feature films including FR Murnau's 'Sunrise' (1927), Ridley Scott's 'Blade Runner' (1982) and Jacques Tati's 'Play Time' (1967). Mark Leckey, "A Life in Film", in *Frieze* 115 (May 2008): 38.

²⁵⁷ Kirsty Bell, "Cinema in The Round", in *Camera Austria* 101 (May 2008): 10.

²⁵⁸ Harbison, Ericka Beckman: Image Games, 12.

²⁵⁹ WANG operating systems, famously Masseur's IT belt in the early 1980s, an early version of Silicone Valley. Dr Wang was a chief technologist and entrepreneur, an early Steve Jobs. "Wang Laboratories", in Wikipedia, sourced, February 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wang_Laboratories

²⁶⁰ Appendix B, paragraph 11.

²⁶¹ 'Some people like to talk during sex. Others get their kicks by talking about it. And then there are those who would rather just watch.' Linda Yablonsky, "Artifacts: Frances Stark's Best Thing", in *New York Times Magazine* (October 26th, 2011), accessed 11th February 2014, http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/26/artifacts-frances-starks-best-thing/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=

²⁶² Anne Ellegood and Douglas Fogle, *All of this and Nothing* (Exhibition catalogue. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2011): 130.

²⁶³ *Ellegood et al*, *All of this And Nothing*, 130.

²⁶⁴ Mark Godfrey, "Frances Stark, Friends with Benefits", in *ArtForum*, Vol. 51, No. 5 (January 2013): 160.

²⁶⁵ Godfrey, "Friends with Benefits", 163.

²⁶⁶ Godfrey, "Friends with Benefits", 164.

²⁶⁷ The plot of 'Infinite Jest', a film within the novel of 'Infinite Jest', partially revolves around the missing master copy of a film cartridge, also titled *Infinite Jest* and referred to in the novel as "the Entertainment" or "the samizat". This film is so entertaining to its viewers that they lose all interest in anything other than viewing it and thus

eventually die. The fictional novel was the final work of the fictional writer, James O. Incandenza before his suicide by microwave completed it during a stint of sobriety requested by its lead actress, Joelle Van Dyne. Quebecois separatists were interested in acquiring a master, redistributable copy of the work to aid in acts of terrorism against the United States. The United States Office of Unspecified Services (U.S.O.U.S.) then seeks to intercept the master copy of the film to prevent mass dissemination and the destabilisation of the Organisation of North American Nations. David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest: a novel* (London: Abacus, 1997).

²⁶⁸ This animation website has since closed down (in August 2013). It is unclear as to whether the work poses copyright issues for 'Xtranormal' and whether any contract of this sort still stands now that the website has dissolved.

²⁶⁹ From the website's description, <http://chatroulette.com>, accessed 17th January 2013.

²⁷⁰ From conversation with the artist Jan 2013, 'I was brought up feeling alienated from things, objects, a feeling I wanted to overcome; that's what the work's about. It's about distance and intimacy – all of this is about trying to become more intimate with something.'

²⁷¹ Rosen, Video Viewpoints: Technology in the 1990s, 3.

²⁷² Appendix A, paragraph 7.

²⁷³ In order to research and make the film, Beckman also collaborated with Jaron Lanier, the technologist highly involved with the development of Virtual Reality. This was prior to the period where Lanier reacted against the technology industry and its exploitation of open source programming.

²⁷⁴ Appendix A, paragraph 7.

²⁷⁵ Appendix A, paragraph 6.

²⁷⁶ Appendix F, paragraph 7.

²⁷⁷ Appendix F, paragraph 11.

²⁷⁸ In 1980, Beckman contended, 'film is creating narrative through the makeshift. My films move backwards, using narrative structures as does the mind of anyone trying to grasp the meaning of images in his memory.' Zeno Birolli, *Horror Plenui: Pictures in New York Today* (Milan: Padiglione D'Arte Contemporanea, 1980).

²⁷⁹ Appendix A, paragraph 5.

²⁸⁰ From conversations with Tony Conrad, Beckman says, 'I saw how I could manipulate this distance [between the image, the viewer and the viewer's memory] by taking the easily assimilated images from my childhood and my culture, and perform them differently.' Lionel Bouvier and Fabrice Stroun, "Ericka Beckman", in *JPR Journal*, Issue 3, Spring 2012: 22.

²⁸¹ Douglas Eklund, *Pictures Generation 1974 – 1984* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009): 127.

²⁸² '[Making Cinderella] was a conscious choice to represent myself in the work and to embrace that gendered perspective... [During the 1980s] Yvonne Rainer, Lizzie Borden and Trisha Brown were big influences. I was also reading work by Marie Von Franz, Helene Cixous, Donna Haraway, Angela Carter and Jack Zipes.' Appendix B, paragraphs 6 – 8.

²⁸³ Eklund, *Pictures Generation*, 124.

²⁸⁴ Eklund, *Pictures Generation*, 128.

²⁸⁵ This is particularly visible in Smith's 'Down in the Rec Room' (1979), or Kelley and Beckman's 'Blind Country' (1989).

²⁸⁶ Kelley early on developed an abject lexicon for popular imagery, which seemed to physically pass through the artist's body in early works like 'The Poltergeist' (1979), 'Monkey Island' (1982 – 3), or 'Peristaltic Airwaves' (1986) so that where part of what's questioned in drawings, performances or diagrams of crude physical absorptions, is how public information might enter the body like it does the mind or popular consciousness. In his earlier performance works these activities constituted perverse metaphor for how discursive formations produce class division. Leckey says, 'In terms of art heroes, Mike Kelley is definitely one. He's a big one.' Leckey, See *We Assemble*, 45.

²⁸⁷ Leckey says of Philip Guston's paintings, in 'Cinema', 'They are Dense and they are Rude, They are Earthy and they are Hearty'. Leckey, "Cinema In the Round", 61.

²⁸⁸ Ralph Rugoff, "Mike Kelley and the Power of the Pathetic" in Elizabeth Sussman, ed., *Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993): 167.

²⁸⁹ John G Hanhardt, "Mike Kelley's Puppet Show: The Postmodern Body on Video", in Elizabeth Sussman, ed., *Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993): 221.

²⁹⁰ Hanhardt, "Mike Kelley's Puppet Show", 222. Hanhardt also addresses the positioning of the body as central to the reception of social issues in Beckman and Kelley's 'Blind Country' (1989). He writes, 'In some ways, this piece is about the senses – smell, sight, taste – looking to find fulfilment, to belong somewhere. The prominent image of a classroom functions as a central strategy, it is here that we see teaching take form as the filling of the student's orifices with sugar as they, through silent gestures, indicate a longing for fulfilment. Fulfilment and realisation of character are recurring quests in Kelley's work, elusive qualities in his search for understanding who and what we are as individual members of a community of collective memory.' He concludes that, 'at the centre of Kelley's project is the body as a site for representing the social and the psychological.' Handardt, "Mike Kelley's Puppet Show", 231.

²⁹¹ Douglas Crimp, *Pictures*. Exhibition catalogue (New York: Artists Space, 1977): 17 – 10 and two years later, Douglas Crimp, "Pictures", in *October*, Vol. 8, MIT Press (Spring, 1979): 75-88.

²⁹² Leah Ollman, "The Mind and Art of Frances Stark", in *LA Times* (26th December 2010), accessed May 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/dec/26/entertainment/la-ca-frances-stark-20101226>

²⁹³ Nancy Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture* (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): 6.

²⁹⁴ Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*, 8.

²⁹⁵ In broadcasting, Thumin uses reality television and other popular derivatives as her case study, where people are encouraged to open up and share their stories with audiences. In museum practices, she looks at examples of 'socially-engaged' exhibitions in the Arnolfini Bristol and an outreach project in the Museum of London where museum visitors were also encouraged to confide aspects of their experiences to camera. For social networking sites, she chooses Facebook.

²⁹⁶ Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*, 172.

²⁹⁷ Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*, 13.

²⁹⁸ Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*, 19.

²⁹⁹ Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*, 137.

³⁰⁰ Thumin also addresses whether platforms for self-representation are publicly funded or profit-driven 'and, crucially, to whom they are accountable, are key aspects

of the processes of institutional mediation shaping any self-representation that takes place here. These are politically urgent questions when the role of public cultural institutions in facilitating self-representation is challenged by the argument that commercially run social media sites allow the creativity (including self-representation) of ordinary people on a massive scale and (it is claimed) subject to fewer processes of mediation.’ Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*, 139.

³⁰¹ Thumin, *Self-Representation and Digital Culture*, 175.

³⁰² Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*. Translated by Ariana Reines. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012. Tiqqun dissolved in 2001. Adam Morris, “Drone Warfare: Tiqqun, the Young-Girl and the Imperialism of the Trivial”, In *LA Review of Books* (30th September 2012), accessed 20th February 2014, <http://lareviewofbooks.org/review/drone-warfare-tiqqun-the-young-girl-and-the-imperialism-of-the-trivial>

³⁰³ *Preliminary Materials for a theory of the Young-Girl* was translated into English by American writer and poet, Ariana Reines. Semiotexte’s commissioning of young feminist writer and poet to translate this text was acknowledged as well as her account of the initial difficulty of hazarding the translation in the translator’s opening notes.

³⁰⁴ This reference to ‘Empire’ follows Hardt and Negri’s definition as a supra-national, pan-global form of power exerted through new communications systems. This control system enforces new forms of slavery through consumerism, which the Young-Girl is the example *par excellence*. ‘Empire prefers quiet methods over open offensives: chronic prevention, the molecular diffusion of constraint into everyday life. Here, internal police run relay for the generalised police state, just as individual self-control does for social control. Ultimately, it’s the omnipresence of the new police that has made them undetectable.’ Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials*, 11.

³⁰⁵ Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials*, 15.

³⁰⁶ Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials*, 12.

³⁰⁷ Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials*, 21.

³⁰⁸ Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials*, 106.

³⁰⁹ Nina Power, “She’s Just Not That Into You, Review: Preliminary Materials for a theory of the Young Girl”, in *Radical Philosophy* 177 (January/ February 2013): 33 – 34.

³¹⁰ This is what blogger Sarah Gram does in her essay ‘The Young-Girl And the Selfie’. Here, reading the Young-Girl symbolically, she draws comparisons between it and the phenomenon of the ‘selfie.’ The selfie is a self-portrait taken by the subject, with the camera visible in show. It is another form of prosumer output, images taken by prosumers to be instantly uploaded and viewed online. Gram asserts that, ‘if the body of the Young-Girl is her primary commodity, her ticket of entry into the world of consumer capitalism (outside of which she is not only useless but also illegible), then her ability to authentically maintain the femininity of her body maintains its value... The selfie is both a representation of and, in the case of social media sites like Instagram and Facebook, an opportunity for the public recognition of that labour.’ Sarah Gram, “Textual Relations: The Young-Girl and the Selfie”, self-published, accessed March 2013, <http://text-relations.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/the-young-girl-and-selfie.html>

³¹¹ Harbison, Ericka Beckman: *Image Games*, 10.

³¹² Wood, “Horror Vacui”, 160.

³¹³ Diego Velazquez’ painting ‘Las Meninas’ (1656) is the example given by André Gide who reassigned the term ‘mise-en-abyme’ from heraldry to literature in writing about

his own ambitions in his own journal in 1893. In André Gide, *Journals 1889 – 1949*. Translated by Justin O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967): 30.

³¹⁴ Guy Debord, "A User's Guide to Détournement", in Ken Knabb, ed., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley, California: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006): 14 – 20. Knabb writes 'The French word *détournement* means deflection, diversion, rerouting, distortion, misuse, misappropriation, hijacking, or otherwise turning something aside from its normal course or purpose. It has sometimes been translated as "diversion," but this word is confusing because of its more common meaning of idle entertainment. Like most other English-speaking people who have actually practiced *détournement*, I have chosen simply to anglicise the French word.' Knabb, *SI Anthology*, 14.

³¹⁵ Debord uses the quotation of a lipstick add as a slogan within the Spanish civil war as an example of 'minor *détournement*' and a 'slogan of Saint-Just, for example, or a film sequence from Eisenstein' as an example of 'deceptive *détournement*'. Guy Debord, "A User's Guide to *Détournement*", 16.

³¹⁶ Debord, "A User's Guide To *Détournement*", 17.

³¹⁷ When asked about her use of 'logical systems' within her work, Beckman quotes Tim Martin, 'Headhunters' curated by Martin, Patti Podesta and Bruce Yonemoto, *VIDEOLACE* Gallery, Los Angeles (1983). Appendix C, paragraph 11.

³¹⁸ Appendix F, paragraph 4.

³¹⁹ As part of *Hiatus* exploration in the 90's Beckman published 'a small art book re-write of the *Beanstalk* story.' Appendix D, paragraph 3.

³²⁰ Appendix F, paragraph 4.

³²¹ Appendix F, paragraph 11.

³²² Laura Mulvey, "The Visual Pleasure of Narrative Cinema", in *Film Theory and Criticism Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University press, 1999): 833 – 844.

³²³ More recently Stark has collaborated in a series of works with a Californian man who moonlights as a drug dealer, called 'Bobby Jesus' ('Addressing Bobby Jesus on my Knees' / 'Bobby Jesus Reads God the Father', both 2013).

³²⁴ Jenifer Papararo, "Frances Stark: I've Had it and A Half", in *C Magazine* (Autumn 2011): 53 – 55.

³²⁵ The Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre and the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver later co-produced a small publication reproducing many of the green screen stills alongside a longer text by British critic and curator Mark Godfrey expanding on some points raised by the final work. Mark Godfrey, *Frances Stark: My Best Thing*, ed., Jenifer Papararo and Kitty Scott (London: Walther Koenig; Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2012).

³²⁶ Appendix E, paragraph 4.

³²⁷ Beckman maintains that, 'the game [format] allows me to build an abstract world where problems are fore-grounded and are worked out by the players outside the constraints of reality. The game is a symbolic realm that can carry with it more philosophical and deeply psychological meaning. If the audience can understand the symbols of the game, and absorb the performance of the player doing this ritual task, my hope is the audience will feel the power of challenge, transformation and achievement.' Appendix E, paragraph 4.

³²⁸ Appendix F, paragraph 3.

³²⁹ 'Illuminations' curated by Bice Curiger, Arsenale, 54th Venice Biennale, 4th June – 27th November 2011.

³³⁰ Stark has made subsequent works that adopt and pervert prosumerism's intrinsic exhibitionism. Digital C-prints were created from Stark's personal 'Instagram' account and sold by her commercial gallery, Gavin Brown's Enterprise during Independent Art Fair in New York (these are explicitly titled with her Instagram account name and serial number of the images she displays there, for example '@therealstarkiller: #376', C-print, 2014). Transposing this immediate output from her Instagram account @realstarkiller into a commercial gallery context could either be interpreted as transgressive or opportunistic. In these C-prints she explicitly re-diverts this closed economy into a different closed market, the art market and significantly, to her own advantage.

³³¹ White, Kinomuseum, 15.

³³² White refers to Leckey's selections: Philip Glass paintings, videos by Gilbert & George and Fischli & Weiss, George Baselitz' sculptures, a pop promo, Popeye, Garfield, Homer Simpson, television adverts, an ancient Egyptian cat sculpture and Hollis Frampton's 16mm film *Lemon* (1971). White, Kinomuseum, 17.

³³³ 'You The Better' (1983, 16mm, 30 mins) premiered at the New York Film Festival with Jean-Luc Godard's 'Passion' (1982). Beckman's work received a negative reception from the predominantly Godardian audience, but critics were more supportive. Carrie Rickey reported that, 'if the fate of all great art is to be at first misunderstood, then Beckman's film, hands down, was the greatest film at the festival... [it] was the only truly vanguard achievement and the only analysis and indictment of the competition that keeps the wheel of fortune spinning.' Carrie Rickie, "Popcorn and Canvas", in *Artforum* Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 1983): 293.

³³⁴ White, Kinomuseum, 25.

³³⁵ Appendix D, paragraph 9.

³³⁶ This recent period has seen further solo exhibitions by commercial galleries newly representing the artist, Cherry and Martin in Los Angeles and Elizabeth Dee in New York.

³³⁷ The full sequence began with an installation of 'Switch Centre' (2003, 16mm, 12 mins) in the first room upon entry, followed by one long room with the three films of the 'Piaget Trilogy' projected at oblique angles across hanging screens, followed by a 'Haitus' room, then a room of preparatory drawings branching into two rooms with 'Cinderella' and 'You The Better' (1983, 16mm, 35 minutes).

³³⁸ According to Beckman, 'The props in Le Magasin's Cinderella room were actual props from the film and were displayed similarly in an installation at the New museum in the late 1980's, in a show called "Damaged Goods", curated by Brian Wallis, then Director of New Museum.' Appendix C, paragraph 10.

³³⁹ The film itself had been edited slightly for the Grenoble exhibition, where Beckman, 'removed a lot of Madi, and tried to keep it the world of her avatar.' Appendix C, paragraph 10.

³⁴⁰ Stark and Leckey 'share' work on their personal websites (Stark) or the online prosumer platforms which feature in their work (Leckey). In Stark's case her website screens all her video works since the 1990s, four in total [<http://www.francesstark.com>]. Leckey has his own YouTube channel [<https://www.youtube.com/user/MrLeckey>], where a variety of his works can be accessed alongside some of the source material and diverse and esoteric moving

images he finds in music videos, advertisements, and other random creations found from similar prosumer websites, like a holding site for his influences and his output. All of the artists are represented by commercial galleries: Stark is represented by Gavin Brown New York, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, and Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Greengrassi, London; Leckey is represented by Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, Cabinet, London and Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Berlin; Beckman is represented by Cherry and Martin in Los Angeles and Elizabeth Dee, New York.

³⁴¹ Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" in *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995): 59.

³⁴² Prasch summarises, 'The central insight of Bennett's "The Exhibitionary Complex" proposes the principles of disciplines surveillance that Michel Foucault identified in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) as central to the modern era's power/ knowledge (embodied in the Panopticon) are turned inside-out in the organisation during the same period of public displays (museums, exhibitions, arcades, amusement parks). The Crystal Palace was thus the inverted mirror image of the Panopticon, reversing the mechanisms while still doing some of the same disciplinary and disciplining work.' Thomas Prasch, "Review of The Birth of the Museum, History, Theory, Politics", in *Victorian Studies*, Vol 40, No. 3 (Spring 1997): 509.

³⁴³ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 60.

³⁴⁴ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 60 – 61.

³⁴⁵ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 61.

³⁴⁶ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 63.

³⁴⁷ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 63.

³⁴⁸ This was an art historical version of a literature based around exhibitionary architecture, of which Baudelaire's 'A Painter of Modern Life' (1863, London: Phaidon, 1995) and Walter Benjamin's 'Arcade Projects' (1927 - 1940, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999) provided earlier examples.

³⁴⁹ Bennett quotes Graeme Davison, "Exhibitions", in *Australian Cultural History*, No. 2, Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities and the History of Ideas Unit (1982/3) 7, The Exhibitionary Complex, 65.

³⁵⁰ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 66.

³⁵¹ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 67.

³⁵² Bennett quotes Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by A. Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1972: 72), 68.

³⁵³ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 68.

³⁵⁴ Bennett quotes Neil Harris, "All the world a melting pot? Japan at American fairs, 1876-1904", in Ireye Akira (ed.), *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975: 144), 68.

³⁵⁵ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 69.

³⁵⁶ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 69.

³⁵⁷ See also Neil Cummings, *The Value of Things*. London; Basel: August/ Birkhauser, 2000. Cummings describes the joint development and psychological impact on consumers of the British Museum's late nineteenth century display strategies with that of London's department store Selfridges.

³⁵⁸ Bennett quotes Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976: 83), 69.

³⁵⁹ Bennett, The Exhibitionary Complex, 98.

³⁶⁰ Bennett mentions the John Soane Museum because it opened before various principles of classification emerged in common display practice and so placed an emphasis on architectural permanence, Pitt River's Museum which grouped objects together 'irrespective of their ethnographic groupings', whereas the British Museum is studied for its restrictive entry policy since the late eighteenth century, in contrast to the 'South Kensington Museum, which, opening in 1857, purposely appealed to a mixed class demographic.' Bennett, *The Exhibitionary Complex*, 70.

³⁶¹ Bennett, *The Exhibitionary Complex*, 68.

³⁶² Both 'missions' of Facebook and Instagram appear on their homepages; <http://www.facebook.com> and <http://instagram.com>, both accessed 5th July 2014.

³⁶³ This point was emphasised recently by the public's discovery that Facebook has been editing and censoring the information on its users' private profile pages, prioritising the material that seems more emotive. Charles Arthur, "Facebook's Emotion Study: Yet Another Reason for the Public's Distrust", in *The Guardian* (30th June 2014), accessed 30th June 2014; <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jun/30/facebook-emotion-study-another-reason-distrust>

³⁶⁴ Bennett, *The Exhibitionary Complex*, 84.

³⁶⁵ Bennett, *The Exhibitionary Complex*, 67.

³⁶⁶ Fraser, Andrea, *Museum Highlights: the collected writings of Andrea Fraser*. Edited by Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005): 4 -5.

³⁶⁷ Fraser, *Museum Highlights*, 41.

³⁶⁸ Andrea Fraser, "What's Intangible, Transitory, Mediating, Participatory, and Rendered in Public Sphere?" In *October* 80 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, Spring 1997), 111.

³⁶⁹ Mark Beasley, "Review: Walid Raad/ The Atlas Group at Fact Liverpool", in *Frieze* 97 (March 2006): 152 – 153.

³⁷⁰ Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012), 126.

³⁷¹ Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, 126.

³⁷² Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994): 145-6.

³⁷³ In Debord's 1957 essay, he proposes an architectural form of détournement, which 'is propagated in a straight line. To the extent that new architecture seems to have to begin with an experimental baroque stage, the architectural complex — which we conceive as the construction of a dynamic environment related to styles of behavior — will probably détourn existing architectural forms, and in any case will make plastic and emotional use of all sorts of détourned objects: careful arrangements of such things as cranes or metal scaffolding replacing a defunct sculptural tradition.' Debord, "A User's Guide To Détournement", 17.

³⁷⁴ This opinion is based on subjective experience, curating independently over the past decade, as well as working as a curator for one of London's publicly funded art organisations.

³⁷⁵ 'Presentism' is evident when the museum shows artists that are established on the market, or new artists whose value is rising in the art market. Bishop highlights the larger museums in the US as prime offenders. The reason for 'presentism', she writes, is the recent economic crisis and knock-on effect to publicly funded institutions, however this strain is dealt with relatively superficially and in no specific terms or

examples. Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology* (Cologne: Koenig Books, 2013): 6-8.

³⁷⁶ Andrew Dewdney, David Dibosa and Victoria Walsh, *Post-Critical Museology: Theory and Practice in the Art Museum* (London: Routledge, 2013): 205.

³⁷⁷ Dewdney, Dibosa, Walsh, *Post-Critical Museology*, 203.

³⁷⁸ Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008): 51.

³⁷⁹ Groys, *Art Power*, 46.

³⁸⁰ Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, 34.

³⁸¹ Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, 31.

³⁸² Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, 32.

³⁸³ Claire Bishop, "The Digital Divide", in *Artforum*, Vol 51. No. 1 (September 2012): 434-441.

³⁸⁴ Bishop, "The Digital Divide", 441.

³⁸⁵ Manovich, Lev, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001): 163 – 164.

³⁸⁶ 'I don't see social practice as influential enough to crowd out the aesthetic in contemporary art. But social practice's identification with ethics and politics should lead us to ask what's prompting its allergy to the aesthetic... I don't think it's a coincidence that social practice arises simultaneously with the digital revolution. Face-to-face relationships are becoming important as we spend more and more time online.' Claire Bishop and Corine Segal, "Art For Politics Sake: Claire Bishop on Social Practice", in *Boston Review* (24th August 2012), accessed September 2013, <http://www.bostonreview.net/books-ideas/art-politics'-sake-corinne-segal>

³⁸⁷ Claire Bishop, Lauren Cornell and Brian Droitcour, "Technical Difficulties", in *Artforum*, Vol. 51, No. 5 (January 2013): paras. 1 – 10, accessed 17th July 2014, <http://artforum.com/inprint/issue=201301&id=38517>

³⁸⁸ According to Artie Vierkant, "Post-Internet Art" is a term coined by artist Marisa Olson and developed further by writer Gene McHugh in the critical blog "Post Internet" during its activity between December 2009 and September 2010. Under McHugh's definition it concerns "art responding to [a condition] described as 'Post Internet'—when the Internet is less a novelty and more a banality. Perhaps ... closer to what Guthrie Lonergan described as 'Internet Aware'—or when the photo of the art object is more widely dispersed [&] viewed than the object itself." Artie Vierkant, "The Image Object Post Internet", 2010, accessed 31st July 2014, http://jstchillin.org/artie/pdf/The_Image_Object_Post-Internet_a4.pdf

³⁸⁹ Chantal Mouffe, "Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices" in *Agonistics: thinking the world politically* (London: Verso, 2013): 85 – 106.

³⁹⁰ Chantal Mouffe, "Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practice" In Trevor Joyce and Shep Steiner ed., *Cork Caucus: on art, possibility & democracy* (Cork: National Sculpture Factory, 2006): 165, accessed 14th March 2014, https://readingpublicimage.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/chantal_mouffe_cork_caucus.pdf

³⁹¹ Mouffe, "Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices", 86.

³⁹² Mouffe, "Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices", 86.

³⁹³ Mouffe, "Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices", 87.

³⁹⁴ Mouffe, "Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices", 164.

³⁹⁵ Tate's 'long tail' model was proposed by Dr Simon Sheikh in conversation about the prosumer complex.

³⁹⁶ Foucault, *Archaeology*, 13.

³⁹⁷ Foucault, *Archaeology*, 15.

³⁹⁸ Beller, *Cinematic Mode*, 82, note 15. Picking up on Beller's prognosis, American cultural theorist Steven Shaviro, wrote that the "endeavour to decode the conditions of their own formation", 'is just the old-style idea of self-reflexivity-as-critical distantiation, something that was beloved of the avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century, but that "postmodern" image practice has almost entirely co-opted and defanged. Anyone who watches contemporary music videos, for instance, knows that this strategy doesn't work any more; the image/commodity's explicit reflection on the conditions of its own formation only adds to its fetishistic allure'. Steven Shaviro, "The Cinematic Mode of Production", on *Pinocchio Theory*, uploaded 27th February 2007, accessed 11th November 2012, <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=561>

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Appendices

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Appendix A – Beckman Interview 1: June 2012

[Harbison questions in bold, some excerpts of which were first published in “Image Games”, in *Frieze* 150 (October 2012): 220 – 227.]

1. Were there particular Piaget texts that you were influenced by for the early trilogy?

I was pretty absorbed in Piaget’s work and all matters of learning and consciousness. I read many texts by Jean Piaget but these stand out in my memory in this order:

1. Genetic Epistemology
2. The Child's Conception of the World
3. The Child's Construction of Reality
4. Play Dreams & Imitation
5. Understanding Causality

2. Does the writing continue to inform the works, or was it more of an early departure point? Are there other strategies that have since informed gaming or play in the work?

I would agree it was a starting-off point, but one that lasted about six to seven years. These writings stayed with me up to ‘Cinderella’. After ‘Cinderella’, I went to Geneva to do a residency in summer of 1989, and I read everyday at the Institute in the hope of rekindling my interest but that didn’t happen. For ‘You the Better’ I researched children’s games in various cultures at the Anthropology department of the New York Public Library. I was looking specifically for similarities in game props (i.e. ball and stick games) in game strategies and rules. I looked for game motifs that appeared in various cultures at different times, motifs that evolved as the games evolved and that resonated in particular cultures. I felt these motifs amplified the social productivity of these games and their role in consensus building. For ‘Cinderella’ I did fairytale research in versions by Bruno Bettelheim, Jack Zipes, and Marie Louise Von Franz. Both ‘Cinderella’ and ‘Hiatus’ were conceived as examples of interactive games, ‘You The Better’ was a gambling game, and ‘Cinderella’ was an example of interactive narrative for girls.

For ‘Hiatus’ my readings and research centred on science, specifically string theory. I was trying to understand space as a mathematical structure and the connection between space and time. I read ‘Time Wars’ by Jeremy Rifkin (1987), ‘Unfolding Meanings’ by David Bohm (1996) and ‘What Computers Can’t Do’ by Hubert Dreyfus (1972). I visited NASA Ames Research Centre to test the Virtual Reality goggle devices and to learn more about this technology as a gaming tool. I had extensive dialogue with Jaron Lanier and Scott Fisher from the team there. But the most important read for me was Henri Bergson’s ‘Memory and Matter’ (1896). This book discusses the relationship between memory, movement, perception and image. Bergson created a circuit model of memory that starts with a single perceived detail, whereby intellectual expansion or added perception of the field that surrounds that memory enlarges, so the memory is not rebuilt but becomes a system. Like my reading of Piaget I read it poetically, not academically. His concepts felt true and in harmony with Piaget, but

much larger.

3. What version of Cinderella' (1986) did you chose, and how did you fashion its translation-adaption of the format into a computer game?

I read over 200 versions of this fairytale in my research and modeled this film on an interactive game, where the linear storyline would intersect vertical indices where the story could pivot and change. These indices were, for example, the clothing that concealed the girl, which existed as a symbol in all the stories. The dress had many variations. So mine became a knot dress or score board so to speak, which then turned into a web, and from that it morphed into a cave for her to hide in. Like my game research in 'You The Better', I looked for similarities in graphic motifs, like the basic story structures that remained intact irrespective of its different cultural and historical contexts. Vladimir Propp's 'Morphology of a Folktale' (1958) helped me to organise my readings and responses to all the versions of this story that had been suppressed.

4. 'Hiatus' (1999) pre-empts a lot of contemporary work, after the euphoria of 1990s 'net-art', when new modes of information distribution are under suspicion and life lived partially online is understood as a more claustrophobic, cavernous space, rather than, necessarily, a bountiful, democratic one. Would you imagine 'Hiatus' female protagonist as an extension of the 'Cinderella' character, both trapped in a particular techno-social environment, who must use her wit and various powers to escape?

After making Cinderella I took a Jungian Fairytale Analysis class that changed how I thought about a narrative structure. So this film was my fairytale for a contemporary girl. I was interested in the construction of space as an expression of identity, first introduced to me by artist Vito Acconci. I worked with him in the mid-1970s and appeared in his 'Red Tapes' (1976).

Researching the work, I visited the company in Los Angeles that was designing 'Zelda', an interactive game for girls. I also had extensive dialogue with members of the Virtual Reality community in Mountain View, California in the early 1990's, which probably played more in the development of this film than any fairytale. But when actually looking at these early immersive technologies and experiencing them myself, I found that the reality was quite different from what people imagined. Cognitive dissonance was one side effect of Virtual Reality and presented a huge obstacle to overcome. This is when you experience a time lag between your action and the result of that action in the space or on an object. The computer altered what you had learned to be a true time frame, and the result was motion sickness. The artist I was in dialogue most with at this time was Tony Oursler since we were both exploring identity. He was thinking about dolls and alien voices, and I was thinking about a creative virtual game where people built complex identities out of borrowed material. 'Hiatus' refers to the name of the online game my female protagonist plays, plus it refers to the period in which she broke from her personal game to deal with an online intruder.

5. What are the technical reasons you shot in a darkened studio?

When I shoot film in a darkened studio, the part of the image where there is black exposes the emulsion. So I always rewind the film in my camera and shoot a second pass. I usually shoot the live action first and use a stopwatch to time the event, then I rewind the film and shoot the animation. In my film *Hiatus*, I shot up to 16 layers. I keep a notebook where I draw each live action frame and use that as a visual reference for the animation. I never see how any of this turns out until I get the film back from the lab. So it is not very controlled. The important thing is that I can build up many layers on the film without losing any quality to the image, unlike digital, where you have to use a 'transparency' tool to achieve the same multiple exposure effect. This removes some luminance and some of the colour. In film, there is a blending of the image and the colour when you double expose the stock. I am waiting for digital to work more like film.

For Paul's scene [Paul McMahan, 'You The Better'] I used a Fuji single Super-8 camera. It has a cartridge much like an audiocassette where the camera can rewind the film into the cassette. I use this camera also because it has an LED frame counter, making it easier to keep track of where I am on the film for my animation.

6. Did you do much colour treatment afterwards?

No what you see is what you get on the film. There is no post-production colour, no digital colour added. I do most of my colour by adding colour gels to the lights and by painting the sets, much the same way it is done in a studio art department.

Appendix B – Beckman Interview 2: September 2013

[Harbison questions in bold. Parts of this conversation originally published in *Ericka Beckman: Image Games*, Tate Modern, September 2013: 5 - 7]

1. What was the most positive outcome of your recent retrospective at Kunsthalle Bern?

One positive outcome was deciding what to do in future work. I began programming multiple screens and light sources to create an animated room. Now, I want to make all the parts of my films talk to each other in a space rather than just on the screen. In my next work I want to extend the film into the room itself by using multiple screens, animated props and lights and separating the sound from the image. It sounds a bit like Puppet Theatre, but it's not. It's more like a spatial cutting, or cutting three dimensionally. My films have always used space whether it is a darkened studio where anything visible is illuminated by a specific light source, or other films which have an internal structure that is expressed spatially, as in 'Out of Hand' and 'You the Better'. I now want to make installations. Secondly, and just as importantly, I was able to connect with many younger artists, curators and writers and received feedback that my work is quite relevant to today. This is a great satisfaction because I always wanted to be seen as an artist and not just as an experimental filmmaker.

2. Can you expand on that distinction?

These distinctions between artist and experimental filmmaker have dissolved as a result of boundless efforts of various artists since the 1970s. However, since I have never produced an art commodity, my work has been ignored by commercial galleries. I went to London in the mid-1970s to show at the London Filmmakers Co-op. I used the film as a format rather than video, so was adopted by the experimental film community as a 'new voice'. I believe my Super-8 work had an impact on that community but because the few writers of that time who ventured to support it were from an experimental film community, I was quite secluded from the art community; there was a distinction back then. Only Amy Taubin crossed over to write for an arts publication. The others went on to mainstream newspapers, journals or more academic work.

3. Can you explain the 'thematic groupings' of the early Super-8 or 'Piaget Trilogy'?

Originally they were created as a group to explore image-formation in consciousness, as I proceeded to read all of Jean Piaget's writing on the subject of children's language and abstract concept formations. 'We Imitate, We Break Up' was devoted to showing the process of image formation. Piaget proved through his detailed and systematic studies that a mental image is formed prior to language and is based on a physical action in the world, that only when this image becomes stable does the world around the child become stable and the child can then give names to things in the world. 'The Broken Rule' was a film to show the differentiation between the formation of social

rules and the creation of a personal rule. I wanted to show that once they are differentiated they could co-exist. 'Out of Hand' was a film to show how an abstract image or sign can represent a memory or an event and how that image is tested, gathers power through these tests and thus becomes stable and actualised.

4. I wonder what you think the common features of your films might be?

I realise that I am interested in everything that can be substituted for language, which works the same way as language works to communicate and unite people. I am drawn to the sublingual experience, rhythmical patterns of energy and the structuring of those patterns. This sublingual experience is based on action and the communication of that action. I have often said I am interested in how to 'perform an image'. I am increasingly aware that I connect to artists at the turn of the 19th century who were interested in forms of new media that describe the experience of synesthesia.

5. The quest for gaining freedom or liberation of various kinds seems a common theme in the work, were these works intuited representations of people/young women in the world?

In my game research there comes a distinction between games for girls and games for boys once the participants are past 10 years of age. Before that it is games for all gender. There are many variations of competitive sports for boys that develop for these young athletes, with few new initiatives for girls, aside from gymnastics, cheerleading, skating and other forms of choreographic display. After 'You The Better' I wanted to explore stories told through games for girls. It was a conscious choice to represent myself in the work and to embrace that gendered perspective.

[In 1986] Lizzie Borden had just moved to LA to direct porn for women for the Playboy channel as I was completing 'Cinderella'. There was a lot of energy about for women to create new media for their voices. 'Cinderella' marked a turn for me in that I stopped working with male-centric competitive games. Instead I turned to the game format to describe an essential feminist story. I found Cinderella stories chronicled in two large volumes collected by two women. In those volumes I found that it was a story that was read to young women to teach a young girl how to be strong if she lost her family and found herself independent. I found the stories horrifying actually, in that early on she was purposely familiarised with the concept of torture and disgrace. So instead of making a dramatic film, I decided to set the essential message in a form of communication that could replace the story as a teaching aid; the game. 'Cinderella' was a critique of this familiar story and its use for the perpetuation of the notion of women as a commodity worth acquiring.

For my film 'Hiatus', I did research at the NASA Ames Research Centre to speak to scientists exploring virtual reality, and at a LA game company for interactive console games for girls. My film 'Switch Center' was a tribute to the end of the 20th century, both as a romanticisation of mechanical world and acknowledgement of its division of labour and fantasy, the end of a division between labour and leisure, the end of believing in labour as a powerful force. It was 2001, the end of a century, the end of Cold War, the end of celluloid, and I was aware of the impossibility of re-animating a

factory that was about to be demolished. Nostalgia abounded at its core. Hence the final image of clearing the land for something new, as the long-gone princess looks out on the past gone.

6. Were you conscious of and interested in other writers, artists and filmmakers with specific feminist or queer agendas from the 1970s and 1980s?

Feminist yes, Yvonne Rainer, Lizzie Bordon and Trisha Browne were big influences. I was also reading work by Marie Von Franz, Helene Cixous, Donna Haraway, Angela Carter and Jack Zipes. Queer, not really. That for me was the nineties, and I was reading everything about cybernetics, artificial intelligence, Virtual Reality and string theory.

7. Your work is sometimes associated with the 'Pictures' generation, is that appropriate?

This was a very small group of artists who showed photographs at Artist Space in 1977. I believe it was Craig Owens who coined the title in an *Art in America*. I was not part of that show, although the artists were all my friends and colleagues. Since the term has adopted many more artists, as you can see from the retrospective 'Pictures Generation' show at the Metropolitan Museum in 2009. But saying this is by no means to say that I don't feel an affiliation. It was my specific generation of friends and we all supported each other's work, which was so essential for its survival at the time when there were no galleries for us.

Specific to the 'Pictures Generation' group was photography. I had no interest in photography, although I tried working in it for many years between 1975-1980. It felt dead to me. I wanted to work in film, an active fluid medium. Aside from this specific media affiliation, we shared an interest in the 'image' that is stored and has special significance in our mind. How it gets there was my question. I shared that with Matt Mullican, my closest friend from the 'Picture Generation' group. We were both interested in memory and in subjectivity; specifically the way that is separate from culturally inscribed images. Basically we believed that our memory is a vast storage system for all these images. Specifically we were interested in how these images are organised and retrieved, and how these images are ordered in each individual in a systematic way. The common sources of image-fascination for this group were the images that created meaning or 'learning' for young children, images on TV, music videos, advertising, and fashion styling, quite prescribed by social groups.

8. Throughout the works, athletic or intellectual competition become a metaphor for aspiration and class and gender struggle; some games are set-ups, never to be won. Is that observation fair?

Certainly this is true for 'The Broken Rule' and 'Cinderella', where turning away from the game yielded more confidence for the players than succeeding to fulfil the requirements of the game. 'Hiatus' goes into the game full force and plays it out. 'You The Better' was a set of games for guys that got progressively more difficult as the rules changed on them. With each rule change there were new physical challenges.

Once they succeeded to conquer those challenges, a new game would be imposed on them. They were in it to achieve excellence in the sport. Since this was a gambling game, they thought they were playing for the bettor, and that the 'house' was there to compete against, thinking that the house was the rule changer. They were under an illusion that they could win if they could figure out each new rule change but this was a no-win game for them. So you are right, it was set up so they couldn't win. However in this film, I wanted to focus on the illusion of power, the fantasy that you can out-smart or out-perform the game. In gambling, people are addicted precisely for this reason. They feel they can out-strategise the system. The capitalist system, represented in my film as 'House', employs this fantasy to conceal its motives in a game. By keeping the rules changing, the competition is the focus for the players, and what they don't see is the mechanics of the game, the real probability of wins vs. losses.

Your more recent works are not scripted or performed by 'players', there is less choral accompaniment and they are not filmed in studios with props. What motives the move away from some of the narrative and figurative structures that have underpinned the work so far?

My move away from black studio work was a practical one. I got too bogged down with the making of these in-camera effects, and I didn't want to go digital (I still resist going digital for animation because I like making things with my hands). After 'Hiatus', I thought if I did something very spontaneous I could find a new way of working. The three works from 2001-12 were tests for me to see if I could respond to whatever situation at hand, and to make a work without the insistence on multiple layers and complex imaging. Plus, I wanted to be outdoors. The Kunsthalle Bern exhibit this summer opened the door to studio work again for me. Now I envision a new work where the screens talk to each other and to the sounds, colours and props that are in the room with the films. I plan to design a film experience that is spread out across various media as an installation. I look forward to collaborating with performers and musicians again.

Appendix C – Beckman Interview 3: February 2014

[Harbison questions in bold]

1. Is Wang the name of the bad cowboy? What is the significance of this name, if any?

In 1990 I was invited by the Public Art Fund to design a Media Board in New York's Times Square. I created an advertisement for a fake Pan Asian company called 'Gitso Trust', which turned outdated military equipment into farming equipment. My character's name Wang was then born. I also was aware that, its peak in the 1980s, Wang Laboratories had huge annual revenues (of \$3 billion) and employed a huge number of people (over 33,000). It was one of the leading companies during the time of the 'Massachusetts Miracle'. At the time the company was directed by a Dr. Wang, an early Steve Jobs.

2. Were you aware of other artists making work at this time (mid 1990s), concerned with virtual technologies but manifesting in analogue, manual animations?

Julia Sher, Peter Weibel, Valie Export and Tony Oursler all come to mind.

3. For 'Hiatus', what was Wanda's costume design brief?

Wanda's costume was made in Paris by Sandra Reid who sewed for the Paris Opera Company. I sent her the materials, rubber tubing and sketches. She did a marvellous job. I saved the costumes. I made the geisha headdress and gown.

4. Was Wanda's guise a means of indulging a fantasy in 'second life'? Was it meant to be sexually appealing?

Yes. She was supposed so resemble a 1990s wonder woman.

5. How long did it take to make Hiatus? Were there specific events or elements that pushed her towards second life or virtual reality?

In all the films I make there is an elaborate background to each character. Madi was a female working in a primarily male software company with computer cubicles. She, like her male counterparts, designed games in their leisure time, using the powerful processors at their job. In the end, I cut a scene from the beginning of 'Hiatus', where Madi makes a phone call to a friend at the lab asking for the data he processed over the past hours, while she was at the gym. The data created the garden she seems surprised to see; it's a surprise to her.

Principle photography started in summer of 1993, and because I was using my school's lighting studio, it was finished in spring 1994. I took one year off after shooting in 1995, for personal reasons. The animation and editing took three years. Hiatus was

finished in the summer of 1999.

6. How is 'Hiatus' an 'identity game' as you've previously described it?

In 'Hiatus', the feminist drive was really to have female audiences connect with the thinking and the energy of a female character to see how a character could work themselves out of a very complex situation. I wanted to really emphasize this idea of intuition and organic thinking, not relying on models but on a more innate learning process. So it wasn't really a feminist film, but there is a lot of revenge when Wanda takes action against Wang.

7. What is the reference to Wang's 'F/Pharmacological adventure'?

Wang turns plants into drugs. He mines her fields, takes her code and uses it for his own produce.

8. To what does the title 'Hiatus' refer? Is it the gap between the two worlds? (I think you implied this with the reference to the green plane in the film's Le Magasin, Grenoble installation)?

Hiatus in the Webster dictionary is defined as a gap, a break in action, a missing part in the sequence.

9. Is the green plane installed in your 'Hiatus' room in Le Magasin, Grenoble a sculpture, or a prop, or how would you classify it?

I just started to show my films as installations this June 2013 at Kunsthalle Bern. But I had already shown installations that used audio looping, programmed lighting and slide sequences in the early 1980s. No curator ever asked me to install one of my films, although it was always my intention. The props in Le Magasin's 'Cinderella' room were actual props from the film and were displayed similarly to an installation at the New Museum, New York in the late 1980s, in a show called 'Damaged Goods', curated by Brian Wallis, who was then the museum's director. However, he didn't want me to show the film in the set. The plane in Le Magasin's 'Hiatus' room is the first time I have ever used a non-prop. The plane represents the experience of being ungrounded, between places, travel. It was a visualisation of the title for me. The plane needs to be larger when I next install this film. It was cut down for the installation. For the installation, I also edited a lot of Madi sequences and tried to keep it the world of her avatar.

10. Are there particular Mike Kelley works to which you felt drawn, particularly in the 1970s and early 1980s, prior to 'Blind Country' (1989)?

Mike Kelley was featured in Tony Oursler's 'EVOL' (1984), an all time favourite of mine. At Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) he made a tape with other students called 'Banana Man' (1983). Performances of his that stand out for me include 'Ajax the Sublime' (1984) and 'Pluto's Cave' in 1985 at Artists Space, which was recorded on cassette for *High Performance Magazine*. In 1987, I performed in the chorus for

'Rothko's Chapel/ Pluto's Cave' at Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York. It was recorded for *Tellus Audio Cassette Magazine* by Claudia Gould, Director of Hallwalls. I also collaborated with Mike in 1981 on a project titled 'Spot Syndrome' for the small publication *New Observations*.

11. Can you explain what you call the 'logical systems' with which you structure your work? (Interestingly and perhaps coincidentally this is a term that was also used by Kelley, cited by writer Timothy Martin in 1992)...

[Beckman answers this with a quote from Tim Martin, first published in a catalogue for 'Headhunters' curated by Martin, Patti Podesta and Bruce Yonemoto in 1983, for VIDEOLACE Gallery, Los Angeles:]

'The structure of this Beckman trilogy is that of metonymy, that is, attributes and correlatives substituting for signs, constructing a zigzag of meaning. Each sequential element is perceived not next to each other but on top of each other; a newly visible impression superimposed on the retained image. Furiously animated objects, architecture and persons are presented as a ready-made sign system, into which a subject is then introduced. Each film recounts a peculiar psychodrama, whose *mise-en-scène* is an idiomatic physical world, propelled by repetitive chants and reflexive cadences.'

Appendix D – Beckman Interview 4: June 2014

[Harbison questions in bold]

1. I wonder if you consider how the gap depicted in 'Hiatus' between a woman's virtual and 'real' life, transfers into the experience of the viewer?

I grew up in a travel-bound air force family. I never lived in one place longer than two years in my early years. I think 'Hiatus' grew out of that experience of mobility. It also grew out of the type of play I needed to anchor myself at that early age. I always go back to girl's early play with dolls when I think about 'Hiatus'. Having that play in my background made this film so easy to envision. We used dolls to stand in for ourselves as 'other' at an early age and develop many narratives around that doll. Many of my playmates had dolls and we made up stories of where we travelled and how set up homes in far-away lands.

I also think of the attention we paid to our doll's wardrobe, we used special boxes like wardrobe closets to transport our players from house to house. Each doll had their own personal closet, a box which contained all their favourite clothes and play things. It was like a coffin come to life once opened. This opening and closing of the box, this make-believe, this use of a surrogate player, was all incorporated into Wanda's clothes and especially her hairdo which was a doll's wig.

2. Do you consider the nuances of the space in relation to aspects of the work when you are installing it? What do you consider the different impacts of screening the work in a gallery or the screening auditorium?

'Hiatus' didn't show in the Kunsthalle Bern. Fabrice [Stroun] thought the film was so unlike all my other works that he chose to leave it out. I shortened 'Hiatus' for the installation in Grenoble. You saw both versions. At Tate Modern, it was the full-length 16mm film (30 minutes). I pulled 'Hiatus' out of ArtBasel since I didn't like the scale of the plane in relation to the screen and that room. Doing these different variations is giving me the opportunity to rethink how it plays as an installation. I have to envision a new installation for this film, since a commercial gallery in New York will show it next year. I am toying with a computerised game board floor. The thing is that I can't update the film. It relies on the date and context it refers to. That limits what I can do with the piece. I am thinking about exploring through drawings some of the undeveloped materials in the film, some of the characters like the Geisha as beanstalk, a representative of the Asia markets and the garden. The geisha was initially designed a beanstalk geisha, someone who represented the rising stocks (stalks) of the pan-Asia markets. I have a lot of drawings exploring the coupling of the female figure with the growth of a beanstalk, connecting two worlds that of labour below and corporate power above.

As part of 'Hiatus' exploration in the 1990's I published a small art book re-write of the Beanstalk story. A gallery can explore all the materials that remain in the background of the film, when it is played in a theatre or museum screening room. Anyway, I can't

project too far forward when I think about installation for 'Hiatus'. Some of my ideas were well chosen for the Grenoble show, hanging the screen in middle of the space and the illuminated chroma on the walls, which draw the colour from the film into the space. I am also thinking about very slight changes in the colour, which could be flickering in the room with the film playing, like alternating colour fields around the screen edges. Very subtle colour shifts. You know this comes from my imagining what Paul Shari tried to do with his 16mm projections of the late 1960's and early 1970's. I read somewhere that he used aluminium plates on the walls next to his projection surface, to project the diffused colour into the room and onto the polished floors.

What makes a commercial space very different is that there has to be something to sell. I am not interested in selling film stills nor am I interested in selling video signage of looping short film scenes. I would be very interested in video signage if there was another way to present it other than the monitor on the wall. I am interested in the way that Claudia Hart goes about it for her current Bitforms show. [www.bitforms.com / www.claudiahart.com]

3. Has your thinking about how best to show work changed over the past 18 months, a particularly busy time for you in terms of exhibitions?

I am sincerely interested in making a new project that is a game piece which uses multi-screens, and is still shot on super-8 and 16mm film, for the qualities of its colour, texture, softness and transparencies. I am really interested in trying to capture the fleeting spectator by placing them in an abstract game world where they have to figure out the rules. Knowing something about true game design I would make it very repetitive and build up a rhythmical experience so that the viewer feels aligned with the players on the screens.

I don't want the viewer to get tired of moving their head back and forth to view a right and a left screen, or have to feel they need to turn around all the time to take in the entire space. Rather I am thinking about a screen system so the film is specialised, taking place in different areas or dimensions of the room all in front of the viewer. So it looks to the viewer that they are in a large space, larger than an actual room. I want to use the screen to extend the space of the room in various dimensions. I want to have the viewer realise that they are directly implicated in the action of the game, with a careful space floor plan, rhythmic structures and the game rules, objectives and outcomes.

4. Does how you plan installations differ to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when perhaps the focus was more on film festivals? There was a particular political claim to how London and New York Filmmakers Co-Ops operated in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly how films were collectivised (in London), archived and distributed. I wonder if that political ambition (of autonomy from but yet agency within the market) had any appeal to you or whether the practicalities of distribution were a means to an end?

Are you asking if I liked my work to be distributed without my agency? No, actually. I loved touring with the work, coming in contact with the audience, putting the films in

the NY film makers coop or Canyon Cinema was just a way to store it. Now this question really begs the obvious: are there differences between distribution outlets? Yes, and it's a big difference. EAI [Electronic Arts Intermix] does a lot to promote the work in their collection. So does Video Data Bank. LUX does even a better job. I think the New York Film Coop needs to be revitalized, and actually all of the US needs to pay attention to what is working better in the UK. It is my understanding that there is an allegiance between galleries and LUX.

I can't stand the whole history of the American avant-garde and how it had to separate itself from larger cultural contexts. That isolationism helped to preserve and protect a certain type of work that had its place in the art world alongside serial art works, conceptual art works, language and photo-text based work, for whatever reason the art world at the time was unwilling to support and nurture. My peers and myself had to overcome this, and we lost years of recognition due to this divide. Even now, only a few galleries in the US are trying to promote and sell time-based work.

5. How did the practicalities of showing work impact you and your peers?

Most of my peers went on to successful gallery careers and stopped making time-based work. Those experimental filmmakers who continued (Leslie Thornton, Lewis Klahr, Phil Solomon, Luther Price) struggled with the limits of what we could do, with how few screenings we could get, how little money could be earned, and especially how thwarting the 'views of the avant-garde' were to become in their scope. It's all in the curatorial practice to make opportunities for moving image-work. Everyone in this peer group is starting just recently to show in commercial galleries (Pat O'Neill at Cherry Martin Gallery in Los Angeles and he is in his late seventies). I think a lot of my peers feel that we missed out on about twenty years from the 1990s through early 2000s, of having a healthy productive career, exhibiting in contexts other than in festivals and small micro-cinemas. I think the Internet has really opened all the arts to a viewership that never existed. The time-based curatorial possibilities are widening. More work is screened and cycled through screening centres, more programs are being curated for group shows, yet in the US the commercial gallery is still lagging.

6. How do you feel the art institution (museum, gallery, foundation) deals with artists' films now, as opposed to in the 1980s? Is it getting any better?

In the early 1980s I had one gallery director after another coming to do studio visits, sometimes two to three times, as in the case of [commercial gallery director] Mary Boone. By 1983 people stopped coming except for a few curators from Europe. I remember Helene Wiener's associate looking at my film stills and announcing that they were documentation and that only the films were the art, and that the gallery couldn't support this kind of production. This was when Metro Pictures was being established. The few curators who wanted to put me in show with my contemporaries did so but screened me in the museum auditorium, or in the case of The New Museum, I had a small installation of props at the museum entrance but not in the main galleries. It was humbling to say the least. I made large drawings and larger photographs to exhibit as film posters, to draw my work out of the auditorium into the gallery, but no curator wanted to do it. It was basically the same reaction as Helene's

assistant.

'Hiatus' took a long time to produce because I wrote many, many computer stories, Virtual Reality scenarios before going into production. I wanted to be sure that I felt comfortable with reality and non-reality co-mingling in a film. I also did commercial work in the 1990's, which made its way into the film 'Hiatus'. Some of the animation I designed and shot for Julia Heyward's commercial work was used for 'Hiatus', and sets from an Installation at the Hirshhorn Museum was used for the film.

Appendix E– Ericka Beckman’s Wexner Center Lecture Notes
Part 1: Cinderella

Let me tell you of some of the versions I found of the tale. Cinderella was NOT interested in going to the palace ball except to prove that she is worthy to her sisters. Cinderella was NOT interested in going to the palace ball to get a man. Her sisters forced her to go there. She tried to give the Cinderella dress away but couldn’t manage to do so. In the different versions, Cinderella dresses as a boy or an old woman in order to survive poverty. Then, after she proves herself dependable and worthy, she tries to show her womanhood. Cinderella rises through the ranks of the court and starts playing guessing games with the Prince, who cannot recognise her out of her gown. Usually the mother recognises Cinderella and forces the marriage.

Let’s deconstruct the Cinderella myth according to Charles Perrault, who wrote children’s stories for the court of Louis XIV, before the revolution.

1. Cinderella’s real problem is that she had no father to ‘give’ her away to a worthy man. Living in poverty meant she could never marry a wealthy man or transcend her class. If every woman aspired to have the freedom to economically advance, she could only do that in marriage.
2. Cinderella plays the innocent on the edge of womanhood, living in a home of poverty among competitive, confused women.
3. How can you write a story that gives women hope and preserves the walled society?

The Cinderella myth creates a false woman – a girl in a gown who is worthy of the prince. The myth also creates a test for the Prince. Is he worthy of carrying on the culture? Can he choose from many women, one who the culture deems a worthy partner? The myth presents a fitting challenge: Cinderella is chosen not for who she is but for her false self. A copy of her is taken and celebrated; it goes on record like a marriage. The story I used was one about a girl who lacked experience in the outside world and her situation was so bad (without a mother, a father, just confused sisters in a poverty stricken household) that she had to leave and make it on her own. She must pass a test of her own to determine her own self worth and this involves bypassing what people tell her to do, shifting her identity many times, through many disguises, jobs and social encounters until she has established her own confidence and engenders self-respect. Then she becomes recognised.

My research into the 350 variants of the Cinderella story led me to believe that what Disney carefully extracted were the elements the most sympathetic to a patriarchal society, a version that ignored the many aspects of the story that dealt with conflicts woman has within her own sexuality, acculturation and power. But I had succeeded in finding a folktale that could be a metaphor for women and technology that could represent women’s place in the history of industry. It was easy to overlay the symbols of the story with industrial and post-industrial motifs. The Forge is an extension of the HEARTH in the factory. The Forge makes a comment on the feminisation of technology. Technology has had a contradictory effort on women’s lives. It has increased the opportunity for new jobs, but it down graded and deskilled the level of

worker to attend to those new machines. Technology is often given a feminine or cartoon identity, to seduce the user into thinking of it as desirable or benign. If we define femininity as the representation of a gendered body, and intelligence as the autonomous potential of technology and mental functioning, their union underscores the artificiality of each; nothing in their union refers to nature, which has traditionally defined women's essential self.

Robotics/Industry/No woman on factory floor

My Cinderella works a low-earning job that keeps her from realising her own intelligence and creative potential. She does not know how to act independently of a patriarchal structure so she must try things on her own and learn she can provide for herself. Cinderella derails Daddy's little girl to a *femme fatale*.

I will now discuss what game means to me, why I make films that are based on games and how and where story and game are rooted in the same structure. The game allows me to build an abstract world where problems are fore-grounded and are worked out by the players outside the constraints of reality. The game is a symbolic realm that can carry with it more philosophical and deeply psychological meaning. If the audience can understand the symbols of the game and absorb the performance of the player doing this ritual task, my hope is that the audience will feel the power of that challenge, transformation and achievement. I would prefer that my audience identify with players in sports rather than with stars in films.

The Game and the Folk Tale: Each stage of the game has a problem in it that requires a solution. A player can acquire a goal or break through the problem by enlarging the schema at that stage of the game, by internalizing the problems and inventing new means to see them or solve them. By doing this you can enlarge the meaning of the game. What kind of game did she play? In a game of multiple choice answers to:

- What do you want?
- To get a great dress?
- To be with the Prince?
- To get a home?

*Will you keep the dress
get to the Ball
dance with the right guy
give by a chance
bring him home*

Cinderella chooses none of the above but lets the game play itself out. An example of this is when you discover the logic behind a 'personality' test, and you provide the consistent answers in order to get out of the analysis and on with your life. But Cinderella comments on the nature of her work and how connected that is to her femininity and pronounces her awareness that her mistaken identity has produced a cultural commodity.

Appendix F – Ericka Beckman’s Wexner Center Lecture Notes
Part 2: Virtual Reality, Interactivity and ‘Hiatus’

I am interested in how the rules of a game impose structures on the player and how, with ‘interactivity’, the player is better able to use those rules to create their own satisfying version of the game, as opposed to simply adapting to these rules in the game, and achieving in spite of them. In an interactive environment, we step over the line between text and the self, and escape the constraints of our own consciousness. However, the emotions we feel are real and not those emotions we, as an audience, feel vicariously in the confines of the cinema. With ‘interactivity’, in place of the invented or exclusive story, we start to regenerate the oral tradition in storytelling, altered by the spokesperson and context, freely exchanged and circulated.

In this presentation, I will to discuss three types of ‘interactivity’:

1. Linear choices: This idea of interactivity is based on the traditional TV edit and broadcast control with its numerous feeds and receptacle channels. There are a series of narrative loops in an exit-less maze, without hierarchies. You just keep moving along linear tracks, cutting back and forth, in and out of the maze at various points. The player makes a map of the time/space spent in the game.
2. Strategy-based interaction: If people can have access to the controls and codes and can build up their own icons and pathways to interact with the structure of these controls, then they can fully develop their own strategies. A narrative is created by juxtaposition. If someone organises these bits, a narrative will emerge
3. Multi-vocalism: Participants can create their own narrative as they go, and through these narratives, interact with other people who also log onto the game network. A new culture is created through these narratives.

I want to see a person effect the rules in the game, not just respond in a feedback ‘push’ button, in a linear sequence. Instead, participants should discover what responses they may have and how they can loop those responses back into the game. Right now, we are stuck at a stage where we coordinate our strategies to achieve a goal in a rule-based system. My goal within the work is to have a player internalise the situation, absorb the game itself and with exposed tools create their adventure and new outcome, invent a solution to a problem in the game.

As regards Virtual Reality, like Jaron Lanier, I am predominately concerned with its promises for communication and of facilitating a shared imagination capable of building a world rather than talking about it. Addressing the controversial implications of this new medium, I will explore an alternative viewpoint to the theory that rapid advancement in ‘intelligent tools’ reflects man’s deep wish to be dominated by machine. I have a more positive vision suggesting how interactive technology can enhance a sense of presence, of belonging to and extending from nature. The implications of this new technology are controversial.

In researching the film, I visited several research facilities, both military and civilian, and inter-viewed scientists working with simulating technology. In 1989, met with

Scott Fischer, chief scientist in charge of the View Lab, NASA's interactive robotics division and Ron Reisman, a systems engineer for NASA's flight simulators. I worked with Jaron Lanier, the inventor of computerized clothing, including the Data Glove and EyePhone. I was invited to attend Siggraph'90, and Cyberthon, a three-day conference on Virtual Reality sponsored by *WholeEarth Magazine*, where I met Sense8, HIT LAB and the North Carolina University team. Through these valuable interviews and exchanges I was able to construct a history of the physio/ psycho/ perceptual research behind this new technology. More importantly, for the purposes of this film, I uncovered a controversy that lies at heart of technology's emergence in the private sector, a conflict that divides scientists along economic and philosophical lines. At one end of the spectrum, supporters of Virtual Reality believe its main contribution to society lies in its ability to increase man's power over nature. Jaron Lanier and several others hold the opposite position, believing that Virtual Reality, integrated or embedded within man's nervous system, will allow him to experience nature as an integrated mind/body whole, thus breaking him from the powerful paradigm of communication and interaction, a power that has steadily drained from culture since the advent of passive viewing broadcast and information gathering technologies.

There are of course related issues of privacy and provokes debates about privacy by which personal data is scavenged and converted into someone else's 'intelligence'. 'Hiatus' is a story about the coordination between technology and technical experience and how it becomes subject to corporate control. Like cyberpunk novels it shares the basic vision of a post-human existence where technology and the human are understood in contiguous rather than in oppositional terms.

'Hiatus' presents a technological encounter on the Internet, where gender-issues follow a woman online. Using the net has a profound impact on people, they converse and interact more frankly: there is innate equality of openness to the message board. The darker side of the net is that one person can hog a lot of attention and interfere with the process of decision-making. It can take four times as long to reach a group decision on the net than it does face-to-face. But face-to-face social encounters include more factors to do with race, sex, rank; aspects of human identities that determine and often influence proceedings. Some women prefer to obscure their genders, to deny their bodies, in order to communicate more effectively. For some women, it's not worth the effort. Regardless, for men it is never noticed. Any communication outside the normal is handled within hierarchies, within power structures.

In terms of technology and the body, Fredric Jameson says that postmodern hyperspace has finally succeeded in transcending the capabilities of the human body to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually, and to cognitively map its position into an external world. The body therefore disappears. 'Hiatus' is a post-feminist portrayal of empowered female bodies playing off and against repressed and hysterical male bodies. Wanda is Madi's construct, a coded masquerade of the feminine presence, belonging to and an extension of nature. Wang is a member of a corporate class who will never risk his own skin. He can't exist outside an organization. He is a real Virtual Reality type, a power-trigger, out to play all sorts of mind games in the name of absolute individualism. He is an entrepreneurial type who works

transactions on the net. He exists to takeover the nest that is built up by a visualiser like Wanda.

In 'Hiatus', it's up to Madi to restore the original situation, which is an ecological metaphor, whereby a native ecology has been usurped and damaged. Madi must figure out how to restore that ecological and value system. She resolves that if you can't go backwards and restore its original state, then you have to establish a new harmony that maintains some aspect of the original within a new structure. There is no nostalgia for the past.

Regarding human nature, as the individual is becoming more integrated into technology and we lose this space/time identity, culture finds within it a new tension. Man has to become more aware and critical of his relation to nature as technology becomes more integrated in his/her personal life and in his/her workplace. Faced with proliferating computer practices in the workplace, we are asked to question the new Silicon [Valley] Order. In 'Hiatus', I try to examine the romance of outlaw technology, of human-machine interfaces. The personal story of one woman's journey becomes a model for the culture trying to re-establish its connection to nature ecology in this time of X. But the question is, who counts? I hope to offer a vision of technological embodiment that is consistent with a gendered history of technology, a myth where technology represents the means of communication and connection with other bodies, rather than the means to escape from the body.

The ultimate challenge women face is to harness the power of technological knowledge to a feminist agenda while struggling against the subordination of technology and labour for private corporate interests. The aim is to empower those workers in technology and enable them to work for the right kind of social change. In the age of intelligent machines and ubiquitous computing, a multiplicity is called for that acknowledges power differentials but is not ruled by them, that reduces differences and that understands gender as automated and intelligent, a being capable of achieving some kind of autonomy from both biological sex and a rationalistic tradition. Haraway's female cyborg releases the female body to nature and merges body and machine to produce female intelligence.

'Hiatus' is a 30-minute experimental narrative about a young woman who plays an 'interactive' online computer game and encounters in the 'cyberspace' of her computer an assortment of logged-on game players and game identities who trick and confuse her. An aggressive male character Wang logs on and appears as an aide, only to deceive her. To confront this powerful take-over artist, she must rely on her 'organic' memory and is forced to establish some psychological boundaries to protect her identity and preserve her freedom. 'Hiatus' is a 'Wizard of Oz' idea. This constellation of female types goes on a journey (away from home, an accidental trip to the wasteland) to seek what they think they need, a mind, a heart/desire, some courage/strength. They go to the tech green city to see a paternal wizard, only to find him out to be a facade, someone who could not make contact with reality. But the girls aren't wise enough yet to understand the false god/tech/man and analyse the tests he gives them. Instead, by performing these actions they get over what is preventing them from recognising the power of their minds, hearts, courage and strength.

'Hiatus' pictures how a fictional near future television will also be the means of annexing online computer games. Its primary audience is young women, ages eighteen to twenty-five, who are experiencing problems of identity, sexual harassment and discrimination, when facing the demands of the workplace. 'Hiatus' aims to empower them at this critical stage in their psychological development with self-esteem and self-reliance. I have invented a game for girls that encourages creative problem solving and intuition, to be critical of and discriminate between dominant cultural myths of empowerment, especially technology's promise to provide the means for individual empowerment. 'Hiatus' is also a critique of the entertainment driven venture into 'interactive' game development targeted at a young male audience, offering a proliferating array of combat and defense games. From my knowledgeable sources, the equivalent age female audience is under-served by these game developers.
