

CURATING IMMATERIALITY

IN SEARCH FOR SPACES OF THE CURATORIAL

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CURATING IMMATERIALITY: IN SEARCH FOR SPACES OF *THE CURATORIAL*

ABSTRACT

This research aims to redefine the role of the curator in relation to the development of new communication technologies, examining the ways in which they have influenced the frameworks of Curatorial Practice in terms of production, distribution and communication mechanisms. This change can be summarized briefly as an alteration in the way human culture perceives geographical space, time, history, identity and, more importantly, objects, as fluid and non-absolute notions. In an attempt to contribute to the investigation of such changes, this research aims to broaden the definition of the profession beyond its current historical and theoretical scope, taking the view that curating has been part of cultural activity since prehistoric times, in parallel with, and related to, the development of other disciplines with which it is associated: namely, collectable objects, art and space. As such, it is defined as an independent and autonomous practice, for which a theoretical framework needs to be developed.

The notion of *the curatorial* as introduced by Maria Lind (Lind, 2010) is used as a means to separate the operational and methodological aspects of Curatorial Practice from its *raison d'être* or ontology in order to delve into the motivational roots of the practice. This separation leads to an understanding of a proposed theoretical ground for curating, which is independent of the frameworks in which it currently operates. Through the juxtaposition of curating and chosen adjacent fields (collecting, art and physical space), spaces in which *the curatorial* appears are exposed and examined. This re-thinking of *the curatorial* seeks to contribute to an expansion of the understanding of the role of the curator in contemporary culture, particularly with the development of new communication models. Being a practice-based study, the research will also examine spaces of *the curatorial* within the writer's own practice through critically examining projects in which she was involved as a curator.

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, the development of digital communication systems and the widespread use of the internet as a platform for the dissemination, discovery, research and appreciation of cultural production have changed the traditional politics and hierarchies that define consumers and producers of knowledge, as well as the mechanisms of taste production and appreciation. Within these new dynamics, the traditional role of the curator, as it was defined in relation to the institutions of contemporary art and the museum, is being questioned and renegotiated. This research project aims to offer a new definition of the curator's role in an attempt to deepen our understanding of the ontology of curation and/or its reason for being.

The study aims to extend the definition of curatorial practice beyond the operational roles currently associated with the field and its historical perception through the development of a possible theory of curating. Such a theory looks to extend the discourse around the notion of *the curatorial* that was introduced by Maria Lind (2010). Lind offers a first glimpse at the possibility of separating the operational and administrative roles of curators and the motivation or essence that lies behind their practice. Lind thus suggests a 'purification' of *the curatorial* in a manner similar to philosophical purification operations used by Carl Schmitt and Chantal Mouffe in their theories of 'the political'. This project looks to continue this process of 'purification' in an attempt to articulate what *the curatorial* may mean or may be in relation to the histories and practices surrounding curating (Chapter 1).

The curatorial, defined in this thesis as the interface between meaning and audiences, is the backbone, therefore, of the thinking-methodologies that drive this study. Through this definition, the re-interpretation of curatorial operations and responsibilities becomes possible, although the notion that such a definition may be only a temporary arrest in *the curatorial's* life as a volatile and ever-changing term is also taken into account. The search for a temporarily stable definition of *the curatorial*, however, is a key part of this project as it assists in validating the idea that a closer examination of curating, as a relatively new academic field, is required.

The curatorial is used as a theoretical anchor point for a thought-based methodology that enables a renewed analysis of issues raised in contemporary museum studies and literature on curatorial practice.

Through the separation of the operational role of the curator (as it is defined in existing discourses), a theory of curating as an independent practice is proposed. Such a theory allows a re-examination of the historical roots of curating, thus permitting an extension to this field of study. The theory of curating offered in this thesis is achieved via thinking experiments, in which curating is separated from, and defined in contrast to, the areas within which it operates. While curating can attach itself to various disciplines in relation to the objects curated, the fields from which curating is separated in this practice-based thesis relate to my personal experience as a curator, specialising in contemporary art.

Within contemporary art, certain tendencies prevalent in recent years, are predominantly questioning curatorial practice and its role. These are namely artworks that use digital media as their medium and platform, seemingly redefining notions of mediation and accessibility and artworks which can be framed as 'relational': community based artworks and socially engaged practices that are re-negotiating the relationship between viewers and artists, artworks and audiences and therefore attend parallel questions.

As part of this research I contend that both these tendencies are related to the development of new communication media and the changing definitions of consumers and producers of cultural heritage. They both seem to stem with an increased awareness to the active participation of the viewer and the eroded distinction between 'elite' and 'popular' art. They are both looking for ways to engage with new models of engaging with connectivity, accessibility and mediation. The first tendency's relationship to the development of such technologies is rather obvious, as this technology is used as a means of conveying the artistic message. The second tendency may reflect on this change retrospectively and indirectly as means of re-negotiating material culture and its resilience. Both those tendencies raise questions regarding curatorial approaches to three main fields I could identify and which inform the subject of each of the chapters brought forth In this thesis: the relationship between curating and objects or collections (Chapter 2), curating and art (Chapter 3), and curating and physical space/the notion of the exhibition (Chapter 4).

The case studies used in this study have been chosen to demonstrate how the relationship between these fields of operation and curating can be re-read if *the curatorial* and its definition within the thesis are taken as a core methodology of

thinking. The first case study (Appendix 1) examines the motivation behind curating and collecting, including the intricate relationship between the curator and the collector. A series of interviews with collector Arnie Druck and curator Yeala Hazut, conducted following an exhibition upon which they worked together, exposes the meaning of such a relationship and its role within society. The interviews constitute a personal manifestation of the issues raised in Chapter 2 of this thesis, evoking Baudrillard's assumptions about collectors and their motivation.

The second case study (Appendix 2) offers a re-reading of the histories of art and architecture as possible histories of curating through the analysis of the Gothic cathedral as a curatorial project. The case study demonstrates how curating can gain relevance if the politics and methodologies of visual culture and its histories are reinterpreted. Thus, *the curatorial* is analysed as an essential element in the planning and construction of what will be defined as 'meaning-making halls'. Such 'meaning-making halls' are not restricted to account for one space or genre of spaces as curatorial spaces, but looks to extend the definition of curatorial space so that it can include within it a wider history of curating. In the analysis of Naumburg Cathedral as a curatorial project, the centrality of the viewer's agency is revealed and the strategies in re-constructing the viewer's memory are depicted in relation to representational ambiguity, an element that will be shown as central to identifying and defining what are those spaces of *the curatorial*.

The third case study (appendix 3) directly refers to the role of the curator in online systems of search, recommendation, preservation and dissemination of digital cultural heritage. The study is based on experimentation in the creation of an online curatorial platform that looks to make online artworks accessible through a variety of alternative digital tools that manage interaction. This platform engages with contemporary practices that use the internet as an artistic medium. The tools created as part of this practice-led research process highlight the relationship between users and digital communication media and the role of the curator in managing those. Within this case study, notions of time, space and attention management are approached as central to curatorial operations online. It offers a practical viewpoint on the relationship between bodily awareness, technology awareness and the appearance of agency in such interactions.

Although they are not integrated into the main thesis, the case studies are important in relation to the theoretical approach that is suggested in this study, as they exemplify and simplify the theoretical analysis that is given in the main body of the work. These case studies verify, to a certain extent, some of the theoretical

assumptions that are made. They also demonstrate how *the curatorial* can be used as a methodology for re-reading visual culture and its histories and its aims, indicating how such methodologies can be utilised to extend research in this field, thus expanding the horizons of curating in terms of its practical development.

By applying thought processes based on the expansion of *the curatorial*, the role of the curator is defined in this thesis as the management of transfers between different layers of cultural, symbolic and linguistic imaginaries, and their possible inter-translation through parallel representations and forms of display (or their accessibility). As such, the role of the curator is not constrained by the institutions and practices that it represents circumstantially, with hope that its future can be re-imagined, *vis-à-vis* the development of digital communication systems.

WHERE THE JOURNEY STARTS: THE DEAD-END OF MUSEUM WALLS

The motivation behind this research and, to some extent, its starting point, was in 2007; two years before I moved to London and just after I have finished the work on an exhibition at the New Media Centre (NMC) at the Haifa Museum of Art (HMA). For this exhibition, I worked as an assistant curator with the manager and curator of the NMC, Ilana Tenenbaum. The exhibition, *NETworking*, presented works from Doron Golan's *Computer Fine Art Collection*¹ and introduced, for the first time in Israel, a historical survey of computer-based online art. Working on this exhibition had triggered a series of inner disputes and raised a line of questions which challenged my pre-existing notions of curatorial practice. The questions arose when I observed the inherent contradiction between the nature of those artworks and the context of the art museum.

Let me set the context for this criticism. The NMC was a division within the museum that sought to collect, archive, expose and extend local understandings of new media art in a wider, international context. As such, from the NMC's point of view, organizing an exhibition focusing and representing internet art to audiences in Israel was a necessary, and somewhat overdue, task at the time.² The NMC space was a narrow corridor leading to a fire exit that has been converted to an exhibition hall with the

¹ Doron Golan's Computer Fine Art Collection is one of the largest collections of internet-based artworks, collected by computer artist Doron Golan since the early 1990s. The collection is based online and can be accessed at: <http://www.computerfinearts.com/collection/> (last accessed 22/06/2014)

² Taking into consideration that artists have been working with the internet as a platform and medium since the late-1980s and early-1990s (see the pioneering works of Alexei Shulgin, Nam Jun Paik and Heath Bunting, for example), *NETworking's* premise – to provide a current picture of new media art's development in an international context – was almost two decades late and therefore overdue.

intention of providing a space for experimentation and display of new media art but without compromising other exhibition spaces.

The NMC had a dedicated designer to transform the dark corridor into a usable space. The corners between the ceiling and the walls were rounded and the whole space was covered in tin, with the exception of one wall that was painted black. Television screens were embedded in window-like structures, recessed into the wall. These features gave the space the feeling of a nuclear submarine or spaceship experience for its viewers.

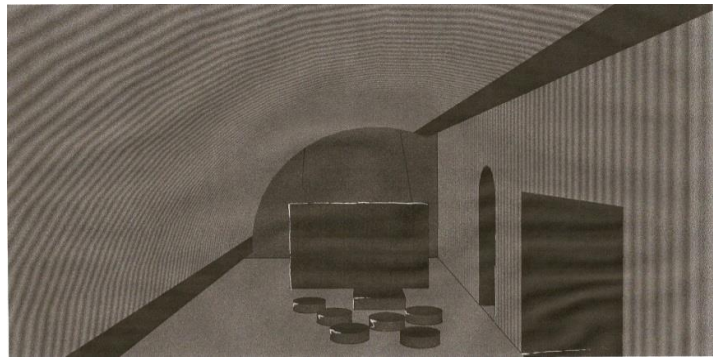


Figure 1 - The NMC at HMA – architectural sketch of the space, As it was prepared for the NETworking Exhibition.

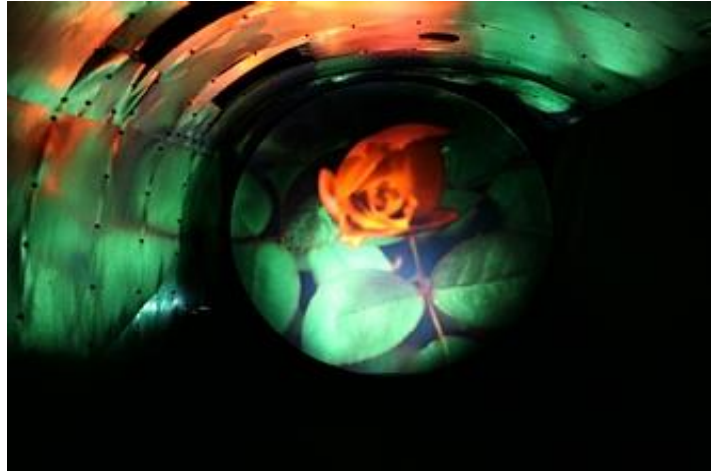


Figure 2 - View of the NMC (during an Erez Israeli solo exhibition, 2007)

In a way, this reflected the museum management's attitude towards new media art. It was seen as the 'step-child' of the museums' general ethos, which was represented by the grand, spacious, luminous and white exhibition halls that occupied all the other floors. Ironically, between 2007 and 2011, the NMC's space became some sort of a nostalgic representation of what it aimed to be; as time passed, many of the spacious white halls were divided and painted black in order to host the increasing dominance of video-based artworks in the general museum programme. Eventually, the NMC was closed in 2012 due to lack of funds and a general understanding that there is no need for a new media centre in such a media-rich exhibition programme.³

³ Until 2005, the NMC was the only curatorial authority to represent new media art (mainly video-art) as part of a coherent programme that framed the history and development of such media in the local context. With the appointment of Tami-Katz-Freiman to the chief curator of the museum in 2006, the museum programme was updated to include new media as part of its general exhibition programme. The number of video and new media art works (including performance) increased with each exhibition as it became central in the Israeli and international art scene. The *Memorials of Identity* exhibition, presented in 2008, was perhaps a formative moment; it included only video works. The whole museum was

FAILURE IN WORKING THE NET

Within the metallic space of the NMC, reminiscent of a low-budget 1980's Sci-Fi film, the works presented at *NETworking* seemed to me detached and alienated. Whilst a great effort had been made to place technology at the centre of the display to underline the prominent interactive aspect of the works, and even though the works themselves offered something fundamentally new, their representation as such just didn't pass. It only made it very clear that the whole show was a form of pretence: a backdrop, depicting an archaic future – a future as it was imagined in the past – in which actors are trying to perform the most mundane activities of the present.⁴

In charge of a great portion of the exhibition design, I felt that my efforts had failed, and I could not find a way to express the fluidity, immediacy, accessibility and mobility of those artworks. This became for me a representative example of the rigidity of the museum walls – both physically and metaphorically: the museum as an exhibition space seemed to have conceptually collapsed and represented a shell without content.

However, this was not the only contradiction I encountered⁵ while working on *NETworking*. The idea of displaying and representing artworks that refuse objectification became the centre around which my questions revolved. I was well

transformed from a 'white-cube' into a 'black cube' for this occasion. The video works were not presented in relation to their medial choice, but rather for their content matter. This marked a break in the positioning of new media art as a separate category in the museum programme. The activity of the New Media Centre, which also included periodical historical exhibitions on the development of new media art and a vast archive of Israeli new media art. The story of the NMC is told through its exhibition catalogues. Most notable is the trilogy of exhibitions *Video Zero*, curated by Ilana Tenenbaum. (Tenenbaum 2003, 2004 and 2006). Further information on the HMA and the NMC, and the archive can be found on the HMA website:

<http://www.hma.org.il/Museum/Templates/showpage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=10000&FID=553>.

⁴ Visitors would enter the space and engage with the works with some enthusiasm; however when it came to truly interacting with them, the possibilities were limited. For example, Andy Deck's work *Wildlife Offline: The Online Migration of the Animal Kingdom*, which is meant to act as a collaborative repository of animals' images in danger of extinction, is dependent on user-participation. However, since the computer displaying the work belonged to the museum, the viewers could not contribute to Deck's collection by uploading their own images. Viewers were not permitted to surf the web within the museum hall, hence the works seemed detached from their context. In a way, it was a form of a frozen moment in time, which did not reflect the connectivity and the participatory potential of the internet as a medium.

⁵ The word 'encounter' here, and as it will be used in the rest of this work, refers to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Encounter, as defined in Simon O'Sullivan's interpretation: '*An object of recognition is then precisely a representation of something always already in place...and as a consequence no thought takes place....With a genuine encounter however the contrary is the case. Our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought.... Life, when it truly is lived, is a history of these encounters, which will always necessarily occur beyond representation*' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 1). This notion of the Encounter echoes with John Dewey's notion of the 'aesthetic experience', which refers to an experience that changes a whole set of conditionings about reality and provides a new way of seeing life's narrative (Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 1980). Within this discourse, one may also mention the constructivist view of a 'learning experience', which is defined by the ability to generate meaning out of knowledge through generating a flexible network of concepts in one's definition of reality. In this process, cognitive structures eventually change, in affiliation with the new connections that are made (Entwistle & Walker, 2002 and Moon, 2005).

aware of, and responsive to, a historical move towards the immateriality of the art object, in which experiential projects investigated ephemerality (performance art, conceptual art, event based art etc.).⁶ However, internet-based works encouraged me to take a further leap into that horizon.

There was something about the potential those art works suggested that offered a radical understanding of what an art object might be: it resonated with a fantasy of direct connectivity and accessibility; an object that can be summoned to exist wherever it is called and could be in an infinite number of spaces at the same time. While the realization of such a fantasy is far from the reality of what the digital realm has been able to achieve, nevertheless, it opened an opportunity for the development of a whole discourse which sought to question and reconfigure a set of historically embedded hierarchies.

The reconfiguration of priorities in the art world and the questioning of current hierarchical structures revolve around a shift from object-based art to process-based, technologically induced art. While the dematerialization of the art object has been a concern in art history in the past six decades at least, computer-based artworks, which rely on networks and systems set up for collaboration, are fundamentally different and provide the backdrop for a further movement towards the object as the main centre around which art revolves.

Moreover, these works' use of the internet as a medium suggests the inversion of the politics of the aura⁷ and, subsequently, a repositioning of notions such as 'the original' and 'authenticity': the more those works are reproduced, clicked, and 'liked' and

⁶ This tendency towards the dematerialization of the object and furthermore, the increasing relational aspects of artworks in the 20th century, and the extension of this tendency within contemporary art, is a subject around which many discourses have proliferated. Some of the pioneering and most influential are Lucy Lippard's introduction to conceptual art in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (Lippard L. , 1997) and Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 1998). Bourriaud's ideas were also echoed in his Tate Britain exhibition of 2009, *Altermodern*, where aspects of discourse and dialogue have been emphasized over the aesthetic art-object itself.

⁷ The term 'aura' is used in this context in reference to its definition and use by Walter Benjamin in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (Benjamin, 2008). In his work, Benjamin reflects on how the 'aura' – the sense of awe that one feels once he is confronted with an original masterpiece – would be affected by mass production. In his essay, he assumes a waning of the aura the more an artwork has been mechanically reproduced. In this sense, Benjamin argued that the more an artwork is copied, the more it will be encountered as a reproduction and thus the less it would invoke a sense of awe. The artwork, therefore, will become less affective. It can thus be said that, in the age of digital reproduction, where the notion of the copy as secondary is obsolete, and an infinite number of copies of each image are available to anyone who has access to the medium, also the role of the 'original' as relating to the 'aura', loses its meaning as perceived formerly. However, if one speaks of an 'aura' as the general affect images produce, then one might argue that, in the age of digital reproduction, the politics of the 'aura' are reversed - the more an image is circulated, the more affect it has. One example for such an inverse relationship between a work's value and its popularity is the evolution of memes (see footnote 8). There is an ongoing and developing discourse about the politics of the aura in the digital age, most notably in Douglas Davis' *The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction* (Davis, 1995), Bill Nichols' *The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems* (Nichols, 2003) and Krzysztof Ziarek's *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Electronic Mutability* (Ziarek, 2005).

shared via social media, the faster their value increases. The more versions of those artworks are found – the more they are copied, imitated and stolen – the higher their value.⁸ Uniqueness, rarity and originality, which play an important role in the way artworks, as well as the figure of the artist, are perceived have the potential to become obsolete and grossly irrelevant in the context of network communication models.

Furthermore, the potential offered by internet-based works in relation to the traditional art institution and markets defies its systems of evaluation and interpretation. Such works do not require assistance with their display; they have the power to display themselves⁹ within the public realm of digital communication systems. They do not need any formal platform in order to claim their visibility or importance as they position themselves from the outset, outside standardized systems of value assigned to artworks and, often, are camouflaging themselves as civic activity. They can be said to have some similarities with spontaneous protests, flash mobs or street art, in the sense that they appear spontaneously, on random paths within the network, without the need for a formal curatorial interpretation or definition. They also do not require specific audiences that have been educated to read them in the context of a certain history or division of knowledge.¹⁰

⁸Two prominent examples that clarify this argument among others are 1) systems of collaborative filtering and the ‘democratic’ voting procedures in sites like YouTube and Facebook, where the number of ‘likes’ a work receives increases its cultural value. 2) The phenomenon of the online Meme, where an image is recycled in different variations. The more variations an image has, i.e. the more copies of it can be found online, the more valuable it is in online culture and the more meaning it acquires throughout time. In this sense, the ‘canonical’ memes are those that have had the widest-spread, and the biggest, popularity.

⁹ This idea of the ‘powerful image’ as the image that has the ability to display itself, is discussed in Boris Groys, *The Curator as Iconoclast* (2010) in light of his definition of curating as the practice that renders works of art visible, and his definition of artworks as ‘weak’ – unable to display themselves. Groys’ text will be further discussed in Chapter 1

¹⁰ Here, I should mention that I am making these statements as homage to the ideal potential of the artworks and the internet as a communication medium, so to make a point on what they suggest on a theoretical level - in the realm of thought. As mentioned before, I contend that many of these statements are mere fantasies which do not have an actual manifestation in reality: The notion of ‘accessibility’ online, can be said to be parallel to the notion of ‘visibility’ in other display mechanisms. In this sense, while the artworks are already in a public space, and therefore can be said to have displayed themselves, they aren’t necessarily accessible on two different levels. Firstly, the systems according to which internet search is organized now, namely in relation to popularity, key words as well as in relation to algorithmic interpretation of users’ previous search results, limit the amount of new knowledge, or new websites one can discover, and in this way constructs ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ within the construct of the world wide web (this phenomenon has been criticized abundantly in media studies, and is termed ‘the filter bubble’, see: Popova, 2011 and Pariser, 2011). In this sense, such artworks are pushed to the very edges of the online world. The more they are pushed outside of the popular realm, the chances that a user could find them decreases, and so, one may argue that indeed they are in need of curatorial representation. Secondly, accessibility here does not only mean access to the artwork itself. Many of the artworks in the Computer Fine Art Collection, for example, are not easy to read through their aesthetic form and much of the meaning and subversive quality lies underneath the surface of display and within the lines of code that make them. Until programming literacy will become a widespread notion, these artworks do need interpretation and mediation, if they have any goal of reaching wider audiences and escape an idiosyncratic universe where only professionals take part. Here too, without curatorial mediation, texts

In this sense, even their preservation and conservation is not a necessity from the point of view of their making. Unlike traditional art media that have been designed to last for generations,¹¹ these works do not seem to derive from an aspiration or an expectation for eternal commemoration but, rather, they fill a momentary, discursive role in the medium with which they interact.

Coming from the museum setting – an institution based upon the collection of objects – I was interested in how I could work with such a dense immateriality¹². Immateriality, here, does not suggest that the works do not have a material nature,¹³ but rather that their materiality is secondary to the process and concept that they encompass, or simply located elsewhere. Those works, I would argue, complicate modes of display even in comparison to other ‘immaterial’ media such as performance art, event-based art, or interactive, community-based works: internet-based works have no apparent material remains or relics that could help in their representation and conservation: no photographs, no videos, no dirty plates, food leftovers or movement engraved in space. The documentation of such work is embedded within

and interpretations the accessibility of such works is limited. The discourse around this topic and the curatorial systems that are currently performing this role, will be referred to further along the introduction.

¹¹ Art media, historically and, more specifically, since the Renaissance, aspired to consist of media that will last for generations to come. For example, linseed oil is used in oil painting because of its specific chemical binding with the molecules of the canvas, allowing the paint to attach itself to the surface and last for a longer time. The method of applying layer after layer of oil, waiting for each layer to dry, is also a means of generating resilience. In a similar manner, sculptures and monuments that were built throughout history were meant to last for decades and, from the outset, the techniques used in their production attempted to extend the life span of such works into eternity. This tendency can be said to have changed during the first decades of the 20th century, when artists started to use alternative, ‘low’ materials for the construction of artworks. There are certain tendencies in art history that question the eternity of the art work. In the extreme, some artworks are self-destructive, like Gustav Metzger’s auto-destructive art (presented at the London Southbank in 1965-1966); a more contemporary example might be Anya Gallaccio’s *Because I Could Not Stop* (2000), presented as part of the 2000 Turner Prize exhibition at Tate Britain. The difference between such works as these, that refuse or do not require preservation and conservation in the traditional sense, and internet-based art is that both Metzger’s auto-destructive works and Gallaccio’s bronze apple tree (which held real apples that gradually degenerate) are attempts to think about the decaying nature of their medium, positioning their destruction as central to their meaning and their place within the art-world, while internet-based works do not position their temporality in relation to any history or tradition of infinite preservation.

¹² The title of this research takes its inspiration from a collection of essays, as part of the Data Browser Series, called *Curating Immateriality* (Krysa, 2006). This collection underlines many of the conflicts curators face with the advent of new communication media and the further dematerialization of the art object. The articles circle around the future of curatorial practice in automated systems, and the politics of immaterial labour. This was one of the first books I encountered on the topic, and it inspired me in many ways to further examine this notion of the immaterial and examine it from an alternative perspective. The title of the book maintained its movement in my mind throughout the process of working on this research and so, as a gesture to internet meme culture, and to Krysa’s contribution to my array of thought, I have decided to mimic the name of his collection as a means of extending possible understanding of curatorial practice and its relationship to such ‘myths’ of immateriality. The way I understand ‘immateriality’, will be further developed through this thesis. For now I will note that while immateriality is often used to describe the opposite of the material world, I refer to immateriality within the context of *the curatorial* and the spaces in which it reveals itself.

¹³ As mentioned previously, the material aspect of digital artworks, and the myth of immateriality, is discussed thoroughly in Christian Paul, ‘The Myth of Immateriality’, in: Oliver Grau (ed.) *Media Art Histories*, 2006.

the code of the work itself and, in many cases, it can barely represent any actual encounter.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: NEW MEDIA ART, VIDEO AND NET.ART

This research has, therefore, begun as an examination of internet art - its 'immaterial' aspects, and the ways in which curatorial practice engages with it. However, while experimenting and examining internet artworks up close, the focus of my research shifted as I realized that it is not the artworks in which I am interested. Neither was I interested in the collection¹⁴ I had been working with as a conceptual unit. I have a huge admiration for internet art and I appreciate that experimentation with such a versatile medium is fertile, agile and complex. I also appreciate how urgent, essential and relevant it is to reflect on the internet as a communication medium and its vast influence on social and identity structures. However, in my engagement with these works, I very rarely found pieces that were coherent enough and developed enough to be considered as 'Art'.¹⁵

Like most experimentations with any new artistic media, most of the works I encountered and researched at the time¹⁶ marked a starting point into the interrogation of the possibilities and limits of the internet as an artistic medium. In

¹⁴ Doron Golan's Computer Fine Art Collection

¹⁵ While art is conceived as a category of practice, usually referring to visual fine arts, my understanding of art derives from the Hebrew word 'Amanut' (אמנות). The word is derived from the same root that composes the verb 'to practice' (root: פ.מ.א to practice: התאמן), and, interestingly, the verb 'to believe' (להאמין). My intuitive understanding of the word, therefore, defines 'art' as a certain expertise, quality, or level of using a medium. In this sense, in Hebrew, many other practices can reach the level of 'Art': there can be an art of filmmaking, an art of fashion design, an art of cooking etc. In most cases, achieving the level or the mastery of art means to be able to use the medium effortlessly while intuitively taking into consideration its purposes and means of operation. While I am aware that the contemporary notion of art distances itself from traditional notions of technical skill with the move towards art as a conceptual category of activities that are defined as such merely by their participation in a certain cultural discourse or field, I would argue that the notion of skill is still relevant. It may be true that the skills required from artists before the *avant garde* movement of the early 20th century are quite different from the skills artists need to acquire in contemporary culture, but these are skills nonetheless. The process of 'deskilling' that artists had gone through within this time-frame, and the repositioning of the artist's skill, is discussed in the writings of Benjamin Buchloh (Deskilling, 2004); John Roberts (The Intangibility of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade, 2007) and Nicolas Bourriaud (Postproduction, 2002). In this sense I would argue that the process that is described above can be seen as the process of acquiring a fluent understanding of a medium on both its conceptual and technical levels. The exhibition *NETworking* made a point, in fact, of discussing how processes of engagement with the technical aspects of the internet as a medium, such as programming, can be read as a process of 'reskilling' (Tenenbaum, 2007).

¹⁶ I have started my PHD research in 2010, and as set by the scope of my practice-based project, many of the works I researched were part of the Computer Fine Art Collection and included the earliest manifestations of net.art. Since then there has been much development in the field, and an up to date survey of internet artworks is necessary. For such purposes, *Art and the Internet* (Lambert, McNeil, & Quaranta, 2014) is a good reference that reveals the scope and depth of this medial category. This introduction's purpose is to set the context for my research and provide a historical understanding of new media art's place within the art-world. A review of developments of internet based art since these initial steps that set me on the course of the topics examined in this research, is outside of the scope that was set for it in advance. The further analysis of internet based art works will take a part in my future activities as researcher and curator.

order to make this claim clear, I suggest that it is possible to draw a comparison between current experimentation with internet art and the development of video art in the 1960s and '70s.

Artists who started experimenting with video were fascinated by various formal and conceptual aspects of the medium's use. Some experimented with the shape, physicality and borders of the TV set, others have experimented with projection and hence were fascinated by light.¹⁷ Some have looked into the flatness of the moving image, its effect on representation and the illusions they can create;¹⁸ others were interested in the glitches that occur in video based systems' smooth functioning.¹⁹

In the same manner, internet artists are currently looking to investigate the possibilities and restrictions of the internet as a medium. Some are fascinated with the poetics of programming languages and the organization of computational data and its representation,²⁰ where others are interested in the translation of real events into data, and data into real events.²¹ Some experiment with the classification and distribution of knowledge through data browsing;²² many are exploring the possibilities of telecommunication and tele-presence, and within them, notions like connectivity and interactivity.²³ A main concern of internet artists, however, is a critical examination of the systems that stipulate and condition the internet as a public space and its potential as a free-standing, uncensored media channel for the construction of truth and fiction.²⁴

These works are interesting in many ways and fundamental to the development of internet-based art as well as for understanding the internet as a communication medium.²⁵ However, if we continue with the same logic, of drawing a comparison between early forms of video art and contemporary forms of internet art, the current

¹⁷ For example, Michael Druks' series *Reordering of Communication*, 1973, where TV sets projecting recordings of TV programmes, were set as part of a home design which accentuated the presence of the TV as an object; Anthony McCall, experimented with light and projection as part of the installation *Line Describing a Cone*, 1973.

¹⁸ Bruce Nauman's experimentation with stop-motion techniques and image position in *Revolving Upside Down* (1969) or Buky Schwartz, *Box #1: A Corner Installation for a Closed Circuit TV*, 1978.

¹⁹ Nam Jun Paik's *Experimentation with Electromagnetic Manipulation* (1963) or Joan Jonas, *Vertical Roll*, 1972.

²⁰ Vuc Kotic, Alexei Shulgin and their experimentation with ACSII, which led to the development of the ACSII art movement (Greene, 2004).

²¹ 0100101110101101.org work, Life Sharing, or the works of Lisa Tevbratt.

²² Mark Napier, Mark Tribe and Heath Buntling's Rado 90 project, for example.

²³ Like in the work *Telegarden*, initiated by a collaboration between 8 different artists; another example might be the epic Etoy war, involving one of the most prominent examples of tactical media.

²⁴ Again, I could bring as an example tactical media projects, like the Etoy war. Another interesting example which touches upon the construction of identity is the invention of Darko Maver by 0100101110101101.org and Luther Blissett.

²⁵ And, arguably, the development of internet based applications in general.

position of video art, and the way it developed, might offer an insight into what position we can expect internet art to take in the future.

Indeed, after two and a half decades of experimentation, video art can be said to have taken its place at the very centre of the art world, and so it might be that internet art will also become a prominent mode in the future of art production. Artists who use video today go far beyond the initial experiments described above; they have learnt to exploit the potential of the medium to the full: its cinematic potential, its immersive qualities, the suspense of disbelief and the magic that it can create.²⁶ Contemporary video art has learnt to use its medium in order to open up other realms of expression and bring to the fore concerns other than the medium of video itself. In a way, as the medium develops, the more complex its use becomes, and the more transparent its framework of suspension.²⁷

One can therefore imagine that artworks that use the internet as a medium will become more and more complex and sophisticated, and in this sense, what I felt was urgent, was not their analysis and investigation, but rather the meaning and relevance of curatorial practice within the same framework. I therefore set to explore alternative, and online, curatorial platforms.

²⁶ This includes the use of professional equipment, professional actors, narrative construction through editing, and the construction of carefully tailored scripts – all are aspects of the medium which were not used by early video artists. For example, one could take the works of artist Omer Fast, which use the cinematographic technique and exploit it to the full, notwithstanding his exploitation of the display of his work in gallery and museum spaces which are flexible enough to offer a trans-medial experience. In his work *Nostalgia*, displayed at the South London Gallery in 2009, Fast uses the space of the gallery to create and disrupt the narrative of a complex script, which like in the cinematic language, uses linear time perception twisting and turning the plot; furthermore, he uses music as part of the narrative construct, he quotes and exploits the aesthetics of horror films, documentaries and surveillance footage in a collage that reflects the meaning of the work being both a futuristic speculation and a metaphorical reflection on the relationship between the colonized and the colonizing. The medial structure of the various videos that structure the journey the viewer is asked to go through is used in a skilful manner to enter from one temporal and metaphorical realm to another.

²⁷ One can refer here to McLuhan's famous quote: 'the medium is the message'. McLuhan's phrase can be read here as a means of determining the ability to shape messages when media have such striking uses in and of themselves, i.e. that the medium has taken over the intention of the one using it. (Nick Montford on McLuhan's work, in: Wadrip-Fruin & Montfort, 2003, p.193) However, I, contend that, while there might be truth in this saying (i.e. the medium is certainly part of what constructs the content of the message, just like the form of an artwork is the means through which meaning is conveyed), a development and acquaintance with a medium can re-shape the relationship between the medium and the one that uses it. The more familiar a medium becomes, the more its meaning can be manipulated by the user. This is what I mean when I claim that the medium becomes transparent and the message, rather than the medium itself, is at the centre of the communication (the examples of Omer Fast is relevant here, too) This view is in contrast with Jay David Bolter, who, in his book *Remediation* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000), argues that the disappearance of the medium is the ultimate goal of representational art online. I dispute his use of the term 'disappearance'; there is a problem with assuming that awareness of the medium can disappear, just as there is a problem in saying it would be preferable if we could live without awareness of our bodies in a so-called virtual space. The condition of virtuality, as defined by Katharine Hayles (2001), and the problematics of Bolter's assumption in this light, will be further discussed as part of the main argument of Chapter 4 and further explored through the VAINS case study.

However, in a similar manner, curatorial projects online seem to operate within the convictions that are set forth by the histories of the institution of the museum and the institution of art. While every museum has a website, museums' online platforms rarely do anything but provide information about their collections and the possibility to visit them, physically.²⁸ Such websites do not participate in the digital discourse of which they are part. While there are theoretical conferences and discussions around the possibilities embodied in the interactive capabilities of the World Wide Web, museums do not actively participate as curatorial entities within the digital realm.

Other online curatorial platforms that are mostly dedicated to the presentation of internet art practices largely fall into two main categories: firstly, those that attempt to imitate the conditions of the museum or gallery visit by providing a simulation of a three-dimensional white cube, where pictures are placed on a virtual 'wall'. Secondly, other curatorial platforms attempt to correspond with the context within which they operate, through the use of programming tools and the visual language that dominates interface designs. For example, such websites might use changing landing pages, offer limited user interactivity through manipulating graphics,²⁹ or function as user-generated content platforms, similar to a Youtube or MySpace channels.³⁰ However, all of those are primarily built on the notion of the collection or the archive, whether the interface through which one accesses the information is designed effectively or ineffectively. Further curatorial activities, are discursive ones, and can be located in forums, mailing lists and discussion boards.³¹

A few other projects (*Kurator* by Joasia Krysa as well as Kate Rich's *Bureau of Inverse Technology*, for example) start to question what alternative forms of knowledge distribution might be available online, whether through an automated act of curating – as in Krysa's example, or as a platform for the interrogation of technology and the

²⁸ See footnote no. 16. The same applies for curatorial platforms, and a growing awareness to the field is noted. For example, Tate Museum launched a series of events and conferences that promotes research and discourse around policies and evaluation of new modes of cultural production which have become prevalent with the advent of digital technologies: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/eventseries/cultural-value-and-digital-practice-policy-and-theory>.

²⁹ An example for this is the *ada.web* online art repository. The landing page changes to a different artwork with every navigation; icons in the website move and the user is required to 'catch' them in order to navigate through; the interface is ambivalent in the sense that it is almost text-less, and, in a way, the design generally corresponds and resonates with the visual language of early internet artworks. (<http://www.adaweb.com/>, last accessed 18/6/2014).

³⁰ See *Netartnet* (<http://netartnet.net/>, last accessed 18/6/2014) and *Digital Art Served* (<http://www.digitalartserved.com/>, last accessed 8/6/2014). Many of those websites that sell digital art online concentrate on the promotion of digital images, rather than artworks that include programming components and interactive capabilities, and therefore offer only a limited service to artists who work online.

³¹ See the CRUMB mailing list and discussion board in the UK. CRUMB also organizes conferences and digital curatorial workshops; 'Rhizome' is another such network that promotes and showcases digital art pieces. In the past, Gallery 9 of the Walker Art Centre offered a series of online exhibitions.

dissemination of tools to manage technology, as in the case of Rich. At the same time, curators, as well as curatorial projects online, do not seem to participate actively in the creations of platforms for conducting meaning-making processes, and rarely use tools that might enhance their activity online to provide opportunities for a self-reflective understanding of what curating could actually mean within the digital realm. This might be because most art-curators, which do not work online, do not perceive themselves as 'technologists' and are intimidated by the unexplored space of computer programming, taking the notion of the algorithm almost as a natural law, rather than an active object of knowledge in and of itself that embodies the agency of an individual or a group of individuals.³²

However, curatorial practice is not only about providing a platform for the display of completed masterpieces. It is also about creating platforms for experimentation, serving as a mirror or log in which the results of such experiments are recorded. The theoretical route that I have chosen for this research might not interact with such concerns directly; however, my practice, which involves experiments with providing platforms for online art, is my way of interacting with those questions and learning more about what curating may mean in an online context, and this leads the enquiry of my research: what am I, as a curator, to do with such works whose materialization and quantification is in opposition to their value. How am I to approach them, and what do they require me to do if I am interested in engaging with them in any meaningful way? How do they allow me to redefine myself as a curator? These questions are part of a lively discourse already prevalent in the field.

CORRESPONDING WITH DISCOURSE: A SUGGESTED REVIEW OF IDEAS

Jack Burnham's exhibition, *Software*, which opened at the Jewish Museum in New York (1970), and its accompanying catalogue text, together with his article published in *Artforum* under the title *System Aesthetics* (1968), might be the first to tackle those questions, ahead of his time. The issues he raised – namely, analysing artworks through the prism of software and hardware, activity and process, were disregarded

³² Media critic Alexander Galloway, in his book *Protocol* (2006) examines such tendencies through analysing notions of control and regulation within online space, some of which encoded within algorithmic programming; Galloway, Thacker and Wark, in *Excommunication* (2013), examine aspects of programming that condition modes of interactivity and provide an insight into the staged power relations stipulated in the World Wide Web; Luciana Parisi, in her book *Contagious Architecture* (2013), offers yet another critical perspective on the use of algorithms as a means of providing a stable and objective system of representations through her philosophical enquiry into algorithms in interface and interaction design. Within the art world, and in an indirect reference to the way artists, curators and other professionals approach both financial models and models of computer programming, artist duo, Goldin + Senneby offer an approach for intervening in such systems through their practice. Projects like *Headless* (2007 and ongoing), *Money Will Be Like Dross* (2012) and *M&A* (2013) explore the mystification of algorithm-driven markets by developing algorithms to promote the sale of their artistic objects.

at the time; however, with the advent and development of new media art, the questions that he began to identify are being re-addressed by numerous practitioners in the field.

One of the earlier anthologies of such articles, *MediaArtHistories* (Grau, 1995), revisited those ideas in referring to the problems inherent in the inclusion of new media art in standard art-market platforms and museum collections. Within this book and, more specifically, in Christiane Paul's article, *The Myth of Immateriality*' (2006), resonating with Burnham's earlier idea, she underlines the importance of acknowledging hardware as a new type of materiality which requires the development of new approaches to art collection and preservation. Paul's extensive writings on this subject in *Digital Art* (2008) and *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond* (2008) provide a thorough review of the challenges that curatorial and artistic practices face online.

Developing these arguments further, the *Data Browser* books series provides further analysis of digital media and art, and includes further criticism of net-naivety³³ and the impact of digital media on working relations and creative agency. The three books of the series offer an insight into the politics of immaterial labour and the economization and objectification of the personal voice through systems of collaborative filtering, apparent personalization and economical strategies that are at work on the World Wide Web. (Cox, Krysa, & Lewin, 2004 and Cox, Krysa, & Lewin, 2006).

More recently, Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, two curators who are central to the field of new media curating in London, published *Rethinking Curating*, which offers a review of the current discourses around the inherent conflicts between curating and new media art, and suggest a rethinking of curatorial practice altogether through analysing examples of curatorial projects in the field (Graham & Cook, 2010). Furtherfield³⁴ Gallery in London, managed by Marc Garrett and Ruth Catlow, can be said to participate in the same discourse from a more practical perspective, offering

³³ 'Net-naivety' refers here to a tendency to think of the potentialities of the internet as a system of seamless connectivity to resurrect agency and social resilience and offer an unregulated and an uncensored space for cultural, artistic and social activity. This had already been underlined as a naïve attitude after the dot.com bubble burst in the 1990s; a similar, further sobering from such fantasy is occurring now with discussions around net neutrality and the attempt to capitalize the World Wide Web. Two seminal writers who analyse problematic approaches towards the internet as a space of unregulated communication are Evgeny Morozov in *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World* (Morozov, 2012), which offers a critical analysis of so-called democratic online systems, and the complications of believing the illusion of freedom offered by the World Wide Web. Geert Lovink, in *Dark Fiber: Tracking Critical Internet Culture* (Lovink G., 2002), provides further criticism of internet culture and the problems and internal contradictions inherent to the medium.

³⁴ Furtherfield Gallery at: <http://www.furtherfield.org/> (last accessed 18/6/2014).

online platforms for curatorial practice that seek to highlight such contradictions and bring such discussions to the fore.³⁵

The most recent survey of the relationship between art and the internet that offers a close look into the reception, dissemination and discourses revolving internet art is *Art and the Internet* (2014), co-written by some of the most acclaimed art historians, artists and theorists in the field. Most relevant in this respect are the three specially commissioned articles by Nicholas Lambert, Joanna McNeil and Domenico Quaranta, which seek to reconstruct the historical narrative that describes the development of internet art. These three articles consider the diverse facets of art online and provide a refreshed understanding of the historical tendencies that define this discourse and practice, from the advent of net.art to the relationships between art and social media and between art and digital identity, from participatory practices and surveillance-related work to the latest term, 'postinternet art' (Lambert, McNeil, & Quaranta, 2014).

However, the vast activity of curators online has also created tensions in the field itself. The question of what curating may be in digital systems, or how it may express itself, was already a part of a proliferative discourse in which I have become involved.

'CURATING' AS A 'BUZZ WORD'

With the proliferation of curating schools and departments, concomitant with the popular use of the term as a 'buzz word' to describe any form of interface design or arrangement and archiving activity, the limits, borders and responsibility of the profession itself seem to become blurred. Alongside the exponential growth of data to be managed, there is also an exponential growth of 'data-managers', or curators. The term 'curate' had been used to refer to a diverse range of online activities involving the choice and presentation of other people's content.

One tribute to the extended use of the word to include a variety of online content management is Robert Scoble's entry, *The Seven Needs of Real Time Curators*, on his blog *Scobleizer*. Here, he defines 'real-time curation' as the bundling of social microcontent, and speaks of the tools and algorithms he thinks could make online curatorial practice more fluid (Scoble, 2010). On the other hand, Maria Popova positions the role of the online curator as contrary to automated curatorial systems,

³⁵ Furtherfield is involved in a variety of activities, from initiating and managing the NETBEHAVIOUR mailing list (one of the most important discussion boards to discuss and promote digital artists and curators, through the organization of exhibitions both online and within the gallery's physical space), to the organization of conferences and talks that tackle the main issues and search constantly for solutions that will accommodate the representation, dissemination and preservation of digital artworks.

which she refers to as ‘the filter bubble’. Such a criticism of automated curatorial systems based on algorithmic recommendation systems echoes much of the discourse in the field.³⁶ For Popova the process of selection and contextualisation of online material is a way of ‘curating interestingness’ – as she sees herself as an extension beyond the filter bubble of algorithmic curation (Popova, 2011).

At the same time, curators in the field of art, and within the museum, see curatorial practice as a highly professional activity, deriving from rigorous academic research of collections and their meaning, applied to the management of museum departments. Many of those professionals, in countless discussions that I have witnessed in person or and on the web, complain about the inappropriate use of the word, which denotes the relevant skills required in order to engage with meaningful curatorial practice.³⁷ Examples are Alex Ahn’s entry on the Bullett website, *You are Not a Curator* (Ahn, 2013) and Choire Sicha’s entry on *The Awl* (Sicha, 2012). Both have commented on the use of ‘curating’ as an all-encompassing term that gradually loses its actual meaning within a world of ‘filthy blogging’ (Sicha 2012) or ‘fancy choosing’ (Ahn 2012).

Of course, such a discourse is native to the internet, which, in itself, reverses hierarchies of production and consumption.³⁸ I would argue that, with the advent of digital communication systems – most notably the World Wide Web – this discourse around curating is absolutely true. Just as anybody can be a producer of content, so everybody can offer a mediation of meaning. The proliferation of curation, hence, may have almost an intuitive relationship with the amount of knowledge that is now accessible publicly and requires management, reading, positioning, categorization and dissemination.

³⁶ See previous comment for further references.

³⁷ Curatorial practice, traditionally is seen as a scholarly and academic profession that involves not only the organization of displays (as is often understood) but also in-depth research of the topics that are explored with each collection and/or exhibition. Furthermore, curators are also seen as professionals in evaluating the value of objects, and their ability to judge the quality and importance of objects is based on expert knowledge and a rigorous approach to history and context. In current times, especially with the proliferation of independent curating, other approaches to curatorial practice may set different terms for what curating might mean; however, there is no coherent theory or history that offers an insight into how such practices answer the same rigorous requirements of the scholar-curator, who is usually deeply involved in disciplines such as archaeology, art history, the history of science etc. It is hard to say that any blogger provides such a rigorous approach to the items that s/he presents; however, the lack of a rigorous investigation into the motivations for curatorial practice beyond the institution of the museum, the gallery or the collection, leaves this discussion open to various interpretations of what professionalism might mean in this field in the first place. The history of curatorial practice and its influence of the definition of the profession will be explored in Chapter 1.

³⁸ The networked structure of the internet, and the prominence of user-generated content, reverses the classic hierarchical structure of mass communication systems, where one producer of content broadcasts a message to a large population of consumers. Online, every consumer can potentially become a producer, reversing and destabilizing the relationship between consumer and producer. Such systems can thus be described as distributors of power.

While this research does not aim to enter into the discussion of what makes someone a 'curator' and what is the appropriate use of the term, it would like to locate this responsiveness to changing media and suggests a different angle altogether.

I hope that through this research, a shift of attention can be made towards current manifestations of curatorial practice that are invisible in the systems that are operating today. While current discourses in online curating that deal with preservation, conservation and creating archives of knowledge that are accessible to the wide public online are invaluable, I call upon curators to operate within those platforms in order to provide spaces for self-criticality and awareness, where those objects of knowledge become discursive and provide a means to be read beyond the limitation of their current positioning as mere objective data.

By following a more general and abstract definition of curating, this research will demonstrate that what has changed with the advent of new and digital media is curating's operational criteria rather than the ontology of the curatorial operation. Under such criteria, curating as a field might indeed be facing a crisis – not because there are too many curators but because we are not performing our role; this problem occurs because we do not have a thorough understanding of our role altogether. As long as curating attempts to solve this crisis by dividing itself to various sub-sections (art curating, museum curating, online curating etc.), there is no way of claiming professionalism in the field.

Within the ethical constrains of our disciplines, I suggest a re-assessment of curatorial practice from a theoretical perspective that might provide an ethical code not dissimilar to the ICOM Code of Ethics for the Museum,³⁹ but taking into account new forms that curatorial practice takes in the 'information era' of the 'global village'.⁴⁰ Such an ethical approach cannot think of the nation-state as its primary framework of concern as the museum does in its definition and, I posit, should understand itself within the prism of its future.

If one could indeed define the blurred core of curating beyond its current restrictions and forms, those challenges, which have been presented as the conflict of curatorial practice in an age of changing communication paradigms could be renegotiated and

³⁹ Ethical code here does not refer to a moralistic approach to curating, but rather to the core of curating as a practice, in its way of referring to the other. Here, ethics can be regarded in a way which resonates with Emmanuel Levinas' notion of 'ethics as first philosophy', and the idea that the encounter with the other is in and of itself an ethical conundrum. At the same time, I am referring to the ICOM code of ethics, which, while it can be regarded as a moralistic approach to museum studies, I would argue derives from an ongoing and developing discussion around notions of responsibility within the encounter with an other. A further analysis of the development of the ICOM code of Ethics will be offered in the first chapter.

⁴⁰ Both those terms, which could be assigned to Marshall McLuhan, will be discussed in further detail, mainly in Chapter 4.

redefined: if it were possible to think of an object and define it not as a material, three-dimensional entity but as any enclosed, complex unit of meaning or memory that can be used and read, then curating's relationship to preservation and conservation might change. In the same manner, if we could define curating, outside of its operational modes within the conditions of a capitalist society – might we find a curatorial relationship to art which is beyond notions such as the original and the copy? If we could define curating outside of the exhibition hall and think of notions such as movement, time and memory on a more abstract level that refers to the visual, and to representation, in parentheses, I contend that we would be able to reconsider the relationship between curating and modes of display.

THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY

Besides the practice-based centre of this research, there was a need to adopt a theoretical framework or methodology to guide me through these enquiries.

The guiding sign that had become the backbone of this research is a term coined by curator Maria Lind in *Selected Writings* (2010) – *The Curatorial*. Lind suggests a break between curating's operational modes – its manifestations in the field of art – and the core of curating, or its reason for being in this world. The discourse around *the curatorial* and its potential definitions made it clear that maintaining loyalty to *the curatorial* and to its 'purification' from the operational modes of curating meant that I would need to search for *the curatorial* in foreign territories; if, indeed, *the curatorial* can be seen as the thought process – the field of possibilities from which curating emerges in a multiplicity of forms – and if I commit to discovering what curating might mean through this notion of *the curatorial*, then such purification must lend itself to a renewed reading of the grounds that define current accepted fields of curatorial practice. Such a re-reading is offered by a process of extending the possible fields within which curatorial practice can expose itself, while divorcing curating from its operational modes; from these areas of comfort with which it identifies itself.

As part of this premise, this research calls for an extension of curatorial practice's theory on both the temporal and the spatial axes; on the temporal axes, this research extends the possible histories of curatorial practice beyond its definition within the confines of the modern museum or its extended field, the collection. I argue here that such an expansion offered to the history of the practice might allow us to extend its understanding within current technological systems.

On the spatial axis, this research aims to penetrate the relationship between curating and its affiliated fields as they have been defined above: objects, art and space. While

there is no doubt that curating is attached, even glued, to some of them, this research aims to maintain a distinction between curating and its 'materials', so to speak, and explore how can one make sense of curating beyond the fields in which it operates.

RELATION BETWEEN THEORY & PRACTICE

This is a practice-based research and, as such, my own curatorial practice has a fundamental role in forming the theoretical aspects of this work and vice versa. Practice and theory in this process are formed as frameworks or platforms for each other: curatorial projects are examined from a critical point of view and their examination raises questions and suggestions that are attended in a theoretical framework. Theory then forms another avenue of research and generates new understandings about the practice. However, this is not a linear process. It can be more-or-less described as a series of leaps from one plane to the other, where, sometimes, one plane turns into the other: writing the theory turns into practice, and practical projects remain on a theoretical level. Theory and practice are conceived here as two forms of perception and being in the world and they complement and contradict each other.

It is vital to me that the text itself will become a space for the emergence of *the curatorial* if this work is to correspond with what I seek to argue about curatorial practice. The structure of this text, including extensive comments and biographical notes attempts to leave a space for others to read into, change, alter and comment. This text asks to be walked and worked through rather than being read. I believe this enables a self-critical and self-reflective perspective. All these different modes of writing, when put together, form a portrait of the way the ideas presented in this text came into being.⁴¹

Each of the chapters, therefore, does not complete a full circle in which the ties and bonds between curatorial practice and other disciplines are solved. On the contrary, it is an attempt to create an interdisciplinary cross where the re-establishment of the disciplines' definition opens up a discussion about widening their understanding altogether. The research is intentionally and purposefully eclectic. Eclecticism is seen, in this context, as an important approach which is less concerned with affirming

⁴¹ The text itself has a practical manifestation as an app designed to be read on digital platforms as a cybertext in which hyperlinks will allow the reader to jump between different sections of the text. The navigation through the text is guided by a spatial diagram, reminiscent of a multicursal labyrinth, representing an alternative to the linear table of contents. In this labyrinth, the reader is able to reconstruct the structure of the text according to the courses he takes within the text. Within this structure, empty spaces are left in which the reader can plant comments, change the text and share different versions of it.

existing conceptions of reality and is more interested in leaving question-marks open for the reader's interrogation. The possibility in presenting the chapters in a non-hierarchical way alludes to my perception that none of those elements have primacy over others in understanding the concept of *the curatorial*.

It attempts to examine aspects of my practice from different directions. The intention is that those readings into the topic will contribute to the development of a fragmented theory of curatorial practice.

THE 'I', THE 'WE', AND THE 'ONE'

In this work, the pronoun 'I' is used to denote a thought formulated and explicated from a subjective point of view. The plural first-person 'we' is used in order to reflect on certain conclusions or understandings that arise from the reading and the writing of this research. 'We' is composed, most simply, from 'I' – the writer, researcher, curator and person – and the readers that are involved in the construction of the ideas suggested through what I term a participatory act of intended attention.

'We' suggests that a certain understanding had been achieved in the processes through which I imagine the readers to go. It therefore becomes a shared assumption as a means to encourage the reader's participation. 'We', in this context, allows a sense of inclusion and already assumes that every idea is a shared idea; that there cannot be a real distinction between the reader and the writer in the process of reading a text. 'We' thus functions as a buffer to the alienation between not only the reader and the writer, but also between the writer and the reader, in the process of writing this text.⁴²

'I' and 'we' have frequently been selected purposefully over 'one' as a marker of a general singular non-specific subjectivity, which makes little sense to the process of reading, writing and the formation of ideas in this context. The use of 'one' is rhetorical and is meant to bridge between the 'I' and the 'We' in the text. It is used in those moments of uncertainty when an argument does not seem to come from the

⁴² This, of course, resonates with the concept of the death of the author as defined by Roland Barthes in his seminal text from 1977; however, here, and within the discourse surrounding digital texts, I am also referring to the notions of 'Ergodic Literature' and 'cybertext', as defined by Espen Aarseth (1997). For Aarseth, cybertext is a notion that existed long before the model of digital texts, and refers to texts which required the active and physical participation of the reader in making one's own meaning. Ancient versions of cybertext include the 'Ancient Chinese Book of Changes' known as the 'I-Ching', (which, interestingly, had a role in the conception of computational technology and binary language) and the Tarot. In fact, Aarseth's journey in search of the ancient origins of cybertext was one of the initial inspirations that led me to research the ancient roots of curatorial practice. This connection, between modes of divination, the cybertext and curatorial practice, will be extended briefly in the fourth chapter. This is outside of the scope this research had set to explore but is one of the topics to which I am curious to return as an extension of this work.

subjectivity of the writer and cannot be said to be a shared understanding that has been achieved through this process. In short, 'one' is used when a certain distance is required from a statement or an assumption to create a space for self-reflexivity that does not immediately identify with the idea at stake.

CHAPTER PLAN

CHAPTER 1: OPERATIONAL HISTORIES: MATERIAL CURATING AND *THE CURATORIAL*

The first chapter is concerned with setting the background and linguistic framework that frames and underpins this research. It attempts to construct an alternative reading of curatorial practice and its histories from a wider perspective, extending its past and its future beyond the current memory of curatorial practice as bound to the institution of the museum and the institution of art.

Expanding the historical affiliation of curatorial practice allows an alternative reading of the way curatorial practice defines itself today, giving a central position to the notion of *the curatorial* within such an investigation. It therefore reflects the theoretical and practical gap that has formed between art-curating and museum studies, and offers a merging of the two disciplines and their discourses in an attempt to reconcile what I perceive as an artificial division between the history and theory of curating, wishing to provide a coherent understanding of the practice as a whole.

The second part of the chapter works closely with the current theoretical framework offered for *the curatorial* as a fertile ground for examining and defining curating's *raison-d'être*, or ontology. It seeks a temporarily stable definition of *the curatorial* as a concept that provides the core of the investigation offered in each of the chapters to come.

CHAPTER 2: OBJECT RELATIONS: CURATING & COLLECTING

This chapter examines the relationship between curation and collecting - two fields that, historically, have been closely related to each other due to their mutual fascination with objects as units of symbolic meaning. The two have been bound together to the extent that there has not been a clear and distinct separation between them that has its ground in their ontological differences.

Looking into the commonalities and differences of these two endeavours, this chapter has two main goals. The first is to deepen the understanding of curating, tracing its roots before its actual recognition as a separate theoretical and professional unit. The second is to distinguish and understand what drives curatorial practice – the curator's

relation to the object and how it differs from the collector's approach. Through this comparison I am seeking to achieve a clearer understanding of the curator's fascination with objects and offer an alternative definition of what a curatorial or a discursive object might be.

The chapter is constructed around two perspectives of the notion of collecting. The first anchor is set in the perception of the collection as a historical phenomenon. It will explore the collection's roots and meanings. The second anchor is set in the investigation of the psychology of the collector and the powers that motivates his fascination with objects.

CHAPTER 3: CURATORIAL PRACTICE, THE ART OBJECT'S AUTONOMY AND THE QUESTION OF THE READYMADE

While the second chapter explores the relationship between curating and the collected object, this chapter investigates another category of objects with which curators are concerned: art. As previously acknowledged, the relation between curating and art has played a central role in the development of curatorial practice, hence any attempt to understand curating as an independent practice should also closely examine the relationship between curatorial practice and art practice.

By underlining the points in which those two practices meet and depart, this chapter aims to achieve a better understanding of what *the curatorial* might mean in the context of both curatorial and artistic practice. The call for an autonomy of curatorial practice is relevant especially in the field of art curating because both artists and curators are convinced of an inherent dependence between the two fields. This is evident in the discourse of art curating, which mainly circles around the relationship between curators and artists and the definition of the territorial borders of each practice. The extreme proximity between these two practices, I suggest, has its roots in the introduction of the notion of the 'readymade' into art practice in early 20th century.

In contrast, this chapter seeks to divorce these two fields and re-establish their independent motivations; namely, I seek to understand the fundamental or ontological differences between curatorial practice and artistic practice, and their use of objects. The works of Marcel Duchamp and Robert Rauschenberg will be taken here as two core examples, with their work being analysed through the prism of *the curatorial*. Through this investigation I hope not only to assert the independence of curatorial practice in relation to art, but also to define the correlations between those

two practices to suggest how those distinctions can contribute to a deeper and wider understanding of *The Curatorial*⁴³.

CHAPTER 4: CURATING IN SPACE

This chapter relates in a more direct fashion to the practical element of this work, as it is the culmination of the enquiry into curation in relation to spatial organization, the construction of identity and the relationship with audiences. It is concerned with the definition of curatorial practice as dependent upon, and attached to, the notion of physical space. This attachment is apparent when one thinks of the central mode of operation for curators, which is usually defined as the exhibition space. The preliminary condition for curating, as it is understood in existing literature, is almost exclusively related to the organization of objects within space, while the relationship between objects is the means through which a 'curatorial text'⁴⁴ is developed.

In an attempt to isolate and understand the notion of *the curatorial* in this context, I offer an analysis that looks into the motivation behind the organization of exhibitions as a method of constructing communal memories and identities. The relationship with the physical, three-dimensional space is questioned and re-addressed in the light of this analysis.

Two modes of perception are recognized as fundamental in the construction of memory. The relationship between the two is not hierarchical; rather, the two modes complete each other in the viewer's experience. These two aspects can be defined as time (or memory) and space (or movement). The deep relationship between the two is examined closely while, in the same attempt to expand the history of curating, I aim to find a resonance of *the curatorial* within the ancient 'art of memory',⁴⁵ where the construction of memory, through movement in space, is assumed in detail. Here, I seek to shed light on other aspects of curating outside of the notion of the museum as we know it.

This chapter acknowledges the importance of spatial composition in the emergence of *the curatorial* and delves into the meaning and properties of this spatial awareness in light of current assumed changes in our social understanding of space and time,

⁴³ Taking into consideration that *the curatorial* is present both within curatorial practice and within artistic practice as well.

⁴⁴ 'curatorial text' is thought of in contrast with the notion of *the curatorial*. Curatorial text refers to the narrative, meaning and discourse which curatorial projects seek to achieve, and in this sense, the exhibition itself can be read as a text. *The curatorial* on the other hand is defined as the space where meaning is deconstructed – before a new meaning can reveal itself through curatorial operations.

⁴⁵ 'The art of memory' (*Ars Memoria*) is a term originally introduced and developed by philosophers Pythagoras and Aristotle, which loosely defines the relationship between moving in a spatial plane and the construction of memory.

rooted in Henri Lefebvre's text *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 2000) and its further development in Paul Virilio's book *The Lost Dimension* (Virilio, 1991). Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002) will assist me in connecting back to what I perceive as the lost dimension of the art of memory, in order to unpick some knots in our thinking about memory construction, space and time-perception.

Finally, an abstract notion of space will emerge to provide a horizon upon which it would be possible to think of the contemporary space of the screen from an alternative point of view, through which I seek to resolve the helplessness of the flatness it inhibits. This will be achieved through redefining curatorial space within the attentional mode of the viewer, recalling the memory of the self as the internal space of *the curatorial*.

APPENDICES: CASE STUDIES AND CURATORIAL PROJECTS

Each of the chapters detailed above seeks to explore the two axes of analysis that were established previously: the temporal axis and the spatial axis. The first chapter approaches the past in the temporal axis, and *the curatorial* in the spatial axis. The second and the third chapters look at the present on the temporal axis. They explore current definitions of curatorial practice within its political and economic context. On the spatial axis, the second chapter looks into subject/object relationship, while the third chapter studies the relationship between object and background. The fourth chapter seeks to offer a glimpse into the future of the temporal axis, and provides a deepening understanding of the relationship between perception, memory and agency.

While the chapters form the theoretical discussion, the case studies and the examination of my own practice are included as appendices in order to exemplify and simplify the theoretical notions that I am attempting to convey. Both the case studies and my own curatorial projects function in the same manner: they are testimonies of my subjective curatorial position, or of my experiences as a viewer. Those examples will be presented separately and independently from the main text as a parallel way of representing the ideas that are brought and discussed in this research. In this sense, they will become 'hovering chapters' through which the reader has the freedom to browse while constructing his or her own understanding of *the curatorial*.

Appendix 1: *In Detail: From the Collection of Arnie Druck, Curated by Yeala Hazut, Haifa Museum of Art, 2010*

This appendix accompanies the second chapter, and looks into the relationship between a collector and a curator in showcasing a collection as an integral unit of meaning in the exhibition *In Detail*, which opened at the Haifa Museum of Art in 2010. The case study is composed of a set of interviews held with collector Arnie Druck and curator Yeala Hazut, exploring the motivation behind both practices and attempting to understand the curatorial process as it is operating within collections.

Appendix 2: Naumburg Cathedral, the West Choir and the Rood Screen of the of St Peter and Paul, Naumburg, Germany

This appendix, which accompanies the third chapter, looks at alternative correlations between curating and art in the extended history of the field, beyond that of the modern museum. The case study recognizes spaces of *the curatorial* in recent art-historical analyses of the west choir and rood screen of the Naumburg Cathedral through the notion of the *simulacrum* and its meaning in the Middle Ages. Placing attention on its spatial arrangement from a curatorial perspective allows an analysis of narrative constructions that recognizes what could be defined as curatorial strategies in Gothic architecture. The mysterious figures of the Naumburg Masters are interpreted as curators and, as such, an alternative understanding of the relationships between curating, artistic creativity and creative agency is defined.

Appendix 3: VAINS: Visual Art Interpretation and Navigation System

This appendix accompanies the fourth chapter. It is a description, review and analysis of an online curatorial project aiming to be a repository search and recommendation tool for viewing internet-based art online. The product of 3 years' collaboration (still ongoing) between computer artist Dr Eleanor Dare and myself, VAINS is a set of tools that examine the relationship between audiences, attention, and perceptions of time and space. The project looks into the intricate idea of the body as technology, where the curatorial act is revealed as a process that uses both technology and the body itself as media for conducting spaces of *the curatorial*.

CHAPTER 1:

OPERATIONAL HISTORIES: MATERIAL CURATING AND *THE CURATORIAL*

IN SEARCH OF THE ROOTS OF CURATORIAL PRACTICE

THE ORIGINS OF THE *MOUSEION*

In an attempt to reconstruct the possible historical roots of curatorial practice, I investigate the histories of the collection and the museum, as archetypes of curatorial space, from a wide historical perspective.¹ In my investigation of recent archaeological writings about the origins of such institutions, I find that while the library of Alexandria might have been the ancient epitomization of the ideal of the museum, some scholars argue that collections and displays of objects, as well as site-specific art pieces, were already a prevalent practice since prehistoric times. Such practices persisted throughout history and took a seminal role in the construction of culture and civilization and are recognized today as early versions of the modern museum, from which the figure of the curator as we know it had emerged.

In *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art* (2002), archaeologist David-Lewis Williams offers a constructivist approach to the analysis of cave-art and displays dated to Upper Palaeolithic times. In his analysis, which had been proclaimed as one of the most significant in contemporary archaeology, Williams demonstrates how such displays, which are often conceived of as primitive representations, can in fact be read as the first development of symbolic representation, language and ritual in human development. The book suggests great care was given to the arrangement of objects and images in the formation of the first public spaces within which the earliest known communities that demonstrated self-consciousness dwelled. According to Williams, such spaces incorporated an astounding richness of meaning, spiritual and ritualistic purposefulness and an awareness to the construction of space.²

¹ Michel Foucault, in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977) also attempts to restore a continuous history of temples, theatres and circuses from antiquity in the development of modes of self-surveillance. While the critique that Foucault offers is invaluable, and as it will become clear, informs much of the discourses around which curatorial and museum studies are based, I have found that the focus of his writings there is no space for interrogating other aspects of such institutions which may be related to an innate attempt to construct what I term 'the common' – i.e. the place in which social relations based on mutual memories and narratives are formed, While the criticism he offers is taken into account, I choose to focus on other aspects of such a history in order to better understand my own motivation as a curator, in the context of my practice, as it will be revealed further along this research.

² Lewis-Williams approach is supported by the work of Steven Mithen, most notably in his research into the origins of art in *The Prehistory of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science*. (1996)

In addition, arranged collections of objects were also found in Upper Palaeolithic burial sites, suggesting that objects, as well as their display, were assigned with symbolic and ritualistic meaning and were an integral part of early burial ceremonies, cultural and social structures, as well as a form of establishing early communication models, hierarchies and linguistic complexities. (Chase, 1987; Hayden, 1993 and Bar-Yosef, 2002).

Further evidence for the centrality of collections in cultural development and educational models, and the importance of display in meaning-making associated with such collections, was found in Ancient Mesopotamian ruins, including Assyria, Babylon and Ancient Egypt. This suggests that the model of the library in Alexandria might have had its roots in earlier, similar organizations that were created for the purpose of pleasure, study and civil education. This suggests that the collection of objects (or forms, in their more abstract definition), their classification, their assignment with symbolic meaning and their display were essential to the development of social and cultural structures, as well as in the development of language and literacy (Civil, 1995, Pollock S. , 1999, Pitchard & Fleming, 2011, Weitemeyer, 2009 and Brown & Feldman, 2013).

While there is debate about the existence of 'artists' at those times,³ two types of what we would now term 'art-objects' were evident. One type consists of seals, tablets and bullae, which were meticulously archived, organized and kept, and were an important part of the economic exchange, identification and transaction systems. The growing bureaucracy required for the interpretation, management, archive and dissemination of such objects could be said to form the roots of written language (Pollock S. , 1999, pp. 153-154 and Brown & Feldman, 2013). The other type consists of images that were painted or carved as part of public displays, as a means of disseminating ideology. These might have also had a role in early public communication systems and education. Archaeological evidence suggests that those images were frequently changed or painted over (Ross, 2005, p. 330), and this notion could be compared to the temporary exhibition of our times.⁴

³ There was no word 'art' or 'artist' in ancient Akkadian (the resources presented are based on Akkadian texts). In ancient Akkadian texts, rulers were considered as the 'designers' and executors of most artistic and architectonic programmes. (Ross, 2005, p. 330) This may suggest the extensive power image-literacy had in such times, to the point that such literacy would be a means of ruling or preserving power. However it could also reflect, already from the outset of this research, the complex relationship between authority, curating and art.

⁴ The suggestions and assumptions that are presented here rely on critical approaches to reading archaeological evidence of the near-eastern ancient civilization, that suggest complex systems of education, ritual and knowledge dissemination existed in those times, and look at reading the meaning of related art practices through contemporary approaches to visual culture analysis. A pioneer in this area is Irene J. Winter, whose long list of students, including Jack Cheng, Marian H. Feldman, Brian Brown, Jennifer Ross and others, are referred to in this text. To support this concept of the changing exhibition,

Professionals identified with classification, interstation, conservation, administration and dissemination of such objects could be identified within lexical texts (Crawford, 2013 and Cross, 2013) and are described as artisan-clerks, who had powerful positions in shaping knowledge of an economic, ritual, political and cosmological sort (Pollock, 1999, p. 172) Those individuals had a profound role in the communication methodologies of the time and were very much in charge, amongst other responsibilities, of assigning the symbolic value of signs, as these were used in identity verification, transaction confirmation as well as educational systems (Weitemeyer, 2009).

I would suggest that it is possible, within the evidence presented above, to identify those individuals as the curators of the time. As will be shown in the following sections, curators today are also seen as artisan-clerks who are in charge, largely, of the dissemination of cultural heritage and art. Curatorial practices had proven to be historically important in the construction of social and communal narratives and ideologies, similarly to the imaginary-literate artisan-clerks of the time. Moreover, we can draw further conclusions about the role of the curator, if we think of it through the prism of its ancient roots. According to the historical perspective offered here, the dissemination of images, art and forms, had a close relationship to the construction, deconstruction and re-construction of language itself. If we understand language as the fundamental form of the symbolic order, then we can assert that the curator's role in culture involves the management, construction, deconstruction, dissemination and preservation of different layers of the symbolic order.

Considering such a deep-rooted history of curatorial practice, I would suggest that the curator in ancient times was not only a keeper of objects as a means of preserving the past but was already the curator of a future society. In other words, by shaping historical narratives and cultural memory, we are not only shaping our identities and, therefore, the behaviours that we adopt for the future, but are taking an essential part in communication systems and their development.

We can therefore conclude that in view of such history, curatorial practice is embedded and embodied within the creation of layers of symbolic orders in society, and as such is part of communication systems and technologies. The role of the curator within such systems might be defined broadly as the conveyor of symbolic

Brian A. Brown, in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art* (2013: 515-542), analyses certain displays that specifically identify ethnic origins and local identities within the political structure of the later Assyrian state. The description offered resembles the structure of modern exhibitions which have sought to construct empirical identity in relation to colonized cultures, as discussed later in this chapter, suggesting that the role of display and exhibition was used to create communal narratives and identities as early as 2500 BC. A contemporary reading might identify specific curatorial strategies within such displays and thus learn more about the role of the curator throughout history.

meaning or interpretation. This of course has implications for how we define the role and challenges of the curator with the introduction of innovative communication models and technologies.

Though we tend to think of 'curation' (as with any other practice) as the work of an individual, if we can step aside and re-examine what curation might be in a collaborative social model (such as the one presented to us by new digital communication models, but also by such ancient examples of the profession), where cultural dominants are not necessarily related to the acts of one specific individual, then we can start to think about the World Wide Web and the curatorial models that exist within it from an entirely new perspective that will allow us to identify and define curatorial acts more easily as they perform themselves in the present.

THE CONTEMPORARY CONCEPT OF CURATION AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE MUSEUM

Although this evidence may suggest that there could be roots to curatorial practices in ancient cultures, this area of research remains under-explored within museum studies and Curatorial Practice discourses.⁵ Within contemporary and modern museum studies, such origins are rarely considered as significant to the development of the modern public museum structure. The following review describes the development of museums and Museum Studies in an attempt to understand the way contemporary discourses define the role of the curator and the institution of the museum within its internal structure and development.⁶ It is not an attempt to fully encompass the history of museum practices and their intricate relationship with systems of knowledge production and education but to set the historical and theoretical backdrop upon which curation as a profession and as an academic division is interpreted. Therefore, I will concentrate here more specifically on the

⁵ While this research revolves around the notion of *the curatorial* and how this abstract term may allow us to expand the definitions and manifestations of Curatorial Practice, this short introduction to a possible history of Curatorial Practice beyond that of the modern museum is suggested as a new potential area of research, which I hope to take further in the future. At the same time, the *Naumburg Cathedral* case study (Appendix 2), offers a glimpse at a possible curatorial interpretation of displays in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance to support the idea of re-examining religious displays and the curatorial agency which has been invested in them. This is in order to further complicate and understand the role of the curator in cultural and educational constructs.

⁶ The review here revolves mostly around the history of museum practices in the UK. However, the processes being described are also relevant to the development of Museum Studies as a Western European movement that had started in the late-17th and early-18th century. This is because Britain had a seminal part in the development of Museum Studies and the advent of public museums as site for learning and mass education. Based on the collection of artefacts, the early development of archaeological sciences, which also could be said to have originated in the UK, was one of the reasons for the fast construction of museum spaces during the 19th century as statutory institutions that sought to preserve and study archaeological evidence.

development of the public collection and the public museum, and the criticism that it received, changing its prospective roles in society.

The development of the museum is deeply connected with the enlightenment model of knowledge that governed much of the dominant ideology of the 1800s, rooted in the humanistic views of the Renaissance. With the development of such an ideology, the cultural world ceases to be a religious one and becomes a space of ideas, discourse and debate. With the influence of humanistic Renaissance traditions, the gradual decline of the church and the increasing prominence of scientific thought, the material world was transformed into an object of knowledge that asked for analysis and classification, processes that are guided by reason and intellect.

The growth of wealth as well as the establishment of academic systems of education in the eighteenth century produced a concomitant expansion in the growth of the collectables market and, consequently, further advanced public exhibitions and museums (McClellan, 2003, p. 4). By the mid-18th century, art academies sponsored regular exhibitions of their members' work, the best known being the *Salon* in Paris (from 1737) and the Royal Academy exhibitions in London (1768) (Bann, 2003, in McClellan, 2003). Similarly to libraries, museum collections were seen as valuable sources for natural and cultural research and had formed an integral part of the early development of academic institutions (Bennett, 1995). As such, museums were secluded from the reach of the general public, and reserved for higher classes who had access to educational platforms.

Within the context of the development of museums during the 19th century, it was Matthew Arnold, one of the first advocates of the museum as a model for institutional development that offered a direct articulation of the public museum ethos, who suggested that religious institutions should be replaced with statutory, public institutions of knowledge (McClellan, 2003, p. 8). With the further development of enlightenment models and political and social philosophies, within which the first national movements can be traced, the public museum was seen as an example for the development of new governmental relations to culture, in which works of art as well as artefacts are viewed as instruments that can transform public identity and alter their behaviours (Bennett, 1995, pp. 3-6). In this context, author James Silk Buckingham was one of the first to introduce the conception of culture's role in civilizing the population as a whole into the practical agendas of reforming politics in early Victorian England. (Bennett, 1995, pp. 3-6).

However, the stratified society of Victorian England stood in contradiction to the ethos of the nation state. Museums and exhibitions were not widely accessible to the

general public in much of the early development of the museum as an agent in the formation of statutory identity. This is because art, as well as collectable items, were often seen as badges of privilege. The most notable critics who sought to change such agendas and encourage a blurring of class distinctions through the opening of the museums to the general public were Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin, who advocated the role of the museum in developing the ethos of the state, educating the masses and developing new designs (McClellan, 2003, p. 13).

Ruskin and Matthews were part of a movement calling for art to cease to function as a marker of class and demanded greater public access to artefacts. By the mid-19th century, museums were opened to the general public as educational platforms. However, museums were heavily criticized for their methodologies. With the opening of The Victoria & Albert Museum in London to the general public in 1851, it became clear that permitting a wider audience did not mean the knowledge that is embodied within these collections was accessible to everyone (McClellan, 2003 and Knell, 2007).

In this context, logician and economist William Stanley Jevons expressed his doubts about the utility of museums, owing to the failure to make them comprehensible and appealing to the broad public. Jevons suggested a differentiation between public galleries, featuring highlights from a museum or an academy's collection to be presented in a more containable form and made accessible to the general public, and research collections and exhibitions, containing everything else for the use of students and scholars (McClellan, 2003, p. 14-15). This can be seen as the first model for the temporary exhibition.

Indeed, as Donald Preziosi suggests in his article *Art History and Museology: Rendering the Visible Legible*, it seems that the modern notion of the museum, the nation state and the modern notion of culture arose together. The museum's function was to provide a space within the nation or community, whose unity and autonomy predicted and depicted the unity of the nation (Macdonald, 2011, p. 50).

THE FIRST MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS AND MUSEUM CRITIQUE

Traditionally, museum employees were scholars, specializing in various fields of knowledge that were represented through a variety of collections (Macdonald, 2011, pp. 414-415). The profession of Museum Manager emerged in the 18th and 19th century, when wealthy collectors began to hire professional academics to manage their collections, as sustainable resources of knowledge and monetary value (Macdonald, 2011, p. 415). This moment is often identified with the emergence of the

professional curator, and this leads to the definition of the profession in our current era.

In the early development of the public museum, such scholar-curators made up the whole of the museums' professional staffing (Macdonald, 2011, pp. 415-416), hence there was no apparent distinction in this historical narrative between the curator and other professionals in the field, such as registrars, professionals in charge of preservation and restoration, museum education staff and other professionals who were part of the museum's operations; at least, within the texts that tell the history of Museum Studies which are cited here, other professionals, are not mentioned, and the curator seem to have the responsibility of managing all museum operations.

As scholars – descendants of scientific, academic thought – the early professionals whom we can retrospectively identify as 'curators' saw order and classification as the core of their curatorial activity. Toward the end of the 19th century, it was quite common for the museum's early historians to highlight its order and rationality through comparison with the jumbled incongruity that characterized the 'curiosity rooms' which were prevalent during the 16th and 17th century and were seen as possible ancestors of the museum show (Bennett, 1995).

I would argue that this contrast that has been specifically drawn between curatorial methods in different eras might point to the fact that the shift between the two modes of arrangement was one of ideology, not of essence to the profession's motivation and goals. The museum construct as an institution of modern classification, categorization and hierarchical order, then, was much influenced by the contemporary imaginaries of the time.

With the need that was first recognized in the Victorian era to develop consistent standards of classification and display, and to discriminate between primary objects for public consumption and secondary objects of interest to scholars, the formation of national and international museum associations and the emergence of a professional identity for museum curators emerged (Bann, 2003, in McClellan, 2003, p.21).

A community of curators was born, specializing according to medium (Marstine, 2006). Here, one can identify the origin of the hierarchies that are prevalent within the profession today. I would argue, therefore, that the division of curators via area of scholarship is related to the Enlightenment model of knowledge production. The history of museum practices suggests that such hierarchies are very much related to ideological constructs, rather than to the motivations and aims of the profession, which are rarely discussed in the discourse of 19th-century museum practice.

Despite this image of the museum as a public institution, advancing the education of the people and serving the ideologies of the time, the institution (and within it, its practitioners) did not develop without further criticism. The display of objects in vast exhibition halls, often under vitrines, in a classified, repetitive manner, seems to have stultified magnificent art pieces and other artefacts. This kind of criticism recurs through the development of museum's history and is the most notable catalyst in the development of alternative display and exhibition organization.

Such claims become increasingly prevalent near the end of the 19th century, being concurrent with the development of philosophical, economic and cultural theories, most notably theories by scholars such as Hegel and Marx. The proliferation of new political theories had reawakened interest in the history of the museum as a social power construct. (Sherman, 2003, 127-129).

THE POWER OF EXHIBITIONS

By the beginning of the 20th century, the power of the museum and its exhibitions in the development of cultural and statutory identity, marked the stabilization of industrial urban culture, which sought a unified cultural and identity model. It had a major role in supporting the colonial policy of the late-19th and early-20th century. Exhibitions that represented new findings from recent explorations and voyages, the discovery of new cultures, which had been positioned as inferior to Western civilization, had supported the identification of the public with the premise of the leaders of the time. The museum became a site of mass public interest, sharing the achievements of the nation.

One of the prime examples for such an ethos of exhibitions is probably the *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations*, for which a special architectonic structure known as the Crystal Palace was built (1851). This exhibition was a grand majestic demonstration of the importance of the industrial revolution. With hundreds of nations represented, the Great Exhibition functioned as a miniature version of the world, presenting the latest technological achievements, positioning Britain at its intellectual centre. Tony Bennett, in 'The Exhibition Complex', offers a startling analysis of the Great Exhibition's architecture and design as a means of '*simultaneously ordering objects for public inspection and ordering the public that inspected*' (Bennett, in: Greenberg, Ferguson, & Narine, 1996, p. 83), exemplifying the role of such buildings and expositions in power and surveillance systems that regulate and control public movement.

The proliferation of exhibitions demonstrated the efficiency of such methods in directing public opinion and establishing new modes of identity. Such techniques were widely used during the 19th century and I would argue that they formed a prominent communication model until the middle of the 20th century⁷. They are depicted by Bennett as well-oiled propaganda machines, interrupted only by the invention of radio, television and the mass broadcasted message.⁸ Their increasing popularity, attracting millions of people, can be read as a form of mass broadcasting system that had a seminal role in delivering the 'news' to the people. The success of exhibitions also reinforced the power of art as a political tool, and in the period between the two world wars, the position of art exhibitions in the political and ideological struggles became central.

Bruce Altshuler's *Avant Garde in Exhibitions* (Altshuler, 1998) demonstrates the centrality of exhibitions in the political struggles of the time, through the collision between three main exhibitions that had been organized before and during the Second World War. *The Exhibition of Degenerate Art* (1937) was one of a number exhibitions organized by the Nazi party as an exposition of everything that could be degenerate about culture while positioning the Neo-Nationalistic view in contrast to such moral discrepancy. As a form of response, the *First Papers of Surrealism* and the *Art of This Century*, both of which opened in New York in 1942, sought to position the same avant-garde practices at the centre of artistic development and cultural liberalism and advancement. The cultural and ideological discourse that is portrayed in the organization of such exhibitions, demonstrates how such communication mechanisms had worked to stabilize public identities.

Such exploitation of the power of display, the format of the exhibition and the authority of the museum as a base for knowledge and scientific thought had brought

⁷ One example that could demonstrate this in relations to the 20th century and the positioning of modern art at the centre of cultural life is the establishment of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the work carried by art historian and curator Alfred Barr. Barr's project sought to represent modern art and create a permanent collection of modern work, a premise that was viewed with much criticism at the time due to the fact the 'modern' art, as its name suggests, was not established yet as a separate category. Barr's solo retrospective exhibition of artists such as Van Gogh, Cezanne and Picasso repositioned those artists at the centre of art-discourses and can be seen, in many ways, as precursors to art history's re-telling of these artists' careers. Though Barr was appointed the curator of MOMA in 1929, his can be seen as a precursor to the construction of contemporary art collections and museums internationally, a tendency which grew after the Second World War. Furthermore, his influence, to some extent, allowed the proliferation of Modern Art exhibitions during the Second World War. Those as it will be noted, have had significance in constructing identities and cultural dominants facing opposing ideological narratives. In many ways, Barr's work demonstrates the power exhibitions had in reconstructing priorities in the art-world.

⁸ Bennett references the millions of visitors that have visited each of the aforementioned exhibitions. This might support the suggestion that the exhibition was a form of mass media. It places the exhibition model at the centre of political power constructs and communication models of the time. I would argue that, if we think of the curator's role within, and interpretation of, the exhibition as a mass media method, we can draw some similar conclusions about curators and their function in contemporary mass media production.

further resentment towards the museum as an institution, and the criticisms that began with the proliferation of museums in the 18th and 19th century developed in the first half of the 20th century, during and after the two world wars.

MICHEL FOUCAULT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW MUSEOLOGY

The discourse of the museum as a market-driven industry has been shaped by Marxist theory, which looks critically at the economic and social foundations of culture. The writings of Michel Foucault – more specifically, his books *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969 and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1977 – provided a fertile foundation for re-examining museum history and ideological constructs. Foucault identified three distinct epistemic systems of knowledge created by ruptures in the economic, social, cultural, political, scientific and theological status quo. These epistemes – Renaissance, Classical and Modern – shaped the formation and identity of institutions.

Since the 1970s, and with the shifting ideological dominants that sought to criticize the modernist ethos stipulated by the nation state and on which the public museum had been constructed, the museum world has gone through radical changes. These changes can be characterized through the prisms and divisions offered by post-modern studies; namely, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and gender studies.

Rhiannon Mason, in her review of the relationship between cultural theory and Museum Studies (Mason in: Macdonald, 2006 pp.17-33) uses the term ‘New Museology’ for the branch of Museum Studies concerned with those ideas central to cultural theory. This theory involves the analysis of culture in its broadest sense - from culture as a way of life to culture as the result of aesthetic practices. Here, museums are thought of as producers of socio-cultural knowledge.

New Museology, naturally, tends to criticize traditional Museum Studies and seeks to position itself as a self-reflexive system, deeply concerned with the ethical responsibilities that museums have towards their audiences, and those communities which they represent, both in public collections and in displays.⁹ Whilst New Museology is a theoretical movement, the practicalities of the profession often position museum-curators in difficult situations where the public interest needs to be weighed against capital power and the survival of the museum as a public institution. This is a prevalent topic in current Museum Studies, which attempts to reconcile the

⁹This is evident in the vast literature that came out of the New Museology (in its other name: New Approaches to Museum Studies) and the topics around which it revolves. The ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, which clearly identifies and regulates such responsibility, may be seen as further evidence of the application of such criticism in the field.

museum's ethical demands with the economic restrictions and local governmental demands that inevitably shape the way museums operate. During the late 1970s and early 80s, New Museology developed within the ICOM (International Council of Museums). Peter David describes the activity of the ICOM and the development of New Museology as the '*radical reassessment of the roles of museums in society*'. The ICOM has since stipulated a Code of Ethics for Museum Practice, which is being updated through periodical professional conferences, thus providing a practice-based aspect that promises the implementation of New Museology's critical thought in the activities of museums internationally.

Predominant changes in Museum Approach to the 'Other' within New Museology Models

One tendency that can be marked with the advent of New Museology is a renewed interest in the visitor as a subject and agent.¹⁰ Such tendencies were influenced by theoretical and literary discourses in both theatre and art, which sought the active participation of audiences in the production of meaning. Such discourses include Bertolt Brecht's notion of *Epic Theatre*, which gave primacy to the viewer's self-rationalization in the course of theatrical action. In parallel, the development of minimalist art, performance art, and neo-Dada movements, which included instructional art, promoted the same idea, placing the viewer as an active agent in the construction of a piece's meaning.

Such ideas also infiltrated the museum and encouraged accessibility policies. Education departments were born and the museum gradually recovered; to some extent, it is still recovering from its history as a private educational institution and its development as a propagator of colonial identity. According to Ross Parry's analysis of museum development in *Recoding the Museum* (2004), the movement towards a more visitor-centred ethos can be seen as entailing a corresponding shift in the identity of the museum professional, from 'legislator' to 'interpreter' of cultural meaning.

New museum theory attempts to provide a case for a genuine cross-cultural exchange. According to New Museology, the decisions that museum workers make reflect underlying value systems that are encoded in institutional narratives. Museums are a social technology, an "invention" that packages culture for consumption. It is the curator's job to deconstruct this packaging so that s/he can be critical in deciding what is made explicit and what remains invisible.

¹⁰ The notion of 'agency' will be developed and defined towards the end of this chapter.

The history of the museum as a propagator of racist tendencies is being carefully examined, not only within the way in which museums present their artefacts, but also in the way in which they collect artefacts and organise their collections. The post-colonial criticism of museums (as it has been demonstrated by Greenberg, Ferguson and Narine in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, 1996) is one of the central poles of new museum methodologies that are encapsulated within the ICOM Code of Ethics for museums.¹¹ It stipulates sensitive approaches to native cultures, and a few examples are given in *New Museology Literature* for the advancement of egalitarian and non-condescending methods of presenting the 'other', the success of such efforts can be contested, however the efforts and discourses reflect a growing awareness to such topics.¹²

In the last several decades of the 20th century, the museum field of research, which had been modelled on the grounds of a male-dominant heritage,¹³ became more open to feminine voices, firstly with the inclusion of women-artists in art exhibitions and later with the acceptance of female curators into the field. Kay Deepwell, in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, traces the development of early feminist curatorial practices and strategies during the 1970s, demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between feminist art practitioners, feminist art historians and feminist curatorial practitioners. In her view, modernist definitions of Curatorial Practice, linking arts management, knowledge of art history and close collaborations with artists, are heavily dominated by male figures and until the 1960s, women's work constituted a marginal part of museum displays. Since the 1970s, however, feminist scholars have been analysing art history and museums as both ideological and gendered in their construction and operation. Their research, which has often been directly critical of museum displays, opened up the discourse around gender politics within museum practice and allowed the inclusion of other voices in art and cultural representation (Deepwell, 2006).

¹¹ The code stipulates that one of the six prime roles of museums is to '*work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serve*' (ICOM, Revised 2006, p. 3).

¹² One book specifically preoccupied with such examples is *Museum and Source Communities* (Peers & Brown, 2003). A more elaborate review of the methodologies and operational role of museums in the construction of communal identity and the social space will be presented in Chapter 4.

¹³ As with all institutions of knowledge production, the inclusion of women within educational and governmental systems, within which the museum was included, was a later innovation that owes much of its advancement to the radical feminist revolution of the 1970s. I would suggest that the male dominance of the field impacted the way its history was written and that one cannot assess the history of Curatorial Practice in a genuine manner without taking into account the role of women within communication models. Elinor Carmi's ongoing research into the definitions of spam in culture refers to such a distinction in the relationship between male-dominated ideologies and the position of women within communication systems, technologies and networks.

Since the end of the 1980s, Foucault's ideas have been particularly influential in Museum Studies. His study encompasses a rethinking of the relationship between power and knowledge, the status of truth, the politics of sexuality and subjectivity, and the way that histories are written. Many of his ideas, including those regarding knowledge and disciplinary power, have been applied to the study of public museums. The introduction of Foucault to Museum Studies has also brought museums to the attention of a much wider Cultural Studies audience (Mason, 2006, 22-24), reaffirming the position of museums and collections in research and cultural production.

BREAKING FROM THE INSTITUTION: INDEPENDENT CURATORIAL PRACTICES

At a certain point in the middle of the 20th century, with the pioneering steps of curators such as Harald Szeemann and Walter Hopps, who have started an independent career as exhibition organizers, a split can be recognized within curating as a field. This split has drawn a line between what is now called "Museum Studies" and what I refer to as "Curatorial Practice". Those two scholarly branches are distinct from one another in a manner similar to two different disciplines: they form two different spheres of theoretical references, including distinct idiosyncratic discourses and a professionalized language. They have different conferences, different publications, different venues for their activity, and different circles of connoisseurs. They are even taught as separate professions and in separate academic divisions.¹⁴

Museum Studies looks at the role of the curator from within the history of the institution - most notably, that of the museum. It is concerned with a diverse set of fields: anthropology, natural history, science, art and more. Curatorial Practice is concerned mainly with the field of art; specifically, contemporary art. The reason for this split and the preoccupation of Curatorial Practice mainly with contemporary art has historical, ideological and economic reasons.

Historically, curators such as Szeemann and Hopps, who formed the first generation of independent curators in the late-1960s and early-1970s, have turned to

¹⁴ Within academia today, there is a clear distinction between 'museology' or 'Museum Studies' and 'Curatorial Practice', which usually refers to the curation of contemporary art and is usually centred on independent curating rather than working within institutions. "Museum Studies" departments, however, specialize in understanding the institution of the museum specifically. For example, a comparison can be made between the Royal College or Goldsmith's curatorial programmes, and Birkbeck or UCL Museum Studies programmes in the UK. The proliferation of Curatorial Practice Programmes across the world, which centre around independent curating of contemporary art, has been discussed greatly in recent discourse, notably in Simon O'Sullivan's *Curating and the Educational Turn*. One of the pioneering groups to establish programmes which specialize in independent contemporary art curating, which is a younger discipline in comparison to museology, is the ICI (Independent Curators International), the first programme having been established in 1975.

independent careers because they found no way of expressing themselves within the confines of the institution. Although both have run and curated museums, they have expressed in a number of interviews¹⁵ their discomfort within such environment. They indicated that they have chosen an independent career mainly because they were more interested in certain aspects of their jobs that involved dialogue with artists, experimentation with art platforms and exhibition making.

They were less interested in their roles as managers and representatives of the museum: its collection, its obligation to answer to statutory and municipal authorities and its ideological structure. They therefore looked for a way to break from the institution of the museum and to acquire more freedom in the way they correspond with the artists they choose to represent. They have seen a necessity in clearing a path for curation as an independent practice worth investigating in itself.

Szeemann and Hopps were mainly interested in the contemporary art of their time, and it can be surmised that another reason they sought independence was the nature of the works they presented. An understanding of the nature of those artworks, and their resistance to traditional aspects of artistic practice and evaluation, led them to realize that a different context is necessary to be able to convey their meaning. Indeed, their call for independence has greatly influenced the way we understand, conceive and talk about the art of their time, as well as contemporary art since. Using the exhibition as an independent form that is not necessarily attached to ideological institutions led to a freedom that is manifested in their curatorial projects¹⁶ and marked a growing awareness of the exhibition as a central agent in the construction of art history, the art market and the reading of artworks. Historically speaking, Curatorial Practice has simply continued with presenting contemporary art and has gradually constructed a separate and independent discourse, often looking back at its short history, whose starting point was the "independence day" of the curator.

The use of the term "independence day" is a symbolic one, and might lead to the ideological root of the split between Curatorial Practice and Museum Studies. As has been demonstrated in this review, museums, in the late-19th century and early-20th century, have been the institutions most identified with the ideology of imperialism,

¹⁵ In: Carin Kuoni (ed), *Words of Wisdom: A Curator's Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art*, ICI, New York, 2001 (Szeeman in interview: pp 167-168); Hans Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, JPR Ringier & Les Presses du Reel, 2009 (Hopps in interview pp 10-11; Szeemann in interview pp. 81-82).

¹⁶ Harald Szeeman's exhibition 'When Attitudes Become Form' (1968) and his organization of *Documenta 5* (1972), were transformative moments in understanding exhibition design as a creative practice in and of itself. Similarly, Walter Hopps' thematic exhibitions, which accurately reflected the emerging tendencies of the art of his time, such as *New Painting of Common Objects* at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1962, became curatorial models that marked the potential of the profession in an independent field. Hopps' experimental exhibition *Thirty-Six Hours*, at MOTA (the Museum of Temporary Art), 1978, was a pioneering, self-critical move that opened up a discussion on curatorial choice, curatorial authority and the role of the curator.

the establishment of the nation state and the construction of (sometimes fictive) historical narratives that served the interests of those in power, promoting a certain class, certain economic interests¹⁷, certain races¹⁸ and social orders. Claiming independence from the institution of the museum was a meaningful and ideological claim for alternative narratives to be heard. It was a way of establishing alternative frameworks for such voices that were not heard in the didactic exhibition hall; it was a renewed call for the autonomy of art, restoring the strength and importance of artistic movements.¹⁹ This call for the independence and autonomy of art can thus be seen as embedded in the light of modernist notions of art criticism, most notably those of Greenberg and Fried,²⁰ even though the first independent curators would not necessarily see themselves acting from a modernist motivation.

The focus of Curatorial Practice mainly on contemporary art might also be linked to economic interests. Independent Curatorial Practice, detached from statutory funding, needed to find means of financing the organization of exhibitions and events.²¹ Independent curators who sought to break from the institution needed to choose those fields that would produce revenue, either financial or social. Once Curatorial Practice became independent of the public funds dedicated to museums, it became necessarily dependent on private financial means. As such, curators might have

¹⁷ The history of museums' development as portraying the history of class hierarchies can be read in the policy of opening museums as public spaces to the working class, such as the British Museum and The South Kensington Museum in the 19th century. Historical records provide evidence that such criteria were openly discussed as a means of stabilizing class distinctions. (Greenberg, Ferguson, & Nairne, 2005, p. 67).

¹⁸ Anthropology exhibitions of the 19th century are known to have depicted a certain racial order according to theories of evolution (Greenberg, Ferguson, & Nairne, 2005, pp. 71-73). However, such discourses are also part of anthropological, archaeological and historical museums to this day; for example The British Museum display, the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, where remains of human bodies as well as objects sacred to the cultures represented are kept as curiosities, suggesting an imperialistic and patronizing look at other cultures.

¹⁹ Starting from the mid-20th century, alternative museums that represent different perspectives on historical narratives have been established, such as Canada Museum for Native American Cultures, and Harlem Museum (representing the local community's heritage, and, specifically, black heritage). Museums have also started working in closer collaboration both with their geographical communities and with other communities they represent (The New Museum in New York for example, and, recently, The Haifa Museum of Art and Bet Hagefen Gallery in Haifa).

²⁰ Clement Greenberg (1909-1974) was a renowned art critic during the first half of the 20th century who set the course for the modernist evaluation of art practices through the stabilization of a formal analysis (rather than an iconographic analysis) to artworks. He was a propagator of Adorno's notion of the 'autonomy of the art work' and saw the separation between art and politics as crucial. Michael Fried (b. 1939) is seen as the successor of Greenberg, especially in his renowned article *Art and Objecthood* (1967), within which he criticises the minimalist movement's affiliation with the theory of Gestalt and proclaims their work to be 'theatrical'. I mention him here specifically because Szeemann, especially with his renowned exhibition, *when attitudes become form* (1969), could be read as an agitated response to Fried's criticism of minimalist art. This is another way of exemplifying the way independent Curatorial Practice sought to break from institutions and the ideologies they represent.

²¹ For example, Harald Szeemann, when organizing his exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* in 1969, was financed by Phillip Morris, cigarette producer. Some criticized Szeemann for his funding sources as conflicting with the ethical role of art and curation. However, nowadays, there are an abundance of examples; every exhibition at a museum is funded by external organizations and businesses. The history of the Tate is also entangled with economic currency. In Israel, the latest "Fresh Paint" Contemporary Israeli Art Fair, which opened in May 2012, was partially funded by Google.

acquired a greater freedom of expression - but were, and still are, restricted to models of popularity.²²

Contemporary art has the potential to produce revenue – it is an area of financial investment²³ and is also proven to serve as a great attractor of social attention. Whether it is liked or despised, historical examples²⁴ show that contemporary art has the ability to attract attention; perhaps more than any other field of knowledge and for a relatively lower price in comparison to the presentation of masterpieces.

For these various reasons, the split that occurred between Museum Studies and Curatorial Practice has also signified a renewed separation between art and other divisions of knowledge. Curatorial Practice nowadays is mainly conceived as the practice of organizing contemporary art exhibitions, fairs and events.

THE SHORT HISTORY OF CURATORIAL PRACTICE

In a way, Curatorial Practice, detaching itself from the institution of the museum, can be said to have attached itself to the institution of art in order to be able to define itself in relation to a different set of concerns. This attachment to the art field had allowed curating to start on a self-investigative journey into the role, purpose, and aspirations of curating.

This journey towards a possible history of curating as an independent profession which is not necessarily attached to the institution of the museum was marked by a number of professionals in the art field and by art historians. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a discourse to re-position the history of art in the light of the history of exhibition-making emerged. Two central publications that have marked their influence on curatorial thought are Bruce Altshuler's *The Avant Garde in Exhibitions* (1994) and Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Narine's *Thinking about Exhibitions* (1996). These important research works closely examine exhibitions as historical events or historical momentums which influenced the course and definition of art history. These two books have set the tone for discussing curating and its

²² Contemporary art projects have often been criticized for their entertaining nature as well as their close proximity with financial markets. Much criticism has been published around the works of Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Project* (2003) and Carsten Höller's *Test Site* (2007) at Tate Modern. There is a wide selection of texts on the subject. Examples include: Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (2004); *High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* (2001); Paul Wood, 'Commodity', in: *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Nelson and Shiff (1996).

²³ See, for instance, the enormous success of art-fairs such as Art Basel and Frieze, as well as the establishment of public companies trading art, such as the V22 collection.

²⁴ About the success of exhibitions in establishing social and financial currency and their role in the economics of art, see Altshuler (1998). The book follows the success of events circling contemporary art and its success in attracting attention and creating monetary and social revenue for both the artists represented and those who represented them.

relation to art practice, entangling the definition of art with the works of curators from the 19th century until contemporary times.

These two books are part of a proliferation of texts that explore the role of curators in the definition of art. Marked by the separation of curating from the museum, independent curators who had been inspired by the freedom suggested by their independence started to examine their relationship with art practices critically and take responsibility for their positions within this field.

Curatorial Practice theory is therefore already a self-critical, self-aware discourse that is hesitant in suggesting robust criteria for the practice. Being 'born' in a post-constructivist, post-modern, and post-critical era, writers of curatorial discourses have the advantage of being cautious in creating their own history and it is probably the first discourse that sought, in the writing of itself, to leave spaces within it for insertions and change; it is marked by a form of self-suspicion and doubt.²⁵ Hence, any account of curatorial history is a temporary sketch in the book of our collective memory and, furthermore, it attempts to remain this way, as does the account offered here through a number of seminal references which are currently, but not irrevocably, central to the definition of the field, at least within the circuit of Western-European thought.

In *A Brief History of Curating* (2008), Hans Ulrich Obrist traces the history and theory of Curatorial Practice as it is manifested through a series of long and detailed interviews with practitioners in the field,²⁶ following, through their responses, a history of influences and seminal figures that informed curatorial thought and practice. The influences are extremely diverse, and what the interviews expose is an intricate interdependence between art and Curatorial Practice. In the preface to Obrist's book, Christophe Cherix, attempts to define his understanding of Curatorial Practice: "*If the modern figure of the art critique has been well recognized since Diderot and Baudelaire, the curator's true raison d'être remains largely undefined. No real methodology or clear legacy stands out in spite of today's proliferation of courses in curatorial studies.*" (Obrist, 2009, p. 6), concluding that the history and theory of Curatorial Practice is deeply involved with the history and theory of art.

²⁵ Hesitant rhetoric is apparent in the form of the literary works that theorize Curatorial Practice; for example, the interview, the dialogue and notes from conferences and meetings are predominant in writing curating's history (as it will be discussed shortly). Anthologies of essays are a prevalent form, and in them, many contradicting approaches are often included, so to deny any standardized ideological construct for curating.

²⁶ Obrist had undertaken a long-term process of interviewing curators as a means of tracing the history and theory of Curatorial Practice. The interviews appear in a series of books published under the meta-title: *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation. A Short History of Curating* reproduces some of the interviews he held with the central and influential figures that were mentioned repeatedly when conversing with curators.

Generally speaking, Obrist's book positions curators in opposition 'the institution' – as an umbrella word which symbolises constraints, intolerance and rigid judgement criteria, and usually identified with modernist movements. Indeed, through the reading of Obrist's book, one gets the impression that, while the methodologies and forms of Curatorial Practice are not well defined, there is an ideological undercurrent which informs itself as the ethics of Curatorial Practice. Such ethics can be defined broadly by values such as inclusion, flexibility, intercultural exchange and transference between different times and spaces. As is expressed by Walter Hopps' hopes for the future of curating, which he shares in his interview with Obrist: *'I really believe – and obviously hope for – radical or arbitrary presentations, where cross-cultural and cross-temporal considerations are extreme, out of all the artefacts that we have... where special presentations can jump around in time and space, in ways we just don't do now'* (Obrist, 2009, p. 31)

Similarly, Carolee Thea's *Foci: Interviews with Ten International Curators* (2001) and *On Curating: Interviews with Ten International Curators* (2009) present a series of conversations with curators who are also organizers of international art events and art biennials. For her, the art historian attempts to interpret the artwork for a potential viewer from the position of an individual standing in front of one single artwork.²⁷ Curators, rather, are involved in translating the artwork by putting it in a context of other works and other documents for a public to interpret the work for themselves. In the introduction to *On Curating*, Thea also positions the curator in relation to changes in art practices and questions the curator's role in constructions of global markets. For her, one of the urgent questions for Curatorial Practice is the proliferating approach to art objects as commodities, while possibly undermining the social role of art in society. Here again, she references one of the most common arguments in thinking about the curator's responsibility to the integrity of art practices. This point of view correlates well with the Marxist ideology, which is prevalent in historical and critical accounts of post-modernist art and its relation to the rise of capitalist ideologies and consumerism.

Thea's books recognize a diverse set of international characters, positioned as seminal figures in the field, providing what one could perceive as a 'global' image of Curatorial Practice. In her interviews with Rirkrit Tiravanija, Massimiliano Gioni, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Okwui Enwezor, Edward Saïd and Pi Li, a dynamic scene of curators is imagined, where the curator functions as a multi-purpose, international, cultural vagabond, whose career is directed by the opportunities that present

²⁷ This view is also implicated by Barry Schwabsky in his introduction to *Foci: Interviews with Ten International Curators* (Thea, 2001, p. 10)

themselves, which also provide the appropriate frameworks for the artworks they present. On one hand, through such an exploration, Thea opens up the definitions of Curatorial Practice. The image of the curator is altered, developing from that of an 'exhibition organizer' into a cultural producer, shedding light over many of the hidden, operational roles of curators and their involvement within the political field of the art market. On the other hand, this image of the international curator as a free agent, unattached to local understandings and definitions of art, only marks the way in which Western ideological viewpoints regarding art dominate the field. In this manner, the complexity of relationships between cultural practices and local imaginaries are disguised under this global self-image.

This strategy, of forming a history of curating through series of interviews which ostensibly express inclusion and plurality, is a prominent one in the field and, as demonstrated, has been adopted by more than one author. Other such accounts include the *The Producers: Contemporary Curators in Conversation* series, edited by Susan Hiller and Sarah Martin (1999-2006), documenting conversations with curators following the Baltic International Seminar at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Newcastle. Curiously, then, it seems that curators 'curate' their history. Within this logic, the interview can be seen as a fragmented and open method of recalling a history, similar to story-telling.

Within this 'curating of a history', one often forgets that there is still an element of curatorial choice implicit in these discourses – and this choice determines who is included and excluded from this history.²⁸ This is a moment where ideology steps in to define Curatorial Practice as an intellectual field. When reading the history and theory constructed around Curatorial Practice, one should keep in mind that it is written from a specific, post-modern and post-colonial ideological perspective. However, the position of such ideology at the core of the practice might obscure, as we shall see, its possible history and future.

In parallel to such historical accounts of Curatorial Practice, the same tendency exists in anthologies of articles that offer the insight of curators on their own profession.

Curating in the 21st Century, edited by Gavin Wade, is one of the first attempts to signify the challenges of Curatorial Practice as it is facing its own definition outside

²⁸ In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the history of Curatorial Practice as it is being written today not only disconnects curating from its roots within museum-based practices but also disconnects itself from an international scene. With all the post-modern and post-colonial awareness that underlines Curatorial Practices today and their critique of institutions, still rarely would one find that the history of curating is also inscribed by figures working outside of Europe. This note serves to remind the reader that the history of Curatorial Practice as it is presented here could be stretched not only across time, into the past and future, but also across space to include what the West would consider the peripheries of its activities.

the museum's borders. Wade identifies an increasing interest in the history of curating since the increasing use of non-gallery spaces as sites for exhibitions (Wade, 2000, p. 5). Going back to art practices in the 1960s and '70s that sought to escaped the framework of the museum or the gallery, he identifies a certain congruence between artistic and Curatorial Practice: artists then, have essentially become their own curators, and by the time independent curatorial practices started to develop, the territory of the curator was already quite unclear. This crisis of definitions, which complicates what could be conceived as the borders and responsibility of curators, will be examined in a closer manner in Chapter 3. (Wade, 2000, p. 19)

Other contributions in this book which may assist us in framing Curatorial Practice's self-definition include Teresa Gleadowe's article 'Curating in a Changing Climate' (Gleadowe, in Wade, 2000, p. 29) where she differentiates between the role of the curator as it has been perceived in the early 20th century and how it is perceived now. Gleadowe discusses the proliferation of the notion of the curator as producer/commissioner of art works, concomitant with site-specificity in the art of the late '80s and early '90s. Another point of discussion in Gleadowe's article is the art movement known as 'Institutional Critique': works like Andy Warhol's *Raid the Ice Box* (1970), Marcel Broodthaers' *Musee D'art Moderne, Department des Aigles* (1968-72) and Hans Haacke's Guggenheim Museum solo exhibition of 1971 (or, rather, its cancellation) had reframed the notion of the exhibition, critiquing the invisibility of certain artifacts due to their signification as culturally 'low' (Warhol), the influence of an artwork's history, fictional or real, on its social and economic value (Broodthaers) and the disguise that certain public cultural practices offer to illegitimate transactions (Haacke).

Those works underlined the ethical complexities of curatorial institutions and, within them, curators, and make evident some of the questions that concern curators to this day in the self-critical examination of their own projects' involvement with capital, value and the capitalist tendencies that are affirmed through them. Gleadowe concludes her article by defining what she finds central and most important for Curatorial Practice at the break of the 21st century; in her words, '*curating at its most effective embodies criticism, and criticism is rooted in historical understanding*' (Gleadowe, 2000, p. 38).

Further to this idea of the curator as a producer of artwork, one may also note the idea of a curator as a catalyst for art production. Hans Ulrich Obrist, in his article *Kraftwerk, Time Storage, Laboratory*, emphasizes the role of curators in providing the conditions for the production of artworks as meaningful processes of knowledge

production. For him, the exhibition space is a fluid and elastic space where the viewer is confronted with experiences and rehearsals of social situations, which he does not have the chance to rationalize or react to in the flow of everyday life. For Obrist, art museums should be fearless cultural pioneers devoting their attention to the cultivation of artists.

A similar approach is presented in Maria Lind's *Learning from Art and Artists*, where she questions the modes of Curatorial Practice of the time and criticizes the exhibition of close-ended objects without notice of the artistic and creative process, which often has more significance in contemporary art works. In her model, the curator should be accommodating, being open and flexible, listening to, and acknowledging, the needs of artists. She reinforces the definition of the curator not as a carer for objects but, rather, as a carer for artists, mentioning the difficulties artists face when they are commissioned to produce artworks but are not involved in the dialogue about their presentation within curatorial frameworks.

In *Ultracurating, The Holistic Nutrition for a Time Starved World*, Iliyana Nedkova offers a new model for Curatorial Practice, which 'rides the wave' of the capitalist model where it provides a service to philanthropists looking for their money to make a cultural and social impact. In her view, curators who are bound to public institutions are a dying breed and soon, the curator will function as an independent advisor for cultural investment. Her idea might be the broadest of all presented: it defines the 'nutrition' for such 'ultracurating' as money and suggests that one could certainly imagine such an 'ultracurator' in charge of different types of projects, specifically with the rise of community based and social engaged art practices. In her vision, the curator thus becomes a kind of a treasurer, bearing resemblance to the meaning of the word 'curator' in Hebrew.²⁹

'CURATOR' – TRACING THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD

Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating, edited by Steven Rand and Heather Kouris (2007), offers another collection of essays written by curators, who are encouraged to rethink the role of the curator and to attempt to define theoretical paths, pinpointing the guiding principles in their curatorial practices. In this book, articles by David Levi-Strauss and Kate Fowle trace the meaning of Curatorial Practice in the etymology of the word 'curator'³⁰.

²⁹ Curator in Hebrew, 'Otzer' (אוצר), derives from the word 'Otzar' (אוצר) – a treasure. In Hebrew, the meaning of the word curator, initially, is one that manages national cultural treasures.

³⁰ In *Kraftwerk, Time Storage, Laboratory* (2000), Obrist remarks that he assumes Curatorial Practice has a further history, which practised different modes of display. For him, Curatorial Practice suffers from

Levi-Strauss locates the earlier mention of the word in Roman times, where the curator was one who took care of a minor or a lunatic. This idea of the curator as 'care-taker' continues to resonate through history and both Levi-Strauss and Fowle trace the curator to the Middle Ages, where figures called 'curators' took care of goods distribution and the collection of taxes across the country; indeed, treasurers of a sort.

The idea of the 'care taker' is developed further in Levi-Strauss' essay, reinforcing both Lind's and Obrist's belief that curators become care-takers for artists. He explores the careers of Szeemann and Hopps as 'model curators' in order to trace the way in which such care-taking can be manifested. In this way, he highlights, firstly, the curator's responsibility of interpretation and criticality, referring back to the shared responsibility of curators and art critics in writing about art. Secondly, he discusses the curator's bureaucratic responsibility of taking care of operational processes to mediate between the artist and the institutions and, lastly, he speaks of the role of the curator as a mediator for audiences.

Kate Fowle, however, in 'Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today', chooses a different trajectory that follows the logic of the care-taker within the model of Szeemann's and Hopps' careers. For her, the curator, in his capacity within the institution of the museum or gallery, is a representative of governmental power relations. Whether the curator keeps her/his position within such a governmental or statutory institution, Curatorial Practice is always entangled with power; either that of a state, patron or a private company. In any interpretation of the word, Fowle suggests: *'it has hierarchical connotations – a curator is someone who presides over something – suggesting inherent relationship between care and control'* (Fowle, 2010, p. 26). Reading Foucault's *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961), she argues for a comparison between the function of a museum or a public gallery and that of mental hospital in the sense that they are concerned with controlling and governing, rather than presenting and preserving, culture. However, she notes a change with the independent careers of Szeemann and Hopps. For her, they are examples that process that curators can also become creators in their own right.

Boris Groys' 'The Curator as Iconoclast', (Groys, in: Rand & Kouris, 2007, pp. 46-54) is one of the first to suggest a full theory for the ontology of curating in relation to art. For Groys, the power relations that are suggested between curating and art are an inherent part of a struggle between two cultural tendencies in history: iconophilia

amnesia about its own history of curating. This notion of the amnesia will be returned to in a later text by Paul O'Neil, *The Curatorial Turn*, providing one of the motivations that propelled this research.

and iconoclasm. Groys presents those two movements in a dialectical struggle, which propelled the destruction and recreation of art throughout the ages, and through which the history of art had progressed. Iconophilia is defined here as the wish, usually of artists, to turn artworks into icons, objects of admiration and ritual; iconoclasm is defined as a movement within which the curator is located, which rejects the iconization of artworks, insisting on the intellectual, rather than the mystical value, of art.

Groys roots the curator-as-iconoclast in the French revolution, where artworks – which had reflected, and were saturated with, religious and status-based power – were stripped of this power by their display in ‘museums’ as objects. Thus the act of ‘display’, for Groys, is double-faced: on the one hand, displaying the work allows its elevation to the status of ‘art’ and renders it accessible. On the other hand, the curatorial act of display in the museum robs the artwork of its power as icon and demystifies it altogether.

For Groys, the act of art’s definition through display has been kidnapped from curators since the start of the 20th century, with avant-garde movements that sought to adopt iconoclast techniques in order to express their disappointment in art. For Groys, movements such as Dada martyred the artwork and tortured the canvas and the notion of art; these attempts, ironically, however, have also been turned into art-icons, defying their original purpose and meaning.

Eventually, Groys discusses the state of curating today, suggesting that the independent curator *‘is a radically secularized artist. He is an artist because he does everything artists do. But the independent curator is an artist who has lost the artist’s aura, one who no longer has magical powers at his disposal, who cannot endow objects with art’s status’* (Groys, 2010, p. 53). The curator’s purpose, in Groys’ mind, is this double abuse of the artwork because, for him, it is exactly this abuse of the artwork that renders the artwork visible.

There are a vast number of such publications discussing the development of Curatorial Practice. The discussions tend to repeat the main arguments in this review, with a few notable additions that have received a higher priority within the history and the theory of Curatorial Practice. Notably, *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance* (2007), edited by Judith Rugg and Michel Sedgwick, offers a selection of articles providing examples of curatorial strategies employed in order to cope with the increasing prominence of screen and time-based art. Within this book, Paul O’Neil’s article ‘The Curatorial Turn’ summarizes the curatorial discourse to that

point most effectively and concludes the aforementioned collision between the two practices as a whole: art on one side and curating on the other.

I reference Paul O'Neil as he had achieved a seminal position within the literature that revolves Curatorial Practice discourse. Just as in his article in the aforementioned book, O'Neil is known for his sharp ability in identifying 'turns', 'shifts' or themes that are of central concern to Curatorial Practice, and he has been the editor of a number of thematic collections of essays which attempt to collect the thoughts of different scholars, pinpointing the direction in which the discourse is going. His book *Curating Subjects* (2007) strives to shift the conversation from the individual narratives of curators and their own practices, instead reflecting on the field in terms of economic and political constructs. The essays in this book allow the unfolding of a more coherent ideology in which the subject is put at the centre of the equation. *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010) notes a certain tendency in Curatorial Practice to turn to didactic, instructional and educational strategies in the proliferation of what is termed a *discursive turn* in Curatorial Practice – a shift from visual aesthetics to discourse and dialogue, which provides audiences, with tools to become participants in the production of knowledge that is taking place within curatorial platforms.

While these essay collections are undoubtedly important in representing thoughts and in the collaborative effort to develop a theory of curating, they seem to be influenced by a feeling of urgency that encourages us to join in a race in the writing of history as it comes into being – a means of maintaining the sense of contemporaneity.³¹ Maybe this race is an echo of the prolific curatorial model of the thematic exhibition: clustering several forms of thought or objects under a loose title that suggests the contemporary concerns of a practice. Such a model contests the traditional, historical and linear model of the exhibition, to suggest a looser framework for the construction of narratives and seeking to assert its influence on art-historical movements.

At the same time that we are concerned with the contemporary condition of curating, few of these articles offer an insightful and deep elaboration of the roots, histories and motivations of Curatorial Practice and, in many cases, they ignore the origin of Curatorial Practice within the institution of the public museum. They seem to start a conversation or open up a field of thoughts but rarely do they achieve a coherent

³¹ This urgency and the notion of 'the contemporary', which can also be translated as 'the tyranny of the new' (Johnson, 2010 and Caruso, 1998), are debated issues in the field of contemporary art and Curatorial Practice. Here, one could mention the seminal work of Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary?' in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (2009). Also see the writings of Lauren Berlant – more specifically, 'The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics' (1999), within which she describes how, with the advent of the broadcasted image, we constantly feel we are living in a continuous historical moment in the present.

historical understanding; indeed, they are inspiring to read, but they cannot be said to provide the grounds for, a history or a theory of Curatorial Practice that could be useful beyond the concerns of their specific moment in time and in space.

It seems the difficulty in telling the history of curating, as well as constructing a coherent theory for the practice, derives from an apparent multiplicity within the practice itself. Curating occurs in many different contexts at the same time and there is also a wide array of other activities that can easily be termed part of Curatorial Practice – some of the discourses around this topic had already been reviewed in the introduction to this research.

Within the art field itself, curators work in diverse of institutions and are put in charge of private collections where their role is to locate the most valuable assets in the art market that will provide their owners with generous profits. On the other hand, curators are also in charge of public collections, managing cultural taste and current dominants through their choice of what will and will not be taken care of as a cultural and public asset. Curators work within private galleries, in charge of complex marketing mechanisms that involve the establishing of symbolic value through theorizing the meaning invested in objects and, at the same time, they work in public galleries and are deeply involved in community work and education. Beyond the art world, curators work in cultural organizations of different kinds and in different fields. When working within archaeology museums, natural history museums or science museums, they are in charge of operating systems that are no less complex than those of the art world, involved in disseminating scientific thought through outreach operations of many kinds.³² The conflict of interests and the ethical complexity is apparent within such diversity.

It is clear that a curator working at a public museum would not have the same goals, concerns and ways of operating as a curator working within a private collection. Moreover, the same curator who started his career at a public institution can easily find himself working for a private collector, often wearing more than one curatorial hat in any given moment. When putting all those functions together into one or two paragraphs, it becomes clear why there is so much scholarly debate about this profession, why it is so popular and why it generates such a confused array of definitions and concerns.

³² Just as art-curators, working as part of a museum team, are in charge of the management of public art collections, so curators of other museums are in charge of managing evidence, be it in archaeology, anthropology, the history of science or any other field, for that matter. They are involved in organizing exhibitions on relevant topics and have an influence on the information that education departments within the museum then disseminate to audiences.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the history of curating is written and referred to in such a fragmented manner. There is much charm to this kind of fragmentation, especially since the aesthetic criteria of our time attracts us to such collage puzzles, where the pieces do not necessarily fit and we, as readers of such histories, are asked to fill in the gaps with our own reading of what could possibly be the glue that gives the pieces coherence.

It is a stimulating aesthetic but it also implies a blurred and undetermined ethics. Each of these puzzle pieces has its own set of values to correspond with, determined by the momentary position one takes in the history of curating, for example, and so there is no real role to be undertaken or responsibility to bear when speaking of Curatorial Practice. Instead, a plurality of fragments persists, like a mirror shattered to a thousand pieces, each piece reflecting the whole world within the limits of its new shape. Indeed, a beautiful image. But, somehow, still unsatisfactory. There is something that does not feel comfortable in this shattered image of Curatorial Practice, probably because it is no longer easy to fit all those pieces into a whole, and there is therefore a moment of loss, or of amnesia, in Obrist and O'Neil's terminology. How can one bridge all these different positions curators take in society and put them under the same ethical framework? What should be our guiding principles? And how would a space for change, interpretation and self-enquiry still be maintained under such definitions?

I would like to suggest that contemporary curatorial forms are no different in their motivations and meanings from those of the museum structure; they are, in fact, only ideologically different. Just as the curatorial practices of early museum times propagated the dominant ideologies of the newly born idea of the nation state, so curatorial practices today propagate the ideas upon which post-modern culture is constructed. Therefore, the short history outlined here does not point to a fundamental change in Curatorial Practice but rather an ideological shift, which should, in turn, disappear under future social imaginaries.

SUGGESTING A PEACE TREATISE

Even though curators are still working within the museum, one can sense, through the reading of the texts reviewed above, an internal tension or resentment in the way curators work both within and outside these institutions. Such resentment would be a healthy, agonistic reaction to an institution which represents dominant ideologies and power relationships. However, with the development of post-colonial, feminist, gender, environmental and post-modern discourses within New Museology, museums

and their field of study have acquired a critical approach, constantly renewing the discussion around the ethics of representation and display. Therefore, it might be that the split between Curatorial Practice and Museum Studies has completed its role in creating a distance for self-criticality.

As a matter of fact, reading recent attempts in defining the role of the museum within the discourse of New Museology and recent discussions within Curatorial Practice as discussed above, it seems that these two fields are united in their concern with plurality, multi-layered presentation, engagement with communities, and means by which to de-construct historical narratives to create alternative paths in reading archives, historical data, theories and ideologies.

What Curatorial Practice could gain from Museum Studies as a theoretical and historical resource is multifaceted. Firstly, it could reconstruct a historical continuity, reaching back to the roots and development of curating as a practice. Secondly, as the museums' obligations include not only presentation but also research and forwarding knowledge (ICOM, 2006), Museum Studies has been engaged with scientific research methodologies that investigate not only the history of objects but also the relationship between audiences and displays. The treasure of vast data accumulated with such research offers answers to many of the questions raised in the theoretical discourse around Curatorial Practice and, I would suggest, would help any curator in establishing practice-based methodologies to develop his or her practice further.

Lastly, Museum Studies offer an expansion of Curatorial Practice beyond the one-dimensionality of discipline-based practice and offers a model for inter-disciplinary exchange. To give one example among many, with recent developments in Curatorial Practice discourse around "the educational turn" (O'Neill & Wilson, 2010), it is clear that Museum Studies could contribute to the understanding of what education might mean in the context of curating and exhibition making, and might offer ready-made solutions to some of the central questions concerning Curatorial Practice discourses.

On the other hand, Curatorial Practice discourses, offer museum practitioners an opportunity to see themselves as agents, and not as representatives of an institution, an approach that I argue, would assist in preserving the critical examination of the practice as a whole. Museum practitioners, too, could benefit from thinking of their histories beyond that of the modern notion of the museum, and could benefit from a more abstract array of definitions under which they could operate more freely. The merging of those two discourses together, I suggest, offers a richer data-base and potentialities to draw from, and a possibility of truly resurrecting curatorial memory.

This research, thus, has its roots in the intersection and juxtaposition of these disciplines, attempting to deepen the historical contexts in which Curatorial Practice can be examined. It therefore does not consider Curatorial Practice in the field of art and Museum Studies to be two separate disciplines.

THE NOTION OF *THE CURATORIAL*

As has been established, since curating is not perceived here as solely preoccupied with art, but seen as a general communication methodology that existed throughout history and within a vast array of technological models, *the curatorial* is offered here as a means of addressing concerns which are beyond the technological developments of modernism and, to some extent, early post-modernism, which position individual creative agency as well as objects at the centre of discussion.

In expanding the understanding of curating as a practice, the term 'the curatorial' has been introduced as a means of separating the operational aspects of curating from the aims of those operational faculties.. Maria Lind's 'The Curatorial' (Lind, 2010) is a starting point for researching this question. Lind asks whether we could think of Curatorial Practice independently, beyond its fields of operations: '*Can we speak of the curatorial beyond curating in the expanded field: as a multidimensional role that includes critique, editing, education and fundraising?*'³³ (Lind, 2010, p. 63). She defines *the curatorial* both as a loose methodology, applied by different people of different capacities, but also extends the term '*as a way of thinking in terms of interconnections*' (Lind, 2010, p. 63). To investigate a possible separation between 'curating' and 'the curatorial', she uses Chantal Mouffe's understanding of 'the political' (Mouffe, 2005): '*For Mouffe "politics" is the formal side of practices that reproduce certain orders. Seen this way, "curating" would be the technical modality - which we know from art institutions and independent projects - and "the curatorial" a more viral presence consisting of signification processes and relationships between objects, people, places, ideas and so forth, a presence that strives to create friction and push new ideas*' (Lind, 2010, p. 64).

³³ In many texts that define Curatorial Practice, there is an emphasis on the very practical and operational aspects of what the curator does, as if how the curator operates (his 'To Do' list), could actually describe what is happening in the curatorial process, the composition of space, or what is created when the exhibition is complete, in the encounter with the viewer and with the artists. This focus is on a peripheral aspect of curating and this, alongside the preoccupation (almost obsessive) with power constructs, politics and economics, is diverting discussion from what it means to be a curator, and towards underlining the problems with which Curatorial Practice is entangled, or how it can be defined in the confines of its criticism. It is this discussion that I am attempting to put aside in thinking about *the curatorial* in order to promote an alternative discussion about the experience of curating and the residue of this experience, or its affect.

In this separation between curating and *the curatorial*, Lind opens up fertile ground, shifting the focus from economic, political, social and other practical aspects through which Curatorial Practice is usually approached. This separation, it is important to note, does not deny or refuse those aspects of Curatorial Practice, rather, it allows curating – the action which is usually entangled in these fields of operation – to assume a more abstract *raison d'être*. In doing so, she calls for a reading of *the curatorial* as an ontology.³⁴ Following the rationale of Mouffe and, inevitably, Carl Schmitt (Schmitt, 2007), from whose definitions Mouffe draws, it can be said that Lind is claiming a process of purification³⁵ of the notion of *the curatorial*.

To define the idea of purification, we return to Schmidt himself. Charles E. Frye, in his review of Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*, explains:

'To Schmitt the political was not a subject matter (potentially every subject matter could become political), nor did it have any limits. "Political" as a word was freer, unbounded, and less specific than "politics" [...] Hence when he first characterized it, the political was made free from all bonds –from the state, or any other political organization or group, and from all other spheres of activity. All that he left was the distinction between friend and enemy [...] In the work of Carl Schmitt there blossomed a theory of politics that might well be described as "La politique pour la politique". Or, according to a similar and contemporary development in law, as a "pure theory of politics".' (Frye, 1966).

This, of course, resonates with other forms of modernist 'purification', like the call for art for art's sake – the purification of art.

Indeed, this process of 'purification' applied to Curatorial Practice is a problematic endeavour as it necessarily asks for the impossible: defining a field outside of the social context from which it was born. At the same time, if we keep in mind that curating and the curatorial are not really possible as two separate fields, and the entanglement of practices with the politics of their manifestation, then there could be a possibility of performing such a separation, merely as a theoretical exercise, in order to try to understand what is at stake when speaking of Curatorial Practice.

Mouffe and Schmitt's separation of 'politics' from 'the political' establishes a platform for the development of new, different political theories. 'The political' points to the

³⁴When speaking of ontology, I am referring to it as a system model; a category of existence or being.

³⁵ Mouffe borrows her thinking of the political as a 'pure' form, separated from politics, from Carl Schmitt, who, in his book *The Concept of the Political*, calls for a definition of the political independent from politics; Mouffe's notion of the political derives from an unavoidable human condition that is always caught in the equation of 'us' and 'them'. Through the purification of 'the political', both writers attempt to extend the understanding of politics.

inherent natures of different kinds of 'politics', widening the perspective through which 'politics' are viewed. The achievement of a similar process is hoped for curating's theoretical background. This is stated, however, as an experiment – as a temporary suspension of attention – and not as a modernist 'call to arms' so to speak, in the separation of curating from its politics.

To perform this shift from curating to the curatorial fully, two theoretical moves need to be performed. The first is the purification of the notion of the curatorial from its specific manifestations, while considering it as a field independent from its specific realizations. The second move, which corresponds and completes the first, is the definition of the curatorial itself.³⁶ I posit that, inherent to this theoretical shift, there is a need to consider the autonomy of curating and to allow it an independence from the contexts in which it currently operates; most notably, those of the collection and contemporary art. While Lind's examination of specific projects allows her to approach certain characteristics, modes, or examples of the curatorial and while those observations are meaningful in understanding what the curatorial might be, her focus on specific and contemporary art projects allows only a narrow understanding of the curatorial as a field of operation, and leaves curating within the confines of a very small context.

I contend that in order to truly enter and understand *the curatorial* as a mode of thinking, operation, or being in the world, one would need to widen the perspectives on Curatorial Practice, taking into consideration that *the curatorial* exists in contexts other than that of art, the collection, or indeed objects in general. Hence, in the earlier stages of this review, I offered the notion of 'forms' as a more appropriate definition of that with which curating is preoccupied. A further development of these ideas will be brought forth in Chapters 2 and 3.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF *THE CURATORIAL*

The curatorial can be marked as a new territory in the definition of Curatorial Practice, and writings around this topic are now starting to proliferate. Nevertheless, since it is still a young term, it does not have an abundant source of references upon which to draw. The development of the term in this research mainly relies on general discourses in the development of Curatorial Practice, most notably, through the work of the Curatorial/Knowledge department at Goldsmiths, University of London, whose

³⁶ The parallel move in Schmitt's text is the definition of 'Friend' and 'Enemy' and the relationships between them as the backdrop, or the field of operation, of 'The Political'. This definition aims at containing all possible 'Politics'.

recent publication, *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (2013), will be reviewed in more detail.

Writing about *the curatorial* in this context feels like joining a conversation I was only invited to observe from afar; while the notion of *the curatorial* was first offered in Maria Lind's text mentioned above, the book *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* offers the first selection of articles to expand on this notion and attempt to arrive at a rhythm that traces *the curatorial* through many different discourses; writing, art, activism, performance, theatre, dance, and so on. As most of the articles included in the book hover above abstract grounds of thought, I cannot purport to review them but I will offer a reflection of my reading: what ideas has awakened within me, the outsider reader, and how it has assisted me on my journey of defining *the curatorial* or 'purifying' it, in Chantal Mouffe's logic.

THE CURATORIAL: A PHILOSOPHY OF CURATING

Reading the texts and the articles that attempt to depict what *the curatorial* might be, without committing to its definitions, I find that there are a few recurring themes that can be identified and which might assist in contemplating its spaces further. I found that, as a way of reviewing the literature on the subject, it was useful to look through the prisms and metaphors that recur on more than one occasion, and to think further about how these abstract ideas that circle acts of curating bridge the operational modes of Curatorial Practice and the space of *the curatorial*.

Of course, we are dealing here with a fleeting topic that cannot be, and maybe even should not be, divided into enclosed themes; hence we should not think of those categories as borders of *the curatorial*, but only as a means of catching its trail in order to extend on the discourse that is already here, while at the same time, offering, at any given moment, to erase, re-curate, re-read or eradicate any such categorizations. The categories, therefore, are also, not closed, but rather operate as an open, metaphorical semantic field in which, hopefully, there is a possibility of floating, not attaching to any word more specifically than another.

THE CURATORIAL AS THE SURPLUS

SEMANTIC FIELD: SURPLUS, NOISE, CADAVER, RESIDUE, EXCESS, GHOSTS, SHADOWS, DISRUPTION

The surplus can be anything that at a certain point seems excessive, indulgent, left out; unnecessary. In this category, we will find that the curatorial performs itself within the field of residues, remains, cadavers, ghosts and shadows. As such, it is a form of disruption or background noise in the certainty of positivity and all that

exists, and points to that which remains beyond the inclusion of current perceptions. It is the background from which dissociation occurs; in drawing a form, it is the background that remains behind it in the moment of its birth, drawing its borders.

In *Raqs Media Collective* inventory of frameworks from which to think the curatorial, they allude to this field through the coupling of the 'Hocus Pocus ~ Surge': '*When someone says hocus-pocus, they may not be aware that they are carefully offering up a garbled version of a powerful incantation, 'Hoc Est Corpus Meum' – 'Here is My Body'. Behind the rhyming party trick tag line lies a suppressed longing for transubstantiation – for turning bread into flesh, and wine into blood*' (Collective, 2013, pp. 20-21). This field of *the curatorial* emphasises one of the roots of Curatorial Practice: acting always in the shadow of objects, remains, and things that are somewhat 'dead', then, almost magically, re-inserting them with life through assigning them with transient meaning. This tendency also reflects on the body as object and the interrelations between object and subject definitions. The image of the cadaver, in this sense, is the signifier of this ambivalent relationship between the field of *the curatorial* and materiality as a whole. Within this relationship, questions about visibility, life and the body are examined.

Stefan Nowotny, in his article 'The Curator Crosses the River: A Fabulation' (2013), recalls an ancient fable by Latin author Hyginus, which recounts the story of Cura, a character who may seem parallel to Prometheus on the one hand, as she has created man and asked for his consciousness, and on the other hand, may resemble the story of Narcissus, mainly when considering that Cura, before creating the mould of a *homo* in her own image out of the clay at the bank of the river, needed to cross the river. For the author, her crossing of the river alludes to the necessity of representation at the core of every creation; she needed to see her own reflection in the water before having the idea to reproduce the image she saw in clay. Cura, named in relation to her 'caring' of the *homo* she had created, also resonates with the idea of the curator as a carer, as examined previously. For Nowotny, the focus of this fable can shift from the act of creation, by means of representation, to an act of crossing the river as an open question in the background of this story that does not quite fit with the initial interpretation. For Nowotny, then, engaging the field of *the curatorial* would be to discuss curating – the act of display – in relation to the ability to cross the border between a preoccupation with materiality and, within it, creativity that derives from a narcissistic urge, into a discourse that considers the body as a form of a bridge between oneself and the other.

In a similar way, Jenny Doussan (2013) approaches *the curatorial* from three angles, repositioning the 'spectacular body' in relation to the history of philosophy. The spectacular body here refers to Giorgio Agamben's notion of the body as a site for the performance of the 'society of the spectacle'. Doussan demonstrates how the body itself and its 'spectacle' of being what it is – penetrable, sexual, ill, open and finite – is a means of performing a resistance to the restrictions of the political. She offers the examples of Eros in one of Plato's dialogues, the Black Plague, and the embodiment of the sense of smell in Étienne Bonnot's *Treatise on the Sensations* (1754). These are, for Doussan, prime examples of performativity, when the body as an entity, and the remains, residues and marks it leaves behind, negate and rescript the told historical narrative³⁷.

Leire Vergara, in 'Exhausted Curating' (2013), uses Gilles Deleuze's essay, 'The Exhausted', in order to reflect on the horizons of Curatorial Practice. For Vergara, opening up the field of *the curatorial* means to exhaust all possible restrictions, forms and affirmations of Curatorial Practice as they are presented, and to retain the inevitability of an 'exhausted' act: an act whose creativity derives from its inability to perform itself within the borders of its own mechanism. Hence the energy of *the curatorial* derives from the surplus; that which awakens when all other resources are exhausted.

Coming from a world of choreography, both Vergara and Je Yun Moon allude to the inevitable embodiment that seems to be at the base of Curatorial Practice: an embodiment which derives from a preoccupation with movement and the disposition of objects in space, similar to the meaning of choreography, in its original definition of 'writing the body'.³⁸ In the field of *the curatorial*, the body (and so, in this context, the residue, the ghost, the cadaver) is awakened by a symbolic, linguistic flip. This flip allows the potentiality of the material to re-live within the realms of language and regain its power or agency (Vergara, 2013, p. 75).

These selected writings that point us into the direction of the curatorial as the surplus – the remaining, that which is out of order, or abject – direct us in two parallel directions. These analyses point back to the history of curators as care-takers of valuable objects, as a significant cultural residue that tells the story of the central power but, at the same time, the same residues and leftovers point to the role of curators in another time of history as carers of the mentally ill and those that are

³⁷ Interestingly, Doussan's ideas are resonated through the notion of the simulacrum as it will be presented in the case study of the Naumburg Cathedral, attached to the third chapter of this research.

³⁸ This resonates with the idea of 'the art of memory', which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

marginalized outside of the social norm, encompassing within their role the two sides of the 'leftover' and, in maintaining this relationship, I would suggest, performing *the curatorial*.

The possibility of finding a territory where both the glorious leftovers of a past and the declined bodies of knowledge meet, is a recurring collision that acts as a constant background noise, as a disruption to what is meant to be kept in the light and what is meant to be kept in shadow, backstage. This disruption, this white noise, this constant vomiting of residues, is the fluctuation of the field of *the curatorial* as negotiates the relationship between the object as body and the body as object.

THE CURATORIAL AS THE BEAM

SEMANTIC FIELD: WAKE³⁹, PATH, PATTERN, ETCH, ECHO, TRACE, STAGE (STAGING)

I use the term 'the beam' to describe *the curatorial* as the aftermath of the act of shedding light over a field of possibilities. The beam as an allegory already includes connotations of the limitations, shape, strength and direction of the light source used, as well as the fact that every act of shedding light is also an act of casting a shadow in a way that positions certain things in the dark and others in the light (visible and invisible or, better still, within our field of attention or beyond our field of attention) Moreover, possibilities are shaped by the play of light and shadow that their structure permits. As much as we tend to think of light as ephemeral and inconsistent, it does not have such an imagined flexibility. It sheds itself directly on to a field and does not attend to curves, folds and breaks. These are marked, rather, by darkness.

At the same time, it is necessary to shed a beam of light over a field to discover its hidden possibilities. The shadow, as much as the light, participates in directing attention. The shadow, in its flexibility, succumbs to the topography of the field and, in a constant dance, traces the gaps, the curves, bumps and breaks in the landscape. With time, the light may burn, etch and affect the contrast of a landscape, so that even when the light source is removed, one might find the trace of its previous direction and intensity, like the white tanning line produced by a ring on a finger. The shadow, however, conserves the hidden elements in its cool conservative embrace, allowing the landscape to re-emerge from its negative image plane.

While attempting to break the linear operation of a path with the notion of Deleuze's rhizome, Suzana Milevska, in 'Becoming-Curator', analyses the moment of 'becoming

³⁹ The word 'Wake' is borrowed from *Raqs Media Collective's* take on *The Curatorial*, as will be explained later in the chapter. The wake here stands for: 'an ephemeral pattern left behind as a trace in water or any liquid by a passing body or vessel; the verb for being aroused, especially from sleep or unconsciousness; a gathering that sits in remembrance and/or mourning around a deceased person through a night' (Collective, 2013, p. 19).

curator' as a possible path for Curatorial Practice, where the 'becoming' is performance itself in the field of *the curatorial*. Here, *the curatorial* is a ray of light that highlights the possibility of becoming curator, rather than the decision of becoming a curator as a career path. This 'becoming' is not only the site of an individual entering a field of self-enquiry, but it is also the transitional moment of becoming curator; its re-enactment, time and again with every curatorial project, allows *the curatorial* to emerge.

In the same manner that light can highlight a certain historical narrative, it can also perform a certain request for a civil re-organization of the past, as is exemplified in Ariella Azoulay's *Zochrot* project. Azoulay, by setting up the conditions for reading archival photographs as well as artworks,⁴⁰ directs the beam of *the curatorial* to illuminate a field of possibilities, well aware of the shadows that are cast at the same time on other facets of the same reality. The reality that glances through the images of the recreated archive is fresh, potent and forceful because it was kept in the shadows for a long period of time under the curatorial constraints of the Zionist statutory ideological viewpoint. This force reveals not only what was, until now, in shadow, but also that it *was* in shadow and, in this manner, penetrates the field of the observer as a potent civil agent.

The idea of *the curatorial* as a vector, as a point of view in the field of vision, or a trace in the field of the sensual, also finds its expression in Bridget Crone's 'Curating, Dramatization and the Diagram: Notes towards a Sensible Stage' (2013). Crone situates *the curatorial* in the contemporary context of a state of acceleration and movement, characterised by the disappearance of the geometrical model of space. Within this fast informational reality, curatorial activity '*insinuates itself within this context in the manner of a diagrammatic operation: a methodology that attempts to organize or make sense of this chaotic and ever-changing world. The diagram, therefore, gives form to a world that is otherwise abstract, obtuse and chaotic: as a diagrammatic operation, the curatorial is what, here, we will term the sensible stage*' (Crone, 2013, p. 208). In this text, she develops the idea of the curatorial as a stage, suggesting a relationship between the terms 'dramatization', as defined by Deleuze,⁴¹ and Alain Badiou's idea of theatre as a meeting between the body and the text, as a form of thinking about the Sensible Stage as *the curatorial*. Throughout, Crone highlights that,

⁴⁰ The project discussed here is the exhibition *Art as Civil Imagination*, curated by Azoulay in Zochrot Gallery, dedicated to the commemoration and promotion of creation and dialogues around the notion of the 'Nakba': the name of the Palestinian commemoration day for the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands with the establishment of the state and the war of 1948.

⁴¹ In this respect, she relates to Deleuze's notion of dramatization as a method to revive the Idea, as well as an expressive moment within which the disruption of space and time allows the emergence of subjectivities.

in the process of staging the sensible, there is also a process of illuminating, differentiating and dramatizing one moment; evident, for example, in the operations of the dramatic rhetoric of lighting a stage and its subject as to direct and manoeuvre attention across an axis in space and in time. This becomes the metaphor for the diagrammatic definition that she gives to curating as a practice.

In this sense, *the curatorial*, as a beam, is connected deeply with ideas of perception and dissociation, pointing to the flexibility of difference to appear, disappear and reappear in relation to display and positioning. *The curatorial*, here, is that flexibility.

THE CURATORIAL AS THE BLANK

SEMANTIC FIELD: IN BETWEEN, VOID, MUTE, BLIND-SPOT, SUSPENSION, DISRUPTION

I use the term 'the blank' to refer to that which, although belonging to a semantic field, a field of vision and a possible expressive reality, is left unspoken, not as a matter of discrimination but as an act of suspending a reflexive moment of enquiry that allows the representational field to float amidst itself, questioning its means of providing visibility, solutions, answers or a place to whatever is represented. It is an awkward silence, a question-mark left unanswered, a proposal to linger in 'the cloud of unknowing'.⁴²

The blank, the void, the mute, is in contrast to an expectation of affirmation. It insists on maintaining silence in order to recognise that answerability is not an option; that the field constantly fluctuates around itself and that there is no need, and no wish, to stop it from moving. The blank, the 'in between', is also the field of collision, of the meeting; a meeting in suspense. It is a site for the definition of one and another, a site for the suspension of politics in favour of the performance of the political. It is a moment where there is a possibility of listening because there is no response – a sound thrown into an abyss that returns no echo but allows the sound's pitch to be heard, loud and clear, in its singular moment of emergence.

Doreen Mande, in her article 'Three Short Takes on the Curatorial', traces the notion of *the curatorial* and attempts to locate its locus and mode of operation. For her, '*The curatorial takes place in the middle of a contradictory web of relations*' (Mende, 2013, p. 106). However, at the same time it performs the unmarked territory of such relations; it also does not find itself saturated by the conflict but accommodates it in silence, which renders the platform of *the curatorial* a site for equality. This

⁴² *The Cloud of Unknowing* is the name of an anonymous Christian literary work, dated to the 14th century. The work is a poetic praise of suspension in a realm of formless being. The narrator of this book is one who is looking for God. In the midst of his/her enquiry, the narrator encounters angels and various forms of mystical entities, and denies their attention, claiming them as 'fake' as s/he seeks to reflect the formless nature of the thing that is sought (God).

theoretical shift is made possible through Mende's introduction of notion of the 'blind-spot', which is always '*fracturing what is exhibited and this without breaking or removing any object on show*' (Mende, 2013, p. 106). In this way, *the curatorial*, in Mende's eyes, is not a practice of exhibiting, but rather a practice of inhibiting – the practical aspects of *the curatorial* allow a sedimentation that brings the site of the exhibition back into the most internal mazes of memories, navigating in half-light, half-dark paths towards itself.

Both Roopesh Sitharan and Joshua Simon reflect on the idea of *the curatorial* as the platform for disruptive, and potentially violent, acts that are directed not towards any group specifically, but towards the public realm itself as an embodiment of the echoless abyss. Sitharan, in 'Aku Menjadi Kepada – What I am Thinking', (2013) explicates a violent act where the estrangement of language becomes a tool of exclusion and inclusion, already signifying the territory of an in-between. His article, written half in English and half in Malay, suggests blank spots, and blind-spots; an embodiment of the space of collision between bodies and between others, framing the meeting itself as a violent act of dissociation and agonism⁴³.

In 'Betrayal and the Curatorial – A Testimony for the Committee on the Curatorial' (Simon, 2013), Simon challenges the notion of curating as judgement; *the curatorial* is defined as a field of betrayal that is manifested through a '*loyalty beyond protocols of allegiance*' (2013, p. 116), referring to the meeting point between loyalty and betrayal: loyalty in one field of judgment may seem like a betrayal in another. Therefore, Simon's attempt to open up a field of curating beyond the idea of judgement is also a constant re-instigation of the enquiry into the political. Simon investigates the visibility and invisibility, or 'muteness', of curatorial acts in relation to a disruption in the field of the social. The contextualization of a curatorial act may define it as a betrayal or loyalty in relation to the public space which it intrudes – it offers a space for expressing the voice of a context – of a social realm – and hence provides a space within which 'others' can be expressed, and meet.

Nora Sternfeld, in 'Being Able to Do Something' (2013), analyses the role of museum exhibition in the light of New Museology and its concerns of post-structuralist modes of interpretation and representation, while also taking into account the idea of a 'critical agency', as she defines it. This agency is the ability to create a sense of

⁴³ Agonism, here, refers once again to Chantal Mouffe's notion of 'The Political' and her further development democracy as 'agonist pluralism' in which she offers conflict as a model for democratic dynamics. In her words: '*An important difference with the model of 'deliberative democracy' is that for 'agonistic pluralism', the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, in order to render a rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs.*' (2000, p. 103). In the agonist model (in construct with the antagonist model), conflict and disruption become a fertile ground for the performance of plurality and therefore for democracy as well.

suspension within which political relationships and struggles can be examined beyond the contingent notions of 'good' and 'bad', taking into account the definition of those changes in relation to time and social and political shifts. She thus offers this state of suspension as a space of *the curatorial*.

THE LIMITS OF ABSTRACTING *THE CURATORIAL*

While the articles which had been referred to above, aim at dislocating *the curatorial* and finding a meaning for it in an expanded field of an epistemological crisis as Irit Rogoff suggests,⁴⁴ many of them are still attached to the structural manifestations of Curatorial Practice. As such, they consider Curatorial Practice to be bound to the institution that, in their descriptions, hosts it and allows it to perform itself. The writers aforementioned all seem aware that, despite the fleeting nature of *the curatorial*, it always insists on taking a form in the examples and analyses that they give, and this appears part of an inevitable process of thinking within and beyond definitions at the same time.

In this way, the articles offered by Martinon, Ilic, Milevska, Doussans, Mende, Simon, Azoulay, Strenfeld and Harney and Desideri, all anchor *the curatorial* in the mode of the exhibition; some in a more direct fashion, in which the exhibition itself is restricted to the institution of the museum or the institution of art, and some relating to the exhibition as a structure of display. For example, in Harney and Desideri's 'A Conspiracy Without a Plot' (Harney & Desideri, 2013), they offer a general analysis of the place of performance and Curatorial Practice in society and, within this scope, introduce a few abstract principles for thinking about *the curatorial* via the notion of a conspiracy; not as a suggestive plot but as a general state of mind, within which modes of agonism are allowed to develop. This agonist energy is essential for art and curating to occupy the meaning that is assigned to them in the beginning of the article. However, where they return to discuss the role of the curator in this whole mechanism of performing *the curatorial*, they still describe her⁴⁵ as an organizer of exhibitions in the traditional sense, under the generalization of 'making space'.

⁴⁴Rogoff suggests an investigation of *the curatorial* from the position of an epistemological crisis that does not succumb to the solution of expansion by means of inclusion; rather, she offers an expansion from awareness of the possible error in forms of current epistemological divisions and categorizations. In the same way, the articles presented in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* offer interpretations of *the curatorial* that collide with, escape or evoke current epistemological divisions. In this manner, *the curatorial* is no longer an aspect that is only deployed in the analysis of exhibitions or the history of Curatorial Practice in relation to museology, but also in the analysis of the staging of other fields, like that of the 'political', in the examples of Ariella Azoulay and Joshua Simon.

⁴⁵ The female pronoun is used specifically by the author in this case and so I have remained loyal this interpretation when referring to the text's analysis. Within the research as a whole, both female and male pronouns will be used in a dual form of s/he, her/him etc. I choose to use the female voice as the leading one because, being a female, it allows me to remain loyal to my subjectivity and to prevent myself to fall

Their reading of Curatorial Practice might not attach *the curatorial* to the institution of the museum; however, it certainly attaches it to the institution of art in the curator's operative roles. So, when speaking of Curatorial Practice, though it is clear that the 'space' the curator makes can no longer be conceived as a 'neutral' space but as a link in the spine of the social realm, the curator herself is still supposed to take care of artists, buyers, sellers; to mediate and coordinate the whole operational facet of the art world, enabling, through this 'caring' and 'making space', the creative agency of others – and this is positioned as the central motivation of Curatorial Practice. Within this perspective, there is no place for the curator as an agent in this mechanism because she is always perceived as the administrator of others – always dependent on the practices of others.

Whilst the operational roles of the curator are surely part of the profession, I am interested to take the discussion a step further and offer an imagined realm, where Curatorial Practice is not attached; even not to the creative agency of others, so that it would be possible to isolate the creative agency of the curator, and the curator's direct relationship to the performance of *the curatorial*. This move is not always possible or successful, as the examples I give will reveal, however, I am interested in what lies in the fringes of such possibilities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THINKING OF *THE CURATORIAL*

The texts discussed above, and the spirit of other discussions in the curatorial field, as they have been presented before, can mark the beginning of a journey in a search for the roots and *raison-d'être* of the figure of the curator, and had a crucial role in allowing me to shape the questions that guide me through the re-definitions of the challenges that Curatorial Practice is facing in the 'digital age'. Through the contemplation of these texts and influences, I was able to articulate for myself, if not a whole theory, at least a set of principles or guidelines through which to recognize *the curatorial* amidst its operational mode and through which to think about *the curatorial*. These guidelines permitted me to develop a path through which to think about Curatorial Practice, acts of curating and further creative acts in correspondence with what I believed *the curatorial* might be. Here are the guidelines to which I have attempted to remain loyal, in understanding and locating *the curatorial* within the spaces I have chosen to research:-

into the alienation that is embodied in the use of a male pronoun. In other contexts, and when appropriate, exclusions will be made and explained.

The curatorial is always facing the other. It exists only in dialogue or in a form of exchange between subjects, cultures or ideologies.

The curatorial is not only the act of simple display, pointing to the existence of forms, but rather **is involved in the act of reconsidering form in its relation to a background.** As such, the curatorial is not about fixing knowledge, but about questioning it, aiming always in the direction of a different understanding.

The curatorial is always necessarily performed in the 'immaterial'; the immaterial here, is referred to as the threshold between being and form, between matter and energy. It can thus be defined as the movement from one form to another.

The methodology stipulated by these principles leads us to an understanding of *the curatorial* through a temporary mode of negation: through what it is not. This is the departure point for understanding how it is defined by the way it corresponds with its adjacent fields. The same methodology provides the strategy of this research: in each of the chapters, I am approaching fields parallel to curating that might be confused with curating, and thus assume a position of negation. Through this negative assumption, the positive form of what *the curatorial* might be within this field emerges, and a possibility of identifying the means through which it inserts itself and operates appears.

However, negation here is also aimed at myself. Within this process of abstraction, I aim to reach a deeper comprehension of how *the curatorial* can be further explicated, deciphered, illuminated and understood. As such, it is a process that always negates its previous discoveries through the deepening of thought in an inward spiral that leads from the exteriority of meaning to the deeper levels that it conveys.

The three main themes presented above, and the three main principles that have guided me through thinking about *the curatorial*, also assisted me in recognizing, within my own thought and practice as a curator, that the spaces of *the curatorial* that I engage with, circle three main recurring convictions, thoughts, or topics, with which *the curatorial* currently finds itself assimilated in a relationship of dependence, and from which I intend to dissociate it. Those fields of operation are:

The field of objects (or, in its more abstract definition, form). From this field, the institution of the collection emerges as a container of Curatorial Practice.

The field of art (in its more abstract definition, creative agency). From this field, the art market, art criticism and art-production emerge as parts of a system which works to contain Curatorial Practice.

The field of memory (or, more abstractly, space, and, in its current, digital manifestation, time). From this field, the museum, the gallery, the public space, the urban space, social and political spaces emerge as different layers to contain curatorial operations.

Each of these fields within which Curatorial Practice operates provide the opportunity to abstract the notion of *the curatorial* further from its operational manifestations, allowing a glimpse into its core and origin. This does not mean that the approach taken by this research should not include how *the curatorial* operates within those fields of forms of creative agency and of time. Rather, the opposite is quite true: these fields will be analysed and the curator's operational role within them will be dismantled to the very core motivation of those aspects of *the curatorial* presented above. What I aim to offer is a shift of focus, or a shift of attention, from those fields in themselves, which are usually dominant in curatorial discourses, to what *the curatorial* could be within them and in what spaces it is manifested.

THE CURATORIAL DEFINITION: A DISCLAIMER

When reading what has been written regarding supposed definitions or thoughts of *the curatorial*, one comes to admire abstract writing, abstract thought and the power of poetics, for in the search into *the curatorial*, it seems scholars open horizons of possibilities, thus maintaining *the curatorial* as it is: a shape-shifter that penetrates everywhere and reflects anything, communicating in a multiplicity of ways that can speak various languages. And maybe insisting on such conditions for writing about *the curatorial* is a clever and accurate approach, because *the curatorial* is, indeed, that which cannot be caught, that runs through the fingers like sand; like the thin line created visually when the grains succumb to gravity inside an hourglass.

Poetic thought refuses an end and reopens itself as an infinite wound. In its eruption and its closure, it still maintains a meaning. Perhaps, in this way, *the curatorial* is the immaterial poetics of materiality; the residue or void that form leaves behind in the place where it once was positioned, marking its possible removal – this constant shift between appearance and disappearance, form and energy, presence and absence.

Maybe poeticism is the only possible approach in which to speak about *the curatorial* - constantly eluding its form and definition so that it remains endowed with this mystery - the mystery imbued in its name; that whisper that haunts our hearts and leads us into the inner realms of curiosity. Perhaps to whisper is the only possibility as we are hesitant about names and, more specifically, about naming even those moments of silence and clarity that are the gaps between the words of a book; gaps that, in a moment of different attention, suddenly start dancing in front of our eyes, becoming void streams that allow the melody of meaning to be heard beyond the construct of a grammar, a sentence and the materiality of a word, which is but a shadow of a thought.

It is inevitable that such poetics will disrupt any form of rationale that circles *the curatorial*. Working with such a volatile, fluid substance, resonates with the poetics that are already residing within me, strumming the chords of memory and allowing moments of its silence and presence to float about. I posit, in fact, that catching those moments of poetic clarity within my stream of articulation is perhaps the only way through which to negotiate *the curatorial*, diving deeper into its meaning in the most intimate moments between myself and I. Hence poetics, memory and subjective self-enquiry, must remain part of writing about *the curatorial* as it operates through resonance. As such, its mystery; the ability to make it vibrate, like a chord, lies in those enigmatic moments of connection.

It must also be asked, could we possibly gain something from thinking about *the curatorial* in a more concrete form, if we dared to attempt to experiment with a possible stable definition that can maintain its form throughout our enquiry into its relationship with other forms? It is clear what we could lose: this intimacy of poetic language, when one poet speaks to another with a hint of the silence that they both know stands behind the words. We might lose this slight nod of comprehension that hints to a certain belonging; an answer to a loneliness of some sort that is inevitable in the wilderness of silence. Suddenly, the hand of form may grab *the curatorial* by the throat and strangle it as a response to the words of Jean Paul Martinon: '*As such, the curatorial is a disruptive generosity ... that can never be properly translated into language and always gives the slip to the economy of received and exchanged knowledge*' (Martinon, 2013).

I believe, however, that *the curatorial*, like the grains of sand that run between the fingers of time, is bound to survive, exactly as it is; evasive, always finding a way of suggesting a blank response to form, in the borders of its lack, in the void that it occupies - and so, nonetheless, I consider giving *the curatorial* a relatively stable form

is a risk worth taking. And so I place the light beam gently in the middle of our working room at night, waiting patiently for that moth that we have named *the curatorial* to attract itself to the flickering flame of the lampshade, quietly examining its attempt in sketching its current dance so that this form can inspire us to think about our actions as curators from the point of view of that movement.

So while my heart falls every time for the poetry, and promises to do so continuously and tirelessly, I will attempt here to be more concrete; to try and collect the voices together and see what could be said about *the curatorial*: where it starts, where it ends and what it resonates with, in the hope that our poetry could thus become more accurate.

ARRIVING AT A TEMPORARILY STABLE DEFINITION OF *THE CURATORIAL*

As promised, to give my thought an anchor within this field of investigation, which is not only abstract in itself (as an ideology, even, one could say) but also attempts to abstract itself further from the form it already takes, I suggest a temporarily stable definition of what *the curatorial* might be. Rather than taking the operational mode of the exhibition, the museum or art as the form, I thus aim to return to this temporarily stable definition of the curatorial as a point of reference to which I return in constructing my ideas. This is to stage *the curatorial* rather than *curating* it at the centre of this investigation.

If *the curatorial* is always, as an entity, related to the border in and of itself, as articulated by the idea of 'in-between', and if *the curatorial* always operates, therefore, in a non-space, a shared space of uncertainty always on the threshold of the other, as in the notion of the 'blank', then it seems most appropriate to think of *the curatorial* as an *interface*.

I interpret 'interface' as the exact abstract notion of a shared platform upon which a dialogue, a conversation or an exchange can occur. It signifies the suspension of 'the political', in Mouffe's terms, as it questions the very notion of 'me' and 'you', 'friend' and 'enemy'; its existence signifies the acknowledgement of the presence of the other within the circle of one's own subjectivity. The interface is therefore the result of the meeting point of one sphere with another (or more). While I have defined *the curatorial* as the interface itself, I will now define the spheres that I perceive are at stake when considering any *curatorial*.

Reading the articles presented above, as well as the history of Curatorial Practice and Museum Studies, *knowledge* is a word that recurs, defining itself as a possible 'sphere'

that Curatorial Practice seems to aim at reaching. However, knowledge, as I understand it, is fixed and static. It is connected to the concept of an objective reality that might exist outside the interface that is *the curatorial*, and hence it attaches *the curatorial*, once again, to another institution: that of a specific and rational ideology. Hence, knowledge does not seem to be the accurate term to fully articulate the shade that I perceive when encountering the spheres that compose *the curatorial*.

Rather, I would suggest that *the curatorial* is shaded with what stands *before* and *beyond* knowledge, and this, I would argue, is the realm of comprehension. A comprehension can be temporary; it can be large but can also act as a swift observation into the quality of just one breath. It is not directed by any ideology and it can perform itself under the condition of any ideology, so to speak. It is a point of contact between theory and practice – a point where theory comes to inform the movements of the body, and the point in which the body signals its non-verbal insights back into the realm of language. If knowledge relies on affirming one reality, comprehension allows the laws of the same reality to reveal themselves beyond their temporary manifestations. Therefore, it seems that the appropriate term to use to describe this sphere, would be comprehension⁴⁶ or, in the form of a noun, *meaning*

Now there is a need to define another sphere that takes part in the creation of that interface. This had already been discussed before, and it relates to the necessary presence of an ‘other’. The ‘other’ is not necessarily another person; it can be a glimpse into an internal alienation, where suddenly a part of myself enters a separate circle of definition, readjusting my internal structure of identity. The presence of ‘the other’ can be manifested in subtle ways, not only as a frontal collision, but also as the concept of an alternative existence outside the subjective realm. It is therefore a marker of the social field, or the field of the common, where Curatorial Practice usually takes place. Therefore I find it appropriate to think of the second sphere as that of a multiplicity of others, a multiplicity of ‘I’s, - and I will call this multiplicity *audiences*.

The word ‘audiences’ permits a number of theoretical moves. Firstly, it permits the act of display, or ‘pointing’, so to speak – the act of reinforcing, adjusting or changing the rules of meaning production. What I mean to say here is that ‘audiences’, or a multiplicity of ‘I’s, are a necessary condition in assuming any effect on a social field – the social, in itself always composed of a plural, is performed only in such multiplicity.

⁴⁶ To clarify this further and within an existing discourse, ‘comprehension’, as I understand it, echoes the notion of the Aesthetic Experience, or the learning experience, as it was discussed in the introduction of this research, however offers a more abstract and independent field of enquiry, which does not necessarily relates to art, as the first, and does not necessarily relates to education, as the second.

Since meaning is constructed on the agreement of a multiplicity to symbolise one thing through another, the idea of *audiences* works effectively alongside the idea of conveying meaning, which forms the first sphere of the curatorial interface.

Secondly, the word 'audiences' calls on the notion of *performance*. The performance here is important because it embodies the acknowledgement of being both 'self' and 'other'. It is a moment of encountering 'other' as 'self' and it is different to a general 'display', because it suggests the involvement of the body within the experience of this self-definition. The exposure of 'self' not only as a pair of eyes hovering in space, as in the case of an observer or a viewer, but a 'self' that assumes the embodiment of experience. The word 'audiences' therefore, allows us to think of *the curatorial* beyond the field of the purely visual and to maintain its relevance when dealing with cultural fields not related directly to visual art and culture.

So here I arrive at my temporarily stable definition of ***the curatorial as the interface between audiences and meaning***.

If *the curatorial* is thus defined, then curating, in its extended field, could be regarded as the act of managing, designing, performing or enabling such interfaces. Such interfaces will often be called curatorial platforms or curatorial spaces in this research. These are spaces which are marked by the performance of *the curatorial* within them, and, indeed, when considering them, one should not ignore the way they also perform the relationship between meaning itself, who stipulates the meaning and how audiences read meaning.

The curatorial as such is an interface with an 'other', or 'between others', so to speak. However, it is not just a common space - it is indeed an interface with an agenda that affirms a certain movement or flow and which designs the exchange taking place. This is not to say that *the curatorial* has a specific political agenda or an ideological value; rather, it is to suggest that every interface has a shade that resonates with the goal of bringing two spheres together and a shade that is determined by the original colour or flavour of each sphere.

AGENCY

One of the issues that surfaces when speaking of Curatorial Practice in relation to its adjacent fields, is the question of agency. The question of creative agency of both curators, artists and collectors, as the core root of the problem in the conflicts between curating and such fields of operation, will be examined thoroughly in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, while the question of audiences' agency in their movement

within a curatorial space will be looked at in close detail in Chapter 4. It is important to offer a definition of agency as it will be referred to in this research, and how it can be understood through the prism of the guidelines for reading into *the curatorial*.

'Agency', in philosophical thought, usually refers to the question of free will and of whether such a faculty exists. This question is related to the structure of predetermined social and natural systems, which prescribe personal development and therefore also individual choices and freedoms. As such, two streams of thought can be identified within Western philosophical thought: those that believe in the existence of individual agency, and those that see agency as deriving from predetermined structures, within which the individual has no free choice.

The tradition of phenomenological and continental thought derives from the works of philosophers such as Marx and Hegel, who identified agency within the realm of history⁴⁷ and deny, to some extent, the ability to convey a marginal freedom for the individual's choice. I am defining the term 'agency' within the context of a tradition that supports the idea that agency does not only exist on a historical or social level, but that assumes agency on an individual, subjective level. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'the intentional arc' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002) bears a resemblance to the notion of agency to which I refer, and this will be analysed in more depth in Chapter 4.

I arrive at the question of agency from one of the better known topics of Jewish thought, a phrase attributed to Rabi Akiva, one of the most important rabbinic authorities at the time of the Mishna (180-220 CE):

"הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה, ובטוב העולם נידון והכל על פי רב המעשה"⁴⁸

'Everything is predicted, and permission is granted, and in bliss, the world is judged; and all according to the plenty of action'.

This phrase, which had troubled Jewish thought ever since, provides the contradiction inherent to individual agency in a nut shell: if everything is given, predictable or predetermined (depending on the translation one chooses), then what kind of

⁴⁷ History here is referred to in Hegelian terms, as defined by the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: 'Hegel regards history as an intelligible process moving towards a specific condition – the realization of human freedom [...] He regards the relationship between "objective" history and the subjective development of the individual consciousness ("spirit") as an intimate one; this is a central thesis in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). And he views it to be a central task for philosophy to comprehend its place in the unfolding of history' (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/history/#HegHis>; last accessed 19-5-2014). For Hegel, personal freedom is the inevitable direction of development within the notion of being human. Within this, there is little space for individual freedom per se as the individual is subjected to the general direction of historical development. History is seen as the general direction of human consciousness towards self-realization and it is seen as immanent to human action. In Hegelian thought, it is history that drives humans, and not humans who drive history.

⁴⁸ פרקי אבות, ט"ו פסוק ג'. The phrase is quoted from the Hebrew Mishan, Avot, 15:3; the translations offered here are my own.

permission is granted for the individual? What is the margin of freedom that an individual has if all is preconceived in advance by a system of interrelations?

In the case of Jewish thought, this abstract, pre-determined system is referred to as God; however, one needs to bear in mind that God, in the Hebrew tradition, does not refer to a finite form of control and judgement. It is an infinite, abstract notion that, by definition, is beyond the capacity of human understanding. In this sense, the Jewish God contains both the symbolic field and the Lacanian 'real'.⁴⁹ In Kabbalistic thought, God's expression in form marks the development of all the systems and phenomena that are tangible to our senses. Therefore, the Jewish God can also be interpreted as the Hegelian 'history'; it can be defined as the natural world and the systems within it – subjectivity included.

Being born in a Jewish home, I was brought up with such Jewish interpretations of agency as this phrase encapsulates, and its definitions by various Jewish scholars. The straight forward, literal interpretation of this phrase suggests that, while everything is predetermined by God, the subject has freedom to choose between good and bad. Within what is knowable to man, he has a choice in action. And whatever is pre-determined, manifested by realms that are not knowable to man, is not relevant to his choice, action or agency as it is beyond the realm of his subjectivity. This interpretation puts the emphasis on the moment of the present as the only moment in existence, and on the choice that one makes in relation to what one can know. The judgement (or 'Din', the result, in Kabbalistic terms) is predetermined

Of course, this reading does not solve the inherent contradiction; if everything is already predetermined, then subjective thought itself is predetermined, and therefore the freedom that one exercises in action, is not actually a subjective faculty.

Indeed, certain Jewish traditions deny the possibility of free choice and agency. Such an interpretation is provided by Midrash Tanhuma, written by Rabbi Tanhuma Bar Aba.⁵⁰ In Bar-Aba's interpretation, the whole of history is predetermined; there is no free will but only an illusion of such a thing. The source of illusion is the identification with the human drama created by structures of personality, which are irrelevant in the perspective of the kingdom of God, and mark the blindness and pretence of the human condition. As an example, he uses the story of Joseph. It is God who had inclined Jacob's heart to love Joseph and express this love in a manner that will provoke his brothers' jealousy and send him to Egypt as a slave – and all this had been

⁴⁹ The Lacanian 'real' here is defined as all that is beyond the symbolic field of representation and language.

⁵⁰ Midrash Tanchuma, Vayashev, signs. 3-4 [<http://www.tsel.org/torah/tanhuma/vayeshev.html>], last accessed 21/6/2014].

predetermined so that the prophecy of the 'Covenant of the Pieces' will find its realization and the sons of Israel will be forced to be foreigners enslaved in the kingdom of Egypt, hence demonstrating how the predetermined history had already affected the hearts and souls of the individuals involved. The notion of subjective agency here is an illusion.

However, many interpretations are unsatisfied with this explanation, because it does not refer to the permission alluded to for the individual's own free will. The phrase is therefore further dissected. Rambam⁵¹ suggests that freedom is granted in the bliss of ignorance. Within the realm of ignorance in which man lives, within the rules under which a man exists in the material world, there is a permission to conceive, differentiate, and therefore choose, between good and bad. Since God's knowledge is beyond man's possible achievement, the mysteries of its logic are also beyond man's understanding. Therefore, one should live according to the first part of this phrase, 'everything is predicted', and judge the good of this world in accordance with one's abilities, and thus act upon this understanding. This might seem, at first sight, an argument that escapes the core question at stake; however, what Rambam suggests is that within God's manifestation in the form of a human, the predetermined system according to which humans act is part of the subjective realm. It is at the disposal of the individual; only outside of his/her current consciousness (in Kabbalistic thought, this consciousness is temporarily separated from God's consciousness, which contains all). Therefore, a person should act in accordance to this predetermined system to manifest exactly his/her true free will, which, eventually, is concurrent with divine will. Hence the contradiction between God's will and free will is the illusion, rather than the freedom, of choice.

Rabi Ovadia of Bar Tanura, on the other hand, suggests that the phrase 'everything is predicted' could also be translated as 'everything is exposed to vision'.⁵² For Rabi Ovadia, the conflict emerges within subjectivity itself: man can already see and can already discern good from bad. When one says that 'everything is exposed' and that God can see to the inside and the outside of the human soul, the reference here is to what man chooses to obscure from one's own vision. Within the privacy of one's own

⁵¹ רמב"ם, משנה תורה, ספר המדע, הלכות תשובה, פרק ה' ⁵¹ Rambam's interpretation is taken from Ramabam, Mishneh Tora, Book of Science, Tshuva Halachas, Chapter 5

[<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/rambam.aspx?mfid=107966&rid=389>, last accessed 21/6/2014].

⁵² In Hebrew, the word צפוי, which refers to 'predictable' in the above translation of the sentence, can also be used to describe an act of the visual sense. Interpreted this way, צפוי may mean 'observed' or 'seen'.

home, or one's own subjectivity, nothing is hidden, but the individual chooses to hide from him/herself as a means of avoiding the acknowledgement of responsibility.⁵³

None of those interpretations allows me to reconcile my own agency. If I go back to what drove me to this discussion in the first place, the predetermination of my condition is explicitly demonstrated: I was born to a Jewish family, exposed to such interpretations of agency. And here again I return to the same preconceived ideas of determinism, which I embody and with which I identify as part of my subjectivity, although they are merely circumstantial. And so this thesis, which seems an act of free will and thought – the structure of my 'self' – can be understood as untrue or irrelevant in the light of such interpretations.

At the same time, I was raised in Israel, a state whose ideological structure rests heavily on a belief in free will and choice, rejecting the idea that reality that can never be influenced or changed. After all, the ethos of this state was built on notions of political agency in the purest form, with the famous words of Theodor (Benjamin) Herzl: *'If you wish, it is no legend'*, suggesting that one's wish can be one's reality if one is truly determined to reach a goal.⁵⁴ And so my ability to accept the plain Jewish interpretations given above is limited, again, by the realm of my predetermined subjective structure. And so I remain within the conflict.

The same sort of conflict can be seen at the base of Nietzsche's philosophy. Bernard Reginster, in his online review of Ken Gemes' and Simon May's book *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (2009),⁵⁵ suggests an overview of the conflict reflected in Nietzsche's thought through the fragments that he had written on autonomy and freedom. The writers in Gemes's and May's anthology are divided into two groups: *'The first concerns the nature of the self to which freedom and autonomy are attributed: contributions that concentrate on this question tend to treat freedom as a defining feature of selfhood, or agency. The second question bears on what it is for that self to be,*

⁵³ A good example of such logic within Biblical stories is the story of Adam, Eve and the snake. After Adam eats from the apple, the story tells that he is hiding from God, and God seeks him, asking Adam 'where are you?'. The conflict that arises here is, if God is everywhere and can see everything, why does he need to ask Adam where he is, and why does Adam hide? The answer is within Adam's response to God's call, stating basically, 'it's not me, it's her', pointing at Eve. Hence the act of hiding is also an act of avoiding responsibility and deliberately denying or obscuring one's own acts, not in front of God, which knows everything, but in front of oneself. The act of hiding in and of itself derives from an understanding of Good and Evil (or, in Kabbalistic terms, a dichotomised understanding of the unity of God) – a result of eating from 'the tree of knowledge, good and bad'.

⁵⁴ This is not the appropriate space for negotiating Zionist ideology and the problems within it, and within the writings of Herzl more specifically. I use Herzl's quotation and its interpretation as I grew up to believe its meaning, which has determined how my life had been led. As a matter of fact, part of the argument I put forward is that it is the interpretation of the symbolic layers of reality that allows a relative margin of freedom; however, it requires much flexibility and effort to arrive at a true individual agency through self-enquiry.

⁵⁵ (Reginster, *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, 2014; <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24779-nietzsche-on-freedom-and-autonomy/>; accessed 22/6/2014)

*or to achieve, freedom and autonomy: contributions that consider this question tend to treat freedom as an ethical ideal to be pursued by individuals who already are selves or agents*⁵⁶. What is suggested here is that agency can either be an ideal for which to strive (whether it exists as an illusion or not, similar to Rambam's and Bar Tanura's interpretation) or, and this is the position that interests me, it can be a result of an effort in the construction of the self, through self-enquiry and self-awareness.

In this possible interpretation, agency is not a given – it is not a condition that is stipulated by being. However, a certain agency or free will can be achieved through the efforts one puts in the understanding of the construction of the self, and its possible reconstruction through intended effort. Such reconstruction cannot change the reality as an objective, positivist field; it can, however, change perception. And here, I return to Rabi Akiva's phrase.

If I may take part in the discussion presented above, I will use of Bar-Tanura's translation of the word 'צפוי' (Zafui) as 'exposed to the eye', 'observed' or 'seen' or, in my own interpretation, 'perceived'. Everything – that is all that exists in one's reality – is a 'perceived' reality. The permission that is granted is the permission to create one's own perception, which inevitably affects everything, because everything exists in terms of its perception. Within the predetermined system that is the self, an awareness of the system or an awareness of the self can awaken agency.

Thusly, agency is conceived here as the margin of freedom that an individual has within the internal, predetermined structure of the self, constructed in correlation to social, political and personal narrative stipulations and one's ability to observe the observed, and choose a means of interpretation of reality. The idea of creative agency in this research refers to the same margin of freedom, where it expresses the possibility of subjectivity within a pre-conditioned environment. Hence, creative agency is usually seen as a means of communicating the possibility of an agency to others.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ This idea of agency was conceived in a long discussion of Mishnah interpretations that took place on the night of the 10th May 2014, in collaboration with Swami Satchitananda.

Chapter 2:

OBJECT RELATIONS: CURATING & COLLECTING

This chapter traces the connections and differences between Curatorial Practice and collecting. The collection, here, is read as the institution that grew in relation to the significance of objects in culture, both as symbolic units of meaning as well as valuable possessions. The notion of an 'object' is put under enquiry in an attempt to understand it beyond its conception as a material, tangible thing and to search for the spaces of *the curatorial* which might reveal themselves in the way curating and collecting both approach objects.

To do so, the notion of the 'collection' as a cultural phenomenon and, within it, the roles and motivations of both the curator and the collector, are examined. The 'collection' is used because its influence on Curatorial Practice stretches from one end of the temporal axis to the other. Private collections were the basis upon which public collections were built.¹ They were also the places from which the first museums developed² and, indeed, museums are still defined by their collections.³ Furthermore, as was suggested in the previous chapter, collections have held an important place in the conservation and dissemination of knowledge, as well as in processes of developing written language and symbolic exchange. This chapter, however, does not intend to provide a historical account of the development of collections and their meanings. Rather, it examines the collection as a point of departure for Curatorial Practice, which this chapter aims at positioning in relation *to* it, but not as part *of* it.

I have chosen to examine the area of collecting on two different levels: from the institutional point of view, and from the point of view of the subjective worlds of the curator and collector.

On the institutional level, I follow the analysis of the role of collections in culture offered by Krzysztof Pomian, *The Collection between the Visible and the Invisible* (Pomian, 1990). This text was chosen for its unique approach in constructing a

¹ The establishment of the museum – and, with it, the public collection – derives from the donation, or confiscation, of private collections and royal treasuries. Up until the 17th century, art and other precious objects were the privilege of those in powerful positions or those with strong financial abilities. Some of the public collections are, in fact, private collections and royal treasuries that were confiscated during political revolutions (the most famous example is the Louvre. The occupation of the Louvre after the French Revolution in 1793 marked a symbolic transfer of cultural capital from royalty to the general public [Bresc-Bautier, 2008]). A historical account of the development of public collections and museums can be found in Greenberg, Ferguson, & Narine, 1996; Macdonald, 2011; Vergo, 1989 and Weil, 1995.

² See Greenberg, Ferguson, & Narine, 1996; Macdonald, 2011; Pomian, 1990.

³ ICOM, Revised 2006.

history of collecting that takes into account models of collecting and ways of interpreting collections beyond the model of enlightenment. Since the premise of this research is to offer an extension of the history of Curatorial Practice, the wider perspective offered by Pomian is useful as a starting point for this investigation. Furthermore, Pomian's analysis of collections draws on a connection between objects and an 'invisible'. The notion of the 'invisible' resonates with the notion of the 'immaterial' as it has been defined in the introduction. In a way, the invisible – that which cannot be seen but can, allegedly, be felt or heard – can be considered a sensual inversion of the 'immaterial', a form which is, first and foremost, visual and which is detached, to an extent, from other sensual realms.⁴

On another level, I am interested in looking at the driving force behind the activity of the two actors that play the main role in this chapter, the figure of the collector and the figure of the curator, and their interest in the collectable object. In order to establish whether curating and collecting derive from the same inner urge, I use Jean Baudrillard's analysis of the collector as presented in 'Systems of Collecting' (in Elsner & Cardinal, *Cultures of Collecting*, 1997).⁵

The case study offered as an appendix to this chapter is an attempt to penetrate the possible relationships between the curator and the collector as they are brought into manifestation in modes of practice through a series of interviews. The exhibition *In Detail: From the Collection of Arnie Druck*, curated by Yeala Hazut at the Haifa Museum of Art in 2010, was a result of an intricate, long-term, complex relationship established gradually between Hazut and collector Arnie Druck.⁶

The exhibition sought to represent the curatorial and artistic aspects of collecting, and to understand the collection as a whole; as a possible unit of meaning which would

⁴ The myth of immateriality, as defined by Christian Paul (2006), and the myth of pure visuality, contested by recent enactivist and situated cognition theories (which are referred to in more detail in Chapter 4 and the attached VAINS case study), are taken into account when using these terms. The use of such terms as 'the invisible', 'intangible' or 'immaterial' reflect on certain tendencies or potentialities objects and their collections might have as the shift of focus is turned from one aspect of the object at stake to another. The use of the terms does not imply a belief in the terms' face value. Notions such as invisibility, intangibility and immateriality are used in a critical manner that acknowledges that the sensual realm is dependent on a visceral and embodied experience in which sensual perception is not categorized according to the linguistic convenience of naming the five senses. The analysis of Pomian's text is further supported by the discourse in Museum Studies which was detailed in the introduction.

⁵ I will refer to the collector as a male figure in this text. This is because Baudrillard considers his collector exclusively as a male figure. Also, in his analysis of the development of the urge for collecting he refers solely to male psychological development (in which the phallus takes a central position). I will refrain at this point from reading this analysis critically from a feminist point of view because, although such a reading might be important and necessary in understanding the systems of collecting upon which, in Baudrillard's terms, our culture is based, it would not contribute to the main purpose of this text. At the same time, I would like to suggest the possibility of thinking about curating as a feminine practice in relation to collecting and, in this light, offer a rethinking of the position of Curatorial Practice in relation to other disciplines in a patriarchal society. This theme will be developed further in Chapter 4, albeit implicitly, in the choice of viewpoints and texts that frame the relationship between the notion of the curatorial and social space.

⁶ Druck is known as one of the biggest Israeli collectors of contemporary art and photography.

define the collector's choice from a different perspective, revealing the possible undercurrent, and even unconscious aspects, of such choices. Through the intensive work of organizing, categorizing, researching and re-arranging, the collection emerged as a reflection of the fragile connection between the subjective narrative of one's history, and the common, public narrative of a people and a nation.⁷

While the full interviews can be read in Appendix 1, the way they deepen the enquiry into the relationship between curating and collecting is meaningful also within the premise of this chapter. The enquiry into the relationship weaved between Druck and Hazut in creating the exhibition can serve as a highlighter, and sometimes even evidence, to assumptions that are made in this chapter. The interviews also shed a warmer light and bestows upon the internal conversation between curating and collecting a softer melody. They complicate the assertions made by Baudrillard's analysis. The mode of the interview in and of itself allows the subjectification and specification of the figures of both the collector and the curator. In this sense, processes of collecting and curating are exposed in a raw manner, and are believed to offer the reader an opportunity to re-discover their meaning for her/himself.

While some of the collector's approach to object is criticized in the theoretical and psychological analysis of his endeavour, the interviews allowed me, personally, to appreciate the delicate, intricate and necessary symbiosis that exists between curating and collecting as two dynamics that drive the advancement of cultural heritage and its understanding. Therefore, markers that direct the reader back to the interviews, and whole sections from the interviews are offered in peach-coloured footnotes. They are included as a means of opening up the discussions offered by this chapter to a more subjective, personal and individual perspective and to alternative viewpoints which may deeply change the perception of collection that is created by the theoretical overview of collecting. They also look to share with the reader thinking processes that are integral to the formation of this research, and to highlight the way in which practice, in this context, becomes an inseparable part of the theoretical development.

⁷ Further information on Druck's collection as well as the interview which provides evidence to the history and core of his collection, as well as the motivations that drew it, is presented as part of the case study.

THE COLLECTION AND THE INVISIBLE

PACKING UP MOTIVATION

The Collection: Between the Visible and the Invisible starts with a review of the vast number of museums and collections in Paris, depicting their astounding diversity, each dedicated to a different class of objects; some containing the most peculiar objects (Pomian, 1990, p. 7). In this context, Pomian, is asking whether there is anything common to all those collections and whether there is a reason we treat all collections as belonging to one single category. If such a category exists, then what does 'a collection', actually mean for culture?

In starting to answer this question, Pomian writes: *'Although they may have served a definite purpose in their former existence, museum and collection pieces no longer serve any at all, and as such acquire the same quality as works of art, which are never produced with any definite use in mind, but simply to adorn people, palaces, temples, apartments, gardens, streets, squares and cemeteries'*⁸ (Pomian, 1990, p. 8), concluding that the common denominator of all collectables is that they are no longer in use, nor is their use expected.

Dismissing the assumption that the central motivation behind collecting is financial, Pomian asserts that, while it might be true that some individuals collect solely for financial profit, the vast majority of collections are primarily interested in the collectable itself, while its value as a financial asset is merely viewed as a by-product of the object's meaning (Pomian, 1990, p. 9)⁹. This assumption is further supported by the history and development of the modern museum, as evident in codes of museum ethics.¹⁰

All further analyses of collections presented by Pomian text are based largely on this conclusion, which brings forth a series of questions in which both Pomian and I are interested: how is it possible that objects that are highly valued are not exchanged or

⁸ While there is much criticism to be made of the way Pomian indirectly defines art at this section, as a mere decorative element without any social or cultural role, I would like to give this criticism a rest for the sake of the continuity of the text. A further discussion about the unique status of the art object in relation to Curatorial Practice will follow in Chapter 3.

⁹ *"They (some collectors) think of art as a financial investment ... There is no logic to the way I collect ... I know rationally, as a collector I should be happy to present the items that I have because the more they are shown the more valuable they become. But I am not always happy to take things out of my collection"* (p. 248 in Appendix 1: Arnie Druck about the absence of financial motivation behind his collection)

¹⁰ Both the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums and the equivalent Museum and Gallery Act (1992) in the UK, from which museum laws in most Western countries draw, do not permit museums to sell any item of their collection, unless it is for the purpose of extending or managing the collection itself: *'Museum collections are held in public trust and may not be treated as a realisable asset. Money or compensation received from the deaccessioning and disposal of objects and specimens from a museum collection should be used solely for the benefit of the collection and usually for acquisitions to that same collection.'* (ICOM, Revised 2006, p. 2). Objects can only be replaced with other objects, and the money earned from selling collectable items cannot be used for any other purpose.

used? What is the basis on which this value is measured (especially if one considers that in many cases, such objects do not even have an aesthetic value or notable historical significance)? Why are these objects valued to the extent that so much fortune is dedicated to handle them and so many efforts invested in fighting for the right to put them on public display?

These questions may lead us to believe that humans might have an inherent tendency to hoard and collect, but Pomian refutes this argument, alluding to the fact that collections had a tremendous value not only in our current times and ideological constructs, but also in radically different social imaginaries. This 'dead-end' takes Pomian on a journey to the very beginning of history and to the exploration of other cultures in his attempt to understand what collections actually are. (Pomian, 1990, p. 11)¹¹

EMBARKING ON A TIME-JOURNEY

The first stop in this journey is the widespread habit, across centuries and cultures, of burying people with their goods. Archaeological research in this area supports Pomian's assumption that burial grounds might be the first evidence, and probably the root, for the habit of collecting.¹² Examples of this habit are vast, from leaders who were buried with replicas of their entire armies, horses and armour, and palaces built specifically to host burial objects, to the most mundane burial sites of what are conceived to have been ordinary community members.

All these examples stand in accordance with the same definition Pomian offers of collections: an assortment of items, removed from economic circulation that are no longer used for their original purpose and are put on display.¹³ In Pomian's definition,

¹¹ "... Even the telephone cards collection, I mean when I was a child, I used to use them – I never thought that they were valuable at all. When mobile-phones became popular, we all threw those cards away, and they almost disappeared from the shelves ... but actually the people who have created those objects have thought about them, and each of those little cards is full of meaning – it is a reflection of a certain time. It makes you think of all the things you have in your purse – you use them and you take them for granted. Maybe if we stopped thinking about them only in utilitarian terms we could discover another value that they have. Another meaning, and together all those objects can tell a whole story of historical development, it is quite amazing. I guess that every urge has its place and reason. I think collections are essential for curators to work from." (from p. 269-270 of Appendix 1; Yeala Hazut in response to my question about the meaning of collection to cultural heritage and curatorial practice and the role of curating in resurrecting the memory embedded in an object. Object, so it seems, seem to restore their meaning in the context of public displays, where they are allowed to be re-read. They become meaningful to a whole and highlight the relationship between individual and communal memories and identities. They therefore have the power of restoring viewers' agency in relation to their own identities.

¹² The extended history of the museum and of Curatorial Practice in Chapter 1 supports Pomian's assumption. This extension of the history of the collection, and with it, the history of Curatorial Practice, together with the possibility of collected objects to maintain a status in a relative position outside market dynamics (hence outside the symbolic order) allows to imagine the collection as the site for the emergence of *the curatorial*. This argument will be further developed in this chapter

¹³ Already with the notion of display, the field of *the curatorial* opens up. This underlines the umbilical connection between curating and the notion of the collection.

the display of such items might be directed to those living in this world or to those living in another (Pomian, 1990, p. 12). This, for Pomian, is the first link in an inherent connection he recognizes between the urge to collect and the possibility of being in touch with other, invisible worlds. In the case of burial sites, this invisible world is the world of the dead.

The next stop in Pomian's time-travel is Ancient Greece. There, the collection took the form of objects that were given as offerings to the Gods and placed within dedicated temples for their public display. The temple of Apollo at Delphi (originally a temple of the Goddess Gaia, built circa 510-323 BCE) is an example. The temple of Delphi hosted large collections of items that were considered 'sacred'. Interestingly, those temples, Pomian notes, ran according to specific rules made with regard to the handling of these objects. They included directions of use, display and destruction,¹⁴ and according to those rules, objects included in such collections were strictly kept out of circulation. They were not meant to be used; their only purpose was display. As such, they were a great source of curiosity, and attracted believers and tourists.¹⁵ Here again, their display was meant both for those living in this world, and the Gods, which were living in a parallel, invisible dimension.¹⁶

Following the origins of the collectable item, the customs of Roman rulers are examined via historical records that remain from the Roman Empire.¹⁷ There, objects of great value were kept in seats of power. Those objects were connected either to booty, gained in battles or in war, or objects that were offered as gifts, in a sort of ritual, where those in power exchanged them as a form of extravaganza. Rulers would put in constant effort to outbid others, risking their fortune and dignity (Pomian, 1990, p. 15); those who could offer the greatest number of, and most valuable, gifts, asserted their positions of power.

¹⁴ This bears resemblance to deaccessioning regulations stipulated by the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums and raises, once again, the similarities in public policies regarding the collectable item in public collections.

¹⁵ One might say that this concept resembles the modern notion of a museum, as well as contemporary-art-tourism trends.

¹⁶ It might be interesting to question the notion of invisibility at this opportunity, as I am not sure it would be accurate to think of the gods of ancient Greece as invisible gods. They were visible in the sense that they could be imagined; moreover, they were certainly of this world. Gods in general, even the Judeo-Christian God, are perceived as containing this world or are part of this world rather than belonging to another world, therefore the notion of the 'invisible' might be said to be related to the notion of the 'real' and the 'place'; they represent in language that which is real, but is beyond human representation.

¹⁷ Pomian refers here to the general legal and cultural rituals which are described in writings from the height of the Roman Empire (27 BC – 200BC). He does not give a range of dates; however, the texts that he quotes either mention the names of rulers or are assigned to writers from this range of dates. Such figures include Sulla (reigned circa. 81 BC), Julius Caesar (reigned 49-44 BC), Verres (politically active as a magistrate between 78 and 80 BC), Pliny the Elder (philosopher and author, an important figure in the city of Pompeii, born 23BC and died 79 BC) and Lucius Scipio (consul circa 190BC).

Pomian compares this idea with that of the potlatch of the North American Natives; however, points to a significant difference between the two: *'whereas in Rome dignity was associated with the ability to spend money in exchange for utterly useless objects, dignity for the Kwakiutl people, for example, is linked to the ability to give blankets, chests, canoes or food to others without asking for anything in return'* (Pomian, 1990, p. 16). This difference will gain more significance as we return to it at a later stage of this analysis but, for now, it should be mentioned that Pomian traces the origins of the private collection to this époque (Pomian, 1990, p. 15).

Our journey through time continues into the Middle Ages,¹⁸ where relics and sacred objects were collected because they were believed to have some mystical or direct connection with the Christian God. These items were amassed and displayed mainly within monasteries and churches. Pomian describes a system by which the number of relics and sacred objects a church would have under its custody would stand in direct relation to its value as a sacred place of worship.¹⁹

The value of such objects – especially relics (parts which once belonged to bodies of saints) – was believed to have been derived from a power taken from the soul that they once used to inhabit: *'this object retained all the grace with which the saint had been invested during his lifetime, which explains how a relic was able to sanctify the place where it was situated just as effectively as the saint himself would have done'* (Pomian, 1990, p. 17). A similar tourism as that described in relation to the temple of Delphi is also depicted here, whereby believers would travel long distances to have a chance of touching, seeing and being in the presence of such relics; similarly, crusades

¹⁸ Again, Pomian does not mention any specific historical times to define 'Middle Ages'. However, he speaks of the cult of saints, which suggests that he refers to customs that were prevalent between the 10th and 13th century, taking into account that the first pope to be proclaimed as a saint was Pope John XV in 993.

¹⁹ The direct relationship between the accumulation of sacred objects and political and religious power is further supported by medieval historians that describe the role of arts and crafts, especially in the course of the Romanesque and the Gothic periods (11th-13th century). Robert A. Scott, in *The Gothic Enterprise*, explains: *'The links between art and sovereignty were multilayered. For one thing, it was important to a king's persona and fitting for his role as gift-giver, whether to God or humans, that beautiful works should flow from him. As we have seen, this act of sacrifice required lavishness because the intent was to overwhelm the recipient, with the hope of enhancing the giver's influence. The splendor of these gifts publicly displayed a king's ability to ensure a benevolent and protective divine presence within his kingdom'* (Scott, 2003, p. 50). By art, here, Scott is not referring to our contemporary notion of it but rather to crafted objects that were not meant for use but were meant to be given as sacrifices to the Church. Scott reinforces Pomian's claim about the direct relationship between objects of ritual and realms of transcendence by referencing Emile Durkheim's early research into the notion of the sacred: *'Even though it (the sacred or the divine) is imagined as being incorporeal, people do not experience it in this way. Through their words and actions, they clearly seem to regard the sacred force as being as tangible, as concrete, as the wood, stone, and metal of the temples or the statues and other objects they believe the sacred has come to occupy. However, people's belief that the divine is both omnipresent and also localized in certain spaces and objects means that the force is external to places where it alights. That is, it does not inhere in the places and objects to which it attaches; rather, it enters them from without and above'* (Scott, 2003, p. 148). The hunt for relics and saint corpses is also examined in Patrick Geary's 'Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics' in *The Social Life of Things Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Arjun Appadurai ed., 2003). While Geary offers a reading of such relics as commodities that were part of an immense network of exchange, he also describes their centrality to contemporaneous political and religious constructs.

frequently had the goal of obtaining such objects. For Pomian, these objects affirm his thesis with regard to the collection's meaning. They had a role in forming a relationship between this world and other, invisible worlds; those of transcendence which had the power to connect the bread in the Mass with the body of Jesus once again.

The next stop in our time journey is royal treasuries, especially those of Seventeenth and Eighteenth century Europe. Here, we are already coming closer to the notion of contemporary collections as those treasuries became the foundation on which modern museum collections were built.²⁰

Similar to objects collected by Roman rulers, royal collections were a means to demarcate social class and display power.²¹ Objects in such collections were not used; they were hidden from the general public and displayed only on special occasions in which, most of the time, only people of the same social order participated. Surprisingly, most objects which were crafted especially for those in powerful positions were not displayed at all but, rather, kept locked in specified storage areas (Pomian, 1990, p. 18).

Pomian further develops the ideas presented above and concludes that collections, since the dawn of history, had a specific cultural role or function to act as a bridge between what he terms the 'visible' and the 'invisible'. While the term 'visible' might be comprehended as 'whatever can be seen', Pomian's definition of the 'invisible' refers not only to that which cannot be perceived, but also to that which can *no longer* be perceived. Hence, Pomian's 'invisible' can be imagined not only across space or distance (here and there; virtual and actual) but also across time (now and then).²²

²⁰ Pomian does not mention that the origins of such collections can be traced to the Italian Renaissance, where patrons have collected valuable items as signs of their power and magnificence. Rather, he connects this tendency to the traditions of the Middle Ages, as some of the texts he quotes are from the late 14th Century. However, one should mention that, in the Renaissance, (15th and 16th centuries), following the religious wars within the Christian world that destabilized the Catholic Church as a predominant system of power, there was a shift from the religious perception of the object as holding power in itself towards the perception of an object as a symbol of power or knowledge. This is parallel to a cultural shift which gradually placed human achievement at the centre of its ideology (Burke, 2014, pp. 190-191). Art objects also went through a gradual secularization process (ibid. pp. 250), while, at the same time, the development of the market led to the privatization of art commissions (ibid. pp.193-194). The confiscation of divine power from the Church, shifting towards civil, secular organizations, was part of the change that propelled the paradigm shift recognised with the notion of 'Humanism'. These tendencies were further developed in the approaches of the 'Enlightenment' movement, so that much of the modern cultural and social structure, especially in relation to collectable objects, derived from ideological approaches that started to develop with the wake of the Italian Renaissance. The influence of Roman customs has been the background upon which such cultural paradigm shifts largely emerged.

²¹ The confiscation of royal treasuries is in itself an act of power manifested through objects, as exemplified in the establishment of the Louvre in 1793. The opening of the public museum in the locus of the royal palace was celebrated as an act of civil occupation which demonstrated the success of the French Revolution.

²² According to Pomian, objects perform their role as bridges to the invisible through their display of 'entities' living in those invisibles planes. For example, burial objects are displayed both for those dead

While, for Pomian, all these collections perform the same role, I contend that, throughout his essay, he is in fact describing several different approaches towards objects and their symbolic meaning or use.

DEFINING THE THREE APPROACHES TO OBJECTS

Tracing Pomian's description, a change in the dominant approach towards objects can be noted when he starts to describe the customs that were practiced during the height of the Roman Empire. While Pomian defines the collectable object as an object that had been put outside of circulation, it seems, in Roman times, that objects were not taken out of market exchange mechanisms. On the contrary, their constant circulation within such systems is what rendered them valuable. While objects could be offered as 'gifts' to the gods of Ancient Greece (and those gifts made up the collection), here, the gifts that made up collections were a private affair, taking the collectable object away from the civil realm into an intricate system of value exchange, in which a certain class dominated. Unlike the competitive behaviour typical to the potlatch, which is directed towards the general good of a group and a certain responsibility to the other, Roman 'costumes', as they are described here, are concerned only with the accumulation of self-value through the accumulation of valuables.

Another point that needs to be made is that objects in such Roman collections were not displayed, either for the pleasure of those living in this world or those in another, invisible world. They were made visible mainly for those who participated in this system of exchange as a display of personal influence and power (Pomian, 1990, p. 16). Therefore it would be difficult to think of them as bridges to an 'invisible', as Pomian does.²³

and for those living and, in this way, form some sort of direct connection between the dead and the living; objects in temples in Ancient Greece are displayed both for the people and for the gods, hence forming a direct connection between the gods and the people. Up until this point in history, the bridge between the two worlds was assisted by display and the sense of vision. If the entities in this world and an invisible world are looking at the same object, it is as if they can see each other through those objects, similar to the common romantic notion of two lovers apart looking at the same moon, which thus connects them. However, in Roman times, objects were not bridges to a parallel realm but to a different time, as they acted as proof or reminders of conquest or victory. According to Pomian, those objects form a bridge to a different, invisible time. However, one can note that the objects are no longer for display, so the senses do not play a part in the connection between the two worlds; the connection is only a symbolic one, and therefore the terms 'visible' or 'invisible' here seem out of place. Collections of relics in churches have direct connections to God through the body of a saint. The saint is seen as a part of God himself, especially when the relics are of Jesus, as in many cases in the Middle Ages. Here, again, the display of the objects is not the main avenue through which the connection is formed. The sense of touch is more dominant in this connection; not only direct touch, but also touch in the sense of presence – being in the same physical realm as God. Here again, the objects are not bridges to an invisible world but are remains of the invisible world within this world. Interestingly enough, Pomian does not explain how modern collections form a bridge to an invisible.

²³ Noteworthy here is Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* (1950) who researched the custom of exchanging objects in various archaic societies. His research was ground-breaking in its critical analysis, and included the North American 'potlatch' and the complex nature of the Roman customs of gift exchange. While entering

One might argue that, while collections in Roman times were private and therefore might have had a different role in society, collections which belonged to churches during the Middle Ages were public, and, therefore, may mark a return to an ancient approach towards the public display of collectable objects. However, a closer reading of the dominant perception of the collectable object at the time reveals something quite different. Firstly, as Geary asserts, even relics and other objects seen as sacred to the church were in constant circulation and exchange. Although they were displayed as part of rituals and as markers of social, economic and political power, they were not considered part of public collections, but were in the possession of the Church (Geary, 1986 and Scott, 2003).

Moreover, there are further, fundamental differences in how such objects were perceived during the Middle Ages, and how they were perceived before: objects that were displayed in burial sites from prehistoric times and early Mesopotamian cultures, and the objects displayed in the temple of Delphi, were man-made and were not considered to have any powers in and of themselves. At least according to the evidence brought forth by Pomian, objects placed in burial sites were not believed to have the power to resurrect the dead, cure diseases etc. In the same manner, objects that were displayed in Greek temples were not considered sacred because they had super-natural powers. They were considered sacred, in the original sense of the word as 'distinct' or 'separate'.²⁴ They were indeed distinct and separate because, as objects, they did not belong because they had lost a status of ownership: they were not owned

into the intricate details of such rituals is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to mention Mauss as a prime influence both on Baudrillard's writings and on the understanding of exchange mechanisms under the title of 'gifts' which were, in fact, a means of assigning debt, and hence power, to the opponent (Mauss, 2002, p. 12). While Mauss' analysis gives a complex image of such rituals, he too, suggests that systems of power reflected in rituals of gift-giving may have changed with the development of the Semitic, Greek and Roman cultures (ibid, p. 61). Also, it is important to mention that while this brief summary attempts to understand different approaches to collectables, it does not deny that several approaches might have existed at the same time. However, ideological shifts and cultural changes point to a changing dominant ideology in each of these time periods.

²⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy discusses the original meaning of the word 'sacred' in *The Ground of the Image* (Nancy, 2005), explaining how 'sacred' is always confused with the term 'religious' when, in fact, its original meaning is something is made distinct, moved aside, or cut off. This also corresponds with the original meaning of the word in Hebrew; *Kadosh* (קדוש) – sacred – is the opposite of 'mundane' or 'everyday' and it simply notes a separateness. On a practical level, to 'sanctify' something simply means to treat it differently; to take it out of the context of the everyday and into a different social context. As the understanding of Curatorial Practice develops in the chapters to come, where it will be defined as 'context', this idea of the 'sacred' might point to the role of the curator in constructing social or symbolic orders. *The curatorial* hence could be defined as the realm of the 'sacred' and curatorial practice as the management of the 'sacred'. In this sense it opens an array of discussion around the spiritual or religious roles of curators in ancient cultures. While this is an enquiry which is beyond the scope of this research, it will be re-visited, in its potential to expand the history and meaning of Curatorial Practice, while at the same time point to a possible directions towards which this research may develop in its future incarnations.

and could not be owned, hence they were completely removed from any type of circulation or exchange.²⁵

Since those objects did not belong to anyone, yet were displayed, they could be seen as belonging to everyone. While they were offered as gifts to the gods (who, in the Greek tradition, were understood as the personification of different forces of nature), they were considered to belong to the natural world. In relation to the definition of the word 'object' as something which is subordinate to the act of a subject, they were actually divested of their status as objects altogether²⁶ and therefore remained as entities of 'in-between'. I suggest that this is what has lent them the position of objects of curiosity. As such, they performed the role of a bridge to a different reality, a reality that lies beyond the social realm; the ability to experience a connection to a world which is beyond representation as part of a community is what made those objects a source of social consolidation.

A similar role can be said to be assigned to burial objects. Objects that have lost their owner become objects removed from the relationship of possession (by extension, out of the social) and therefore were automatically placed outside of exchange mechanisms.²⁷ As such, they lost their status as objects as they were no longer items that could be used or acted upon; they were separated and 'sacred' like their dead owner.

The owner, on the other hand, loses his status as subject at the moment of death. The cadaver also belongs nowhere, hovering between its past as a subject and its present as an object. No longer a member of society, the dead enter this same world beyond social exchange. Both 'body' and the 'object' that used to belong to the 'body', become part of the same order of things: those that cannot be classified as subjects nor objects;²⁸ thus it made sense to bury them together. In cases where such objects were

²⁵ This can be seen as either the cause or the effect of these objects being sacred, and for the sake of this argument, it does not matter. Their absence from financial circulation also meant that they were part of a different and distinct social exchange apart from the everyday. In my attempt to imagine what their meaning could be, I think of them as entities frozen in time, and this is, I argue, what gave them their 'aura' as objects of curiosity that attracted attention and thought.

²⁶ I would note here that, in my understanding, things that are not categorized in the subject/object relationship are also outside of any linguistic (symbolic) representation. Language (the symbolic order) is built exactly on this dichotomy (Subject>verb>object as the basic construction of a sentence) and cannot make sense without it.

²⁷ At this point, I would like to suggest that in the case of war, the idea of confiscating objects could be seen as related to modes and rituals of occupation. If we agree that the exclusion of objects from circulation was a means of maintaining the memory of the dead out of the realm of exchange, their assets, frozen in time in their continuous presence outside of the social realm, mark their owner's absence. Confiscating objects and keeping them in circulation means that new forms of possession erase the memory of the enemy as his memory is assimilated within the social order of the rival community. The circulation and exchange of such objects could be seen as a symbolic act of rendering their deaths forgettable.

²⁸ Here, I refer the reader back to the notion of the 'cadaver' that is offered in the analysis of *the curatorial* in Chapter 1. Maurice Blanchot understands the ontology of the image in relation to the

displayed, they were, once again, objects without ownership, like bodies without souls, and therefore could indeed become a bridge: an ambiguous entity which flickers between a 'here' and a 'there';²⁹ between life and death.

So, I contend that, while objects in Medieval times were thought to have a power of their own, almost as a denial of the absence of the saint from which the relics were taken, items in ancient collections, at least according to Pomian's description, were not conceived as powerful. They were conceived sacred merely by the inability, or lack of will, to categorize them within the distinctive positions relevant to object and subject relationships.³⁰

In all these cases, the collected item performs the role of a bridge between an 'invisible' and a 'visible'. However, in ancient times, the bridge remained a portal between worlds; flickering, unfixed, its destination unknown and in many cases untouchable or inconceivable,³¹ whereas, since Roman times, the bridge was confused with the actual realm of the invisible. That is, those objects that were meant to be reminders of something that is uncontainable and un-representable were seen as the invisible itself.

This confusion, I suggest, has been apparent in Western Culture since that time. It has tendencies which are related both to institutionalized religion³² and to secular points

strangeness of the corpse. In *The Two Versions of the Imaginary*, Blanchot thinks of the image as a residue which is not quite placed and therefore haunts the mind. He speaks of the status of the cadaver within the social realm: 'What we call mortal remains escapes common categories. Something is there before us which is not really the living person, nor is it any reality at all. It is neither the same as the person who was alive, nor is it another person, nor is it anything else. What is there, with the absolute calm of something that has found its place, does not, however, succeed in being convincingly here' (Blanchot, 1982, p. 256). While Blanchot is interested in the realm of the imaginary, he also considers the ontology of the image and its possible relationship to the object. This triggers questions about the relationship between objects, images and memory (or, indeed, the ontology of the visible and the invisible) as central to our current cultural memory constructs, especially within online systems of representation. While I will touch upon this topic in the VAINS case study, I choose not to enter this discussion more fully as it takes me upon a journey through a field of enquiry (that of the image) which I have chosen not to approach in this specific investigation. However, it is certainly something to consider when extending this research in the future.

²⁹ In some burial sites, actual soldiers, horses and other living things which were subject to a king's or a warrior's will, held the same position as objects, and I would argue that this is exactly because they were not conceived to have an agency of their own; they were subordinated to the agency of another subject, and therefore, in a sense, could be seen as 'objects': they were entities who were acted upon, rather than actors in the world. While this may seem cruel and by no means acceptable in our contemporary social context, this might help us to understand the logic and see that ceremonies involving the burial of whole troops with their leaders answer the same logic and the same social rules as those described above.

³⁰ The distinction between the different approaches towards objects, then, might be said to have its roots in the notion of possession, which will be discussed in more detail on the second part of this chapter.

³¹ Usually the destination to which these bridges point is either towards the real or towards death.

³² I would like to make a distinction here, between *religion* and *institutionalized religion*. Religion, if we examine it as much as possible as a pure practice, which is inherent and inseparable from cultural development, is not necessarily always in line with the institutional representation that it receives. Rather, I suggest that religion can be defined as a general term that describes a merging of an ethical theory and a related practice. Religious practices are usually addressed to individuals as means of manifesting the ideology in which one chooses to believe. The manifestation of religious belief on a personal level can take many forms and shapes but there is usually a constitution of values and ways of being in the world that supports the theoretical ideology of one's personal belief system. Institutionalized religion is one of many possible manifestations of religion as an idea or way of acting in the world. It

of view: from a religious point of view, these objects are perceived as having a magical or divine power in the world. From a secular perspective, this tendency means that nothing is sacred; nothing is separated from the realm of language – there is nothing that is not categorized, departmentalized and assigned an exchange value. While those two tendencies might look like opposite agendas, they are in fact two sides of the same coin and originate from the inability of humans, as speaking creatures, to maintain an on-going encounter with the real.³³ They both derive from a fear³⁴ of that which cannot be symbolized and quantified and, essentially, from a fear of death.

The perception of objects as part of social and linguistic structures is the basis of how we perceive collected objects and art works to this day. However, I posit that objects could have had a completely different function as suggested by historical examples, arguing that it is in those spaces where this kind of functionality survived that curiosity still exists,³⁵ and spaces of *the curatorial* are bound to emerge.

To conclude this section, I offer a distinction between three different approaches towards collected objects that can be traced through Pomian's description of collections:-

The first approach treats the object as a bridge to a certain invisible; it is a door to a different dimension in time and space, which does not answer to rules of the social and symbolic orders. In this approach, objects are left in an unrecognized category between the visible and invisible and serve as a reminder for both life and death as manifestations of that which is unspeakable. Here, the object acts as a membrane, an

refers usually to a multiplicity of individuals, and attempts to provide religious ideology with governance capabilities through the development of what is usually take the form of a complex legal system with forms of reward and punishment and a hierarchical structure that supports a certain social order. I am well aware that this definition is general and might even be applied to the nation state, science and capitalism. I do not see a belief in God as a necessary prerequisite for the definition of religion. In the context of this text, when I speak about attitudes towards objects and how they are perceived by 'religion', I refer only to the institutionalized perception of religion.

³³ In Lacanian terms which will be thoroughly introduced in parallel to the analysis of Baudrillard's text.

³⁴ The word 'fear' here is not quite adequate. Using the word 'anxiety' troubles me as it has its distinct definition in psychoanalysis, with which my point does not quite correspond. 'Trembling', in its translation form Hebrew, could have been a more accurate description. I interpret 'trembling' as a mixture of awe, deep respect and the inability to contain an encounter to the point that the emotion experienced verges the borders of terror. However, the word 'trembling' is already occupied with Søren Kierkegaard's notion of 'trembling' as relating to faith and to the story of the binding of Isaac, within his work 'Fear and Trembling' (Kierkegaard, 1983). While Kierkegaard relates the idea of faith to memory through the notion of 'trembling', and while I acknowledge that the use of the word 'trembling' is necessarily occupied by institutionalized religion, this note is to point to a direction where this word could be read in a different context, maintaining a direct connection with the inherent fear of existence.

³⁵ Generally speaking, today we still use objects as items embodying the memory of the body which once held them and used them and, in this sense, objects are still a reminder of that which is absent, similar to a cadaver. When I look at my grandfather's scarf, the object that I stole from his closet, when I was 12, much before the time of his death, I find it almost impossible to imagine how this familiar object, animated by the loved one, is no longer in use. I will return to this notion of the object of a loved one, when addressing then notion of possession.

open wound in the symbolic or social realm, which is kept as a live memorandum to what lies beyond representation.³⁶ This approach will be referred to as the **oscillating approach**.

In the second approach, objects are perceived as having invisible powers; this may explain beliefs in magical or enchanted items and, as will be explained in chapter 3, this approach contains the status of the art object in society. These objects do not function as bridges to an invisible, as they are believed to host the invisible in themselves. This approach will be referred to as the **sanctifying approach** to objects.

In the third approach, the object is conceived as a symbol of value or power. In this category, objects seem to endow their owners with certain powers or graces. In this approach, the object does not have a spiritual role connecting its owner to the real. On the contrary, the object is 'taken out' of the real and assigned a purely symbolic meaning.³⁷ This approach will be referred to as the **symbolic approach** to objects.³⁸

It is important to clarify that these three approaches have always existed in parallel and there is no way of ascribing an *époque* to the way an object was perceived. However, history, and the way it has been written, tells us the story of dominant ideologies and so, through an understanding of these attitudes towards objects, it might be possible to understand the general cultural tendency of a time.

³⁶ In this sense, it is important to understand that the object does not represent the wound, but *is* in fact the wound. It is in itself the portal - it does not represent that which is absent; it is a reminder of absence itself. To return to earlier understandings of *the curatorial*, this resonates with the semantic field of 'the blank'.

³⁷ As it will be supported later by Baudrillard's analysis, the symbolic approach which dominated in Roman times, but also later in the Renaissance and the 17th and 18th centuries, characterizes 'the collection' on the basis of which modern museums have been established, and therefore it a prevalent approach in contemporary culture as well.

³⁸ Sometimes, such objects still hold a unique position as documents or reminders of past times. Nevertheless, often, their perception as such allows them to become not bridges but, rather, romantic and nostalgic remains, as long as they are owned for the private purpose of an individual. I argue (and this argument will be further supported by analysis of Baudrillard's text) that their only possibility of maintaining a value as a bridge through different times is by their confiscation from the private realm, and from relationships of possession.

THE OBJECT, THE THING & PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS

In the analysis offered in this chapter, which relates to Baudrillard's definitions of the collected object and the collector, the term 'object' is used within the field of Baudrillard's thought. The Lacanian definition of 'object' seems to be an appropriate point of departure, which will set us on the right course for understanding Baudrillard's ideas. Baudrillard's '**collectable object**' or '**object of desire**' can be said to have the same initial structure or appearance as the '**object petit**' in Lacan's discourse, which he defined as emerging from the fixation of '**the thing**' within the realm of language: in Lacan's words: *'The Sache is clearly the thing, a product of industry and of human action as governed by language. ... The word is there in a reciprocal position to the extent that it articulates itself, that it comes to explain itself beside the thing, to the extent also that an action - which is itself dominated by language, indeed by command - will have separated out this object and given it birth'* (Lacan, 1996, p. 45).

Here, '**the thing**' is the non-signified matter from which an object may emerge in relation to a subject. The object emerges from 'the thing' through the act of **demand**; through the act of assigning it with meaning or, in other words, through its incorporation within the system of the symbolic order. This is why

Collecting, as it has been established, is a very ancient habit, so it would be interesting to ask, just as Pomian does: what on earth possesses people to collect objects endlessly? Is it possible to draw a line that connects the cultural perception of objects as they are expressed in different époques, and the personal urge to collect? Can we therefore think of different types of collectors, as there are different types of collections? How would the personal understanding of objects elaborate our understanding of a cultural obsession with objects? And, most importantly, how can this analysis define the role of the curator?

Introduction to Baudrillard's Collection

Baudrillard's 'Systems of Collecting' (1994) can be read as a search for the motivation behind the phenomenon of collecting. Here, one should note that the mere definition of collection as a private, subjective preoccupation of an individual, as it is suggested in Baudrillard's analysis, is necessarily related to the symbolic approach to objects. As we shall see, this approach still maintains its position as the predominant approach of our time, and I contend that this is true in many expressions of modernity throughout history.³⁹

³⁹ **Modernity**, here, does not relate to the époque that anticipated and followed the Industrial Revolution, whose earlier roots can be traced to the Renaissance, but to a general tendency that rears its head across different times in history, as it has been suggested by Sanford Kwinter in his illuminating historical review *Architectures of Time: Towards a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture* (2002): '*Modernity, then, clearly must be more than a mere, benign synonym for 'new' or 'contemporary', for the problems it raises conceivably can be addressed to any work in any historical period. [...] a distinction must therefore be made between the "critical" task of many modernizing or avant-garde movements and the more fundamental project of modernity, whether vowed or not, of a "transvaluation of all values". The first project addresses at best the specific institutions and systems of representation in which history and power had become incarnate; the second addresses their very conditions of possibility.*' (Kwinter, 2002, pp. 35-36). I choose to use this definition of modernity as I find that while reading the history of my profession, I could indeed detect shifts across time that seem to have a common ground, which, as Kwinter suggests, might point to a 'preliminary descriptive ontology of modernity itself'. Furthermore, it allowed me to reconcile some of

'the thing' is accounted for by Lacan in the Pre-Conscious order; that is, before one can determine self-awareness in relation to it. The subject can only determine his position in relation to an object because subjectivity also appears in this divide of the real into object and subjects, through the act of language. This is why Lacan says, in a different context, that: *'the symbol first manifests itself as the killing of the thing, and this death results in the endless perpetuation of the subject's desire'* (Lacan, 2006, p. 319); it is the absence of 'the thing' which is the source of the subject's desire for the object.

Desire is directed towards an object as a temporary fixation but, in fact, can never be satisfied because it can be interpreted as a nostalgia for that which is on the threshold of the symbolic.

Later in the chapter, I will seek to stretch Lacan's object beyond its definition as emerging from the surface of language and action, and provide a perspective through which a distinction between object and subject cannot be maintained exclusively within the linguistic model of subject > verb (Action) > object. Thusly, I strive to depict an alternative relationship between 'self' and

Baudrillard examines the relationship between the collector and the collected object; a relationship which reveals the meaning of the collected object as a private commodity as well as a social agent.⁴⁰ He opens with a definition of the word 'object' in relation to desire: *'Among the various meanings of the French word objet, the Littre dictionary gives this: "Anything which is the cause or subject of a passion. Figuratively and most typically: the loved object".'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 7), inevitably embarking us on a psychoanalytical⁴¹ journey into the collector's mind. In using this definition as a starting point he sets the terms for examining the collection as a substitute for the 'real'.

Baudrillard follows the relationship between an object's value and its meaning in Marxist terms.⁴² The starting position in Baudrillard's analysis is the examination of its use value.⁴³ While usually an object's exchange value⁴⁴ is stipulated by its

the inner contradictions I feel exist in critical examinations of modern and postmodern art as, many times, I found that they were not different at all; only using different representational schemes. The task of 'transvaluation' as Kwinter puts it, seem to me apparent both in modernist and post-modernist tendencies.

⁴⁰ In Baudrillard's general system of thought, Baudrillard's analysis of objects' status in society points to the object being the motivation for many social acts, and is therefore seen by Baudrillard as an agent in its own right. To put it more explicitly, the desire for the object perpetuates various social acts (most notably acts of violence). Hence, in Baudrillard's logic, an inversion between the direction of *command*, the object and the subject is brought about by desire. This logic had come to its ultimate development in Baudrillard's *Fatal Strategies* (1990), a book depicting a society that is completely controlled by objects. This will be discussed further in the section dedicated to the notion of possession.

⁴¹ The dictionary offers a variety of definitions to the word 'object', not all of which are to do with desire. Baudrillard is therefore referring to a very specific understanding of objects, and his choice to use this definition, and ignore the others, point to a specific reading of the relationship between the collector and the object, which is anchored and thought through a psychoanalytical lens. Hence, terms in 'System of Collecting' as well as in this attempt to read it, are defined in the light of a Lacanian vocabulary. 'The Real', 'The Symbolic', 'The Imaginary' and other such terms, are defined according to Dylan Evans' *Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychology* (1996)..

⁴² Baudrillard's contribution to the development of the Marxist theory of commodities is the introduction of the surplus value of the object as a sign, and its relationship to the exchange value of an object (hence 'sign value'). The terms that will be used in the context of this research to discuss the value of commodities are defined according to Richard J. Lane's explications presented in *Routledge Critical Thinkers: Jean Baudrillard* (2000); Marx's value forms are discussed in the first Volume of *Capital* (Marx, 1982, pp. 125-138).

⁴³ In classical and Marxist economics, the term **Use Value** is used to describe the value of a commodity in relation to its utility. In Baudrillard's theory this refers to the functional value of an object; its instrumental purpose.

⁴⁴ In political and Marxist economy, **Exchange Value** is the object's economic value. In this text, exchange value will be used to refer to the commodity's monetary value (price).

'object' in its relationship to what Lacan would term 'the real'.

In order to understand the concept of 'the real', one needs to understand the three realms that Lacan identifies within the structure of subjectivity, and the way they will be used throughout this text. **The symbolic order**, in this context, includes everything within the realm of language; as Dylan Evans explains in *Introductory Dictionary to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (1996), Lacan had a vast interest in linguistic structures and how they determine subjective relations: *'Lacan's discussion of language is dominated by references to Heideggerian phenomenology and, more importantly, to the anthropology of language Language is thus seen as structuring the social laws of exchange, as a symbolic pact'* (Evans, 1996, p. 99).

Hence, the symbolic order refers to language not only as an internal system of representing reality via signs but also as a social pact to communicate. The symbolic order, in my reading, includes all possible social transactions and exchanges. It does not only refer to the realm of linguistics (words and sentences) but also to cultural symbols. As such, money and monetary value function in a similar manner as symbols or signifiers.

The real is defined as anything that stands beyond the ability to communicate itself through language. It is the un-representable and the in-expressible. It therefore many times read as everything that exists beyond the symbolic order – as defined above.

The imaginary order emerges from what Lacan terms 'the mirror stage' – the moment in which the subject recognizes his own image in the mirror. The notion of 'identification' or

use, in the process Baudrillard describes, a separation between functionality and value means that an object's exchange value is no longer related to use per se but is dependent on other faculties of the object and, in a Lacanian turn, this is understood as the symbolic meaning of an object. This gives rise to the notion of sign value,⁴⁵ where an object's exchange value is determined by its meaning rather than its functionality.

Baudrillard's text explains how items are divested of their function and valued for their symbolic meaning, forming the basic construct of Baudrillard's 'Hyperreal'. The Hyperreal is a term introduced by Baudrillard to describe an enclosed social system, a reality of its own, not based on signified from the perceived reality. In such a reality, commodities are valued only for their sign value rather than their use. It is a world that blurs the boundary between simulation and reality through the notion of the 'simulacra': the representation, or simulation, of simulation.⁴⁶ The Hyperreal is an important term for this research because it is affiliated with the notion of 'virtual reality'. With the development of digital and internet-based communication systems, there is a certain anxiety surrounding the notion of a world lived only in the reality of the screen – detaching us from any relationship to the real. This anxiety informs many of the dialectics around the development of such technologies.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ In sociology and economics, the term **Sign Value** was developed to refer to the value that the object has as a sign in terms of its surplus, i.e. social, meaning. In Baudrillard's theory, an object acquires a Sign Value when it is considered in relation to a system of objects. The sign value is detached completely from the use value.

⁴⁶ In this sense, collectable objects, according to Baudrillard (i.e. objects kept only for their sign value) and the belief that such objects can endow their possessors with prestige, invert the subject/object relationship. The object becomes a sign, giving its possessors the sign value that they covet.

⁴⁷ Ross Parry, in his book *Recoding the Museum*, gives an overview of the dialectics surrounding the integration of digital technologies in the management of collections and displays within museums. Paul Virilio's work, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, also expresses a certain critique of such systems of

'recognition' is therefore a seminal aspect of the imaginary order and can be defined as the 'action' attributed to the subject within this realm. It is the realm of images, and therefore falls within the definition of the symbolic order; however, it cannot be confined to a grammatical notion of language.

The imaginary in Lacan's thought is related to the notion of the fantasy, and therefore can manifest itself as a form of compensation mechanism, whose role is to blur any discrepancies between the symbolic order and the perceived reality. The imaginary order will not be referred to directly in this text; however, one may read the analysis of Rauschenberg's ready-made that is presented in Chapter 3, as a playground of the imaginary order. This clarifies the way in which the imaginary order is related to the object of desire.

The notion of the imaginary is used in this research in a sociological sense, referring to society as a whole. Here, the imaginary (or the social imaginary) is the sum of shared symbols, images, values, mythologies and prototypes from which a named society draws. (Cornelius Castoriadis' definition presented in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1975).

The notions of 'the object' and 'the thing' in relation to 'the subject' will be put within a different framework of definitions by the end of this chapter. The object will thus emerge as a product of perception, rather than a symbolic configuration of the real, as it is often understood.

This approach will be further developed in Chapter 4 as it has

In Baudrillard's conclusion, an object's ability to substitute another object, forming a symbolic relationship between different objects, also means that objects have a central role in rendering identity, time, life and death, meaningful and manageable: *'In this respect, the objects in our lives, as distinct from the way we make use of them at a given moment, represent something much more, something profoundly related to subjectivity: for while the object is a resistant material body, it is also, simultaneously, a mental realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is governed by myself alone. It is all my own, the object of my passion'* (Ibid, p.7). Thus, in its ambiguity, being between a body and an abstract intellectual concept, the object, in Baudrillard's view, reflects back upon the collector a hope for a stable internal reality, where the collector gains a notion of control over life (and therefore also death) through the object. Collecting thus becomes a form of self-preservation⁴⁸.

Baudrillard's articulation of the relationship between collectors and objects reveals the inner architecture of the collector's obsession, as it will be discussed in the next sections. However, it does not recognise a fundamental difference between the desire of the collector and that of any other consumer who purchases an object for its sign

simulacra. Baudrillard's work itself, to a certain extent (and specifically with *Fatal Strategies*, which I referred to earlier), expresses an anxiety about losing ourselves to a world of simulation.

⁴⁸ "... major parts of the collection are indeed - I feel - expressions of myself as a human being. The collection is a huge part of me, undoubtedly, in every level. Also many of the things that fill up my time are related to the collection; I travel to specific places because I know I might find something relevant to one of my collections there. I invest a lot of time in researching the items that I collect. This occupies a great deal of my time. It is in my blood, I am completely driven by this curiosity" (collector Arnie Druck on p.253, Appendix 1) "After a few weeks of working together, I remember that Arnie did not feel very comfortable with the idea that I have spent so much time in his collection ... I realized how private his collection was. I understood how sensitive I need to be. I realized I am dealing not only with objects but with a person's sense of self ... working on the exhibition it became very clear that my curatorial choices would shape not only an exhibition but a new way of representing Arnie's personal story to the world" (Yeala Hazut on the process of working with Druck on exhibition and cataloguing his collection on p.261, Appendix 1).

proved to have more currency in my search for spaces of *the curatorial*

value.⁴⁹ The text thus highlights Western Consumer Society as a 'culture of collecting'.

IN DETAIL 1: MEANING VERSUS FUNCTION

There is, however, a difference between the collected item and any other object purchased for its sign value, and that is the relationship between the object's usability and its meaning. The characterization of this relationship in an inverse-ratio equation is what connects Pomian's understanding of the collectable to that of Baudrillard.

Pomian describes the process thus: *'firstly, a semiophore fulfils its ultimate purpose when it becomes a collection piece; secondly and most importantly, usefulness and meaning are mutually exclusive, as the more an object is charged with meaning, the less useful it is, and vice versa'* (Pomian, 1990, p. 30).

Baudrillard, in a slightly different manner, writes: *'Thus any given object can have two functions: it can be utilized, or it can be possessed. The first function has to do with the subject's project of asserting practical control with the real world, the second with an enterprise of abstract mastery whereby the subject seeks to assert himself as an autonomous totality outside the world'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 8).⁵⁰

Both Baudrillard and Pomian identify an important turning point in the life of an object that greatly changes the cultural approach towards it. While the meaning of everyday objects might move between functionality and appearance (or symbolic meaning), the collected object, they suggest, is a pure signifier, a semiotic symbol, or in Pomian's words, a 'semiophore'. Both Pomian and Baudrillard agree that disfunctionality is a necessary characteristic of the collectable object. However, I am interested in asking whether such an opposition indeed exists, if we take into account other approaches to objects, rather than the dominant, symbolic one.

In More Detail: Function Versus Use

For such an alternative analysis, let us take an object – a knife, for example. The knife is designed to cut through matter, therefore the knife's function or use can be defined

⁴⁹ In contemporary consumer society, objects' values are very much dependent on their sign value; branding and positioning are central concerns in marketing and publicity. Examples can be drawn from every product that we consume, even food. Tesco, Sainsbury and other large retailers sell similar products in different packages to create a variety of price. 'Value' products as opposed to 'Finest' products are similar in many aspects, only the packaging and branding of the products is different. To a certain extent, products are bought for the way that they are presented and reflect on the buyer's financial ability, which then corresponds with a social position and self-image.

⁵⁰ Baudrillard's definition differs from Pomian's, in mentioning 'possession' as the other possible extreme in the axis on which objects move in relation to subjects.

through its act: 'to cut'. If an individual decides to use the knife as a bookmark, theoretically, the object will be divested of its function. However, I would argue, that in this example, the knife would still not reach the status of a collectable item just because it was used differently. If I use my kitchen knife as a bookmark, its value would not increase or decline in relation to the way I use it. So, divesting an object from its technological function does not necessarily endow it with the symbolic value of a collectable.

I suggest, therefore, that there is a difference between an object's function and its use. We could say that an object's function is defined in direct relation to the object's original design (and hence to its designer's creative agency) and its common use (which is assumed in accordance to its design). However, objects can be divested of their function and still be in use, just as in the example of a knife used as a bookmark. Usability, therefore, can *temporarily* redefine the function of an object. However, the original function is maintained in the object's design. In the example of the knife, a supposed collector of knives is aware of the knife's suggested function. The collector thus does not question the object's function, nor is he divesting it from its function; rather, he refrains from using it. According to this distinction, a collectable item is not divested of its function, as Baudrillard suggests, but from usage.⁵¹

In this sense, the stream of meaning and the stream of function are not necessarily oppositional. There are certain scenarios where the relationship between the two is complementary: the object's use is what supplies meaning, and its meaning is what reinforces its use and makes it more efficient. Hence, I posit that some objects are designed to serve both a technological use (technological function), and a symbolic use (symbolic function), as in objects of ritual, for example.

IN EVEN MORE DETAIL: SYMBOLIC FUNCTION AND OBJECTS OF RITUAL

Let us assume that any object has a technological function: the knife is designed to cut meat, the computer is designed to store and process data, the prosthesis is designed to restore normal bodily function to an extent, etc. Approaching objects from a technological point of view, one can regard them as extensions of the body; an enhancement of a certain bodily function. The knife, the computer and the prosthesis

⁵¹ The category of art and its definitions of function, use and possession will be discussed in Chapter 3. For now, to continue with the reading of Baudrillard, the analysis will overlook the category of art and refer to all objects as if they were designed with an intentional technological function.

were invented to make processes of survival and production either more efficient or easier.⁵²

Personally, I am used to thinking about production in its materialistic form – the production of commodities – and often forget about the more abstract functions of objects. However, this is where the question of function becomes interesting. Again, let us take the knife. If I am a butcher, I might have a favourite knife. I like the knife because, after many years of cutting meat with it, my body automatically knows how to use it optimally. The knife is related to my motoric memory⁵³ – the physical relation I have with the knife also has an emotional and an intellectual or psychological implication. The knife has gained surplus emotional meaning for me because it embodies the knowledge I have gained through years of practice. I use it for cutting the meat but also for awakening the practical memory stored in the relationship between the knife and me.

Let us go one step further: imagine that I am cutting the meat in relation to, or for the purpose of, a ritual.⁵⁴ In this case, I no longer have a single aim that can be defined as ‘to cut’. My action gains further purpose which requires me to use the knife in an intentional manner and invest more attention in the smallest details of cutting the meat. Here, ‘ritual’ can be defined as giving awareness to the purpose; to the wider context in which the action is placed.⁵⁵

⁵² Production can be seen both on a practical level (the production of goods) and a more abstract level (production of knowledge and/or social relations, for example), hence the examples used here. The computer and the prosthesis complicate out relationship with objects as technological tools and provide insight into the difficulty of separating ourselves from our objects or from the technologies we invent to assist us. This will be analysed in more detail in the following chapters.

⁵³ Motoric memory refers to a memory of the physical body, or the muscles; for example, riding a bike. It is well known that once one has learnt to ride a bike, the ability is never forgotten. The muscles and the different physical systems are able to produce the same equilibrium without giving it any extraordinary attention once the activity has been practiced enough so that the body remembers it. Another example might be singing or practicing a certain dance routine. The idea of the motoric memory and its relationship to Curatorial Practice will be examined more specifically in Chapter 4. For now I would like to open up the possibility of thinking of memory not only as a mental construct and intellectual capacity, but also as embodied in our movement and sensual organs. Such an assumption is supported by current neuropsychology and neurological research that has shown that movement neurologically activates parts of our brain that are related to our short- and long-term memory (Coull & Nobre, 1998; Schubotz, Friederici & Cramon, 2000; Grondin, 2010).

⁵⁴ As an example for this kind of ritual in both Jewish and Muslim traditions, the killing of the animal and the cutting of the meat gains added value as the butcher has a religious role, which he performs through ritual and prayer. Another, related example is preparing meat for sacrifice. In these examples, cutting the meat is part of a longer, meaningful process, the purpose of which is beyond physical survival (eating). It therefore refers to survival in the emotional, intellectual and spiritual spheres. While the action acquires surplus meaning, which has relevance in the symbolic realm, it is not completely absorbed within the symbolic as it has a vital and direct connection to the real in its positioning, in this specific case, between the life and death of both the animal and the one performing the ritual. The ritual signifies, in a way, the exchange of life with death.

⁵⁵ In Jewish tradition, this treatment of meat is related to a process of purification, which is both physical and spiritual; the blood (the animal’s ‘Nefesh’ – one level of the spirit according to Jewish philosophy) is at the centre of this ritual and has a strong relation to the person who then eats the meat and the health of his own ‘Nefesh’. At the same time, the process is also related to gratitude. It is not only the preparation of a meat; it is a moment of contact with life. To expand the discussion beyond this example,

This perspective signifies a momentary awareness of the origin, result and purpose of my action. Moments of awareness are moments of expansion beyond the motoric automotive action, implied and requested by the ritual itself. Such moments of awareness are also reflective of a concern about things which are beyond me, such as others and the relationship to place.⁵⁶

The practice of preparing the meat, therefore, is no longer a pure motoric/instinctive practice, but rather a spiritual, emotional and/or intellectual practice. Using the knife, I am not only practising the cutting of meat; I also practice my connection with the place through the expansion of my awareness: the memory of my position in relation to society, to others and to the place from which I borrow the meat to sustain my existence.

The knife, while maintaining its technological properties, acquires another function in my relationship with it. It embodies the motoric skill, but also my spiritual, emotional or intellectual skills required for that awareness or expansion. It therefore functions as a milestone on my path to my spiritual awareness or goal in the context of the ritual – and any such awareness starts with the notion of remembrance, and more specifically self-remembrance⁵⁷

a wider perspective can contain any form of presence or awareness to the act of giving and taking life that is invested in the action of cutting the meat, and does not necessarily relate to a specific deity or God. ⁵⁶ I am borrowing the idea of a relationship between man and place from the Mishnah, ה' פרק, יומא מסכת, 'ט משנה, Yoma Tractate, chapter 8, tractate 9. In the Mishnah, there is a differentiation between the relationship between one man and another and the relationship between a man and a place. While the term 'place' in Jewish tradition can relate to the religious relationship of man to God, it is also regarded as an abstract relationship between man and whatever surrounds him that is not part of a social order; therefore, it relates to that which is beyond religion (as religion is a social construct). In a way, 'the place' is parallel to, or contained by, the Lacanian 'real', in its physical manifestation within one's body and environment. However, it also has representations in the symbolic order, unlike God, who cannot be represented by any means according to Jewish tradition. Awareness to 'the place' as I refer to it in this text, should be taken in its literal meaning: the space in which one is contained and that enables one's life. In the example given above, it seems accurate to use 'the place' as the thing towards which awareness is expanded in moments of gratitude, prayer and blessing. The terms 'place' and 'context' will gather more meaning in the next chapter to highlight one of the main realms within which Curatorial Practice operates, while the notion of 'the place' will be avoided deliberately in Chapter 4 in order to point to a crisis in our definition of 'space', which rarely takes into account the embodied and situated condition which the term 'place' implies.

⁵⁷ The term self-remembrance is borrowed from Ouspensky's analysis of man's possible evolution. The term is best explained in his book *In Search of the Miraculous: 'In self-remembering attention becomes divided, one part of it is directed towards the same effort, and the other part to the feeling of self... I am speaking of the division of attention which is the characteristic feature of self-remembering. I represented it to myself in the following way: When I observe something, my attention is directed towards what I observe—a line with one arrowhead: I—> the observed phenomenon. When at the same time, I try to remember myself; my attention is directed both towards the object observed and towards myself. A second arrowhead appears on the line: I <—> the observed phenomenon ... self-remembering resulting from this method had nothing in common with 'self-feeling,' or 'self-analysis'* (Ouspensky, 2001, pp. 125-126). The double-headed arrow suggested by Ouspensky points to a reciprocal relationship between the phenomenon observed and the observer. This resonates with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception and his understanding of the ability to observe being dependent upon the ability to be observed (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, 2002 and *The Visible and the Invisible*, 1968). In relation to the notion of 'the invisible' to which Pomian refers, this correlation between the observer and the observed might also point to the meaning of the object as a bridge to another realm: I extend my awareness to my presence as a participant within the real through the object. This implies that I have an

To take this one step further, we can imagine that I am a priest and that those moments of expansion I bring upon myself while preparing the meat are in fact public moments in which a whole community takes part. While only I am practising the physical aspect of cutting the meat, the entire community is practising its other, spiritual/emotional/intellectual aspects. In this case, the knife becomes an agent through which a communal experience can be shared. The same knife will have surplus meaning not only for me but also for the whole community. It will serve as a reminder of each member's relationship with the place.

In these examples, the knife is never divested of its function or use, yet acquires surplus meaning, endowing it with what I term **symbolic function**. This kind of meaning is actually bestowed upon the object through its use. Therefore, to make a division or opposition between meaning and function, or meaning and use, would be inaccurate. As long as a memory is invested in the use of the knife, it will be able to function as an agent floating between the symbolic realm of language, social relations and the real.

The knife now embodies multiple functions at once: it serves a technological purpose, it serves as a discursive object or a container of memory and, in addition, it is an embodiment of communal and social relations. This is what enables the object to become, as in Pomian's assumption, a bridge between the visible and the invisible. Its power derives from this multiplicity and ambiguity of use.

The collectable object can therefore be defined in the following process: the separation of an object from its symbolic function, thus endowing it with a symbolic meaning while attaching an exchange value to it; i.e. entering it into a relationship with the social. The object becomes a sign – a semiophore, in a completely different set of relationships between the subjective realm of the collector and the social or the symbolic realm within which the collector wishes to position himself. We could therefore say that the object, in terms of its cultural perception, has moved from one realm of perception (as an object in relation to the place) to another (as an object in relation to the social).

aspect that exists beyond the symbolic realm, and hence 'I am' beyond my social position. Earlier in the same chapter, Ouspensky suggest that, on the path to self-remembering: *'What struck me most was the connectedness of one thing with another in the system, the wholeness of the system, as if it were an 'organism'. And the entirely new significance of the word to 'know' which included not only the idea of knowing the thinking or that, but the connection between this thing and everything else'* (Ouspensky, 2001, p. 124). Again, the idea of self-remembering is anchored in a relation to the place as a system that works in symbiosis, in which we take part. This relates back to the question of agency. These aspects will be further developed in relation to Memory in Chapter 4.

POSSESSION

Baudrillard defines possession thus: *'Possession cannot apply to an implement, since the object I utilize always directs me back to the world. Rather it applies to that object once it is divested of its function and made relative to a subject'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 7). Here, Baudrillard describes the logic of possession in accordance to the definition of the collectable suggested above: an object is divested of its technological function, and I would add symbolic function as well, and is confiscated from the public into the private realm (i.e. assigned to a specific subject). The only thing I would add to this definition is that the object also changes its relationship to any possible use. As Baudrillard suggests, this is when the object becomes a pure symbol: stable; fixed within the linguistic realm, with no chance of ever having this multiplicity of function and use. I argue, that this process of 'possession' also means that the object loses its ability to bridge between the symbolic and the real or invisible. For Baudrillard, possession holds a key position in the psychology of the collector. The compulsive urge or passion for objects starts with possession.

It goes without saying that the possessed object is not non-usable, in the sense that the object still maintains the technical capacity to perform its productive or technological function.⁵⁸ Though this is obvious, it is an important distinction in understanding the process of possession and how it points to the conflicted attitude of contemporary consumer society to its objects, in which the collector is merely a case study.⁵⁹

If the object does not lose its functionality or usability, then what does? Or, better to ask, who does? If the object can still be used but is not used, then it is the collector or possessor who chooses not to use the object. However this can hardly be referred to as a choice. There is fear involved in use as it is seen as oppositional to preservation – and preservation, as we will see from Baudrillard's text, is essential.

So, in a strange psychological turn, the object only highlights the deficiency of its possessor. While possession is usually understood as a hierarchical relationship where the subject dominates the object as a means of dominating reality. I posit that a closer examination of the relationship reveals that the positions of possessor and possessed are, in fact, reversed. It is not the object, but the subject, who is rendered impotent. Thus we can conclude that the object is not divested of its use, but the subject is divested of agency. In other words, **possession, in this sense, can be defined as the renunciation of agency.**

⁵⁸ Its symbolic function, however, which is not dependent on the object's physical and technical characteristics, will be completely lost in the act of possession.

⁵⁹ From the perspective of Baudrillard's entire oeuvre and his extended theory of objects.

What, then, prevents the collector from using the object? This can be explained as the subject's perception of the object as a signifier rather than a signified;⁶⁰ or, in other words, a simple confusion between the symbolic realm (the realm of representation, substitution and language) and the realm of the real. It is the subject's mind, possessed by the idea represented by the collected item that prevents the subject from acting upon the object and using it.⁶¹

In fact, in the realm of the real, objects cannot be possessed in the sense that they can never disappear from it, through the mere act of possession. The real persists beyond any of our attempts to diminish it. Possession is a virtual relationship that can be set only in the symbolic realm of social relations – in this realm, only subjects take part.

This means that in order to possess and be possessed, one necessarily has to accept the rules of a certain social and linguistic order. Inanimate objects do not hold such capacity. This leads to the conclusion that only subjects can be possessed, because only subjects, according to Descartes' initial definition of the term, have the ability to think. Possession can therefore be defined as a type of 'mind control'.⁶²

The exchange value given to the object fixes its meaning to a particular symbolic realm by fixing the context in which it can be presented and the relationship it has with the world. The assignment of an exchange, or monetary, value means it necessarily loses its ability to function as a bridge to the real as, by necessity, it anchors the object within an enclosed social and linguistic structure, removing it further from its original functions.

⁶⁰ 'Signifier' and 'signified' here are used in their linguistic definition, as suggested by Ferdinand de Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics* (Saussure, 1959, p. 65).

⁶¹ Of course, this discussion already points to the question of perception itself – how can one define 'the real', that which is beyond language, with the help of symbolic representation? This contradiction in the symbolic approach to objects has much to do, I would suggest, with our supposed relationship to reality and whether we assume it to exist beyond the realm of perception or understand perception itself as generated by our inner, already symbolic worlds. This question will be addressed in Chapter 4. In terms of Baudrillard, one should keep in mind that the Western cultural tradition, the customs of which are described here, relies on a Kantian perception of reality as an a-priori condition that exists outside of perception. The notion of 'reality' therefore often coincides with the notion of 'the real' within this specific thought-system.

⁶² A differentiation needs to be made between possession as it is described here – as part of the inner psychology of the collector – and possession in the sense of a belonging to a body, or an extension of a bodily, emotional and/or intellectual property of an 'other' (as suggested by Susan Stewart in *On Longing*, 1993) The latter bears similarity to the approach discussed earlier in the analysis of burial objects; here, the object is part of the subjective realm, not being a separate entity belonging to reality but, rather, an extension of the body. It does not assume a separation between body and object, and this move depends on the other's *suspension* of possession. Without the object maintaining its status of belonging to the absent subject, it cannot be a bridge or a means of connecting to the subject in her/his absence. Here, it is the suspension of possession that allows the magic of reconnection. It is in the object's belonging to another, rather than oneself, that this suspension is made possible.

THE CURATOR AS EXORCIST

Drowning in the symbolic realm means surrender to the belief that language can solve our relationship with experience. The fact that it cannot – that the reoccurrence of the real and its experience, combined with the firm conviction that objects can give logic, order, and measurement to regulate the real – is the source of the collector's obsessive and compulsive passion in Baudrillard's thought: no matter how many times possession fails in this attempt to control reality, the collector's belief will lead him to collect more. The failure confirms the inherent anxiety of the real, and will fuel the search for the next item.

This leads us to the question driving this investigation: what stands between Curatorial Practice and possession in the way it has been described and defined above? The answer to this question points back to the etymology of the word 'curating' and its traditional relationship to religion. The curator is like a priest⁶³ in the sense that he takes care of possessions. But taking care of possessions is not taking care of objects. As previously explained, taking care of possessions means taking care of the possessed: those who are captured by frames of mind that prevent them from expressing parts of themselves (the real within), or the inexplicable phenomenon that are embedded within (the real without).

Through the *use* of objects, their positioning and display in changing contexts, their renewed interpretation and the questioning of current positions and beliefs about them, curators offer an opportunity for a cure; a cure through curiosity: the act of questioning and observing, without a necessary compulsion to provide answers.⁶⁴

⁶³ In investigating the etymology of the word 'curator' in its semantic field, 'the curate', defined as a member of the clergy or a parish priest, is probably one of the only words that has maintained its past meaning in our current social context. Interestingly, in none of the etymological searches mentioned before, none of the curators sought to analyse the etymology of the word through its religious meaning. Even Groys, who is touching upon religious tendencies in *The Curator as Iconoclast* (2010) refrains from attaching any religious significance to the role of the curator. However, I contend that a relationship to religious institutions can probably be traced if one agrees to extend the history of Curatorial Practice as it was suggested in Chapter 1. The Naumburg Cathedral case study, attempts to start this quest by searching for curatorial thought within the construct of Gothic cathedrals. This is not to suggest that curating is a religious practice, however, it seem to have been attached to religious institutions in the past. Here, I argue, again, that the difference between contemporary curating and curating in other times, might not be an ontological difference but rather an ideological one. These aspects of Curatorial Practice, and their relationship to practices of divination, are beyond the scope set for this research in advance; however these are topics which I intend to research in the future as they seem to hold further potential in resurrecting the memory of Curatorial Practice.

⁶⁴ This will become clearer when Edwina Taborsky's notion of the discursive object will be discussed. Here, I would like to point to an affiliation between this act of exorcism and Taborsky's insistence on usage as a fundamental quality of the discursive object. If we consider an object as part of a symbolic system of representation and/or perception, then a sign that is not used is no sign at all, as she articulates it: '*if the sign is abstracted from usage, it is meaningless, as an amulet, unused for several centuries, hidden in the ground, is not only meaningless during its burial, but may also be when unearthed and is not understood as an object of any social group.*' (Taborsky, 1990, p. 71). It also invokes Groys' conclusions: '*Under these circumstances, the curating of an artwork signifies its return to history, the*

Public and Private Collections; Public and Private Collectors

This definition of possession, I would like to suggest, points to an important distinction that I believe needs to be made between private and public collections. While collectable objects in Pomian's definition have a special status because they belong to no one and to everyone at the same time, the collectable item in Baudrillard's example loses its special status precisely through the act of fixing the object to the ownership of a subject. So while we call both phenomena 'collections', the nature of the objects within them is entirely different: objects circulating in the exchange market and those whose value is purely theoretical. The latter are seen as non-exchangeable in monetary terms as they are appreciated for their symbolic functions as bridges to different dimensions in time or space; to a wider perspective in the relationship between society and the real.⁶⁵ Such objects are very unlikely to return to circulation, unless, as in Pomian's example, an act of violence occurs.

This understanding also points, in my opinion, to a fundamental difference between curating and collecting. The difference is anchored in the motivation or desire that drives the two. Collectors, for Baudrillard, are not collecting objects but, rather, collecting themselves; it is an act of narcissistic endeavour: *'In this sense, all objects that are possessed submit to the same abstractive operation and participate in a mutual relationship in so far as they each refer back to the subject. They thereby constitute themselves as a system, on the basis of which the subject seeks to piece together his world, his personal microcosm'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 7). Here, it becomes clear that the collector's desire is directed towards himself. His inner world is perceived and reflected through the collected object and, in this sense, the object is no different from a looking glass: what is central is not the mirror itself, but what it reflects back; the self-image it produces.

The fixed symbolic meaning of the object⁶⁶ is exactly what enables a switch between possessed and possessor, self and object. To preserve their meaning, objects must remain fixed or possessed; hence collected objects are not collected for the purpose of

transformation of the autonomous artwork back into an illustration, an illustration whose value is not contained within itself but is extrinsic, attached to an historical narrative...Images don't emerge into the clearing of Being on their own accord, where their original visibility is then muddied by the 'art business,' as Heidegger describes it in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. It is far more that this very abuse makes them visible'. (Groys, The Curator as Iconoclast, 2010, pp. 49-53).

⁶⁵ In Western cultures originating in Christianity, an example is art masterpieces. However, it is important to remember that this is true to a very specific tradition and that art is not necessarily always able, or aiming, to reach such a status. While masterpieces are seen today as bridges to 'history' – a different time and space, and as points of reference to the optimal reach of human potential and craftsmanship – it is difficult to ignore their original history as objects of ritual. While secular theories are more prevalent in the academy today, I am unsure as to what extent we are able to differentiate which aspects of their value are connected to the quality of the work, and which are still connected, in a historical and traditional fashion, to their religious purpose.

⁶⁶ The meaning of the object is fixed to the image of the collector himself.

display, but are hidden. In Baudrillard's description, too, there is an inherent conflict between the desire to display the power with which the collector believes the collection endows him, and a fear that the illusion of power and self will clash in its encounter with an outer world: *'they will maintain about their collection an aura of the clandestine, of confinement, secrecy and dissimulation, all of which give rise to the unmistakable impression of a guilty relationship'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 9). The notion of guilt, which Baudrillard refers to here, has a connection with the erotic pleasure in the act of collecting which will be addressed shortly.

However, before we continue describing the collector in such conspicuous terms, I would like to remind us that we all are, in some way, preoccupied with such a relationship to the symbolic realm. In fact, within psychoanalysis, various 'object relations' theories confirm that objects have a seminal role in our ability to differentiate ourselves from the background of the environment from which we emerge: i.e. the social realm or, in a more profound symbolisation, our mother.⁶⁷ It is inevitable that, within such a psychology, objects will play a central role in other stages of our lives and in our ability to position ourselves within the symbolic realm. If we consider these approaches, we might be able to alter our relationship to the collector as an entity, recognising that the collector's urge is alive within us all as we belong to the same social realm, and that, in the outskirts of a system that perceives objects as signs, it is inevitable that the collector figure will emerge. Not only that, but the collector figure can also be seen as the background upon which the curator figure can define his/her desire anew.

The curator's desire is an exhibitionist desire, related to display. This can be marked as the first point in the differences between the curator and the collector. While 'display' might present itself as an even further dive into a narcissistic viewpoint, reinforcing a position of power, other aspects of display should also be considered.

Firstly, the curator does not normally work in the vicinity of his own collection. Secondly, the notion of display already necessarily includes an 'other' – that is, one who is exterior to the logic of the collection. Even if a curator seeks to display, in an act of narcissism and power affirmation, the collection's idiosyncratic logic still needs to be broken in order for it to be part of such a communication mechanism.

⁶⁷ Here, it might be added that, although Lacan's definitions of 'objects' and 'desire' are fundamental to Baudrillard's understanding of collecting, other psychoanalytical theories are also relevant, particularly Winnicott's theorization of objects relations in early infant development. The examples, which Baudrillard uses, connecting collecting to habit, temporality and absence, are in line with Winnicott's understanding of objects as substitutions to maternal presence. Even though Baudrillard does not directly relate to the maternal body and its absence in his text, the consideration of Winnicott's theory of object relations in reading this text is useful in understanding relations of substitution and regulation that Baudrillard describes.

Furthermore, the moment of display is a moment of vulnerability, whether the display is that of power or not – because once an ‘other’ participates in the encounter, there is no possibility of predicting her/his reading.

Thusly, I posit that Curatorial Practice is always directed toward an ‘other’. The curator is always distanced from the object displayed, so that the object, or indeed the collection, rarely comes to reflect the ‘self’ that might be standing behind it, even if it may have an echo in the choices of display. This may also offer an explanation to the fundamental importance of display (or, in its more abstract form, accessibility) to the act of curating⁶⁸.

THE CURATORIAL OBJECT AND THE DISCURSIVE OBJECT

To demonstrate how curators working within public collections perceive collectable objects, Edwina Taborsky’s *The Discursive Object* (1990), is a useful reference. Taborsky offers a meticulous analysis of the object as a discursive entity. For Taborsky, the object always exists in three different realities at once: a ‘material reality’ – which corresponds to the presence of the object within the realm of other objects; a ‘group reality’, which is the use, function or interpretation that an object might have for a group of people; and an ‘individual reality.’ Here, Taborsky refers not to systems of private collecting as they are analysed here but, rather, to the individual as a private example taken out of a group, never entirely different or distinct from the group.

Accordingly, the object itself has three different facets: the Qualisign, the Sinsign and the Legisign. The Qualisign refers to the qualities the object embodies through its

⁶⁸ “I was reluctant is because I am a private person. I didn’t feel quite comfortable about people seeing and knowing what I do ... I felt exposed, especially when all my stuff were shown like that at the museum. I was a little bit uncomfortable with the idea that someone will come in look at all the boxes, picking at my stuff. It made me nervous; I was asking myself what will they find next? I know any person who ever saw part of the collection was amazed. All of them say “wow”, that’s their first reaction and I don’t know what they mean by their “wow” ... I think there was something about the curator, coming from a completely external point of view, looking at the collection and rearranging it- that made a little bit of sense for me as well ... It was a very positive experience, also that moment you have spoken about, of becoming public – I was afraid of it at first, but in the end, when the exhibition opened - there was also a sense of relief.” (collector Arnie Druck refers to the privacy, secrecy and internal processes of collecting and how these have gained further meaning once the collection was curated and displayed to a public audience. From p.254 and 264 in Appendix 1); “I am not sure I remember exactly what he said to me. But it was to do with the exposure of his private and inner endeavour to the world. It solved something for him, it changes something. It was to do with the narrative that has been reflected through the exhibition, which he did not see before. It was about seeing all the items that he cherished so much organized in a manner that could actually communicate with others.” (Curator Yeala Hazut on the meaning of displaying collections in p.265, Appendix 1); Here, the meaning of the curatorial process as a form of ‘caring’ is revealed. This is a formative moment both for the curator as an individual and the collection as an entity. The meaning of curatorial choice and the ‘curatorial series’ in relation to an aesthetic experience allows a comprehension not only of the objects displayed but for the self who engages with them in various ways and to various depths. It also reflects back to the collector about the act of collecting itself. Passing the threshold of display inevitably encourages awareness to the process of collecting, its roots, characteristics and meaning in a social and cultural context.

appearance, materiality and, generally speaking, sensual presence. The Sinsign refers to the object's notion as a sign in language. It is a subsidiary of the Qualisign, but of the same importance. The Legisign relates to the meaning of an object within a symbolic system of representation, and, inevitably, to social legal systems (Taborsky, 1990, pp. 70-72).

For Taborsky there is no question that the collected object is part of a symbolic realm and thus inherently part of a common language: *'It exists in what we could describe as Levi-Strauss' "bundle of relations", where a unit, such as an action or an object, is also linked with its interactive usage. The bundle of relations ... are stored within the social knowledge of this "text in potential", as the potential to be meaningful'* (Taborsky, 1990, p. 64). This potential of becoming meaningful, or legible indicates that the main participants in reading the object are the viewer, the system of ideas from which the viewer emerges, and the system of ideas from which the object, as a sign, emerges: *'They cannot be moved from society to society and retain the same meaning; the meaning will change and the object may even become meaningless. No matter what paradigm of knowledge the society uses, its signs are meaningful only within a specific social group'* (Taborsky, 1990, p. 65). What is implicated here is the flexibility of an object's meaning through various systems of signs, and the central role of the viewer in deciphering its meaning, which is always a discursive act of negotiating multiple systems of signs, language, and symbols. Taborsky concludes: *'The meaning of the object only becomes existent in an interaction between observer and object ... the discursive paradigm considers that the interaction between the two is not for the movement of message but the establishment of each being's spatio-temporal reality'* (Taborsky, 1990, pp. 68-70).

The responsibility or the role of the curator in providing the platform for such an encounter, then, is that of providing the conditions for a re-negotiation of meaning within a common space: *'The museum, clearly, has an important social function – to explore objects as signs, that is, as objects which are socially meaningful ... the museum should base exhibitions around the discursive object. This should include the conceptual interaction with that objet, both in the original society and in the museum society. ...The discursive object exists not as a unit in interaction with its environment, but as a unit in interaction with conceptual beings'* (Taborsky, 1990, p. 75). In this relational equation which Taborsky describes, the curated object is a capsule of knowledge in which aspects of perception are already embodied, which the curator desires to reveal and share. Curating, according to this point of view, is an attempt to resurrect the memory of the real or of experience, embodied in the object.

We can therefore understand the root of the difference between collectors and curators, and between private and public collections. The realm of *the curatorial* aspires to resurrect the performative facet of the object. If a resurrection of its symbolic function as a bridge between the symbolic and the real is no longer possible within certain cultural constraints, then, at the least, this aspiration aims at a movement, shaking the fixed meaning of an object within the symbolic paradigm of perception in which it is placed, so that it resonates and associates with different, interchanging meanings – or provides a link between different symbolic realms⁶⁹.

SERIALITY

While possession - placing the object in a relation of exchange - is what fixes the object in the symbolic realm on a social level, the series is what reinforces possession on the individual's level. The removal of the item from the world and its pinning to the self is what creates the parallel between self-value and sign value (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 12).

Following this, a number of levels of possession can be recognized in this process. Each has its own role in fixing the object with an untouchable symbolic meaning. Exchange is what signals that possession is possible. Once possession is made possible, the object will be pinned to a personal system of reference. In the collector's internal universe, this system of reference will be the collection.

Referencing the anal stage of development as well as the mid-life crisis, Baudrillard relates collecting to sexual development (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 9). The pleasure that the collector takes from his collection relates to an erotic satisfaction which Baudrillard relates to seriality: this is gained both from the objects themselves – a version of 'fetish' – but also from the variety that the collection offers (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 11). The interplay between the singular item and its belonging to a seemingly

⁶⁹ *"It was important for me to understand how the collection can exist independently, outside of Arnie's point of view. It was essential for me, as a curator, to offer a new point of view. At the end of the day, this was the curatorial premise. I didn't want to just hang the collection on the walls; I wanted the collection to become a meaningful story that can be told ... The objects looked very dull when we first encountered them, placed in their folders and boxes. You have to look at them closely and with great attention before realizing they are amazing in and of themselves ... This is a curator's responsibility, especially in the context of a public-funded museum, to represent the material to a certain audience. And the idea is to educate, expose but also to trigger curiosity and entertain. I don't think entertainment is a rude word. I wanted people to enjoy looking at the exhibition; I wanted them to feel that this was meaningful to them. At the end of the day, who wants to come to an art museum and see a bunch of documents, telephone cards and postcards? This is why we have given a great amount of attention to the design of the displays and the design of the space, so that the vision I could see, the narrative I was imagining, could be manifested in a physical space, in a physical experience for the viewer, like a journey ... This is a very tight balance: working between the collection as a whole, where the idea of quantity seem to be central, and working with the individual objects themselves, making sure that their quality is apparent and can be given enough attention."* (curator Yeala Hazut on the responsibility of curators and revealing the discursive nature of objects from page 263-268 Appendix 1)

endless series does two things according to Baudrillard: firstly, the relation to other, similar but not identical objects proves the uniqueness of each object in the collection, and, secondly, it offers, through this process of accumulation, a satisfying quantity of variations: *'The recourse to the possessed object is never superficial: it is always premised on the object's absolute singularity. One can never find absolute proof in the real works that a given object is indeed unique. On the other hand, subjectivity is entirely capable of working things to its advantage without such proof'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 9). The self-referential nature of the collection is therefore the common denominator of the series, which itself offers the erotic pleasure to which Baudrillard refers: *'Its absolute singularity as an object depends entirely upon the fact that it is I who possess it which, in turn, allows me to recognize myself in it as an absolutely singular being'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 9).⁷⁰

While the uniqueness of the object is usually perceived as the motivational force behind a collector's passion for its possession, Baudrillard claims that it is in fact the series and its incompleteness that drives the collector: *'... it would be clear that the apparently unique object, is, precisely, no more than the final term embodying all previous terms of a like kind, the paramount term of an entire set...in short, the unique object epitomizes the set to which it belongs'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 12). He goes further to suggest: *'At a certain point there are no longer differences between the items in the collection, there is only the obsession of completing the series, a frustrated effort. And so the act of collection accelerates until it falls onto itself'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 19), demonstrating that the constant search of the absent is the propelling energy of the collection as an entity that possesses the collector. While this is a frustrating endeavour, inherently disappointing as the series is never complete, this incompleteness is what fuels the system of collecting because this constant move from satisfaction to disappointment gives cyclicity to the act of collecting. This cycle, in turn, becomes a way of coping with neurosis; here, Baudrillard skilfully breaks the myth of the 'loved object' (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 9).⁷¹

⁷⁰ One might like to note, in this instance, that such psychology is potent only if it rests on the implicit convictions that the individual subject is a singular entity with a need to re-affirm this singular subjectivity in her/his internal world. Indeed – this idea is intertwined with the independence sought from the body of one's mother (as a symbolic entity) in early stages of development.

⁷¹ The idea of the 'loved object' refers to the feeling that collectors often describe in relation to the collected object: a fascination with the object and a belief that that specific object type is the most beautiful, made specifically for the collector's own taste and desire (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 9).

Arnie Druck on the meaning of seriality as an urge in the process of collecting, also refers to the idea of the loved object and the roots of the choices that he makes: *"The choices I make are intuitive, they are driven by a certain need, from my guts, but it's not that I am unaware of the financial aspects and potentials of what I do. And these choices could certainly be considered mistakes in terms of financial prospects ... but I gain such pleasure from having the whole series and this, I cannot resist. This pleasure is of course completely selfish. It only serves me, nobody else enjoys this. My family, my friends, nobody understand this craziness ... you have no idea how happy I am when I find an item that I miss from one of my series. Such joy!"*

This underlines the decision-making mechanism that controls the collector in his search for specific objects. In this mechanism, objects are not valued for their quality, unique characteristics or true cultural significance, but by their discoverability. The harder it is to obtain, the more valuable it becomes.⁷²

The Collector's Choice and Curatorial Choice

In this context, while curatorial choice derives from a responsibility to the other,⁷³ choices involved in collecting are directed towards the mechanism of self-representation in an internal, secluded universe. In fact, I suggest that collectors do not perform an active act of choice; their choice is already driven by their serial motivation and their agency has already been surrendered to predetermined social orders through the process of possession. I would therefore suggest that it would be futile to speak of taste or choice in the context of analysing and understanding private collections. Quality does not take part as a pre-requisite within the criteria that brings an object to be part of the collection's legacy.

Within the model of Enlightenment, and in relation to the notion of the discursive object presented above, the series or, in this context, category of objects, becomes for the curator a playground for temporary experiments in which objects can be appreciated for some or other of their properties. Hence, curatorial choice is not

For example when I found that rare edition of one of the Tarshish books, a book that was not in the national library catalogue, I was so happy. I cannot explain how happy I was ... its simply the inner life of a person. Something in the internal puzzle of the self is completed, fixed. And the funny thing is that it can be anything – any object. You could say that this book that I found had a certain aesthetic and historical value and so the excitement is justified, but you know what, I also collect pamphlets of the same publishing house, not something which is aesthetically or intellectually exciting ... but if I find those two missing pamphlets- that would be amazing- it will fill like a blank spot, a space within me. So you see, there is no real distinction here between valuable things, expensive things and the most mundane things. I will get the same pleasure and the same satisfaction from completing any of the series I have.” (Page 251-253, Appendix 1)

⁷² Oddly enough, the same mechanism is recognizable in the exchange market (more specifically the art market). Therefore, it is possible to claim that the logic of the collector is parallel to the logic of the market, as both are expressions of different levels of possession. This also corresponds with the notions of 'originality' and 'authenticity' as deeply embedded in our understanding of the 'self' as a distinct, separate and unique entity in the world. As previously suggested, this points to the larger social conditions that are necessary for this type of psychology; namely the existence of an 'objective' reality outside the realm of perception and the positioning of the individual at the centre of social concern.

“When I collect I don't think of all the implications and meanings of my collection, I am more drawn into the detail. I collect from a need or an urge; I don't choose objects for their political value, but for their specific value for me. There was something at that moment when I suddenly saw all the choices I have made unconsciously as a collector, and how they are telling my biography – my own story- but also how my own story is inevitably connected, influenced weaved within the history of the state of Israel. How I am part of history” (Collector Arnie Druck on choices mechanisms involved in the process of collecting) p. 256 Appendix 1)

⁷³ An 'Other' in this context usually refers, not to one individual, but to certain social groups or constructs, such as the state, an ethnic group or certain interest groups (the art world, for example). Claiming that curatorial motivation is towards an 'other' does not, in any sense, contradict notions of personal taste, self-involvement or opportunism. It only points towards the motivation from which curatorial choice is made and the direction towards which it aspires. In this sense, Curatorial Practice is about opening up a discourse, and even if the discourse circulates around the curator himself, it still echoes within the social group in which it is performed, and has an intended relevance in the life of others.

conditioned or defined by a predetermined seriality. It also cannot be defined as a means of escaping social relations. It can be defined from an almost opposite approach: the act of curating works to destabilize the conditions of seriality, and this playfulness is manifested through display; it is inherently directed towards an engagement with others. Drawing on ancient and contemporary curatorial examples, one might even suggest that it is motivated by the creation of social discourses and/or social groups.

Seriality is therefore not conceived as a territory in which objects have pre-set and specific positions that need to be occupied. At the same time, notions that drive the collector, such as 'absence' or 'completion', are not very useful in depicting the curatorial desire. The curator takes satisfaction from the temporal presence of objects in the display, perhaps because the curator's desire is not directed towards the interplay between singularity and seriality; absence and presence, in the process of self-preservation as described by Baudrillard.

We can therefore make a distinction between curatorial arrangements, which I will refer to as **the curatorial series**, and the notion of seriality as described by Baudrillard. The curatorial series is not about the collection of 'types' but is perceived as a site for highlighting and at times even questioning, the notion of a 'type' in the first place.

The Curatorial Series

Following the argument above, we can start to think in more depth about the motivation driving Curatorial Practice, from which the notion of *the curatorial* emerges. In this sense, Curatorial Practice can be defined as the creation of series. It is the breaking of the series, or its restructuring, that endows Curatorial Practice with a certain power in the dismantling and re-creation of meaning. While the curatorial series is a relatively restricted space, it still offers a flexibility in comparison to the organization of collected objects in the logic of contemporary collections, based upon the symbolic approach to objects and the structure of the collection as described above.

It is thanks to the fanatic way in which collections, objects and seriality are perceived that curatorial series can still have a great success in resurrecting the memory embodied in collected objects. Here, there is a form of symbiotic relationship maintained between the worlds of collector and curator. This relationship is apparent both in psychological structures and in social and pragmatic manifestations of such internal structures; collections are a fertile ground for the work of the curator as a

contemporary social exorcist. At the same time, the meticulous collection of peculiar objects, objects of no apparent meaning in society, can turn in the hand of the curator into objects that embody discourse and social relations.

In this sense, Curatorial Practice answers Baudrillard's question: *'can objects ever institute themselves as a viable language? Can they ever be fashioned into a discourse oriented otherwise than toward oneself?'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 24) and, in accounting for an extended history of Curatorial Practice, one might argue, that Curatorial Practice is always directed at this task: the task of creating and managing the social symbolic order.

OBJECTS AND TEMPORALITY: THE CONTROLLED CYCLE

Seriality, for Baudrillard, is connected to temporality through the notion of repetition, and the notion of the habit. Here, a habit is what constitutes the possibility to divide time into manageable parts. The repetition allows the habit to be a regulating force as its repetition promises the re-occurrence of certain things and therefore offers an illusion of control over events that occur on a linear timeline.

Habit, in fact, enables us to understand time as linear in the first place as it reaffirms the logic of causality; where one thing is bound to follow another: *'It is through our cutting up of time into those patterns we call 'habits' that we resolve the potential threat of time's inexorable continuity, and evade the implacable singularity of events'* (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 14). This cyclical aspect of collecting creates its perceived power over time; it is a means through which time can be escaped, rendered and contained within a mental set.

Domination over time, which the collector finds in the act of collecting and the system that the collection offers, is also related to the ability to cope with one's own appearance and disappearance in the world. The collection is inevitably, according to Baudrillard, a means through which one contains his own death and mourns his own disappearance. The repetitive play between the absence and a presence of an object allows the collector to move mentally between his own absence and presence from the world. The object as a mirror of the self disappears and reappears in the game of seriality. The collector is under an illusion, therefore, of control over his own death: *'yet collecting remains first and foremost, and in the true sense, a pastime. For collecting simply abolishes time. Or rather: by establishing a fixed repertory of temporal references that can be replayed at will, in reverse order if need be, collecting represents the perpetual fresh beginning of a controlled cycle, thanks to which, starting out from any term he chooses and confident of returning to it, man can indulge in the great game of*

birth and death' (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 16). Baudrillard suggests thus that central to the connection of the series to temporality is not its subject matter so much as the collector's experience of the act of collecting.

Curatorial Time

Certain exhibitions,⁷⁴ especially historical ones, can be said to organize time similarly, according to a specific system or ideology, as a means of achieving control over perceived reality. While in the case of the collector, time is regulated by the very act of collecting, in the historical exhibition, it is the spatial aspect of display rather than repetition which generates the flow of time in a certain direction.⁷⁵

While time is divided and regulated through the use of space, the curator aims not to manage a personal relationship with temporality, absence and presence. Rather, he aims to manage others' *perception* of time. The act of exhibiting the series in a spatial organization, and the request of the viewer to follow this path physically with the body, is significant in the curatorial act. This process of regulating time and its experience are not confined to the private, but are shared in an attempt to create a public or a common understanding of time and hence create a social relation.

Ahistorical exhibitions, on the other hand, while not having a substantial relation to time as linear or organized, are already a step further away from the idea of regulating time through objects. Indeed, aspects of time management are still important; curatorial time is inherently entangled with curatorial space. However, aspects of continuity are disrupted in such curatorial projects, as they may present objects from different times and different contexts in the same space, requesting the viewer to suspend the linear understanding of narrative and history.⁷⁶ Rather than enforcing a continual stream that represents time as logical and manageable,

⁷⁴ As a matter of convenience, the exhibition, as a paramount mode in Curatorial Practice, will be used to understand temporality and its experience within Curatorial Practice. I believe that the same conclusions can also be applied to different modes of Curatorial Practice. This will be further developed in Chapter 4 and in the VAINS case study.

⁷⁵ The relationship between spatial organization, linear time, time perception and movement will be discussed in Chapter 4 to unlock the components of curatorial time within current cultural perceptions of space, especially its changing perception in the digital era.

⁷⁶ To give an example of such ahistorical structure, which also delineates distinctive categories of objects, I would suggest the series of exhibitions at the Wellcome Collection in London, curated by James Peto. In his exhibition *Superhuman* (2012), Peto juxtaposed objects from the medicinal collection, contemporary commodities (such as an iPhone) and contemporary works of art, in a spatial organization which had no relation to a linear time-scape. The exhibition thus asked the viewers to draw connections between different technologies in different times. As such, a collection of prostheses were shown in front of a vitrine which included an iPhone, and old medicinal instruments were displayed near Floris Kaayk's work *Metalsis Meligna* (2006), depicting a pseudo-documentary about a disease caused by implants where a man gradually turns into a collection of mechanical parts. Here, the juxtaposition is not only of time and space, but also of fiction and non-fiction, in an apparent attempt to attract the viewer deeper into a self-reflexive state about the meaning of technology and our inevitable entanglement with it.

Curatorial Practice, in a causal relationship, can offer a dismantling of conceived time frames and distort perception of time altogether.

Just as with seriality, and deeply rooted in it, the disturbance that spaces of *the curatorial* offer within time perception are always related to conceived notions of time. For *the curatorial* to emerge as a space of changing definitions of meaning and perception, it needs a background landscape, which is provided by current social conditioning, thus the symbiotic relationship between the organizational logic of the collection and curatorial practices is an inseparable part of contemporary notions of curating. The collection offers the arrangement, between the gaps of which *the curatorial* emerges.

The very flexibility of Curatorial Practice – its ability to represent time both as linear and non-linear – points to the fact that, unlike collecting, curating is not obliged to commit to the continuity of time in its representation. In Curatorial Practice, I posit, time and space form two fields that fold into each other – space creates an alternative perception of time, which is detached from the notions of continuity by which we live our everyday lives, and the disruption of temporal continuity allows different perceptions of space to emerge. The spatial manoeuvre is the fundamental platform for curatorial temporality, while seriality is the platform for the act of collecting. This spatial manoeuvre endows Curatorial Practice with a vast array of flexible possibilities to play not only with the perception of objects/subjects relations and the blurring between them, but also with the perception of time/space on both a personal and shared level of experience.

So, while objects perceived as collectables or fetishes, are means through which one regulates one's own living experience – a means through which one avoids encountering the chaotic nature of life, time and experience – *the curatorial* becomes the realm in which such organizations are bound to collapse, offering a glimpse into what Baudrillard terms '*the dimension of absolute singularity...uninterrupted consciousness of that irreversibility of time signalled in the moment of our birth*' (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 16).

Although it might be true that we are incapable of maintaining subjectivity within this dimension, the possibility of glimpsing into it allows us, if only for a moment, to dismantle the preconceptions created by the systems of objects around us and use the objects to help us resolve 'this relentless passage between life and death' (Baudrillard, p. 16) by embodying it and acknowledging that, like the exhibits, we, too, are flickering objects, hovering entities with no fixed place, constantly between presence and absence.

BEYOND THE OBJECT OF DESIRE

We have established that Baudrillard's system is relevant to the extent that we take into account the dominant approach to objects in contemporary time, which can now easily be re-affirmed as the symbolic approach. At the same time, though Baudrillard examines the object from a psychoanalytical point of view, relating it to desire, there are many other ways in which objects can be defined. We must therefore consider whether these relationships described between the collector and the object and the curator and the object would still be valid if other understandings of the word 'object' were considered.

The simplest definition that the dictionary offers of the word object is: *'anything that is visible or tangible and is relatively stable in form'*.⁷⁷ While this might seem a simplistic definition, its accuracy is revealed when it is applied to non-material objects. Unlike other definitions of the term, which are satisfied in defining an object through its tangible and material form, here, the definition of the object relies on its coherence – the stability of its shape.⁷⁸ According to this definition, our ability to perceive something as an object is related to our ability to contain it as a separate entity that can be perceived in its wholeness. The term 'stability' plays an important part in this definition as stability in form enables things to appear to us as objects. Things whose margins are open to interpretation – things that are not stable in their form – are difficult to objectify. Therefore, it can be concluded that fixation and stability are central in our relationship with objects: instability in form would inevitably contradict our desire towards objects, as a means of containing life.

The definition of objects and subjects as such is related necessarily to the extent to which they are fixed in their meaning and relational position to other subjects or objects. In this sense Curatorial Practice can be defined as a fragmentation or interference in the status of the object as 'object', and therefore also interference in the relative relation between object and subject.

If we refer to Curatorial Practice as a practice of questioning objects' accepted and regulated meaning through repeated re-positioning and experimentation, then we can say that the stabilizing categories of subject and object within the curatorial space are not as relevant as they might seem, unless they serve a specific ideological concern, like they did in the grand exhibitions of Imperial nations in the 18th- and 19th century.

⁷⁷ This is the first definition of the word offered by dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/object>, last accessed 22/6/2014).

⁷⁸ Such definitions are offered by Oxford Dictionary online (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/object>, last accessed 22/6/2014), and by Merriam Webster Dictionary online (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/object>, last accessed 22/6/2014).

This is because the blurring and (sometimes even) elimination of categories – the questioning of positions such as passive/active, object/subject, possessor/possession – is necessary in the stabilization of any such relationship. The space of *the curatorial* in such processes can be described as that brief moment where things lose their definition as objects, lose their symbolic meaning and are placed within a temporary primordial, pre-symbolic realm of mere presence.

While one may consider such space as problematic from an ethical point of view, relating it to the manifestation and reinforcement of power constructs,⁷⁹ it becomes clear that the blurring of such boundaries, and the ability to wonder in a space that offers a different relationship to others, objects and ideas, is at the centre of curatorial technique – a known meaning has to be detached from a ‘thing’ before it can assume a new symbolic relationship with the social realm. Spaces of *the curatorial* are volatile spaces as they are not stable and containable; they offer an opportunity for experience, which derives from within the symbolic order and breaks through it.

I would argue that the intrinsic and complicated relationship between Curatorial Practice and dominant power constructs are inherent in what Curatorial Practice is aiming to achieve: those who are in ‘need’ of a cure are always those who are possessed by their ideas⁸⁰. In exposing the core, and interest, of Curatorial Practice, there is an opportunity to resurrect the curiosity for which it aims and allow those relationships to become supportive of evolution, at least in the sense of awareness, reflexivity and readiness of and for change.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Both in the history of thinking about exhibitions as well as in the criticism of museological practices, the question of the blurring between object and subject is central to ethical discussion. (Greenberg, Ferguson, & Narine, *Thinking about Exhibitions*, 1996; Macdonald, 2011; Viriglio, 1989). While those discussions are valid and important for thinking progressively about the possibility of making Curatorial Practice more useful in its resistance to power relations and mechanisms, and while the ethical investigations of such categories as object/subject are necessary, I posit that such suggestions should not stand in opposition to curating as a practice because curating does not necessarily answer to one set of ideological concerns. A space of questioning is never an easy place to remain for long, and the ability to contain the blurring of such categories is limited if we are to continue to live within a social order. However, spaces of *the curatorial* allow a disturbance in this field, and therefore provide a space for those ethical debates. I would state that, in my belief, curatorial projects should not refrain from being ethically problematic or hesitate in questioning the boundaries of social convention. Any criticism offered with regards to Curatorial Practice as dismissive of the subject’s power is, therefore, in vain, as it is the role of Curatorial Practice to examine and challenge the firm positions of those engaged with it.

⁸⁰ In this sense, Curatorial Practice in the 18th and 19th centuries aimed to ‘cure’ people from their religious and irrational behaviours, and organize time and space according to ‘logical’ or ‘scientific’ constructs, as Bennett concludes, museum practitioners of the time, would contrast the museum structured with the ‘jumbled incongruity’ that characterized the curiosity the museum of previous centuries (Bennett, 1995) pointing to an ideological shift which is marked by changing perceptions and modes of representation. This shift is not less radical than the curatorial shift in perception we are witnessing today: in the same manner, contemporary curatorial projects, like the example of the Welcome Collection recent programme mentioned above, can be said to want to ‘cure’ audiences from the rational and rigid constructs of previous centuries, allowing a more flexible approach to reality-marking, yet again, another ideological shift.

⁸¹ Examples of such productive relations between curators and mechanisms of power, beyond the model of the museum, can be found throughout the Bible, if one reads those relationships outside of their institutionalized religious and ‘mystical’ interpretations. One of the earliest examples of a conflict

Curators handle objects not as physical, but as an abstract category that does not really exist. Their role is profoundly related to a possibility of reminding us that objects are just bridges through which we might be able to attain a memory of ourselves as flickering objects in the world, outside of our subjective mind, which is highly addicted to, and possessed by, ideas. Curatorial Practice inevitably complicates our relationship with the convictions and categories through which we organize our lives. In doing so, it highlights the space from which agency had disappeared, while at the same time, it allows us to see how agency might be able to re-appear.

While curating in this chapter seems resonate with the oscillating approach to objects, I am uncertain if we can imagine the role of curators in cultures whose dominant approach differed from ours. It might be that the oscillating approach to objects has remained alive within Curatorial Practice as an essential part of its premise, or it could be that it is, in fact, an expression of current dominant ideologies, which Curatorial Practice is answering. Such tendencies can be defined by our current attitudes to space and time – both will be closely examined in Chapter 4.

This is an interesting enquiry, which I would like to maintain as an open wound at the centre of my argument. It is maintained open because I do not believe I have the capacity to answer it yet, and because I believe it allows an opening for us, as readers of our current condition, to search for spaces of *the curatorial* and, within them, locate a possibility of agency.

between the symbolic and the real is the people of Israel requesting to be reigned by a king, like all other nations (The Book of Samuel, Part A, Chapter 8). Samuel expresses his worry that the people will confuse the symbol with the 'true' king of Israel – IHVH or, in a more philosophical or secular interpretation, 'Being', 'the place', or the relationship with 'the place'. (the root of the name of God in Hebrew, IHVI, is also the root of the verb 'to be'. The name of the God that should not be pronounced is related to Being; that is, the experience and a relationship with 'the place'). To cure and rest the people's mind, Samuel offers a process of divination in order to choose the king of Israel. In this action, he blurs the boundaries between categories of object and subject as well as between the symbolic and the real. It is an act in which the king chosen, as an object, also has a symbolic function, in the sense that his choice is connected with the arbitrariness of 'the real', therefore he cannot be an independent symbol but, necessarily, is always a bridge with the Real, flickering between the two worlds. This space is dangerous, as history has proven; once a connection with 'the real' is interpreted as a connection with God (who is also perceived as a symbolic entity), then kings are perceived as part of a divine and sublime order, as if they themselves hold power over others, and become exploitative. It is the curate's role to maintain equilibrium by constantly breaking the sign value or the symbolic meaning attached to elements of power. When curators are corrupted by power, stability is broken. This example, therefore, may reveal why developing a theory and an ethical understanding of curating is a necessary and urgent task. The relationship between divination, chance operations and Curatorial Practice is an intriguing topic, which the scope of this research would not permit me to develop on this occasion; however, I am offering this note as a possible extension of our thinking about curating as a practice, beyond the realms of art and objects, and in its 'naked' manifestations within symbolic acts in the social field. This resonates with the idea of the curatorial as the blank and the space of collision, which is referred to in the first chapter.

THE CURATORIAL, THE OBJECT AND THE THING: A CONCLUSION

Within Lacanian terminology, which has been used in this chapter, *the curatorial* puts the object back into the realm of the thing, temporarily removing it from the symbolic realm of language and representation. Hence, the thing can become itself again, before acquiring another existence in the imaginary realm. This is the nature of an oscillating approach towards objects. Any act of iconoclasm is an act of removing the symbolic meaning of the object and turning it to a 'thing'.

One can therefore conclude that *the curatorial*, in relationship to objects, is the transference of objects from one realm to another. If we can think of the digital as an additional symbolic layer of representation that is now acquiring significance within social constructs, then the curator's role within the digital realm, if it maintains loyalty to its ontology (as defined by *the curatorial*) must be a way of creating a meeting point between the digital realm and other realms of reality – symbolic, real, or imaginary.

While we may not like the idea of an automated system for curating, as curators we have a responsibility in approaching this field and expose it as a space for *the curatorial* in order to allow the memory and knowledge of our profession to sip through in its constant re-shaping and uncovering of such things we may take for granted: objects, reality and perception. If the internet can be conceived as the largest public collection in our known history, we should take into account our role as curators in the destabilization of the categories offered by collectors, customers and sellers online so that we can maintain a memory of what should remain outside of exchange mechanisms so that within this vast system of collecting, there will be a space for questioning our understanding of this symbolic layer and how it reflects the world in the means we navigate through it.

THE OSCILLATING APPROACH IN THE DIGITAL REALM

Following the discussions offered in this chapter, we can now revisit some of the concerns that were raised in relation to the role of Curatorial Practice in a digital space.

Firstly, it is now clear that the materiality of an object, or the definition of an object through its materiality, is not essential to Curatorial Practices. Materiality is a realm which we – audiences – place within *the curatorial*, assigning a certain symbolic meaning in relation to current dominant ideologies. It is the meaning of materiality rather than materiality itself that matters in curatorial arrangements. Any object

defined as a stable unit of meaning can become a discursive object for curatorial enquiry, even if it only exists as a line of programming language.

The same goes for object/subject relationships and the staging of the encounter with 'material reality' as a pre-requisite for notions of authenticity and originality. Such relationships are not necessarily dependent on notions of materiality and they can be indicated via an array of techniques which are prevalent in online practices; for example, the tendency of online marketing to function on the basis of so-called subjective emotional preferences, embodied in symbols like the 'thumbs up' icon of 'like'/'dislike' on one's Spotify account, or the non-choice of the 'Like' icon on one's Facebook page.

Such systems accumulate data on our projected image of subjected individuality. As we 'like' and 'dislike', we are creating an interior world very similar to that of the collector described above, except via a visual representation on our screen. At the same time, what is beyond our screen – beyond our possession and perception – are the algorithms and programmes that denote a whole world of abundant possibilities which we are made to believe are uncontainable and therefore need re-arrangement and organization. The algorithms and programmes, are beyond our realm of understanding, and thus function almost as a version of the real for most of us –of course- they are a layer of the symbolic in any possible aspect- as they are in themselves a linguistic code – one which connects our social realm with the symbolic layer of technological instruments and developments.

If we accept the definition of curating as that of the maintenance, creation or disruption of symbolic orders and strata of meanings, the identification of online curators might take us into a new world, which is quite distant from our identification with the realm of art and the cultures of collecting we know today. Curating is buzzing below the surface of this new, symbolic order of digital communication, altering the very notions upon which our perception is constructed: that of language itself, as it affirms new social symbols.

It seems that the curator online, whether s/he manages knowledge of history, objects of art or, indeed, social relations as a 'curatorial medium' in and of itself, should become aware of the curated objects and, dare I would go even further, curated subjects, that are at stake: the thumb on the Facebook post, the folder icon, the refresh icon, the home icon, the 404 error notice, what we categorize as spam, what we categorize as central, what we render accessible, and what we let drop as a residue into the dark matter of information that is no longer needed – are all manifestations of online curating.

CURATORIAL PRACTICE, THE ART-OBJECT'S AUTONOMY AND THE QUESTION OF THE READYMADE

The previous chapter provided an alternative understanding of curating's relationship with notions such as the object, the subject, value, exchange, possession, function, seriality and time. While the analysis reflected different ideological approaches which have a deep connection to the evaluation and the understanding of objects, it did not seek to enter into the definition of the art-object as a separate category. For the sake of continuity, the text assumed a temporary position, where the distinction made between artworks and collectible objects was merely a formal one. One may argue, thus, that the analysis offered so far for the motivations behind curating and collecting is not complete or complex enough as it is hard to deny that art has a special meaning and a special status both in the world of collections and in its relationship with modes of curating. As art takes a central role in the history and practicalities of curating, the purpose of this analysis is to delve into the ontological relationship between curating and art.

To do so, I suggest that our commitment to the 'purification' of *the curatorial* as an overarching principle means that, there is a need to identify the operational role of the curator in her/his relationship to art (reflected in various administrative and bureaucratic functions which include, among other responsibilities, the commission and production of artworks, the promotion of procedures for their dissemination, fundraising, filling application forms, articulating meaning, education, research, sales, public relations and even personal promotion at times) and separate these aspects from the inherent curiosity that seems to drive curators to engage in such operational functions, with an attempt to go beyond the politics and economics which, undoubtedly, are an inevitable and a central part of this relationship. Therefore, I suggest, temporarily divorces curating from art in order to offer a perspective on a possible autonomous Curatorial Practice.¹

¹ Whilst this chapter offers a rather radical shift of thought, it is intended to be an experiment in extending the history and boundary of Curatorial Practice, with the aim of enquiring deeply into the nature of the practice. Whilst it does put aside the accepted form of the practice, manifested through its operational aspects, it is by no means a call to underestimate the economic, social and political aspects of the relationship between art and curating; rather, I recognize that the discourse around Curatorial Practice is saturated with discussions surrounding the centrality of politics in Curatorial Practice and,

CURATING AND ART: A HISTORY OF MUTUAL DEPENDENCE

Writing that the relationship between art and curating is central to discourses surrounding Curatorial Practice is stating the obvious; however, sometimes, stating the obvious might shed light on assumptions seemingly so plain to us that they become transparent; with such invisibility, their analysis is sometimes neglected. With this in mind, there is value in asking: why is curating always considered in relation to art? What is it about art that requires a whole practice of display attached to it? What is it about Curatorial Practice that cannot be thought of without the mention of the art-object?²

When we look into the short history of curating, there is something dubious about it. Already, in a brief glimpse into the conductors of those discourses, it is easy to discern that the writers of the 'short history' of Curatorial Practice, who define curatorial concerns, are mostly, if not solely, art curators. It is as if any other viewpoint that is not at the service of art has been taken out of consideration. It is therefore clear why, reading the theory of Curatorial Practice as it is presented today, one inevitably draws the conclusion that curators are bound to define their practice in relation to dominant tendencies in the art world, functioning either as conductors or as responsive actors

understandably, the responsibility of curators in shaping the cultural field. However, central to this argument is the question of how one can negotiate the ethics of a vocation without firstly underlining its internal structure and motivation. This experimentation with the suspension of the practical elements of Curatorial Practice is only a means by which to return to those concerns with better-established, and more arresting, responses.

² Boris Groys, in 'The Curator as Iconoclast' (Groys, 2010), offers an analysis which traces an alternative history of Curatorial Practice through iconoclast movements to suggest that the order of dependence is actually reversed and that art requires curation in order to 'appear'. He concludes that the curator is indeed 'the new artist' who is engaged with important iconoclast activity, freeing both the art work and the audience from iconophilic perceptions, which he finds at the base of alienation processes. Groys' text had been a prime inspiration and propelled much of the thought-procedure of this research. However, Groys' reading does not take a direct part in building the arguments presented in this chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly, his article revolves around an assumed interdependence between curating and art, neglecting whole areas of curating which frame art as only one out of many fields of enquiry within which Curatorial Practice is involved. Secondly, it seems to me that Groys' conclusive argument only digs a deeper hole in which the anxiety over creative agency is fortified. In this sense, the text forms part of the 'warzone' on which I will elaborate in the next sections of this chapter, insisting on a hierarchical relationship which does not allow room for both practices to exist in parallel without 'stepping on each other's toes'. Lastly, Groys positions curatorial practice's roots in iconoclasm as a secular movement. I find that this suggestion is fundamentally wrong. Firstly because iconoclasm is profoundly embedded within religious thought: especially in the examples Groys brings, of Muslim Iconoclasts, such movements were not concerned with the image itself and its 'appearance' or 'disappearance', rather they were attempting to answer the law of the second commandment, which in some of its interpretation does not allow any representation of God whatsoever. His definition of iconoclasm, on which the definition of the curator as iconoclast stands, is therefore inaccurate to the extent of contradicting itself. Secondly, by proclaiming that curating is necessarily a movement towards the secularization of the art work, it only takes one ideological perspective in account, and bases the ontology of curating upon it – not allowing it to breathe beyond restricting a dichotomist definitions of curator/artist; sacred/secular; religious/rational. While I am aware that there is a certain correlation between my arguments and those of Groys, I point to these fundamental points of disagreement, to explain why the definitions provided in the previous chapter with relation to the ideological attitudes towards objects are more useful in explaining my point of understanding of the matter.

that negotiate or interpret it while, at the same time, the definitions of art, also condition the way curators approach other objects of cultural significance.

The obvious means of understanding this short history is through the eyes and the actions of Walter Hopps and Harald Szeemann, those two 'über-curators' who sought a way of freeing themselves from the burden of the institution so that they could provide platforms for creative experimentation and activity. In numerous interviews and commentaries, they express their deep dedication to art, artists and freedom of artistic expression (as seen in Chapter 1). However, interestingly, their legacy is somewhat at odds with itself. While the curator is placed at the service of art, Hopps and Szeemann, the fathers of such a tendency, seem also to be the first to explore the notion of curatorial creative authorship, opening up the relationship between curating and art for enquiry.

Indeed, their actions were welcomed with some confusion, as the separation of curating and art had become increasingly challenging.³ Current discourses in the field of contemporary art and curating find difficulty in drawing the line between these two practices (Altshuler, 1998, p. 35 and Wade, 2000). In turn, the relationship between curators and artists is often portrayed as a battle over creative territory, underlining the basic right to creative agency.

With art's call for autonomy and the development of independent Curatorial Practice, there seem to be an inherent tension between the figure of curator as a backstage manager and the figure of curator as a creative agent. And so we are left both with a discourse that has a legacy of loyalty to art and a history hesitant in exploring itself beyond the borders of accepted hierarchies. In this way, I contend that the split between Museum Studies and art curating discourses had contributed to the amnesia of Curatorial Practice, as defined by Obrist (2001) and O'Neill (2007).

However, this history of Curatorial Practice, and the inner tension within it, evokes a certain grimace in the face of cultural history. The figure of the curator is often perceived almost as a parasite, feeding off the creativity of art and the evolving surrounding markets. The curator is often referred to as a 'middleman',⁴ evoking

³ The exhibition 'Live in your Head: When Attitudes Become Form' opened in Kunsthalle Bern in 1969 and was accepted with mixed reviews. The dispute around authorship in the curatorial creative act is still at the centre of debate, and 'Attitudes' is taken as a prime example (Baker, 2010). The re-enactment of the exhibition in the recent Venice Biennial in 2013, as a gesture to the seminal role of this exhibition in the history of curating's self-definition, will be reviewed later in this text.

⁴ The curator is referred to as a 'middleman' in several recent writings about the role of the curator in relation to art. See Søren Anderson and Lars Bang Larsen's 'The Middleman: Beginning to Talk about Mediation' (O'Neill, 2007, pp. 19-29). Here, the notion of the curator as middleman is central to the discussion of the positive and negative aspects of the 'middleman' figure in relation to his necessity. The same assumption underlines the conversation between Georgina Jackson, Vaari Claffey, Mark Garry and

disdain and suspicion as to the necessity of her/his presence as a mediator between artists and audiences. Needless to say, such an underlying assumption surrounding the role and motivation of the curator is a source of tension and complexity in the relationship between curators and artists, and the source of an inherent anxiety about the creative agency of the artist, which is at stake whenever it is subjected to curatorial 'manipulation'. Tracing the source of such anxiety, and offering a re-reading of such discourses is the premise of the following subchapter.

THE ROOTS OF A DISPUTE: THE CURATOR AND THE HISTORY OF ART CRITICISM

Baudelaire's *Salon de 1846* (1946) and Oscar Wilde's *The Critic as Artist* (1891) are two seminal texts that have framed the enquiry into creative agency in the representation, analysis and critique of art. Both Baudelaire and Wilde, being writers and renowned literary figures as well as art critics, sought a creative approach to the reading of artworks; in the lack of alternatives, as will be shown, they also form the basis of thinking on the relationship between Curatorial Practice and art. With this noted, we may ponder: is the motivation of the art critic parallel to that of the curator? If so, how can this help us understand the apparent clash between creative agencies in the relationship between art and curating?

Baudelaire, first and foremost, was a poet. His *Flowers of Evil* – probably the last 'blockbuster' poetry book, which can be considered his 'masterpiece' – is so bold that reading it leaves the tongue bleeding, like a battlefield.⁵ As a poet and an art writer,

Tessa Giblin in *The Irish Review* (winter 2008). In this conversation, under the title 'Unconditional: A Conversation on Curatorial Practice' the participants aim to define the borders and limitations of this 'middleman' position within contemporary Curatorial Practice (2008, pp. 60-69) Kate Fowle, in 'Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today', (2007, pp. 10-19) refers to Harald Szeemann's role as a 'middleman' between museum and artists in his capacity as an exhibition organiser. These are a few examples of direct references to the term which, at the same time as defining the curator as 'middleman', also suggests that the curator's role may be disposable. This is one of the main questions surrounding the crisis of Curatorial Practice in the face of digital technologies, where there is an opportunity for a direct relationship between producers and consumers and the idea of mediation seems obsolete. The notion of the 'middleman' and questions of the curator's necessity are prevalent especially in discourses about the relationship between curating and art.

⁵ For example, in the poem *Élévation* (Baudelaire, 2014), Baudelaire juxtaposes the romantic description of the universe dancing around him with the pain of the protagonist's soul. The pain gradually builds as we delve deeper into his mind, which is unable to contain the marvels of the world as it is preoccupied with its petty existence of anxiety and pain. This contradiction is not a cynical one, as one may assume; rather, it seems that the pain derives from the position of the protagonist as both the observer of beautiful things and the observer of the deep abyss of his hellish existence. He therefore takes a constant double position and, within these two positions, he fights himself in a burst of verbal violence and wishful thinking, alienating the possibility of ever enjoying the elevation beyond his sorrow (using the third-person 'celui'): *'Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse/S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins;/Celui dont les pensées, comme des alouettes,/Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor'* ('Happy is him who...' etc.). This violence is directed towards his own mind, which becomes a battlefield in the search for truth: on the one hand, he knows the bliss that reveals itself through the silent acceptance of such beauty, yet, on the other hand, he cannot let his thought disappear into that silence, and he

Baudelaire is torn, not only between the natural and the sur-natural⁶ world of his own symbolism, but also between the image and the word.

Once written, an idea filtrates into the world of the real, surpassing the border between the sublime and the beautiful; however, the word always remains but a memory of the encounter. The physicality of the written word is only a black shadow of its transparent silhouette in one's mind: once expressed, an idea becomes used, battered and defeated; it morphs from an ideal into the sound of a loud breath (vanity).⁷

The practice of writing, which is immanent to art criticism, is double-faced, involving a tension between theory and practice. Ostensibly, the written word signifies the theoretical discourse. It is the body through which ideas find a voice, and is entangled with the structures of thought and therefore with the most subjective perception. Writing is always confined within language, which is, at its very core, a manifestation of the will to express oneself: to bring potential into being in the realm of practice. In this sense, writing is always a bridge – a middle ground; an activity never remaining in place but flickering between the writer and the reader, and thus between theory and practice.

Writing itself, however, *is* a practice. It involves a technique, is the production of an object, and calls upon the material world to participate in its production. Nonetheless, its product (other than the paper sheet adorned with curving signs) is ephemeral, amorphous and impossible to trace or to catch. It is a practice whose product is theoretical. Furthermore, writing, from either side of the equation, is the embodiment of a translation: stuttering, incomplete and lacking thought itself, it is an embodiment of failure; of an inability to represent the realm of the ideal.

Baudelaire's writing contains this awareness: although poetry produces a concrete aesthetic form which could be viewed as the product of writing, it is still, in itself, a set of images, painted on the eyelids of the reader. Writing thus embodies a labyrinth of tensions between the theoretical and the practical, between the mind and language,

inevitably remains in the dark realm of his sorrow. This inability to enjoy the natural world transforms its piercing beauty into a form of inner vengeance. This approach is typical of Baudelaire's poetry and can also be seen in poems like *La Beauté* and *L'Idéal*.

⁶ Baudelaire's writing suggests a dualistic approach to nature. The natural world divides, in his logic, into 'natural' and 'sur-natural' phenomena. *The natural* is defined as the world of physics and the *sur-natural* as the world of the image (imagination) and projection (hence of art, also). This approach is prevalent in his poetry and especially in the symbolism in 'Fleurs Du Mal'; an in-depth enquiry into these terms and their relationship to art can be found in David Carrier's book *High Art* (Carrier, 1996).

⁷ Here, the sound of a loud breath refers to the word 'HEVEL' (הבל) in Hebrew. The other meaning of the word 'HEVEL', is vanity. It is the word used in Ecclesiastes' starting phrase, 'Vanity, all is vanity'.

failing to be completely independent and always floating like a ghost amidst the material objects of this world.

By acknowledging this failure, Baudelaire approaches art criticism from an alternative and, some would say, radical point of view. It is not a point of view that suggests objectivity or a set of coherent and successive conclusions; it does not define itself as merely theoretical; rather, it is a mixed and, in a sense, more practical approach reflecting Baudelaire's inner conflicts when seeking to rethink the practice of art.

Baudelaire seeks to free the art critic from the burden of the social – historical and political contexts that condition and limit the critic's genuine encounter with art – and offers him/her the gift of imagination, which is, in Baudelairian terms, the gift of creation, meaning that the critic will be able to investigate the potentialities of the dialogue between the word and the image, and between practice and practice, rather than between theory and practice.

Just as art has a right to exist in its own right, in the same vein, art criticism has the right to explore itself as an autonomous field. Of course, the conflict that arises here and which Baudelaire recognises – is that the origin of art criticism is in art itself, meaning there is difficulty in suggesting that independence can be claimed. The solution Baudelaire offers is simply: *'To be just, that is to say, to justify its existence, criticism should be partial, passionate and political, that is to say, written from an exclusive point of view, but a point of view that opens the widest horizons'* (Baudelaire, 1965, p. 44).

In applying Baudelaire's consideration of painting to art criticism, one can conclude that, as much as the artist uses nature as 'a dictionary' from which he takes what is necessary for an original and imaginative account of his experience, the critic should treat art as a dictionary of the encounter with all that is a reflection of the human being and its experience. Therefore, what Baudelaire offers is not an account describing or contouring the artwork, but rather an account penetrating it, whilst, at the same time, building on it and flying away to yet a different realm of imagination. This is a discourse that does not distance itself from the encounter, but which finds itself immersed in it. It is shaped by offering yet another creative agency – that of the reader. As Baudelaire famously concludes, *'Thus, the best account of a picture may be as well a sonnet or an elegy'* (Baudelaire, 1965, p. 65).

Oscar Wilde's interpretation of the role of art-criticism, via which the Baudelairian art critic is normally read and which can be seen as initiating from Baudelaire's conclusion about the critic's role, suggests something quite different. Wilde, as

opposed to Baudelaire, I would argue, insists on the independence of art criticism, and this leads him to assume a rather distinct, even extreme, position, as shown in 'The Critic as Artist' (1947).

Wilde argues for the supremacy of art criticism over the work of the artist in an attempt to turn the accepted hierarchy on its head. In this sense, the title of his treaty is deceptive as it does not compare criticism with art in an attempt to reach equality (criticism = art), but rather builds an equation where art is valueless without criticism (therefore criticism \neq art, but criticism $>$ art).

While we often take art criticism to be a natural parallel of curatorial discourse, I contend that this seamless transfer from criticism to curating is fundamentally inaccurate, and should be offered a second look. I believe that this misleading connection, and the misreading of Baudelairian texts, forms the preliminary construct within which the architecture of the aforementioned anxiety resides.

THE CURATOR AS META-ARTIST AND/OR THE ARTIST AS CURATOR

'The Curator as Artist' by Jonathan Watkins (*Art Monthly*, 1987), can be viewed as a resurrection and an adoption of both of the aforementioned texts in terms of the strategic approach to the examination of Curatorial Practice. Taking the title of Wilde's more radical approach to the relationship between art and criticism, Watkins, too, frames the work of the curator as an artistic practice in itself. The subordination of the artwork to the meta-narrative that the curator stages is signified by his definition of the artwork as 'ready-made' in relation to Curatorial Practice.⁸

Whilst this discourse seems to have faded in recent years, the questions surrounding the meeting points of art and Curatorial Practice still resonate in the examination of the role and the responsibility of the curator. One such example is the correspondence between Anton Vidokle and others in the pages of *e-flux magazine*, and particularly in relation to 'Art without Artists' (Vidokle, 2010). In this article, Vidokle questioned the

⁸ This principle was a central preoccupation of curatorial discourse throughout the 1990s and early-2000s. Paul O'Neill, in his article *The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse* (O'Neill, 2007) gives a useful historical account of the discussions around the notion of the curator as an artist at this time. In his account, he mentions discussions that took place in *Frieze* and *Art Monthly* magazines, between leading curators such as Robert Storr, John Miller and Jan Hoet, and artists such as Group Material, Julie Ault and Louise Lawler, from which the notion of the 'middleman' was also extracted. O'Neill locates in this discussion a creative authority and agency in the work of curators. The roots of this discussion are traced back to the relationship between curation and the definitions of art criticism. While O'Neill's account is important to the understanding of the responses and replies offered to this question within art discourse, he does not offer a clear separation between art criticism and curating. I posit that there is a fundamental difference between the two, in terms of the level of interdependence and reciprocal relationship between curating and art. In this way, curating can think of itself as completely independent of art, rather than as a by-product of art practice; the comparison between the two is useful only for an understanding of the logic of the discourse.

freedom of curators in their curatorial initiative, which robs artists of their position in the social field, thus rendering them speechless in their re-definition of both fields.

Another more recent example that reflects the misreading of Curatorial Practice, is the re-enactment of Harald Szeemann's 'When Attitudes Become Form',⁹ as part of the 2013 Venice Biennial. 'Attitudes' is seen as a manifestation of Watkins' article in practice: the re-enactment of this moment in curatorial history epitomizes the performance of the authority and authorship of the curator in his use of artworks as a means of delivering a larger framework of enquiry.¹⁰

Although such discourses belong to a recent fluctuation or shift in Curatorial Practice, as marked by the birth of the independent curator, Baudelaire and Wilde remind us that thinking about the tension between art and other affiliated practices (curating included) is not unique to our time. Upon closer inspection, they resonate through the history of art theory and the definition of practices that are affiliated with, or comment on, artistic practice.

STRETCHING THE HISTORY OF A RELATIONSHIP

If we accept that the tension apparent in the relationship between art and affiliated practices is not a new concern, this will allow us, once again, to stretch our minds and reconsider this relationship as it is reflected in earlier forms of curating and art that dominated before the 19th century. Such a relationship might not be obvious in the written literature of the time; however, it is in the way art was disseminated,

⁹ For convenience, 'When Attitudes Become Form' will be referred to as 'Attitudes'.

¹⁰ The recreation of 'Attitudes' was an experiment in preserving a curatorial product; within this context, 'Attitudes' was treated like an end-object: it was left untouched. Where the original works of art could not be found, empty spaces remained in the staging of the exhibition to remind the viewer of the incompleteness of this archaeological construction. The intention, I assume, was to create an 'authentic' experience, where viewers could imagine themselves as visitors in the 'original' exhibition space. However, this aspiration for 'authenticity' and the 'original' failed to express the intention behind 'Attitudes', which sought to portray the ephemerality and temporality of the art-objects it presented; and so the re-enactment of the exhibition defied its purpose and made 'Attitudes' lose its voice. One can take the reproduction of the exhibition catalogue as an example that reflects the absurdity of this operation. The original catalogue, designed by Szeemann, attempted to defy the idea of a catalogue as a finished object that offers an enclosed, finite reading of artworks. Rather, it was meant to become a document that maps the process, the research and the conditions for reading the artworks and the exhibition space, opening up those readings to the visitor's own participation in the construction of the artworks' assumed meaning. The reproduction of the catalogue at the 2013 Biennial as a defined, enclosed object, defies the original purpose of authenticity: no process is revealed regarding the new attempt at performing this exhibition. The visitor, the artists, and, indeed, even the curatorial agency, remained out of the framework of this re-enactment, thus diluting the possible encounter, which, rather, than being re-performed, is assumed to take place whenever a mere form is reproduced. But just like the title of the exhibition, 'Attitudes' denied the primacy of form (or the object, so to speak), and its definition as an enclosed unit of meaning in and of itself. The Venice 'Attitudes', I argue, is, in fact, a misreading of Szeemann's project as a whole. Within this, there is also a fundamental displacement of creative agency (the reader's agency included).

interpreted and discussed before the proliferation of the individual artist as an author.¹¹

The case study presented as an appendix to this chapter seeks to perform such an exercise by offering a curatorial analysis of the rood screen and the west choir in a Gothic cathedral positioned in the small town of Naumburg, Germany. This particular analysis resurrects what seems to me to be the curatorial concern underlining the arrangement of the artworks and their positioning within the space of the Cathedral.

The management of the interrelations and positions of the artworks in the space of the Cathedral can be read as a product of creative agency, which, in my reading, casts speech in the throats of the mute sculptures, allowing them to become vivid inspirations to curiosity. In this example, it is curatorial thought, rather than each individual sculpture, that becomes the centre of the viewer's attention, and indeed, the case study suggests that the mysterious and proclaimed Naumburg Masters were a group of professionals who, working in a collaborative effort, sought to expose the Cathedral as a political space for enquiry, while the sculptures and their positioning meant to perform the spaces of the curatorial, which would allow the reader's agency to stand at the centre of curatorial concern.

This case study makes a point in demonstrating that other relationships between curating and art were indeed practiced in history¹² and that the hierarchical positions that we are accustomed to today might not be ontological to what we aim to practice but rather provide a distraction that directs our attention towards a constant battle over individual authority.

Although examining a long history of Curatorial Practice that runs parallel to art, and is as ancient as art, may relieve some of the tension in the categorical definitions of the two, it does not yet solve the question of the relationship between art and Curatorial Practice, nor does it permit the separation between the two practices.

¹¹ The proliferation of the individual artist as an author can be traced back to the beginning of the Italian Renaissance. This also marks the birth of the art market as we know it today, a market that is based on the reputation of an artist's practice as much as it is based on the quality of the work at stake. (Burke, 2001) Before the Renaissance, there were very few testimonies of individual artists; rather, the names inscribed on art pieces were those of guilds or workshops. (Scott, 2003)

¹² The analysis of the Cathedral as a curatorial project offers the idea that, even though there was no one person that could be assigned as the 'individual' curator of the cathedral, curatorial concern (i.e. the mediation of meaning and the management of audiences through space in its use of objects) is a prevalent part of the cathedral's affective influence. In such examples, there is virtually no separation between art and Curatorial Practice, and the interface between the two practices seems smooth in the final encounter. It is difficult to know the attitude of the artists and architects involved in this project as there is not much remaining of the correspondence or discourse around this project; whether or not tensions were manifested in the process is left to our imaginative capabilities.

If curating can be about anything and is not necessarily about art, then what is it about the art-object that lends itself so easily to the architectures of Curatorial Practice? What are the knots that tie together those two practices? What is the ontological reason behind their attachment, beyond its expression in the historical narrative?

THE SPECIAL STATUS OF THE ART-OBJECT

The art-object is examined here through the prism of the three attitudes towards objects that were defined in the previous chapter and takes into account the belief that art, much like any other cultural invention, corresponds with history. Accordingly, it is constructed and re-constructed in relation to the ideologies underpinning the aforementioned three approaches. Those ideologies can be defined through their attitude to transcendence and the relationship between the realm of perception and the world beyond, which often is viewed as an immaterial reality.¹³

THE ART-OBJECT AS A COLLECTABLE ITEM

A brief look into any museum collection reveals that most collections – historical, archaeological, maritime etc. – include a vast number of art-objects.¹⁴ So, how does the art-object function differently than other objects? How does it remain resilient when culture radically changes? And in what way does the nature of art influence related fields – notably, that of Curatorial Practice?

The first step here is to develop an understanding of the special status of the art-object in today's dominant ideology (defined earlier as the symbolic approach). Seeing the art-object through this lens means that it is assigned with a monetary value in relation to general market mechanisms, and, indeed, that the art-object manages to maintain its status as a relatively stable asset. This financial stability, reflected in a gradual increase in value, derives from the same trick that gives the collectable item its unique status: the mechanism of inverting the logic of supply and demand.¹⁵

¹³ Some of the ideologies referred to here, especially those affiliated with the Symbolic Approach to objects, such as materialist theories (and hence Marxist theories) do not acknowledge transcendence at all. The Marxist branch of the Symbolic Approach has influenced the way we perceive art in a deep and generalized way, as we shall see later in this chapter.

¹⁴ A simple search of the British Museum collection – a museum not dedicated to the presentation of art – shows 49 results for the keyword 'utensil', 14,438 results for 'tool' and an astounding 86,422 results for 'art'. This example indicates that art is seen as an object for preservation, more so than other cultural objects.

¹⁵ By this, I mean that, while the logic of production stipulates that the quantity of production is conditioned by demand, here, the logic is inverse because production is stopped (either intentionally or because production processes are no longer available to continue the supply of the object in question),

This inversion is possible through the exploitation of the value of the object as a sign. The object's value as a sign lies in its tight relationship with ideological and ethical assessment criteria, which frames it according to its influence on historical memory, its importance as conductor of cultural dominants and its influence as a social agent. What renders the above possible is the same assumption that propels the discussion in Chapter 2: the logic of placing meaning and function in an inverse equation.¹⁶

THE RESILIENCE OF THE ART-OBJECT

Art-objects, in this context, are unique, even in relation to collectable items, because they are created with no functional use or technological productivity in mind.¹⁷ In the logic that objects are assigned value in accordance with either usage or possession, an art-object is an object that can only be possessed, hence it is automatically defined by its symbolic value. In this sense, the art-object is the perfect semiophore.¹⁸ Whilst it is

but the object's value rises because demand continues to remain stable or increase. This situation creates a false sense of lack in the market, which is compensated by the increase in the object's exchange value.

¹⁶ It is important to remind ourselves here that the dichotomies that define meaning in opposition to function are themselves a symptom of the symbolic approach to objects and this analysis is therefore limited in its ability to encompass the full meaning of art-objects in culture. That said, since contemporary culture and contemporary art discourses are embedded within a paradigm that positions subject/object relations at the centre of its ideological premise, the analysis of the art-object through the Symbolic Approach is necessary. Hence, the analyses of modern and contemporary art in this chapter are based on a phenomenological approach, which frames the subject at the centre of enquiry. It is a relativist approach that does not see access to transcendence. While it is tempting to question this ideology altogether and suggest a restructuring of the meaning of 'object' through a different system of ideas (such as the unity of object and subject in Hinduist tradition – see Swami Nikhilananda's *DRG-DRSYA-VIVEKA: An Enquiry into the Nature of 'Seer' and 'Seen'*, 2006), the premise of this research is to redefine Curatorial Practice within the context of Western Art and philosophy, recognizing a shift in paradigm created by the proliferation of new communication technologies. As such, this research still places the Symbolic Approach as the point of departure for analysing the constructs through which the object is considered. However, this remark may pave the way for an enquiry into the conditions of the Symbolic Approach itself, with the hope that I can develop this in the future.

¹⁷ This follows my definition of technological function in Chapter 2. However, here I anticipate a possible assumption that this research might hold in its indirect analysis of art and its role. If one defines technology as an enhancement of human bodily capabilities (as in Chapter 2), and agrees to extend the definitions of 'body' to include mind, thought and emotion, rejecting the trajectory of mind/body separation (as will be elaborated further in Chapter 4), then, as part of such shift in definitions, art can be seen as an advanced technological tool for the production of mind substance: thoughts, emotions and ideas. In this sense, art, together with language, is one of the most ancient forms of technological invention, with a fundamental importance to our evolution as species. With our economy moving towards immaterial production, and scientific attempts to trigger and control human functions (for example, the application of Neuroscience-related technologies to everyday gadgets such as game consoles and mobile phones), one can imagine that artists, too, will use those forms of technological tools in their creation of 'mind substances' and, in this way, the involvement of art with technology, I would argue, will maintain art's sustainable value in the next technological revolution. Here, I should also remind us of the object's possible 'symbolic function' (the function objects maintain when used as a common denominator for memory, as defined in Chapter 2). While in the symbolic approach, within which we are currently immersed, it is difficult to understand function except in its opposition to meaning, I posit that 'symbolic function' could be seen as one of the prime goals behind the creation of art-objects, in its capacity to define the 'technological' use of art as a form of visceral memory-drive.

¹⁸ 'Semiophore' as defined by Pomian: '*Objects which were of absolutely no use...but which, being endowed with meaning, represented the invisible*' (Pomian, 1990, p. 30).

not created with any technological function in mind, it is created as a vehicle of symbolic meaning; therefore, it could be defined as a ready-made collectable.¹⁹

As a ready-made collectable, the art-object has further advantages that create its unique status amongst other collectable items: firstly, the art-object fits within the internal logic of the collectable series and offers the continuity that forms the motivation behind collecting. Importantly, it is already recognised as a symbolic unit of meaning; therefore, it easily takes its part within a collected series that reflects and reinforces the collector's identity and ideology.

In this way, the art-object fits readily into the collection's way of forming an idiosyncratic organisation, detached from any specific reality or context.²⁰ Within the inner dynamics of the collectable series, the art-object offers the potential for an infinite series. This presumable infinity provides the collector with a promise that the pleasure of the hunt that informs the game of collecting, in its tensions between presence and absence, will persist into the future, with no fear of it ever collapsing into itself with the notion of completion. It is therefore a perfect answer in the collection's inner psychology as a means of organising time, space and death.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the symbolic approach, art-objects are easily made into symbols of political power and sovereignty.²¹ Their readiness to perform such a role is due to their history of informing a representation of reality; they reflect their owner's identity and whims readily.²² Furthermore, they can be commissioned specifically for the reinforcement of political power, ideology, or historical narratives by perpetuating a pre-constructed, direct message.²³

¹⁹ The collectable here is used in the sense of its definition within the context of the symbolic approach. .

²⁰ I would argue that this has been reinforced with the modernist ethos of 'art for art's sake', which underlines many of the inner contradictions of the art world today.

²¹ In this statement, I also refer, to some extent, to the impossibility of disconnecting art from its political context or political power, and take a stand in relation to the modernist assumption that art can be made for art's sake. Whilst I do not think that creating art for art's sake is impossible, I believe it is a fallacy as long as art is being exchanged in the market like any other commodity. Also, it must be remembered that even when serving itself, art is serving an ideology; in this case, the ideology of cultural categorization and the promotion of sectional knowledge.

²² Some portraits, for example, were commissioned to represent not only an 'improved' physical appearance that would match with ideals of beauty and, generally speaking, as asserted by Shearer West: while 'likeness' might have been an important aspect of portraiture, *'All portraits show a distorted, ideal, or partial view of the sitter'* (West, 2004, p. 12). Portraits, however, also attempt to grasp the inner faculties of an individual's personality through the use of symbolic objects represented as part of the portrayed identity. In this sense, portraits are almost a collection in and of themselves: they promise the resurrection of the individual through the image, using all the objects that define her/his identity, like in the case of Daniel Mijtens' portrait of Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel and Surrey, c.1618. The painting depicted objects that were later found to be in the possession of the Earl (West, 2004, p. 114).

²³ This use of art was a prominent function of art during Roman times, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as discussed earlier and in the Naumburg Cathedral case study. In many ways, one can see a parallel between the changing approaches towards the object as described in Chapter 2 and the role of the artwork in those ages. In Roman times, art was used as a means of glorifying leaders and victories, in medieval times, art was a means by which to promote belief in God and in the Renaissance, art became a

Accordingly, their resilience is also fed by a communal historical memory of their importance and special status; i.e. tradition, which allows the art-object to accumulate different meanings as it is transferred from one hand to another, reinforcing its symbolic value.²⁴

From a historical perspective, a large part of its accumulative meaning derives from its representational capabilities. Until very recently, art was considered the main visual testimony of events, ideologies and constructs of power. Thusly, history demonstrates art's power in shaping historical memory. This power of art endures: art is still viewed in museums, archives and collections as a means through which society is able not only to document events, but to preserve the event's meaning and the general state of mind it produced. Art is therefore central to the production and maintenance of group identities; states, communities and religions, for instance.²⁵

The resilience of the art-object can be demonstrated via its stability in changing times and in changing tendencies reflected in the various approaches towards objects identified in Chapter 1. From the sanctifying approach, art-objects are seen as holy instruments through which the divine can reflect itself.²⁶ The logic of the sanctifying

means to demonstrate the abilities of man. With the development of free markets, competition and the role of the artists' name in art marketing (mainly because artists were again dependent on private funds), artworks turned into commodities and were evaluated by monetary means. However, archaeological research into the earlier meanings of art (in prehistoric times, for example) reinforces its close connection with ritual and language, and offers an alternative perspective on the role of art in the history of cultural development. Two seminal writers who contest the separation of art from other modes of communication are David-Lewis Williams (2002) and Steven Mithen (1996). I am intrigued by the possibility of thinking about art from a different perspective that does not satisfy itself with the political struggles of our time. I am taking this opportunity to provide a gap in which we can imagine what art could mean to us today beyond its entangled history with the Symbolic Approach to objects.

²⁴ The role of images and, within them, of art-works as historical documents is reviewed by Peter Burke in *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (2001). The art movement known as Institutional Critique made a point of suggesting a critique of this mechanism; most notable for my purposes is Broodthaers' work *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles* (1968), in which he created a fictional museum and provided a whole programme around the works and exhibits presented there. The work examines the way in which historical narratives and fictions (whether true or false) position artworks and objects as capital, propelling their value in correspondence with personal interests and financial gain.

²⁵ The role of the artwork as an important document in the production of common identity and historical narratives is explored in Boris Groys' *Art Power* (2008). Groys objects to the exclusion of former Soviet Union artists from the canon of art history, assuming that their exclusion is related to ideological narratives which sought to position Communist ideology outside the main narratives of the Western world. He calls for the defence of such artists and a re-reading of history that will allow us to recognize the importance of their art, regardless of their political affiliations. The Istanbul Biennial, in its recent incarnations (2011 and 2013) has also sought to break the status quo of thinking of art in relation to East/West and North/South dichotomies, allowing an alternative historical narrative to emerge that focuses on the interpretation of global power relations from the point of view of those excluded from historical narratives written by the West (most notably, as Groys also notes, the historical narrative suggested by the US). In both these versions of the Biennial, the 'resurrection' of 'old' artists, as well as the presentation of artists from various locations around the globe, other than central Europe (as prioritised at other such mega-exhibitions) are methodologies by which the power of art as a document and political agent is exposed.

²⁶ 'Divine' here relates to Christianity's definition of the sacred but it can also be interpreted similarly in other religious ideologies as a form of transcendence or ideal reality. Here, the Christian tradition is taken as an example because of its importance in shaping Western thought and science.

approach gives a central role to representations, reflections and imagery. This is exemplified by Christian thought and its approach to representation overall, and to art more specifically:²⁷ in Genesis, Man is created in the image of God. Accordingly, existence is seen as a form of representation, or reflection, of God in material reality.²⁸ God's further investment in the material realm is then manifested once again in the form of a human – Jesus – reflecting back the image of Man as God. Inherent to this logic, there is a blurring between God's representation and God's manifestation, and, inevitably, between 'things' and their images.²⁹ Within this logic, images are able to enact a form of transcendence and are as important and potent as reality, whether defined as a transcendent or a material reality.³⁰ In a culture that deeply believes in reflections as real aspects of God, art can easily be interpreted as sacred, manifesting God through representation. Hence, certain religious art-objects are recognised as holy in the sense that they hold divine power in and of themselves.³¹

The sanctifying approach can also be used to explain the special status of art-objects in other ages and contexts, where it might not be seen as a reflection of God but is still believed to embody a transcendent field; for example, the art-object could be perceived as the remains of the Genius of an artist; in Western artistic tradition, it is seen as a way of embodying transcendent inspiration. Art is almost viewed as a type of independent abstract entity. Boris Groys framed this tendency as the underlining

²⁷ Christianity is taken as an example here for its profound influence on the development of Western art and its perception.

²⁸ Jewish tradition suggests a variety of other interpretations of the book of Genesis, which are in line with the second Commandment (directly translated from Hebrew as 'thou shalt not create an image or a sculpture', but popularly known as 'you shall not make yourself an idol'. The word 'idol' is in itself already an interpretation of the text in its original language). Jewish tradition is brought here as a possible alternative interpretation to approaches which are predominant in Western culture, and as the historical origin of such approaches, and is not viewed as 'truth' by any means. In this regard, there is a vast difference in meaning between Jewish tradition and Christian tradition. While Christian traditions (and, with them, iconoclast movements and, inherently, art-history) debated among themselves on the definition of idols, *simulacra* and 'true images' (a further analysis of these disputes is offered in the case study of the Naumburg Cathedral, attached to this chapter), the Jewish tradition understands the portrayal of God through images as an explicit betrayal of God's infinite nature and existence beyond the symbolic order. I would argue that the problem of our culture and obsession with image, sign and objects, as defined in the first chapter and analysed by Baudrillard, derives from the predominance of Christian philosophical thought in art history. Without scrutinizing the Christian historical narrative upon which our very thought is constituted, there is no way of expanding beyond dichotomist notions.

²⁹ This analysis is developed in philosophical writings about the meaning of images and the imaginary in Western culture. Sartre, in *The Imaginary*, examines the roots of our attachment to images and their relationship to our mental operations, memory and imagination through a phenomenological approach that, Sartre suggests, leads inevitably to the evaluation of art as representation (Sartre, 2004) Jean Luc Nancy, in *The Ground of the Image*, touches upon the specific significance the image has in religious thought, referring to the tensions between the image and the real, and the image as a possible possessor of transcendence in religious terms (Nancy, 2005).

³⁰ This definition and understanding of sacred objects resonates with Emile Durkheim's understanding of the topic as presented by Robert A. Scott (2003). A further analysis of the sacred object is offered in the case study that is presented as an appendix to this chapter.

³¹ As noted before, different attitudes towards objects mingle and exchange within the same area of time and space. For example, the Church as an institution used art and its specific sanctified status in order to gain symbolic political power.

condition of the iconophilia he recognizes in the relationship between art and its own definition:

'In spite of this knowledge (that the representation of the Pipe in Magritte's painting is only but a representation) we are still inclined to believe that when we look at an artwork, we directly and instantaneously confront 'art.' We see artworks as incarnating art. The famous distinction between art and non-art is generally understood as a distinction between objects inhabited and animated by art and those from which art is absent. This is how works of art become art's idols, that is, analogously to religious images, which are also believed to be inhabited or animated by gods' (Groys, 2010, pp. 48-49).

Following Groys' insight, in the 20th Century, artworks were described by means of their 'aura', a term with a certain unexplained or mystical edge. Accordingly, they are approached almost as life forms – living entities that need to be protected from cultural change and destruction.³² They are created, as well as perceived, for the purpose of display and preservation. They are isolated and separated from everyday life through different systems, such as art criticism, art education, museums, and collections.³³

Created with no technological function in mind, the art-object also resonates with the 'oscillating approach'. Since the art-object is in antithesis to technologically productive commodities, it cannot be assessed or exchanged according to the same terms by which other cultural products are valued.³⁴ Unlike other manufactured goods, the process of producing art is already a self-reflexive analysis and, at times, a

³² I argue that, while the locus of the 'real' changed from one époque to another (from God to Man in the Renaissance, From Man to Society (or History) in the 19th Century, from society to art itself in the 20th Century), the underlying importance of the image or representation (hence, the art-object) derived from a sanctifying approach that saw art as a sacred, separate practice that resonated with and presented some sort of transcendence.

³³ Several art movements have sought to eliminate the gap between art and everyday life, such as Dada and The Situationist International. To some extent, relational art and performance also seek to merge art and the social and political field. However, despite such efforts and their seeming importance in the development of art history, the dominant way in which everyday life treats art maintains the category of art as a separate and sacred one, which is still assigned with value in relation to its historical prestige rather than its actual value in the social field.

³⁴ Now, technological productivity might be seen as secondary to the design and positioning of an object, if we take, for example, the smartphone. The iPhone, for a certain period of time, received a consensual acceptance, flickering somewhere between its sign value and its actual productive aspect as it became a symbol of status and sophistication. One would pay an exceedingly high price for it, though it offered a similar technological solution to other smartphones in the market. In this sense, one could say that companies are currently attempting to position their products in a position similar to that of the art-object. However, recent history (The rise of Samsung Galaxy and its new features) shows that technological productivity still plays a central and paramount part in the product's value. Samsung was not considered to have the same prestige as the iPhone, it offered technological improvements that attracted a vast number of consumers to exchange their iPhones for a better technological gadget, and therefore such a comparison is not entirely viable.

criticism of the objects' cultural value.³⁵ This self-reflexivity serves as a continuous background noise that performs a passive-aggressive resistance to different mechanisms of evaluation; hence art, even when traded as a commodity, never complies completely with a simple set of concerns that would grant it a definitive, stable sign-value.³⁶ It is a complex sign that continuously questions its own value.

Being on the verge of the definitions and boundaries of its own production, art-objects are born 'hovering', existing between realms of being, potentially functioning as bridges to an invisible in the mere process of their production. As objects with no technological function, they are affiliated with unseen inner worlds; they belong to the symbolic realm whilst also already referring to what might be beyond symbolic exchange.

At times, they not only represent such meaning but also set it in motion, promoting the production of ideas and perspectives. This residue of art is constantly leaking, finding its way through the gaps of the social field, offering an alternative set of symbolic representations that exist alongside visual and spoken reality. Although it can serve as a bridge to an invisible, art is still part of the symbolic order and is rarely a bridge for the real; however, as an alternative model of expression, it may be defined as a bridge to the invisible *within* the social order.³⁷

The art-object's self-enquiry can also be defined as its agency because this allows it to question its definition as an object so that it can manoeuvre its position in relation to changing ideologies and maintain a relative independence in assigning its own status.

³⁵ Art history demonstrates how, within the process of producing art, artists have always sought to criticize their own means of operation, reflecting on their inevitable subordination of political and religious powers (like in the critical portraits of royalty – the famous painting of *Charles IV of Spain and His Family*, painted by Goya in 1800 is one of many examples). Artists similarly have always reflected on the power of their medium, and the meaning of perception and representations. Turner's investigation of colour, and the Impressionist movement can be used as examples here. Within postmodern art, self-criticality becomes even more apparent, and, many times, is the central theme of the artwork (take, for example, Goldin+Senneby's *Money Will Be Like Dross* (2012 and ongoing), where the artwork reflects on its own value accumulation and circulation within the abstract construct of the art market.

³⁶ This how a work of art can be relevant for a number of ideological constructs at the same time. While representing one, it also criticizes it, serving an opposing ideological construct, which would then adopt it as its own, hence the historical accumulation of the importance and meaning of masterpieces. A good example is offered by Salvoj Zizek in his analysis of Beethoven's 9th Symphony in his film *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (Fiennes, 2012)

³⁷ At the same time, one could say that it often also tries to express, or form a reminder of, that which is beyond linguistic representation – either by creating devices (words, images, expressions) that will allow its entrance in the social realm or through the purification of language (this can be said to be true of recent community-based art-approaches: by engaging within the social realm, attempting to reach subjects in a direct fashion. An example is Marina Abramovich's *The Artist is Present* (2012), which included a series of educational workshops given to young performance artists, as well as the artist's actual interactive presence in the gallery space. Another such example is Tino Sehgal's *These Associations* performance as part of the Unilever series presented in Tate modern in 2012 which directly engaged viewers in personal conversations with actors.

ART AND CURATING: A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

The art-object's flexibility allows it to maintain its status, despite fluxes between different understandings of the object's role and meaning. This flexibility is intrinsic to the nature of the art-object and its production but is also related to the flexibility of its definition and the ability of adjacent practices – notably, curating and criticism – to stretch the boundaries of its definition.

This points to a mutually beneficial relationship where both art and its related fields find advantages in maintaining this status for the promotion of different interests, such as new ideologies and cultural shifts. Thusly, the art-object, intuitively and willingly, opens itself to new definitions that could potentially surpass, contradict and extend its previous meaning.

If a curator is a manager and/or producer of interfaces between audiences and meanings, either through the creation of new ideologies or the shift of ancient ones, then, from the curator's point of view, art-objects are naked and feminine.³⁸ They seem so because they are created for the purpose of penetration: they ask for their unfolding and interpretation. They are flexible objects; they readily change in different contexts and by different readers. In this sense, they can be defined as ready-made curatorial objects because they can be used readily in the creation of the curatorial series.³⁹

By no means does this imply that art-objects have no independent meaning in and of themselves or are transparent; in actual fact, the opposite is more accurate. It is because they are vessels of rich content that they are able to convey complex layers of meaning that can be unfolded and recovered in different lights. Moreover, they can be read repeatedly in different ways from different perspectives, whilst simultaneously exposing different aspects of their significance.

Essentially, the artwork's gaze is towards its audience. In its plea to be penetrated, watched and understood, it assumes active participation from the reader.⁴⁰ Moreover,

³⁸ Needless to say, femininity here does not stand in opposition or relation to permanent roles of femininity and masculinity between curatorial and artistic practice. My attempt here is not to portray a whole relationship structured on those limited notions of gender. However in the attitude toward art as an object (i.e. an enclosed unit of meaning in the process of interpretation) re-read and re-shaped through curatorial acts, it plays a feminine role. Those roles are in constant flux throughout creative and curatorial processes.

³⁹ The curatorial series as defined in Chapter 2.

⁴⁰ One might interpret the modernist ideological concern with the 'theatricality' of artworks as relating directly to this plea of the artwork to be looked at. The rejection of this aspect of the artwork might well be related to the protective stance in favour of art's autonomy as it might be difficult to achieve the autonomy of the artwork as long as it remains dependent of a reader, in need of attention. One could suggest that this is one of the internal contradictions of modernist ideology.

once art had become publicly available and accessible,⁴¹ the traditional unique status that assigns it with political, mystical or other ‘powers’ inevitably makes it rather attractive and curious – even magnetic.⁴² This particular status of the art-object has a significant role in the mental preparation of visitors to curatorial spaces.⁴³ Audiences that intend to see artworks do so while acknowledging that they are expected to make and direct particular effort and attention; they are required to read the artworks and peel off the material layers of form to uncover and explore meaning: mentally ready to face an artwork, audiences are open and receptive. In their voluntarily suspension of the protective masks layering their perception, they are more likely to reach new understandings of the objects in view, as well as of themselves as observers. Their perception is more likely to shift, allowing new meanings to form, and thus they are more likely to encounter an aesthetic experience.⁴⁴ If *the curatorial* is defined as the interface or relationship between meaning and audiences, the art-object may be seen to hold a promise that a curatorial mediation will occur. This is how the art-object may be recognised as central to Curatorial Practice.

On another note, in the current mechanism of art production, curators, as much as collectors, can commission artworks that readily correspond with content or the meaning they are interested in mediating;⁴⁵ therefore, one could state that a curator

⁴¹ Until relatively recently, many artworks belonged to private collections not accessible to the general public. The confiscation of art collections and their conversion from private to public property after the revolutions of the 18th and 19th century was a symbolic act; we can imagine that, until their confiscation, art-objects were adorned with a certain mystery deriving naturally from their being inaccessible. The recent change that had rendered art works accessible to the general public still holds a symbolic meaning which makes viewing art seem like a responsible and necessary civic act.

⁴² There is a certain added pleasure in the discovery of what once was limited to private eyes. In this sense, public museums and collections are related to peeping into a hole into the private world of the other. This has added much to the ‘aura’ of the artwork in modern times. In this sense, the position of the artwork in modern culture is still between the private and the public realm. Post-modernist art and, more so, contemporary art, considers a completely different aesthetic and ethical concern. The seductive nature of the art-object in this context is often used to create a certain affiliation with the historical role of the artwork and the public collection, creating different layers of, often subversive, meaning. See the work of artist Kristian Kozul, for example – using seductive, rich and abundant textures and materials, he covers objects such as gas masks and wheelchairs, which can be related to political tensions in his home country, Germany. The tempting materiality of the covered object reveals a bitter end once the viewer is attracted to look at what is underneath the crafty decorations. The strategy of covering the object is what exposes it, and the affiliated political stance that it represents. The same can be said of the work of Tom Gallant. The Exhibition BOYSCRAFT, presented at the Haifa Museum of Art (Curator: Tami Katz-Freiman, with me as assistant curator) investigated the use of traditionally feminine crafts in the construction of an alternative political narrative. This feminine appearance, as I choose to describe it, is a complex set of relationships that set the stage for an encounter.

⁴³ In the context of this work, there is a difference between the terms ‘curatorial spaces’ and ‘spaces of *the curatorial*’. Curatorial spaces refer to platforms for the practice of curation, such as museums, galleries, art festivals, internet platforms or any other physical locus where curatorial acts are performed. *Spaces of the curatorial* refers to space where *the curatorial*, as previously defined, is generated. These are more likely to be mental spaces where meaning is regenerated.

⁴⁴ As per Dewey, *Art As Experience*, 1980. See further explanation in note n. 5 in the introduction to this research. The notion of the aesthetic experience bears some similarity to notions of self-remembrance as described in Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous* (Ouspensky P. D., 2001) and discussed in Chapter 1.

⁴⁵ Art was commissioned by curators since the dawn of history as a means to conduct a unified image for communal identity and is thus useful in understanding art’s status.

working with an art-object is a luxury in the sense that it is the easiest, fastest, most comfortable path of performing *the curatorial*.

If I can assume the artist's point of view for a moment, in order to examine this relationship from the other perspective, working with a curator as a means of achieving representation or as generating funds is one of the best strategies available, if *the curatorial* is taken as central to curators' motivation, then it is plausible to presume that they are driven by overseeing the creation of artworks which would be meaningful for audiences. As such, curators are less concerned with the currency or symbolic value of an artwork.⁴⁶ Hence, they often work almost as collaborators in the production of the work, even if they only participate in the operational aspect of delivering the work into existence.⁴⁷ The work with a curator, therefore, allows the artist a relative freedom.

In addition, as experts in mediation curators are, in many cases, good partners in the construction of meaning in the first instance, and often function as a resource of knowledge, providing a point of reference, allowing the artists to understand their work better within historical and cultural perspectives. At its best, the relationship between a curator and an artist is a genuine encounter between two individuals, with one effecting the perception of the other and allowing one another to develop further, progressing beyond the limitations of the individual's perceptions; thus the

⁴⁶ Here, there is a need to clarify. In accordance with my definition of *the curatorial* and its translation into the fundamental principles of curatorial motivations, professionals who work in private art galleries, who are interested in the promotion of art as commodity, are not practicing curating during moments of interaction with collectors or other stakeholders. They might be curators when, within the gallery space, they negotiate the meeting between artworks and audiences through their representation the gallery exhibition space. The relationship between art commerce and Curatorial Practice is a complex one, into which the scope of this work does not allow me to delve. It is an important area of study where this research might be extended. The differentiation between an art merchant and a curator needs to be underlined in order to be able to understand the interrelations between art and curating in the context of performing *the curatorial*. Curators often need to take upon themselves the role of art merchants. Whilst this might have its roots in historical tradition and might be necessary in current mechanisms of art production, the art market and art commerce, I would like to suggest that this is not a fundamental aspect of the motivation behind Curatorial Practice.

⁴⁷ As an interesting example to mention is a talk between curator Vanessa Desclaux and Dr Andrea Phillips, as part of a graduate departmental seminar in the Art Department at Goldsmiths, December 2009. In this interview, Desclaux spoke about her involvement as a curator in the production of Santiago Sierra's performance at Tate Modern (April 2008), where 8 homeless women were paid the fee of a night in a hostel to stand at the gallery turbine hall. (See Tate Shots: <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/performance-santiago-sierra> accessed: 16/06/2014). One of Desclaux's roles was to locate women who would agree to participate in the performance. This is particularly interesting in the context of this analysis because it exemplifies the extent to which the motivation of the curator to produce content compels him to act as an agent for the artist and the institution as a whole. Needless to say, Desclaux's involvement with this project performed a central part in its execution, and was entangled in a complex set of ethical concerns and social controversies that she had to embody and engage with on a personal level.

relationship between curators and artists in itself could be defined as a space for the emergence of *the curatorial*.⁴⁸

THE CURATORIAL SPACE SINCE THE MODERN MUSEUM

Curatorial spaces can be recognised as spaces intended to produce an aesthetic experience. A history of curatorial spaces may include a variety of constructs, the interpretations of which are entangled with the ideology that they protest to the extent that their purpose is almost forgotten: The Temple, The Cathedral, The Town Square are all in line with histories of The Palace and The Museum. While a variety of models to curatorial space are at our disposal, such as the amnesia of Curatorial Practice means that it recognizes itself only from the prism of the museum. The 'exit' of the independent individual curator from the museum is in itself part of the construction of an ideological movement and its dissemination.

In the 1960s and '70s, art and Curatorial Practice undertook a campaign to disseminate and reinforce modernist ideologies represented by notions such as 'individualism', 'the new', 'the original (genial)' and 'art for art's sake'. The curatorial space constructed for this purpose was the 'white cube': a space reinforcing and highlighting the creative and genial power of the individual, and celebrating it as each artwork was isolated in the sterility of what assumes itself as a 'neutral' space.⁴⁹

The way art and curation are spontaneously involved in progressing cultural dominants is also evident today. With the rise of post-modernity and the erosion of the notion of the individual author, both artists and curators find themselves working

⁴⁸ I would argue that in practice, these conflicts are negotiated in the curatorial space, as part of a process of producing a collaborative effort, whose result benefits artists and curators equally. This is the point where the curatorial space transforms and informs the space of *the curatorial*. Within the practical aspect of production, territories are crossed and identities are temporarily left out; sometimes they are forgotten and even re-negotiated. This distance between self and identity is made available thanks to a larger aim that contains both the artist and the curator. This aim is represented by the curatorial space, be it an exhibition hall or a commissioned project with no specific physical space. In this moment, not only the meaning of the object, but also the perception of the subjects involved is regenerated. The mere aspect of working together thus may be an opportunity for *the curatorial* to emerge, and hence adds further complexity to the relationship between curators and artists.

⁴⁹ A thorough analysis of the 'white cube' as an ideological agent, its origins and relation with contemporaneous art theories can be found in Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (O'Doherty, 1986), a seminal piece of writing which exposed the political operations of the space in constructing the history of art and the identities of curators, artists and visitors. He details the reasons for the gallery space being white, clean, and neutral in design, and the illusion that it is meant to create of an overarching objective and neutral voice. This, of course, is also a construct of authority, which is embedded in the Aesthetic Experience of the exhibition space. The same methodology that O'Brien uses could be applied to the rewriting of a history of the curatorial space. Such a history may assist in resurrecting the memory of Curatorial Practice and its origins. Unfortunately, the scope of this work does not allow me to delve into this topic further. However, it seems important to lay the ground for the enquiry by posing the question.

as part of collectives,⁵⁰ proving once again that they are not only servants but very much conductors and pioneers in the creation of systems of power and the destruction of old ones.

At the same time, they seem to be responsive to one another and, in correlation, the separation of both the artist and the curator from the identity of an institution or the narrative of an ideology sought for their individual expression has a profound effect on the definition of both practices. Modernist⁵¹ approaches that stipulate individual authorship and specialization emphasise the need in redefining their territories, taking distance with their involvement with political business and re-examining the core of their practice.

This complex symbiosis between the two practices and their natural displacement due to their mutual concern makes it difficult to understand the difference between them. Whilst art has claimed the territory of the creative author, Curatorial Practice was largely seen, until recently, as an operational, technical vocation, whose relationship with creativity was accidental. However, if we adopt the expanded

⁵⁰ A few examples to the recent tendency to work in groups can be found in the curatorial premise of *Manifesta 8*, Murcia, Spain. Three curatorial collectives (ACAF, CPS and transit.org) were invited to collaborate in the creation of the project. Many of the artistic projects presented in the *Manifesta* were created by a collective of artists (such as AA The Art Assembly, AGM 10, Common Culture and even more complex organizations such as the Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum and the incubator for Pan-African Roaming Biennial).

⁵¹ At this opportunity, and as we are going to delve into such notions as modernity, modernism, post-modernity and post-modernism, I would like to set the definitions of these terms as they are perceived in this research. While postmodernism is used as an umbrella term, covering an array of cultural movements which break away from 'modernism', I think its definition as such is problematic as modernism itself does not have a stable definition. To take the art-historical context, for example, on the one hand, the modernist ethos identified with the writings of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried sought a purification of form, the autonomy of art from politics, and the abstraction of figuration. At the same time, this modernist movement was nurtured by the first and second waves of avant-garde art: Surrealism, Dada, Cubism and Futurism, none of which could be claimed as politically, formalistically neutral. While, in art, modernism is often considered as the continuous movement towards the autonomy and abstraction of art – 'art for art's sake', as Adorno suggested – its later positioning in such light ignores the deep involvement of art in cultural and historical movements. Boris Groys, in his book *Art Power* (2008), offers an alternative reading of art history, from which it is clear that the modernist project sought to erase art's coherent narrative due to what I would argue was an anxiety about the cynical manipulation of creative agency. If post-modernism is defined in relation to modernism, then it is clear why it remains a term that receives diverse interpretations and definitions. As this chapter draws on art history, postmodernism will be referred to here as a movement in art and cultural criticism that sought to break away from a formalistic approach to art interpretation and return to its conceptual essence, following Krauss and Steinberg (Krauss, 2002 and Steinberg, 2002) It also encompasses a criticism of contemporary culture noted by Jameson and Baudrillard, which contests its short attention span and its inability to generate an in-depth and rigorous culture. Postmodernism is analysed here as a by-product of capitalist economic structures based on consumption and the worship of face-value and the image (Jameson, 1991 and Baudrillard, 2008). Post-modernity, on the other hand, will be referred to as a recurring attitude in cultural history, which has always existed in parallel to other perspectives. Like Walter Truett Anderson, I understand postmodernity as a typical world view; however, I refrain from using his definition as I believe his emphasis on irony as the prism through which postmodernity sees the world is not accurate enough (Anderson, 1996). In fact, there is something rather naïve in certain tendencies of the postmodern, in its opening up to the point of explosion. In this sense, I see post-modernity as a movement within modernity. Modernity, here, is referred to in the spirit of Stanford Kwinter's reading of cultural history; for Kwinter, modernity is not conditioned by a specific period in time but, rather, it is a way of breaking with existing ways of thinking; trying to break away from every stable reading or pre-configured understanding of reality (Kwinter, 2002).

perspective of the history of Curatorial Practice as offered before, we might see that, at times, curators had more creative agency than artists;⁵² curators have not always been subordinated to art's definition.

My intention here is not to claim the superiority of one practice or another; in fact, it seems that both curating and art have an investment in creative production and the conveying of meaning to their audiences. The territorial quests commonly obscure or divert the attention from the collaborative nature of both curating and art, turning the discourse surrounding their relationship into a political playing field⁵³ with hierarchical power struggles that insist on the definition of one as a parasite or subordinate of the other, without taking into account the symbiosis that has worked throughout the history of both practices.⁵⁴ To relieve some of the concerns which have been outlined above, in relation to the position of creative agency within the curatorial process, I will turn the analysis of the readymade from the perspective of *the curatorial*.

⁵² While it seems obvious in our culture that the creative act invested in large cultural projects is the work of artists, different points of view may be considered if we shift our point of view. Here I suggest the Church or other religious or political institutions, as an example for earlier curatorial platforms, which sought the commission of artworks as part of their ideological positioning.. The commissioning of such work was done with precision, to the point of stipulating the narrative, symbolism, medium, form and content of the artwork. In fact, in such projects, artists can be seen as technicians, whose role is to illustrate the ideas of others.

⁵³ Political here refers to the very basic definition of defining the relationship between artists and curators as a relationship between an 'us' and a 'them' (Mouffe, 2005).

⁵⁴ Needless to say, those struggles divert attention from a genuine and non-biased investigation on the role of those two expressive modes of communication and their influence on our evolving culture.

THE ANXIETY OF BEING READY-MADE⁵⁵

The third season of the television programme *Star Trek – The Next Generation* ends with a devastating war between humanity and the Borg (a distant civilisation the Starship Enterprise had encountered) when a timeless creature named Q, belonging to yet another life form, the Q-Continuum, had pushed them into an unknown territory in a distant galaxy to which they would not have arrived without the Q's little prank in the first season of the same series.

The Borg is a fascinating being that encapsulates the absence of individuality. They are depicted as humans who have surrendered their humanity in the merging of the biological body with that of a machine. They are so distant from what we may consider 'human' that even Commander Data, an android of a human form, seems more capable of emotion and interpersonal interaction.

Reminiscent of the scene of Neo's birth in the Matrix Trilogy, the first-season discovery of the nursery on the Borgs' ship reveals that the Borgs' biological bodies

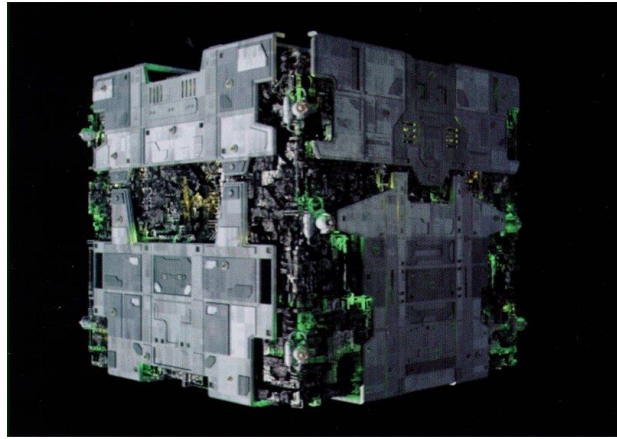


Figure 2- The Borg Spaceship as it is encountered in the third season of *Star Trek - The Next Generation*



Figure 2 - Above: The Borg as portrayed in *Star Trek - The Next Generation*. Below: Cptn Jean Luc Picard as a Borg.

⁵⁵ 'Ready-made' and 'readymade' will be referred to in this chapter as two different concepts. The first bears similarity to the notion of 'the found object' and relates to the use of ready-mades as artistic media. 'Readymade', the term coined by Marcel Duchamp, will be referred to here as an object used for curatorial purposes. The difference between the two will be made clear throughout the argument. The separation between the two is central to the separation between curating and art, and is key in relieving the anxiety of being 'ready-made' as defined in this section.

are only a means of nourishing the larger communal identity and consciousness of the species. The species is led only by the desire for technological development; their communal power seems undefeatable and, as the third season ends, they promise to take the whole of humanity captive for the purpose of their own advancement.

The defeat seems imminent when Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Enterprise is taken by the Borg and is turned into one of them; divested of his ability for individual judgment, he is assimilated to the collective consciousness of the Borg, who, in turn, uses his knowledge and judgement to defeat humanity in its attempt to fight back. Humanity is saved when Data – the ‘good machine’ – connects to the mechanical part installed to Captain Picard’s body, assisting him in regaining his individual consciousness, which inevitably means the destruction of the Borg ship.

Captain Picard seems to return to normal activity, until the second chapter of the fourth season reveals the depth of his trauma. During this chapter, he confesses to his brother, in a rare moment of personal drama, how he had been used for purposes that were not his own. It seems that the depth of the trauma is involved not in the loss of his identity but in the exploitation of his knowledge and agency: the Borg *used* his identity or image - what he represented to his fellow humans and the summary of his life choices in the gain of a war in which he did not want to take part, let alone on the ‘wrong’ side.

The anxiety inherent to such a situation can be seen easily when analysing a Sci-Fi television series. However, it might not be as obvious to consider how this imagery resonates with the trauma of humanity facing the horrors of the First, and predominantly the Second, World War. Terrified of the power of the plural, one cannot disengage the trauma of war from the ideologies that humanity sought to adopt in the late-20th Century. Within this premise, the art-object, along with its instrumentalization and its use for the construction of a destructive, deadly narrative, like that of Nazism, becomes an incentive for the development of an ideology which searches for art’s ‘purity’.⁵⁶

The use of the art-object as a curatorial ready-made resonates with similar concerns. From the artist’s viewpoint, the interrelation between curating and art seems related to the danger of repositioning and redirecting creative agency. The use of the term ‘ready-made’ in itself, when applied to art, seems a violent nickname, suggestive that the artwork may become a finite, non-negotiable object, the meaning of which is to be

⁵⁶ See, for example, *The Exhibition of Degenerate Art* organized in Munich in 1937 by the Nazi party, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Altshuler, 1998).

determined by whoever may 'use' it. The word 'ready' suggests enclosure; a separation between the creator and the creation, or at least reflects on the fragility of this relationship at the moment the art-object is taken out of the hands of the artist.

RAUSCHENBERG AND THE ARTISTIC READY-MADE

The way in which Rauschenberg uses the ready-made adopts a manner that is distinct from the original act offered by Duchamp⁵⁷ but it has, nonetheless, vastly influenced the understanding of 'ready-made' as an artistic methodology. Rauschenberg's combines⁵⁸ are adequate for the comparison of the artistic ready-made and the curatorial readymade because it is often read in the light of curatorial aesthetics. More specifically, his use of photographs and objects has been analysed commonly in relation to institutions such as the archive, the collection or the museum.⁵⁹ Notably, some of his earlier works, such as *Thirty Scatoli Personali* (1952), seem to resonate with the syntax of museological aesthetics and arrangement. Therefore, his works embody an opportunity to examine the interfaces between art and curation, and might be seen as a point in history that compels us to re-think the definition of those practices and their associated territories.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ A further analysis of Duchamp's readymade will be given later. Here, I would just mention that, while Duchamp's readymade is complete as it is, Rauschenberg's main development was the incorporation of ready-mades as part of a larger logic of painting.

⁵⁸ 'Combines' is the name given to Rauschenberg's abstract works that could not be defined in traditional medial categories such as painting or sculpture.

⁵⁹ To give a few examples, Douglas Crimp, in his article *On The Museum's Ruins* (Crimp, 2002) considers Rauschenberg's works in relation to Malraux's *Musee Imaginaire* (Malraux, 1996). In his attempt to construct the notion of the museum and stretch it beyond its cultural perception, he refers to different literary examples that describe the project of the museum as related to notions of indexation, taxonomy, archaeology and the futile accumulation of knowledge. He also discusses Foucault's theory of the archive and Barthes' early writings on photography. Through his literature review of those ideas, he concludes that Rauschenberg's paintings, in their use of the photographic image and the random accumulation of images, objects and signs, correspond with the purpose of the museum. Rosalind Krauss, in her article 'Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image', originally published in 1974, analyses Rauschenberg's works in relation to memory and examines his use of photography, negotiating notions of index, taxonomy and reality; Anna Dezeuze, in her article 'Unpacking Cornell: Consumption and Play in the Work of Rauschenberg, Warhol and George Brecht' (Dezeuze, 2004), analyses Rauschenberg's works in the context of a retrospective reaffirmation of Cornell's work, affirming the ways in which the syntax and aesthetics of the museum appear in both Cornell's and Rauschenberg's work.

⁶⁰ This is not to suggest that there are no other parallel important moments in the history of art that resonate with this question. In fact, many works of the late '60s and '70s raise questions about collecting, archiving and curating; for example, the works of Andy Warhol, which highlight questions revolving archiving, documentation and the passage of subjective time; or indeed his works relating to consumer goods/celebrities. The work of Marcel Broodthaers and a tendency of institutional critique, which sought to stimulate a discussion around the political role of curating and the institution of the museum in the circulation of art, must also be considered in this discourse. What Lucy Lippard refers to as the 'dematerialization of the art-object' (a term that describes this tendency of questioning the position of the artwork as an object, its materiality and its presence) is central to this discussion and will be discussed further in this chapter. However, Rauschenberg here is seen as a prominent example of this movement because, as the analysis will show, I believe it has a significant role in positioning painting as an object and in questioning this position altogether. As I see Rauschenberg's work as a seed that was planted in the early development of this movement, it is important for me to refer specifically to him.

Although such a discourse is interesting, when reading Rauschenberg's comments on such interpretations, it seems that one of his aims was actually to detach the objects used in his paintings from any form of external objective or subjective order. As quoted by Rosalind Krauss in 'Perpetual Inventory', Rauschenberg states: *'If I see any superficial subconscious relationships that I'm familiar with—clichés of association—I change the picture'* (Krauss, 2002, p. 97).⁶¹ Perhaps, as Dezeuze points out in her comparison between Rauschenberg to Cornell (Dezeuze, 2004), it was because he was prone to collecting, and was looking, as Krauss interprets it, for ways to surpass his own fetishist approach towards objects, that he opposed their presence as a comment on or a reflection of the logic of consumer society. This attempt to escape the logic of the collection, embedded within the logic of a consumer society, might have been the reason that led him eventually to destroy most of his early boxes.

Hence, although Rauschenberg's work is brought forth in relation to Curatorial Practice in its form and arrangement, I conclude that his concern was primarily an artistic one: his preoccupation with ready-made objects was centred on their relevance as an artistic medium as opposed to being part of a project that refers to the object as a meaningful entity. However, to deepen the understanding of the latter, the question that remains is, what is the meaning of the ready-made in his paintings? And how can this reflect on the artistic ready-made in general?

Rauschenberg's work was one of the cases that demonstrated a schism within the discourse of art criticism and became a catalyst for the development of new ways of looking at works of art; therefore, the analysis of his works is often tied to the theoretical context in which they were introduced. He is often defined as 'the first postmodernist painter', mainly through Leo Steinberg's seminal writings about his work. Within its postmodern reading, Rauschenberg's work, and his use of the ready-made, is read through a preliminary, fundamental axiom that was established and stabilized by tendencies in art criticism at the time: those of the rejection of formalist analysis and the application of postmodernist and neo-Marxist theories in the reading of his work. However the analysis offered here will take a formalist approach, mainly because it is through the formal analysis of his work, that I could penetrate the meaning of Rauschenberg's ready-made.⁶²

⁶² As this analysis is an attempt to recall and encounter with the works of Rauschenberg, it is painted in biographical and poetic gestures at times. In my attempt to re-remember moments in which I have understood something fundamental in Rauschenberg's work, I am bound to return to my first encounter with his work. This encounter bears a meaning, as this initial and direct experience sheds light over my understanding of the ready-made in art and more specifically in the world that Rauschenberg had created in my imagination. The notes in the pink text-boxes are translations of entries I have put in my diary when I was 17, 18 and 19 years old, originally in Hebrew, and translated to English for the purpose

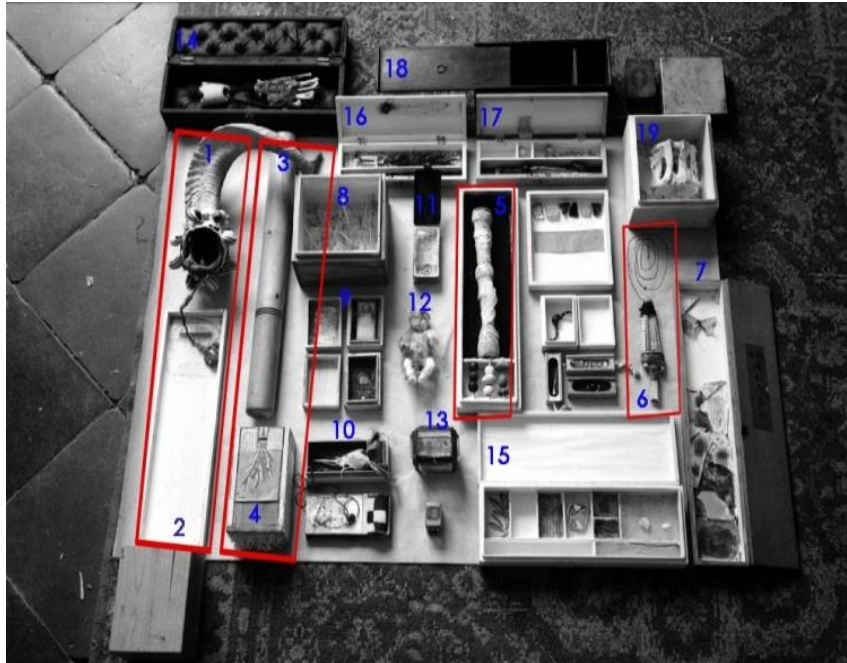


Figure 3 - Robert Rauschenberg, *Thirty Scatoli Personali*, ca. 1952. Arranged and photographed by the artist, floor of Pension. Quoted in Dezeuze, 2004. Below, in the pink box, is an early attempt to read Rauschenberg's boxes in formal terms.

Looking carefully at the arrangement of the objects in Rauschenberg's boxes, one finds that the relationship between them is rather formal. Objects are treated as movements that continue one another. This resembles the syntactic structure that appears in his 'combines': it seems like the bamboo flute (no. 3 in the image on the left) spits on the image of what seems to be a flame drawn on a match-box (no.4); the repetition of the same movement appears in the relationship between the horn (no. 1) and the string that seems to be drooping from its open mouth, straight into the empty box beneath (no. 2). The repetition allows one to interpret this movement as metaphors and similitudes that converse with each other, reflecting the movement assigned to certain shapes and materials: the bursting energy of the flame is a miniature example of natural forces that move against the forces of the earth's gravity, while the energy of dripping water succumbs to gravity's will. This same movement, or relationship to gravity, then repeats itself multiple times in the correlations between object no. 15 and object no. 16, object no.6 and object no. 17, and object 7 and object 18, in different variations. It is almost as if Rauschenberg is building a mythological theory of matter through his use of objects, while each object is absorbed within the general meta-structure of the surface and/or depth in the box.

Depth and surface here negate each other: three-dimensional objects are treated like brush movements on a two-dimensional surface, while the three-dimensionality of the box contains the depth of the object within it, flattening their visceral presence while protecting them.

The ready-mades are so much part of a meta-organization that Rauschenberg's boxes seem almost like a private space into which we are peeping with a cheeky wink. This feeling of intrusion into a private space is reinforced by the compositional positioning, which resembles the way one would design an internal logic or world. In this sense, it resembles the arrangement of a private collection, whose objects no longer refer to any external or cultural meaning; rather, they exist only within the specific organization of the series, without necessarily having a meaning in and of themselves.

of this work. The notes attempt to make sense of a language that was new to me at the time. As such they bear a certain partiality. They are passionate, in Baudelaire's terms. They are forms of practice in writing, a form of testimony to spaces of *the curatorial* that had opened within me, at the time of the encounter. Hence they are meaningful not only to my understanding of Rauschenberg and the ready-made, but also to my search for those spaces of what I term *the curatorial*. This attempt also bares some resonance with what Jane Rendell would term 'Site Writing', in informing new forms of art criticism inspired by feminist approaches to scholarship. (Rendell, 2010)

A FORMAL READING OF RAUSCHENBERG'S READY-MADE



Figure 5 - Robert Rauschenberg, *Retroactive I*, 1963. Oil and silkscreen ink on canvas, 1964

The repetition of Kennedy's gesture in this painting can be taken as an example of how formalist concerns are used in the production of the paintings' meaning. Nevertheless, the painting does not assist me in understanding the cultural context in which these photographs were taken or published.



Figure 5- Robert Rauschenberg, *'Windward'*, 1963

This is an example of one of Rauschenberg's paintings from 1963-4, to which Krauss is referring to when analysing the appearance of the three-dimensional cube (top right) in Rauschenberg's paintings. This cube appears in several forms and in different paintings of the same time.

Rauschenberg's combines were a catalyst in the rejection of the purely visual (formal) aspects of painting, and it is clear that a purely formalist analysis of his works could not encompass the full scope of their meaning. Nonetheless, I believe that such a formalist analysis could contribute to our overall understanding of his paintings, in addition to the use of the ready-made as a visual curiosity, utilized to encourage the fascination of the viewer's gaze to search for further layers of meaning.

I come to this conclusion as a result of my personal first encounter with Rauschenberg at the Museum of Modern Art in Brussels as a 17-year-old-girl from Israel, with little awareness of American political concerns. Rauschenberg's canvases dazzled me with a unique visual attraction, which felt similar to an optical illusion; a *trompe l'oeil*. I remember the moment vividly as I felt I was extracted from my reality and transferred into a sensual experience, visually drowning in the fields of matter he created. It was mainly the formalist aspects of his work – his use of formal repetition, his compositional constructs, and his use of colour and the format of the canvas – that seduced me into the intricate surface of his work.

In parallel, I felt that, although Rauschenberg's reading highlighted the surface of the painting, the ready-made within it opened up a further dimension: a concrete, visceral and real space. Rauschenberg's surfaces created an illusion of depth, suggesting a different set of rules in comparison to other devices used in the definition of space in painting – mainly the use of linear perspective as indicative of the Euclidian conception of space. Rosalind Krauss, in 'Perpetual Inventory' (Joseph, 2002, pp. 93-132), begins such an analysis when reflecting upon the relationship between Rauschenberg's painting and Renaissance illusionistic techniques, considering his painterly hints of linear perspective,⁶³ compositional choices and his use of the physical veil as a means of conveying the specific 'flat' experience of his painting and the integrity of its surface.

THE FLATBED PICTURE PLANE

In 'Reflections on the State of Criticism', Steinberg coins one of the most important terms in reading Rauschenberg's paintings: 'The Flatbed Picture Plane' (Steinberg, 2002, p. 7). The 'flatbed' is a reference to techniques of printmaking where textures, and sometimes objects, are pressed on the surface of the plate to create an impression of their materiality or shape. I would suggest that the use of the term 'flatbed' is also relevant in a formal analysis of Rauschenberg's painting as it predicts his use of objects and images in a similar way to how a traditional painter would use the direction of a brush stroke or a line to convey depth, or a haptic effect.

For Steinberg, the term 'flatbed' emphasises the relationship between painting and body-posture. In his reading of this act from an art-historical perspective, he claims that painting was always created in relation to the viewer's and the artist's erect body posture. As such, paintings have accomplished their ancient role of being 'windows to the world':⁶⁴ a prism through which reality seems to reveal itself through representation. (Steinberg, 2002, p. 28)

For Steinberg, this is one of the radical shifts post-modernist painting offers, and he extends this idea of a changing relationship between the body and the canvas, analysing it as a shift in perception: the painting no longer offers a relationship between two parallel erect platforms of perception but, rather, a meeting between two separate, and even oppositional, planes of existence, which are interpreted as the dichotomist couple of 'nature' and 'culture' (Joseph, 2002, p. 28).

⁶³ As an example, Krauss refers to the three-dimensional box that appears in a few of his combines.(see figure 3).

⁶⁴ A definition of painting that was a prominent part of art theory since the Renaissance, believed to have been first coined by Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise 'On Painting' (Alberti, 1991)

However, while Steinberg defines this moment of shift as 'nature' to 'culture', he also makes it clear in his defence of the old masters⁶⁵ that the focus of every art form is cultural in the sense that it always refers back to its own symbolic realms and mechanisms of conviction. It is in this tension between nature and culture that the magic of art occurs (Joseph, 2002, p. 18). Hence, a contradiction can be noted within his text: if one believes that every artwork is created with this form of self-awareness, then the innovation that he senses in Rauschenberg's work cannot be related solely to a shift from 'nature' to 'culture'. The cultural is already present in the mere definition of a man-made object.

**Brussels, Belgium
Museum of Modern Art, August (?),
1997.**

(Translated from Hebrew, December 2013)⁶⁶

The echo resonated from the plain walls declaring the shiny new borders of a space. The image of the walls and their smell reminds me of a freshly ripped plastic wrap, a barrier that isolates a disinfected area, framed by the stuttering neo light of the hallway. My mother is a doctor, and so I should feel comfortable in here, just like I feel at the hospital. Not a clue of the outside world is permitted to accidentally leak in. The visitors are also silent, careful. I walk with the memory of a certain weight, pushing down on my sky from the heightened ceiling. Above my head, it

In fact, the tension between 'culture' and 'nature' already exists as an integral part of the human experience of landscape: landscape is a flat plane in which human existence is staged in an erect posture. The horizon line – the limit of perception as well as the marker of the horizontal palette – divides the endless circular movement of walking the earth into manageable units of measurement. This edge, the horizon, is only permissible from an erect position.⁶⁷ The horizon line functions as the turning point where the two-dimensionality of representation, which is essentially a faculty

⁶⁵ Steinberg defends the Old Masters, naming Shakespeare, Yeats and Dante. He believes that Greenberg's theory suggests that those artists were not thoroughly aware of the forms they used, implying that form and content are separated. In his defence of old masters, he explains how form and matter correlate in the making of the meaning of the artwork.

⁶⁶ This is a diary section from my first encounter with Rauschenberg's work at the Museum of Modern Art in Brussels. The encounter with those works had deeply influenced me and to some extent allowed me to appreciate Rauschenberg's importance. Much of the conclusions drawn in this chapter vis a vis Rauschenberg's analysis are drawn from this specific encounter, which I can frame as a personal 'aesthetic experience'. My ability to contextualise my thoughts in relation to art discourses only developed later as I completed my degrees. This text offers a first, intuitive, poetic account of the unique encounter I have experienced. The section presented parallel to it, on the right hand side, is a direct translation of this specific experience and what I had felt I have learnt - hence the position of this diary entry specifically at this moment within this chapter. It is maintained here and in its original language with hopes to expose a process of translating as a means of penetrating spaces of *the curatorial*.

⁶⁷ It is interesting in this context to think that the earliest mythological stories told by man about the creation of the world, in almost any known ancient manuscript, is that of chaotic matter dividing itself into two: the earth and the sky. This mythological description might as well be the enlightenment of raising the eyes from the matter of the earth and perceiving the world from an erect position. The myths also allude to the correlation between two fundamental natural elements: female and male in the Babylonian tradition with the fight between Marduch and Tiamat; Gaia and Eros in the Greek tradition, Light and Dark in the Hebrew tradition. This may reflect an inherent coherence between our dichotomized structure of thinking and the nature of human perception.

resides like a blanket of heavy velvet, pretending to be a night sky, with little pieces of glass laced in between the gaps. 'I better not to look up', I am remarking to myself, or there is a chance I will be crushed; 'I shouldn't interfere with this illusion of transcendence'.

Nevertheless, this space seems so familiar. A Church, a Hospital, a Prison, a Museum. They all seem to have this sort of ceiling. Dining rooms in the Kibbutz have a version of this too: The echoing walls are chanting the voices of some who walk by; in their whispers they surrender. A global, absolute aesthetic. The deliberately emptied space. empty space for the voices of selves to bounce through and return back to their bearers. Like the ear listening to its own blood rush through a shells vocal labyrinth, and reminded of a sea.

Yes – like hospitals, you've been to one, you've been to all. I can find my way in any hospital in the world, I imagine. Just follow the operative space. Isn't that dramatic? It seems unnecessary to have anything hung on the walls, really. The echo, the ceiling, the walls, the tall white patches of lights – they are quite enough. My mind wanders. I wonder. Why am I afraid to talk to myself in a whisper here? My ears are thirsty for my own voice; a familiar presence. My shoulders respond with a slight shrug. While I establish all those paintings are surplus, I tell myself again, 'please refrain from looking at the ceiling' – but this is where my eyes wander and take me. What I need is to drill holes in these walls; some sort of escape from this majestic ambiance – a door to a different space where my eyes could rest on a line, leading into depth. A horizon.

My legs move too lightly. I have been stripped of my bag, my jacket, my scarf: my accessorized sphere of protection. Light and naked, I roam with a curious expectation. Yet there is no response. No one seems to have the intention of

of the human mind, and the three dimensionality of reality, meet. What I identify in this moment of shift between the two that is manifested in the flatbed picture plane is a human relationship to nature, rather than to culture, notwithstanding that it is entangled and inseparable from biological and cultural constructs. The 'window', the erect landscape, is a translation of the world into the terms through which humans perceive it. It is a mirror to the illusion I live in, an illusion that projects on to the screens of my eyes (the retinas); one which I cannot escape.

It is actually the erect picture that corresponds more directly with my mental understanding of the world (culture), and the flatbed picture plane which seems to correspond with my physical experience of it (Nature). The element that makes the difference in this interaction is not the creative horizontal process; rather, it is the constant mental shift from a vertical to a horizontal position, and this movement between the two realms is performed in Rauschenberg's work by the ready-made object.

What I came to realize then and now is that the use of the ready-made breaks the dichotomised perception which divides experience into opposed couples of meaning: nature vs. culture; illusion vs. syntax etc. It does so by performing the role of a neutralising element; a third dimension that vibrates between formalist, illusionistic and

showing up to this encounter. If only there was one window I hope for; a small gasp of non-air-conditioned air. But I am stuffed in here; within myself. Me, the echoes and the whispers. A subtle sound of high hills knocking on the cement floor. A hissing, feminine breath followed by a childish question mark hung in the air. Now I remember that this is very much like homelike a particular room at home, like the television room at home; underneath the floor-tiles of which I have buried myself, in the shallow layer of sand that would embrace my flesh, that would block my voice and cool my bones. Maybe the ceiling is not the answer. Maybe it's the floor I should be looking at. No tiles. One fluent surface of shiny cement, so shiny it might as well be metal, but it's heavy and impenetrable.

My eyes explore the edges of the cement floor and bump into an artificial horizon line where the floor clashes with the wall, and, at the edge of my gaze, something is dragging my eyeballs like a magnet. There is a clue after all.

'I think we found an aperture!' My eyes lead my feet, pulling them towards what seem to be three holes in the sterile surface. 'My God, I think you are right!', I tell them. Suspicious still, my feet stop and I stand. My feet stop but my eyes are invited to dance; they are hopping across, inside, beneath a desert. A curve in a desert road; a desert road that circles a small hill of blue sand. A hill of blue sand is making me stretch my muscles in preparation. I am stretching from the inside to keep my balance as my eyes follow the curve in the road: 'The horizon will reveal itself, I am sure, in just a fraction of time, now, in a minute', it promises. 'It will open up to me, and what I

conceptual concerns, encompassing all three elements while serving as their meeting point.

The objects embedded in Rauschenberg's paintings function as constant reminders that refer me back to my three-dimensional existence.⁶⁸ Those objects resonate with the presence of my body, allowing me to measure and differentiate myself by way of comparison. The ready-made object, within the poetics of the flatbed picture plane, is a central anchor that unites, just like a horizon line, both the natural and the cultural aspects of my being, offering a concrete moment in which this ninety-degrees shift from a horizontal to a vertical perception operates.

In its absolute assimilation within the painting's plane, the object functions less as a reference to itself, as a functional tool or as an independent unit of symbolic meaning, taken from another world and inserted like a prosthesis or a statement. Rather, it functions as a hinge that allows the stripping of illusionistic techniques to their very basic and fundamental operations. What operates within the painterly language is not an attempt to recreate or represent nature, but to activate a mode of recognition. It is similar to the 'Home' button on the browser's tool bar. It is where one returns to at the end of a journey, and it is also where one departs from.

⁶⁸ If our visual perception can translate two-dimensional planes to three-dimensional images, then our sense of touch, which can be understood here as the third dimension of perception, is what allows us to understand our bodies as vehicles in a three-dimensional space. The object stands in relation to the landscape as a means through which one can estimate the three-dimensionality of a plane or a space.

have been waiting for is on its way. I can already feel the bottom inner edge of my stomach preparing to sing. Delightfully stirring within it are drops of anxiety. Excitement and a subtle raising tone that elevates surprise, accompanied by a question mark. This inner echo bounces off the walls of my cavity and pulls me towards that tear in the wall. A few steps and I stop. My eyes are resisting the movement. The space opening up in front of them is pale and surprising.

The blue sand hill looks battered, as if it were a sack of sand thrown down from a hot-air balloon by a passenger. Its weight mocking its history of flight, it is withered; left on the ground as a hill of sand that blocks the horizon like a revenge of some sort. A well-planned revenge, taken against those hungry, greedy eyes of mine that I can feel settling slightly outside of their sockets, calling my body once again to move forward, to follow the curve of this hill. My head tilts unwillingly to see the beyond above it. I am drawn to the lower third of the tear in the wall, and am walking towards it.

Now the question mark I hear in my breath continues to rise, becoming high pitched, like that of a doll. As I approach the materiality of this mirage, this phantasmagoria of the blue desert hill. The hill is indeed a bag of sand, I realize now. Attached to the surface of the canvas and coloured in blue, it is asking me a question about the space that might hide behind it. The space has been devoured by the sack; flatness has revealed itself. The deceit is clear and yet the inner echo of the whispers bouncing off and back to the walls of my inner cavity vibrates within me, still dancing with anticipation. 'Something is happening here', they say. The deceit is clear but the space is still there; I can feel it in my stomach, though my eyes can't perceive it, but I know it's there – maybe it's the temperature.

Whilst the ready-made object is a point of reference, it soon loses its original shape and substance and becomes an inseparable part of the painterly syntax that creates this tension between different planes.

Rauschenberg's painting, however does not represent a real landscape and, in this sense, is not representative of nature's image; however, it is descriptive of the way in which we construct mental space, operating in the same way a landscape is translated in our mental image of the world.

This understanding of Rauschenberg's paintings, as referring to some sort of a mental map, echoes across different analyses of his work and, more relevantly, in the analysis offered in relation to his use of the photographic image: *'It seemed at times that Rauschenberg's work surface stood for the mind itself—dump, reservoir, switching centre, abundant...Rauschenberg's picture plane is for the consciousness immersed in the brain of the city.* (Steinberg, cited in: Joseph, 2002, p. 32)

Here, Steinberg might implicitly allude to Space, as was negotiated by Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 2000). The flat space of the city is translated in Rauschenberg's work into the flatness of the picture plane. Both spaces resonate with the same language of collage, which, just a few years later, would become the flag of aesthetic resistance, as defined by Debord in *Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 2002).

My insides jump and the hissing voice fades: here I am, finally – my whole body at once, and I know it is happening. A moment is being etched on my long-term memory. It does not feel like *déjà-vu*; rather, the exact opposite. I leave my doubt beside the hill of sand that is transforming, becoming a bag of sand, and then a hill again. This is where reality and metaphor unify. What remains is only a dumb silence. A space made of flexible, soft, empty, transparent patches of fabric.

The canvas turns into a trampoline and as my eyes bounce off it, its elasticity dances, leading the weight of my gaze: an object that I cannot identify and a circular movement that, like glue, holds the pieces together. From one to the other, each circle points to another. The unidentified object becomes a metaphor for a stranger, then it turns and becomes the object again. What *looks* like the thing turns out to be the thing itself. At the same time, it converses with a bag of sand that becomes this blue and empty desert.

My God, I have found a space! A space with no horizon line and no skies; nevertheless, I have found a world. I am walking alongside the edges of this world that speaks a language I remotely recall from a fresh, as-yet-undiscovered emptiness in me, and I can stroll in and out of the edges of this world endlessly. The halls, the walls, the echoes, are transforming in my ears; everything is alive.

The metal pipes that decorate the ceiling reminded me of a strangling lack a moment ago. Now, they are an opening to another layer of emptiness beyond them. There is a gap between the ceiling and the sky.

The space vibrates with the whisper of breaths. Heels are knocking on the floor

RAUSCHENBERG AND THE MATERIALISED IMAGE

Stepping back, one could suggest that the flatness of Rauschenberg's picture plane is not only a result of the relationship between the work and human positioning, but also of Rauschenberg's equal care towards the variety of elements and materials that compose his painting: *'The collage elements were not used to assist in the formation of images, they were employed in such a way as to suspend their materiality between their own identity as objects and a transformation into sheer pictorial design or tone. In Rauschenberg's work the image...is a matter, rather, of an object transferred.'* (Krauss, 2002). In Rauschenberg's picture plane, everything is treated as a 'thing',⁶⁹ in its Lacanian definition: an unidentified primordial shape that has yet to become a sign, independent from the background upon which it emerges. It performs a denial of the painting's two-dimensionality. Paint marks, images, objects and the painting as an object in itself, are positioned on the same contextual platform in their use as part of the inner syntax of the work.

In his equal treatment of different 'things', there is no fundamental distinction made between Rauschenberg's use of images and his use of objects; rather, both can be analysed under the same terms within his artistic language of subordination—they all

⁶⁹And, in this sense, may expose spaces of *the curatorial* in its reading.

with hesitation, but without regret. The performance had begun.

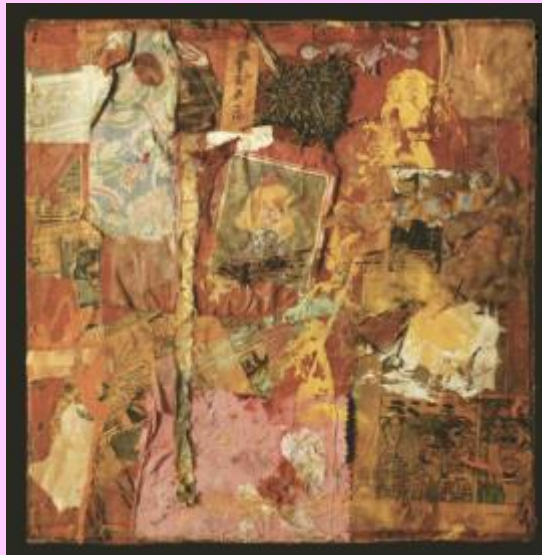


Figure 6- Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled*, 1954



Figure 7- Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon*, 1959

function as ready-mades.⁷⁰

Within this logic, subject/object trajectories are formed and their manifestation resembles, to some extent, the trajectories that have been identified in the inner logic of collecting: *'But the image was more than just a translation of the object; it was a relocation of it. The image removed the object from the space of the world, installing it in a space of an entirely different order. [...] And because it was irrevocably separated off from reality, it was understood (with varying degrees of idealization) to transcend reality'* (Krauss in: Joseph, 2002, p. 48). Like in the psychology of the collector, the removal of the image from the world in an attempt to reconstruct an inner space where the world is digested according to different measures resonates with the removal of objects from the world when they are divested of their function and added to a collection.

The possessor of the object in this case is the painting rather than a traditional subject in the image of a person. As such, it dismantles the object as an identified individual entity: unlike the collectable item, the ready-made object might not even maintain its material integrity in service of the painting's aim to transcend reality, to use Krauss' words. This transcendence is not necessarily a reality beyond matter; it might as well

⁷⁰ The main difference I sense between the meaning produced by images and the meaning produced by ready-mades is similar to the difference in the interpretation of a figurative painting and an abstract painting. The image refers to a more specific connotation, as it references a specific historical moment or figure, while the object is barely recognizable in its original use. Therefore, in the associative journey of the viewer, the image as ready-made leaves less room for freedom of interpretation. In this sense, the image is more political. Nevertheless both the image and the ready-made are operating at the same level, triggering a mode of recognition that is then underestimated by their use as materials, with no hierarchical distinction.

be a reality that seeks to transgress the politics of the object itself, much like a collector sabotaging an object as a protest against his or her obsessive urge.

THE READY-MADE IN ART DISCOURSE

To conclude what can be learnt about what I termed here the artistic ready-made, I contend that, in art, the ready-made object is used in a similar way to how one would use other media such as marble, oil or acrylic paint. Whilst the medium used might have a reference to a set of ideas, it is still used to create a single unit of symbolic meaning to which it is subordinated. This logic stipulates that, in art practice, objects that are used as ready-mades lose their identity or the original meaning embedded within their history or original function. In this sense, the artwork possesses⁷¹ the object within it and uses it for its own construction of space and/or narrative, forming a hierarchy in which the ready-made is an object (it is acted upon) and the artwork is a related subject (it is the active agent).⁷²

Within this current discourse, the definition of artwork as a curatorial ready-made raises the question of usage,⁷³ which is a problematic concept because 'use' entails subverting the oscillating status of the art-object. From this perspective, the 'use' of art-objects as ready-mades predicts the disappearance of the bridge that the object forms to its particular invisible.⁷⁴ As such, it is clear, when defining the artwork as a ready-made, why a certain anxiety occurs: that of the artwork disappearing and

⁷¹ In the second chapter, 'possession' was defined as a denominator in subject/object relationship. It is both the point where the two depart; however, it is also the point where the two meet and potentially cross positions. It therefore forms an essential and necessary part in the subject/object opposition. If the notion of possession is removed from the equation, as was shown in the first chapter, the anchor by which the positions are stabilized allows, in this metaphor, the fish to be no different than the sea. Furthermore, possession, as it was defined before, relating to the assignment of exchange value that fixes the object in a stable set of meaning-relationships, already encompasses the postmodernist and Marxist critique that is suggested as an interpretation to the meaning of the ready-made in art practice: The art object becomes a commodity like any other in the self-reflexive use of the ready-made as possessed by the painting itself.

⁷² This conception of the subject/object relationship is simplistic, especially in relation to the analysis offered in the previous chapter, where subject/object positions can easily change, blurring the very definition of both terms. This is not an attempt to assert that such a description of subject/object relations is satisfactory or even accurate; however, in the mechanisms of the anxiety to which I am referring in this context, this seems to be the common perception that still prevails. Otherwise, if one recognizes that subject/object relationships are in constant flux, forever re-definable by context, then such an anxiety is refuted by itself.

⁷³ i.e. that the artwork is being used rather than represented. By using the artwork, in the current psychology of object perception, one damages the artwork's value and the agency that it represents. Its symbolic value is seen and interpreted as part of an inverse relation in the equation of use value/symbolic value as discussed in Chapter 1. With regard to the artwork, which is created with no technological function or usability in mind, the idea of usage undermines the very core of the artist's mission, and questions the whole meaning of the object as an art-object.

⁷⁴ Which in our current culture very much relates to the individual artist that has created it, hence forms a personal offense.

becoming an object in a meta-narrative that holds on tightly and, in its embrace, strangles the artwork as an independent carrier of meaning.⁷⁵

RE-READING DUCHAMP'S 'READYMADE'⁷⁶

One cannot speak about the 'readymade' without speaking of Duchamp - the 'father' of this strange entity, an object cut from every day and pasted into a sacred⁷⁷ ground to find itself in a completely different set of relationships with the world. The object is now defined in its entirety as the result of creative agency, and locating the agent of this creativity forms an inner conflict in the logic of authorship.

The purpose of this section is to go back to that moment in art history where the idea of the readymade first emerged, and to understand the logic enabling it. Within this reading, Duchamp's readymade, and with it, the use of readymade by other artists, such as Andy Warhol, Joseph Cornell, Kader Attia and Rosangela Renno, to name a few, is fundamentally different to Rauschenberg's 'ready-made', despite their reading under similar terms.

Such a reading is based on the idea that, essentially, a readymade is a process by which any object can be defined as art. This transformative ability of the object and its definition inevitably blurs the line between any collectable item and an art-object. In reverse logic, this could ultimately reflect back at the art-object, posing a question about its apparent uselessness, providing a torch that illuminates its function in cultural production. In this logic, art is no different to any other commodity or object of desire and this destabilises the unique status of the art-object.

Duchamp – and, to some extent, Warhol's – use or representation of commodities as artworks is often interpreted as underlining this destabilization in order to criticize the dominant ideologies concerning an approach to objects; in fact, they are thought to point to a crisis in art: as art-objects are increasingly defined as commodities, no

⁷⁵ This anxiety is expressed in the analysis of the relationship between art and Curatorial Practice in the 1980s and 1990s as discussed in Chapter 1, and which will be further referred to in the next sections of this chapter.

⁷⁶ Here, I must mention Jonathan Watkins' work, which started to touch upon the idea of the curatorial ready-made through examining the work of Duchamp (Watkins, 1987). Although this text has not informed the analysis presented in this chapter, it is nevertheless an important starting point in thinking about the acts of Marcel Duchamp and their relationship to the tensions between art and curating. Duchamp, to whom the invention of the term 'readymade' is assigned, chose to refer to the combination of the two words as one, as to suggest of its meaning as a separate entity. Hence, in this section of the chapter, I am also referring to this combination of words as one. By the end of this chapter, it will become clear that there is, in fact, an important distinction that is made between the term 'ready-made', as it is written in the section analysing Rauschenberg's work, and the term 'readymade' here. The first refers to an object while the latter will be defined as a process.

⁷⁷ Sacred in its original meaning of 'separate'.

different to any other mechanical reproduced objects, they are at risk of losing their social agency.⁷⁸ However, what interests me here is the way in which the readymade can be read in Duchamp's terms, suspending, for a moment, the 'common' understanding of the readymade in familiar socio-political contexts, as described above.

As I discern a significant difference between his readymade and that of Rauschenberg, I am interested in thinking of Duchamp's practice in relation to *the curatorial* and question his definition as an artist. That said, I am not attempting to disregard a long line of rigorous art-historical analyses of his works, which inspired me and informed my reading of his readymade. I am interested here in offering this break in order to open up a space where the anxiety of being readymade can somehow be left to be, in order to enable a better understanding of the curatorial creative agency.

DUCHAMP AND HIS DEFINITION AS AN ARTIST

When reading Duchamp's notes, I could not help but notice reluctance in his self-identification with art. More specifically, with reference to the readymade, his remarks are startling. *The Duchamp Dictionary* quotes Duchamp's initial thoughts about the readymade in this respect: 'A work of art without an artist to make it', and remarking that Duchamp said: 'Please note that I didn't want to make a work of art out of it' (Girst, 2014, pp. 154-156) Girst notes that the popular definition of the readymade, as defined by the *Dictionnaire abrègé du Surréalisme* ('Manufactured objects promoted to the dignity of art through the choice of the artist'. Girst, 2014, pp. 154-156) was a definition given by Andre Breton rather than Duchamp.

For Duchamp, the definition of the readymade was less concrete: 'Curious thing about the readymade is that I've never been able to arrive at a definition or explanation that fully satisfies me. There's still magic in the idea, so I'd rather keep it that way' (Girst, 2014, pp. 154-156) Here, Duchamp supports the idea of an object that cannot be identified or classified as this or that. His understanding of the readymade is related to art only indirectly.

⁷⁸ This analysis, voiced commonly throughout different texts about the readymade, refers to the Marxist-inspired understanding of art's function; those comparisons find their way into art definition quite often in current analysis of the state of art and are well summarized in Krauss' article 'Perpetual Inventory', but also in other books dedicated to the analysis of art within economical systems, such as in Julian Stallabrass' *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Stallabrass, 2004), Don Thompson's *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art* (Thompson, 2012) and Sheridan Ford's early *Art A Commodity* (Ford, 1888). As explained before, although this is a valid and dominant analysis of the use readymade in those artists' work, I am more interested in other possible ways of reading ready-mades. Even if the conclusion is similar, I am deliberately choosing a path that does not place Marxist economic theories in the foreground, but rather at the background of this analysis, while the intimate relationships with objects and the motivations of individuals are highlighted.

This scepticism as expressed by Duchamp in relation to art also echoes through the history of his writings, which formed his unique body of work and personal history as a cultural figure: his rejection of painting, the appropriation of engineering sketching techniques, his interest in formal techniques of visual representation, his fascination with comics and linguistic puns, the readymade, his interest in the studio space while practicing a withdrawal from the art world, the period of time that he had invested in playing chess, his preoccupation with chance operations – all those seem to point in a similar direction. This general dissatisfaction with art's premise was also apparent in his rejection of what he would term 'the retinal'⁷⁹ - a term about which, unlike others, he had been explicitly clear.

Writing about 'the retinal', Duchamp framed his disappointment with art in a historical context, imagining a past where different creative practices, that were not strictly visual, existed: *'Since Courbet, it's been believed that painting is addressed to the Retina. That was everyone's error. The retinal shudder! Before, painting had other functions it could be religious, philosophical, moral'* (p. 70).⁸⁰

His dedication to chess and to organising events that cannot be related directly to art may resonate with the same reluctance – possibly a need to escape the definitions of his acts as 'art'. However, his interest in the cultural field, in aspects of knowledge production and in the state of the human, did not fade altogether. It seems he sought different ways of expressing himself and manifesting his version of creative agency.

In another of his written notes concerning the use of the readymade, Duchamp himself asks: *'Can one make works which are not works of art?'* (Ades, Cox, & Hopkins, 1999, p. 125). In this little fragment, it seems that Duchamp asks what other definitions could be assigned to his practice; whether it would be possible to maintain a creative act that bears no direct relation to art and its strict definitions. His attempt, I would argue, was not to redefine art but, rather, to escape the propositions stipulated by being an artist.

The persistence in defining Duchamp as an artist and the associated attempts to frame the whole of his activity as 'art' seems peculiar in this context. Looking at his practice from an alternative perspective, a large portion of his actions may be read as

⁷⁹ The term retinal refers to any visual aspect of the painting that is meant for an aesthetic pleasure of some kind. In his writing, Duchamp explains how he thinks the focus of art on its visual aspects, renders the other aspects of art, which he found much more important, redundant. Other such aspects include the meaning of an artwork and , its subject matter or message.

⁸⁰ A further analysis of Duchamp's objection to 'retinal' aspects of art, as a means of engaging other senses in the composition of aesthetic experience, and the influence of such attitude on the art movements of the time, is offered in *Please Touch: Dada & Surrealist Objects after the Readymade* (Mileaf, 2010)

having a direct correlation with Curatorial Practice; namely, his interest in the notion of the readymade.

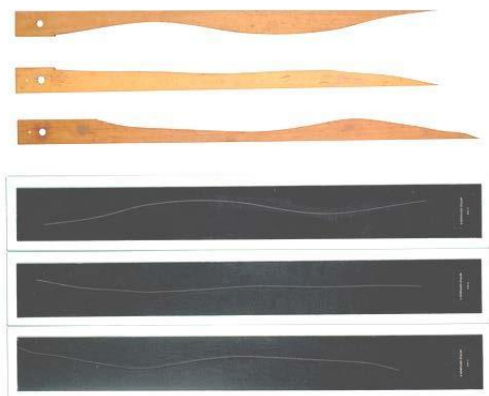


Figure 9 - Marcel Duchamp, *The Three Stoppages*, 1913-1914:

'Duchamp took one meter lengths of string and dropped them from a height of one meter onto a canvas. He then stuck the threads down and thereby fixed the new lengths that chance, gravity and the 'whims' of the thread have created [...] the term 'Stoppages'- a French word meaning the invisible mending of a garment' (ADES, COX AND HOPKINS, 1999: 79).



Figure 9 - Marcel Duchamp, *Network of Stoppages*, 1914

'Duchamp called his lovingly boxed rulers 'the meter diminished' and used them, each repeated three times, in his 'Network of Stoppages' (1914) as the templates of a plan for the disposition of the bachelors or the "non malic moulds" in the *Large Glass*' (Ades, Cox and Hopkins, 1999: 79).

THE READYMADE

In *The Portable Museum* (1989), Ecke Bonk concludes that Duchamp's experimentation with the readymade was a means of connecting two elements of his practice: 'chance' and 'measurement':⁸¹ (1989, p. 10).

The meeting between those two elements is reflected in the readymade through a process involving, firstly, the limitation of choice; that is, the framework or rules within which this process takes place. Whilst choice is a subjective moment of identified attention, the framework set in advance limits the arbitrariness or the chance involved in this subjective process.⁸² The framework itself stipulates the choice of a mechanically manufactured object; in this sense, the subjective choice is removed from the production process, leaving the product clear of intention or subjective investment.

If the artwork is defined earlier through the creative agency that is invested in its process of production, then what Duchamp does with the readymade renounces this type of artistic choice in favour of another

⁸¹ 'Measurement' here is seen as a form of interpretation that leads to a possible production of meaning. It could also be seen as 'logic' or 'foresight', which is also apparent in his interest in chess.

⁸² To define choice, I use the term 'identified attention' as defined by Ouspensky in *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (1974, pp. 83-87). A further analysis of different types of attention and their relationship to choice and agency will be provided in Chapter 4; however, for now, the definition of identified attention is that which is produced when an object catches the mind's mechanical attention and provides further emotional stimuli or interest. This type of attention can be prolonged to longer periods of time because of this feeling of fascination, but in the moment this initial fascination wanes, so attention automatically moves to the next object, which catches it. Hence, it is difficult to think of choice deriving from a mode of identified attention as a choice at all. Attention here is directed (possessed) by the object of desire, rather than by the subject's intention.

creative process, the centre of which lies in the frameworks and limitations provided for choice and reading. From this description, the readymade, in this account, cannot be defined as an object but should be viewed as a process.

The logic of the readymade as a creative process lies in how Duchamp defines human perception. For him, the basis for human understanding of reality is constructed upon a number of arbitrary axioms or rules that limit the possibilities of reading reality, enabling measurement or scientific observation.

His *Three Stoppages* (see Figure 11), a central element that reappears in early and later works, reflects on the operation and role of such axioms in our perception and embodies the irony he saw in measurement as a premise. Ades, Cox and Hopkins comment on this humoristic character of Duchamp's work: *'Duchamp mocked the human pretension of measuring nature, calibrating it by a scheme that is always arbitrary, making sense of it with rules and laws that depend entirely upon a human perspective'* (Ades, Cox and Hopkins, 1999: 79) or, in Duchamp's words: *'If a straight horizontal thread one meter long falls from a height of one meter on to a horizontal plane, distorting itself as it pleases and creates a new slope of the measurement of length'* (Duchamp, *From The Box of 1914*, cited in Ades, Cox and Hopkins, 1999: 79).

In this sense, it seems that a large part of Duchamp's practice is intended to function as a repository of systems of measurements and categorisations – an invented, alternative symbolic system through which the content of his work should be read.⁸³ The Duchampian universe came to represent the arbitrariness of social or symbolic mental constructs, shedding light on a process of constructing theories that are intended to describe reality but which, in fact, are based on axioms that cannot be verified.

The second aspect in understanding Duchamp's internal logic is the application of such axioms in the analysis and extension of reality through the use of the precision of an engineer or a scientist. This is exemplified by his application of 'precision painting', where the units of measurement he created in his 'canned chance' operations are used in order to depict a reality which, according to the idiosyncratic logic he had defined, seem to be a description or even transcription, without any flaw (see Figure 12).

⁸³ To return to Taborsky's definition, Duchamp constructed an alternative 'cultural' definition within which his objects could be read as a *Legisign* – hence taking into account curatorial concerns about their presentation.

The complete operation is therefore considered a reflection on the logic of continuity: how meaning is stabilized by a mechanical apparatus, and through this process generates further calculations and assumptions that prove the basic random axioms to be correct, in a form of tautology. In return, the system as a whole seems to produce trustworthy, proven or scientific models for reality. This is the way Duchamp described, whilst, at the same time, criticized, processes of knowledge production.

The framework Duchamp chose for the first attempts at readymade reflects this logic through another layer of complexity. His choice of a mass-produced object has, in itself, a meaning that reflects back on knowledge production as a mechanical, unconscious process. Both production and knowledge are embedded within the industrial process of manufacturing mass-produced objects. It is an uninterrupted mechanical procedure that seems to function in itself. The usability of the objects he chose is recognised as a further proof that strengthens the logic that generated it; however, the completion of the readymade as a process means that the object is granted a life of its own, independent of the system that had produced it; it is examined in another system of axioms, rules and assumptions. Within this system, the object remains dumb, unable to reflect back on the promised evolution and progress that gave it birth. In this manner, the readymade destabilises processes of knowledge production in both systems, thus allowing the arbitrariness, absurdity and aimlessness within them to be revealed.

The object, placed in an awkward framework or context, eventually reveals a source of embarrassment, deriving from a misreading not only of the object at stake but also of the whole system to which it now belongs. The readymade, as a process, is one of misplacement, which exposes the empty space left behind in the object's natural position in the common system of perception. It also reveals the new space within which it is positioned. This type of misplacement reflects on the terms of perception, which participate in writing the human condition.

THE READYMADE AND THE BODY

Indeed, the mechanically reproduced object bears importance in Duchamp's practice because its mode of existence resonates with that of the human condition. This is epitomised by the image of the machine, which acts both as a mechanically reproduced object and as a producer of objects in itself. The machine's centrality in

Duchamp's practice is evident in his meticulous study of machines⁸⁴ and his use of the figure of the machine as a symbolic operative element in works like *The Large Glass*.⁸⁵

In *The Large Glass*, Duchamp seems to draw a parallel between mechanical reproduction and human reproduction. Both are depicted as futile, endless operations whose only aim is preservation, and thus are absurd parameters in the measurement of cultural development or growth.⁸⁶ Here already, Duchamp's attitude to subject/object dichotomies is complicated, referring to their interchanging positions - the readymade being a process with no end, which might seem like an object at a certain point but, in fact, never rests in a stable position.

As such, the readymade reflects the inherent tension of the subject, being, eventually, only an animated object in relation to any reality that is outside the subjective realm. However, the subject is rarely, if ever, able to perceive itself as a unified, enclosed and stable unit of meaning. His only hope of relief from a multi-layered and complex subjective reality is either reproduction or death. Both the sibling – the product of reproduction, and the cadaver – the product of death, stand on the verge of the same

⁸⁴ As an example, one might think of his meticulous study of the Chocolate Grinder, which then was used as a central element in *The Large Glass*.

⁸⁵ *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, 1915-1923, also known as *The Large Glass*, is one of Duchamp's most important works as it is seen to summarize his practice and interests, as it encompasses many of the elements that Duchamp worked upon meticulously, from the image of the bride to the image of the chocolate grinder and the use of the 'three stoppages' as a means of measuring the mechanical operation depicted. Here, it is important to mention that *The Large Glass* itself is not interpreted as a 'pure' curatorial work, like the readymade is thought to be. However, *The Large Glass* is used in order to understand more clearly Duchamp's interpretation of mechanically reproduced objects, which make up the notion of the readymade. Furthermore, curatorial aspects of his work will be analysed in order to locate Duchamp's curatorial interest. In this context, it might be interesting to mention the analysis offered by Roy Ascott, linking Duchamp's *Large Glass* to digital culture. In his book *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness* (Ascott, 2008) Ascott uses the *Large Glass* as a means of reflecting on early notions of the telematics communications and the relationship between body and technology. For Ascott, Duchamp's *Large Glass*, and his work in general, is an attempt in communicating interactively with a viewer in the process of de-composing and re-composing elements in Duchamp's work. For example, as part of his analysis refers to Duchamp's use of the glass as a means of generating an interface. In his article *Is There Love in the Telematic Embrace?* Ascott refers to this enquiry stating: "In the recent history of Western art, it was Marcel Duchamp who first took the metaphor of the glass, of the window onto the world, and turned it back on itself to reveal what is invisible. We see in the work known as *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, or *The Large Glass*, a field of vitreous reality in which energy and emotion are generated from the tension and interaction of male and female, natural and artificial, human and machine" (Ascott, 1990, p. 242). This resonates with the analysis offered here on two fronts, firstly, from a formal perspective, the use of glass as a meaningful move towards the construction of context and the viewer's agency within it, secondly on the thematic understanding of the *Large Glass* as referring to the relationship between biological and mechanical reproduction.

⁸⁶ These comments about the relationship between Duchamp's practice and cultural evolution are related to art historians who read Duchamp's practice in light of spiritual evolution theories, such as alchemy. A central reference is that of the figure of the bride. In a few mystical traditions (Christianity and Judaism included), the wedding, or sexual intercourse, is a metaphor for the connection between Man and Divinity. In such theories, the idea that reproduction is the only purpose of human existence is seen as absurd, as the human's ability to produce meaning is a means through which a connection is created between different realms in the world. (visible/material and invisible/immaterial) This idea has extensive appearance in literature. Ades, Cox and Hopkins mention references to Arturo Swartz and Maurizio Calvesi's accounts of alchemy in Duchamp's work from 1975 and 1977. A contemporary summary of those readings can be found in John F. Moffitt's *Alchemist of the Avant-Garde: The Case of Marcel Duchamp* (2003). I interpret the bride in Duchamp's work as an entity on the verge between a childhood and a womanhood- between a human subject and her function as a machine for reproduction.

unimaginable place that is the reality of existence as a body, an object; a stable and enclosed unit.

I suggest that Duchamp's practice centred on these parallels, between mechanical reproduction and human reproduction, with his work depicting a human machine whose sole purpose of existence is concerned with reproducing itself, while no actual understanding of the purpose of this reproduction is offered. It is like a perpetual and ceaseless movement that cannot be controlled. In his works, Man can be seen as a version of a cyborg, already post-human: a mechanical construct programmed around sexual needs, sometimes even unaware of the source of those needs, clouding her/his vision with ideals. His return to the image of the bride, the ultimate machine of reproduction, derives, in my view, from a fascination with the dumbness of this process.⁸⁷

This process is arbitrary, just like other processes of production with which human society is identified: such is the production of knowledge. Hence, *Three Stoppages* is, in fact, a reflection on this arbitrariness that exists at the foundation of everything that we refer to as 'civilisation', or which has been defined before as the social or linguistic realm.

THE MEDIUM OF READYMADE OPERATIONS

Taking a step further into the examination of Duchamp's practice in an effort to understand its roots and motivations, one finds that this transgression of borders between object and subject dichotomies was made possible through the process of the readymade. If we accept that the readymade is not an object but a process, and if we understand that creative agency does not express itself in the process of the object's production, then what remains, as a task, is the identification of its locus.

Let us use some concrete examples of readymade operations: the urinal, submitted for the exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917, which Duchamp had titled *The Fountain* and signed by hand in the name of its producer, R. Mutt; and *Hat Rack*, which was hung in an awkward position from the ceiling (see Figure 13 and 14).

⁸⁷ Duchamp's ambiguous relationship with sexuality is a well-researched topic. Jerrold Seigel suggests that his works reflect on issues of impotency (1995), and Thierry De Duve elaborates on gender politics implicit in Duchamp's practices. Among other interpretations, De Duve suggests that gender ambiguity was a means of conveying notions of equality that seemed urgent at the time of Duchamp's work (Duve, 1996). The fascination with the figure of the bride has been interpreted as a means of reflecting on the nature of sex, marriage, and the transitional moments of one's gender identity's formation (Ades, Cox, & Hopkins, 1999, pp. 84-121). Further analysis here reflects on Duchamp's ambiguous relationship with gender and marriage (Ades, Cox, & Hopkins, 1999, pp. 122-135). His identification as 'Rose Sélavy' and his final masterpiece, *Étant donnés*, are often interpreted through this prism. I suggest that Duchamp's fascination with sexuality might have a relationship to the process of reproduction itself.

These are chosen because they are considered by many to be the 'purification of the readymade' (Bonk, 1989, p. 10).

The reading of these readymades is normally referred to through the prism of Breton's definition of the readymade: '*Manufactured objects promoted to the dignity of art through the choice of the artist*' (Girst, 2014, p. 154). However, if we take a step back and ask what exactly the 'artist' chooses in the readymade process, we discover that the choice of the object is arbitrary. It is not the act of 'choice' that 'promotes' the object to the 'dignity of art'; to take Breton's definition seriously, one needs to question what it was, in fact, that changed the definition of the urinal, or the hat rack, from a utility into art.



Figure 11 - Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917.



Figure 11 - Marcel Duchamp, *Hat Rack*, 1916.

Was it, as Baudrillard suggests, the renunciation of the object's utility? Or, rather, could we define the critical moment as the choice of space – the background upon which the object was placed – and the context, which redefined the meaning of the object in the cultural field? I suggest that the readymade, as a process, can be read as the setting up of a background: a construct that would make objects appear in a way they could not be imagined before.

What is underlined in these actions is the way in which axioms and definitions of reality are changed by repositioning objects in 'inappropriate' cultural fields of categorization. Duchamp demonstrated how meaning and knowledge production are dependent on their place within our cultural, social and linguistic constructs.

Needless to say, space, position and context are the mediatory tools of curators, and the changing meaning of elements in their different arrangements can be identified as a central occupation of Curatorial Practice, resonating strongly with the definition of the curatorial

series, as defined in Chapter 1. Curatorial creative agency is therefore located not in the production of an object⁸⁸ but, rather, in the production of the background, in the production of space,⁸⁹ or in the production of what may be considered 'noise'. *The curatorial* finds itself within the relationship, just as Maria Lind suggested in the first introduction of the term: 'Today I imagine curating as a way of thinking in terms of interconnections: linking objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses in physical space like an active catalyst, generating twists, turns, and tensions' (Lind, 2010, p. 63). Curatorial agency is not an interrogation into the process of production; in actuality, it is an interrogation into the conditions of usage, possession and meaning making.

THE READYMADE AS THE *ARS-POETICA* OF THE CURATORIAL

Whilst much has been said about the way in which the readymade, as a process, changed the definition of art, little has been written about how this act reflected upon the social and rational constructs enabling this dramatic shift in meaning – constructs that I believe Duchamp sought to question and bring to light.

If we accept the readymade as a process, and as a curatorial one, then works such as *The Fountain* seem to have significance not to the definition not of art, but of the curatorial act itself. Duchamp's urinal does not have a meaning as an object in and of itself in the sense that it is not perceived as part of a system of knowledge or belief, and is not displayed in the context of one.⁹⁰ Even if the urinal were a discursive object

⁸⁸ 'Object', here, does not only refer to the material entity, but as it had been offered before as an enclosed, singular unit of meaning.

⁸⁹ Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space* as central to the understanding of curatorial space will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁹⁰ Here, I refer to the 'discursive object' as defined by Edwina Taborsky (Taborsky, 1990) and as it was discussed in Chapter 2. While I am not in complete agreement with Taborsky's analysis, I agree that the 'Qualisign', the "Legisign" and the 'Signsign', in her terms, are important in the mediation of meaning, even if an object is analysed outside, and detached from, its original context. In Duchamp's use of the readymade and its further analysis, one could say that none of those aspects are taken into consideration. Of course, this is not to undermine the meaning of the object as it has been put in the context of the exhibition hall.

One could argue that the choice of the urinal was barely an arbitrary one, and that this reflects on Duchamp's sense of humour, subversive thought and opposition to aesthetics in the most direct fashion. One could also argue that the urinal as a mass-produced object is a reflection on the industrial aspect of creativity which Duchamp is known to comment on in other works. Finally, one could say that the urinal is an object of knowledge, only that the knowledge embedded within it is shoved to the edges of our perception because of certain hierarchical dichotomies that are prevalent in Western Culture. The urinal might indeed be an object of 'everyday knowledge'. Other interpretations of Duchamp's readymade converse with Western Mysticism (references to alchemy, for example, as mentioned above) and to Eastern Philosophical notions. Duchamp's work could be also compared to Zen riddles, which point to the absurdity of existence and our attachment to material objects and rational definitions, which might or might not have correlations with reality. All these interpretations are interesting and might have a connection to the truth behind Duchamp's work, but they are dependent not on Duchamp's understanding of objects but, rather, on Duchamp's investigation of how meaning is created.

or an object relating to cultural knowledge or memory, Duchamp's actions do not underline the knowledge or the memory potentially contained by these objects.

Rather, his actions were an experiment with changing definitions of space. As such, one could see the readymade as a self-reflective curatorial act. His investigation, nonetheless, was not of art-objects' definition, nor was it of the mass-produced object; rather, I believe that his aim was concerned with the identification of the curatorial space and the conditions under which reading is performed, where meaning is constructed and deconstructed in relation to context. The readymade might, then, be defined as the *ars-poetica of the curatorial*.

DUCHAMP AND THE CURATORIAL PLATFORM

Aware of social and mental constructs that condition his and others' perceptions of his work, Duchamp laboured throughout his creative life to form alternative platforms, contexts or mental constructs in which his artworks could be perceived. It seems that he craved the creation of alternative discursive frameworks and sought spaces of *the curatorial*.

Looking at Duchamp's practice, one can trace his direct interest in curatorial aspects of his works' representation, and it would not be an over-exaggeration to state that he was invested in the conditions of display as much as the content of the works. The mediating space in which these works were to be perceived was paramount and inseparable from the process of their creation; he created them in an internal Duchampian universe in which objects would be read according to the set of rules he had stipulated.

His awareness of context or the environment in which his works were placed is present in almost every work he created. *The Large Glass*, for example, was made in glass exactly for that reason. Duchamp is quoted as saying: '*All that background on the canvas that had to be thought about, tactile space, like wallpaper...all the garbage...I wanted to sweep it away. With the glass you can concentrate on the figure if you want and you can change the background if you want by moving the glass. The transparency of the glass plays for you*' (in: Ades, Cox, & Hopkins, 1999, p. 94). The fifth chapter of the book, dedicated to *The Large Glass*, continues and interprets this further: '*Glass has the property of a window in that it automatically and involuntarily includes what is seen through it, but unlike a window, the position of the Large Glass can be changed to look out onto a different prospect, a different setting for the figures*' (Ades, Cox and Hopkins, 1999: 94). Hence, the materiality of the glass has a role to play in the staging

of the subject at stake. The transparency of the work was a declaration of content's fragility to context.

With the creation of *The Large Glass*, Duchamp recognised that his own idea – in this case, the diagram⁹¹, the figure and the relationship between them – is sensitive and prone to the influence of outside penetration.⁹² If the environment in which the work is placed, with all the impressions it stipulates (the vision of the viewer included) could be perceived as a kind of 'noise', interfering with the clarity of the message, then the choice of glass as the background material for the piece meant that Duchamp chose to incorporate this 'noise' into the medium of the artwork. Hence, the viewer, when facing the work, has to invest effort into creating a mental separation between image and background.

This active effort, as requested from the viewer, is a small, yet fundamental shift, meaning the image, mentally separated from any background, floats in the mental space of the viewer; detached, becoming an absolute manifestation of itself.⁹³ In this process, we are requested to focus our vision, concentrating on the elements that make up the image, whilst the glass becomes a physical border between the work and the environment, idea and context, image and background.

Similar curatorial concerns can be read in Duchamp's series of suitcases, *Les Boîtes en Valises*,⁹⁴ which is often interpreted as a summary of Duchamp's creation as a whole, as well as the culmination of what I interpret to be his curatorial efforts. When creating an internal universe in which his work would be interpreted, the suitcases can be seen as curatorial platforms in and of themselves. It would be difficult to argue that the suitcase is one singular art-object as it emphasises the multitude, containing a curated selection of Duchamp's works. Indeed, the suitcases were a challenging moment in the definition of Duchamp's practice, hardly understood as an art-object at the time of their release and were only understood as such in retrospect (Ades, Cox, & Hopkins, 1999, p. 174).

Despite the fact that Duchamp's early years may have been marked by a preoccupation with the processes of art production, as Duchamp's practice seems to evolve, one can see a tendency to maintain a certain distance from such processes, as

⁹¹ The diagram itself can be read as an act of performing the curatorial. See (Crone, 2013)

⁹² Penetration here is relevant only in the presence of a viewer who attempts to read his work: Duchamp takes into account the position of the viewer as well as his convictions in the preparation of his work, so that his ideas will be accessible.

⁹³ Hence also resonating with the idea of Simulacrum: the figure is only a representation of itself, detached from its understanding in the context of reality.

⁹⁴ *Les Boîtes en Valises*, is a series of works where Duchamp assembled fragments of his practice: facsimiles, prints of his paintings and miniature versions of his 'readymade'. The reproductions were placed in tailor-made boxes that opened up as mini-display apparatus.

well as an increasing interest in the examination of social and political relationships expressed through different cultural platforms and dialogues.

If Duchamp's biography can be read with his interest in spaces of *the curatorial*, then some of his activities seem less curious or questionable. His alleged 'disappearance' from the art scene between 1923 and 1937 reveals his abundant activity in experimenting with platforms for cultural production: In 1924, Duchamp issued 500-franc bonds to finance a system of betting on roulette, based on chance operations, offering these bonds as a financial investment. This act, based on the notion of chance and on mechanisms of mathematical probability, can be read in direct relation to the logic of the readymade in which Duchamp offers a critique of systems of evaluation and power and the ways in which they construct meaning in the cultural field.

In 1927, Duchamp took part in the organization of the International Exhibition of Modern Art in the Brooklyn Museum, New York. Subsequently, Duchamp participated in, organised and managed chess competitions and conferences. He also published *L'opposition et les Cases conjuguées sont réconciliées* – a chess treatise written with Vitaly Halberstadt. Chess, if read through the eyes of a curator or cultural producer, may be considered a means of finding an alternative system of logic within which to operate. As John Cage notes on Duchamp's interest in Chess in relation to a dedication Duchamp had written to him, '*Because both mushrooms and chess, you see, are the opposite of chance operations*',⁹⁵ implying that Duchamp's interest in chess was indeed a means to researching another type of logic within which chance was not central as it was in the other mechanisms of human perception he had previously investigated.

In 1934, Duchamp issued the *Green Box*, a collection of Duchamp's facsimiles, which, similar to *Les Boîte en Valises*, were reproduced and collected in limited-edition boxes. Although this was not received readily as a work of art, when seen through the curator's eyes, the *Green Box* can easily be read as a curatorial project, implicating the reading of archives, journals, letters and personal communications as a means to construct, rather than record, memory⁹⁶.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Art Lange, *Interview with John Cage 10/4/77* (Cage, 1978)

⁹⁶ An interesting experiment which may serve as a further, contemporary understanding of the *Green Box* in light of the curatorial analysis suggested here is the re-production of the *Large Glass* by Richard Hamilton. Hamilton worked on translating the *Green Box*'s instructions and following them to re-create Duchamp's piece in a long process that started in the late 1950's. In 1960 Hamilton's reproduction was signed by Duchamp. However further work on this translation process continued towards the 200's with Hamilton's further work on the *Large Glass*'s reproduction at the Tate Modern (2003). Hamilton framed this creation as a 'faithful replica', maintaining a complex relationship to Duchamp's original and to notions of authorship. Hamilton's reconstruction in this manner suggests the deep correlation between Duchamp's works and highlighting the holistic approach Duchamp had taken towards his practice. It also raises questions in relation to the reproduction of memory as an object or an entity. This may bare parallels to the notion of the *Simulacrum Naturae*, presented by Assaf Pinkus in his article *Sculpting*

Between 1934 and 1938, Duchamp was involved with platforms for the interpretation of art and culture. He opened two solo exhibitions and published his writings and works in numerous magazines, namely *Minotaure* and *Transition*. Between 1937 and 1942, he was involved with the organization of the *International Exhibition of Surrealism*. These may seem like more direct curatorial activities as they took place within the realm of art discourse and in the form of exhibitions, which are accepted largely as a curatorial platform; however, if we *do* accept that curating does not necessarily revolve around organizing exhibitions, and if curating can revolve around other objects in culture, then one may find that there is no ontological difference between his interest in the platform of the exhibition and other platforms for making meaning: from the perspective assumed here, the projects initiated by Duchamp sought to renegotiate the meaning of the fields at stake, be it chess, economy, gambling or works of art.

Even the activities of Rose Sélavy – the female persona Duchamp created, active between 1934 and 1940 within the art scene – can be read as a curatorial experiment in questioning the definitions of gender and the positioning of the self as an object within a social series. Here, of course, the boundaries between curatorial and artistic agency are blurred.

In conclusion, the reading of some of Duchamp's activities as curatorial seems to reconcile Duchamp's image as a practitioner. The term 'curating', as we know it today, might not have been in use at the time of his activity, and therefore his pioneering moves can only be read as such in retrospect. The notion of *the curatorial*, I suggest, however, opens up alternative interpretations of his activity and life.

If one agrees to accept the extension of the field of curating beyond the forms it had taken thus far – namely, that of the exhibition space – then the analysis of Duchamp's activity as curatorial could inspire a whole array of possibilities for Curatorial Practice; freeing it from the confines of already-established curatorial platforms. It might just be that the inventions of new curatorial spaces within which meaning can be mediated is one of the central and most important roles of the curator in a culture already saturated with content.

Simulacra in Medieval Germany, 1250-1380 (Pinkus, 2014) as presented in the case study attached to this chapter. A thorough account of this translation process and its meaning is offered by Paul Thirkell in his essay *From the Green Box to Typo/Topography: Duchamp and Hamilton's Dialogue in Print* (Thirkell, 2005) published in Tate Papers online research journal in 2005. (accessible through: <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7343> accessed 13-6-2015)

DUCHAMP AND THE CONTEXT OF THE EXHIBITION

Whilst reading Duchamp as a curator allows us to stretch the limits of the curatorial platform beyond that of the exhibition and beyond the realm of art, this section, explores the way in which Duchamp engaged with the traditional and conventional roles of the curator as an exhibition manager and organizer.

The most famous and studied example of Duchamp as a curator is his participation as a central figure behind the organization and design of the *International Surrealist Exhibition*, which was shown in three different locations between 1937 and 1942.⁹⁷ This exhibition was an event that marked a stepping-stone in the history of art and the acceptance of Dada and Surrealism in the centre of art discourse of the time (Altshuler, 1998). It stood in opposition to the political outrage that flamed Europe – namely, the outbreak of the Second World War – and brought the voices of revolutionary resistance to the centre of attention. In some ways, it can even be read retrospectively as a response to *The Exhibition of Degenerate Art* Adolf Ziegler organized in 1937 in the name of the Nazi party.⁹⁸

When reading descriptions and impressions of the *Surrealist Exhibition*, one understands that the curatorial platform Duchamp had created generated a complete sense of chaos and disorientation, as if one walked into a common space of the subconscious realm.⁹⁹ His curatorial approach, as has been documented, was not one

⁹⁷ A through history and analysis of the International Surrealist Exhibitions can be found in Lewis Kachur's *Displaying the Marvellous* (Kachur, 2001). Kachur gives a detailed review of the different exhibitions and emphasizes the partiality of the exhibition design as part of creating a meaning in the space of the exhibition itself: 'in each setting the participants abandoned any attempt at neutrality of presentation in favour of a subjective environment that itself embodied a statement' (Kachur, 2001, p. xiii). Kachur sees these attempts as the background for the development of such artistic practices as the site-specific installation that became a prominent means of expression in art from 1960s up until the 1990s. Nevertheless, Kachur's book refers only indirectly to the influence of the surrealist exhibition on the ideology of Curatorial Practice and curatorial space. Bruce Altshuler, in *The Avant Garde in Exhibition*, refers to the influence of this exhibition in the evaluation of Surrealist art and the political importance of this movement in the cultural memory of modernity. (Altshuler, 1998, pp. 116-135) Through his analysis, he refers to the implications of such an affective display in the construction of art history. See Chapter 1.

⁹⁸ Politically, one could say that these three exhibitions – the *Armory Show*, the *Surrealist Exhibition* and the *Exhibition of Degenerate Art*, marked the immigration of the art centre, and with it, 'the free world', from Europe to the United States. This is alluded to in Bruce Altshuler's account of exhibitions in art history (Altshuler, 1998). While the Exhibition of Degenerate art sought to humiliate, dishonour and destruct the noble image of Western Art traditions through displaying the artworks in chaos and without care, the *International Exhibition of Surrealism* sought to use the same means of 'degeneration' to convey its own ideological ground, in which the curatorial acts of the Nazi Party seem to have lost their meaning through an act similar to the confiscation of objects in the winning of a war. The appearance of both exhibitions in the same year can be said to have a political resonance, seeking to reinstate the status of art and Western culture as it was read up until that point. In a way, the relationship between these two exhibitions is the epitome of the struggle between two ideologies that fought over dominancy, through Curatorial Practice. The winners of this struggle were the ones to write the history of art and re-establish concrete parameters for art's evaluation. A thorough analysis of this relationship may be suitable for another context, outside of this research.

⁹⁹ Testimonies on this feeling of disorientation and chaos are documented in Altshuler's account of the Surrealist exhibition as he quotes the review of the exhibition in *Vogue*: 'Unrest, claustrophobia, a feeling of some terrible disaster hung over the rooms' (Altshuler, 1998, p. 124).

of subtle intervention; rather, it was a totalist creation of a space that answers an alternative logic: one offered by Surrealism.

Surrealism, in this sense, was not viewed as a common style that defined a group of artists but, rather, as a cultural movement reflecting something about the condition of being human; however, within this context, although all artworks were scrambled and embedded within a space interrupted by imagery and activities, the individual art pieces still seem to speak loud and clear, each in its own right, as separate entities or different facets of this Surrealist condition when it is performed.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, Harald Szeemann, in 'When Attitudes Become Form', generated the basic conditions for reading Minimalist art and Arte-Povera. When organizing this exhibition, he did not take himself out and apart but, rather, participated and involved himself in the construction of a set of conditions for reading the meaning of these art movements. More specifically, he placed the emphasis on the active participation of the audiences in the experience of the exhibition space and invested his trust into the 'wholeness' of the objects within the exhibition space as 'things' that do not need further explication, staging or categorization. Such was the discourse surrounding art at the time – mainly Minimalism, *Arte Povera* and conceptual art that seem to have influenced the design and orientation of the exhibition.

One of the ideas known to have directed those practices is voiced by the Minimalists, who sought to create 'objects' – enclosed units of meaning – in a Gestalt equation, where they would not be perceived as different parts composed together but as one unit, as one whole.¹⁰¹ In the same vein, 'Attitudes' was represented as one whole containing and embracing the sum of its parts. These conditions had proven to mediate the meaning of the works presented so vividly that 'Attitudes' remained a central element in the interpretation of the artworks presented within it as well.

Here, the description of Baudelaire's passionate, partial art critic brings us back to the question of the artwork as a readymade, and the various issues concerning creative and artistic agency. In this context, we may wonder, can we draw a parallel between the passionate art critic, and a passionate, imaginative art curator? In the *Surrealist*

¹⁰⁰ His curatorial acts included interventions in space that could be defined as artistic installations, as Altshuler puts it: *'He compounded allusions by covering the ceiling with 1,200 coal sacks filled, according to Man Ray, with a light, incombustible material in difference to the insurance company...nearby two constructions of revolving doors were used to display graphic works a reference to Man Ray's well known early series of collages...paintings were hung on the walls, and Duchamp originally wanted electric eyes to trigger their illumination whenever a viewer approached. When that proved unfeasible, an alternative was arranged for the opening on January 17 – as guests entered, they were handed flash-lights by Man Ray, the show's Master of Lighting'* (Altshuler, 1998, pp. 122-123).

¹⁰¹ A good overview of Minimalist ideology and its relation to Gestalt can be found in Ad Reinhardt's 'Art as Art' (Reinhardt, 1992) and Donald Judd's 'Specific Objects' (Judd, 1992)

*Exhibition*¹⁰² of 1938, Duchamp, as curator, did not step aside; did not pretend to negotiate a world external to his own, but, rather, took part in the construction of the surrealist ethos himself – just like Szeeman did in ‘Attitudes’.

The exhibition here is not perceived as a static space or a moment frozen in time; it does not place the artists and the movements represented under a microscope or within a sealed vitrine. Artworks were not displayed silently within a simulation of a cultural image, depicting a sterile laboratory, painted white.¹⁰³ Rather, the laboratory¹⁰⁴ Duchamp and Szeemann had created was messy, some would say even dirty, causing the space between familiarity and abject¹⁰⁵ to be questioned.

The interaction between the artworks and the space, as well as between the artworks, performances¹⁰⁶ and viewers, was meant to create a direct opening for communication within which meaning was formed and mediated as a result of a collaborative effort.¹⁰⁷ The passionate curator manages space not only as an exhibition space in which objects are displayed, sacred, separated and detached; for her/him, the space is also a space for encountering others; a space that generated a conversation of viewers with themselves, with the artists, and with other visitors. In this sense, the exhibition became a discursive space.

¹⁰² It would be appropriate to call the exhibition as a whole ‘surrealist’ rather than just the art displayed within it.

¹⁰³ Duchamp’s rejection of the common ideas of art display, and his determination to allow viewers to interact with artworks through different senses (not only in visual means) is elaborated and concluded in Janine Mileaf’s book: *Please Touch: Dada and Surrealist Objects after the Readymade* (Mileaf, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ The idea of the museum or exhibition space as a laboratory is something that characterised Szeemann’s work as a museum curator. As he himself testifies in an interview with Carolee Thea, explaining the motivation behind his work in Kunsthalle Bern, ‘*We wanted to open up the institution as a laboratory, more as a confirmation of the non-financial aspect of art*’ (Thea, 2001, p. 19)

¹⁰⁵ Abject here refers to Julia Kristeva’s use of the term. She defines it through the relationship between that which once belonged to the body (familiar) and that which is shed of the body and now forms an estranged relationship with it. In this process of displacement, the bodily-residue turns into a ‘thing’; part of the realm of the ‘real’, and many times awakens a feeling of disgust – this is what is termed ‘abject’ (Kristeva, 1982).

¹⁰⁶ Performances were scheduled as an integral part of the design of the exhibition space. As Altshuler notes: ‘*The opening itself was a great social event, filled with Paris society in evening dress requested on the invitation. The announcement stated that “the authentic descendant of Frankenstein, the automaton Enigmarelle, constructed in 1900 by the American engineer Ireland, will cross the main hall of the Surrealist Exhibition at half past midnight, in force flash and force blood” but even without his appearance there was much to entertain the celebrants*’. (Altshuler, 1998, p. 124) Altshuler then describes several performances that took place during the opening of the exhibition, including Duchamp asking some children to play ball inside the exhibition space.

¹⁰⁷ This lies in direct correspondence to Taborsky’s definition of curatorial concern: ‘*meaning only becomes existent in the moment of interaction... the museum, as a public system involved with the meaning of the object, cannot confine itself to only one sign-form of the object, but must include all three. An exhibition based only on the Qualisign does not provide a situation for the discursive production of meaning which has some relevance to the object in its ‘original society’ ... if we accept that meaning is created within a discursive format, and does not come as a packaged unit of meaning from the object to the observer, then we must accept that the observer is a participant in the creation of the object’s meaning as a Signsign*’ (Taborsky, 1990) Duchamp, I suggest, created Surrealist conditions for the reading of Surrealist works so that those could be understood as part of their ‘original environment’ and so that meaning is produced discursively.

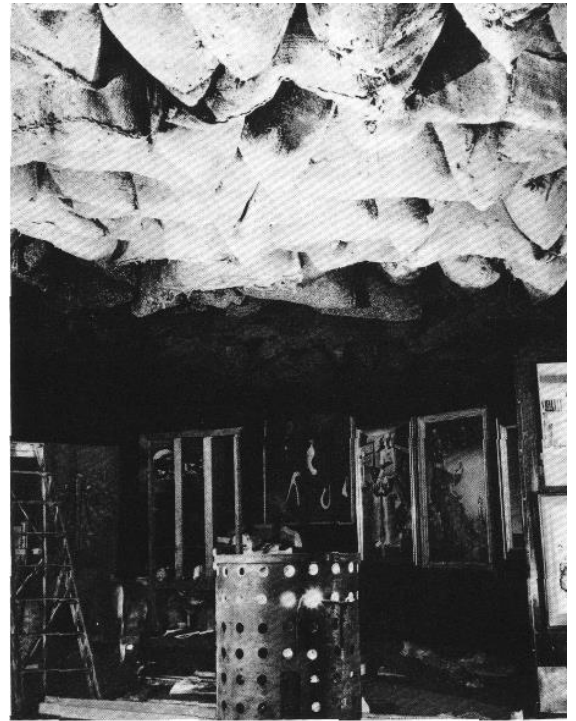
The Surrealist exhibition of 1938, with which Duchamp was affiliated as an organiser and curator, was very much seen as an extension of Surrealist practices, as Altshuler notes:

'As Surrealism had progressed in painting from the receptivity of automatism to the fabrication of dream imagery, so in living space the next step was the assembly of environments. To some degree this was done privately in various studios and residences, but it was presented to the public in grand scale at the 1938 international exposition. Breton had written in his introduction to Ernst's 1929 collage novel 'La Femme Sans Tête' that surreality depends on our wish for a complete disorientation of everything' (Altshuler, p. 122).

In this sense, the exhibition was read not as a representation of Surrealist painting from a distance, but rather as a Surrealist event in and of itself and as such, it could be said that Duchamp used the artworks presented as readymades.

It might be true that, in the context of such an exhibition, the spotlight normally focusing the viewer's attention on the 'individual', 'genius' artist is dispersed, and an ambient light instead is shed over the movement and its meaning, spreading the focus over a larger set of concerns; however, this light is also what enables the movement within the exhibition as an event. Its preference for a general interest over a focalised viewpoint which places the individual at the centre of the equation allows shapes, patterns and changing movements to be discerned; the artist, therefore, becomes part of a living, breathing system of relations, rather than an isolated producer of peculiar objects of curiosity.

In accepting the readymade as a process, an event, then the definition of the artwork as readymade functions as a means of destabilising its presence as an object,



Marcel Duchamp, *1,200 Bags of Coal*, installation view at "Internationale Exhibition of Surrealism," 1938, New York



Figure 12 - *Exposition Internationale du Surrealisme*, Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris 1938: *The Horoscope*, an object by Marcel Jean; paintings by Paalen, Penrose and Masson (ART OF THE 20TH CENTURY).

highlighting its meaning as part of a process and blurring its distinction as an object or a subject, thus positioning creative agency at the front; in the present tense, rather than in the history of the object, in the past tense.

Whether or not we agree over the importance assigned to the individual artist, is irrelevant since such exhibitions do not seem to be dismissive of the individual's creative agency: it might be true to suggest that an exhibition can be seen as a creative project in its own merit, as Altshuler notes: '*... the physical setting installations...clearly overwhelmed the works shown within them. This constituted the show's unique aspect, turning the exhibition itself into a work on a par with its content*' (Altshuler, 1998, p. 128). However, within this project, artworks were not reduced to the limitation of the platform within which they were exhibited; rather, they took part in a collaborative attempt to create a capsule of space which, in turn, could alter the behaviour of those that visited it: '*The installation designed to evoke the disquiet of repressed desire on the verge of self-recognition, the viewer placed into a world displaying its own Surrealist interpretation. The setting was appropriately nightmarish, theatrical and self-conscious*' (Altshuler, 1998, p. 133).

In this way, one could conclude that, in actual fact, the noise offered by the environment, alongside its lack of neutrality, functioned like the glass in Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even*: it allowed viewers to create a mental break between the background and the artwork itself, thus allowing the artwork to live as a separate entity, floating in a larger context.

The artworks displayed in the Surrealist Exhibition were not possessed by the context that displayed them in the same way that a work of art possesses a ready-made object and deconstructs it. In fact, any hierarchical relationship of subject/object was put into question in that space.

CONCLUSION

The space created within Duchamp's work is also a space of dumbness, much like that described in Rauschenberg's works: this space of dumbness is where the viewer is requested to question his own perceptions.¹⁰⁸ However, whilst Rauschenberg's space is the platform upon which personal, already constructed memory unfolds, the space within Duchamp's work is one that does not come to trigger memory, but which requests a further attempt to reconstruct the conditions of memory: our identifications, our view of the world and, within this world, our view of the object displayed.

Such a reconsideration of reading conditions is proposed not by the display of art, but also the display of everyday objects in their uselessness. Hence, curatorial moves, and even the *ars-poetics* of curatorial moves, do not necessarily require the representation of art-objects in order to perform themselves and reach a significant negotiation of meaning with audiences.

While the symbiotic relationship between art and curating is invaluable, I believe curators should reconsider the centrality of their concerns about art and artists, and debunk the myth of their close affiliation with art critics. It is true that those roles often collide, especially when curators are asked to explain, with the traditional notion of the label, the artefacts presented; however, at the same time, Curatorial Practice does not need to be dependent on such writing practices and representational modes. In fact, I would argue that art would benefit from the curator's freedom to explore his own paths within the creative agency invested in the displays.

The curator has an interest in preserving the creative agency embodied in the artwork because this agency is exactly what allows the artwork to be a luxury for Curatorial Practice. It constantly renews the artwork's unique status, prepares audiences for a context of rereading and reshaping, and lends itself to space of *the curatorial*. Although the motivations of artists and the curator might be identical at times, their means of operation, their medium and their interests are different, mainly because one is directed towards self-expression and the other is centred on the conditions of understanding and comprehending expression.

We can therefore reconsider the anxiety underlining the territory affirmations of our current artistic and curatorial discourses. The reading of the curator as an iconoclast

¹⁰⁸ This space of dumbness will be elaborated further in Chapter 4.

is only true to the extent that the curator challenges the definitions of art as an object and begs for its dematerialization. Dematerialization, in this regard, infers abandoning the object as a finite, enclosed, material entity and reshaping it as a flexible process that can take up many signs in the neural map representing our reality. Curatorial Practice, therefore, naturally questions art's definition in relation to the notion of an end-product or an object, and attempts to establish art's presence as performative. This, in turn, nourishes the special status of art as an oscillating inter-subjective entity.

CURATING AND ART IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Some argue that, in the face of current technological development, the art-object is losing its special status as culture progresses towards a multi-medial and multi-modal sphere of productivity that includes mass mechanical- and digital reproduction, as well as an abundance of cultural producers.¹⁰⁹ New information technologies indeed seem to be the catalysts for a fundamental shift in the relationship between producers and consumers. In the case of such new models, the border and hierarchy between the two categories are being blurred.

During the past 30 years, with the introduction of interactive media, such as online social networks, platforms for content generation, and the publication and development of interactive television, supported by surveillance mechanisms,¹¹⁰ where viewers and consumers are actively changing and influencing the content they consume, communication models have changed drastically. Such new models offer

¹⁰⁹ Communications models changed drastically in the past 30 years, from a hierarchical model that can be depicted as a pyramid, where there are few producers of knowledge, which broadcast their messages to mass audiences, to today's network, where each node potentially is both a consumer and a producer of content. For an overview of communication models, how they change and their effect on cultural identity, I have referred to: (Mead, 1934; Caughey, 1984; Gay, 1996) . The way in which communication models are altering modes of creative agency and production is well surveyed in Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Jenkins demonstrates how participatory platforms and the creation of para-texts generates the production of literary oeuvres and communication models, complicating the definition of narration and, in my view, opening up creative agency to participation. I would suggest this is the reason why the study and understanding of Curatorial Practice, in its more obscure form, is an urgent concern.

¹¹⁰ An example of such a use of interactivity is reality television and within this genre, the *Big Brother* programme can be taken as a prime example. The use of surveillance is manifested through the 24-hour documentation of the participants' actions and life, which are followed by the viewers. Further surveillance techniques are manifested through the use of the interrogation room, where Big Brother, an unknown authority who manages the programme, poses challenging questions to the participants. Viewers are, at least apparently, able to change the course of the programme by voting participants in and out of the house, affecting their chances of winning a monetary prize. *Big Brother*, and reality TV in general, may have found its inspiration in Josh Harris' project *Quiet*, which was initiated in the dawn of the millennium, where he had created a simulation of a surveillance state, via the use of new media technologies. The fundamental components of the *Big Brother* programme – the surveillance, the interrogation room and the transparent authoritative voice that manages the interaction between the different people – have all been present in the *Quiet* project. Documentation of the *Quiet* project forms part of Harris' documentary *We Live in Public* (2009) which narrates Josh Harris' life and creation.

not only a changing relationship between producer and consumer, but also alternative understandings of the relationship between product and process.

In the chapter 'Unfinished Business' in Paul Lunenfeld's *The Digital Dialectic*, the author provides a detailed account of how processes involved in production, that were once at the fringe of communication media (such as sequels, games, merchandise, and consumer reviews¹¹¹), are currently at the centre of production. This shift, Lunenfeld argues, assumes that narratives distributed on such platforms are never-ending stories and that their continuity through interactive media fundamentally changes the definition of the product as an enclosed unit of meaning (Lunenfeld, 1995). The way in which communication models are altering the modes of creative agency and production is surveyed in Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins, 2006). Jenkins demonstrates the way in which participatory platforms and the creation of para-texts generates the production of literary oeuvres and communication models, complicating the definition of narration and thus opening up creative agency to participation.

In such a model, notions like 'taste' and 'gatekeeping' and, some would argue, even curating and art themselves, have become obsolete, owing to the fact that, in a non-hierarchical system such as the one reflected through the increased interactivity of communication media, notions that have been fundamental in the evaluation of authorship, authority and power, such as, 'the original' and 'the authentic',¹¹² are becoming increasingly irrelevant¹¹³. This means that the cultural status quo, which has been conducted and preserved by a powerful few in the past, is now giving way to new forms of judgement. Within this, institutions of power are adopting alternative political strategies in the shaping of such cultural and ideological standards.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Lunenfeld defines this kind of post-production activities, involving the participation of audiences as 'para-text'.

¹¹² Authenticity here refers both to authorship and to direct interaction with the original object. In relation to authorship, authenticity suggests the genuineness of the maker; an art-object will be evaluated by the success and establishment of its individual author. In this sense, the art-object is authentic if one can prove it has been made by a specific individual. If this cannot be proven, the artefact will be assumed as 'non-authentic' or forged, and its value would decrease dramatically. Authenticity here also refers to the possibility of being in direct physical contact with the original object rather than a copy or a simulation. The problem of the authenticity of the original is further analysed and reviewed by Ross Parry in *Recoding the Museum Meaning* (Parry, 2007). The fifth chapter is dedicated to the authenticity of the museum visit, and the problems the museum is facing with the digitalization of collections. Further analysis of the problems with authenticity in online curating will also be discussed further in the fourth chapter of this research.

¹¹³ Here, I would argue that the irrelevancy of such notions might or might not unfold itself as the dissemination of such models continues. It might well be that, with the development of alternative communication models, one will find a nostalgic attraction to 'the original' and 'the authentic', as a means of refuting the common modes of content consumption.

¹¹⁴ Here, one could bring up the recent policy change in the UK in which local councils do not initiate the active development of cultural projects, but instead offer services of support to entrepreneurs within local communities interested in initiating such work. This participatory approach, which withdraws from

At the same time, the debate surrounding a crisis in art and the overall sustainability of its special status in the face of changes in communication models¹¹⁵ has had several incarnations throughout the history of art;¹¹⁶ until now, art's status – and within it, even the status of the art-object – showed incredible resilience to changing cultural definitions in ethics, aesthetics, ideologies and economic structures.¹¹⁷ In an interpretation of art as process, there is a potential to understand art forms as they express themselves online, without descending into confusion about art's definitions.

Similarly, the implications of such changes for Curatorial Practice and the conflicts that curators face with the introduction of new communication models (as they were presented in the introduction to this research) seem to revolve around the definition of art as an object and curating as a practice that involves the preservation and presentation of objects. However, the analysis suggested in this chapter suggests that Curatorial Practice is interested in objects only to the degree that it can refer to them in the process of their dematerialization;¹¹⁸ that is to say, Curatorial Practice is interested in form rather than objects. Eventually, penetrating to the core of the practice, one will find there is no essential difference between online and offline art-objects from the perspective of *the curatorial*.

taking a responsibility for the quality and ethics of such cultural production, is problematic, to say the least. It also has implications for the funding of cultural workers and might add to the discussions around the precarious nature of such labour and the governance of new modes of what is currently termed 'cognitive capitalism' (Moulier-Boutang, 2011) and (Peters & Bulut, 2011)

¹¹⁵ In fact, I would suggest that the changing definitions of what might be considered art is one of the strategies that gives the art-object such resilience. Like a chameleon, it seems to adapt itself to ever-changing communication technologies and media.

¹¹⁶ Some of the important contributions to this discussion are Walter Benjamin and his famous article, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (Benjamin, 2008); Roland Barthes' 'The Death of the Author' (Barthes, 1977) and Fredric Jameson's 'Post-modernism, or the Logic of Late Capitalism' (Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Post-Contemporary Interventions), 1991). More recent contributions to this discourse in relations to digital technologies include Bill Nichols' 'The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems' (Nichols, 2003) and a recent talk given by David Jay Bolter at ISEA (Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts) in 2011 'The Digital Plenitude and the End of Art' (Bolter, 2011).

¹¹⁷ All very much influenced by new communication technologies.

¹¹⁸ This tendency of the 'dematerialization of the art-object' has also been suggested in previous art historical accounts of processes that occur in the shift between what we term 'modern' and 'post-modern' art. The most notable figure within this discourse is Lucy Lippard, whose *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art-Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973) offers a renewed perspective that has set the ground for understanding conceptual art and the gradual de-centralization of objects as 'art'. However, such tendencies could be traced to the very beginning of the modern movement, and one could claim that the dematerialization of the art-object started with the 'dematerialization' of the observed object in artistic movements such as Impressionism and Cubism, which had started a movement towards abstraction. Before art as an object disappeared, the relationship between art and objects, which was understood mostly as a relationship between the 'representational' and 'the real', needed to be undermined. Once this relationship had been redefined, a natural movement towards abstraction, through the 'fractalization' of the object, and, eventually language itself, was inevitable. In the context of this research, as explained introduction, non-object art refers mainly to such tendencies in art that seek to avoid 'the object' altogether and, more specifically, the object's position as a central part of the work of the artists.

The immateriality that is at the core of the curatorial object is the aperture through which we can start to rethink new media art, collaborative- and socially engaged practices, digital interfaces, and virtual realities within which art no longer functions in a dichotomised universe of subject/object relationships. Through this analysis, a discussion concerning the role of the curator in such spaces can begin, highlighting the 'real' problems this practice faces, which are not those of preservation, conservation, collection and categorization but, rather, how space, context and the direction of attention is utilized within Curatorial Practice to create cultural identity and meaning.

CURATING IN SPACE

The previous chapters suggested a shift in the discourse of Curatorial Practice. Focusing on the ontology of curating, the arguments repositioned Curatorial Practice in relation to objects and confirmed that, within the framework of *the curatorial*, the main concern for Curatorial Practice is not the organization and categorization of objects, nor is it to define objects as 'art'. Rather, Curatorial Practice is concerned with the interrelations between platforms for reading, and the way the conditions they stipulate might change the meaning produced. Accordingly, the media of Curatorial Practice have been redefined as *space* and *context*.

This final chapter seeks to complicate these conclusions further, by questioning the dichotomist coupling of 'meaning' and 'materiality', whilst also questioning the definition of *space* and *context*: What is the historical relationship between Curatorial Practice and space? How does this perspective allow us to define space in the eyes of the curator? For what purpose do curators use space, and how does it perform its curatorial role in the construction and negotiation of meaning?

Whilst this chapter will touch upon phenomenologist theories – especially those that seek to examine the interrelations between the physical and the mental realms of experience – it does not intend to deliver a philosophical perspective on the definition of *space*, nor is its interest in arriving at definite answers that stipulate standards for the curator's activity; rather, it seeks to open up a discussion that would allow the further development of curatorial thought, especially in our current age, saturated with new communication paradigms that require us to change our perspective and be attentive to the way in which meaning is constructed in new ways.

The relationship between Curatorial Practice and space, in its physical, social and mental interpretations, is a vast inquiry, especially if we accept that the history of Curatorial Practice can be stretched all the way to pre-historic attempts to construct meaning through display in common worship places, and even more so if we think of how the extended field¹ of Curatorial Practice can be defined through various forms of negotiating meanings and creating contexts for the construction of social categories.

¹ Irit Rogoff's 'The Expanded Field' (Rogoff, 2013) resists the definition of the art field as a multiplicity and adopts a model of epistemological crisis to reassess the boundaries and frameworks of Curatorial Practice. The expanded field, therefore, is not the expanded field of the art world, which may include further activities such as cultural activism but a means of locating other points of departure for thinking about Curatorial Practice from the edges of its operational definitions.

Hence, this chapter is not an attempt to encompass this vast area of study in full; rather, it focuses on certain aspects and histories of this relationship; namely, the relationship between the curatorial space and the construction of memory through the notion of the exhibition. What had guided me through the choice of texts and points of focus for this chapter relates to my practice and the questions and understandings that have been reached within the curatorial experimentations I have taken through the course of this research.

The case study to support this chapter presents and analyses the conception and creation of VAINS,² an online platform for the dissemination and interpretation of internet-based artworks from the Computer Fine Arts Collection. In a way, VAINS aims to experiment with the questions that the *NETworking* exhibition at the HMA raised, and in this sense, this chapter closes the circle and returns to the point of departure from which I embarked on this journey.

VAINS became an experimental platform for thinking about digital curation, developed in collaboration with artist and programmer Dr Eleanor Dare and myself. Throughout the process of creating the different tools for VAINS, we approached some of the questions concerning what an online curatorial platform might constitute and how meaning can be constructed and negotiated in a realm of non-space and non-object, attempting to offer practical solutions and spaces for re-thinking both curating and computer-based art.

The VAINS project offers alternative conditions for browsing and viewing artworks online. In an attempt to avoid the imitation of Euclidian and geometrical space, as well as linear constructs of representation, the VAINS tools seek to explore both what space and time could mean in online context, and what alternatives are providing a platform for the performance of *the curatorial*.

One of the questions that led the research done with VAINS, was already formulated in the previous chapter and stems from a need in understanding what constitutes 'context' online, on to put it in a different way, what stipulates and effect the conditions for reading an artwork on an internet browser. The assumption made at

² 'Visual Art Interpretation and Navigation System'. The project was co-developed with artist and programmer Dr Eleanor Dare and with the invaluable support of the Goldsmiths Digital Media Centre in collaboration with the Art and Computing department led by Prof Janis Jeffries at the time. VAINS is defined an ongoing research project whose core purpose is the extension I of the experimental phase of the system. This case-study offers a temporary arrest in this research process and the conclusions drawn in this text are intermediate conclusions fit for the specificities of its time. We (Dare and myself) contend that as technology further develops and is increasingly involved in our day-to-day activity, increasingly integrated with our bodily gestures and even with our bodies, further tools would need to be explored and played with in order to negotiate users' agency, presence and criticality when interacting with such systems. VAINS, hence, suggests that a research system for researching curatorial innovation online with such values and principles in mind is a requirement in the field.

the beginning of this research frames search and discovery processes, or differently put, the journey we go through in discovering and accessing content, as the intellectual and emotional context for the artworks reading³. Hence, the interfaces developed for VAINS are initially alternative search, discovery and recommendation tools.

In developing those, our first premise was to offer an alternative to engagement based on text and the written word. 'search words', 'keywords' and 'tags' – all of which are the custom way of categorising and accessing content online, were developed in relation to the internet's history as primarily a military, scientific and professional platform for exchanging relevant information. Such interfaces were designed to fit the aforementioned contexts and are therefore based on an image of rationality and distance from the content provided. Notions such as simplicity, efficiency and objectivity are manifested in the designs of most search engines such as Google and Yahoo.

However, as in the case of the development of any other mass communication media such as print, telephone, radio and television, as their use is propagated and popularised, their function and the role those instruments take in our lives change. Indeed it is still used in professional contexts, however since the introduction of web 2.0 and the proliferation of social networks and interactive content generation and distribution, the internet had become a central locus of social activity and entertainment. Interestingly, though, interface design had changed very little and is still largely based on the aforementioned model which allows little reflection on other modes of using the internet which are more affective and not solely related to the efficient retrieval of data or information⁴.

VAINS sought to differentiate itself from such design-trajectories by experimenting with innovative search paradigms that avoid the written word as the pivot around which user experience is constructed. With this goal in mind we developed visual,

³ A full analysis of how we have reached this assumption and how this has been further verified by users' interaction is offered in the case-study itself.

⁴ There is much to say about the way these interface-designs condition the social relations that are formed online and the way such unity in design principles challenges the distinction between leisure and working time spent in front of the screen. Discourses around the meaning of labour in the digital age, which will be approached later on in this chapter, may benefit from thinking about the production of spaces and their design online as a core element in their criticism of such tendencies. I contend that the way we think of our leisure hours and working hours is very much dependent on interface design and that such designs should be considered more seriously than they normally are. The reader might want to note that the production of social space and the categories that are suggested by urban and architectonic design can be compared to interface design online when reading the works by Lefebvre and Virilio presented in this chapter. Urban planning, architecture, exhibitions and online interaction tools can all be put under the title of 'interface design' or 'social space construction'. All these can inform and renovate interface design online and suggest solutions to what seem to be dead-end problems within these discourses. A further development of these points will be offered further along this chapter.

multi-sensory and intuitive tools for navigating art online. We believe that the correlation between different images, and the engagement of the sensory realm in encountering an artwork is more fit as a context for the appreciation of such content, which is rarely based on verbal or purely intellectual engagement. As such it requires a different amount of time (or a different time-perception) and a different kind of attention than what one would use when looking for a Wikipedia article for example.

The tools developed for VAINS used a core database of collaborative filtering results which formed the basis of the curatorial procedure. Within this process over 200 participants in the course of a 6 months assisted us in categorising over 35 artworks from the CFAC in relation to icons and images we have created. This database is the surface upon which other curatorial tools were examined and developed.

Alternative navigation tools are referred to as 'access applications' included search engines using haptic images/icons, sounds, textures, games and tasks, personalised questionnaires and emotional enquiry. In the latest development in VAINS search tools as presented in this thesis is the Neural Art Navigation tool, using EEG readings from users responses to artworks in order to predict and choose the next object of their curiosity, seemingly in accordance to users' 'mood' or mind-set.

All these alternative tools were further tested by users. Their experience was evaluated through in-depth interviews and comparative questionnaires that were given to them before and after engaging with the system. The questionnaires looked to assist users in detailing their experiences and assist us in understanding and analysing their responses. Our purpose was to find out how the use of such alternative routes for discovering content online may change the ways in which users engage and read such content. The conclusions of some of those experiments are attended in the VAINS case study.

In the context of introducing the forthcoming chapter, one conclusion drawn from these experiments is interesting: the relationship between users and artworks changed and varied depending on the technologies and the tools that they have used. This highlighted a renewed understanding of the relationship between users and their technologies, and more specifically, the relationship between technology and users' sense of physical presence and awareness to their bodies. Here it might be useful to mention that many of the questions that propel the arguments in the forthcoming chapter were raised during experiments with VAINS. Accordingly, many of the conclusions which are rationalised and contextualised in the context of this chapter were firstly reached in the context and as a result of VAINS development. Hence, this chapter further underlines the centrality of practice as a research methodology into

curating and its meaning. Practice is an indispensable supporting pillar that informs and generates thinking-processes presented in this chapter and throughout this thesis.

VAINS was developed with the user, rather than information or content, at the centre of its enquiry. This approach is the core principle which had allowed spaces of *the curatorial* to reveal themselves in the core of experimenting with such systems. Within this search for spaces of *the curatorial* engaging the user's agency was paramount. In this sense VAINS draws on the suggested theory or curatorial methodology presented in the previous chapters of this research and rests on the expanded history of curating proposed in this study.

The experimentation conducted with VAINS, together with further projects, which will be discussed here, allowed me to adopt an alternative approach to curating, which is engaged in processes of constructing and de-constructing spaces. Within these, the notion of a means-to an-end, object or product, is seen as marginal in relation to the ongoing development of ever-changing platforms. These understandings, which are part of the practice-based approach taken in this research, inform much of the thought process and choices that underline the analysis offered in this chapter.

ARRANGING KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY IN SPACE

MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

Display⁵, as a mechanism located at the heart of curatorial constructs, plays a seminal role in the practice of curating; As part of my premise to separate curating from its operational manifestations and dissect it in this journey of revealing *the curatorial*, I find a need to examine the relationship between curating and the physical space of exhibition halls, galleries, city squares etc.

In this context, the exhibition is read as the construction of a public, communal and social space. Within such a space, the construction of meaning and identity is performed by a multiplicity of 'I's'.⁶ The communal 'reading' of meaning, as it is

⁵ The use of the word 'display' may seem to frame Curatorial Practice in the realm of the 'visual'; however, it also acknowledges that, even though the visual takes a primary role in our cultural, sociological and psychological constructs, the notion of display could be expanded to include other sensual realms. The idea of curating beyond display is touched upon in the first chapter through the analysis of Leire Vergara (2013) and Bridget Crone (2013). While this topic is beyond the scope of this research, it is a question that seems to evoke an array of new possibilities for curating, and will be approached in future research.

⁶ Irit Rogoff, in 'We - Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations' (2004), offers a subjective journey into the experience of being part of this multiplicity of 'I's' within the exhibition space, and describes the formation of the plural and the common in the manifestation of curatorial practices.

constructed through display, allows a narrative, or a knowledge construct, to become a shared one – similar to certain aspects of ritual in religious practices.

The development of the New Museology generated a whole array of discussions concerning the role and operation of museums, especially in relation to their recognition as institutions of great political power in the definition and construction of communities and identities. Finally, the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums already acknowledges the museum's 'community' as part of the institution's mission statement, and asserts the importance of representing such communities and maintaining a coherent set of relationships that frame the means through which their heritage is preserved, negotiated and displayed. Within such contemporary discourses, the discussions surrounding the definition of the term 'community' and the relationship between museums and communities is a prolific topic. A number of prominent ontologies exploring this issue from different viewpoints inform my approaches to my practice and research.

Museums and their Communities (Watson, 2007) examines the general history of the museum and its role in constructing historical narratives and communal identities, as well as the different strategies employed in such operations. The quest of this selection of essays is to use those mechanisms in the construction of more equal and neutral representations of such communities, which are perceived as peripheral to the ethos of the Western, white-male-dominant culture. The sensibilities and complexities within such a premise are explored through a variety of case studies, including the representation of Hiroshima at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington (Luke, 2007), debates around the conservation of Nazi death camps as museums (Bordage, 2007), the 'Inspiration Africa!' project at the Horniman Museum in South London (which sought to debate both tangible and intangible heritage and its presentation within the museum hall in an attempt to promote equality for people with disabilities) (Golding, 2007), and many others. Each of the case studies and essays in this book examines the construction of heritage and identity from a different angle, offering a variety of curatorial tools with which to engage and think critically about curating as the site of the communal.

Museum and Source Communities (Peers & Brown, 2003) examines the direct relationships museums aim to initiate with their source communities,⁷ highlighting

⁷ 'Source communities' refers to communities from which collections of objects were initially taken to form the museum collection. This process has not been devoid of violence throughout the years. One of the examples given in the book, and which personally touched me, is Gerald T. Conaty's account of Glenbow Museum's journey towards establishing a relationship of trust in the presentation of the Blackfoot people (a tribe of indigenous people that lived across the US and Canada) (2003). The process also included returning certain objects of ritual to the tribe for their original use, after such objects had

the challenges faced by Curatorial Practice in its attempt to establish trust, and the difficulties of translating Curatorial Practice to fieldwork and involving communities actively in the construction of their communal memory. At the same time, the book also touched upon the challenges of translating fieldwork back to frameworks of display.

Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (2003), look closely at a number of case studies that position the museum at the centre of the production of social and political conflict. Detlef Hoffman's article 'The German Art Museum and the History of the Nation' (Hoffman, 2003) tracks the history of constructing a national narrative for the German people through national collections, displays and representations, accounting for the shattering of its represented image in the Second World War. Ariella Azoulay's article 'With Open Doors: Museums and Historical Narratives in Israel's Public Space' (Azoulay, 2003) studies the state of Israel and how it is represented and rooted in the histories of the Jewish people, examining the narrative offered to the nation's expanded history by the state's permanent displays and temporary exhibitions.⁸ In conclusion, the book seeks to demonstrate the political centrality and importance of curatorial institutions in the construction of historical narratives and common perceptions.

been confiscated and put in the museum collection. The analysis of objects of ritual in Chapter 2 highlights why returning such an object to be used in its original, symbolic function, is a curatorial act that resurrects the memory of an inter-subjectivity through the presence of an object. The story told in this article gave me a glimpse into the problematics of the political situation within which I am embedded as a curator working in the state of Israel. While a few projects in Israel attempt to approach issues of co-existence, commemoration and renegotiate the Palestinian and the Israeli identity (such are the work of Beit Hagefen, Centre of Arab-Jewish Culture; the work of the Umm el-Fahem Gallery and the work of curators Maayan Amir and Ruti Sela in their various projects in ex-territorial waters; Ariella Azoulay, previously mentioned in Chapter 1, should also be mentioned here for her diverse activities in this field), the distance from the Glenbow's story allowed me to take a fresh position in relation to my own practice in the city of Haifa. Reading this article had allowed me to visualize the possibility of such a resurrection of agency through the curatorial act.

⁸ These two articles are discussed together here not as a matter of coincidence. While reading the book, the similarity between the ideological construction of the Zionist identity, and the strategies used in the construction of the German national identity, struck me. As the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, the confrontation with such a similarity meant that I had to acknowledge how my own identity had been constructed through curatorial platforms of different sorts. The glimpse I was offered into the use of such strategies and their effectiveness in the architecture of my own subjectivity, and the way in which I understand myself in relation to the Israeli's ultimate other- the Palestinian, had allowed me to widen my perspective on the different forms Curatorial Practice takes, outside the halls of the exhibition space and the museum. I have started to understand the scape of my home city, Haifa, in a completely different way. While reading this book, I was in the course of collecting materials for the Haifa Project (which will be discussed later) through a series of interviews with local artists. Throughout this fieldwork, I realized how listening, silence and presence have profound roles in exposing spaces of *the curatorial* where meaning and landscape are reformed. In one of my interviews with senior artist Abed Abdi, he told me the story of the 1948 war from the point of view of a Palestinian young adult. The space of listening and recording in itself allowed the emergence of a space where both our identities were deconstructed and reconstructed in the course of this mutual remembering. This experience resonated deeply with the reading of these two case studies and became one of the formative moments that led me to dedicate much of my attention to providing such platforms of listening when planning the Haifa-Hackney Residency.

Art and Its Publics (MacClellan, 2003) can be considered a bridge between contemporary Curatorial Practice discourses and those presented by New Museology. The book explores the role of art presentation in the definition of museum audiences and the prevalent attitude to representing communal identities in the space of the postmodern museum. Christa Clarke's article 'From Theory to Practice: Exhibiting African Art in the Twenty First Century' (Clarke, 2013) approaches the sensitivities of displaying the 'other' and the probable impossibility of correcting the distorted narrative around historical attempts to represent African culture. 'Reframing Public Art: Audiences Use, Interpretation and Appreciations' (Senie, 2003), differentiates between the definition of audiences and of communities in relation to public art practices, with such groups seemingly detaching themselves from any localised concern.⁹ Nevertheless, the essay suggests that such a relationship to site and locality is still present, even in these so-called 'neutral' attempts, and asserts the role of the public artworks in the unification of identities through marking sites and constructing communal memory.

In the history of independent art curating, one finds similar examples that reflect on the exhibition's role in forming cultural and social hierarchies. To trace the roots of this discourse in specific relation to art-related Curatorial Practices, the exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, curated in 1989 by Jean-Hubert Martin at the Centre Pompidou, is a key event that marked the ways in which a corrective representation of the art world was attempted. The premise of this exhibition was to present both Western and African art history in a globalized context, blurring the definitions of centre and periphery.

⁹ The notion of the 'public space' and the space of the city form an important part of cultural life in Haifa, my city of origin – the locus of most of the curatorial projects I initiate. Wadi Nisnas, part of the old city of Haifa, has been itself a space for years of curatorial intervention which sought to occupy the ancient streets with the stories of conflict, resistance and co-existence. The streets of Wadi Nisnas, are adorned with public sculptures and public artworks that had been left there over the course of years of festivals and art events, and are a remarkable monument to curatorial attempts to reconstruct the memory of local communities, without much success. The very notion of understanding that art audiences and the relevant communities are not one and the same thing, and the understanding of such public art projects from a point of view that considers communities rather than audiences, has allowed me to open up a new perspective through which to critically examine municipal conservation efforts aside the municipal negligence of other parts of Haifa's old city. Highlighting the detachment of art initiatives from the communities that live and work in Haifa has informed several choices made in the organization of the *Coming Community* exhibition (curated with Yeala Hazut at the Haifa Museum in 2011); namely, the inclusion of the local community of artists in the exhibition, despite our curatorial concerns for the 'artistic quality' of the works presented. Interestingly, the Block Group, one of the local artistic group invited to intervene in the exhibition space, chose to construct a broken fountain, identified with the typical community gathering space in Haifa (Haifa is known for its numerous fountains). The fountain that had been created specifically for the exhibition looked like a deserted construction site, where paper boats were allowed to sink into the heavy cement of its architecture, reflecting exactly on the role of public spaces (the museum included) in the social life of a city, and the discrepancies that shown in the attempt of the local art museum to be *en vogue* with global tendencies in aesthetics and contemporary art, which rarely reflect on the museum's local presence.

Within contemporary curatorial discourses, again, the number of discussions, essays and examples is vast, with discourses constantly being updated and renegotiated on the pages of books and magazines dedicated to this topic. With the rise of collaborative artistic and Curatorial Practices in the first decade of the 21st Century, and with the proliferation of socially engaged and community-based art practices, this area of discourse is growing exponentially.

To name only a few key publications that have informed the thought and practice of this research, Hal Foster's 'The Artist as Ethnographer' in *The Return of the Real* (Foster, 1996) and Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 1998) frame the development of relational and socially engaged art practices within the history of performance and participatory practices, forming the background for certain concerns on the blurred boundaries between art and other professions.

These two central writers have also informed the discourse of Curatorial Practice in the field of art, naturally relating to the role of the curator in negotiating the framework for such practices, and the ethical issues involved in their representation. The interplay between Curatorial Practice and art, in this context, is a fragile one, marking one of the cross-territorial aspects of art and Curatorial Practice as examined in the previous chapter.

In a more local context, within the UK, The Whitechapel Gallery,¹⁰ and its commitment to the investigation of its relationship with the community in which it is embedded, propelled a rich discussion on the topic, the conclusions of which can be read in a collection of recorded conversations between curators and educational programmers in the gallery, published in the book *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics*. In these conversations, the professionals working at the gallery sought to redefine the

¹⁰ The Whitechapel Gallery is, in fact, a prime example of the entangled relationship between curatorial institutions and the communities within which they are embedded. The public gallery, which started off as a community centre and a library, is deeply rooted in its history and relationship to the changing nature of the local communities of East London. This is reflected through Whitechapel's archive and the curatorial work that is invested in its research and representation, an archive which documents the life of the local communities through history. The gallery as an institution is deeply committed to the preservation and expansion of local memory through the archive. Their commitment is apparent in a series of events, exhibitions and institutional changes, both subtle and more profound. On the subtle end, the gallery commissions socially engaged projects that comment directly on memory construction and community work. Two prime examples are Janet Cardiff's sound piece *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*, 1999, which presents a guided audio tour of the gallery's surrounding streets, offering alternative readings of the sights and sounds of the area, and Melanie Manchot's *Celebration (Cyprus Street)*, 2009, where the artist worked with a local community to explore the notion of shared identities in the construction of urban space. Both projects were commissioned and supported by the gallery (Cardiff's work is still available as part of the permanent gallery programme, and was initiated in collaboration with the Artangel organization). More fundamental changes include the recent refurbishment of the old library space into an exhibition hall that explores the memory imbued in constructs of knowledge production like the library, the archive and the gallery. Currently showing is Kader Attia's *Continuum of Repair: The Light of Jacobs Ladder*, a version of his installation at the 13th *Documenta* in Kassel, Germany (2012). The installation includes the presentation of a full library/archive/collection of books, documents and objects that imply racist interpretations of indigenous people in juxtaposition with medical books depicting the horrors of physical deformation as result of war. .

term 'community', the differences between a community and a network of visitors, and the conditions for the construction of communal identities around the gallery. In their discussions, they emphasize the direct influence of the gallery on the urban space within which it is located, and analyse cases in which the gallery as an institution attempts to act as a mediator between communities and other regional institutions and funding organizations.¹¹

INEVITABLY CONSTRUCTING MEMORY AND IDENTITY: MEMORY CONSTRUCTION AND THE NOTION OF COMMUNITY IN MY OWN PRACTICE

In my own practice, it took me a while to acknowledge the responsibility that I have, even as a curator that operates on the periphery of both artistic and Curatorial Practice's vision. In fact, I have found a renewed interest in the peripheral as a means of re-reading the centre. In retrospect, I can see that, as time passed and my knowledge and self-awareness deepened, so my practice become more localized, creating a kind of intimacy which reflects my own hopes and my memory of the communal spaces of which I am part. The projects and exhibitions I have organized thus inevitably expose this tendency, and provide a platform through which I explore the relationship between location, identity, memory and Curatorial Practice, both on the localized, intimate level of relationship to the urban space of Haifa (and within it, the art museum) and on a more abstract level (permitted through the development of the online platform VAINS, presented separately as an independent case study).

¹¹ The idea that the presence of a museum or a gallery within a social space can change and reconstruct the physical manifestation of the urban landscape through curatorial interventions that do not remain within the constraints of art- representation within the gallery and the museum halls, and more specifically the example of the Whitechapel Gallery, informed part of the research I have initiated and carried out within the Haifa artistic community. In a meeting with Nayia Yiakoumaki, the archive curator of the Whitechapel Gallery in 2011, we discussed the power of the archive as a means of resurrecting memory and reconstructing the urban space. The tensions between the urban space as a mental reflection of the memories that construct it and the physicality and materiality of the streets, and the ways in which these condition each other, are exposed through the archive of the Whitechapel Gallery, allowing the urban space to stretch itself beyond the constraints of representation – be it a mental representation through subjective memory, or a memory transformed into history through the use of photography and archival materials. Maybe through the construction and the curation of the Haifa-Art-Forum archive, I was attempting to reconstruct the puzzle of Haifa, in my own memory of climbing up the hill and running down the slopes of Mount Carmel, desperately looking for a sign of my presence between the stones that make up the pavement of this city which existed long before me and will persist long after me, but which exists only within me at this moment in time.

The exhibition *The Coming Community*, curated in collaboration with Yeala Hazut at the Haifa Museum of Art as part of the Winter Exhibition cluster of 2011, sought to understand ways contemporary artists reflect on the construction of communities in an age where 'place' is not necessarily defined by its geographical borders but around notions of common interest or ideological proximity. How do such new community constructs change the way we see social space, and the geographical definitions of our identities? How do different identities interlock, collapse into one another and negate one another, and what sort of individual emerges from such inherent plural identity?



Figure 2 - On the upper left, Curator Yeala Hazut and curator and manager of the NMC, Ilana Tenenbaum, dance at the DJ-led party at the opening event of the Coming Community Exhibition. On the right, the museum front yard at the time of the opening. The bottom images are from the closing events of the exhibition, which included a 'give-and-take' and crafts market.



Figure 2 - Images from the *Coming Community* Exhibition at the Haifa Museum of Art, featuring the works of Cao Fei (top left), Brody Condon, The Block Group and Vik Jacobson-Frid (top right); Brody Condon and Eli Gur-Arie (middle left), Rod Dickinson (middle right), Assi Meshulam (bottom left) and Sharone Lifschitz (bottom right).

The exhibition explored the role of rhetoric, ritual and imagery in the construction of communities, many of which function across online platforms and the sense of connectivity that they enhance. Within this exhibition, the role of the museum and its relation to the urban space and its population has been explored through a series of

events that engaged local communities in activities that sought to underline the interrelations and frictions of identity in the Haifa urban space¹² as well as the representation of local contemporary practitioners within the curatorial premise of the exhibition.¹³

The exhibition and catalogue text, and the related artist's talks, museum tours and discussions with the lead curatorial team of the museum at the time of the exhibition,¹⁴ sought to create a dialogue regarding the museum's role in relation to local communities, and seems to have managed to change preliminary attitudes about the museum's local identity.¹⁵

The Coming Community exhibition was informed by, and acted as, a further catalyst in the process of long-term field research led by Yeala Hazut and myself, exploring the artistic community of Haifa's urban space in an effort to define the unique voice of local art practices. The exhibition marked a stepping-stone in our efforts to propel

¹² Such events included a party in the museum's foyer at the opening of the exhibition, inviting local communities to participate, and an open market, where all were welcome to exchange personal goods in return for other goods. As the Haifa Museum of Art is located at a strategic geographical position, in the interface between five major cultural divisions in the city: orthodox Jews, Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, The Russian and the Ethiopian community, every open social event is a platform for the exposure of the different cultural narratives and personal ideologies that dominate different parts of the city. Despite the strategic location of the museum, the majority of museum visitors came from other parts of the city, where the population is dominated by Jewish, Western-European identity, hence these events were one of the only opportunities where the museum itself functioned as an intermediate space of meeting.

¹³ Local contemporary artists have not been presented in the museum halls since its inception as a museum of modern art in the 1980s. The local artistic community refrained from participating in museum activities as a protest against the ill-presentation of the local artistic community as 'peripheral' to the Israeli art world, whose centre is defined as Tel Aviv. This was the first in a series of exhibitions in the museums that later attempted to examine in a closer fashion the responsibility the museum has in representing local communities.

¹⁴ Before that exhibition opened, during the time the exhibition was presented and, to an extent, after it was closed, the museum's curatorial strategies were revisited with the changing of the museum's chief curator (Tami-Katz-Freiman completed her cadence at the end of 2010; Ruti Direktor took the chief curator position in Winter 2011). Hazut and myself saw the *Coming Community* exhibition as an opportunity to revisit museum policies, according to which we have worked for over five years in our capacity as assistant curators, curators and educators. *The Coming Community* sought to prove that a different connection with the local community is possible and that the museum should be engaged in community activity, not only through its education department (which had an abundance of outreach and educational programmes directed at a variety of communities in Haifa) but also through its curatorial programme. We have achieved a momentum of raised awareness and, since our intervention, the museum has become tri-lingual (including Arabic as one of the formal language of the museum publications and labels) and a general shift in the museum's premise to engage with local communities can be sensed through the exhibition programme curated thereafter. Another example that could be seen as a result of this thinking-tank is the project *Haifa Walks*, curated in 2011 by Ruti Direktor. Each weekend, for a course of 6 months, a chosen community member (several local artists participated in this project as well) offered a guided tour along the paths that had carved his/her memory of the slopes of Haifa. A map of all the walks was published as a means of archiving the paths that individuals had marked within the contested urban space. This was one of the projects discussed during the strategic positioning meeting that was held at that time. For more information about the Haifa Walks and the adjacent exhibition, *Formally Speaking: Lines Made by Walking*, visit:

<http://www.hma.org.il/Museum/Templates/showpage.asp?DBID=1&TMID=841&LNGID=1&FID=1739>

¹⁵ *The Coming Community: In Search of Community in Contemporary Art* catalogue text offers a more thorough overview of the exhibition and its context, including its relationship to Giorgio Agamben's text that bears the same name (Agamben, 2007), (Weinerg & Hazut, 2011). Accessible in Hebrew through Erev Rav Online Art Magazine: <http://erev-rav.com/archives/12679>.

local dialogues and discourses concerning the position of the Haifa art world in relation to the national definitions of what might constitute art.¹⁶

The research culminated in a series of round-table discussions, involving a variety of creative practitioners in the city, and in the collaborative effort to construct art events that would concentrate a large sum of cultural activity in an effort to increase the visibility of local artistic practices. Our research culminated in characterizing the unique fabric of the Haifa art-world, which seems to lie in the history of Haifa as a left-wing, working class city.

Artists in Haifa seem more inspired by event-based and participatory practices than by object-based, commercial art practices. Back then (2009-2012), such practices did not take a central position in Israel's art discourses.

The round table discussions and the meet-ups between different practitioners in the cultural field of Haifa led to a series of white-night art events and the production of a local art map that includes the different institutions actively participating in the production of event-based and socially engaged art practices, including the Hadar and Nave Yossef cultural Centres, the Agaf Gallery at the Port area, the Nemala studio, The Pyramid Centre of Contemporary Art and artistic interventions in the public space, such as the Herzl Underground pedestrian passage.



Figure 3 - Images from the Block Group Installation of the deserted fountain, working on the *Coming Community* Exhibition, Haifa Museum of Art

¹⁶ In the local dialogues at the time of the research (2009-2012), ideas around relational aesthetics, community-based art practices and local curatorial engagement were not positioned at the centre of art discourses and debates in Israel. The research had led us to believe that the focal point of local artistic practices is process-based art projects that do not put the art-object at the centre of their creation but seek engagement with the local civilians of the city in projects such as street parties, art festivals, open studios, publishing platforms etc. As such, local artists did not fall into the categories of art definitions in the country and have been left outside of the central representational platforms for art in Israel. This has started to change slightly in recent years, thanks partly to curatorial activity, which encouraged the self-definition of the local artists and their voice to be heard in national media and art-related platforms.

In our attempts to position those local, socially engaged art practices within international artistic discourse, the Haifa-Hackney Artists Residency has been proposed as a means of creating both an educational and a curatorial platform for the exploration of local talent, based on an international exchange with Hackney, one of Haifa's 'twin cities' in the UK. Hackney offers a model for gentrification processes, based largely on cultural development and artistic activity, and provides working spaces for artists in a variety of projects.¹⁷ Hackney Council emphasizes its work with communities through the activities of the Hackney Museum¹⁸ (a partner in the residency's programme), while Haifa provides an accomplished system of accommodating cultural diversity and reaching out to communities at risk of social exclusion.¹⁹ The relationship between the two councils provides opportunities for knowledge and skill exchange in the investigation of socially engaged art practices.

The international exchange aims to assist young artists in defining their practice in an alternative context, within which Haifa is a cultural periphery as long as it compares itself to Tel-Aviv (Israel's 'cultural capital'), but can be seen as an alternative cultural centre in relation to other ideologies and perspectives that derive from a more general, international scope that does not focus solely on



Figure 4 - street art events organized in Haifa as part of the Holiday of the Holidays Festival, December 2011.



Figure 6 – part of the Haifa Art Map, created as a result of the round table discussions of the Haifa Art Forum, initiated by Yeala Hazut and myself. The Map was issued as part of the *Holiday of the Holidays Festival 2011* accompanying the exhibition catalogue of *Certified Copy*, an art exhibition that extended from the Beit Hagefen gallery and occupied abandoned buildings and public spaces in Haifa (curator: Yeala Hazut) .. *The Holiday of the Holidays* also encompassed a series of public art events in collaboration with the local communities. .

¹⁷ Examples include the activity of various art studio organizations supported by the council. These include ACME studios, Space Studios, the Lipman Library and studio space, the Hackney Wick Studios, and the Arbyte gallery's activity.

¹⁸ The Hackney Museum, and its recent 3-year programme representing the life of communities at Cazenove Street in the borough, can also be recognised as an example of a contemporary approach to community engagement through art (*Side by Side: Living in Cazenove*, presenting at the Hackney Museum, Jan–May 2014; Curator Cheryl Bowen).

¹⁹ Since the establishment of the twinning agreement in 1968, Haifa and Hackney have created platforms for knowledge exchange in these areas, especially around health services and a fruitful collaboration between the Rambam Hospital in Haifa and the Homerton Hospital in Hackney. The residency seeks to extend these relationships to include the cultural field and contemporary art.

object-based art practices.

EXPLORING THE NOTION OF COMMUNITY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE AND COLLECTIVE PRACTICES

Further to the exhibition at the Haifa Museum of Art, which can be seen as a 'traditional' engagement with Curatorial Practice through the platform of the exhibition and the framework of the public museum, I have also taken part in investigative acts, seeking to better understand the position of Curatorial Practice and related educational frameworks in their efforts to reconstruct historical narratives and local identities as part of the *AC Collective* activities.²⁰

AC's research selected a few curatorial platforms that had positioned the term 'collaboration' at the centre of their premise, and led Salons or guided discussions around the idea of collaboration and the collective, which seem to proliferate in the practices presented. Such was the 8th European Biennial, *Manifesta 8*, and the *Homebase* project. The questions leading the research varied from ethical concerns about the political responsibility of art and curatorial practices in the construction of communal narratives, as presented through these collaborative projects, to the investigation of abstract notions of collectively, communal identity, democracy and the place of the individual's agency within such projects. The concept of the musical score as a platform for performance, re-enactment and collaborative creative effort was taken as a possible metaphor for orchestrating collaborative curatorial platforms within the salon discussions; a comparison which, in retrospect, could only answer some of the complex conflicts in the relationship between curating, art, creativity and identity.

²⁰ AC – Anonymous Collaborators Collective, is a group of artists, curators and PhD students at the Art Department of Goldsmiths, University of London, sharing a common interest in the exploration of collaboration in contemporary art practices, as part of a movement which seems to have developed in the early 2000s and involves the self-definition of groups with no particular emphasis on the position of the individual within them. Such a premise was also at the core of *Manifesta 8*, the European Biennial that has presented the work of 3 collectives of curators. More about AC research in relation to *Manifesta 8* can be read here: <http://www.manifesta8.com/medular/posts.php?catid=45&lang=en>;

More about AC research in relation to *Homebase* here: <http://opps.residencyunlimited.org/2013/homebase/open-call-homebase-build-vi-artist-in-residency-berlin/>.

The AC website can be accessed here: <http://www.acrowd.info/>.

AC Collective members include artist Carla Cruz, curator Wiebke Gronemeyer, artist Nina Höchtl, artist Julia Martin, art writer Marit Münzberg and myself.

The *Homebase* project, which took place in Berlin in a deserted orphan-house in the industrial part of the city, commissioned site-specific works by 13 artists. The project stipulated that the artists needed to stay 3 months within the space, engaging in communal activities such as shared dinners, workshops and discussions about what would be presented as part of the final project. While the artists were not requested to collaborate on the



Figure 7- AC Salon. Left Column: images from the Salon held in the *Homebase* Project, Berlin 2011; Right column, images from the Salon at *Manifesta 8*, Murcia, 2011. The images depict some of the field research conducted at the background of the AC research as well as the workshops and our use of the musical score as a platform for thinking in interrelations – as in Lind’s definition of *The Curatorial*. (2010, p. 63)

creation of the artworks commissioned, the mutual platform for the investigation of the exhibition’s theme – ‘Home’ – meant that attitudes and knowledge were shared and a coherent curatorial narrative was constructed in a form of collaboration.

Manifesta 8, in a similar, yet different, manner, sought to expose the fragile and illusive history of the contingent spaces of Murcia and Cartagena as two cities vastly influenced by a constant flow of immigrants from Northern Africa. *Manifesta 8*, as an exhibition and a process, positioned these cities, which are at the periphery of Spanish cultural realm, at the centre of the political turmoil that Spain experienced in the 20th Century.²¹ The AC research Salon aimed at working with the education staff of *Manifesta 8* to explore the complex relationship of the project to local communities who were not as enthusiastic about opening up discourses relating to the dark past they have only recently escaped. The AC Salon exposed the problematic reopening of

²¹ Here I refer to Spain’s history since the Second World War, and the totalitarian regime led by Francisco Franco. Both Murcia and Cartagena hosted monuments of the civil war and the violence that dominated the country for decades. The remaining, abandoned buildings of Cartagena Prison for Political Prisoners, and the ammunition storage houses at the centre of the city, were both refurbished and re-opened as part of *Manifesta 8*’s attempt to resurrect the memory of those locations. More about the process of refurbishment and the conversion of such spaces into exhibition halls can be accessed through the Portal de Cartagena Website: <http://www.portaldecartagena.com/article.asp?id=1252476..>

the former San-Anton prison in Cartagena for the display of a number of art pieces, as well as the occupation of a few spaces within these cities that were abandoned and closed to visitors for almost five decades.²²

Through direct experience, these projects revealed to me the importance of Curatorial Practice in shaping the memories and identities of communities through utilizing urban and public places, exposing the sensitivities related to managing such spaces. The deep interrelation between physical, urban and architectonic space, with the shaping of communal memory, became clear through artistic interventions that used and presented documentary- and archival material collected in the process of working on the site-specific installations.

However, in none of those projects, texts, discourses or examples could I identify a detailed account of the subjective encounter; that is, the experience of the individual who, by stepping into the performance of her/his own cultural memory, embodies these constructs and consumes them as part of her/his own identity. This question led me to consider further how physical spaces of shared interest are performing *the curatorial* in the conflicts of their reading and positioning.

This process is a dynamic and ever-changing element of Curatorial Practice, which leaves its marks in communal spaces, like scars in the fabric of society, and within the neural patterns that constitute the common to the former and present occupants of such specific cultural spaces. Accordingly, the construction of urban spaces, the utilization of such spaces and their appropriation are also directly related to personal, individual identities.²³

Whilst working on *The Coming Community*, I have come to realize that this question is relevant and prominent in the context of examining online cultures and interactions; in a common space where, at some meeting points, no-one seems to share a common or coherent political history or identity, and the only shared narratives are that of language (as what signifies a human from a non-human life-form) and the shared platform of the present moment.²⁴ The relationship between curating and a shared common space or moment seemed beyond operational, and alluded to a more essential role in the ontology of Curatorial Practice and in the ability to find spaces of *the curatorial*.

²² Such as the old post office and the vast ammunition storage spaces at the centre of the city.

²³ A more elaborate look into the relationship between curation, architecture and communal memory and identity is offered by the *Museum Without Walls* Initiative of Bet Hagefen, Arab-Jewish Cultural Centre in Haifa, and its online archive, documenting public art projects in the urban space of Haifa (more information can be accessed here: <http://www.mwwart.com/>)

²⁴ This, of course, resonates deeply with my interpretation of Giorgio Agamben's text *The Coming Community*, which informed the research behind the exhibition.

Furthermore, within new communication models, one of the main challenges is reflected in the lack of a physical space, and I argue that this relates to a certain loss of the communal experience of sharing space: the loss of the multiplicity of 'I's that were framed above as engaged in the construction of mutual memory and cultural narratives.

Rather, the work in front of the computer is a relatively solitary one. The engagement with others is done either through abstract acknowledgment of the other's participation in private browsing experiences – as in the case of collaborative filtering, recommendation tools and voting platforms, or through a distant image of presence – in social networks, forums, discussion boards and other communal discursive platforms. At the same time, online artworks fervently explore notions of telepresence and collaborative authorship,²⁵ reflecting on the interrelations between agents within this social field. It seems that here, it would be beneficial to understand the dynamics of individual memory constructions in relation to such changing communication paradigms, in order to understand what movements are available in engaging with curating's role in the construction of memory and identity.

FRAMING THE DIFFICULTY OF 'THE VISIT' IN CONTEMPORARY CURATORIAL PRACTICE

Ross Parry, in *Recoding the Museum* (2007), summarizes the relationship between curatorial space as a socially integrated institution, and physical constructs or architecture. In his overview of museum history, he concludes: *'Museum history can also be seen as a history of society itself – of cultures struggling with their own identities, riding on the ebb and flow of politics, finding ways to socialise, to remember, to play and to learn ... Similarly, we can fashion the story of museums as a history of buildings – of spaces that provide a framed exhibition and production of knowledge, of thought made three-dimensional and physical'* (Parry, 2007, p. 6). In the fifth chapter, 'Rescripting the Visit', Parry aims to understand the difficulties museums encounter with their introduction to digital technologies – specifically in the face of the museum visit – which he identifies as the locus of 'authenticity' in museum experience.²⁶

Physical space, in the analysis he offers, has a tight relationship with the ability to construct the visit within the museum through confining it to the physical structure. Narratives and ideas are formed through the viewer's physical movement in space,

²⁵ Examples of such projects may be found in the introduction of this research.

²⁶ To put Parry in the context of his own work, it is important to mention that he does not present a position whereby the authenticity of the visit would be compromised with the assimilation of digital technologies within museum practice; rather he attempts to present the different positions in relation to this change and the way museum practitioners theorize the problems they encounter in confronting it.

hence the space functions as a bridge between the mental (virtual) realm of ideas and the physical realm of objects (Parry, 2007, pp. 85-87).

Indeed, the display of objects and their arrangement in space can only find its logic through its positioning within a track of movement, which arranges perception through space according to a successive accumulation of experiences. This is conceived as a simulated sense of temporality or linearity, or a consecutive construct of cause and effect.²⁷ This logic drives the narrative of the visit and the ability of the visitor to draw a 'world' or, as Parry puts it, a 'microcosm' out of it.²⁸

Throughout the fourth and fifth chapters of his book, Parry analyses the relationship manifested between the construction of knowledge and spatial arrangement in a number of examples. In narrating the history of museum spaces, he identifies the origins of this technique in the practice of mnemonics, also known as the 'art of memory': a practice that was prevalent during antiquity's oral tradition for the purpose of memorizing large amounts of information. He relates the revival of such ideas and their reflection to the proliferation of Renaissance texts regarding 'the art of memory' that were re-printed in the 18th and 19th centuries and inspired the establishment of the public museum (Parry, 2007, pp. 85-87).

In Parry's further analysis of this relationship between mnemonics and the exhibition hall, he considers several Renaissance writers who refer to the experience of constructing memory and narrative through a built environment as a spiritual one. This ability to contain a whole universe through its miniature representation, and the possibility of containing it in a physical encounter similar to a simulation of travelling and exploring the distant corners of the world, in my view, has led the history of Curatorial Practice. This metaphor is apparent in all the identified origins of the museum, from the arrangement of ritual spaces in pre-history and temples of antiquity through to the chambers of curiosity, all the way to the more familiar

²⁷ The term 'linear', here, does not mean to suggest that a museum visit is necessarily conducted in a preorganised fashion that forces the viewer through a specific linear trail. Rather, even within the spontaneous, spatial visit, in which the viewer may jump from one object to another not necessarily in relation to the track intended in the first place, the movement stipulates a subjective linear experience, where knowledge is constructed according to the logic of movement.

²⁸ The relationship between narrative and the construction of meaning or social status quo has a profound resonance in cultural theory and sociology. Narratology, as a field of study, was widely developed at the beginning of the 20th century as part of a constructivist approach. Most notably, the work of Tzvetan Todorov (*Genres in Discourse*, 1978) and Vladimir Propp (*Theory and History of Folklore*, 1984), are identified as preliminary attempts in formalizing a theory of constructing narratives, stories and discourses. Narratology later received post-structural interpretations in the works of Jacques Derrida; more specifically, his book *Acts of Literature* (1992). Further analysis of storytelling and narrative constructs in the production of common memory and identity is offered by Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) and *Time and Narrative* (1983). The relationship between the museum visit and the production of narratives as basic constructs of identity is a topic that had received notable analysis, most specifically in the works of Mieke Bal. Bal is therefore known to have contributed to the development of New Museology and related theories. Her book *Double Exposure* (1996) analyses the act of display and its meaning within the construction of curatorial spaces.

structures of the museum and the gallery, which we identify today as the prime locations for curatorial practices.

THE ART OF MEMORY AND CURATORIAL SPACE

There is no account of the full scope of 'the art of memory' as it has been practiced in antiquity. What survived were merely three main resources from which modern understandings and interpretations of the practice have been extrapolated²⁹ (Yates, 1966, pp. 11-16)

Frances A. Yates, in *The Art of Memory*, provides a thorough history of the discovery and development of such ideas. Whilst her account seeks to construct the history of the development of 'the art of memory', I would like to direct my attention to the nature of such practices in an effort to understand how they reflect a constructive, accurate knowledge of memory-construction, using space. More specifically, I am interested in the way this technique is addressed to an individual, rather than a group, encouraging the apprentice, as a singular being, to sharpen mental capacities and master the art of their own memory.

This underlines an interesting resistance to the notion that memory is almost always accumulated from a passive position; our brains respond and reflect back on themselves the solicitations from a given environment in a type of surrender to what triggers our bodies. Memory is generally perceived as a sedimentation of such experiences, which we might have access to in the aftermath and, if we put our minds to it, we could actively recollect, reflect on, analyse and organize. However, generally speaking, the individual does not have an awareness and active role in the processes of remembrance.

²⁹ My main resource for understanding *the art of memory* is Frances Yates' thorough historical account of the topic in her seminal book *Art of Memory* (1966). Yates refers to three main resources from which she resurrected the history and techniques of *the art of memory*. The first, and the one most popularly used in the reconstruction of the topic throughout history, is *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, which was composed by an anonymous writer; the second source is Cicero's account of rhetoric in his book *De Oratore* and the third resource is Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. While there has been a coherent history of the use of *ars-memoria* practices, since antiquity, through the middle ages and the Renaissance and until the 18th and 19th century, there is no clear account of the ways it was distorted or interpreted in relation to an original version of the practice. The principles and the aims of such a practice seem to have been forgotten for the large part, and only a limited manifestation of the practice remained in the planning and construction of churches, and other buildings with ritualistic or other public purposes. While memory has been a faculty which had primacy in the philosophy of Rene Descartes, its final categorization as part of the theory of dialectics rather than rhetoric, as it was initially perceived in Ancient Greece, points to the nature of such distortion in its interpretation; this is reflected mainly in the loss of the practical aspect of *the art of memory* and its incorporation into a more theoretical framework, in the form of formal logic or symbolic application. Here I would like to suggest that the practice of *the art of memory* has been kept alive by curatorial spaces but that with time, the foundation upon which curation has been constructed was too, forgotten, in correlation with a development of a dichotomised model of the universe. The opposition between body and mind seem to have had a central part in the deconstruction of the practices of *the art of memory*, as this will be approached further along this chapter.

In describing the possibilities and opportunities reflected via 'the art of memory' as a concept, Yates introduces a few documentations of abilities that would startle contemporary notions of human memory capacity, such as the description of Seneca's abilities and Augustine's testimony of Simplicius:

'We think of memory feats which are recorded of the ancients, of how the elder Seneca, a teacher of rhetoric, could repeat two thousand names in the order in which they had been given; and when a class of two hundred students spoke each in turn a line of poetry, he could recite all the lines in reverse order, beginning from the last one said and going right back to the first. Or we remember that Augustine also trained as a teacher of rhetoric, tells a friend called Simplicius who could recite Virgil backward' (Yates, 1966, p. 31).

Whilst there is no possibility of verifying the accuracy of such testimonies and texts, nevertheless, these are curious attempts in underlining the importance of memory constructs and their centrality in the teaching of Rhetoric.

Indeed, Yates positions 'the art of memory' as one of the philosophical divisions of the time. Here, 'the art of memory' is amongst five central disciplines³⁰ with direct links to poetry and art. These relationships are connected to how the construction of an 'artificial memory', as Yates defines it, is one of the core purposes, if not the essence, of creative acts, and is integral, in one way or another, to their unfolding.

Of course, one may relate the loss of such capacities and practices to the proliferation of the written word that came shortly after and weakened the need to learn full texts and facts by heart. Nevertheless, within the original texts describing the operative aspects of the 'art of memory', one finds clues to the possible underlying system that is in operation when constructing memories and which might refute the direct relation between memorization and the purposes of 'the art of memory'.

THE ART OF REMEMBERING

The first step in the construction of an artificial memory is the selection of a *locus*. Here, it is emphasised that this should be an actual physical space –preferably empty – where the practice can take place (Yates, 1996, p. 23). The practice is both physical and mental, and requires the active recording of the physical architectural space in one's mind. The apprentice is required to remember, in great detail, the divides within

³⁰ The five canons of Rhetoric are: Invention (the development and the purification of ideas); Arrangement (the construction of the ideas so that they form a coherent and effective argument); Style (planning the manner through which the arguments will be presented); Memory (in its traditional interpretation, the memorization and contextualization of the argument. A further analysis of memory will be given shortly) and Delivery (the performative aspects of the speech).

the physical space so that the space is vivid in one's memory to the extent of a permanent familiarity; hence, there is a great deal of importance assigned to the *habit* of walking around the space and becoming familiar with it so as to develop a spatial awareness that will eventually enable the apprentice to construct a complete mental image of the *loci* without effort.

The scriptures cannot stress enough the importance of the physical manoeuvre within the selected space for this exercise. Masters of 'the art of memory', so it is claimed, could eventually create such detailed spaces in mind, independent of the physical space; however, there are few who could do this, and it is noted to have taken many years of intensive practice until one reaches that level of skill, alluding to the fact that the imagination described here might not be similar to what we understand it to be when one imagines things in the mind. Until such a level of skill is reached, the physicality of the spatial experience is absolutely vital (Yates, 1966, pp. 35-40).

The following step in the practice is the assimilation of symbolic objects within the mental construction of the physical space. Such objects are referred to as images and they are representative of concepts, simple and/or complex. The object should directly relate to the concept one wishes to remember. Complex objects are imagined in order to foster more complex ideas, or longer sequences of details. The object's detailed description in one's mind, and the reasoning behind each of these details in relation to that which one attempts to remember, are emphasized. A further imaginative quality is added to the details imagined by assigning them some sort of emotional life through their aesthetic distortion (Yates, 1966, p. 26).

The image of the object should be vivid and affective in one's mind, with the apprentice required to take further strolls in the physical space and imagine the images of the objects *in situ*, each in its own position in relation to the idea, phrase or detail rehearsed. In my reading, 'image' here does not refer to a representation of reality or nature, but to an active operation of imagination; a focused attention directing the construction of an emblem, the symbolic value of which is clear and profound. As such, what is asked of the apprentice is the creation of a type of virtual reality.

Virtual reality, in this context, is not read in the same manner as we tend to think – as a substitute parallel to the natural or as an illusion meant to make one feel as if one has been transferred to another world – nor does it refer to a reality related only to simulation and images. Rather, as much as the image is an active operation of imagination, virtual reality here is a result of a concentrated effort to build an internal system of language: a further layer of imagined significations with their related

signifiers. Each architectural space, experienced through the five senses and the sense of orientation, allows this reality to become a vivid response to stimuli rather than a simulated world of imagination, hence connecting the realm of ideas to the realm of the sensual, allowing the artificial memory at hand to be carved in one's mind as *experience*.

RE-READING MEMORY

Yates' account of 'the art of memory' offers an interesting distinction between the way it was taught by the Greeks – apparently descending from other ancient cultures, such as Ancient Egypt (Yates, 1966, p. 29) – and an 'art of memory' extrapolated by Quintilian and taught in Roman times. Quintilian's approach to 'the art of memory' was more sceptical and, in his transcriptions and readings of the source texts, he positions memorization as the central aim of practice. As such, he questions the definitive need of a direct correlation between the 'images' and the *loci*.

Yates remarks that Roman scriptures on 'the art of memory' seem to change the focus and form of it, and encourages the imagination of words rather than images. They also diminish the importance of being in a physical space, with some said to simply imagine the spatial organization of words on a two-dimensional surface, such as a piece of paper or a stone. Yates concludes with a question concerning the nature of the practice and its possible results: *'Has Roman society moved on into greater sophistication in which some intense archaic, almost magical, immediate association of memory with images has been lost? [...Would the artificial memory not work for Quintilian because he lacked the acute visual perceptions necessary for visual memorization?'* (Yates, 1966, p. 41).³¹

³¹ I cannot help but be reminded that in my reading of the history of the collection, a shift between two attitudes towards objects was also noted at the same period of time in history. Here, I refer to the shift between a general 'hovering object approach' during Greek times, to a 'symbolic approach' during Roman times (see Chapter 2). While I am not a specialist in these eras, and quite aware that this is not the appropriate context to interrogate the fundamental differences between these two cultures which seem to be attached to each other in some sort of suggested historical continuity, and while I am quite aware that proof is lacking, I cannot help but think that, just like collections might have had different interpretations and roles in Ancient Greece compared with their Roman versions, the interpretation we are accustomed to giving words such as *memory*, *imagination* and *the image* might have had a different meaning to those who practiced 'the art of memory' before Roman times. The 'symbolic approach', which finds its roots in Roman times, stipulates the fixation of a meaning to an object. This meaning is then embedded within an economic system of exchange. One of the reasons this meaning is fixed and cannot change is because the meaning has monetary value in its own right. This approach reflects a limitation on memory and imagination, and the cancellation of the curatorial space that exists between the signifier and the signified. In this approach, the *curatorial space* is defined not only as stipulated by practice but also as a mental capacity, which connects it back to the roots of the word 'curator' as presented in the first chapter. Is this flexibility of mind – this ability to take distance from the identification of an object with a meaning – exactly the space of curiosity? Is this not the space of enquiry? Here, we find that opening up spaces of *the curatorial* means not only an external interference, but also an actual engagement with experience, which loosens up the mental perception of the world and allows it to remain in movement.

Through reading Yates' work, I have come to the conclusion that, in order to understand the nature of this Quintilianian shift, there is a need to return to the original sources of 'the art of memory' and the insistence on a difference between 'memory' and 'recollection', as Yates suggests: *'Aristotle distinguishes between memory and reminiscence, or recollection. Recollection is the recovery of knowledge or sensation which one had before'* (Yates, 1996, p. 48). Yates continues to describe the process of reminiscing, concluding that it can be described as a hunting-chase for a specific object in our memory through associative thought.

'Memory', in Aristotle's definition, however, is the ability to manage and arrange the associative mind so that one is conscious of the relationship between the forms it contains. Hence, memory is not necessarily related to linear time but to an awareness of the interrelations between different forms. Yates concludes, *'Since the starting-point in a train of recollection has earlier been linked to mnemonic locus... its possessor could start at any point in his places and runs through them in any direction'* (Yates, 1996, p. 49); that is to say, in 'the art of memory', the ability to remember does not necessarily relate to a specific linear order of things as they have been perceived but, rather, to their comprehension as a system or as a whole.

In an effort to understand how this process of intentional-remembering is conceived, one could refer to another recurring paradigm that seems to be the underlying tone of all the ancient writings Yates refers to regarding 'the art of memory', and that is the idea of intentional thought – a thought with an orientation; in other words, a practice of focused attention: *'Thinking, he (Aristotle) says, is something which we can do whenever we choose, "for it is possible to put things before our eyes, just as those who invent mnemonics and construct images". He (Aristotle) is comparing the deliberate selection of mental images about which to think with the deliberate construction in mnemonics of images through which to remember...intellectual faculty works in the stored images from sense perception'* (Yates F. A., 1996, p. 47). This is to clarify that intentionality in, or at least awareness of, the direction of memory and thought, seems to be at the heart of 'the art of memory'. In this process, one directs the gaze on to perception itself, and creates a mental separation between memory and perception. Aristotle continues to develop this logic by proposing that, just as memory is constructed on the objects of imagination, perception is arranged through the order of the things perceived; this, in my view, is the moment where memory, thought and physical space collide.

Socrates also underlines memory as being different from remembering in the *Phaedrus*, in which he tells a story that will be analysed and remembered as his

treatise against the use of the written word. The story tells of Thoth, a God of ancient Egypt, who can be seen as one of the fathers of language and, in a sense, the cogitator of the symbolic order. He is assigned with the invention of mathematics, geometry, astronomy and other systems of classification and description, including the basis for statistics (with the invention of the dice). He is also assigned with the invention of letters. When he goes to the higher God, Ammon, to present his inventions to the Lord of All, Ammon seem to be disapproving: *'...and now you, who are the father of letters, have been led by your affection to ascribe to them a power the opposite of that which they really possess. For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use them because they will not practice their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are not part of themselves will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not for **memory** but for **reminding**; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise but only appear wise'*.³² Whilst I do not intend to argue against those who position Socrates against the written word, I would like to highlight a small distinction Ammon makes in Socrates' story: when speaking of the damage Thoth's pupils will suffer through the use of letters, he distinguishes 'remembering' or 'recalling' quite clearly from 'memory', alluding to the relationship of the first two with knowledge and the last with wisdom.

The fear expressed here is of losing an ability to connect memory back to what Yates would term in her own analysis of the story, 'realities' (Yates, 1966, p. 52). Those realities, however, I suggest, are not necessarily means of connecting thought to the natural world, and the fear is not of the loss of memorization capacities that will be eroded with the possibility of transferring information through writing, but rather of the loss of comprehension: the disengagement of theory from practice, in the simplest sense. It is a fear of losing the ability to be present in what is expressed within the physical dimension of cognition.

The ability to construct memory and/or thought intentionally, according to preconfigured systems, is not the theoretical notion of devising the world into multiple parts and categorizing everything accordingly, as one might imagine the purpose of 'the art of memory' to be. It is neither the recording of experiences in a linear movement through time or the construction of an internal narrative; rather, *memory* alludes to the ability to have distance from the linear composition of time and

³² *Phaedrus*, 274c-275b, quoted in the translation by N.H. Fowler in the Loeb edition (in: Yates, 1966, p. 52).

reflect actively on a topic as a space. This type of prefiguration requires that there is a gap between the signifier and the signified. What one finds within this gap is the intention – the active participation of the self – and maybe even agency. Here, the self is not defined by an accumulation of life experiences and the construction of a linear narrative of existence, which results in an arbitrary, pre-determined identity, but is the mere sense of existence experienced through the eyes of an individual consciousness.

Therefore, I suggest that what Socrates was anxious about losing was not the capacity of memorizing phrases by heart, but the quintessential capacity of intentional thought, as described by Aristotle. This capacity is the ability to maintain an active agency through the process of constructing and carefully arranging memory. Similarly, oral repetition is not a means of memorizing, but is an exercise in shifting perspectives: listening to oneself might encourage the ability to attach thought processes with the sensual being, assimilating them into a whole through the presence of one's experience.

Providing further support for this assumption, Yates quotes one of the earliest resources known regarding 'the art of memory': the fragment known as *Dialexeis* (approximately 400 BC). This text offers direct instructions for the apprentice of 'the art of memory': *'A great and beautiful invention is memory, always useful both for learning and for life. This is the first thing: if you pay attention (direct your mind), the judgement will better perceive the things going through it (the mind). Secondly repeat again and again what you hear; for by often hearing and saying same things, what you have learned comes complete in your memory'* (Yates, 1996, p. 44). Here, the instructions direct the apprentice to understand that memory is a capacity useful not only for learning but also for life and it is possible only as a result of directing one's attention intentionally. The writer uses the word 'judgement,' which, in our current context of language, might mean something very different to the original intention in the context of the original text. For the writer, 'judgement' is that which perceives the movements of the mind; the sensation of an awareness that arranges the appearances of the world in one's singular experience. In my understanding, this sense of separateness and direction is the self. Accordingly, the writer requires that the apprentice takes distance from the self when practicing 'the art of memory'. The process of intensive thought or imagination, therefore, is not similar to the identification with a thought that runs through one's mind, or to the process of believing that the thought necessarily expresses the thinker. Rather, what is offered here is a separation between the thinker and the thought.

It is the distance from the self in the observation of perception that allows the intention/agent to take part in the processes of memory and remembering. The self (the notion of a unified narrative, a story one tells her/himself and which constructs itself arbitrarily in the succession of linear time) is what one leaves aside, hence allowing a different, intentional memory and identity to evolve. If we accept that memorization is not at the centre of such practice, then, in a similar fashion, rehearsal in speech is not a mechanical repetition of words, but a means of assimilating that which is learnt into an embodied experience of being. With this instruction, the writer is defining the borders of the distinction between a knowing that derives from memorization and the wisdom of comprehension, which Ammon mentions in Socrates' story.

In this context, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology comes to mind when considering that Aristotle's epistemology was deeply rooted in the sensual realm and in the body (Yates, 1996, p. 50). The role of speech and repetition in this construction of memory can also be further explicated through Merleau-Ponty's understanding of language: *'In a sense, speech repeats and goes beyond, but in a sense it conserves and continues, sense-certainty; it never quite pierces the 'eternal silence' of private subjectivity. Even more, speech continues beneath the words and never ceases to envelop them, and, if ever voices were distant or unclear, or the language quite different from our own, we would be able, on meeting it, to rediscover the stupor of the first witness of the first speech'* (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 45). Here, Merleau-Ponty defines speech as a means of going beyond what is said and heard. It opens up the potential of comprehension beyond the formal linguistic strata. In Merleau-Ponty's theory of language, language is not distinct from thought itself, but is the platform from which thought emerges and vice-versa. Consequently, repetition in speech can be related to the embodiment of a thought, and its digestion and assimilation within one's own subjectivity.

If one takes this approach and understands it in the language of Merleau-Ponty's thought, then 'memory' as defined by the ancient practice of *ars-memoria* is not 'memory' in the sense of recollection (i.e. a linguistic capacity that is detached from the sensual presence of being); rather, memory becomes a quality of being in the world. In this way, it becomes clear why, in ancient Greek tradition, *'memory is seen as the mother of the muses'* (Yates, 1966, p. 52).

THE ART OF MEMORY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY CURATORIAL PRACTICE

The distinction between memory and recollection allows us to consider further the relationship between Curatorial Practice's operative manifestations – namely, those of the exhibition and the museum, and their relationship to authority, or the stipulation of a truth. We might have forgotten the original intention of mnemonics organisations but, nonetheless, this powerful relationship between the construction of space and the construction of individual memory is part of the history of institutions relating to curating, and, in this sense, we still use physical spaces to assimilate knowledge within our systems of perception.

Importantly, however, without a gap between self and perception, this technique is only partial; in its partiality, it constructs stable systems of ideas, which seem permanent and deterministic, as they do not allow a space for the observer's intentional agency. Seen through this prism, we may understand why the institutions that construct these inconsiderate and deterministic systems³³ – systems that can only be recalled but not changed or revived by *memory* or self-enquiry – are dead institutions. Essentially, they are graveyards for ideas, remaining available only in the realm of perception. They no longer possess the ability to reconstruct themselves intentionally.

If we are to revive, in some way, the principles of *ars-memoria* as they have been presented here, then we could underline the centrality of the observer in this assimilation of senses and thought. It is the awareness of the observer in the process of memory construction itself – the exposure of the curatorial technique – that leaves space for her/his intentionality in this process, allowing a distance from the memory constructed, and then allowing memory and experience to be altered, elaborated upon and questioned as part of this process. I suggest that this mental space within which such flexibility occurs as a result of a distance taken from memory (or identity) is the internal space where *the curatorial* resides.

THE ART OF MEMORY AND ITS POSSIBLE CONTEMPORARY FORMS

There are a few implications for this understanding of 'the art of memory.' First, memory and thought are deeply rooted in our physical experiences. To relate this idea

³³ These systems are deterministic because they reflect a reality where one cannot move back and forth within memory but can only travel in the direction of the arrow of time. Such a perception anticipates its present according to a sequence of accidental events in the past, rather than reconstructing itself according to the present. The end point of such system is therefore always predetermined.

to a more recent philosophical account, we can look to the aforementioned Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who opposed the idea that thought can be disconnected from perception, and therefore from its situatedness – it is already embodied within the physicality of the observer's body. In the development of his approach, Merleau-Ponty argues there is a unity between the perceiver and the perceived in a reciprocal relationship between the self and the world that manifests itself through the senses: *'...my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange'* (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 133). In other words, the subject and the world, in Merleau-Ponty's thought, are one and the same.

Markedly, Merleau-Ponty rejects temporal or hierarchical understandings as suggested by common readings of Western philosophy – mainly Kant and Husserl – whereby the world exists prior to perception, and perception translates the world or reflects it in the subject's mind. In the same way that our senses are part of the sensible and not distinct from it, mind and body, in Merleau-Ponty's thought, are not two realms of being that are interconnected but, rather, components of the same mechanism. They are correlated and interrelated in a whole,³⁴ without the possibility of separating them.

He explains: *'Since the physical, the vital and the mental individual are distinguished only as different degrees of integration, to the extent that man is completely identified with the third dialectic, that is, to the extent that he no longer allows systems of isolated conduct to function in him, his soul and his body are no longer distinguished'* (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. 203). Through this statement, Merleau-Ponty stresses the unity of body and soul through three layers of perception: the physical, the vital and the mental, which are integrated in human experience.

The development of this perception, which blurs any possible border between the being sensing or perceiving the world, and the world being sensed, also refutes the possibility of separating objects and subjects. The observer, in the experience of encounter, is both the active orientator of the gaze and the passive receptor of his/her

³⁴ 'Whole' refers here to a Gestalt whole. Merleau-Ponty was influenced by Gestalt theories and, while he rejected and contradicted some of them in his first book, *The Structure of Behaviour* (Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, 1967), he still uses the idea of a whole, whose parts cannot be divided and separated but are interrelated in a relationship of complete dependence with no hierarchical structure.

own senses. The observer is a seer only as long as s/he is seen (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 134). Through such an understanding of the phenomenology of perception, the possibility of constructing a sense of being, an idea, a memory or, in fact, even a language through manoeuvring and shaping physical space and its objects, becomes a most intuitive practice, the origins of which can be traced to the beginning of man's self-discovery.³⁵

The second implication that derives from the above analysis of 'the art of memory', and which relates to the alternative perception of a non-dualistic world, is that, according to this approach, what we perceive as virtual and what we perceive as imagination is not separate or distinct from what we perceive as natural or real. The dichotomy suggested between real and virtual is related to a transparent,³⁶ non-provable assumption of the same *a-priori* reality to which we might have access.

Whilst I have no intention of affirming or negating the existence of a world beyond that of human perception, and I have no intention of justifying or contradicting any phenomenological approach presented here, it seems to me that, if we trace the motivation of Curatorial Practice in a search for *the curatorial*, then curation as a practice may be embedded in these assumptions, deriving from an urge to investigate the precise relationship between our spatial awareness, our senses and our thoughts.

If, indeed, the partition between 'virtual' and 'real' can be dropped, then, just as body is inseparable from thought, thought is inseparable from language, whether imaginative or verbal. Thought *is* the symbolic order, meaning there is no real difference between a symbolic or imaginative realm and the realm of perception. Perception is not understood in relation to direct contact with a reality that exists and needs to be interpreted; rather, the seer is considered in relation to perception. The order and shape of enquiry shifts, and the idea of 'authenticity' becomes a futile concept in this field of thought.

The third implication of this understanding of *ars-memoria* might shed light on what 'the virtual' could mean and how we can use 'the virtual' as a medium or tool for Curatorial Practice – an understanding that might have important implications if we are to recognise the role and operations of Curatorial Practice online.

³⁵ This refers back to the extended history of Curatorial Practice offered in Chapter 1. Some would argue that the practice of displaying objects as parts of 'exhibitions' can be traced back to pre-historic times. I would add here that this may have had a very distinctive role in the construction of verbal communication and the development of language.

³⁶ 'Transparent' in the sense that we take it for granted as a condition of our existence, without questioning it.

If we accept that space, both as a mental and a physical sphere, is the medium through which Curatorial Practice expresses itself, and if we accept that the participation of the body within the reconstruction of this space through movement is what allows the performative construction of knowledge, memory³⁷ and identity, then there is the need to understand spaces, their production, and the state of perception that they create, if we are to achieve a better understanding of Curatorial Practice as a whole, with *the curatorial* still at the core of its ontology.

More specifically, as this study is concerned with offering a new definition of the problems curating is facing as a practice owing to the development of new media communication and their expression in art through a tendency towards the dematerialization of the object and the adoption of performative, socially engaged and digitally mediated cultural practices, I seek to create a bridge between the traditional platforms for Curatorial Practice (mainly exhibition spaces) and the spaces within which culture is mediated and is happening in our contemporary times – spaces that seem, on the surface, to bear little resemblance to such a direct relationship between the bodily gesture of movement and the constructed space.³⁸

THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE, FLAT SPACE, AND THE RULE OF SPEED

The idea that something might be lost with the proliferation of new technologies and in the changing modes of our understanding and perception of space – more specifically, the anxiety that space and the body within it will disappear from consciousness, in some way or another, transforming into a virtual reality of representation – is not a new one. In fact, one could read history as a series of changes in modes of representation and identify resistance whenever new methods of communication technologies are introduced and dialectics that support or resist new methods of representation are suggested.³⁹

³⁷ This brings to mind some essays that find synergies or parallels between Curatorial Practice and choreography and use this analogy in their attempt to develop and comment in the definition of *the curatorial*. See Leire Vergara, 'Exhausted Curating' (Vergara, 2013) and Je Yun Moon, 'This Is Not About Us' (Moon, 2013). A thorough review of these ideas is given in Chapter 1.

³⁸ Furthermore, if a curator takes a democratic approach, encouraging participation, then there might be a reason to consider the difference between memory and remembering and relocate the sites where revival of the visitor's awareness is possible. Awareness of processes of memory construction would put the curatorial authority, which has been the target of much criticism (as explored through the history of Museum Studies and independent curatorial practice), into its place and perspective within the social sphere, through the active participation of the visitor.

³⁹ The advent of digital communication technologies and the apparent social changes that these had brought in recent years, provides a fruitful ground for the proliferation of many alternative historical reviews that place media and communication models at the centre of cultural and social change and are therefore considered as agents in the construction of history. I would argue that Curatorial Practice should be researched as a central communication methodology. This chapter is informed with a close reading of the following theoreticians who have offered representational modes a central position in the

The history of art criticism could be seen, in a way, as a history of interrelations between acceptance and resistance to new modes of representation.⁴⁰ With the development of new mediation technologies and the increased primacy of the screen, whether as large as a theatre stage or as small as the size of our palm, the concern is that we are plunging in a hyperreal, hyper-subjective mode of existence that is deeply conditioned by a virtual or imagined sense of being, losing our relationship with the image of ourselves and of others as human.

This concern is voiced in the literature and philosophy of Western culture, especially in the aftermath of the industrial revolution and the Second World War, demonstrating fundamental shifts in social understandings of time and the body as regulated, controlled, measured and categorical realms that are almost exempt from the flux of the natural world. In this view, the subject has the responsibility of disciplining body and space through time, represented by the apparatus of the mechanical clock, thus answering to preliminary conditions stipulated by production, its modes and its efficiency.⁴¹

shaping of historical narrative and perception: Paul Virilio, who will be approached more closely in this section, offers an analysis of how changing modes of representation had a profound effect on the cultural development of perception and ideological constructs, especially in relation to conflict and war. His book *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (1980) is an attempt to construct a historical narrative about the development of representational technologies and their use in establishing power constructs and civilian relations. His book *The Lost Dimension* (1983), which will be read more closely, examines the implications of the development of digital imaging technologies and live broadcasts for military technology and, consequently, for everyday, civilian life. Jonathan Crary also offers a historical narrative, which traces the way representational modes have affected human perception, and their central role in the development of dominant ideologies. In *Techniques of the Observer* (1990), he traces the history of optical devices in an attempt to identify the formation of the notion of 'the observer', as part of the stabilization and affirmation of subject/object hierarchies during the 17th and 18th centuries. Crary suggests an alternative history of vision in order to expose the underlining conditioning in western culture's position towards natural phenomena. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, in their book *Remediation* (2000), trace the history of the representation of space through different technological means, starting from the mathematical representation of space and its manifestation in linear perspective, through to digital techniques of realism, identifying transparency and immediacy as core principles in the development of communications media. Bolter and Grusin suggest that the ways in which linear perspective is used as a rhetorical means in the shaping of fictional realities, ideals, fantasies and dreams. Manuel Castells, in his trilogy of books published between 1996 and 1998, entitled *The Information Age*, offers an extensive review of the development of urban society and urban space, and their dependence upon the development of communication and information technologies. Castells positions representational technologies (as consistent with communication models) as a significant element in the shaping of social change, together with economics and governmental policies.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Crary, in his books *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) and *Suspension of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (1999), offers an alternative reading of art history that centres around new modes of representation and the way that these have affected perception. Crary is mostly interested in optics and the technologies that have developed around optical discoveries, and how these have led to the development of photography and, later on, modernist art movements, such as post-impressionism and cubism, which, in his view, tested new modes of perception made available by those technological developments.

⁴¹ To name only a few of the writers that have commented on this shift, see footnote no. 26. In relation to the ramifications of the Industrial Revolution on the perception of the body and human life, and its relationship to the atrocities of the Second World War one can mention Zygmunt Bauman, who, in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (2000) offers an in-depth reflection on the connection between models of modernity expressed through industrialization and the systematic approach to genocide. His book offers a way to understand how the idealization of the assembly line, and the position of the individual within such constructs of productivity, also suggests a possible reversal, where the human body itself, and life

Within this discourse – and, more specifically, in relation to urban development and the model of the industrial city – one can consider Henri Lefebvre a seminal figure. Lefebvre sought to expose the interrelations between an increasingly structured environment and the constructs of social and political spheres. His book *The Production of Space* (2000) expresses a sharp criticism of the articulation and definition of ‘space’ in Western philosophy, and stresses further the urgency of approaching the question of space from a perspective that articulates the relationship between space and the social realm clearly. Lefebvre traces the history of the definitions of physical space and locates a shift, during Platonic times, between a ‘geometry of space’ and a ‘mathematics of space’. For Lefebvre, this shift marks the increasing abstraction of cultural conceptions of space to the extent that its scientific elaboration exceeds the tangibility and comprehensible reality of its actuality.

This increasing abstraction, from Lefebvre’s perspective, seems to run as an axiom through the history of understanding space in Western philosophy and has led thinkers to avoid defining the term and to consider it as a condition or an attribute of existence instead. He thus depicts a process in which the subject can only access space as a manifestation of her/his mental function. As Lefebvre states: *‘from a philosophy of space revised and corrected by mathematics—the modern field of inquiry known as epistemology has inherited and adopted the notion that the status of space is that of a ‘mental thing’ or ‘mental place’....No limits at all have been set on the generalization of the concept of mental space....’* (Lefebvre, 2000, p. 3). Lefebvre finds that this abstract

with it, are decomposed and stripped bare to their material components. One could argue that this process of the banalization of human life and the human body in its social expression point to a possible ‘psychology’ of evil, as it has been articulated in Hanna Arendt’s account of Eichmann’s trial, as examined in ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil’ (1977). There, Arendt reveals how bureaucratic and clerical processes seem to reinforce alienation between one’s action and one’s ability to recognize their implications. These works touch on some of the most extreme moments that industrial advancement had brought and, within these moments, an anxiety about a loss of humanism, which goes hand in hand with the development of new technologies and production models. However, one can consider other writings such as Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (Benjamin, 2008) and Roland Barthes’ ‘The Death of the Author’ (1977) and *Camera Lucida* (1993), as seminal texts that express similar worries on a more abstract level. These texts pose questions on how new modes of production might change perceptions of culture in general terms, and on their effects of subjective and collective memories. George Didi Huberman’s work on the relationship between the photographic image, the archive and remembrance – namely, of the Holocaust, especially in his book *Confronting Images* (1990) – can be seen as a bridge that attempts to connect the history of photography in the representation of history, and the psychology that lies behind the photographic image as a document of such radical changes. Aside from modern and post-modern interpretations of the relationship between technology, modes of communication, modes of representation and the human condition, we could attempt to stretch our recollection back to the times of Plato and Socrates. Plato’s resistance to the mimetic nature of art and Socrates’ rejection of the written word could also be seen as a similar hesitation or fear of the power of representation to change our relationship with reality. One should also mention that, while more attention is given here to resistance, fear and criticism of new representational and productive modes, other viewpoints that represent what could be termed the other side of the dialectic, have been expressed. Movements such as Futurism, Russian Social Realism, and Russian Constructivism (and, to some extent, Cubism), seem to look forward to the revolutionary momentum that was felt inevitable at the time (as an example, one could take the *Futurist Manifesto*, written by Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti in 1909, which calls for the integration of humans and technologies in achieving the further evolution of man).

notion of space calls for it to be approached from a more critical perspective.

This tendency is further reflected in current expressions of Subjective Idealism, which, in his view, denotes the participation of the subject in the production of social space, leading to a fundamental distance between the subject and the political and social realm, which could be read as a form of alienation.⁴² Lefebvre's concern here is not with the subjectivity with which Western philosophy interprets space but, rather, he raises a concern that the social aspects of space (as a common, shared realm of subjectivities) are being neglected and, with this negligence, the constructions of social space and its politics become invisible to our eyes.

To connect Lefebvre's argument with the history of Curatorial Practice as it is entangled with the history of constructed space, I would like to offer a similar view on how space is defined within curatorial discourse. Importantly, this view does not intend to overlook my own use of the notion *spaces of the curatorial* as a recurrent and fundamental theme in this research, which expresses an abstract relationship to the constructs within which I operate as a curator.⁴³

Lefebvre's ideas raised awareness about the nature of urban spaces and the way in which they stipulate behaviours that are in line with modes of production. This also resonates with the ideas that were introduced earlier in this chapter; namely, the inter-relation between the construction of memory or identity with the physical manoeuvre of the body through constructed space.

Guy Debord's seminal work *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) offers a further development of Lefebvre's ideas, positioning communication and mediation as new modes of alienation. He demonstrates how representation and communication form conditions for a mechanism of self-surveillance and obedience to capitalist logics of consumerism, around which social and interpersonal ties revolve. The 'self', in Debord's society, is entangled with these constructs of behaviour through a deep

⁴² Alienation here is referred to in reference to the basic definition offered by Marxist philosophy: as the export of individual control and power, bestowing it on an external, larger force that is usually out of one's possible reach and entangled with systems of belief and conviction.

⁴³ It is my aim, in this chapter, to examine this abstract notion of space and closely assess its relationship to curatorial discourses, as a means of following the initial logic of 'the art of memory'. The urban space – its regulation, compartmentalization and constructs, as well as the theories that offer its analysis – seem adequate and fruitful in the examination of the logic of Curatorial Practice and its relationship to constructed environments, especially in the light of the models available to us, to the museum, the gallery or, indeed, the street. The premise of this attempt to draw a parallel between the two is not to offer a criticism of modern methodologies in Curatorial Practice through a postmodern prism but, rather, aims to advance this journey of further stripping the possible relationships between curating and *the curatorial*, and the role of space in the construction of memory and identity.

process of identification with self-image, which facilitates only minimal awareness of one's part in the socio-economical construct.

THE URBAN SPACE OF THE SPECTACLE AND THE PRIMACY OF TIME

The abstract, mathematical perception of space has a fundamental role in these dynamics as it is measured, regulated and viewed in subordination to time. The approximation of distance is estimated by time as opposed to bodily gestures or movements. The urban space measures distances in 'E.T.A.'s,⁴⁴ and a city is measured by its efficiency in movement management; hence, networks of connectivity – roads, public transport and organized spatial distribution in relation to function (work, leisure, residential areas) – are all part of an efficient management mechanism regulating the position of an individual within her/his everyday life. These are the roots of the urban constructs within one's definition of 'self'.

Once the measurement of space occurs – predominantly through the division of regulated time – then any procedure to increase speed that occurs through the use of technology shifts possible perceptions of distance and of space. This relationship between regulated time and space, or between speed and distance, formulates the 'shrinking' of the world in its demand to increase our speed, both in the management of the everyday (speedy replies, speedy services, 'speedy boarding') and in the theoretical discourses describing our world as a 'global village' (in Marshall McLuhan's⁴⁵ terms).

⁴⁴ 'Estimated Time of Arrival'.

⁴⁵ The term 'global village', which is in common use today when describing the seamless interconnectivity of different locations around the globe and the decreasing significance of national borders in the formulation of social and economic ties, was coined by Marshall McLuhan, and used in both his books *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964). Although McLuhan's media theory received a mixed response at the time of its publication, McLuhan's theories, which have proved to realize themselves faster than anticipated, gathered vast popularity when the World Wide Web was launched. Now, the term 'global village' is used by seminal writers in the field of sociology and economy in the definition of economic, political and social globalization processes. McLuhan himself also identified speed as a prime element in contemporary culture (especially in his book *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*, 1989), in which he also comments on the gradual disappearance of the geometrical model of space and on media's immense influence on the understanding of communication models, interpersonal relationships and the representation of space. His influence therefore, cannot go unnoticed. Paul Virilio's text *The Lost Dimension*, which will be examined in this chapter, can be said to have been influenced by McLuhan's thought. My choice of referencing Virilio rather than McLuhan in the discussion around the effacement of space in this chapter is based on several reasons. Firstly, Virilio's abstract reference to the dimensionality of space has more of a direct relationship to my arguments, especially considering Curatorial Practice's attachment to art and representation, rather than to contemporary theories positioned within the field of media and communication. As much as I would argue that, in fact, if there is a need for field categorization, then Curatorial Practice probably belongs more to this realm than to the art field, my intention is to position myself within the discourse of a field which identifies it with the latter, and Paul Virilio's text has greater resonance in such discourses. Secondly, Virilio's analysis in *The*

NO SPACE, JUST TIME: THE LOST DIMENSION

Paul Virilio's work can be considered a direct continuation of Lefebvre's *Production of Space* and Debord's *Society of The Spectacle*. Virilio proceeds with the task of understanding how definitions and representations of space occupy the logic of social and political organization. He also examines the implications of replacing the Euclidian, geometrical model of space with a mathematical one, epitomised by digital technologies. Virilio's *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (1977) suggests that Western society is already immersed in an abstract mathematical perception of space. Distance, speed and information are interrelated in the urban economy, whilst movement is at the centre of the equation.

Virilio offers the term 'Dromology' as a way of describing a culture governed by the increasing speed of its operations, whilst speed is recognised as the representative of progress and growth. Within this logic, the human body is continuously depicted in alienation, as a form of vehicular or mechanical apparatus.⁴⁶

Virilio's earlier research into the history of communication media included an account of the development of representational technologies – notably, cinema – and their relationship to changing cultural perceptions. His book *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (1989) offers an introduction to the intimate interrelations between cinema and war within the changing cultural perceptions of time. The moving image, which will later become the broadcasted image, adopts a seminal role in warfare, with the role of representation becoming even more central as society moves towards the development of fast, efficient and networked communication technologies. The city, for Virilio, is a '*human dwelling place penetrated by channels of rapid communication*' (Virilio, 1986, p. 5).

Virilio published his book *The Lost Dimension* in 1991, following the outbreak of the Gulf War - probably the first war to have received a full,

I was 11 years old when the war broke out. My family lived in Haifa, in a newly built neighbourhood on the slopes of mount Carmel, and from the spacious

Lost Dimension and the introduction of the term 'Picnolepsy' offered me a platform upon which to develop my understanding of 'memory' and 'recollection' as defined at the beginning of this chapter.

⁴⁶ Here, Virilio is also suggesting a connection between the logic of the city and the idea of Reason that gained momentum in enlightenment. He points to the replacement of the human soul with the reign of reason, meaning that the body is now conceived only as a vehicle of the brain, taking the dichotomy between body and soul, or body and mind, further. In this sense, his thought resonates, to some extent, with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty as described above.

live, video 'documentation'⁴⁷ that appeared to happen in reality and on the screen simultaneously. The book, which continued Virilio's previous logic, within which technology and war are positioned at the centre of cultural and historical development, anticipated the televised war and, maybe in an ironic turn, it was published in synchronicity with this 'live' demonstration of how war strategies and communication systems – namely, the broadcasted image – are interconnected via a mechanism comparable to a Chinese finger trap.⁴⁸

This model is complicated even further with the development of instant messaging and mass digital

balcony of the house at No. 3 Geulei-Teiman Street,⁵² you could see the Mediterranean ocean. Around this same time, I remember autumn afternoons of seating on my window sill, staring at the clouds floating above the ocean, and imagining them to be huge chunks of the earth coming together, connecting once again into one united landscape in which I could imagine everything I ever dreamt of seeing at my feet. I would be the princess of this world, of course. I never thought of being a queen; it seemed like too much of a responsibility. But even the idea of being a princess urged some sort of discomfort that I felt as an annoying awareness in the space between my toes. And so, I decided that I would be the peace-bearer who had brought all the lands together. And that's all. Of course, my life could maintain

⁴⁷ The word 'documentation' here is problematic because it might imply, if used without care, a relatively neutral position, while at the same time, some would argue that the coverage offered of the Gulf War was far from neutral, and, in fact, that much of it was invented in order to affirm a historical narrative that had never taken place as it was told. Famously, Jean Baudrillard, in the three articles that compose the book *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1991), attempts to expose the war as a masquerade, meant to cover the actual brutality with which the U.S.A attempted to change the political map of the Middle East. I use the word 'documentation' here because it is my belief that while there is a growing awareness to the malicious potential of the broadcasted image and its power to reinvent historical events as these happen, the vast majority of the people around me, and myself included, still see in journalism an idea of truth being presented. The word 'documentation' is put in quotation marks to note the awareness of its shaky position in the sentence.

⁴⁸ The book itself shifts from very abstract and theoretical accounts of the definition of space and its changing perception in contemporary culture, to very detailed, technical accounts of aviation mechanics and electronics, and how communication systems are the driving force and logic behind contemporary aviation techniques.

⁵² Geulei-Teiman, in translation to English means "The Ones Freed of Yemen", in reference to the controversial operation that Israel has performed in 1948, with the assistance of the American aviation forces. According to the Israeli history books, from which I have learnt in high school, the operation which was called "On the Wings of Eagles" was controversial because it was done without the consent of the local government which had shown a discriminative approach towards the Jews in the area. A series of pogroms had badly hurt the Jewish refugee camps and there was a fear that those would not survive. The immigration operation was a secret operation, at the end of which, 45,000 Yemen refugees were rescued and brought to Israel. The parallel street to Geulei-Teiman, where one of my best friends lived, was named Giborei-Getto-Varsha, in translation to English, "The Heroes of Warsaw Ghetto", referring to a small group of Jews that had organized a rebellion in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Second World War and have defeated temporarily the German Army. Most of them did not survive the war. They were the only group of Jews we learnt of at school, who had resisted the Nazi regime through an effort to publish a local newspaper within the Ghetto and an active organized physical rebellion

social networks, which feed us 'live broadcasts' of every mundane or politically meaningful activity.

Already born within the flat urban scape that Lefebvre, Debord and Virilio describe, I found Virilio's *Lost Dimension* and the analysis he offers to our cultural state of mind to be a fruitful ground for crystallizing some of the issues that Curatorial Practice is facing with the advent of digital communication networks.

The first issue brought to mind is that curatorial mechanisms of display, which are constructed on the basis of the common or social space, intentionally designed for physical journeys; mechanisms positioned at the centre of Curatorial Practice's logic, in the form of the exhibition, are no longer accessible to audiences in the traditional sense.⁴⁹ Curatorial Practice's insistence of remaining locked in the museum and the gallery pushed it further away from the central stage for the production of common narratives, and, as such, it seems to be in a state of crisis.

The crisis is not one of 'authenticity', as Parry underlines

almost no meaning after this mission had been accomplished, and so I would cry a little, wishing my father was there, and return to telling the stories of my Barbie dolls' biographies.

When the war broke, the legends of my fathers' childhood stories of being stuck in shelters and pranking the teachers at night suddenly turned out to be as bitter as they were sweet – just like my grandmother's story about the time in Auschwitz when she stole a jar of jam from the central kitchen and, although caught, was agile enough to escape the hand of the soldier that had shone the flashlight on to her back.

The sound of the sirens, which I only knew as the monotonous piercing sound I am expected to stand still for in national ceremonies of commemoration, started to break into a climbing and falling cry, which reminded me a feeling of nausea. With little understanding of what was occurring, I saw my father rush into my room as I sat down on the bed and tried to figure out how to I run without slipping the stairs on my way to the shelter. The shelter, versions of which were built underneath every single private house in Israel, was two floors down and I was terribly worried about Julie, my dog. She did not have a gas mask like all of us, and the Israeli

⁴⁹ The term 'accessible' here refers to the interpretation of the term presented in the introduction to this study. Accessibility refers not only to the availability of such places to visitors, but also to the ability of audiences to understand the logic of such places and find a way of integrating them with their current understanding of representational modes.

(Parry, 2007). In actuality, it can be described as a mental distance between curating's perception of space, and audiences' (as well as curators') changing perceptions of the same notion. In this sense, the digitalization of archives, the inclusion of interactive labels, the formation of the 'black cube' and the predominance of digital video in museum displays (changes that are often introduced as examples of the 'digitalization' of Curatorial Practice) could not, and are still not able to, bridge this gap between space and experience, which is so essential to the history of the development of curating.

Further to the link established between the space of the city and curatorial space, it seems that understanding the logic of *The Lost Dimension* might be key to understanding how Curatorial Practice can engage new communication media.

Sketching a direct link to Lefebvre's thought, Virilio concludes in the first pages of *The Lost Dimension*: *'Today, the abolition of distances in time by various means of communications...results in a confusion in which the image of the City suffers the direct and indirect effects of iconological torsion and*

Defence Forces, who have been giving them out in the local malls, would not allow me to borrow one of the incubators that are distributed for babies in case a chemical or dirty bomb hit the city.

A routine had started and, with it, my memory loss. I only remember the ceremonial details: the shelter needs to be cleaned, organized, and checked every day; doors and windows, and any surface made of glass, needs to be sealed with masking tape to prevent the glass from breaking. A bucket of water and bicarbonate of soda needs to be ready at the entrance to the shelter. All gas masks had to be counted and arranged, making sure that each box had the right name on it. The filters needed to be checked. The Antropin injections needed to be to hand. The instructions manual on how to inject the Antropin was hung on the wall.

The alarm usually went off in the middle of the night. My slippers, which I never wore otherwise, were beside my bed. We would run down to the shelter, and before sealing all the remaining possible holes through which contaminated air could get in, placing rugs moisten with bicarbonate water in the gap between the door and the floor and the gaps between the window and the window seal, I would shout for Julie, who used to sleep in the laundry room. Once we were all locked in behind the huge metal door,

distortion, in which the most elementary reference points disappear one by one...Most decisively, the demise of the ancient categorization and partition of the physical dimension leads to the loss of the geometric reference points' (Virilio, 1991, p. 30). Virilio highlights the loss of three reference points: the physical division of space; the meaning of the city as an image and the Euclidian geometrical perspective.

THE LOST DIMENSION: LIFE CATEGORIES AND THE LOSS OF THE CITY IMAGE

The loss of a direct relationship between the body and the physical space, in Virilio's understanding, is a form of losing contact with ancient life categorizations that governed social logistics for decades. This means that the definitions of labour, leisure, social interaction and formal polity are blurred and become inconsequential as the same instruments and mental spaces that we use for work are also used in leisure activities, etc.⁵⁰

underground, we waited patiently until we could hear a boom, or until the monotonic sound of the alarm would return to one continuous cry that would announce our relative safety, firstly, to stand still, and then to go out. There was no radio or television reception in our shelter. The news came only later, after we already knew, by the sound of the fallings, how close the missiles hit.

For the first part of the war, we could not go to school but at a certain point, a decision was made that everything must get back to normal, and our habitual rituals needed be replaced. My mother drove me to school the first day, stuck in traffic with my gas mask at hand, in a carton box that was hung over my shoulder like a lady's handbag. I remember the main street of Ahuza that day felt festive and ceremonial; all the children with the brown cardboard boxes, somewhat excited.

Our first class was arts and crafts, and it was dedicated to our gas masks. We were asked to create an alternative box and decorate it with glitter and flowers. In a very short while, the brown boxes had disappeared from the landscape of the city as new decoration ideas flooded

⁵⁰ This loss of distinctive spaces for everyday activities, especially the blurring of borders between labour and leisure, is a cause for concern and of much recent debate around the notion of precarious work and the logic of what is reluctantly termed 'cognitive capitalism'. These were expressed in recent years in a number of conferences and activities raising the awareness of what is at stake when labour is encouraged as a form of leisure that one does for free, because one is following the passion of one's heart. This is apparent predominantly in cultural industries, with the proliferation of 'internships' as what might be read as a new form of slavery. To name a few of the conferences and workshops in which I have been lucky to take part, I would mention the lectures given to BA and MA students at Goldsmiths College, University of London between 2009 and 2013 by the Carrotworkers' Collective (Carrotworkers'

Furthermore, as all activities are mediated through the same space – that of the screen – action, perception, communication and representation come to occupy the same position in relation to the passive viewer. The ability to differentiate between what is central and what is peripheral in one’s life deteriorates.

This shift in perspective⁵¹ points to a fundamental amnesia that can be anticipated with the forgetfulness that characterises those systems which direct our observation. I

this new style-accessory. My friends and I walked to school with glittering boxes of various kinds, comparing our meticulous artwork, taking care of our masks as if they were jewels.

Within two weeks, it already became socially unacceptable to show up with your own humble, hand-made receptacle that might still reveal a bit of the naked, brown skin of the box, and its birth mark: a huge exclamation mark printed on its front with the word ‘warning’ in red. And so I began to nag my mother, like all my friends did, to buy me one of the new, plastic square boxes for the

Collective website can be accessed here: <http://carrotworkers.wordpress.com/>), the Precarious Workers Brigade (<http://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/>), and a two-day conference at Middlesex University under the title *Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work in a Changing World*. The works of artist Stephanie Rothenberg mark, for me, one of the first meaningful engagements with such concerns. The work *Invisible Threads* (2011-2012), which she created with artist Jeff Crouse, points to the threshold between labour and leisure in online gaming activities. The artwork used the platform of *Second Life*, a multi-player, visual social network, where avatars represent users, who attempt to make some sort of impact in the digital world created for them by earning virtual money in order to buy virtual clothes, housing and gain access to further features of the game. Rothenberg and Course built a jeans factory in ‘Second Life’, the workers at which were children who were paid to perform the virtual task of arranging the materials and instructions in the right order, while costumers who ordered their personalized, designer jeans could see how the product was manufactured online. At the same time, the factory had a physical manifestation, where a large-scale printer had actually printed the design to be sent to the costumer in real life. As much as this work seemed to be a viable business model, especially with the recent successful operation of 3D printers, it reflects and comments on the exploitation of labour as a form of pastime one does for one’s own spiritual comfort rather than for gain, and demonstrates how the blurring of such divisions could easily cross into dangerous grounds of abuse and imbalance between labour and capital (a documentation of the process can be accessed here: <http://eyebeam.org/projects/invisible-threads>).

⁵¹ Manuel Castells, in his trilogy *The Information Age*, notes this distortion in the image of the city and the changing face of social constructs as we are witnessing their development since the early 2000s. In his definition of the space of what he terms ‘the informational city’, he depicts a space of flows rather than a geographical locus. In his understanding, the urban space, as a centre of information and capital, is no longer a pre-constructed architectonic space. In this sense, he reinforces Virilio’s idea of the loss of categorization. He depicts the urban space as a process that is influenced not only by local interactions, but also by global movements. The identification of a ‘place’ specific to a cultural history, or to the ideology of the state, is rapidly eroding. He projects current changes in the geographical structure of the US into a future where the city becomes a stretched suburban living area, with no particular centre, around which activity is magnetized, like in the model of the industrial city, where higher classes within the social construct do not attach themselves to a specific location or history, and express their global presence in building resorts or hotels that have a particular style or design all over the globe. Finally, he proposes that the structure of such an urban space (no longer a city) is a direct reflection of the rising dominant ideology of postmodernism, driven by the notion of ‘the end of history’, allowing itself to denote partitions between past, present and future, between central and peripheral in the widespread network of centres, who are dedicate, not to a communal life, but to a seclusion based on class division, The only distinction that he can find is that of personal identity in relation to class, rather than a sense of belonging to a social sphere or a community, where different classes of society inevitably intermingle in their interaction within the city centre, marked in the traditional city as places of worship and/or commerce.

refer to the broadcasted moving image and also to the constant flow of information in our electronic 'newsfeeds'. Our Facebook 'walls', for example, in their name and appearance, blur the distinction between the political and the personal, meaning that the banana my friend found, which seemed to remind him of the physiology of a human reproductive organ, is put on the same plane as my other friend's petition against female circumcision.

This amnesia, when stretched into the past and further into the future, suggests that the reason we are unable to understand 'the art of memory' today is related to these shifts in the understanding of physical space. It also raises fundamental curatorial questions: How would identity be constructed under the new terms of a lost connection with physical space? How do we know what to remember when we are constantly flooded with streams of information that do not signify themselves in a hierarchical order

mask. I got a purple one because I didn't like pink, and because the other kids used to make fun of me when I proclaimed blue was my favourite colour; they said that blue was a boys' colour. Since I had already been the subject of gender ambiguity when my mother cut my hair short at the age of 5 and no one could tell whether I was a boy or a girl, I thought it would be a good idea to remain gender-neutral, at least during the war.

Seven years later, I would still use the plastic mineral water bottles my parents had bought as supplies for the war whenever I went out on a field trip with my friends to a forest or hill. It took our family the same amount of time to digest all the cans of corn, beans and tuna that were stored in the shelter.

I don't remember much of the Gulf War. I don't even remember the fear. I do remember how much I was worried about Julie, and whether or not she could make it to the shelter before we would seal it. I also remember that, for Purim that year, when the war was still on, I dressed up as General Schwarzkopf.⁵³ My father drew me a map of Iraq with

⁵³ General Schwarzkopf was the commander of the US Central Forces during the Gulf War. He was a regular image on our television screens and a target of much satirical work at the time. He was ridiculed for the ambiguity there seem to be between his physical condition (he was seen as fat and old) and the operations that he had commanded, which emphasized the undertaking of much physical labour in his name. This juxtaposition was used to demonstrate that his engagement with the actual war that took place in the Gulf was not one of physical intervention in the field but, rather, a mediated engagement. Schwarzkopf, like us, was watching the war on a screen, and making strategic decisions from a distant position.

of perspective? Is there even a possibility of deploying memory practices in the culture of the flickering, ever-changing image, where boundaries between central and peripheral are eroded? Furthermore, within a postmodern ideology where no meta-narratives seem to be adequate criteria for preservation or negligence, what will guide us through such decisions?

signs of bombing. There were no people or villages on this map - just a few camels.⁵⁴



Figure 8 – Me as General Schwarzkopf and my beloved blonde, Julie (February 1991)

All these questions are both urgent and relevant for Curatorial Practice today, as common memory is already being constructed by invisible hands on the main stage of knowledge-production, meaning curation's efforts to make itself apparent and self-aware are quickly dissolving into its long history of amnesia. It is important to note that such questions are no longer abstract; they do not refer to a far future, but to the possibility of recollecting our present and recent past properly.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ I offer these personal memories here for two reasons. Firstly, it is my attempt, in reading Virilio's text, to locate myself in the time and space of the book's publication, as a means of intentionally repositioning my personal memory in the context of the discourse suggested, and the influence of what Virilio is pointing to, within the context of my own life. For example, I believe my memoir of the Gulf War reflects, in one way or another, the experience of many children who participated in the war from different sides of the television screen. It is a way of repositioning myself as the central node of perspective; as a way of escaping the generalized and almost apocalyptic tone of Virilio's text. Secondly, the associations reading this book brought to mind (my naïve experience of war, my perception of the television set at my grandparents' house), point to spaces of *the curatorial* within the social field. For example, I can observe how my experience of the war, and the coping mechanisms I was taught, played a part in constructing my identity as an Israeli. Indeed, the gas mask – this terrible instrument of rubber and stench – was somehow, in a discursive, collaborative act of schoolteachers, turned into a fashionable accessory. Here, I locate a dramatic shift in the symbolic meaning of the mask. By the end of the war, there were a few girls in my class who insisted on carrying the masks around with them even though it was not necessary. They were so identified with the mask as a symbolic object that assisted them in digesting the anxiety of the war through an aestheticization of the violence they had to demonstrate upon their bodies night after night, that even if the war might have been over in terms of the television screen's output (it was generally 'out of fashion'), their bodies had not yet taken enough breath to allow them to abandon the ritualistic routine of the war. Hence, I find in this story, an opportunity to reflect, via my own life and experience, on how these processes of identity and memory construction operate on an individual level – a question with which I am working in this chapter. The story, I find, is funny, sad and terrifying at the same time. In parallel to its emotional significance as a marker in time where history and self collide, it also points to the ways in which the logic of *the curatorial* functions transparently in our everyday life. Although this was not a self-conscious curatorial act, its elusive form allows me to widen my understanding of *the curatorial* further and ask myself about its manifestation in unexpected spaces in the construction of my own identity and memory.

⁵⁵ Because 15-20 years – the time it took the internet to proliferate as a major communication method, which might seem like the blink of an eye in a traditional historical perspective – is already a tremendous amount of time in the realm of online culture, where information is produced at an astounding rate.

THE LOST DIMENSION: GEOMETRICAL SPACE

The preliminary assumption offered through this transition might appear to be a further development of the shift Lefebvre identifies between a geometrical representation of space and a more abstract, mathematical depiction of space as calculable through movement and speed; however, Virilio complicates this by adding the implications of new communication models, which are also based on speed: *'In the face of this disordering of appearances, the orientation of point of view is not so much the angulation of surfaces and superficies of non-Euclidean geometry as it is the absence of any delay in the broadcast and rebroadcast of televised images'* (Virilio, 1991, p. 31). He takes us further into this logic, explaining how such visual communication models change fundamental notions of perception: *'Point of view, the omnipresent centre of the ancient perspective design, gives way to the televised instantaneity of a prospective observation, of a glance that pierces through; the appearances of the greatest distances and the widest expanses'* (Virilio, 1991, p. 31). While one would expect the lost dimension to be that of the depth of space, Virilio highlights the disappearance of the 'point', which is the point of reference connecting our senses of vision and orientation to the natural world through a linear perspective; a hierarchical perspective of which, according to Virilio, we are forgetting the figurative and metaphorical meaning.

Moreover, as we shall see, the shift of perspective to which Virilio refers is connected to perception in more than just an abstract, theoretical sphere of speculation. Virilio refers to this dismantling of our notions of space and distance in a deeper sense; in his mind, we literally lose our perspective: *'Suddenly, we possess this ease of passing without transition or delay from the perception of the infinitesimally small to the perception of the infinitely large, from the immediate proximity of the visible to the visibility of all that lingers beyond our field of vision. And suddenly the ancient distinctions among the dimensions disappear'* (Virilio, 1991, p. 32).

To further explicate what I mean, perspective, here, is the exact point of connection between our mode of perception and our bodily position within space, whether physical or, as Virilio argues, political or social. The loss of linear perspective – which is the way in which we naturally perceive distance, space and position – is a loss in our ability to discern central from peripheral and urgent from mundane, as it is instinctively incorporated within us. The point of view, or dimension zero, as referenced by Virilio, can therefore be read as the self: what we lose is our perception

of self as the centre of the world from which every space deduces itself.⁵⁶

The implications of such a disappearance are related back to perspective in its most biological manifestation of our field of vision. The self as centre is questioned. In Virilio's words: *'Where once the aesthetics of the appearance of an analogical, stable image of static nature predominated, we now have the aesthetics of the disappearance of a numerical, unstable image of fleeting nature, whose persistence is exclusively retinal—namely, that of the sensitization time, which eludes our conscious attention, once the threshold of 20 milliseconds was crossed—just as with the invention of the ultra-speed camera, whose one million images per second exceeded the composition time of 24 images per second'* (Virilio, 1991, p. 36).

If indeed the self is the 'ground zero'⁵⁷ of perception, then this implies that one does not have a choice; self-perception is deconstructed, meaning self is no longer able to discern the logic of aesthetic arrangement in its relation to the spoken ethics of society; the self is unable to position itself within this logic, and can no longer relate to the linear construction of time through a continual narrative of identity; the self is no longer able to notice the conditions under which perception is constructed.

PUTTING DIMENSIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

Just before we lose our perspective in Virilio's terms, however, I would like to think about it once more. What is perspective? True, it is used as a representational instrument; a technique that saw its rebirth in Renaissance painting and architecture, allowing two-dimensional planes to imitate three-dimensional depths through a

⁵⁶ I contend that Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community* (1993) attempts to respond to some of those questions. In his text, the identity of the self is no longer constructed according to an ideology of a local community or political group and, in a way, detached from locality altogether; rather, identity is offered as the opposite of itself, constructed according to the points that differentiates one from another, rather than according to what connects me to an 'other'. In his vision, this can develop into an idealized society that would accumulate political significance not via a permanent set of values but as part of a constant movement and shift between different categories of life responsibilities.

⁵⁷ The term 'ground zero' here, is used, in a self-aware manner, to allude to the 9/11 tragedy –probably one of the most epic televised events in the history of humanity. This event which propelled a long war, chasing the image of one man – Bin Laden – was concluded with another epic moment, that of Bin Laden's capture, depicted by one of the most curious images in the history of war: the US cabinet, staring at a screen, with grave facial expressions distorting the centre of attention from the invisible document that they had presumably been watching, to their moment of realization. Not to mention all the theories that propelled and assumed that Bin Laden was never caught and that this was all just a publicity stunt so that the war could finally end and relieve the US from its grave expenses at the rise of internal economic crisis, these two events probably mark in the most dramatic way this loss of the individual point of view, which is now managed by the broadcasted image. The memorial 'Ground Zero' which was built in commemoration of the victims of 9/11, interestingly, is a huge abyss that opens up the negative space of the Twin Towers – a negative monument, which I interpret also as a metaphor for the loss of dimension zero, as it depicts in a visceral fashion a type of internal withdrawal which, I argue, could be understood as characterizing the state of the televised mind.

calculated effect on vision.

At the same time, and just as Virilio recognizes, it is embedded in our biological structure; our mind translates space in the form of perspective, and surely our bodies came before Renaissance painting. Merleau-Ponty explains it well in the following quotation from his book *The Visible and the Invisible*: '*Perspective is much more than a secret technique for imitating a reality given as such to all men. It is the very realization and invention of a world dominated and possessed through and through in an instantaneous system, which spontaneous vision at best sketches, trying vainly to hold together all the things which clamor for its whole attention. Geometrical perspective is no more the only way of looking at the sensible world than the classical portrait is the only view of man*' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 53). Here, the same phenomenological logic that refuses to differentiate between perception and the body positions the self back at the centre of the picture, exposing perspective or, to expand, any other form of representation, as part of the construct of the self. If we bear this view of perception in mind, then there is no possibility of detaching our perception of space as a three-dimensional perspective from our bodies as they navigate through their internal and/or external realities, unless a biological perturbation occurs that could alter vision altogether.

The sense of self, the zero dimension, as a point of reference, cannot really be lost. The only thing that might occur is its positioning in a different medium or in a different system, within which hierarchical logics of possession do not have the same prominence. If we examine the online landscape as probably the best example of a space flattened to the dimensions of the screen, completely dominated by the logic of mathematical, digital representations of space as speed, we will find that, in fact, perspective, in its most symbolic ways, governs all aspects of interface design, assisting us in the difference between central, important, urgent and peripheral, deducible, and mundane: small-print, big-print; blue, green and red, all utilize our most instinctive biological tendencies – colour, size and relationship – to frame preferences in the traditional geometric perspective of representation.

It is even surprising that, within the realm of the digital, where completely different navigational laws can be invented and experimented with, most interface designs and most 'virtual reality' platforms do, in fact, imitate and correspond with our experience of the natural world, whilst the medium attempts to hide behind its own mathematics

as a quiet distributor of dreams.⁵⁸ As such, the online representational world is deeply connected to the bare skeleton of the construct of space as we know it.

In a way, our means of dividing space in time is related to our positioning in existence through the faculties of memory as recollection, which organises experience in a linear coherence of past-present-future or through the logic of causality; this is rooted in our finite existence. We *are* the division of space in time. This is the profound truth of our temporality and the way in which we always will be subjected to the conditioning of time. It derives from us *being* the temporal manifestation of an infinite space.

Whilst it is true that the logic according to which we evaluate priorities in the digital sphere may not be in correlation with current dominant ideological systems that tie our physical proximity to an emotional proximity, managing identification in relation to a geographical model, a digital perception of space is, nevertheless, no different from the cityscape: it is constructed according to social narratives and ideological dominants.⁵⁹ These are driven by the new types of relationships offered in the age of digital communication, reflecting and representing postmodern ideologies.

Manuel Castells, in *The Rise of the Network Society*, provides an analysis of postmodern architectural tendencies and changes in the constructs of urban planning as a reflection of new power relationships and definitions of centrality that have

⁵⁸ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, in their book *Remediation* (2000), offer a thorough historical account of the relationship between linear perspective and the development of digital interface design, according to which linear perspective, and the attempt to imitate a sense of orientation and three-dimensionality, are part of an inherent aspiration designers have for transparency and immediacy of the mediating technology they use. While *Remediation* is a meaningful account describing the techniques and motivation of such hyper-mediation tendencies, and while virtual reality is placed at the centre of the development of digital interface design, it represents only one side of the equation. Another tendency in digital interface design, which usually is more prominent in the design of interfaces developed by tech companies such as Google, circles around simplicity and minimalism and is inspired by the initial engineered environment of the 'Net', based mainly on text. Furthermore, Bolter's analysis of virtual reality does not take any critical position with regards to the possible implications, and political drive, that lie beneath this tendency for transparency and immediacy. I would argue that Virilio's critique of this disappearance and the transparency of the medium is a recurring dialectic that surrounds any new development in communication and mediation technologies. What should be noted here, though, is that the inherent wish to make the medium disappear, and this apparent hope to disappear within it, is in the hands of the observer as much as the hand of technologies. Hence, alienation itself is not directly and solely related to what can be achieved through the art of mimesis, in terms of persuasion and behavioural education, in such a suspension of disbelief. The viewer, visitor or user is willingly suspending him/herself as a means of alienation of the self from the reality of life; because life, as the film director, Alejandro Jodorowsky once remarked in an interview for American Television, is the epitome of the most vile and violent experience.

⁵⁹ Here, what is more worrying is the recurrent notion of the 'personalized' online interface that attempts to 'predict' one's favourite music, images, news and friends through algorithmic calculations of 'likes' and 'dislikes', or keyword searches. This tendency is often characterized as the 'filter bubble' and is further criticized and explicated in the works of Eli Pariser (*The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*, 2011), Geert Lovink (*Dark Fiber: Tracking Critical Internet Culture*, 2002) and José van Dijck (*The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*, 2013).

become prominent with the advent of digital communication and its central role in economic exchange. As he puts it: *'Some tendencies in "postmodern architecture", as presented for instance by the works of Philip Johnson or Charles Moore, under the pretext of breaking down the tyranny of codes, such as modernism, attempt to cut off all ties with specific social environments...yet in fact what most postmodernism does is to express, in almost direct terms, the new dominant ideology: the end of history and the supersession of places in the space of flows... the liberation from cultural codes hides in fact the escape from historically rooted society'* (Castells, 2010, p. 449). What Castells highlights in his historical understanding of urban space, which culminates with the vivid description of the post-modern city, is how the cityscape changes to fit our modes of operation – and the advent of digital communication technologies has not changed that. Art and stylistic movements always, and inevitably, reflect the social realm and its dominant ideology, whether overtly so, or by declaring themselves as enacting a meaningful resistance.

I am not suggesting that narratives and ideological dominants, as they are reinforced through the form, logic and design of our communication networks, should not be reviewed, criticized or analysed. However, I do feel it is important to do so with our eyes open to the different strategies deployed underneath the apparent window of the screen, strategies that I would claim are the most significant form of curating in contemporary culture. Essentially, there is a need to offer a thorough analysis of the construction of online paths and central nodes of information and develop a common awareness of the architecture of the online space itself accordingly. There is a need to expose the ideological constructs according to which information is accessed; there is a need to understand the role of accessibility and who facilitates it better; there is the need to question the mode of integral social surveillance embedded in the online space and governing our movement; and there is the need to ask ourselves how our desires and identities are constructed according to such logic. Most importantly, I would argue, coping mechanisms that promote self-aware systems exposing those constructs should be distributed so that the individual is able to restore her/his agency when interacting with his her/his own memory.

THE LOST DIMENSION IN THE HYPER-REAL

If we allow ourselves to imagine this kind of world, then what comes to mind is an urgent criticism, whereby Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* is completed in Virilio's vision of *The Lost Dimension*, leading us to a world that is immersed in Baudrillard's Hyperreal: a total virtual reality that is merely a simulation and a total alienation from

the natural and, eventually, from our 'self'.

However, if we accept Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, then, just as language and thought are one and the same thing, representation and reality (or, more accurately, perception) are not two different realms but are interconnected on a very physical level. What is offered, therefore, by the notion of the *simulacra* in this context, is not a world detached from reality, but a complex layering of different aspects of material reality as they are expressed through the development of language and communication models. Nor is the idea of the *simulacra* new to our age. *Simulacra*, in fact, describes a permanent state of being resulting from being human: a speaking animal. If look at culture from such a perspective, the digital realm does not offer any radical new model, but rather another layer of simulation and representation, adding to those with which we are already identified, to the extent that they become transparent to us, i.e. invisible.⁶⁰

When claiming that what we are doing through our communication technologies is adding dimensions to our existence, I suggest that we are developing further layers of symbolism and representation; it is the continuous, natural process of the development of language, a language able to represent and encompass within it a global network of influences that provide our species with the only opportunity of surviving, with the explosion in human population, the density of our communities, the distribution of natural resources, and the deterioration of natural habitats.

Virilio, Baudrillard and Debord identify a danger of losing ourselves within representation, the spectacle or the Hyper-real. We are already lost here; there is no real division that can be made between this symbolic universe within which we are immersed and what we refer to as the natural world of phenomena. We *are* the natural world of phenomena, and we cannot diverge from it as much as we try. As long as we are our bodies, as long as we are humans, perception and representation, thought and language are one and the same thing, and the anxiety revealed underneath the levels of analysis offered here is inherent to the cautionary tale we are telling ourselves, which has received various representations under numerous names.

⁶⁰ Systems that may seem transparent to us are systems of visual literacy, like art, or like the use of icons online to direct an activity, formulated by a single symbol such as a 'like'/'dislike' button. Other examples are the notion of a 'logo' as an identifying visual marker of a corporate or a company, and even verbal language and written language, which in themselves could be seen as forms of technological revolution at the time at which they occurred.

In our current culture, its popular name is 'virtuality'.⁶¹

VIRTUALITY, EMBODIMENT AND SITUATED COGNITION

Katherine Hayles, in her article 'The Condition of Virtuality', explains the nature and origin of the fable at the root of the anxiety of losing a grasp on reality with the advent of new communication media: *'virtuality is the cultural perception that material objects are interpenetrated by information patterns. Note that the definition plays off a duality – materiality on the one hand, information on the other. The bifurcation between them is a historically specific construction that emerged in the wake of World War II. ... It is also a mind-set that finds instantiation in an array of powerful technologies. The perception facilitates the development of the technologies, and the technologies reinforce the perception'* (2001, p. 69). Hayles points to a transparent supposition or axiomatic conviction with deep historical roots that lies at base of our understanding of what information constitutes and how we develop, perceive and think of information technologies.

For Hayles, this understanding relates to fundamental binary constructs at the base of Western thought. In this case, the first binary couple recognized in her text is that of 'matter' and 'information'. Hayles demonstrates how the theoretical assumptions prevailing today understand information as an abstract pattern that can be isolated from any relationship with a transmitter or a receiver, and therefore can be regarded as a free-floating element or energy. The acceptance of such an approach to information is circumstantial in her historical analysis, and relates to the technologies available at the time this supposition was made. This approach's resilience and proliferation, however, is rooted in a complex set of psychological conditions embedded within Western culture's deepest beliefs.

When tracing the logic of such a dichotomy between information and matter and the implications of such a view on the development of information technologies, Hayles identifies a parallel between the binary couples of matter/information and body/soul, explaining that: *'Abstracting information from a material base meant that information could become free-floating, unaffected by changes in context.... If we can become the information we have constructed, we, too, can soar free, immortal like the gods'* (Hayles, 2001, pp. 73-75). We should take a moment to imagine whether we could isolate memory and define it as some sort of substance independent of our bodies,

⁶¹ If, indeed, there is no differentiation between the symbolic realm, language and thought, and if we think of language and art as technological tools, then it is clear why it is impossible to separate our technologies from our bodies, further supporting the assumption that technology is an extension of our bodies, as it was presented in Chapter 2.

transferrable from one host to another. Would this mean we could extend our lives forever? We could live on a CD, a DVD, a USB stick, a television set or game console. We could even duplicate consciousness and communicate with ourselves through the same instruments. Indeed, the banal dichotomy upon which all other dichotomies exist – and that is reflected in all anxieties – is this annoying, inevitable binary couple of life and death, and it also seems to be holding together our condition of virtuality.

Hayles then takes the reader on a journey through different ideological fictions, literary and academic, that are constructed on this imagined possibility of isolating information from its medium. Such works include Hans Moravec's *Mind Children* (1988) and Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (1976),⁶² both of which depict a reality where ideas, consciousness, memory and life can be safeguarded and remain immortal, isolated from the bodies that once held them together.

This mythology also finds its expression and currency within the dialectics Michael Heim identifies within the voices that encourage, and object to, the development of new information technologies. In Heim's analysis, he defines 'Network Idealists'⁶³ as those who see in the digital realm a way of escaping or subverting the logic of dominant ideologies as they are expressed in everyday life. I would argue further that the separation between information and matter, or between mind and body, offers not only an afterlife defying death but, just as importantly, an afterlife within life; a 'second life'⁶⁴ as a way of manifesting one's aspects of identity and fantasy that are not permitted within the constraints of normative social life⁶⁵. The digital realm offers,

⁶² Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*, has also had a prominent part in the shaping of the language of digital discourses. His term 'meme' is widely used as a means of expressing the survival of ideas through dissemination and proliferation of expression. Hayles' renegotiation of Dawkins ideas suggests an alternative evolution theory, where what strives to survive is information rather than its manifestation in matter, are well reflecting one of the subversive dominant ideologies that drive activities online.

⁶³ In 'The Cyberspace Dialectic', Heim proposes an overview of the prevalent approaches to the rapid development of new digital communication technologies and models as they are expressed by dominant public figures and movements. He divides the digital dialectic into two apparent groups: firstly, the 'Naïve Realists', which he defines as those seeking that meaning of human existence in a return to the natural, which they perceive as opposed to 'the technological'. Technology, for the Naïve Realists, is not a sign or source for advancement and evolution; rather, they see it as the force that drives humanity away from its natural course of development. The second group, which Heim names the 'Network Idealists', perceives cohesiveness between the advancement of technologies and human evolution. Those that belong to this group object any regulatory acts that seek to control or moderate technological development or the limitation if its use. They believe that technological development and the creativity attached to it is the appropriate ethos for human intelligence. Hence, they work for the further assimilation of technologies into human culture and believe strongly in the personal and social freedom these technologies provide. Heim offers a third approach, which he sees as a synthesis of the first two: 'Virtual Realism'. This approach brings together the enthusiasm of the Network Idealists in exploring the possibilities and potentialities of new technological development but also adopts the scepticism of the Naïve Realists in exploring and negotiating the ethical implications of assimilating such technologies. Through Virtual Realism, Heim strives to critically examine the development of such technologies and construct procedures for informed decision-making in regulating the use, dissemination and development of such technologies (Heim, 2001).

⁶⁴ *Second Life* is also the name of a multi-user network social network and game discussed earlier, which, in the ability to construct an alternative 'life', could be interpreted as a space for managing regrets.

⁶⁵ In this way, I like to think of the internet as the representation of our common subconscious.

through this separation, a new type of so-called freedom from a world that does not, and cannot, answer the expectations stipulated by contemporary culture. The viewpoint of Virillio, Baudrillard and, to some extent Debord, could be interpreted as reflecting what Heim terms 'Naïve Realists' – those that perceive technology as a wall built between the self and her/his life. One fears death, the other fears eternal life; however, it is the same underlying principle that can be identified as the source of these hopes and fears, which is the assumption that information and matter, mind and body and, indeed, culture and nature, can be separated and regarded as distinct structures that are independent of one another.

VIRTUALITY AND CURATORIAL PRACTICE

This condition of virtuality can serve as a prism through which we can examine, once again, the assumptions explored in previous chapters of this research so as to provide further currency for my argument that it is urgent to escape this labyrinth of binary thinking when examining Curatorial Practice.

The same dichotomy of the condition of virtuality, for example, describes the conflict of Curatorial Practice in relation to its definition as attached to the display, organisation and caring of physical objects, as illustrated by the history of Museum Studies.⁶⁶ Ross Parry draws this conclusion in *Recoding the Museum's Meaning*, identifying one of the greatest fears as the 'disappearance' of the object with the infiltration of new representational technologies, leaving the museum as an empty shell, devoured by the nothingness it presents, eventually made redundant (Parry, 2007, pp. 58-61).⁶⁷

The other side of this dialectic promotes the digitization of the museum and cannot see a rupture between Curatorial Practice and information technologies. Within this view, one should not be afraid of the dematerialization of the object as long as its memory remains intact; in this view, it is the meaning assigned to the object that turns it into a valuable possession, worthy of preservation while the material aspect of the object can be neglected. This approach therefore states that it is the 'informational' aspect, rather than the material aspect, of objects that drives the ethos

⁶⁶ An overview of the conflicts Museum Studies has identifies in relation to the primacy of information in contemporary culture is offered in the comprehensive review offered by Ross Parry in his book *Decoding The Museum* (Parry, 2007). An overview of the development of museological thought and self-awareness is given in the first chapter of this research.

⁶⁷ While the museum is taken in this research as a prime example of a curatorial space – in many cases, the only space considered as a prototype for Curatorial Practice – it also reflects on the conflicts inherent within Curatorial Practice. While I would suggest that the redundancy of the museum does not mean, in any way, the redundancy of curatorial practices, one can reflect on the identity of the curator and the changing paradigms of the profession through the changes that occurred in the museum in the last 40 years, with the advancement of digital communication technologies.

of the museum. Accordingly, the museum as an institution might be perceived as the ancestor of the digital, 'virtual' space. As Parry concludes, museums have had a '*long-established reverence for the informational. As much as museums had prized and collected objects, so they had prized and collected the information that gave meaning and context to those objects*' (Parry, 2007, p. 76). In fact, one could say, following the definitions in the previous chapters, that any curatorial space is essentially a 'virtual' space because the negotiation of meaning, which the curatorial space aims to offer, is not embedded in material reality; it is, in fact, engaged in the 'management' of common virtual realities; namely, the myths, religion and ideologies we are submerged in as a society or culture.

At the same time, would we be able to digest or believe such a 'virtual' world if it did not refer to itself with the 'authentic evidence' of the 'real world' as symbolized by objects that are signified – the matter of reality from which language derives? And how can we disconnect Curatorial Practice from its direct physical engagement with the necessity of physical space and display? On the other hand, though, we have already acknowledged that the space of the museum or curatorial space is only a simulation; the world shrunk into manageable size. As such, we go on chasing our own tail of thought in a circular, dialectical progression to try and solve this endless puzzle, the basis of which is in the conditions set for the discussion in the first place: those of the binary opposition. This is how the dichotomized approach, packaged elegantly by Hayles as the 'condition of virtuality', reveals itself to be an insufficient model for the definition of the curatorial space and the curatorial acts performed within it.

EMBODIED AND SITUATED COGNITION

I would suggest a different approach, from which I believe Curatorial Practice as a whole – and, more specifically, online manifestations of Curatorial Practice – could benefit.⁶⁸ Theories of embodied and situated cognition offer a coherent and complete system of ideas based on science and perception, and its study, which are already part of a whole biological system that participates, in its entirety, in our cognitive operations, minute after minute. As such, even within our bodies, a hierarchy between the brain/cognition and the body is refuted.

⁶⁸ As a matter of fact, if we consider Curatorial Practice in its extended field, we might recognize that the solutions I am offering here are already taken into consideration in applications that are developed for digital communication technologies and marketing techniques; and while those that are using this information to their benefit might not identify themselves as curators, they are practicing curation, nonetheless.

Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's book *The Tree of Knowledge* (1987), is one of the first thorough accounts offering an in-depth understanding of such theories. Before they explain their view of human cognition, they offer a history of the development of life, providing a scientific basis for their assumptions and an alternative description of the theory of evolution, which positions the idea of 'natural selection' in a different perspective. The basic axiom running through their assumptions is related to an epistemological approach, inferring that there is no possible knowledge beyond the realm of the knower and the realm of practice (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 27). In this preliminary assumption, they already acknowledge that whatever is expressed through language already belongs to the symbolic order, to the social realm: the order of perception, simulation and representation: *"This circularity, this connection between action and experience, this inseparability between a particular way of being and how the world appears to us, tells us that every act of knowing brings forth a world"* (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 26).

They insist on reminding the reader regularly of these two underlining assumptions and, in doing so, expose the very construct of scientific thought and its absurdity: scientific thought poses axioms that describe the conditions of, say, a scientific experiment. The experiment, therefore, describes a world through this set of conditions, and allows the image of the world – always structured in advance – to come forth as such. The image of the world produced in their experiments almost necessarily reinforce the axioms upon which the experiment was built; what is generated, therefore, is not knowledge of the natural world or the phenomenon observed, but knowledge of how such axioms may manifest themselves in specific situations – not dissimilar to Duchamp's readymade operations. Eventually, the only knowledge accumulated in such a system is knowledge on condition of the knower's perception.

Of course, this is a form of tautology; however, this tautology reflects upon the only thing that is knowable to a degree, and that is what Maturana and Varela would describe as 'structural determinism' (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 96). Meaning that, the biological structure of any living creature (myself included) conditions any possible interaction with its environment; hence, any reaction I have, whether physical, emotional or intellectual, is a reflection of my internal architecture, not of any outside disturbance or stimuli as is generally thought (not dissimilar from the Jewish notion of agency discussed in Chapter 1).

Looking at Curatorial Practice from this perspective, whilst taking into account the conclusions already drawn in previous chapters, one could understand the

importance of Curatorial Practice in the negotiation of the social 'deterministic construct', allowing social change to occur through changing the context, the medium and the way in which things are interpreted. How they are organised and how they create, in turn, the social space through an intensive work with the individual—the visitor, the viewer, the participant—is always at the centre of the practice: its pivot.

Curatorial Practice seems to fluctuate between those two realms in a constant flickering, allowing us glimpses that show there are no boundaries that differentiate external and internal worlds; only in our own mind. Curatorial Practice allows us to separate different layers of symbols – the different strata of the simulacrum within which we live – to unite them and then let them part again. *The curatorial*, in fact, is the bridge between them: the moment in which the social common takes its form: the moment of the creation of the symbolic realm.

The object in this system functions as a point of reference, allowing us to shift our perception between different layers of our symbolic worlds; between matter and information, body and consciousness, time and space, life and death. Eventually, the common denominator towards which all those strands of symbols stream is that of perception.

If, indeed, we accept that space and time are entangled with one another and with our corporeal reality, and if we accept that the idea of constructing memory or identity through experience in time and space is at the core of Curatorial Practice; if we accept further that the idea of a 'lost dimension' cannot be viable under such conditions because both space and time are experiences entangled with our senses and perception, and if, furthermore, we agree that our perception itself is a form of simulation, then the only thing that remains when examining Curatorial Practice online – and I would argue that this is also true for ex-web curating – is the relationship of the subject to the information or experience in which s/he is suggested to participate. Moreover, if, in the development of the digital symbolic layer of existence, the dominant parameter is time, then one needs to understand time perception in order to understand the possible avenues of digital Curatorial Practice.

TIME, MIND, BODY

The Western conception of the relationship between time and space can be very broadly divided into two main agendas. Here, we find the Kantian logic that considers that time exists before consciousness and is independent of consciousness: that is, time is seen as an attribute of the natural world.

on the other side of this dialectic, time is seen not as an attribute of the world but an attribute of consciousness, hence positioning individual existence before time, space, and any other object perceived. Within this approach, there is no reality whatsoever; rather, the whole of perception is a subjective universe of infinite internal strata. This might be a good way of rephrasing Lefebvre's criticism of subjective idealism.

This dialectic inevitably is part of the general *logos* inherent within this system of thought, and is rooted in the separation between body and mind, between the subject and the world or between matter and information (if translated into contemporary terms) that stipulates the condition of virtuality. This *logos* is hierarchical in essence; it suggests a power relationship based on possession, where one realm possesses the other: either consciousness possesses the perception of time, or time possesses consciousness as part of the conditions in which it appears..

Accordingly, the third available approach places body and mind, and time and perception, at the same level, and cannot be seen as any form of synthesis. In fact, a dialectic way of thinking, at its core, already originates from a dichotomised view; from a perspective that explicates nature, based on opposing powers that somehow need to 'get along' together through a moderated reflection upon both. Rather, the third approach, if able to resist any type of possessive relationship, would also deny any pre-structured hierarchies governing inner or external phenomenon.

From this perspective, everything is knitted together into a very thick fabric. Time and perception are entangled with one another, and time is stretched and narrowed in relation to all other mechanisms involved in the construction of worldly perception. Our senses are an integral part of our thinking processes, just as our thoughts are constructed within, and through, the gaps in language. In this regard, there is no potential to think about information or the mind without thinking about matter; there is no way of thinking about time without consciousness, and vice versa. All that remains is to observe those intricate interrelations with great care, aware that the observation itself is also part of the process of perception, and thus impacts upon it.⁶⁹

If, indeed, space and time can be seen as two complementary definitions of our

⁶⁹ Interestingly, those three approaches to time and space resonate with the three approaches to objects as defined in Chapter 2. While the symbolic approach does not acknowledge any existence outside the symbolic realm (concurrent with subjective ideology), the sanctifying approach endows all meaning onto the 'objective', 'transcendent', *a-priori* reality. The oscillating approach does not denote any other attitudes but, rather, acts as the passageway between those different layers of perception, where the object is not defined and contoured as separate from the background upon which it emerges.

internal, structured determinism, and if we understand that they function in correlation with one another, we should also accept that, as much as space could have constructed the perception of time and thus the impression of memory in traditional operations of Curatorial Practice, there remains the possibility of reversing the equation and assuming that, if we play with mechanisms of time perception, we will be able to construct an impression of a space and, thus, a memory.

Time, here, is not the time of the mechanical clock, nor the regulated time of urban space; rather, it is the only time in existence: time in the realm of an individual's perception. Whilst time perception may differ for each individual, there are certain aspects in the predetermined structure of our nervous system that may be viewed and accessed. As Maturana and Varela would argue, a predetermined structure does not render a structure predictable (Maturana & Varela, 1992, pp. 122-124).

There is an important distinction between structural determinism and predictability: for example, I can create a curatorial space – an exhibition, a space within which one can move and wander, and through which one could construct a certain memory. While the structure of the space offers a closed system, there are infinite possibilities of navigating and reconstructing the curatorial space, and there is no means by which I would be able to predict the visitor's movement. However, regardless of how the visitor decides to compose her/his visit, s/he will always move within the predetermined system created by the curatorial enterprise.

In this example, the underlining curatorial process is similar; the curator is looking for a way of creating an experience of learning; constructing memory and identity. Therefore, s/he studies the conditions for memory construction, and simulates experience within a restricted physical space. If the curator has no access to a physical space as such, then there is a need to return and ask, what else, or, in fact, what *really*, affects temporality and memory? In other words, what are the conditions prolonging or accelerating our perceptions of time?

If we understand that our perception of time is deeply rooted in biological structures, then, to answer this question, we could turn to experiential psychology and neuroscience; such fields accumulate information on the elements in the nervous system that seem to be responsible for accelerating and decelerating time (in our

subjective internal perception of time).⁷⁰

Firstly, it is interesting to note that research into this topic confirmed that the processes involved in time-perception trigger areas in the brain in charge of spatial orientation and movement (Coull & Nobre, 1998; Schubotz, Friederici & Craon, 2000; Grondin, 2010). This confirms the long-accepted intuition by which time, space, speed and movement are all interconnected in our perceptual processors. Moreover, it has been shown that there is a direct correlation between processes of time estimation, spatial orientation and memory operations (Schubotz, Friederici & Craon, 2000; Grondin, 2010), once again confirming the idea laid out in the early sections of this chapter that movement within space is indeed involved in constructing memory, and that recollection processes involve areas in the brain that are responsible for time estimation and space orientation.

In addition, recent research into time perception both in neuroscience and experiential psychology reveal interesting factors involved in composing subjective time. The first scientific conclusion relates to a well-observed experience, coined in the proverb: 'time flies when you're having fun'. Indeed, affective factors seem to have a major influence on our perception of time (Angrilu, Cherubini & Pavese, 1997; Grondin, 2010).

⁷⁰ It is important to note at this stage that what is offered here as support to the further development of the theory is a restricted point of view, for a number of reasons. Firstly, I am not a neuroscientist or a brain scientist; hence the reading I am offering here is not meant to be a scientific or empirical account of embodied Curatorial Practice. Nevertheless, I think that, intuitively, through practice, curators suggest such a model for curating, and the mechanisms of display within constructed structures are a very good example of this. What is suggested here is a horizon via which to think of Curatorial Practice in a different way that is not attached to, and incapable of thinking of itself independently from, its operational history. This could mean that we would be able to achieve a better understanding of Curatorial Practice and its operations if curators were to form inter-disciplinary collaborations with scientists who, in fact, examine *spaces of the curatorial* from a slightly different perspective. Secondly, the empirical research that is presented here as a point of departure for a possible discourse might change extensively if new empirical data is released. One needs to take into account that brain- and neuroscience are relatively young domains in the field of science and, as such, are changing in a fast rate. Therefore, any theory of embodied Curatorial Practice that emerges here should be amended and re-examined in close relation to such areas of research so that it can develop in correlation with its premise and not become detached from contemporary understandings of embodied cognition. And so, more than anything, this inclusion of neuro-scientific research is only a means of inspiring a discussion about the possible implications of accessing our perception of time, and its meaning to Curatorial Practice. Those studies are by no means perceived as a 'proof' or an affirmation of the assumptions made in this chapter. As a matter of fact, if that were the case, my reader could accuse me of an inherent contradiction, because the approach taken in this research suggests cultural hierarchical understandings that might place science at a higher level of accuracy and importance in relation to practice-based humanities. There is a lot to be said about practice-based humanities as an unrecognized, but extremely meaningful, epistemological category, without which science itself would have lacked direction; however this research is not dedicated to the defence of the humanities, either. Rather, this is an attempt to think *the curatorial* in terms of inter-relations; to offer an alternative route for our curious minds to wander. This curiosity, as will be shown in the VAINS case study, indeed produced some interesting results in the experiential field of my own Curatorial Practice, and for the visitors exposed to those experiences.

This conclusion can be said to be taken into account and embodied already in curatorial choice and in the sensitivities of the profession: it is related to affective themes, images and objects which are presented within curatorial contexts. It may also be a way of examining anew the relationship between curating and art. Art may be seen here as an affective means of constructing memory. It also resonates with descriptions offered in 'the art of memory', through which emotive affiliation to the spaces and the objects memorized would have a positive effect on memory capacities.

However, one factor proven to have an immense influence on time-perception, which can be seen as a core element of Curatorial Practice, as well as a factor in influencing affective fluctuation, is that of attention. Attention division, attention to passing time and attention to the task at hand all seem to hold importance in the perception of time and space, as well as in the construction of memory (Coull & Nobre, 1998; Pouthas & Perbal, 2004; Grondin, 2010).

The relationship between time and attention is such that, the longer it takes to process perception and locate the experience within the neural network of our brains, the further time is stretched in the subjective experience. Accordingly, when defining the subjective time of the visitor, one could say that the rhythm of subjective time passage is in correlation with the rhythm of processing perception.

We can therefore conclude that one can stretch and condense time in relation to the familiarity of the objects encountered, as well as their placement within their usual environments. I would argue that, intuitively, this is exactly what curatorial mechanisms do in their use of the curatorial series, as described in Chapter 2. Therefore, one can read Curatorial Practice through this prism, thinking of display as the act of directing attention within a network of inter-relations. One could also consider the construction of memory, history, and self-identity and narrative a result of managing attention, directing attention or placing attention on one thing rather than another.

TIME AS CURATORIAL MEDIUM, ATTENTION AS CURATORIAL PLATFORM

Although the relationship between time, space, perception and attention might seem intuitive and obvious, I believe that many of us have previously experienced how the quality of attention directed towards a task or an object can change our perceptions of

the object and of the time spent in interacting with the object, although little has been written on the role of attention in processes of perception.

Jonathan Crary, in his book *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*, offers a historical account of how attention is approached and analysed in Western culture, taking us back to the critique of modernity and, with it, the critique of consumer society and the infinite flow of information that subjects are expected to process on a daily basis. Crary takes the title of his book from a paper Freud published in 1912, in which he speaks of the 'suspension of attention' as a technique in managing the large amounts of information to which the therapist is exposed in every-day psychoanalysis sessions.

For Crary, this suspension of attention marks an important admittance to the limitation on human attentive capacity, which is required in large quantities in the logic of postmodern culture and, more explicitly, with the development of digital communication systems, and the increasing speed of processing required. One of the means for Crary to demonstrate this crisis of attention in current times is the increasing diagnosis of, 'Attention Deficit Disorders' (ADD), which can be called a post-modern epidemic. His account of the development of an attention crisis in post-modern society also provides an insight into the perception of attention and its understanding in psychology and neuroscience. Attention is defined as the ability to maintain an undivided focus on one object or task, and this becomes increasingly difficult in the distractive mode of working with technologies.

The idea that attention can be suspended opens up a whole realm of possibilities in thinking of different qualities of attention and how their emphasis might have great importance in coping with attention overflow.⁷¹ He grounds the idea of a suspension of attention in various philosophical studies, most notably highlighting Schopenhauer's idea of 'purified perception' as a means of suspending time and allowing an ambient⁷² attention, rather than a focused one.

Further to Crary's argument, it could be suggested that attention, as perceived within Western culture, is also interpreted via a relationship of possession; one possesses attention through control and focus on an object. On the other hand, one might be

⁷¹ This bears some resemblance to Virilio's notion of 'Picnolepsy', which is defined as a momentary absence of consciousness. These moments of absence are, according to Virilio, what enable us to construct the fluidity of perception through memory.

⁷² 'Ambient' in the sense that attention is not focused on one object but, rather, floats in a panoramic view of the environment in which one is embedded.

possessed by her/his attention; this is then described as a deficiency. Within this definition of attention, the same system of subject/object dichotomies is already embedded, as well as a hierarchical relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. One is active; one is passive. Moreover, within this definition of attention, the effort is centred on maintaining a constant awareness on one singular object, often detaching it from its background and its context.

Merleau-Ponty, in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, offers a similar critique of attention: *'the concept attention...is deduced, in empiricist thinking, from the "constancy hypothesis", or, as we have explained, from the priority of the objective world.'* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 30). Merleau-Ponty therefore offers an alternative definition of attention, which seeks to escape this hierarchical construct that presumes objects are laid before the observer for the purpose of being perceived as such. Therefore, he defines attention as an 'intentional arc'; in his words: *'the life of consciousness—cognitive life, the life of desire or perceptual life—is subtended by an "intentional arc", which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation, or rather which results in our being situated in all these respects. It is this intentional arc which brings about the unity of the senses, of intelligence, of sensibility and motility'* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 157). For Merleau-Ponty, the 'intentional arc' – the means through which objects are deciphered from their background – is, in fact, the same searchlight, only directed towards one's own consciousness; one's memories, ideological constructs and beliefs allow one to distinguish things from their background.

Merging this with theories of embodied cognition and the fundamental idea of a structural determinism may shed further light on this argument: *'This structure conditions the course of its interaction and restrict the structural changes that interactions may trigger in it'* (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 95); that is, perception itself, and all the operations of attention – or the 'intentional arc' – are determined by our biological structure and its interaction with an environment. Whilst this provides interesting insight into the idea of attention, it also reveals that which is conditioned in the subject's construct. Essentially, it is still not a comprehensive system for understanding this 'arc', but is suggestive of an array of qualities and types of attention.

A detailed analysis of attention and its role in the composition of memory is offered in the writings of George Gurdieff and Peter Ouspensky, who offer an alternative

psychology; a psychology that does not attempt to describe only mental operations, possible malfunctions and pathologies, but also a 'Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution'. Ouspensky's book, which bears this title, gives a thorough account of three different types of attention, which might be useful in opening up a field of enquiry into different qualities of attention, and therefore different qualities of time perception and, subsequently, self-perception, memory and space. Ouspensky and Gurdieff's theories are interesting in this context, most specifically because they allow us as to close the full circle of this chapter and relate back to the notion of an intentional thought: an element that seems to have been lost from the earlier practices of 'the art of memory'.⁷³

Ouspensky identifies three types of attention that are in operation within processes of perception. 'Mechanical attention' is defined as our awake state, where things are noticed according to pre-constructed memories, which allow us to differentiate ourselves from the background and to differentiate the objects with which we are familiar. Mechanical attention is an automatic function of our perception, and it does not require any effort. It is characterised by a tendency to roam and move from one object to another, further reinforcing cognitive ties between memory and reality.

'Identified attention' is defined by an emotional quality of fascination. It is a further development of 'mechanical attention', as it does not require any conscious effort; however, it triggers a prolonged suspension of our internal time, as we find ourselves attached to an object. This can be related to Lacan's notion of desire in the definition of subject/object relations. An example of identified attention could be fascination with a television show, or prolonged periods spent reflecting on a loved one; however, according to Ouspensky's definition, as there is no conscious effort involved in this

⁷³ Gurdieff's teachings, which are referred to in most cases as 'the fourth way', have their origins in both Sufi and Hindu traditions, which themselves offer various interpretations of the notion of 'attention'. Most notably, the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti in *The Flame of Attention* (1982) describe a form of unattached attention that could be said to be the state of consciousness itself. I have chosen to refer to Gurdieff and Ouspensky in this research rather than other theories which might be adequate in describing different qualities of attention because their definition has more common ground, in terms of terminology and language, with those of Western Philosophy, and because the account that is offered to different types of attention in the theories of 'the fourth way', are more detailed and embedded within a coherent system of psychology. The types of attention that will be defined in this chapter derive from a close reading of a number of writings; mainly, the transcriptions of lectures given by Ouspensky and Gurdieff to a number of students, which are documented in Ouspensky's *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (1974); *In Search of the Miraculous* (1950); *The Fourth Way* (1957), Gurdieff's collection of lectures documented in the book *Views from the Real World* (1973), and Rodney Collins' *The Theory of Celestial Influences* (1952). The use of these definitions of 'attention' does not aim for a full acceptance of the theories of the 'fourth way' – in fact, much criticism has noted the inaccuracy of some of the teaching's claims with regards to theories of creation and natural forces. However, in the realm of offering an alternative psychology to man's possible evolution, I find that the ideas offered in these books offer a fertile ground from which to embark on a discussion that highlights different aspects of perception and memory, as I seek to do here.

type of attention, it comes and goes in correlation with responses to internal and external solicitation; in this sense, whilst it may last for a longer period of time, it is still a form of 'mechanical attention'.

'Focused attention' requires active effort directed towards a certain task or object. This correlates with the type of attention that, in Crary's view, would relate to ADD. Moreover, most of the time, it is also the kind of attention required in neuropsychological tests in situations like work and studies, and also may be related to the type of attention Freud sought to avoid in order to prevent an overflow of information. Through this type of attention, one object is placed at the centre of one's perception at will.⁷⁴

For Ouspensky and Gurdieff, these are the three main types of attention that underline processes of perception; however, the cultivation of 'divided attention' is at the root of any possible evolution of man in the logic of their theory. Without going into the details of what such evolution may entail, since it is not entirely relevant to this research, I will define 'divided attention' in relation to other types of attention mentioned above: as the ability to maintain focused attention on more than one object at once. Whilst 'divided attention' is a state that can occur accidentally from time to time, it is not a faculty that Ouspensky and Gurdieff suppose people can achieve at will; the maintenance of this type of attention requires immense efforts. However, if such attention is maintained, a different perception of time opens, and it is within this realm that vivid memories are constructed and remain as profound impressions that could change the structural determinism of perception.

Gurdieff and Ouspensky speak of a unique type of divided attention, which I will term 'intentional attention', which is at the core of achieving self-consciousness in the possible evolution of man. 'Intentional attention' is the ability to maintain a divided attention on an object and on the internal processes of perception: i.e. on the construct of the self. If such states of 'intentional attention' are maintained, the door thus is opened to a new realm of reality that Ouspensky terms 'The Miraculous'.

What is most interesting in the testimonies Ouspensky offers of such moments of self-consciousness in *In Search of the Miraculous*, and which are specifically interesting to this chapter, is that the notion of suspended time seems to play a central role in these experiences. Within such moments, subjective time is stretched to the extent that the

⁷⁴ I am using the word 'will' in the absence of a better term with which to describe it, although this does not refer in any way to the notion of 'free will'.

subject can observe the deterministic construct and understand her/his own conditions of perception. This bears an uncanny similarity to Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'silence' as Daniel Primozic's account of Merleau Ponty's philosophy concludes: *'Therefore, all Being is part of the same flesh. This provides an interesting juncture in the analysis. It would seem that the only Being left to interrogate is we, ourselves - giving a brand new dimension to the ancient Greek credo: know thyself. But what can the brute being say about the brute being, especially to the brute being? The answer can be silence. Only nothing is the appropriate answer, for nothing need be said'* (Primozic, 2001, p. 64). This corresponds, to some degree, to the idea of the intentional thought process involved in 'the art of memory'; the locus of the individual's agency in the intentional construction of the determinist system within which perception occurs.

All in all, this beautiful state of mind – a beautiful abyss that opens in one's own conscious perception – is, I would argue the *space of the curatorial*. It can be cultivated and performed, I posit, within the operations of Curatorial Practice, in the midst of all the noise, *simulacra*, added dimensions and speed of our postmodern times.

Its performance should direct Curatorial Practice back to its prime concern: that of the visitor, and whilst it is inevitable that Curatorial Practice will represent and stipulate the dominant ideologies of its time, the refusal it may offer to any form of alienation is the *space of the curatorial* that may be present within the viewer: a space which offers enough distance so that s/he is allowed to observe the way we are constructed as part of our environments; as part of the social, communal space, and as part of the shared space of language.

CURATING IMMATERIALITY: IN SEARCH FOR SPACES OF THE CURATORIAL AN ATTEMPTED CONCLUSION

A GENERAL OVERVIEW

This study has identified the gaps between different current definitions of curating in an attempt to understand such spaces and contradictions as opportunities for redefining curatorial practice. This work was performed through the development of the notion of *the curatorial* as a pivot around which curating revolves. This commitment to *the curatorial* exposed a possible ontology of curating. To expand and define the notion of *the curatorial* further, each of the chapters confronted a field within which curating operates and upon which curating seems to be dependent. Through a close examination of the relationship of curating to each of these fields (objects/collections, art and physical space), an abstract understanding of curating has emerged; one that is not necessarily related to familiar forms that curatorial practice has taken in recent history (i.e. as a concept related to the notions of 'display' and 'material culture').

The alternative theoretical definition of curating given here has provided a wider perspective from which potential manifestations of curatorial practice can be drawn and its future can be reimagined. At the same time, the enquiry into the seemingly inherent connection between curating and its traditional materials (objects/collections, art and physical space) has facilitated a re-reading of the possible histories of curating, thus allowing the lost memory of curating as a cultural practice to be resurrected. This cultural practice, it is suggested, runs through and connects all the knowledge-production processes and data-organisation operations that have occurred throughout history.

It is assumed that if one was committed to such a perspective, then the history of curating could be stretched to the very beginning of culture, and even to prehistoric times. While such an assumption needs confirmation through more thorough research, its suggestion is a means of triggering the possibility of thinking about curating from outside the perspective of the Enlightenment model of the museum, with the hope that this could lead to a more flexible approach being taken to the definition of the practice and to the understanding of visual culture in general.

Following these new definitions, a shift in perspective in terms of the concerns of curatorial practice becomes possible. This study began as a means of negotiating the role of curating in the management of cultural production and knowledge online; however, the acknowledgment of the core issues within discourses in the field and the development of a possible alternative theory and history of curating have permitted a re-reading of the 'crisis' in which curatorial practice seems to find itself. Thus, the aforementioned issues have been reframed, redefining the ontology of curating.

Indeed, the matters that characterise this 'crisis', which are seen as central to current discourse around curating digital cultures – namely, the conflict between 'material' and 'immaterial' cultures, issues surrounding the preservation, conservation and dissemination of artefacts and technologies, and the dynamics of choice, taste and the construction of space – have been re-presented here as operational matters rather than essential ones. This has allowed a re-negotiation of the solutions that are offered to such issues within the field, thus relieving some of the anxiety that new technologies inevitably bring.

Within this re-negotiation of the core issues faced within curating today, objects have been defined not as material, three-dimensional entities but as enclosed, complex units of meaning or memory that can be used and read. These new definition of 'objects' demonstrated a capacity to free the curator from certain conditions that have been assumed to exist within the limited scope of the historical role of curatorial practice and its relationship to traditional perceptions of material culture and Euclidian space.

Moreover, the newly defined relationship between curating and its fields of operation has allowed the curatorial thought that stems from this research to relieve itself from concerns related to the collection and preservation of such material culture. While it is true that curators often take managerial positions within institutions where cultural heritage is preserved and recorded (which is framed as a central and important task), recognising the separation between the acts of collecting and curating permits curatorial practice a certain freedom to focus its attention on what can be regarded as its central responsibility: the production and mediation of meanings. The differentiation between the act of collecting and the act of curating reframes meaning-making strategies, thus demonstrating that the flexibility of meaning, rather than the preservation of meaning, is at the centre of curatorial practice. Within such a re-organisation of the values of curating, curators can re-think the social and cultural role of curatorial practice in relation to social imaginaries and cultural dominants.

From a historical perspective, the resurrection and extension of curatorial memory is seen as being connected to the development of curatorial self-awareness, offering a contribution to the critical examination of curatorial projects, expanding the history of this unique rhetoric and revealing the possible invisible curatorial operations that exist in our times.

With a view to concluding this study and giving an overview of the different arguments that have been made, firstly, I will condense the conclusions that have been reached in each chapter, before examining them from a wider perspective in order to clarify the main contributions made by this study. In particular, we will return to the point where the research commenced: the work of curators within digital communication systems and, more specifically, on the World Wide Web.

CHAPTER 1: CURATING AND THE CURATORIAL

As well as giving a historical overview of the relationship between curating and possible earlier manifestations of museums, collections, archives and libraries, in this chapter, I sought to re-establish the tie or relationship between museum studies and contemporary art curating, pointing to the moment of their split as a necessary moment in the history of curating that opened up a space for self-criticality and the re-assessment of the curator's role within the social and political dynamics of the history of art.

Without such a split within the profession having occurred, it would be difficult to imagine curating as a field for experimentation with the meaning of cultural objects. At the same time, it would seem that such a split has lost its currency with the development of the New Museology and the similarities between concerns within art curating and museum studies. Indeed, their re-assimilation provides a deeper understanding of what curating can mean and how its operational methodologies can evolve further in relation to particular goals and responsibilities.

In order to offer a theoretical point of departure to curatorial practice, the term *the curatorial*, first introduced by Maria Lind and developed in more detail by the Curatorial/Knowledge department at Goldsmiths, has been examined and dissected within this thesis. It is suggested that the term itself calls for a separation between the ontology of curating and its possible manifestations. In the context of this thesis, curating is therefore considered to be a way of being in the world or a way of thinking.

It was argued that it would be impossible or at least inappropriate to draw a decisive conclusion and define *the curatorial* as a stable notion, as it seems to be at odds with the ethics suggested by this term; however, a temporarily stable definition of *the*

curatorial as the interface between meaning and audiences had been put forth as possible anchor for thinking about curating and broadening our understanding of the term.

Placing 'audiences' at the centre of curatorial thinking paradigms, using *the curatorial* as a pivot, reveals the notion of agency to be inevitably meaningful in the management of relationships between audiences and meaning. Agency was defined in this context on the level of perception as a margin of freedom one may have in the reading and/or interpretation of reality and its representations. In this sense, the first chapter also proffered new conceptions of the different types of agency associated with the consumers and producers of cultural heritage ('agency' and 'creative agency').

As such, Chapter 1 set out the theoretical assumptions around which the thought-based methodology of this research has been centred. Such a methodology looks to generate and perpetuate a discussion about the extended history and cultural meaning of curating that goes beyond its current assumptions about itself. In this manner, the chapter also sets the groundwork for a deeper examination of the relationship between curating and the fields within which it is practiced, as examined in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2: OBJECT RELATIONS

The first realm with which curating is associated in the context of this thesis is the realm of objects. The second chapter and its case study (Appendix 1) examined the material history of objects. This focus was based on current and historical discourses of curatorial practice and museum studies, in which a belief in the cultural significance of such material entities seems to be seen as essential to the ontology of curatorial practice.

Based on this premise, curators often endeavour to conserve, represent and research objects whose main origins can be traced to private and public collections. 'The collection' here also encompasses 'the archive' and 'the repository'. While these three manifestations of the act of collecting are undoubtedly different, they were placed under the same umbrella in order to examine the possible relationship of curating to such institutions on an ontological level. Here, the motivation or psychology of both the curator and the collector were key areas of interest.

This task was informed by a close investigation of collections' function in cultural history. Through the identification of three cultural approaches towards objects that

seem to have developed in association with economic, ideological, governmental and social structures, the possible trajectories of curating and collecting were exposed.

Furthermore, an examination of the collection as it is understood in current discourses considered the possible relationship between collectors and their objects, as well as between curators and systems of preservation and representation. A clear distinction between the collector's fascination with objects and that of the curator was articulated, as it became clearer that the psychology of those two figures is inherently different: one is an introvert, the other is an extrovert; the former attempts to avoid social relationships through the notion of the collection, while the latter seeks to create a platform for social engagement through the display and representation of collected objects.

With this renewed perspective on the collected object and the collection as a whole, it became easier to decipher the main concern of curating; i.e. reviving the memory embodied within objects of knowledge and objects of ritual, thus enabling a connection between different symbolic systems and different symbolic realms to exist and a transfer of elements to occur between them. Within such a definition of the curator's role, it also became clear that the physical presence of the object is only necessary inasmuch as it permits the mediation of the sensual, material realm of perception. Beyond this notion, an alternative definition of the object as a stable unit of meaning was suggested, replacing the necessity of the material presence of the object and allowing curatorial operations to exist within a 'virtual field' that is detached, to some extent, from the usual relationship between curatorial practice and objects that is generally assumed to exist.

The re-definition of 'the object' given at the end of the chapter enables the extension of material culture, repositioning the curator in relation to the management of 'immaterial' culture as it is perceived in discourses around digital cultures. Within this new definition, the relationship between curating and cultural production – which involves immaterial labour, cognitive capitalism and concerns about the construction of digital heritage – emerged as an extension of the field of curatorial operation and a possible new perspective from which to rethink curatorial methodologies and their limits.

CHAPTER 3: ART, CURATING AND THE 'READYMADE'

The third chapter continued to re-negotiate the curator's role in relation to a specific area of material culture around which contemporary curating seems to revolve. While current discourses in the field of art curating focus upon the interfaces between

curating and art, this chapter sought to demonstrate how curatorial practice can be seen as independent and different from artistic practices, thus suggesting a temporary divorce between the two fields.

The chapter began by identifying an anxiety in relation to the instrumentalisation of creative agency that seems to be central to contemporary art discourses in relation to form of creative curating. Furthermore, the 'readymade' was recognised as a key notion that blurs the distinction between curatorial and artistic practices. To find a certain relief from this anxiety and clarify the relationship between art, curating, creative agency and 'the readymade', the works of Marcel Duchamp and Robert Rauschenberg – two central figures in the development of art history's understanding of 'the readymade' – were analysed closely.

This analysis revealed how different cultural approaches to objects, as they were defined in the second chapter, could be utilised in order to understand different types of the 'readymade' and the various operations in the entangled histories of curating and art that involve its use. By developing the distinction between the two approaches examined here – the symbolic approach and the oscillating approach – a separation between the 'Ready-Made' and the 'readymade' was achieved. The first was recognised as being connected with the notion of an artistic medium being taken over and manipulated by the act of creating or expressing meaning, to the point at which the ready-made disappears completely as a unit of independent meaning. The 'Ready-Made', as defined through Rauschenberg's work, was thus linked to a symbolic approach to objects, which was found to be related to the collector's approach to objects and their meaning.

The 'readymade', on the other hand, as defined through Duchamp's works, seems to perform a different manoeuvre altogether. Here, the object is not subordinated to Duchamp's creative agency or robbed of its original unity and meaning; the readymade in this context is thus seen as a process rather than of an object. The object used in such operations remains intact as a unit of independent meaning within Duchamp's work. The 'readymade' as a process, then, indicates a shift in, as opposed to a collapse of, meaning. The notion of Duchamp's 'readymade' operations as processes thus facilitated a re-reading of meaning production in the context of art presentation.

Accordingly, Duchamp's career was re-interpreted here, demonstrating that a large portion of his practice centred on negotiating the conditions for meaning-making. As such Duchamp's work exposes and plays with spaces of *the curatorial* and seeks to define and understand curatorial concerns. Hence, Duchamp's 'readymade' was put

forward as a curatorial readymade and Duchamp, as a cultural figure, was re-positioned as a curator instead of an artist. The renewed position of Duchamp's 'readymade' made possible a further distinction between the role of objects in art practice (referred to as 'the artistic Ready-Made') and the role of objects in curating (referred to as 'the curatorial readymade'), allowing modern art history to be rethought in relation to these definitions.

The oscillating approach to objects, as a pivot for curatorial practice that is anchored in the curatorial, revealed that although a risk of hijacking, distorting and re-negotiating meaning through curatorial performance exists, the object, as an idea and a memory, remains intact as an enclosed unit of meaning, thanks to its ambivalent, or oscillating, status, which is encouraged by such curatorial operations. This analysis enabled a different perspective on the risks of art-instrumentalisation and a loss of creative agency and demonstrated why the allowance of curatorial freedom when displaying and interpreting artworks is necessary in the resurrection of the art object's meaning outside its supposed market-value.

The psychological and historical roots of the aforementioned anxiety were approached in relation to technological development (namely, the industrial revolution) and its effects on human objectification (in relation to the atrocities performed during the Second World War).

The conclusion to the chapter enabled the exposure of other possible roots for the 'anxiety of being Ready-Made' as expressed in recent discourses about contemporary art. This anxiety was framed within a larger paradigmatic and cultural shift that is influenced by digital communication media, which renounces the obvious distinctions between consumers and producers of cultural heritage. Within this new dynamic, the fear that emerges is that of art losing its special social and cultural status, which is traditionally based on notions of authority, authorship, authenticity and 'the original', all of which drive the current value of art in the market.

The anxiety that remains in relation to creative agency within curatorial operations is connected to the dependence of the status of art on its own 'uselessness'; a characteristic that determines art's position as a 'ready-made collectable'. This anxiety was relieved in the chapter by returning to the definitions of collected objects suggested in the previous chapter. This anxiety was relieved by returning to the definitions of collected objects as suggested in the second chapter. Within this definition and its elaboration in further understanding 'objects of ritual', 'usage' was shown to not necessarily contradict 'meaning' if the notion of 'symbolic function' (rather than 'symbolic meaning') is taken into account.

Hence the anxiety from curatorial creative agency overriding that of the artist has been shown to relate to art's definition of itself and its status and doesn't relate to curating as a creative act in and of itself. If curating is perceived as having a symbiotic relationship with the production of meaning and if it is viewed through the prism of *the curatorial*, such concerns around the value and status of art objects is of concern to curating only inasmuch as it chooses to attach itself to this specific field and even within such a relationship, while curators have a significant influence on the value of artworks, the preservation of such value and the circulation of art-objects in market related systems is not the centre of curatorial premise;

To some extent one may even choose to take a radical position of asserting that such responsibilities are in opposition to curatorial thought. From this perspective, given that object-based art is so embroiled in its relationship with the market, it might just be that curating, as a practice that tends towards the oscillating approach, could, and maybe should, disrupt present assumptions about art in order for the memory of its 'symbolic function' to be resurrected, rather than its 'symbolic value' being prioritised.

The chapter argued that the interest of curatorial practice in objects and, more specifically, in art-objects, has to do with the dematerialisation of the object, in the sense that the object's relationship to the symbolic realm within which it is created is exposed and dichotomised trajectories of object/subject relationships are put into question. The object as a 'stable unit of meaning' is dismantled through curatorial operations and hence issues surrounding 'authenticity' and 'originality', which seem to arise when representing art online, are of little concern in relation to the performance of *the curatorial* and its role as the underlining principle of curatorial practice.

CHAPTER 4: CURATING IN SPACE

Curating is seen predominantly as practice of display, involving the arrangement of objects in space – at least this is perceived as a central methodology in conveying curatorial meaning. The definition of curators as 'exhibition organisers' appears to be at odds, therefore, with the absence of physical space (in terms of both the exhibition hall and the physical, bodily presence of an audience) in online contexts. The main question that circulated within this chapter concerned the dependence of curatorial practice in space and the possibility of escaping such a relationship in order to provide contemporary platforms for curation that do not necessarily refer to space in the sense of a Euclidian or geometric model.

The relationship between curatorial practice and spatial organisation was developed here in order to understand the motivation that lies behind such a methodology and to question the necessity of the exhibition as an ontological condition for the practice of curating. The meaning of physical space and the embodied experience of audiences was analysed through contemporary discourses around the meaning of exhibition making and via my own practice as a curator. This review of ideas involved a discussion of the relationship between an embodied experience of space and time and the construction of communal and individual memory.

Memory construction, as a concept, was approached through an analysis of the ancient Greek 'art of memory', which allowed the possible roots of exhibition-making as a practice to be traced. The 'art of memory' was seen, in this context, as a possible philosophical and practical root for the development of curatorial practice. The alternative analysis offered to the 'art of memory' in this chapter led to the conclusion that memory can be constructed through an embodied experience of space. However, the emphasis within this analysis shifted once it was made clear that the purpose of the 'art of memory' was the resurrection of the apprentice's ability to intentionally and artificially construct her/his own memory, according to a pre-figured, representational system that serves her/his goals. Within this trajectory, the notion of agency, as it was defined in the first chapter, permitted the re-negotiation of that ability, which seems to have been lost, to some extent, in modern readings of mnemonics.

The 'art of memory' as an intentional process of memory organisation enabled the role of *the curatorial* within internal and individual operations of meaning-making and memory-construction to be revealed. Agency in this context has been defined as the space between identity and one's identification with identity.

In order to understand the relationship between curating and space in more detail, texts on the production of urban and social spaces were analysed. The definition of space and its role in the inner organisation of one's memory and, most significantly, one's time, as well as the relationship between these areas, was examined. Inevitably, in reading discourses about the crisis in definitions of Euclidian space and the collapse of space and time within representational paradigms offered by digital communication technologies, this chapter approached what is often seen as a cultural shift in the perception of the biological body and its lack of relationship with physical space. It was suggested that this crisis, characterised by the absence of the body, is anchored in the increasing abstraction of geometrical space in mathematical representations. Such representations of space lead to the collapse of space and time

as distinct measures or attributes of perceived reality. This crisis is not dissimilar to the crisis of the materiality of the object, as represented in the two previous chapters and, in a sense, continues the discussion around object and subject relations in the context of curatorial operations.

In addressing what this crisis may mean in the context of curatorial practice, Katharine Hayles' notion of 'the condition of virtuality' was used. Her analysis of the cultural perception of information revealed the dichotomised view that predominates in the history of information sciences. This discussion was combined with theories of embodied and situated cognition, as well as Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, in order to draw the conclusions that 1) there is no real distinction between modes of perception and modes of representation (they are equally virtual) and 2) an understanding of space as detached from perception is possible only if one considers the existence of an *a-priori* reality that can be measured outside of the realm of the sensual.

As agency – and, therefore, presence – had already been positioned as existing only within the realms of perception, it seemed most appropriate to let go of traditional and dichotomised understandings of the relationship between time and space when examining the realm of *the curatorial* – especially as *the curatorial* was defined in the previous chapters as a possible bridge between different symbolic realms. As such, *the curatorial* was not seen in a limited way, bridging any particular realm of representation to another, but as being able to approach 'virtual spaces' with the same ease with which it engages with physical ones.

Adding to this interpretation of dematerialisation (which was arrived at in the third chapter of the thesis), 'the condition of virtuality', was refuted as an insufficient model for the examination of audiences' perceptions. Rather, with the aim of understanding what constitutes an audience's perception of time and space and how it operates, this chapter called upon recent neuro-scientific research in an attempt to find an embodied and situated model for experimenting with various layers of 'virtual' or 'dematerialised' space.

Research into this field revealed the physical dependence of time and space perception in the brain on both the emotive conditions set for subjects and the level/type of attention one invests in a named situation. Such a perceptual understanding of time and space enabled the application of methodologies of curatorial practice within a flat space-time continuum (that of the screen) to be stretched further, being redefined as the management of memory and attention through different modes of attention.

It was concluded that it is possible to see the management of attention as a parallel to spatial organisation in digital contexts – in the abstract realm of a seemingly flat screen space. Curatorial operations were thus exposed as constituting the internal organisation of virtual space as perceived through time by audiences using such technologies, while different types and modes of attention were suggested and defined as having various relationships and affiliations with modes of agency and self-awareness, and artificial constructions of identity.

Such modes of attention were considered as means through which to think about time/space constructs and their position within curatorial practices. Spaces of *the curatorial* within systems of attention management and perception were argued to be related strongly to notions of agency, while a link was drawn between the conscious construction of memory, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter, and the motion of ‘divided attention’ that runs against current cultural definitions of attention and its role within perception, memory/identity construction and agency.

The curatorial operations that are somewhat invisible in the preservation, dissemination, and appreciation of cultural heritage as it is created and managed in the online realm were identified and underlined, and it became clear that the conscious curatorial act of managing attention is an urgent task that highlights the responsibility placed upon curators with the advent of digital communication media. Such actions remain invisible, to some extent, because they are not defined, criticised and perceived as curatorial operations.

A further development of how the conclusions to Chapter 4 can be approached on a practical level is suggested in the case study attached to the chapter, which describes a three-year experiment with managing emotional awareness and attention in the development of an online curatorial platform called VAINS.

SO HOW SHOULD WE, CURATORS, GO ABOUT OUR FUTURE?

To conclude, curatorial practice, defined from the perspective of *the curatorial*, can be understood as the management of interfaces negotiating meaning for audiences. This is often achieved through the construction of embodied memory. This definition indicates that *the curatorial* – as the interface between audiences and meaning – can change its forms and operations; however, the core principle of creating and disseminating meaning and meaning-making mechanisms stays intact. This stability was demonstrated in this thesis through an examination of the development of *the curatorial* throughout history. Thus, through this definition, a relatively coherent

theory of curating emerges, in which the histories and futures of curatorial practice can be re-imagined.

CURATING AS 'BUZZ-WORD' – REASONS AND TRAJECTORIES

One of the difficulties that remain with such a broad definition of curating has already been approached in the introduction to this study and can be read as a form of complaint: we, curators, are reluctant to accept the recent popularity of curating. The idea of 'curating' as a buzz word seems to undermine the professional aspects of the role and to obscure the importance of the associated knowledge base and experience.

However, we should be reminded that this problem is not different or dissimilar to the concerns that have been raised in all professionalised fields of knowledge production and dissemination with the advent of digital communication media. This project has elaborated on such issues in relation to the field of art in order to show that the same symptoms of anxiety and stress exist in every field where creative agency is at stake. The proliferation of tools for representation, knowledge production and consumption, and of platforms for self-expression and display, has destabilised the modern hierarchies of power to which we are accustomed. Within these new trajectories, the definitions of 'elite' vs. 'popular' and 'professional' vs. 'amateur' are changing rapidly.

Mechanisms of taste stabilisation function on the basis of different, seemingly democratised, dynamics between producers and consumers of culture. Just as anyone can be a curator nowadays, anyone can be a film-maker, journalist, scholar or scientist. The institutions that once regulated the quality of cultural production are gradually being eroded, losing their power. Complicating the notion of 'democratisation' was approached in the introduction to this chapter, and in the context of this conclusion, I would like to suggest that our role as professionals, educated in traditional curating, is not yet obsolete. In fact, this role may gain renewed currency if we, as curators, step out of our comfort zones and take upon ourselves the vast responsibility associated with our social role, approaching the curatorial tasks at hand, namely that of attending the vast cultural heritage that is being disseminated through digital communication technologies.

In fact, I contend that the increasing use of curating as a 'buzz word' is an intuitive social response to the lack of professional 'curating' in facing the vast amount of knowledge and cultural objects that are now accessible publicly. This 'material' requires management, reading, positioning, categorisation and mediation. If we accept that what has changed with the advent of new communication media is the

operational manifestation of our practice rather than its ontology, indeed, under such theoretical definitions, curating as a professional field might be facing a crisis. However, that is not because there are too many curators – instead, it is because we are failing to perform our role.

As long as no coherent theory of curating exists and curating is divided into various sub-sections (art curating, museum curating, online curating etc.), there is no way of claiming professionalism in the field; before we can require anyone else to become a ‘professional’ curator, there is a need to understand what being a curator actually means. Rather than falling into a territorial argument about what curating may or may not be and should or should not do within the ethical constraints of our disciplines, I suggest that a reassessment of curatorial practice from a theoretical perspective is necessary in order to clarify its ethical position.

This reassessment is not dissimilar from the ICOM Code of Ethics for the Museum and should take into account the new forms that curatorial practice could possibly take in the ‘information era’ of the ‘global village’. Such an ethical approach cannot think of the nation state as its primary framework of concern as this problem is becoming increasingly one of global concern. Rather it may find it more productive to position itself in relation to its own futures and histories, taking into account existing ethical discourses in cultural heritage.

REDEFINING THE ‘CRISIS’ OF CURATING

While we are preoccupied with arguing about the borders and scope of our profession, we are overlooking the actions that are shaping our modes of meaning production and knowledge dissemination. We count on others blindly to do our work, without feeding off the richness of our shared, accumulated experiences and histories, which draw on self-criticality and self-reflexivity and aspire for a humane and equal society. These are the cultural lessons that we learnt in past decades, with the development of the New Museology and contemporary curatorial practice and these are the same lessons which we now fail to disseminate and transfer to those who are re-constructing our self-representations online.

We still need to enquire, criticise and converse with the invisible curators of our time; We still need to ask, who are the agents that control our memory in online space, and who are the ones that regulate them? What criteria are used and whose interests are served?

NEW COMMUNICATION MEDIA ARE NEW TOOLS FOR CURATING

The redefinition of curatorial operational criteria, which can guide us through this vast task of curating the internet, can be achieved through the prism of online tools: collaborative filtering, recommendation algorithms, search engines, online archives, social networks, all of which could potentially offer a genuine, shared space for the creation of a common narrative as a basis for interaction.

Such tools extend our responsibilities towards the audiences we represent, rather than diminishing them. I argue that these tools are our new curatorial agents and, as such, they are political tools, embodying current ideological concerns and models for self-perception, as well as generating the signs that constitute another layer of 'the symbolic' that we share as a culture. Steadily, this is becoming a global paradigm.

Indeed, this is a call to engage with engineers, programmers and other individuals whose education has been very different to ours. This may seem, at times, like an impossible bridge to cross; it might be difficult to get used to such practitioners after our long history of working with the most convenient collaborators: i.e. artists.

But if we are true caretakers – true promoters of cultural curiosity – then we must acknowledge that if there is any creative agency that needs to be freed and taken care of at this time, it is that of engineers, programmers and technologists. This journey promises new revelations about the nature of perception, language and visual culture and while taking care of these practitioners' agency, sanity, sensitivity and social responsibility, we have the opportunity to engage with some interesting current questions about how meaning is produced via new technological platforms.

If a paradigm shift in the very definition and locus of creative agency can be identified where 'the individual' has less of a stake in the production and dissemination of knowledge and meaning, what curatorial models could we create for the preservation of this margin of freedom, at the corner of social perception, when dealing with extensive collaboration and inter-disciplinary projects like those offered by digital media?

While current discourses in online curating that deal with the preservation, conservation and creation of archives of knowledge that are accessible to the wide public online are invaluable, I would like to call upon curators to operate within these platforms in order to provide spaces of *the curatorial* in which objects of knowledge become discursive and can be read beyond the limitations of their current positioning as mere 'objective data'.

It is a call for curators to experiment with the technological tools that are already sculpting our current knowledge-distribution patterns, and to dismiss the

intimidation associated with the possibility of acting within the realm of algorithms and programming. Participating within this field should not necessarily be undertaken from a knowledgeable perspective; on the contrary, a lack of technological knowledge may highlight and expose the problematic relationships that exist between technologies and their users.

While media critique does exist, curatorial aspects and concerns, from the perspective of cultural heritage preservation, are still lacking; alternative platforms for the dissemination and preservation of such heritage are needed. Policy-making in this field is still missing the valuable historical, socially conscious perspective that we – curators and museologists – can offer. Curators, as experts in meaning production and memory construction, and as story-telling enthusiasts, should be responsive and active, acquiring the framework and the tools needed to begin a critique of the media that they view and upon which they act.

PROLOGUE

This thesis marks an end to a space of time that allowed me to delve into, and deepen, my understanding of the field in which I operate as a practitioner and as a writer. However, I can only see this conclusion as temporary arrest in the development that is bound to persist in the aftermath of this work's submission. The four years invested in this research allowed me a space of subjective time. In this time, I was taken out of the context within which I act, and was allowed to reflect from distance on the preliminary conditions that set its course. Within this space, I have had the opportunity to deepen the process of understanding my operations as a curator and the potential that these acts may hold for their present and future.

The next natural step, with the completion of this theoretical work, is its application in the practical field, both within the projects that I initiate as part of my activity online, as well as the projects that I initiate as part of my activity within the art community in Haifa. This includes an active assimilation of the new understandings that I have reached. I can already see, throughout the course of the past four years, and in my plans for the future, a fundamental change in the ways I operate as a curator within the cultural and social fields in which I take part. Initially a curator within the museum walls, I embarked on a journey that took me out of the safety net of the municipal institution. While at the beginning I sought to explore the possibilities embedded in the organization of thematic exhibitions which will place the social at the centre of the museum discourse, in the second year of this self-enquiry, I already found myself engaged in projects whose premise was far from the production of events that circulate around the arrangement of objects in space.

Rather, I saw the urgency of engaging with the people of the urban space, and/or, for that matter, of the digital space, about which I care so deeply, and offer, out of the scope of knowledge and ideas, limited as they may be, alternative models to what I conceive is currently central to Curatorial Practice and debate. In Haifa, this meant positioning the peripheral, 'uninteresting' city in relation to Tel Aviv, the cultural capital of the Zionist state. Online, it meant understanding the central streams of information flow and how they operate, so I can offer accessibility, that I hope will reveal the efforts of the subversive digital practices that I have encountered on the way. Accessibility here, is understood in the extended field, as it was defined in the introduction to this research, and encompasses both a platform that will assist in finding and disseminating such practices, but also a platform that will encourage a

collaborative act in a quest to awake my own self-remembrance, practitioners' self-remembrance, and of course, the user's self-remembrance.

HAIFA HAIFA, A CITY WITH A BOTTOM¹

Maybe because Haifa is my home town and a large part of my identity, the change I have gone through became most apparent in the encounters I have experienced every time I have returned for research or leisure purposes. It only became apparent to me recently that, in the course of this research, my perception of Haifa has changed dramatically. It came to embody, for me, a space whose history beyond that of the state of Israel cannot be denied. The streets of Haifa, the buildings, the municipality and the people constantly and inevitably expose the fabric of violence and resurrection. Its presence is embarrassing. It is like that of a stage upon which one finds herself naked in front of a crowd, but continues to work in whatever way she works, because the nightmare never seems to end. We are bound to be naked in this city of ghosts and silence; there are moments within the secret staircases and walks that only locals know about; moments of encounter that are beyond the scope of words – encounters with the past, and with the people that make up the array of diverse religions and cultures that live within it. This has always inspired me.

But now I can see, and articulate, that what I recognised amidst the ruins of the old buildings of Haifa and amidst the pine trees that, ever so often, allow a glimpse of the shore, are spaces of *the curatorial*: spaces where identity is highlighted as a predetermined construct, stipulated by the shaky and waning systems that guard an ideological narrative. Underlining the spaces between those bits and pieces of 'stuff' allows a suspension of identification with identity, and the reconstruction of the self. Haifa is a weird and awkward urban space, known for its penetrative silence and the boredom that seems to cover the streets like a thick blanket. This boredom is, for me, the source of curiosity, which inevitably raises its head above the cement of the roads and asks, what was here before? And what is this all about?

PERIPHERY/CENTRE PARADIGMS

Recently, with all the efforts that have been put in the construction of local artistic identities, to which I have contributed in my modest way, some attention had been drawn to the city, which is often called 'the sleeping beauty', in a typically Israeli,

¹ This is a translation of probably the only song that was written on the character of the urban space of Haifa. 'Haifa Haifa, a city with a bottom' – bottom can also be translated in Hebrew as 'Downtown'; however in this song by David Broza it can encompass both meanings.

cynical way. Suddenly, some eyes came to delve beneath that blanket of boredom to reveal the voices that were hidden there all along. This was marked by the 10th anniversary of the 'Holiday of the Holidays' Festival that delivered an array of art related events in December of 2013.

Erev Rav, one of the prominent art magazines in the country, decided to publish its first printed issue at the same time² and, to the performative surprise of the Israeli art world, the topic of that issue was Haifa. Similar to an invasion of Mars, the writers who were invited to contribute to this magazine insisted on asking, 'is there life 'on' Haifa?'

I was also invited to write an article for this occasion. And I did.³ When the words ceased to flow from my keyboard and I raised my eyes to meet the illuminated screen, I realized what a long way I had come since I first moved to London. In the early efforts of my local curatorial premise, I tried constantly to think how life could be re-invented in Haifa; how Haifa could turn into a little Tel-Aviv – a place which is a more overt cultural centre. I saw frustrated artists who, with no gallery, museum or home, had to perform in the street and beg for attention, like beggars.

But in the article that had written itself, I suddenly saw the discovery of this boredom anew. It is this exhausted non-space of non-doing that is the quality that makes Haifa a real alternative to the art market centred in in Tel Aviv. The article concluded itself, proclaiming that, in fact, it is the stillness, the boredom and the silence that are the most efficient forms of civil resilience in this noisy reality of circling around an alleged 'centre'; a centre of what? I started to question. This constant white noise of people climbing on walls demonstrates the real potential of Haifa. Within it, the 'mediocre', community-based art practices suddenly did not seem like a disgrace to what I think of as tasteful artistic practice, but became sincere artistic research into the city's own internal language and dynamics. An internal logic, that, of course- could not have the same result as that of the first Hebrew city- the proud Tel-Aviv.

As such, I have now come to think of the subversive potential of the periphery as a potent platform for curatorial acts, especially if I define my practice around the notion of *the curatorial* and the idea of agency as a form of self-remembrance. What could be a more potent platform for Curatorial Practice than that which seems dead, distant, awkward and displaced? What is a more effective platform for the performance of *the*

² Erev Rav as an exclusively online magazine until that point

³ The article was also published on Erev Rav's online platform; accessible in its translation to English:

<https://4ea69e921e70b6f10a49f45ff3e4173899d86d0c.googleusercontent.com/host/0B89sTfVZwyC7WDBHWIVGT21SNUU/-haifa-please-make-peace-horde-erev-rav-.html>

curatorial than those unimportant places, reminiscent of other realms of being, other times and other convictions; such places that are lost or forgotten in the midst of the hurry to construct a new ideological front? Here in the wilderness of the abandoned, I have found the breath of something new.

In a way, these four years have allowed me to stop the race I have taken upon myself in circling what seemed central, and to realize, in this deceleration, that in fact, the real potential for my practice lays in the periphery of the visible. This is what changed my understanding of the urban space of Haifa and inserted patience into the construction of the frameworks for my practice, such as the Haifa-Hackney artists' residency, which will open, hopefully, in 2015.

Maybe it is inaccurate to think of this as a deceleration; instead, it is a position at the eye of the storm: in relation to where I come from, London – and, more specifically, Goldsmiths, seemed like the pivotal point around which everything turns. London, with its striving artistic activity, and Goldsmiths as a proclaimed institutions that marks its influence in the field, seem to have shrieked the centre of Tel Aviv to a tiny insignificant dot that races around in circles around the centre which was London. When I placed myself right at the centre of it all, I could finally stop and observe, and, in a subtle movement, I started circling myself. This change of direction, or focus, also originated in my new encounter with the potential of online curatorial practices, which I intend to continue and develop through the platform of VAINS, with hopes that these tools will inspire a different approach to digital art.

ONLINE CURATORIAL PRACTICE

In realizing the potential of the periphery and in meeting those who work in the periphery of this shared space of the internet, I started to realize the real scope of Curatorial Practice, beyond the closed definitions of accepted time and space. In the historical journey I have embarked on to search for spaces of *the curatorial* – this expansion I have taken upon myself as part of this research – I have encountered the curator as an expert in reading, writing and interpreting modes of visual literacy. I am still surprised each time to discover how accurate this definition is in describing my interest and my practice.

However, such a definition has its own implications, and a new set of questions comes to mind. What does it mean to be a professional reader and writer of visual literacy in our current day and age? And how, indeed, does such definition allow me to redefine the challenges I am facing with the advent of new communication technology? And, more importantly, who is inventing the new symbolic strata of our digital reality?

Who is archiving, arranging, disseminating and categorizing our seals, our bulae and our plates and in these actions, sculpting the future of our language and perception? While some of these questions have already been considered and answered, somewhat, in the body of this research, they still resonate with an urgency that I cannot shake off. Programming literacy seems to be the urgent task of curators today, and it is one of the skills that I intend to acquire as a direct result of the conclusions drawn from this research.

THE COMMON SPACE OF THE FIGURATIVE ‘WE’

The urgency of this call derives from yet another understanding to which this research had led me: an understanding that curatorial spaces are not only spaces that allow us to meet our histories, our objects, and what we have already created. Curatorial spaces are a constant reminder of our present, and construct our future tirelessly. And the future of *the curatorial* within digital communication systems is no longer as an interface between audiences and objects; rather, it is a meeting point between actions and subjects.

Irit Rogoff, in her article ‘We - Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations’ (2004), offers a subjective journey into the experience of being part of this multiplicity of ‘I’s, as she conceives it, within the exhibition space, and describes the formation of the plural and the common in the manifestation of curatorial practices. In her words: *‘Despite the prevailing mythologies that continue to link the experience of art to individual reflection, we do look at art, inhabit the spaces of art in various forms of collectivity and in the process we produce new forms of mutuality, of relations between viewers and spaces rather than relations between viewers and objects’* (Rogoff, 2004) This statement provides an insight into the possibility that in such communal spaces, one is a viewer, but is also being viewed; an idea that is also seen in the writings of Merleau-Ponty and Altshuler. We encounter each other and encounter ourselves as part of the creative fabric of life.

In their very essence, Curatorial Practice and art have not changed at all. They are still involved in the same old ritual that I recognize in the Volp Caves, the Niaux Cave and Chauvet Cave in David Lewis-Williams’ book, *The Mind in the Cave*; it is the same ritual for which the temples and streets of Ancient Mesopotamian cultures were built. It is the same old ritual for which the Romanesque and the Gothic Enterprises laboured to construct space and it is the same ritual that the White Cube had sought to recreate outside the constraints of a violent reality. It is the same ritual that seeks to perform the premise the well known inscription on the Temple of Delphi’s door, that hall

which was built for the sole purpose of providing a space for the oscillating object: 'Man, Know Thyself'.

What is this ritual? Here, I would like to open up the possibility of thinking of culture and display, and their roles in constructing relationships and communion, as denominators of the human condition, which change their form but not their ontological core. In a way, the premise of this research was to allow such an understanding to emerge from the abstraction of any form, exposing the notion of *the curatorial* as a means of connecting subjects - relieving the prime focus from objects and individuals (which, in themselves, isolated from a network of relationships, are the ultimate objectified subject) and recalibrating the focus on relationships - on the interconnections that form the background from which we emerge as inter-subjective beings. This conclusion raises a whole new set of understandings of Lind's original definition of *the curatorial* as 'thinking in interrelations'.

CURATORIAL POETRY

I have already confessed that my heart will fall for poetry, once and again, and now it is clear to me why; after all - poetry - is Curatorial Practice manifested in Grammar, and maybe this is the reason *the curatorial* lends itself to poets, who in their re-arrangement of language, reconcile our relation to our inner most world.

But beyond the beauty of the poetic, which inevitably tempts every curator to succumb her/himself to its gravity, there is a lot of research to be done to uncover the intricate and the complex histories and meanings of those rituals we have developed in order to return to ourselves. There are further questions that need to be answered about our nature as constructs of layers upon layers of symbolic representations that intersect, contradict and contest each other in the search for a certain peace or connection.

I hope that, as a researcher, I will have the opportunity to delve into a further enquiry of some of the questions that were left open in the course of this study but which I was not able to contain here. Those areas of enquiry were already marked within the text, anticipating the impossibility of concluding this research; this research can only conclude itself with rising tone and pitch of the question mark, because it is driven by maintaining all its edges open.

APPENDIX 1

IN DETAIL: FROM THE COLLECTION OF ARNIE DRUCK¹, THOUGHTS ABOUT COLLECTING AND THE EXHIBITION

This study sets to explore and extend on the exhibition *In Detail* that was presented at the HMA in 2010. The study case is comprised from a series of interviews² that were taken with Yeala Hazut, who curated the exhibition, and Arnie Druck, whose collection was represented in this exhibition. The interviews aimed at understanding better curatorial processes that are entangled and dependant on collections. Through those interviews some aspects of the relationship between the collector and the curator are revealed, as well as the relation between collecting and curatorial practice. The interviews also explore the central role of spatial representation in curatorial practice and a set of priorities that might define or extend the understanding of curatorial practice. *The Curatorial* is apparent in various aspects of this project, both in the construction of a new relationship between the collector and his collection, and in the display of the private collection in a public context.



Figure 1 - Images from Self-Life Exhibition

The exhibition was presented as part of a cluster of exhibitions at the museum that dealt with the notion of collecting on various levels. The main exhibition, *Shelf-Life* curated by chief curator at the time, Tami Katz-Freiman, was set to explore collections as a phenomenon in art and

touched upon different themes that emerge in the exploration of collecting as a creative act that informs contemporary artistic practices. Within the context of this cluster, *In Detail* was an exhibition that dealt with collecting itself; its meaning and

¹ *In Detail: From the Collection of Arnie Druck* was an exhibition, presented at the Haifa Museum of Art (referred to as the HMA) between February and July. Curator: Yeala Hazut.

² The interviews and conversation with Yeala have been through a course of several conversations we have had about the exhibition between September and November 2012. Some of the questions derive from earlier conversations I have had with Yeala in 2010, on the occasion of the exhibition's opening. Two interviews were held in Arnie Druck. One on the 28th of November, 2012. This was a video conference. Another interview was held in Jaffa, 21st of January, 2013. The following text is not a direct transcription of the interviews, as some of the parts were not relevant to this study case and were taken out of the final draft.

representation. The exhibition was a result of a long term research project, through which a fragile set of relationships was sewed between the museum, collector Arnie Druck and curator Yeala Hazut. The aim of this project was to research, learn and discover Druck's collection, representing it as one conceptual unit while offering it a curatorial interpretation.

Arnie Druck is a renowned collector both in Israel and internationally. His collection is diverse and includes a variety of items from different fields of research. Most notable are his collection of early Zionist documents and materials, his children's book collection, his postcards and telephone cards collection, his collections of Haggadas³ published by the Kibbutz movement, and finally his large collection of art, most notably his collection of contemporary Israeli photography.

The research and development of the exhibition required both Druck and Hazut to collaborate and ask relevant questions about the nature of collecting, the nature of the collection itself and the meaning of its exhibition. In retrospect, both have agreed that this was a very meaningful procedure that has shed light on both the phenomenon of collecting as well as on curatorial practice.



Figure 2- The Front Space of *In Detail* during its installation at the HMA, 2010

For this exhibition, one of the main exhibition halls at the first floor of the HMA was divided into two smaller spaces. In the front exhibition space, objects that represented many of Druck's collection were shown in traditional museological displays: three large vitrines were created to host a very large number of objects, most of them relating to the early Zionist movement and the establishment of the state of Israel: Zionist Congress documentation, Zim⁴ ships models, medals, stamps, postcards etc. This part of the exhibition represented not only Arnie's earlier collections but also some of the main visual symbols of the Zionist movement. Some of

³ Haggada – the booklet used in Passover during the Jewish Seder ceremony. The book is describing the Israelites exodus from slavery in Egypt. Some of the Zionist movements of the late 19th century, especially those that were later on related to the establishment of the Kibbutz and the Kibbutz movement, aimed at re-inventing the image of the Jew through underlining the nationalistic aspects of the Jewish tradition rather than the religious ones. They therefore had also created their own versions of Jewish rituals and as part of this objective re-invented the Haggada. The Haggada is one of the only books in Jewish tradition that can be illustrated and therefore interpreted in different ways.

⁴ The Israeli national maritime company.

the objects presented at the exhibition have a invaluable historical value in the construction of the Zionist narrative and ideology.

The back space of the exhibition was dedicated to more recent additions to Druck's collection - contemporary Israeli photography and video art. These were combined with a display of some of Druck's postcards collection. In this space the collection was represented in a more diverse fashion, within designated frames that were designed specifically for the exhibition and were hung on the wall in different heights and depths. The photographs chosen for the exhibition have all resonated strongly with a contemporary post-Zionist movement, prevalent in contemporary Israeli art, in which the ideology that had set the institution of the state of Israel is approached from a critical perspective, and in many ways dismantles the positive way in which those ideas have been represented as part of a Zionist indoctrination at the early days of the state.

While the exhibition was very clearly a representation of the history of Israeli ideology, it also reflected Druck's personal journey through the development of his collection. Hence the exhibition became a reflection on the relationship between public and personal narratives, and their intertwining, development and reconstruction one aside the other.

Visiting the exhibition, the relation and contradiction between curating and collecting had become apparent: walking through the divided space, the shift one felt in modes of representation also embodied a shift in perception. The collected objects were hovering between a public and a private realm, between a past and a present which is very private but at the same time communal, public, and very much reflecting a story of a whole nation.

The relationship built between the collector and the curator in the context of making this exhibition was apparent in the sensitive approach to the materials and their organization according to both curatorial concerns, and internal categorizations that were part of the collection construct. In this sense there was a tight tension between the separation of memorabilia from art works, and on the other hand the aesthetic organization of memorabilia in contemporary form of display, apparent in the design of the vitrines, the frames that incorporated some of the documents, and the general tendency towards the amassment of materials, without necessarily explaining the history or meaning of each of the collectable items, as one would expect from a classical museological representation of such artefacts.



Figure 4 - Image of the front space, displaying Druck's Zionist memorabilia collection



Figure 4 - Image of the back space displaying Druck's contemporary, Post-Zionist art collection

The amalgamation of the objects without necessarily referring to the individual place of each object within the collection construct allowed for two things: firstly the freedom of the visitor to interpret and construct the narrative that was suggested through such historical documents presented, from a subjective point of view which involves individual memory and does not necessarily stipulates a pre-constructed statutory narrative, as is often the case with the presentation of such

objects of significance to Israeli cultural heritage. On the other hand, it allowed a representation of a huge number of objects from Druck's collection, reflecting on the compulsive act of collecting and the amount of attention and time Druck had dedicated to the process of collecting.

The exhibition seems to have resurrected the collective memory of those that visited the exhibition space. This was apparent in the amount of time visitors had dedicated to the presented objects, and the conversations that the display had generated. Some of these conversations and comments will be referred to later on in the course of the interviews conducted as a means of exemplifying the exhibition's effect. In this sense the exhibition has created space for the reconstruction of communal memory through a form of story-telling.

During the course of the exhibition's opening, it became apparent that the liveliness of the exhibition and the attention that it has generated did not derive from its curatorial narrative, stipulating a shift from Zionism to post Zionism as such. This cultural shift in Israeli identity has taken a primal position in contemporary Israeli culture and art

in the local art discourse since the 1980's and has been represented in innumerable curatorial projects. The artworks presented, too, were already shown in numerous other occasions. Therefore it is safe to assume that the fascination with the exhibition was not in relationship to the construction of this specific historical and cultural narrative.

Rather, I argue that it was the juxtaposition between the private and the public, between the past and the present, between the symbols of one's ideology and their use in order to convey another's that has made this cultural shift apparent and affective. Moving within the space there was a feeling that time had frozen and that in an uncanny loop both the present and the past have existed in the exact same time. The cancellation of hierarchical or linear arrangement in the space – mixing art with historical artefacts- meant that the conflict between what they represented together was revived.

Reviving the experience of the identity crisis or the inner conflict of what it means to be an Israeli in both the past and the present also revived a series of questions one can ask about the construction of historical narratives and the nature of those narratives. The exhibition had inspired me to reflect back and reconsider the history of Israel as a socio-political space, and re-re-frame its affiliation to the notion of a 'Jewish people' as a national unit in general, so that the relationship between the 'Jewish state' and the 'Jewish people' was deconstructed and blurred. I felt that this juxtaposition within the construct of my own personal identity-narrative had intrigued the perception, that like the objects who were placed in no correlation to their logical time and space, also I exist in several places and times in parallel-reawakening the notion that the divisions between subject and object in the framework of the exhibition were suspended, and a new perspective about my identity and my part in this historical narrative was suggested. In this sense, I felt that the exhibition had opened a space of *the curatorial* within me, and this experience had affected me deeply and remained engraved in my memory.

Knowing the process that both Hazut and Druck went through while working on the exhibition; I was interested in the individual and subjective journeys they have been through while working on it. I wanted to understand the decision-making processes that brought about this processes and locate *the curatorial* as part of the process that brought this particular exhibition into being. I wondered whether through this process they have learnt anything about what curating might mean, especially in the

context of working with collection. These were the driving questions that have led the following conversations.⁵

INTERVIEW WITH ARNIE DRUCK

Lee Weinberg (LW)⁶: Now, after I told you a little bit about my research and about what I am aiming to understand, would you be so kind to tell me a little bit about your collection?

Arnie Druck (AD): I started collecting in my childhood, mainly stamps and coins from Israel. My father spent time in Israel when it was first established as a state, and he subscribed me both to the Israeli stamp market and the National Medallion Company and so from the age of 7 I already collected stamps and coins. When the Yom Kippur war⁷ struck, I was studying in Berkley University, but I felt that I have to come to Israel to help with the efforts of the war and so I took a flight and arrived to Jerusalem. After I was told that my services were not needed in the Israeli Defence Forces, I found myself walking around Jerusalem and subsequently went into one of the art galleries. I think I was around 23 years old. I saw two works of art which I really liked and bought them. I was not very interested in art, but this visit has awakened something within me, and when I returned to Berkley I got into it. I regularly went to museums and galleries and started to buy more and more art and gradually learnt the field. In 1978 I decided to move to Israel, to make Alyiah⁸, and I have met one art merchant who got me into Judaica. I also became very interested in books, especially illustrated books and children's books. From that point on my collection has gradually developed in different directions. It has become extremely versatile. Eventually, I moved to Jerusalem and started to collect the Israeli art that was popular at the time, you know, Zaritsky⁹, Aroch¹⁰ – all the famous artists of the time. After a while, and after being to some of the more contemporary exhibitions, I started to form relationships with the young artists of my own age, like Bokobza¹¹ and

⁵ I believe that the interviews speak for themselves and that the conclusions one can draw from them are self-explanatory. I feel it would be an unnecessary addition to also include an analysis or a reflection on those conversations, as they are in themselves self-reflective.

⁶ To make it easier to follow the interview, abbreviations were used in the names to signify who is talking. Arnie Druck will be referred to as AD. Lee Weinberg will be referred to as LW. Nehami Druck, Arnie Druck's wife will be referred to as ND. Yeala Hazut will be referred to as YH.

⁷ The Yom Kippur War, Ramadan War, or October War started on October 6th, 1973.

⁸ Making Aliyah – is a term describing the immigration of Jews to Israel as part of an ideological or Zionist move. In Hebrew Aliyah means ascending, or moving up. The word has a positive connotation, and is embodying a meaning of return.

⁹ Joseph Zaritsky, an established Israeli painter, worked between 1891 and 1985.

¹⁰ Arie Aroch, an established Israeli painter, worked between 1908 and 1974

¹¹ Eliahou Eric Bokobza, born 1963, an Israeli painter and sculptor, one of the raising stars in the contemporary Israeli art scene in the 1980's

Yitzhak Livneh¹² and other artists that started to become famous during the 1980's. When I started with this, we had a little habit, me and my wife: each Friday we would go for a gallery tour and would decide which artwork to buy. After making the purchase, we would bring the work, hang it on the wall and just look at it. Every once in a while we changed the pictures on the wall. At the beginning I only bought art that I liked, but at a certain point something changed. There was a spur of political art, at the same time David Reeb¹³ first started his shows in Jerusalem, and even though I didn't really like the works, I was interested in them and decided to collect their work anyway. I think this is when I started to collect art intensively [...] at a certain point I didn't have enough space to store all the artworks and so from very practical reasons I have started to collect photography. I have a very large collection of artworks, much more than what any normal human being would need or want. At a certain point, I think maybe after the exhibition at the HMA, I realized that if the works are not displayed, if you can't enjoy them, then it is a bit of a waste. So I started to hang the works I owned in different places – like at the offices of law firms I work with in Tel Aviv.

LW: You collect so many things, how does that work? Do you start a collection and then when you complete it you start with another one? Or do you buy items to all the collections in parallel?

AD: There are up and downs when it comes to my collections. Sometimes I am more interested in one collection and I focus on it for a while, but I am not very focused on one area of collecting. This is not so good because I spread myself too thinly. To build a serious collection means to concentrate on one field and to collect it thoroughly and well. But in actuality I don't follow this logic. There is no logic to the way I collect in that sense. Over the years I became very curious about so many different things and this had led me to have this very versatile collection. I know that I am supposed to be a contemporary photography collector, but then I am also interested in historical documents of Israel before it was established as "Palestine" during the British mandate. I am also interested in contemporary Israeli photography that is not necessarily artistic. And on top of that - I am also interested in international contemporary photography. Maybe I should have concentrated and worked on one area only, but I can't.

¹² Yitzhak Livneh, born 1952, painter, one of the leading Israeli artists who came to fame during the 1980's.

¹³ David Reeb, born 1952, an Israeli painter and installation artist. One of the pioneers in a new political movement within Israeli contemporary art in 1980's that forcefully criticized Israel's behaviour in face with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

LW: It seems to me that you are collecting from a very deep passion – a passion for the objects themselves, and not only out of concern to your own image as a professional collector or something like that- am I right to suggest that you collect those things that you feel something towards, that are curious to you- that interest you?

AD: yes, yes, of course. But too many things trigger this curiosity in me, and this has become a problem. But this collection is also a lot of work. You see, I manage the collection all by myself. I don't have curators or registrars that work for me, like other private collectors do. These collectors, they have big companies, and they think of art as a financial investment. This is why it is important that they show their collections every once in a while, because it raises the value of the artworks that they own. Of course I also think it is important that the objects I have will be displayed. I borrow items from my collections all the time, but you see, this has become a full time job. Every time someone wants to borrow an item from my collection, I have to take care of everything and there is so much bureaucracy and paperwork involved that sometimes I can't be bothered. I know rationally, as a collector I should be happy to present the items that I have because the more they are shown the more valuable they become. But I am not always happy to take things out of my collection. From another point of view, I have just hosted a few German scholars from Dusseldorf and I was asked to show them my collection and explain a little bit about it, and it was a good experience because it is important that people will be aware of the collection in a national and international context, and it is also important to Israeli contemporary art, that it will be shown so that people from other countries will get to know what is happening in Israeli contemporary art. So I guess this collection is also good to have for social reasons, but it takes a lot of energies, so I don't do this quite often.

LW: In the very little we spoke, you have already answered many of the questions that I wanted to ask you ... I understand that you are not always involved with all your different collections at once, but that you have ups and downs and your interests can change and develop as times passes by ... I also understand from what you tell me that sometimes you wish you were more focused on one area of your collection but that you find it very difficult.

AD: yes, this is life – ups and downs

LW: It almost sounds like you are suggesting that life gets in the way of your collection...

AD: Well, I do other things as well. I am married – I have three children – I work. But it is true that the collection takes a large part of my time. .

LW: and really, how would you say your close environment, your wife and children look at this habit of yours to collect? How do they perceive the collection?

AD: well, on the one hand they appreciate the collection. They like art and they see the value in some of the things that I buy, but at the same time, I know they think that this has grown out of any proportion. They are very proud of the collection – some of the collections I have are of great significance; they are shown in museums and other venues all over the world¹⁴, and of course, they were extremely proud when they saw the exhibition at the HMA, at the same time, it is a burden, it takes a lot of my time, and I invest a lot of money in it and they tend to think that I am exaggerating.

LW: It seems to me that you have accomplished quite a lot with those collections. When you were first collecting all those items, did you understand the historical importance of the objects you collected? Did you understand what an important impact those collections will have in the future? What I mean to ask is whether you feel this was your motivation in collecting those items...

AD: Of course this crossed my mind a few times, especially with my collection of historical documents ... I have documents from the Zionist congress with original Herzl signatures. I am always amazed that nobody is interested in those things anymore. You know, there are very little collectors who seriously research their materials and seriously collect...

LW: You mean to tell me that Israeli and Zionist archives are not interested in those documents?

AD: Yes, they borrow those things. But that's it. Since the exhibition at the HMA, people know me and my collection a little bit more. Beforehand I was a private collector and a secret collector as well. I also think it is much better for the collection itself to remain anonymous and a little bit secret. People should not know, who, what, where. When they know you are a collector and that you have a lot of money they ask for ridiculous prices. So it is better to collect modestly and quietly.

LW: If we already mentioned the exhibition you have had in the Haifa Museum, if I understand correctly, this was the first time that your collection has been shown in public, as a collection, under your name, am I right?

¹⁴ Arnie's collections have been acknowledged and shown in many institutions all over the world. The Toronto University, Moma, The Nahum Gutman Museum, The Israel Museum to name a few.

AD: Yes. I mean beforehand they would borrow items from my collection but the collection itself- as a unit, like Yeala has curated it, was never shown before ... but even Yeala... I don't know what Yeala told you about how it began ... I took them¹⁵ to the warehouses I have in Jerusalem and in Jaffa. There were more bits stored in different places. I don't know what they were thinking in the first moment that they saw all those things, eventually, they chose to focus on my contemporary Israeli photography collection and so, for the exhibition they didn't take any sculptures and only a few paintings – I think maybe two or three of them. Yeala did show parts of my other collections as well, but even the Israeli photography, I have so much more, they showed such a tiny proportion of the collection, so the way I see it – they didn't really represent the collection as a whole ... I am very happy with the final result and what can you do – this is curatorship – it is about choice ... about the curator's eye going through the collection and the connections that she has made between different items. I am not sure I would have explained things in the same way but I think, overall, the curatorial process was good ... new connections were made between objects, and they were suddenly lighted in a different way ... when I collect I don't think of the psychological and philosophical aspects of my collection. I understand that such an aspect exists, but I don't occupy myself with this.

LW: As a collector, you also make choices- you choose which item to include in your collection. What drives your choice then?

AD: Ah, this is a complicated question, how do I choose? I choose. Well maybe it would be better to ask how I chose when I just started collecting, how my choices have changed after a decade, and how I choose now- that I have more knowledge and background in the areas I collect. The more knowledge and experience you accumulate the more you can see...

LW: So, really, how did your choice processes changed over the years?

AD: well, this requires a whole research in itself, but let's say that at the beginning – and I am mainly speaking about my art collection, I just bought what I felt was right, what my gut told me to get, if I liked it I bought it – I didn't think about the work's value or interpretation. I just bought whatever I wanted to have ... when you buy something that you know is going to be worth a lot in a while, well of course it adds up to the excitement, but let's say that this was not the motivating force behind the purchases. Then after a while my choices were very much shaped by relationships I have developed with certain artists. For example, at the beginning I was a very loyal

¹⁵ By them Druck refers to Yeala Hazut and Tami Katz-Freiman who was involved in initiating the process.

supporter of the realistic school, led by Israel Hershberg¹⁶. I bought a lot of this kind of work at that time and it took me a while to open up to other styles. Then I developed relationships with other artists; one artist introduces you to another and this is how the collection grew. After a while other, more practical things, shaped the way I collected, for example, I couldn't collect any more sculptures or painting because I ran out of space. This is the reason I started to collect photography, really ... at a certain point I became very enthusiastic about my photography collection. I used to go to a gallery and buy 60 works by the same artist. For example I have 60 works of Joel Shterenfeld, I have the largest collection of photographs by Kiki Smith – 100 photographs of Kiki Smith and really, what can you do with all this? So I have given some of the collections away. The MOMA has some of my photography collection now.

LW: So eventually you had to give them away... but I was wondering, this last urge you were talking about, buying a few works at once – would it be right of me to think that it was related to the completion of a series? My father is collecting stamps, and I know from him, that that completing a series is something that drives his purchases, would you say this is something that has shaped your collection too?

AD: Of course, it is a very meaningful aspect of collecting. This is what motivates you and drives you as a collector. Me, for example, I did it a few times, went into a gallery- and if I felt that a series of works should stay together I would buy the whole series the same day. But it is not a financially viable choice to work this way. It doesn't make much sense. The choices I make are intuitive, they are driven by a certain need, from my guts, but it's not that I am unaware of the financial aspects and potentials of what I do. And these choices could certainly be considered mistakes in terms of financial prospects ... but I gain such pleasure from having the whole series and this, I cannot resist. This pleasure is of course completely selfish. It only serves me, nobody else enjoys this. My family, my friends, nobody understand this craziness ... you have no idea how happy I am when I find an item that I miss from one of my series. Such joy! For example when I found that rare edition of one of the Tarshish¹⁷ books, a book that was not in the national library catalogue, I was so happy. I cannot explain how happy I was ... its simply the inner life of a person. Something in the internal puzzle of the self is completed, fixed. And the funny thing is that it can be anything – any object. You could say that this book that I found had a certain aesthetic and historical value and so

¹⁶ Arnie is referring to the Jerusalem Studio School, led by realist artist, Israel Hershfeld. The school was founded in 1998. It is devoted to the promotion of traditional painterly methods and realistic painting. <http://jssart.wordpress.com/about/>

¹⁷ Tarshish is an Israeli publishing house, founded by designer and Editor Dr Moshe Spitzer in 1939. Tarshish focused on publishing Hebrew translations of classic literature. Arnie refers to a series of Children's books that he collects, illustrated by artist Yigal Aricha.

the excitement is justified, but you know what, I also collect pamphlets of the same publishing house, not something which is aesthetically or intellectually exciting, I have dozens and dozens of those pamphlets, and I am missing no.7 and no. 25. I am looking for those two everywhere and this little pamphlet is only worth about ten shekels. Maybe if the merchant will have any idea about how rare it is, he will take 100 shekels. So those things don't even have much of a financial value ... but if I find those two missing pamphlets- that would be amazing- it will fill like a blank spot, a space within me. So you see, there is no real distinction here between valuable things, expensive things and the most mundane things. I will get the same pleasure and the same satisfaction from completing any of the series I have. Not many people understand this. If you take the merchants for example, they would feel that they earned money on my expense when they take 25% more of an item's price, and they know they can do that because they know I am looking for that specific item. I laugh at them because they don't really understand that it does not matter - what's at the centre is the completion of the series all the rest is not important.

LW: Do you think you could ever finish collecting? Do you think that once you have completed all the series you have started you would be able to give your collection a rest?

AD: I think there are certain collections that you can complete but even then, it is a bit tricky. For example, the Tarshish books I was telling you about. There is a catalogue that lists 101 books, so you would think - if I had all the 101 then my collection would have been complete. But then I already found three books of the same series, which were not even catalogued. I also found special editions of books I already have which have a few variations in them and this can go on and on. All this depends on how you define the collection in the beginning – but in some aspects, you can never know if you have completed a collection. Something will drive you to always check once more because you might always find another rare item or a different edition of the same thing that you already have. All this still counts as part of the series.

LW: How do you find and discover all those rare items? How do you know of their existence if they are not catalogued, for example?

AD: You don't know those things in advance, but when you look for those things you do know exist, you come across many surprises. The process of collecting is my way of learning the world, and I do that through the objects I collect. First I look for specific objects, and sometimes I need to go to many places before I find what I want. When I find an item I research it thoroughly, I ask about it. I create contact with other people who have a connection to what I am collecting. The more objects I have the more I

learn about their specific category of knowledge. As a matter of fact, it is true to say – I have a lot of knowledge about those areas I collect. Like every research project, one step leads to the next, and eventually you discover more and more about things. This is how you find more objects as well. From every person I meet I learn a little something about the objects I collect.

LW: If I am reading between your lines, can I say that the process of collecting and the collection in a certain way is part of you, part of your being? Do you feel that it reflects on you or represents you as a human being in a way?

AD: Absolutely. At least major parts of the collection are indeed- I feel – expressions of myself as a human being. The collection is a huge part of me, undoubtedly, in every level. Also many of the things that fill up my time are related to the collection; I travel to specific places because I know I might find something relevant to one of my collections there. I invest a lot of time in researching the items that I collect. This occupies a great deal of my time. It is in my blood, I am completely driven by this curiosity.

LW: So when you say that collecting is in you blood, well I assume what you mean is that you will always be fascinated with certain objects because of the knowledge that they hold? I remember when I was little I used to ask my father, why do you collect all those stamps, what do you need them for, are you planning to send so many letters? And he laughed and answered that he collects the stamps because behind each of those stamps there is a magical and rich story of how it came to be, why it is valued at a certain rate and that this is his way of learning about the history of the world. Through researching the stamps he reveals very interesting details about those places and times that interest him. There is something so very charming in this pursuit, something magical in the fact that such a small object can contain and reveal so much information. It is a little bit like a flash-drive or a computer chip.

AD: Yes, exactly. This is how I gained most of my knowledge. But what worries me at the moment is that there are no collectors any more. People don't collect any more, it is a dying occupation. I know this because I know I don't have many competitors in Israel who are looking for the objects I look for. I look at all those Hi-Tec people that our country has produced. They have a lot of money, but they don't invest it in collecting. They don't collect art, they don't collect books. It doesn't interest them at all.

LW: Well this has a lot to do with education, which brings me back to the museum and to the exhibition. Because I believe that there is something about showing your

collection like that in a public space, as it is, that might inspire some people to look into the area of collecting. Now I also understand better what you meant earlier when you said that you felt the exhibition could not represent the collection as a whole. Of course, in the context of the exhibition it was not possible to present all of it and what it means to collect – all that we have discussed. If you want to communicate something to an audience, there is no other option- choices need to be made; reduction is a necessary part of this process. Would that be one of the reasons you were so hesitant to start the process of working on this exhibition?

AD: Well, some of it, but also you know, if people know that I am a collector, then all kinds of pressures begin, things suddenly cost more ... but really the reason I was reluctant is because I am a private person. I didn't feel quite comfortable about people seeing and knowing what I do. It was a massive exposure for me, there were articles in various magazines and newspapers, suddenly I was interviewed, I had to answer so many questions, and I felt exposed, especially when all my stuff were shown like that at the museum. This is something that intimidated me a little. Also it was not very easy to go through with the curatorial process. My collection is not organized and catalogued, it is all in boxes scattered around different locations and I was a little bit uncomfortable with the idea that someone will come in look at all the boxes, picking at my stuff. It made me nervous; I was asking myself what will they find next? I know any person who ever saw part of the collection was amazed. All of them say "wow", that's their first reaction and I don't know what they mean by their "wow" ... Sometimes even I cannot believe how many thing I have and how disorganized everything is. You have to see it to believe it.

LW: In those times when Yeala came to look at your collection, were you involved in any of the curatorial processes?

AD: Yeala came to my office in Jerusalem with another assistant ... they didn't work with me, they were working separately- looking at all the things. From time to time they would ask me questions about one of the objects. ... It was not an easy process for me but at the end I could see the benefit of it all, and I think there was something about the curator, coming from a completely external point of view, looking at the collection and rearranging it- that made a little bit of sense for me as well. A little bit of order in all this mess. It's very clear to me now that if I was asked to curate my own collection I would never have made the choices they have made. It was a very positive experience, also that moment you have spoken about, of becoming public – I was afraid of it at first, but in the end, when the exhibition opened - there was also a sense of relief.

LW: And do you think that this experience has influenced you as a collector? For example, do you think you gained a better understanding of your collection? If we look at the exhibition, we can see that they took your personal collection, your personal story, and demonstrated how this is weaved with the history of the political ideology in Israel. Could you see this whole historical narrative and how it was embedded in your collection before the exhibition?



Figure 5 - Yael Bartana, *Untitled (Andromeda Rock)*, 2006
inkjet print on paper

AD: Yes, of course I was aware that my collection had a connection with the political ideology of Zionism – this was one of the main reasons I was interested specifically in those objects. With my art collection, I didn't see the connections so bluntly but again, you need to take into consideration that showing those specific works -

that reflected those ideological and political changes- this was also a curatorial choice. I can see how well the art pieces that were chosen were integrated in the exhibition and completed the other collections. This is why I think the exhibition was successful. With the artworks as well, of course I knew that the artworks I bought were political artworks that presented a very specific agenda. But something did make more sense when everything was displayed together. Let's take for example Yael Bartana's work¹⁸ that was presented there. One of the main reasons I bought this work in the first place was my personal story with Jaffa, the process of moving from Jerusalem here. I was very much aware of this aspect when I purchased that work, but at the same time, seeing it at the exhibition, I understood it from a different perspective.

I think what really moved me or made me think differently about my collection was listening to Yeala giving guided tours in the exhibition, the way she presented the collection and the exhibition and even more than that, giving such guided tours myself. We both did it very differently. When she spoke, she did it from a different, maybe a wider perspective – she talked about the historical narrative, the psychological, philosophical meanings ... When I did the tours I wanted people to understand the passion I have towards collecting, I wanted them to understand why I collect those objects. I wanted them to take this with them. It was really a very special

¹⁸ Arnie refers to Yael Bartana's work *Untitled (Andromeda Rock)*, 2003 (See Figure no. 6).

experience- this personal encounter ... I was exposed, but at the same time, I could try to make myself understood ... I enjoyed the tours very much, but when I did them, it was clear to me why I am not a curator, that the way I am talking the collection, I speak about it as a hobby – I am not making all the connotations and I don't understand all the connotations my collection might have with such a self-awareness. Even if I know at the back of my mind that the historical and political value of a piece is something that can drive me to collect it, it is not something that is laid out and spoken about. When I collect I don't think of all the implications and meanings of my collection, I am more drawn into the detail. I collect from a need or an urge; I don't choose objects for their political value, but for their specific value for me. There was something at that moment when I suddenly saw all the choices I have made unconsciously as a collector, and how they are telling my biography – my own story- but also how my own story is inevitably connected, influenced weaved within the history of the state of Israel. How I am part of history. I think this is something that is true about every individual, especially in this country.

With the guided tours I have given, I have become more self-conscious about the quality of my collection. I didn't have a problem with the items, not at all, I stand behind every single item that was exhibited, but I asked myself if the way I represent those objects is not poor, whether I could do it better, whether, if I was given the chance to start over and do all this process again I would have done it differently.

LW: That is interesting, so let's go with this fantasy, if you were given the opportunity to do it all over again, to exhibit your collection again – how would you do it?

AD: In a fantasy? If I had no time restriction and no financial constrains? First of all I would have bought, before the exhibition, all the works of all the major icons of the Israeli art world. I would have bought the best pieces of art I could find – this is a fantasy of course- and I would learn about those works and try to find the thread that connects them all – the historical thread – without all the enthusiasm of being a collector. I would have done something more rigorous, more academic.

LW: But you are describing a completely different process – there is a difference between choosing from an existing collection that has been built over years and buying artworks specifically for an exhibition? Don't you think?

AD: Yes, of course. But it is a matter of how you represent yourself, this is when you understand that through the exhibition, this is what you do: you represent yourself and you want to represent who you really are. Let's say you are a person who cares

what others would think of you – so me- for example – If I could do it again, I would want to control this process...

LW: Do you feel that the exhibition at the HMA didn't represent you as a serious and a professional person? And you know, maybe this is one of the main differences between curating and collecting. Curators, they immediately think about how others will read their choices, this is the first thing that they think about. When you are in the process of collecting, you do it for yourself. You don't think about how other people would read you through this – because it is private and it is yours.

AD: I think it was a good exhibition, it did something different, it represented a certain aspect of me, but, at the same time it didn't reflect things I wish it would have, for example, my knowledge of Israeli art. I am comparing this exhibition to other exhibitions that were made for other Israeli art collectors in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art for example¹⁹, they were presented as meaningful in the history of Israeli Art. To be honest with you, I was not very impressed with those exhibitions and I think that they lacked a curatorial line. In this sense they were not as successful, but on the other hand, and without patronising- I know more about Israeli art than 99% of those who are experts in the field ... this is something that is important to me ... maybe if I'd have written an article about this or something ... and you know, when you see those collections, well, me personally, I am not that impressed – because I know how much better it could be.

LW: We spoke for a while now, and I know you do have an incredible knowledge of Israeli art. You were pretty much part of the field, the money you contributed with your collection must have moved things around in the art market. You have supported artists and whole movements ... this is indeed something that comes with collecting that cannot be replaced. Also the type of knowledge that you have - a curiosity to such details that cannot be compared to the knowledge others have in this field. If I think of curators, or of myself as a curator, obviously, as a viewer my approach is very different, but as a curator I don't pay that much attention to all the details that hide behind an artwork, I am more interested in understanding the main idea and see how it corresponds with a certain context. I enjoy the details, but I cannot say that that passion for those little details is what drives my practice.

AD: This is true, and many times it seems that people do not understand that. They also very rarely really understand how to estimate the value of an object, its potential as a financial asset, how to buy and how to sell. There is a lack of integrity in this field.

¹⁹ Arnie refers to Depletion: work from Doron Sebbag (ORS) collections, curated by Nily Goren and Aya Luria, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, March 2008.

Objects are not appreciated for their aesthetics or for their details; their value is set in the context of a set of intricate relationships between different people, cliques, in the art world. Rarely would anyone try to evaluate the object itself. I think this is a problem. I think many things are missed and mistaken this way.

LW: So, how do you see the role of the curator in this context?

AD: well, I believe that when organizing an exhibition, works should be presented in their historical context. This means the curator should have much knowledge about the work itself, where it came from, and how it is relevant to the whole development of a history of art. I am less interested in all the psychological and philosophical aspects of curatorial writing. You know I have done a BA and an MA in psychology – it is not that I don't understand or don't appreciate those things, but I feel that sometimes those interpretations are disconnected from reality – mainly disconnected from the reality of the artwork itself. I also think that this knowledge has less value for the audience.

LW: So this is where your fantasy of your next exhibition comes from, from this art-historical premise?

AD: Yes, I think it is connected to the fact that sometimes I wish I would have concentrated on one of my collections. This is why it is so difficult, you see ... but you know; sometimes I have a dream to just let it all go. Get rid of everything and start anew- start fresh. Take my wife to a trip around the world with only a backpack and a stick. Sometimes I wish I had nothing.

LW: Really? You have such a dream?

AD: Yes. I think this has become the goal now. Get rid of everything. Maybe restart a different collection. Focus on one area alone.

LW: So what will you do with all the things that you already have?

AD: I will sell it all. I will give some of them away. I will have to take whatever they offer me.

LW: Wow. That is quite a dream. It sounds like a very bold and brave plan. Really, are you capable of taking this whole collection, that you are so attached to, and just get rid of it to restart your life weightless? This sounds almost like a spiritual revelation.

AD: Yes. This is what I want.

LW: So, if this is the case, I will ask you one last question about your collection, and then I will part from you. Do you think your collection will ever become a public collection? Or do you think you rather leave it in the family?

AD: 100%- it will not stay with the family – because it is a burden. I have a million things and it is a hassle to take care of them, to preserve them.

LW: So, do you think of selling everything? Or are you considering some sort of museum or a public exhibition space for all the things that you have?

AD: No. Not really. It is something that was offered to me a few times but I don't want to do that.

LW: but some of the things that you have, mean so much to the public, they are historically valuable, especially to the public, here in Israel.

AD: Yes, this is true but this is why parts of my collections are spread in different institutions that are interested in them. The Kibbutz Haggadas in the Toronto University, the Judaica collection in Avichai House in Jerusalem, some of the Nahum Gutman works in the Nahum Gutman Museum, but you see those institutions – they have a problem as well. They don't have any space and resources to keep all those things themselves. So in many cases, they prefer to borrow items for the purpose of exhibitions, but they don't want to keep them. They prefer the items to be in my hands - they know I will take care of them. Also, if I donate the items to archives, libraries and other such institutions, those items will remain in their basement and no one will see them anyway.

LW: Do you feel that in private hands the items are saved in a better manner? Because for me it always seemed, that those institutions, even if they bury the items in their basement, at least the items are catalogued – intellectually available to the public. They also certainly keep those things under specific conditions, so if anyone ever wanted to approach those items, they could.

AD: I think that many archives are not very good in keeping the documents. The conditions are not always optimal, and they don't always keep the right temperature or the right moisture levels. Many times it is not the institution's fault - they don't have enough resources to keep those objects safe. I feel I have had my chance, I have collected all those items, and at a certain point it will be off my hands, I will move on. Whatever will be with these objects will be. I don't think that I will ever stop collecting- it is in my blood. But maybe I will do it more modestly, focus on one area.

LW: And aren't you interested in perpetuating your name through your collection?

AD: I feel this has already been accomplished; my name appears in different catalogues and publications. For me this is enough ... oh, please let me introduce you to my wife, Nehami. We have really nearly finished, but you should know, that she has a degree in art history. I think you should ask her how she feels about the collection, being the partner of a collector.

Nehami Druck (ND): Oh no, I don't think you should.

LW: Arnie has already confessed that the family and you are not too enthusiastic about his collecting habits...

ND: Yes, it takes a huge amount of space. Both physical space, but emotional space as well.

AD: The most interesting thing is she always compares the collection to a lover. The collection is my lover, she says.

ND: It is truly like a lover. It doesn't only occupy a space; it takes a huge amount of the emotional energies. It also has the same aura, you know – the same sort of secretive odour– it is all a big secret, it is only his, nobody else has access to this place but him. Nobody ever penetrates the full depth of it; nobody will ever know the truth, the essence or the root of it. You can now maybe see the external part of it- what Arnie chooses to present to you, but a lot remains completely private and impenetrable ... and Arnie will admit it himself. He says it: there are some places where there is no entrance, nobody is allowed in. You know, there are collectors who catalogue their items, who lets others organize their collections, this is one style of collecting. But in Arnie's collection - it is different. There is no catalogue, no one else involved. Everything is in his head. Only he knows what he has, where things are and what their meaning and value is. This is why I am saying it is like a lover, because the whole process of collecting is directed inside rather than outside. It is completely private and internal.

LW: Thank you for this contribution, this is very interesting to hear about it from a different perspective ... this could be an idea for another research, don't you think? the relationship between wives and collections...

INTERVIEW WITH YEALA HAZUT²⁰

Lee Weinberg (LW): I remember, when you first started working with Arnie Druck on this exhibition, not everything went completely smoothly. How did the relationship start? What were the main milestones?

Yeala Hazut (YH): The idea of working with Arnie came from Tami²¹ at first. The idea for the whole cluster was to approach the notion of collecting in art. We thought it would be interesting to present a collection – a genuine private collection - as a way of examining another aspect of this phenomenon and give the point of view of a “true” collector. TKF had an on-going relationship with Arnie and she offered him this opportunity. It took Arnie a while to get back to us, and he seemed a little bit hesitant at first, but in the end we started the process. I started by visiting his collection which was kept in different venues, and looking at the items, cataloguing them, researching them. I had to understand the collection myself. It was a vast collection, so many objects and things that I really needed to go through a process of first finding out what I am looking for within the collection.

After a few weeks of working together, I remember that Arnie did not feel very comfortable with the idea that I have spent so much time in his collection, and we had to stop the process and talk so we understand each other. I think this was a mile-stone in the relationship that we slowly formed. Something opened up in the conversations we had following this crisis, and I think many of the boundaries were made clearer to both of us. I realized how private his collection was. I understood how sensitive I need to be. I realized I am dealing not only with objects but with a person’s sense of self. I never thought of collections in those terms before, at least I didn’t think it was true to such an extent, but working on the exhibition it became very clear that my curatorial choices would shape not only an exhibition but a new way of representing Arnie’s personal story to the world. This became one of my main challenges; I wanted the exhibition to express this resonance between the public space of the museum and the collection as a historical display on the one hand, and Arnie’s personal story and the way it corresponds with history on the other.

LW: Why do you feel there was so much hesitation in opening up the collection to the public?

²⁰ At the beginning of the interview Yeala has requested to take into consideration that everything that she says is from a subjective point of view, things that she remembers from the process and not facts or rigid realities. This is therefore not a documentation of a curatorial process but a reflection on it from of distance of time and experience.

²¹ Tami Katz-Freiman (TKF), Chief curator of the museum at the time.

YH: Arnie is very private about his collection; he is extremely passionate about his collection as well. It seems his collection derives from an urge, a need. One might say on the verge of obsession. The collection seems to represent for him his most inner and intimate world. When I started looking through his stuff, it was a very clear breach of his privacy, and I am not sure how much he was aware of this aspect of the process when we first started. I am not sure he could have estimated how emotionally challenging this could be for him. You must remember that we have never met before this, so the process was a bit artificial as well. I was a complete stranger going through his most intimate stuff, asking questions. You can imagine this was not a very comfortable situation.

In addition, the collection was not organized in one space coherently, it was spread across different spaces, which in and of themselves are private spaces that very rarely anyone is granted permission to enter. Here I was, not only looking through his stuff, but also following him around to all his private spaces: his office, his house, warehouses and store rooms. Sometimes it was difficult to understand, that looking into his private collection, I was granted entry to the depth of his soul: to many of his childhood memories, to many of his conscious and subconscious urges, to many of the things that built him up as a man. To a certain extent I could say that the collection is a reflection of who Arnie is, and his biography. This was one aspect that I felt was very important to bring across as part of the exhibition.

LW: When you describe the collection, scattered in different places, it seems like a pretty dis-organized endeavour. Was the collection arranged in any way?

YH: The collection was indeed scattered. The objects were kept in boxes and folders and here was no apparent logic in how it was organized, and I think I could say quite confidently, that no one could have been able to find anything specific in the collection, apart from Arnie himself. He knew exactly where items were and how to find them. The organization of the collection had its own inner logic which very much corresponded with Arnie's inner world and life story. Parts of the collection were organized according to categories. This made the curatorial process laborious but at the same time very interesting. We never knew what surprises we would find next. It was like a treasure-hunting journey²².

LW: So what was the experience, really, of being in a curatorial position within all that?

²² Maybe this is a little bit of a taste of the experience of collecting

YH: Many questions arose while working on this project, mainly on the objective of collecting. I mean in some of the cases, where there was an obvious series that needed to be completed, there was some kind of a virtual aim for the collection: that of completing the series. I say virtual because it was very clear that in other cases, the series didn't play any central part. When collecting phone cards or children's books, there is some sort of a definite and finite number of items that the series includes, and it is very clear that once a series is complete the collection is also complete. But with the collection of art works, it became impossible to refer to the collection in the classic terms of the series. So how do you determine the end or goal of such a collection? And it makes you think, what is the meaning of collecting art like that? How can an art collection be defined? What is the story or the purpose of such a collection? Can it be put under the same category of collecting series of objects? If a private collection is a reflection of the collector's inner world, then what a public collection should be? I still remain with these questions today, and I think these are significant questions especially for curators who are working within public institutions, whose premise is based on collections, like the museum. These are questions that have no definite answers.

LW: So it seems that you were going through a process of deciphering the collection yourself. I assume that the exhibition was formed out of this procedure in the end. How was Arnie involved in all that?

YH: It was not a purposeful and accurate operation, I was going through a process with the collection myself, and within this process I had to see everything, and ask many questions, Verify the way I understood the things that I found, I did a lot of research. The process as a whole was hesitant, and naturally, so was the building up of our relationship; not only with the collection and with each other, but also with ourselves and what we are both looking for and expecting of this process. We needed to work in full collaboration.

At a certain point I saw that as much as the collection is Arnie's personal space and personal story, it is not the only thing that can be drawn out of it. It was important for me to understand how the collection can exist independently, outside of Arnie's point of view. It was essential for me, as a curator, to offer a new point of view. At the end of the day, this was the curatorial premise. I didn't want to just hang the collection on the walls; I wanted the collection to become a meaningful story that can be told. It was very clear to me that I am not interested in displaying Arnie's self-portrait, a criticism of him or anything along those lines.

We talked a lot during this process about all the questions that we both had, and I think at a certain point it became a process of collaborative research through the collection. He, too, was beginning to see his own collection from a slightly different perspective. As the time went by, the relationship between us developed, and by the end of the project we got on very well. I think this level of openness on both sides was essential to the success of the exhibition.

LW: So when you have reached the end of the process and in retrospect, do you think this process of curating was something meaningful for Arnie as well? Do you think that you managed to re-invent the collection in some way?

YH: Definitely. The curatorial choice was very meaningful and maybe a little bit painful for Arnie. Firstly it was obvious we would not be able to show the entirety of any of his collections, they are too vast. And so there needed to be a choice involved, of what to show and what not to show. Here again there was tension involved between the curatorial project, which was my premise, and his personal feelings about certain objects that he felt the exhibition could not do without.

It is his private collection you see, these are his stuff, so even if from a curatorial point of view I can make a choice to fit a certain angle that I want to bring through, I still need his approval to a certain extent, and there were a few negotiations around these issues. Finally the choice itself was a meaningful procedure for both of us. Making a choice about what to display can only mean a certain reduction. Things had to change their meaning a little bit when they were presented and exposed. But I remember, eventually at the day of the opening he was standing in the exhibition space and he was crying. It was a very special moment for him, seeing everything displayed, organized and thought through.

LW: Did he tell you what it was that was so special for him at that moment? Why he was crying?

YH: I am not sure I remember exactly what he said to me. But it was to do with the exposure of his private and inner endeavour to the world. It solved something for him, it changes something. It was to do with the narrative that has been reflected through the exhibition, which he did not see before. It was about seeing all the items that he cherished so much organized in a manner that could actually communicate with others. Not only that, but many others came to see the collection at the exhibition and found it very interesting. At the beginning he used to stand in the room and offer explanations to the hundreds of visitors that came into the space. I think he felt that the exhibition managed to somewhat represent him and his collection in a respectable

manner. It turned the collection to something meaningful. The exhibition was a little bit about Arnie and his life story, but only as a portrait of a much deeper cultural procedure. Within this opportunity I chose to show how the collection is a reflection of a rupture in Israeli society and the move from idealist and Zionist tendencies, to a post-Zionist era. Of course you cannot say that Arnie was post-Zionist in his views or anything like that. But his collection, as it developed in time, tends to represent a more diverse array of political thought that is a reflection of Israeli society. So all in all, it seems that his personal narrative was suddenly integrated with the story of Israel and the Zionist movement, and in itself it was a very exciting moment.

LW: What I find interesting in our conversation so far, is that every time you are speaking about Arnie's collection, you almost refer to it as a work in itself. You refer to the objects and the way they are organized as an integral part of a larger sum, and in the description of the work process, it seems you are hesitant to disturb or deconstruct this whole, as if it has a meaning in and of itself. Do you think collections can be considered as a form of creation or practice?

YH: I think that to a certain extent they are. Personally I see the creative and the artistic in many things that are normally not considered as such. When I work with very talented business men for example, it always seems to me that their work is also a form of a whole, a creation, an art. So I am prone to interpret many things as "art". When I curate, I also feel that I am working from that very same creative place I used to work from when I was an artist.

Lately I really feel that when I organize an exhibition, and plan where everything will be installed, I am almost painting on the walls. I think that creative intelligence runs through many things, and collecting is certainly one of them. However what intrigues me about collecting is the notion of an endless endeavour. You can never say a collection is actually complete or whole. Even collections that are based on serial motivation, many times would not be completed even if the last item would have been found, this is what I felt when I was working with Arnie: there is always something that can be added, looked for, researched, and so collecting is an endless mission. I am not sure whether all collections are deriving from this creative source, and I am not sure that they can be considered as art works or curatorial projects, but they certainly have a certain wholeness to them, that makes them stand as a single project. I feel that Arnie, for example, through his collection has created something which can be considered as a whole. There is an internal logic to the collection, and even if it does not communicate at first, it can be made to communicate, and then there are many things that the collection could actually tell us.

LW: When you are thinking about your work with Arnie, can you try and see what was your role as a curator in treating the collection?

YH: As I said before, the first step was to research and catalogue the collection. Understanding what there is.

LW: in a way this is already a work of translation, isn't it?

YH: Yes, definitely. The organization of the collection in a manner that others could also understand which objects are there and where they are stored, is in itself an act of rendering the collection more accessible and communicative. The second step, which was the most meaningful step for me as a curator, was to listen to the stories the collection had to tell and then choose the one story or narrative that I am interested in highlighting.

LW: do you remember while you were working whether there was more than one story you considered for the show?

YH: It is very difficult for me to remember at the moment. Of course there were endless stories that the collection could have told. Arnie's collection is vast and includes so many items which are very meaningful to the history of Israel as a nation and the history of Zionism; I assume that anyone could have gone through a different route of organizing and interpreting those objects. This is why I felt that my role as a curator had to do with a certain rigor and seriousness. I had to be very accurate in how I represented certain objects. I had to know their history; I had to understand what they really are, what they really mean and what they could potentially mean to an audience. I mean, especially when working with a collection which has such an historical value, when you end up highlighting or discussing a certain historical narrative, there is a great responsibility embedded in that.

LW: So you feel that your responsibility as a curator was more to do with education, with presenting the objects and their meaning to others?

YH: Absolutely. This is a curator's responsibility, especially in the context of a public-funded museum, to represent the material to a certain audience. And the idea is to educate, expose but also to trigger curiosity and entertain. I don't think entertainment is a rude word. I wanted people to enjoy looking at the exhibition; I wanted them to feel that this was meaningful to them. At the end of the day, who wants to come to an art museum and see a bunch of documents, telephone cards and postcards? This is why we have given a great amount of attention to the design of the displays and the design of the space, so that the vision I could see, the narrative I was imagining, could be manifested in a physical space, in a physical experience for the viewer, like a

journey ... The display of the objects themselves needed to be diverse and represent both the richness and diversity of the collection, but at the same time, be just enough so that each object could be given its full attention. This is a very tight balance: working between the collection as a whole, where the idea of quantity seem to be central, and working with the individual objects themselves, making sure that their quality is apparent and can be given enough attention.

At the end the show was successful in the sense that people dedicated a lot of time to going through the objects and looking at them. People enjoyed the exhibition, they learned from it. I would say this was definitely a central part of the exhibition design.

LW: Do you think you can think of a role the curator has when working with collections, and inevitably collectors as well?

YH: I think that working with collectors is important, specifically because of what we discussed earlier. The collection is a creation that reflects on the collector himself, but the collector's life story and self-portrait always has a relation to a certain wider perspective. Private collections often hold objects that tell very meaningful stories that are significant for a whole group of people. The object itself creates a presence that a history text-book or even an image cannot bring forth. It is something about the object being itself - not a representation of anything else. I think as a curator, my role is to listen to the collector, to gather information from him about the collection, about the objects. Listen to his interpretation; listen to what else he feels he is missing in the collection. This is a central part of understanding the collection itself. Firstly, it enabled a relationship of trust that allowed the exhibition in the first place; secondly, it is the knowledge of the collector. Collectors have so much knowledge about the objects that they collect. It is important to understand the objects themselves in the collection. Even if in the end they will not be presented, or they will be presented in a different light, it is important for both the collector and the curator to understand what they mean for the collector. In Arnie's case for example, I am not sure he was aware that the works of art that he had chosen, all come from a very specific point of view in the political map. For him, the works were related to his personal story, how he found them, what he liked about them. Only after we worked on the exhibition he could see for himself the common denominator of the works that he had chosen, and how they contrast or work together with his earlier collections.

LW: You were talking about the importance of the spatial arrangement and about how you thought very carefully about the space's design. You were also talking about a move from a private collection, hidden from the eyes of the public to a display in a public space. I imagine that this was a big part of making this exhibition, the exposure

of the private to the public. I feel that there is something essential and important in this move both for the collector but also for the objects themselves that are finally being displayed. Do you have any thoughts about that?

YH: Absolutely. We talked about what it means for the collector, or for Arnie in this case, to showcase his collection and open it to the public. This was a terrifying moment, yet very rewarding for him as far as I know. But you are right. Looking through the boxes, filled with objects that make up his collection I oftentimes was thinking to myself that they contain such important things and that the public has every right to see them. He has documents from the first Zionist congresses, and documents signed by Herzl himself. These are materials of such value in terms of the history of the state of Israel that in some aspects one could ask whether documents like that should be held in a private collection, inaccessible to the rest of the world. Of course these things are his; he bought them for his own reasons and for good money. But I felt almost a certain relief when I knew that they will be displayed to the public – even if for a temporary space of time – they will belong to all.

LW: I feel that there is a potential, in the context of such an exhibition, to somehow restore the memory or the meaning that such objects have. I think that this memory or meaning can be restored through a process of curatorial choice and display. I think curatorial choice - placing objects in different and changing contexts can somehow re-construct its meaning and I think its display in a public place, where people can go through a common experience re-constructing this meaning or memory for themselves can really offer a learning curve, an experience that changes the viewer's perspective.

YH: Absolutely. The objects looked very dull when we first encountered them, placed in their folders and boxes. You have to look at them closely and with great attention before realizing they are amazing in and of themselves. They instantly take you to a different time. Being able to bring a public to experience that - is a very important part of exhibiting them. And yes, those historical documents seemed to have finally restored a deeper meaning, a meaning that I think exists when you realize how much they can tell to a whole group of people. It is not that they lose their meaning when they are stored in a private collection but at the same time, they only serve their role to one person – the collector, and this is taking them almost out of context. Luckily, we seem to have managed to touch people with this exhibition, to make them look and appreciate those objects. People have spent hours looking at those objects, and finally they seem to have understood something new about themselves, about what it means

to have an Israeli identity. So it is possible to say that the objects have resorted their meaning on various levels thanks to the way they were chosen and displayed.

LW: The meaning might have been restored on some levels, but still, you could only have displayed their meaning within the constraint of the curatorial narrative that you have brought up. As a curator, how do you feel about that - the curatorial choice to tell that specific story about the development of Zionism? After all the history of Zionist ideology can be told in many different ways.

YH: I don't completely agree with you on that. Of course, those objects had a meaning in the curatorial narrative, but at the same time, many of the objects displayed had a meaning in and of themselves. I think that the viewers, which hold their own historical and political views, have their own interpretation of the objects. I don't think that the curatorial narrative can actually be as dominant as to take that away from them. I had no issues with presenting this narrative. I saw it more as a suggestion, as a reading, especially in Israel; you can count on audiences to have their own political agenda. It is part of being a citizen of this country; you come with an informed way of constructing your own historical narrative. Maybe in other contexts, in other countries, this could be said to be problematic. But in the HMA, with the history of the urban space in which it is set²³, it could only be perceived as one of many possible readings.

LW: Going back to Arnie's collection, private collections, public collections ... after speaking with Arnie, I tend to think that there is something in certain kinds of private collections that has an advantage in comparison to curated or public collections. I mean because there is a certain lack of choice, a certain accumulation - amazing things are preserved. Things that might seem mundane at a certain time, but can gather meaning and cultural value with time.

YH: Yes, Arnie's collection was very interesting in this sense. Even the telephone cards collection, I mean when I was a child, I used to use them - I never thought that they were valuable at all. When mobile-phones became popular, we all threw those cards away, and they almost disappeared from the shelves ... but actually the people who have created those objects have thought about them, and each of those little cards is full of meaning - it is a reflection of a certain time. It makes you think of all the things you have in your purse - you use them and you take them for granted. Maybe if we stopped thinking about them only in utilitarian terms we could discover another

²³ The HMA is set in the junction of three neighbourhoods in Haifa: a Jewish neighbourhood, a Christian Arab neighbourhood and a Muslim neighbourhood. Since the 1990's the same area is also the home of a very big Russian community as well as an Ethiopian community. Haifa in general is the most culturally diverse city in Israel, and also an example of a relatively successful integration and co-existence.

value that they have. Another meaning, and together all those objects can tell a whole story of historical development, it is quite amazing. I guess that every urge has its place and reason. I think collections are essential for curators to work from.

LW: Can you share, what have you taken from this process as a curator, on a more personal level?

YH: Well, as it was one of the first projects I have curated, it obviously was a great learning curve. I have learnt a lot about working with space, with designing displays. I have learned how much those things, that seem almost transparent to viewers, are essential in telling the story of the objects they represent. I think that was a very meaningful realization. Also, I have learnt what is important to me as a curator. I saw how much it is essential for me to be rigorous and accurate in the way I represent things. I think I suddenly became more aware of my responsibility as a history-teller. I saw how important it was for me to actually do something new with the idea of the exhibition itself; to create something which doesn't look like yet another exhibition; to change something, to comment on curatorial practice itself. Also I found how important it is to shed light on alternative points of view, to change the meaning of the objects by telling their story slightly differently. By telling their story slightly differently, I think the collector as well earns a new perspective of the collection that he owes. And if indeed the collection is a reflection of his inner world, then it is quite certain that he will see himself in a new light as well. This is on a personal level – I think it's an end result of the personal and curatorial process we have both been through, but I think that the exposition of such objects, especially in the light of the artworks that were represented there as well, has been meaningful to the audiences that visited the museum. I think that they saw the objects themselves in a different light.

LW: I agree; there was something about this exhibition. I think that this has a relation to the fact that it was a mixture of art-objects and non-art-objects. It's like the relationship between those different categories of "things" in the space highlighted a new understanding of the objects themselves. For example, the documents felt more "real" because they were presented in juxtaposition with photography, which as a medium has a certain relationship with the representation of reality – and yet this collision of the artworks, the documents, the photographs, made it very obvious that they are just representations. On the other hand, the post-Zionist content of those artworks became more affective when they were placed beside those relics from the Zionist congress. The objects that we hold so dear, that we look at with much nostalgia, became alive, affective. This is how I felt.

YH: I hope this is what all viewers experienced, especially because all the artworks that were displayed in the exhibition were already shown before in other contexts. I believe that if you are able to shed a new light on those artworks, then you might have also contributed something meaningful to a discourse in the history of art.

APPENDIX 2:

THE NAUMBURG CATHEDRAL, THE WESTERN CHOIR AND ROOD SCREEN: A CURATORIAL READING

HOW TO READ THIS TEXT

This case study offers two parallel routes to reading the rood screen and west choir of the Naumburg Cathedral. One route relies on current research in this area and conforms to the traditional iconographic analysis that is suggested by disciplines such as art-history and archaeology. This route is based on several central questions that lead the research in the field: who are the Naumburg Masters? Are they a group or an individual? How did they construct the Naumburg cathedral and the works within it? What was the meaning of these works in the context within which they were created and how this meaning may or may not be conveyed by their unusual nature: their unique aesthetic, position, arrangement and ambiguity?

The second route relies on alternative readings into the meaning of the Naumburg sculptures. In attending the Naumburg Masters' identity, it does not attempt to locate it to a specific personality but to understand rather, how they worked and functioned in the context of their time. In attending the works' meaning, it looks to distance itself from iconographical analysis, and rather ask whether one could find a universal meaning embedded in these works. A universal meaning here refers to the meaning they embed which seem to resonate with viewers across different periods of time and within different theological, political and cultural contexts.

Assaf Pinkus' reading of the Naumburg Masters' work, re-interpreting and extending the notion of the 'simulacrum' serves me as a bridge between these two approaches and takes a central position in constructing this case study.

My unique contribution to the Naumburg cathedral's analysis is prevalent and accentuated in furthering Pinkus' thought and positioning it in relation to *the curatorial*, however it converses with the aforementioned research and relies on its conclusions and the wide historical perspective it offers. Therefore the two routes for thinking about the sculptures at the Naumburg cathedral are intertwined throughout this text. Art historical reviews are highlighted in blue titles and alternative readings offered are highlighted in pink titles.

This arrangement underlines a fundamental position taken in this case study which refuses to give primacy to one of these routes. These two reading are not seen as

opposing one another, rather they are understood as two streams of thought which stimulate and inform each other. As such, one reading is no better than the other, but each reading exposes different aspects in the significance of these works in the understanding of visual culture and its histories. The text is presented in a linear fashion to ease the construction of these points in the context of a printed thesis. The reader, however, is welcome to choose which route she/he attends to and how to reconstruct the text in relation to her/his own background and interest.

INTRODUCTION

I can trace my long fascination with medieval architecture to my undergraduate studies at the University of Haifa. On my first year, when time came to register to the different modules, there were no slots left in the popular 'Art Discourses in 19th Century France'. To my great disappointment, I could only find a place in a course titled 'Foundations in Medieval Architecture' - what seemed to me the most boring course on earth. I have already prepared myself for two weekly hours of heavy napping, and by the first session, I have already comforted myself in the joy of day dreaming, when Professor Anat Tcherikover came into the auditorium. In her enthusiastic and performative presence, she proved an ability to somehow transform two hours of analysing columns and capitols, into what I experienced as 20 minutes of insightful and passionate analysis of cultural history. Subsequently, the introductory course to medieval architecture profoundly changed the way I read art history, and provided me with tools in analysing space and understanding architecture's role in the dissemination of ideological narratives throughout history.

It was the Romanesque Cathedral that had captured my imagination more than any other, and only in retrospect I could understand the nature of this fascination. In one of those intensive afternoons, sitting in the auditorium packed with students who would take the occasional nap on their notebooks, Tcherikover described the hierarchical order of Romanesque architecture, and how this hierarchy was played in order to give room to a variety of expressive encounters, which included, within the periphery of the church, the most marginal topics of the gospel stories. The periphery, both physical and conceptual, which is rarely approached, marked an untouched territory, open to play and interpretation. A territory that can become the fertile ground for the growth of what I still think is one of the most interesting periods in art history¹.

¹ Until this day I am still in the process of discovering the meaningful attraction I have to peripheral territories. In the retrospect of reading this case study through my practice, I understand that indeed, the interest I take in my hometown, Haifa, and the interest I take in the margins of artistic practice, derives from the same strategic principle. In the periphery, away from the main stage and the flashy lights, there is an allowance for freedom and

The 'cover-story' for the explosion of monsters, demons, weird animals, biological deformations, erotic allusions and other incredible sculptures that decorated the back yards of these cathedrals, was the journeys the twelve apostles allegedly had taken upon themselves to spread Jesus' words.

After Jesus had been crucified and resurrected, so the story tells, the 12 apostles had travelled the 4 edges of the world to offer salvation to all. Artists² of the late 11th and 12th century sought to imagine how the furthest corners of the world would look like, and what types of creatures would be encountered, and came up with a multitude of surrealistic representations, which stand in some contradiction to the serious and even sinister nature of the church as the powerful institution it was at the time³.

The weird characters that decorated Corinthian capitols were usually amassed in the colonnades of the backyard of monastic constructs, cathedrals and abbeys, while the tympanums decorating the gate and the interior of the cathedral would have the usual descriptions of Christ, with an inclination to represent him as a triumphant judge or emperor. This relative

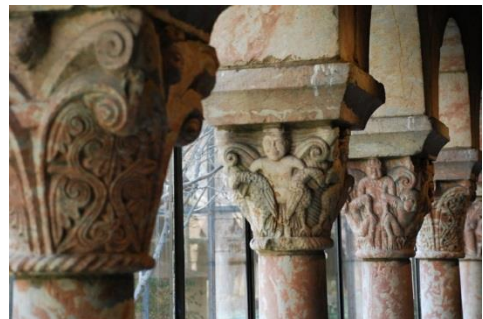


Figure 1 - The three images above are from the colonnade of Abbey Saint Michel de Cuxa, The abbey is situated in the Oriental Pyrenees, South West of France and was consecrated in 974. The abbey. It is one of the examples of decorated capitals that depict the strange creatures and monsters depicted as part of the story of Jesus sending the apostles to preach the nations.

experimentation that is incomparable to what could be made possible at the centre of the discourse. The idea of negotiating a periphery as an alternative centre of its own right and interest, seems to be a preoccupation I insist on taking, whether consciously or unconsciously.

² The use of the word artist here is a little problematic; simply because research into medieval history shows that the idea of an individual artist did not appear to have significance until the rise of late Gothic architecture and sculpture, verging on the beginning of renaissance. In medieval times, artworks were produced by workshops. Workshops can be imagined as a group of individuals working in full collaboration on the production of artworks in the service of the church. While different workshops could be recognized according to their characteristic style, the effort, the style or indeed the artistry cannot be assigned to one specific individual as is the custom today. In order to understand the art of medieval times, there is a need to perform a mental exercise in eliminating the idea of the individual from the idea of art-production.

³ Most remains of Romanesque architecture can be found in the south of France, Spain and Italy. Many of the Romanesque structures were destroyed or entirely refurbished with the advent of the Gothic project, of which I will speak later on in this text. A good example of a Romanesque structure which can be used to demonstrate this artistic topic and hierarchical arrangement within the church could be Saint-Michel de Cuxa abbey in South-West France. While the church itself was built towards the end of the 800's, it was refurbished a few times, and remained a treasure for 12th century sculpture and architectural traits.

freedom of speech that was allowed in the back-yard of the Romanesque structure, and which sometimes, even leaked into the main halls of certain cathedrals⁴, had intrigued me. It was a hint that offered me a glimpse into the possible spaces of creative agency within the artworks of the time.

As time passed, the strange images of monsters, creatures, folk tales and legends found their place in the back-yard of my memory, as my interest in contemporary art had taken the foreground. They returned to me all of a sudden in some sort of a flashback when I heard a lecture given by Dr Assaf Pinkus of the Tel Aviv University⁵. Pinkus was interested in the notion of the simulacrum as it was understood in the Middle Ages and researched, as his case study, the hall of sculptures in the west choir of the Naumburg Cathedral.

By then I have already started my current research, and became deeply fascinated with the argument he made, offering an alternative interpretation to the works of the renowned 'Naumburg Masters'. For him, the mysterious sculptures, which have intrigued and fascinated not only generations of art historians, but also used by entertainers⁶ and masters of propaganda⁷, were the invention of a new type of simulacrum, that is closer to our contemporary notion of the same concept, simulacra, coined by Baudrillard⁸.

When Pinkus had presented an image of Uta von Ballenstedt's sculpted face in parallel to the Disney illustration of the evil queen in the Snow-White story, my mind was once again flooded with those same monsters that had maintained, so it seems, a vivid position in the backdrop of my thought. At that moment, I started to move

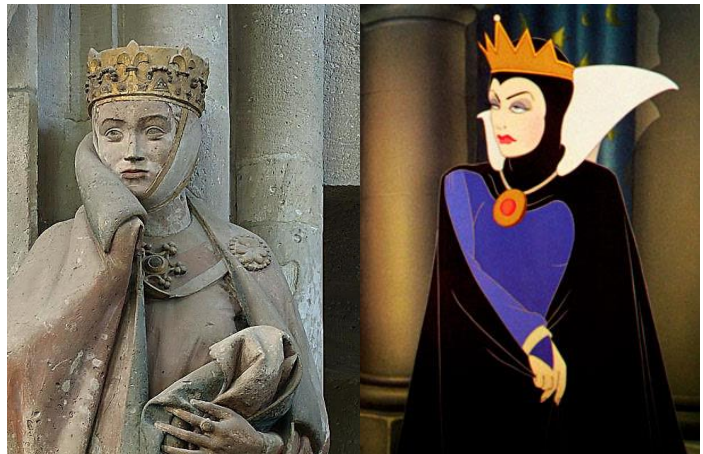


Figure 2 - On the left the Naumburg Mesiter depiction of Uta von Ballenstedt, placed in the west choir of the Naumburg Cathedral (circ. 1235/40); on the right: Walt Disney's Evil Queen Snow White animation film (1937)

⁴ One such example is the rotunda of Neuvy-Saint-Sépulchre church in Central France, a structure that initially thought to imitate the church of the holy cross in Jerusalem. At the centre of the cathedral, the rotunda, a circle of columns, is decorated with capitols depicting strange and imaginary creatures.

⁵ I have heard the lecture at The Encounters Conference, the annual conference of the department of art history and visual cultures at the Haifa University in 2011.

⁶ As it will be made clear, many of the Disney Characters in the Snow White picture of 1937, were inspired by the characters of the Naumburg West Choir.

⁷ The sculpture of Uta Von Naumburg and the Bamberg Rider from the Bamberg Cathedral, both assigned to the Naumburg Masters, were used in the famous Nazi propaganda film *Der Ewige Jude* by Fritz Hippler (1940)

⁸ Pinkus refers in his article both to Deleuze and Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum, mainly noting their pessimistic understanding of the role of simulacrum in society, I will refer to Pinkus' analysis in more details at the next portions of this case study. For now I am mentioning this very briefly in order to set the context for this case study.

back and forth in memory between images of contemporary art and the images of the sculptures still standing silently, in the hall of the west choir of the Naumburg Cathedral.

The lecture, and a later conversation I have held with Pinkus, led me to rethink *the curatorial* altogether. I had already suspected by that time, that *the curatorial* could not be thought of as fixed in time or to contemporary notions of art and expression; however it was the first time I saw the figure of the curator emerging from in-between the pages of art-history, in a territory which had not yet been sought. This was an important insight into a possible history of curatorial practice which stretches itself beyond and before the ethos of the modern museum.

I was intrigued by the works of the Naumburg Masters and more specifically by the rood screen and the west choir of the Naumburg Cathedral; until this day, after decades and centuries had already passed; visitors are in awe encountering these works. Dozens of art historians speculate; teams of researchers meticulously analyse the carved stones, all are searching for the 'cover-story' of the Naumburg Masters, but to this day, their searches are in vein.

This case study follows an actual journey I had taken to the little town of Naumburg, in order to visit the cathedral. I was not sure what I would discover as I first ventured into this quest, but I sensed that if I were able to re-read the works of the Naumburg Masters, new horizons will open for my search for spaces of *the curatorial*. I had a feeling that I would be able to offer such a new reading and that it has something to do with me being a curator.

I have therefore decided to take the challenge and explore the aspects of curatorial presence in the planning and manifestation of this specific piece. However, it was not just this specific piece that was at stake. Once I embarked on this journey, I understood that while 'curating' is not be part of our vocabulary when looking at the history of art and architecture, the insertion of this term and its resurrection may offer new paths for thinking its research.

This case study – therefore - would like to enquire into the possibility of reading gothic cathedrals as curatorial projects. That is, projects that encompass not only artistic mastery and architectonic geniality, but also a curatorial programme, not dissimilar to a temporary or permanent exhibition in a museum, which seeks to serve viewers with a time-space continuum in the internal organization of objects and

forms with a wish to convey the larger picture, the bigger meaning embedded in such vast projects.

READING THE NAUMBURG CATHEDRAL FROM AN ART-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



Figure 3 - Image of the Naumburg Cathedral (exterior)

The Naumburg Cathedral was inaugurated in 1029, after political pressures from Ekkehard the 2nd and Hermann, sons of Ekkehard the 1st, the Margrave of Meissen, and one of the most powerful men of the Eastern border of the Saxon area in Germany, convinced King Conard the 2nd and Pope John XIX to approve the relocation of the Episcopal See from Seitz to Naumburg. The relocation occurred in 1028, and the new cathedral was built with the generous donation of Ekkehard and Hermann, the brothers who unfortunately had no children of their own and sought to be commemorated for generations to come as the founders of the Naumburg Cathedral, hence ensuring their place in purgatory.

The cathedral was firstly constructed in Romanesque style, and was later on refurbished, during the early 13th century, according to Gothic principles that were prevalent at the time. With the dawn of the Gothic era, many cathedrals that were previously built in Romanesque style were either refurbished or completely renovated to comply with the new ideological viewpoints that were carried with the development of the new political orders of the 13th century (Scott, 2003, p. 92). The refurbishment of the Naumburg cathedral included the extension of the church nave, the renewal of the eastern choir and the building of a west choir. The Romanesque foundations, however, were preserved to a certain extent and the cathedral incorporates a collage or a combination of both these architectural concepts.

THE NAUMBURG CATHEDRAL AND ITS GOTHIC RENOVATION

The refurbishment of the Naumburg cathedral apparently included all the proper notions of the Gothic premise. The building was expanded, pointed arches were added to the east choir and a western choir was constructed. The pointed arches hosted large windows who had allowed the light to enter the church on both sides pronouncing the architectural concept of the Gothic aesthetics.



Figure 5 - View of the west choir rood screen and behind it the west choir and the hall of sculptures



Figure 5- The west choir rood screen

Commemoration was offered to the founders of the church in the shape of naturalistic human-size sculptures in the hall of the west choir. The rood screen, which separates the west apse from the nave, depicts the passion of Christ and the central entrance to the west choir is adorned with the figures of Marie on the left, Christ on the cross in the middle, and St. John the evangelist on the right. The glass windows depict themes that were also prevalent at the time: the right windows represent those that were in service of the church throughout its history on one panel, and different saints renowned for their virtues on the other. The left window represents the evangelists in their triumphant struggle with their torturers on one panel, and on the other panel noble representations of the seven virtues overcoming the seven deadly sins.

On the face of it, a Gothic project 'by the book'. However, as much as it appears as such, a deeper inspection of the artworks reveals their unsettling nature and their odd relationship to such gothic principles. From the choice of scenes in the depiction of the last supper in the reliefs composing the rood screen, through the depiction of Marie's and John's pain and torture at the gate, and to the facial expressions and postures of the figures of the church founders. All researches point to the unique,



Figure 6- Panoramic View of the west choir Hall of Sculptures

mysterious, even talkative nature of the works, which stand in contrast to commonly used images during Gothic times.

The sculptures are talkative in the sense, that in attempting to read their relationship with one another, the viewer is inevitably confronted with a riddle, as if the characters were trying to tell a story. The story, however, is not a holy biblical story. Rather, it seems to depict the human petty drama of everyday life through the most mundane behavioural mannerisms.

THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

There is a vivid and continuous discussion regarding to the identity of the Naumburg Masters. Researches specializing in the analysis of German Gothic architecture are devised in their opinions. Some argue that the Naumburg Masters was an individual artist, and some argue that like many cases of the time, the work cannot be assigned an individual and that it was performed by a group of people or a workshop. There aren't any definitive records to support either of the arguments. Those who think of the Master as an individual, base their hypothesis on the particular style of the sculptures which are assigned to him, and can be easily recognized in various locations around East Germany, such as the Bamberg Cathedral and the Meissen Cathedral for (Poeschke, 2011).

For those researches the artist's 'hand-writing' is recognizable through his delicate technique and the vitality of the characters that he had reproduced that bear no resemblance to other sculptures of the same time and era. Their hypotheses are based on masonic signs which are engraved on different sculptures and architectonic elements within a number of cathedrals that incorporate sculptures in this unique style. They conclude that the same signs appear in the different locations- indicative of a continuous singular identity. (Donath, 2012)

Arguments that seek to define the Naumburg Masters as an individual artist were most popular during the 1930's and 1940's, however recent research conducted by

Naumburg College⁹ casts heavy doubts on such assumptions. Recent findings as they have been summarized by archive manager, Matthias Ludwig, base their assumption on other construction records from the same time. Those indicate that artists in late 12th and early 13th centuries were still not recognized as individuals but were often part of workshops which were commissioned on the basis of their previous work. The conditions set for the work at Naumburg suggest that in fact the work could not have been done by one individual. Furthermore, the comparative research of documents and notes from different construction sites, suggests that the Naumburg Masters might have worked in different locations in parallel, as the cathedral in Bamberg, in Meissen and in Mainz are dated to approximately the same time frame¹⁰.

The masonic signs found to represent some sort of signature, might have therefore might have incorporated different meanings. As similar signs were found in different cathedrals, in other locations and across different dates, it is plausible to assume that they were instead a way of marking the structure of the work in the process of its coordination, rather than individual signatures.

THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY ART CONTEXTS: THE NAUMBURG MASTERS AS A MODEL FOR COLLABORATIVE CREATIVE-AGENCY

Here, we might find a model of collaborative effort which is very rarely executed nowadays, most probably because systems of value and exchange which are in operation and are based on notions of authorship and authenticity are at stake. To conclude this section, I would like to note that while affirming whether the Naumburg Masters was a group or an individual is not essential to the arguments made in this specific case study, I am more inclined to believe in the collaborative model.

This is based on the evidence, but more importantly, I choose this model, because I believe developing an understanding of collaborative authorship and decentralizing the notion of 'the original' in art discourse is a necessary task with the development of digital communication media and its influence on artistic practices in the field¹¹. Past examples, like that of Naumburg Masters, if thought of from a point of view of a collective effort, could open our imagination to think of other models of exchange

⁹ Unless otherwise stated, the information on the cathedral and its history was provided and verified in an interview with the cathedral archive manager, Matthias Ludwig. The interviews were held in June 2014. The latest information about the cathedral's known history is kept up to date with the works of the Naumburg College, and can be accessed through their website on <http://www.naumburger-dom.de/> (last accessed 12/6/2014). The most recent research on the cathedral's history was conducted by the Naumburg College research group, and most of the materials have not yet been published. Those that have been published will be referred to directly in this text.

¹⁰ Sculptures assigned to the Naumburg Masters, found in Mainz are dated to the 1230's; the sculptures in Naumburg are dated to the mid 1230's as well. At the same time, the Bamberg Rider, another famous sculpture assigned to the same persona and found in Bamberg Cathedral is dated to 1237. From this point of view it seems the master had to be in several locations at the same time to be able to personally work on all the sculptures assigned to his craft

¹¹ This relates to digital and internet-based art, but also to community based project and collaborative efforts which are interested in creating an alternative model for artist-viewer relationship.

which allow creative agency to accomplish itself through different prisms of understanding and interpreting creativity. This may enrich and offer solutions to the discussions brought forth in the third chapter of this thesis, shedding light over art's relationship to adjacent fields such as art-writing and curating. They also offer insight into the conditions that stipulate our reading of art as an individual endeavour - a reading which restricts the definition of art's roles in an extended perspective of time and ideological systems of thought.

THE ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE WEST ROOD SCREEN AND CHOIR: ACKNOWLEDGING THE AMBIGUITY OF THE SCULPTURES

The Naumburg cathedral and more specifically the west choir and the rood screen that separates the nave from the apse, is one of the most mysterious compositions of the high middle ages. It is assigned to an anonymous individual or workshop, referred to in literature as the Naumburg Masters. The striking quality of the figures depicted on the rood screen and the



Figure 7 - The first relief depicting the last supper on the rood screen of the west choir

statues positioned in the choir hall is apparent in the liveliness of the facial expressions and the bodily gestures, which bare an extremely naturalistic appearance. The characters are supposedly the images of the different founders of the church, twelve in number. The different characters who belong to different generations, seem to be engaged in a corporal conversation. Their gazes are pointing the viewer to a spatial organization, where one character relates to another. This creates the feeling of a moment frozen in time, within which a set of relationships and different possible narratives can be imagined or revealed . Different theories were therefore developed to explain the narrative, intention, motivation and meaning of those artworks.

Most researches agree that the west choir extension was built specifically for the commemoration of the founders of the church. These are based both on iconographic analysis of the rood screen and the sculptures, the archival materials that remained from the 13th century¹² and on archaeological findings, which had confirm that the early Romanesque construct also functioned as a burial site (Hess, 2013).

¹² There is very little documentation that had been preserved from the 13th century. The document mentioned above mentions the name of 7 out of the 12 founders of the church which are commemorated in the hall of sculptures. The identities of most of the male characters could be confirmed thanks to scriptures on the shields that they are holding,

The rood screen itself has been analysed for the peculiar choice of images for the different reliefs depicting the Passion of Christ. Jacqueline Jung, in her article *Peasant Meal or Lord's Feast? The Social Iconography of the Naumburg Last Supper* (Jung, 2003) traces the history of the rood screen interpretation. According to Jung, up until the end of the Second World War the scene of the last supper was viewed as a peasant meal because the iconography of the characters involved seem to have depicted labourers' table manners. However she argues that in view of new research into the iconography of bodily gestures and table manners during the 13th century, the image depicts a festive meal within which Jesus is positioned as a Lord, or as a king. This stands in some contradiction to the main image of Christ at the centre of the rood screen: there he is depicted tortured. In her analysis she explains how the changing political climate in Germany had changed the interpretations offered for the sculptures and the rood screen. For example, she explains, before the Second World War the idea of depicting Christ as a peasant was preferable for the national socialist party. Her analysis points to the different interpretations offered to the rood screen relief over the years, and reflects on the flexibility that these image incorporate, allowing readers of different époques to construct narratives of their choice to the general concept of the cathedral.



Figure 9 - Close up of facial expressions: Timmo of Kirtzberg (image of the sculpture's reproduction in the Naumburg Cathedral exhibition)

Michael Viktor Schwarz offers a thematic interpretation of the rood screen basing his analysis both on iconography and philosophical/theological texts that were prevalent at the time. In his article he suggests that the images chosen to depict the passion of Christ were not directly taken from the New Testament, as was normally the custom, but instead, were chosen specifically, from varied sources, to infer a message about forgiveness and compassion before entering into the hall of sculptures. For Schwarz the choice of images and the depiction of the different characters in their extreme facial expressions sought to create proximity between the viewer and, Marie, John and Christ who welcome those who enter the hall. The purpose of such

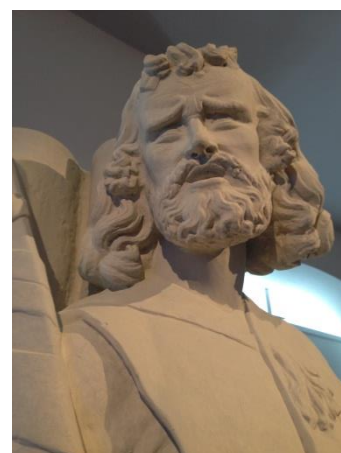


Figure 9 - Close up of Facial Expressions: Count Sizzo (image of the sculpture's reproduction in the Naumburg Cathedral exhibition)

however the identity of Count Sizzo and the identities of the two female figures which are not depicted as part of a married relationship (Countess Gerburg and Countess Berchta) could not be confirmed beyond doubt. There are no original floor plans or any form of documentation from the time of the planning or the construction of the church, hence most interpretations offered are speculations.

proximity, together with the specific images chosen for the rood screen, depicting mainly the notions of betrayal¹³ was to reinforce the commemoration of the characters that are depicted in the choir hall. While they are depicted as sinners, engaged in mundane activities and sinful behaviours, they still deserve forgiveness and commemoration (Schwarz, 2005).



Figure 11- The different characters in their position. from left to right: Uta and Ekkhard the 2nd; Reglindis and Herman; Countess Gerburg; Count Wilhelem of Camburg; Count Dietrich; Countess Berchta



Figure 11 - left: Count Dietmar; Left:

the inner imagination of the viewer in order to find some sort of relationship with the founding figures, so that in prayer a true emotional identification with their memory could be achieved. (Schwarz M. V., 2012).

For Pascal Hess, the figures' strong physiognomy is meant to represent the world of sin, while the windows that form the background, and through which the heavenly light penetrates, is meant to form a picture of heaven. In this sense, the figures seem to be the mediating stage between the world of sin and the afterlife, alluding to the

¹³ Schwartz notes that Judas is depicted twice, and Peter is depicted twice, out of the four remaining original reliefs of the rood screen. Both those characters, which represent betrayal and doubt in the apostles stories, are accentuated and made central in the general arrangement of the space.

belief that only the prayer in favour of the dead will allow the visitor of the church a gateway to heaven. (Hess, 2013)

In the introduction to the second part of the catalogue that accompanied the large exhibition of the Naumburg Masters in 2011, Hartmut Krohm and Holger Kunde attempted to look into the relationships that seem to be depicted through the sculptures' bodily gestures. They point to a certain emotional or political tension that reveals itself between the characters. However the different characters depicted are known to have lived in different times and therefore it is difficult to decipher what would be the actual meaning of the conversation that they seem to be engaged in.

Other theories are concentrating on yet another mysterious aspect of the west choir at Naumburg. The founders of the church which are so carefully depicted in the hall of sculptures gave their donation almost a century before their commemoration by the Naumburg Masters. The naturalistic depiction of their vivid expressions and faces could not have had any relationship to how the founders originally looked like. Moreover, it is not clear why they would receive such a place of honour in the west choir, if they did not directly contribute to the refurbishment of the church. Furthermore, commemoration in the form of sculptures was usually done in the shape of a horizontal grave upon which the figure of the dead would be carefully sculpted. Those lying figures would be put on the floor, as graves. Naturally those types of commemoration were motionless, or frozen, depicting an expression of grace, to assert the position of those commemorated in the state of purgatory. Vertical statues were dedicated mostly to saints and holy figures, and if certain bishops were depicted in the form of vertical sculptures, they would rarely occupy the choir, but remain within the nave.

Art-historians who are working with these topics, are meticulously searching for comparisons, and normally assert that the hall of sculptures was built to attract further donors to the church. The west choir was therefore an exemplary means of showing them how they would be commemorated. If that were true, then one would expect the facial expressions and the depiction of the characters to be more in line with the fashion of the time; the emotive and affective physiognomy of the characters and more notably, their arrangement in space, do not stand in line with such prerequisites.

Hundreds of further articles are published every year in this attempt to explain, decipher and understand the Naumburg Meister oeuvre; however the meaning of these sculptures remains unfixed. Lost in the unwritten pages of Naumburg history,

only legends that are told over generations might be remains of the time, and these too, cannot shed light over some of the peculiarities of the church plan.

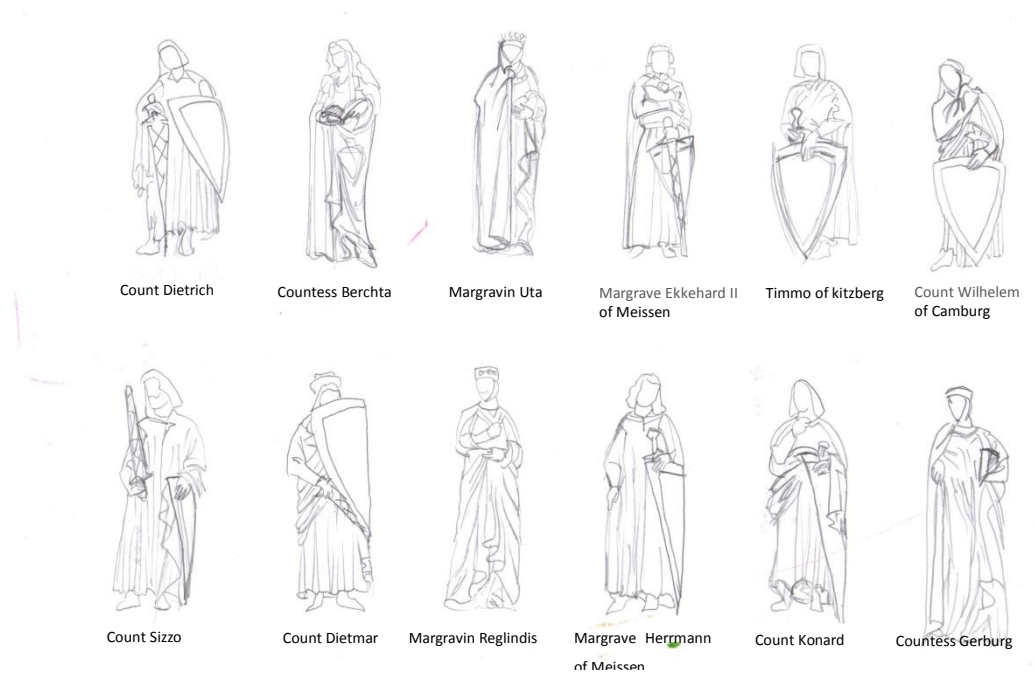


Figure 12 - The twelve figures in the west choir and their assumed identities; This illustration was inspired by a similar diagram presented at the Naumburg Masters exhibition within the Naumburg Cathedral.

TRACES OF THE CURATORIAL: READING THE UNIVERSAL MEANING OF THE NAUMBURG SCULPTURES

THE MEDIEVAL NOTION OF THE SIMULACRUM AND THE NAUMBURG MASTERS

Assaf Pinkus offers a radical shift in reading the works of the Naumburg Masters, more specifically, he is interested in sculptures that depict unidentified figures and approaches this lack of a certain identity, as an opportunity to solving their reading. In this analysis, hence, he is not looking for further archaeological or historical data that would assist him in revealing the identities of the figures depicted; he takes this ambiguity as an intentional and integral aspect of the original thought that drove the creative agency at stake.

In his article *Imaginative Responses to Gothic Sculpture: the Bamberg Rider* (Pinkus, 2014), he analyses The Bamberg Rider as a case study to explore and test this perspective when reading the works of the Naumburg Masters in their entirety. While the identities of the figures represented in the west choir of the Naumburg Cathedral have been identified almost beyond doubt, The Bamberg Rider's identity causes much dispute and no conclusion has been reached as to who it is meant to represent. This figure, hence, serves as an anchor for Pinkus' thinking-strategy.

Pinkus is curious about the modern and contemporary use of these figures and sees this as a key element in understanding the works. In the case of the Naumburg sculptures, he refers to their use in Walt Disney's film *Snow White* (1937)¹⁴, while in the case of the Bamberg Rider, he is fascinated by its use, collaged with the image of Uta Von Naumburg, in the Nazi propaganda film of 1940 *Der Ewige Jude*.

Pinkus is curious about the sculptures' flexibility of meaning: on the one hand they are representations fit within the ideologies and context of the Gothic Enterprise



FIGURE 13 -THE BAMBERG RIDER

The sculpture dates to the time of the consecration of the cathedral's new building in 1237. It is located on a console at the north pillar of the St. George choir. There are a few assumptions as to the sculptures original position. Pinkus posits that the rider was once situated at the entrance to the cathedral facing the cathedral itself - a unique position in terms of spatial arrangement in relation to other depictions of horsemen in the same period of time

¹⁴ The aforementioned juxtaposition of the figure of Uta and the evil queen in snow white is one example out of various others that Pinkus refers to. A further development of this thinking trajectory is offered in Pinkus' book *Sculpting Simulacra in Medieval Germany, 1250-1380* (Pinkus, 2014), an expert of which he presented at the aforementioned *Encounters* conference held at the University of Haifa 2012.

while one the other, they are used as affective representations of German identity in the arguably different ideological construct that the Nazis sought to propagate.:

Taking the Bamberg Rider, he carves a careful path, firstly, presenting the different assumptions that have been made with regards to the Rider's identity and then expressing his dissatisfaction with current art historical research, concluding that while each of the interpretations offered might be, to some extent, true, none of them can be ascertained: *"... for each interpretation, there is either a missing component or an excessive one that prevents the production of a coherent meaning"* (Pinkus, 2014, p. 336). Based on the missing and excessive components which he recognizes in each of the analyses he brings forth, Pinkus offers to let go of the question that drives such research: who is the Bamberg Rider? Rather, he suggests that we take this obstacle as an underlining condition for reading the sculpture.

Pinkus' journey towards an alternative reading trajectory is, hence, led by questioning this phenomenon: why can't we identify the Bamberg Rider? Why do figures created by the Naumburg Masters readily give themselves to re-appropriation? How do they trigger the imagination of creators, hundreds of years later? What is it about those figures that land themselves so easily for their re-interpretation and their constant cultural circulation? He attempts to answer those questions through the notion of the simulacrum.

Simulacrum as a concept seem to be useful here, Pinkus notes, because it refers to a representation which does not have an original manifestation in nature – that is – an image which does not refer back to reality, but rather refers to imagination. The Bamberg Rider, seems to be answering such a definition, and so do the figures of the west choir in the Naumburg Cathedral, as he concludes: *"This also holds true for other narrative cycles at other sites related to the circle of the Naumburger Meister: for example, while the iconography of the choir-screen reliefs in Naumburg Cathedral can be identified without any peculiar difficulty, the historical identities of the famous Stifterfiguren stand in a contradictory relation to their appearance and attributes."* (Pinkus, 2014, p. 337).

He then goes on to explain the different discourses around the notion of the simulacrum during the 11th, 12th and 13th century¹⁵. His analysis leads him to account

¹⁵ Pinkus offers an elaborate analysis of the notion of the simulacrum and its development during this array of time, using various philosophical and literary works in order to underline the different meanings the term has had. He locates the beginning of such discourse to Plato, and supports the rest of his analysis with the works of St. Augustine, Hrabanus Maurus, Hugh of St. Victor, Thomas Aquinas and others. I will not go into this analysis in detail as it is beyond the scope that was set for this specific case study, however a comparison between the medieval notion of simulacrum, its contemporary interpretation by Deleuze and Baudrillard, and its relationship to the notion of virtuality, as defined by Katharine Hayles is an interesting topic which I would like to approach in the aftermath of this research.

for at least two types of simulacrum (although he is speaking of more) that have been referred to during this time scope. One, which relates to reality, *simulacrum naturae* and one which has no direct relationship to reality, and is therefore an image of pure imagination: *simulacrum gratiae*. The first is relating to an image which is embodying or representing the divine, while the other is attuned with the concept of idolatry.

Pinkus, however, looks to rescue those terms from their simplistic interpretations. Through various literary examples of the time he argues that those two types of simulacrum should be read in relation to the desire that drives their creation. For him this desire is a desire for the Real in the 'simulacrum naturae', and a desire that already acknowledges that it is bound to the image in the 'simulacrum gratiae'. The second is a desire that immerses itself in imagination, renouncing or replacing the Real which is in itself already and always inapproachable. However for Pinkus, this image does not come to replace the Real, as in its interpretation as idolatry. Rather the acknowledgement of the image as an independent object of desire, and not as a representation of one, changes the internal dynamic of this relationship.

In his analysis, he returns to the story of Tristan and Caerdin in the *Salle aux Images*, a fragment from the Tristan story ¹⁶(ca. 1150s-1180s). The story tells of Tristan who fell in love with queen Iseut. As he could not materialize his love to Iseut he married a woman that looked exactly like her, however, he could not consummate his marriage with her, knowing that she is not the real woman that he admired. Rather Tristan creates a sculpture which is depicted as a 'living statue', one that is in the exact image of Iseut. Tristan relates to the sculpture as if it was more real than his wife. His wife, here, becomes the image of idolatry which came to replace Iseut. His brother Caerdin, who finds the statue in Tristan's hall of statues, falls in love with the image of Iseut and ventures to seek the real woman inspired by the image he had seen.

For Pinkus this story exemplifies the difference between the two types of simulacrum and their psychological roots: "*For Tristan, the statue no longer represents Iseut; being neither Iseut nor her sign, it is a speculation of its viewers, the wax upon which the subjective expectations of Tristan are stamped. While Caerdin is searching for the 'archetype', Tristan indulges in the simulacrum [...] similarly the simulacrum of the Bamberg Rider is neither a specific person nor his image; rather it is a replica of a real presence opened to the speculations of its viewers*" (Pinkus, 2014, p. 347). This expert demonstrates in Pinkus' thesis how an image may fluctuate between imagination and

¹⁶.

the Real, triggering desire in both directions, dependant on the viewer's position in relation to that object of desire¹⁷.

DEATH RITUAL AND COMMEMORATION

In Gothic thought, death, or more concisely, life after death, took a central part in the liturgy and in the general mind-set of the average Christian believer. The dead were seen as integral members of the community of the living, with responsibilities and rights. Hence, a set of rituals and ceremonial activities were dedicated to the dead, and a few historians see Catholicism at the end of the Middle Ages as a 'cult of the living in the service of the dead' (Schwarz, 2005, p. 61 and Schwarz M. V., 2012, p. 143).

The dead were seen responsible for protecting the living from all kinds of natural disasters, and it was the living's responsibility to pray in commemoration of the dead. Scott describes the related rituals: *"During medieval times, when people died they did not cease to be members of society. Rather, they retained a vital, palpable presence within the world of the living. Beliefs about their continuing presence and importance in this life were framed within a larger context of assumptions about the universe. [...] From their realm, the dead were thought capable of influencing the world of the living. In this sense, the dead and the living together formed a single universe of being."* (Scott, 2003, pp. 183-184)

A deep belief in a state of purgatory, a realm hanging between life and death, which was described as an intermediate state of consciousness, prevailed. According to this belief, those who had lived a life decent enough, and are destined to arrive at heaven would go through a process of purification in the state of purgatory before entering the kingdom of heaven. The state of purgatory is an interesting philosophical concept

¹⁷ Maybe Pinkus' advantage, coming from a traditional art-historical background, is his lack of prejudice towards the notion of the simulacrum as it is perceived and presented in contemporary art discourses. The notion of the simulacrum as it has been re-introduced to contemporary philosophy by the works of Baudrillard, approaches simulacrum as an underlining condition of the Hyperreal. It is regarded with much suspicion, critically read as a mechanism in perpetuating the capitalist ideology. The break that Pinkus offers here allows a reading of the simulacrum as a general methodology in visual culture that can land itself to any ideology and its propaganda. A similar idea is suggested by Slavoj Žižek in his analysis of Beethoven's 9th Symphony in his film *The Pervert's Guide To Ideology* (Žižek, 2012). A neutral position towards the notion of the simulacrum (and I would argue that this is directly related to the notion of 'virtuality' as it was presented in the 4th chapter of this thesis), may allow us to understand it as a state of perception which is inherent to the human condition rather than a tactical tool in controlling desire. The story of Tristan in this context is compelling because it highlights the simulacrum gratiae as an inevitable consequence of unconsummated erotic love, as an example. The ability to become self-aware of that mechanism and the ability to recognise that one's object of desire is necessarily a virtual object, allows for an understanding of such 'objects' beyond the object/subject trajectory. Rather what is highlighted is the dynamic of relationship which is shaped in accordance to one's initial position towards perception. This reading of the simulacrum resonates with other contemporary philosophical attempts to step out of a dichotomised approach to images vs. the Real. Within the premise of this research, such an understanding that places the centre of experience on perception itself and looks to understand the relationship between imagination, memory, identity and desire, permits the occurrence of agency in the gap between the image and its viewer.

in its own right, however its prominence in the catholic belief meant that people aspired and awed the state of purgatory. In many ways, releasing a soul from purgatory, and allowing it to reach heaven was dependent on the prayers of those alive, commemorating the dead through various rituals (Scott, 2003, p. 185).

These beliefs had a vast influence on the design of cathedrals and on the art of the time. However, the cult of the dead, also had other advantages. The commemoration rituals, and the art that supported the remembrance of the dead were a great source of funding for the Catholic Church, and in a way, it was a self-sustaining system. The visitors to the church would dedicate much of their prayers to commemorate the dead, knowing that they can 'buy' their place in purgatory through their own commemoration in the future (Scott, 2003, pp. 182-186).

THE CULT OF THE DEAD, SIMULACRUM, OBJECTS OF DESIRE AND THE IMAGE AS A POSSIBLE REAL

Pinkus further develops his reading of the simulacrum as 'objective' presence in relation to the ideological conventions of the time. Pinkus, as well as a large number of other researchers of this period¹⁸, posit that the dead in this regimen of thought, were not seen as separate from the living. In fact they were believed to be active members of society, who, despite their physical absence, perform an essential role for the living communities.

Basing his assumption on this set of beliefs, Pinkus uses his understanding of the simulacrum to conclude that such artworks as the Bamberg Rider and the Naumburg west-choir sculptures could have maintained an alternative meaning, one that is looking to embody the presence of the dead or the absentee: "*As a double for the absentees, the simulacra provided the deceptive illusion of seeing and hearing the dead face to face as if they were still alive*" (Pinkus, 2014, p. 350).

Pinkus' interpretation of Tristan complicates the implications of the simulacrum gratiae and paves his way to conclude that simulacrum, on the level of perception, and its manifestation through an art-work, may become a real presence, a direct extension of the real which refers back to imagination (or memory) and hence embodies perception (or the image/memory) as a reality in and of itself. As such the

¹⁸ Schwarz M. V., 2005, Jung, 2003 and Donath, 2012 are three examples taken from my research into the interpretation of the Naumburg Masters' work. However the same conclusion is acknowledged by general researches of this period (Scott, 2003)

representation of such simulacrum, like in the story of Tristan's sculpture, may be as affective as 'objective reality'¹⁹ for its readers (Caerdin).

Within this complex understanding of the simulacrum, Pinkus suggests an interpretation of the Bamberg Rider as a 'simulacrum naturae', i.e., while the Bamberg Rider is an image without original and might seem, on the face of it, as answering the conditions for idolatry, its flexible identity and inevitable ambiguous interpretation, granted by its position in space, within the independent context set by it, transforms it into an independent form, which could be read as natural – as belonging to reality itself. It is natural, according to Pinkus, because it directly reflects on the nature of the unattainable Real, as Pinkus puts it: *"While the conventionalized imagery of the sacred history featured in the sculptured narrative might be regarded as an image of divine truth, or as simulacrum gratiae, the Bamberg Rider might be regarded as simulacrum naturae. Any final meaning imbued in such stone simulacra can be but a partial and unstable one, as is the case with simulacrum naturae."* (Pinkus, 2014, p. 350). The Bamberg Rider, being an invented character, can no longer be viewed as a representation of any reality, but the reality of the rider itself. As such it is independent from any relationship to an image. Hence for Pinkus, the ability to think those artworks as a renewed interpretation of a simulacrum naturae is related to the ambivalence of their specific histories and their detachment from any specific context.²⁰

Reading the Naumburg Masters' work as simulacrum naturae, leads Pinkus to understand that for these works to maintain their vivid nature as 'real presence', the participation of a viewer and her/his consideration in their sculptural and spatial composition is essential: *"Apart from its unstable and multi-referent meaning, another intrinsic feature of the simulacrum is its real presence as an existence available to the viewers, thereby enabling and creating an interactive environment [...] The existence of a viewer as an active and integral part of the sculpture's environment is always calculated, and each individual figure, as indicated by Hubel, is installed in a scenic sequence that connects between them and the viewers"* (Pinkus, 2014, pp. 350-351).

The viewer hence becomes an active agent in the construction of meaning in this context and facing the sculptures of the Naumburg Masters. The viewer here, is requested to insert her/his worldview, her/his active reading and her/his interpretation within the instability of the relationships that are depicted between the

¹⁹ 'Objective' is put under parentheses here, as it is clear from the philosophical position taken in this chapter (that perception is the centre of experience) that such a reality cannot be understood as objective at all. The word is used, however, to clarify my intentions to the reader.

²⁰ This ambivalence, or 'in-betweenness' of the rider's identity, can be seen as a space of *the curatorial* as suggested by the notion of 'the blank', in the first chapter of this research.

figures. Moreover, the viewer is requested to reflect on their own interpretations as hovering between truth and fiction, allowing her/his agency to be consciously revealed in the gap between perception and the perceived. This I would contend, is detailing and further extending the construction of an 'aesthetic experience' (Dewey, 1980) This is also what enables those sculptures to maintain their aura of fascination over lengths of time .

SIMULACRUM, AGENCY AND THE CURATORIAL

Pinkus' article may point us to two fascinating assumptions: firstly, he lays the ground for thinking of the Naumburg Masters not as conveyors of meaning, but as conveyors of the conditions under which meaning is constructed. The motivation in creating the type of simulacrum considered above is not that of representation but that of presence: an embodiment of the viewer her/himself as her/his desire constructs the significance and identity of the artwork. What awakens the artwork and brings it to life, is the viewer's agency rather than the artistic mastery. The works and their arrangement are not directed towards the artworks legible or suggesting a stable intellectual/ideological message. Rather, the beam of light here is directed at the viewer in negotiating the stories she/he can tell. These stories are flexible, they change, they can be re-told and re-discovered under the conditions of the curatorial series proposed in this case. The curatorial series is constructed in relation to the ambiguity of the sculptures' 'origin' (now pointing to one's own perception, memory or imagination) and in relation to their organisation in space. What is significant in their reading, I would therefore argue, is not their conception as objects, i.e. stable, enclosed units of meaning, but the space they construct in between them.

The second assumption inherent to the centrality of the viewer here, offers an insight to the way in which such an active reading is enabled. The ambiguity of the sign derives from its unfixed or oscillating status, always referring to more than one symbolic realm at a time²¹. This oscillating status²², nurtured by a void in the resurrection of identity, corresponds with the different understandings *of the curatorial* as they were brought in the first and fourth chapters of this research²³.

²¹ In the case of the Bamberg Rider, we can speak of past and present, for example, if taken into account the re-appropriation of the image. However one can also speak of more abstract notions in this respect, for example, its existence between the Real and the image, memory and perception.

²² This status is parallel to the definition of the oscillating approach to objects as presented in the second chapter of this thesis.

²³ These relationships will be further attended in the section starting on p. 326.

Artistic mastery and realistic²⁴ representation is a meaningful choice in this specific case, as it is central to creating the figures' oscillating identity; it is in their naturalistic and ever so human expressions, that they stand out as ever so 'wrong' in the cultural context of the church²⁵. However what animates those expressions is the relationship that they have with one another; like a silent, gestural conversational that performs itself above the head of the viewer, their arrangement in relation to one other, in relation to the stained-glass windows that periodically illuminate their faces, the introduction to their presence from under the rood screen depicting Maria, Jesus and the Last Super, highlighting, more than anything, the notion of betrayal, set optimal conditions for the viewer's curiosity. From this curiosity all forms of contradicting and interchanging meanings derive, as demonstrated by the numerous stories art-historians tell in their attempt to understand and identify them.

In this sense the vast research that is dedicated to those sculptures, is in itself, some kind of evidence that the Naumburg cathedral, and the west choir within it, are apertures opening towards spaces of *the curatorial*.

THE NAUMBURG MASTERS AS CURATORS?

There is indeed one thing that underlines all those different interpretations offered to the works of the Naumburg Masters. The arrangements of the different elements in space, the architectonic design, the sculptures, the windows, the pillars and their capitols, are all part of one project, one expressive attempt, as each element corresponds with another, each stone laid, supports another, on both a conceptual and a structural level²⁶.

Moreover, in attempts to address the identity of the Naumburg Masters, they could not be defined under any known creative disciplines traditional to art-historical divisions such as architecture, sculpture, art etc. They are depicted as a hybrid and are referred to in ancient and contemporary texts as 'sculptures-architects' for the lack of a better concept. This inability to define them as belonging to one discipline or another stems from an understanding that their responsibility for this project was vast and that the project's details were meticulously orchestrated and coordinated, to

²⁴ 'Realistic' here, refers less to their resemblance to actual characters in reality, but rather to the detailed and accurate depiction of gesture and facial expression.

²⁵ This 'wrongness' of the figures' gestures within the context of the Gothic enterprise and a further analysis of its significance are offered in the art-historical analysis of the sculptures as it appears in the second part of this case study.

²⁶ Evidence to support this argument on a structural and archaeological level is presented in the review of the art-historical analyses of the west choir and rood screen in the second section of this case study.

include all above responsibilities. The goal of such coordination was to create a spatial journey, putting the visitor at the centre of its premise.

The centrality of the viewer's experience is expressed in most researches that seek to understand the Naumburg case²⁷. Almost none of those are able to separate the hall of sculptures from the entirety of the cathedral's organisation. Most articles that approach the sculptures' analysis begin with a description of such a journey. Many of them also suggest a direct connection between the reliefs of the rood screen, the figures of Christ, Mary and John at the entrance to the choir and the sculptures of the founding figures within the choir hall.

Researches have no doubt that the Naumburg Masters were in charge of orchestrating the cathedral's construction which included interior planning and the collection of all the different elements that compose its design; the commissioning of artists, window makers, builders, architects, engineers. According to documents of the time, they were also in charge of the smooth timing and coordination of the different professionals and their work. It is clear that coordination, commission, and management were the operational elements of their role. To support this claim, one may want to rely on the scientific research that provides evidence of the inter-connections, on a structural level, which exists between different elements in the space.

ART HISTORICAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT READING THE NAUMBURG MASTERS AS CURATORS

Joachim Poeschke offers a comparison between the Naumburg Masters and a film director, depicting the process which must have involved a coordination of a large number of professionals. On a conceptual level, he suggests, there is clearly an intended effort to create an ensemble effect that takes into account the different statues and artworks presented in the cathedral as part of the same premise (Poeschke, 2011). Dominik Jelschewski demonstrates how the sculptures were created as an integral part of the arches' support, crafted in advance as columns, their back forming the supportive elements of the ceiling. Such evidence also points to the fact that the architectural plan and the positioning of the characters in place needed to be carefully measured and conceived in advance. (Jelschewski, 2011).

Guldo Siebert, offers an analysis that confirms the extension of the Naumburg sculptures' narrative into the stained glass windows. In his article dedicated to this topic he provides evidence that the Naumburg Masters, must have planned the

²⁷ The centrality of the viewer's experience is expressed directly in research conclusions but is also apparent in the way researchers approach the analysis of the cathedral as describe their own process of walking within it and revealing its meaning.

windows, their design and their instalment to be in complete accordance with the sculptures' placement (Siebert, 2011).

Pascal Hess, suggests that within the Naumburg Cathedral one can speak of 'architectural and sculptural communication'. Hess presents archaeological evidence, depicting the structure of the cathedral in comparison to its earlier Romanesque version to prove that there is a coherent plan to the cathedral refurbishment. For Hess, the plan as a whole seems to be directed at delivering a message to potential founders of the Naumburg church and is targeted at attracting further donors (Hess, 2013). Whether one agrees with the interpretation offered in this article, the general evidence he bring forth pronounces the importance of the whole in delivering a message. This supports the assumption that a curatorial thought was indeed invested in the planning of the Gothic refurbishment of the church and that this thought was directed towards the experience a visitor.

However it is not only the west choir that needed to be planned meticulously. The whole original Romanesque structure, the construct and design of the east screen and choir, the crypt, the little churches (The St. Elizabeth and the St. Mary's church), the towers, the dormitory and the passageways between those different areas, all needed to be taken into careful consideration in the building of the cathedral to enable the viewer's journey to manifest itself.

Here, one could speak of the Naumburg Masters' specific interest not only in the construction of memory, so to speak, but also in its conservation. The choice of refurbishing only part of the cathedral while conserving and maintaining a large portion of the original, Romanesque structure and artworks was unarguably a deliberate effort which required resources, care and attention. In fact, the eastern rood screen at the Naumburg cathedral is one of the only Romanesque screens left intact. It is more than reasonable to assume, that the screen would have been destroyed in the renovation of the cathedral without a careful and conscious attempt to protect it. This was the destiny of many Romanesque structures and the artworks within them as they went through the vast renovations the Gothic enterprise initiated. However in this case, the rood screen is conserved in a most exquisite way (Nicolai, 2011). This leads me to believe that the Naumburg Masters were not only concerned with finding future funding to the church and serving those in power as most research in the area suggest – but that there was a larger intention in the way they approached the cathedral and its history.

It seems that the Naumburg Masters' consideration of memory and heritage was profound and had significance in the planning of the viewer's aesthetic experience.

Walking through the doors of the cathedral, one encounters not only the current manifestations of the ideology at stake, but also its previous lives, through their embodiment in objects, images and designs. Just as the previous lives of the building are conserved, so are the previous lives of the church's founding fathers and their unique relationship to the village of Naumburg and the cathedral²⁸.

THE NAUMBURG MASTERS CARVING SPACE OF *THE CURATORIAL*

Taking *the curatorial* as a core element in analysing the Naumburg Cathedral, I would like to suggest that the term missing from these researchers' vocabulary is 'curating' and that the Naumburg Masters can be thought of as curators: organisers of space in relation to the mediation of meaning and the construction of memory. If such a stance is taken, then the ambiguity of the Naumburg Masters' identity may be relieved to a certain extent and further analysis of their work process and methodology can be developed.

Within these dynamics of space-organisation, *the curatorial*, as a value or a principle, bridges, not only between different times – past and present – but also between different time-perceptions: linear and spatial. Narratives suggested by the viewers' journey inevitably lead to the linear reading of the building, while the eclectic collection of artefacts from different time-periods, styles and understandings of the main stakes in Christian ideology purposefully lead the viewer to a non-linear perception of history and time.

As such, not only the Naumburg sculptures, as figures, are simulacrum naturae, as Pinkus suggests, but the space as a whole can be seen as a memorandum to the present moment, in which the situated and embodied presence of the viewer is the locus of experience.

I believe that the term 'curating' here could be beneficial in changing the perspective from which one examines such historical remains of past structures as it allows an approach that puts process at the centre of the investigation. Furthermore, it allows us to consider the concept of the cathedral not only as a space for religious ritual, but also as a cultural space for the production of meaning and the stabilizing/destabilizing of ideological currents prevalent at the time. For curating as a newly academic division, extending the self-reflexive gaze of curators towards a whole history of meaning-making-halls that were dedicated to 'the sacred' could open a whole field of research that may enhance and renovate contemporary curatorial approaches and methodologies.

²⁸ As further explained in the second section of this case study.

Returning to Tcherikover beloved course in medieval architecture from this perspective, I can finally point to what had fascinated me in the Romanesque arrangement of cathedrals: both in Romanesque (late 10th – early 12th Century), and later on in Gothic times (Early 12th until late 13th century), the arrangement of artworks in the space of the cathedral doesn't seem to be all accidental, or entirely utilitarian - in the service of the church's interest. Rather, one may resurrect a double-faced strategy here: on the one hand it is designed to construct communal narratives, memory and identity as stipulated by the ideological overview of the church. However, on the other hand, at the periphery and in the details of such arrangements, space was left, that seemed to be aiming at staging a momentary gap where one could delve in an 'encounter'. These were gaps where imagination was let loose; where a temporary permission was given to ponder, question and maintain a curiosity about all the different stories that were told and presented in the framework of the Catholic premise.

In my own idiosyncratic universe, I found the gaps between the sculptures at the Naumburg cathedral, their intriguing relationship, and the curiosity that they impose, familiar. They are what I call spaces of *the curatorial* – spaces where the linear path of a narrative deforms, returns back on itself and inevitably tears open a gap within which the viewer has the opportunity to insert her/himself.

THE GOTHIC PREMISE

Before proceeding to analyse the possible extension of curating's history to those times, it may be useful to set the context of the Gothic ideology from which the Naumburg Masters emerged²⁹. Most art historians that researched the possible roots of the Naumburg Masters, point to their earlier work in the great cathedral of Rheims (Poeschke, 2011). The Cathedral in Rheims which was built on the ruins of a Romanesque church, burnt as part of a local riot in 1211, was soon to become one of the most famous constructs in the western Christian world, announcing the arrival of a new building style which will conquer most of Europe and spread like wildfire. (Scott, 2003)

The new principles of the Gothic world view were deeply influenced by translations of scriptures from antiquity, namely those of Plato and Aristotle. The aesthetics of the

²⁹ The identity of the Naumburg Master is unknown, and there is no evidence to provide us any information on the biography or genealogy of the Naumburg Master. It is not known whether it is an individual artist or a group or a workshop which was popular at the time in the north eastern regions of Germany. I will dedicate a portion of this case study to the debate around individuality and collaboration and provide support to my position that the Naumburg Master was not an individual artist. The name 'Naumburg Master' was coined in the 1930's and 1940's, when it was assumed that the creator of the different works in Naumburg was an individual. I will refer to the Naumburg Master in plural (Naumburg Masters). This is a common solution in the field. This is not to undermine or eradicate the possibility that the Naumburg Master could have been one of the first artists to acquire an individual recognition for her/his genius, in some way predicting what would become the norm in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Gothic enterprise, and its theoretical background, was influenced by Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430), and his famous essay *De Musica* (A.D. 387-391). Robert A. Scott in his book *A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral* explains why the scholars and theologians of the 13th century found St Augustine aesthetic theory compelling: *“True beauty, he (St. Augustine) declared, is ultimately anchored in divine reality and reflects it. He conceived beauty to be a property that inheres in an object or a sound, an attribute it possesses by virtue of its resemblance to or mimicry of divine reality”* (Scott, 2003, p. 123). The charm of St. Augustine’s ideas for the devoted men of the Catholic Church was two folded. Firstly it promised the concept of absolute beauty, an objective harmonious manifestation that is governed by an ordinary system of laws. This system promised a direct relationship with the divine. If one could accomplish such beauty in constructing objects or buildings, one could acquire the ability to invite God’s to residence within material form³⁰.

The specific aesthetics of the Gothic Cathedral have been further developed by Abbot Suger of Saint Denis, who had combined the writings of St. Augustine and a few others in order to invent a totalist work of harmony contained within the architectural form. The principles of the Gothic cathedral were based on the notion of a sacred geometry, as Scott explains: *“Given his belief that true beauty must be rooted in metaphysical reality, Augustine concluded [...] that the fundamental quality of true beauty is what he termed ‘proper modulation.’ ... He believed that beautiful music could be achieved by basing the relationships between musical units on simple arithmetic ratios. Music composed according to these rules would be ‘ideal,’ reflecting the true nature of the universe, which, he believed, was constituted of similar ratios.[...] Perfect proportions led builders of great churches to conceive of architecture as applied geometry, geometry as applied theology”*. (Scott, 2003, pp. 123-124) The ‘proper modulation’ of musical notes was translated by Suger into the notion of perfect geometrical proportions. Those were seen as a manifestation of God’s presence in earthly form. The aesthetic theory, which was elaborated, extended, interpreted and concretized by Abbot Suger, had an attraction on a pure theological level: The notion of absolute beauty gave further reaffirmation that indeed God is present within the sacred constructs of the Gothic Cathedral.

At the same time, this newly developed philosophy of aesthetics, that encompassed within it the ethical code of the divine, came in a time it was most needed. It was a

³⁰ Here already one can understand the importance and centrality of the notion of simulacrum in the medieval thought. The idea of absolute beauty promised, that by answering certain laws, a creation could come alive with the spirit of God. This will be elaborated further later on in this text, however it is interesting to think of the notion of the simulacrum here, not as a representation or a mimesis of God’s image, but the manifestation of God’s divine structure – the creation of life itself. This also extends the possible understanding of the anctifying approach to object, and the reasoning behind the belief that objects indeed hold power in and of themselves.

way of negotiating different new cultural trends that had shaken the hierarchical structures of power that dominated the medieval Christian world. Firstly, with the development of a new middle class, the invention of a new aesthetic form which was seen as a live proof to the existence of God and its presence in the church had assisted in reinforcing its declining social, economical and cultural status. Furthermore, the adoption of texts from antiquity, and their containment within the framework of the Christian theology, might be said to have assisted the church in coping with the increasing popularity of Scholasticism, a movement which gained prominence during these times.

The Gothic project, therefore, encompassed an inter-disciplinary approach, and the Gothic architecture, as conceptualized by Suger, was a means of performing divine proportions in all aesthetic aspects of the construct: from its architectonic structure, to the art works within it and through to the sacred music composed at the time. It was believed that the aesthetic form would create an image of heaven on earth within the cathedral walls.

IDENTIFYING CURATORIAL PRACTICE WITHIN THE GOTHIC PREMISE

Within the general history of the gothic premise, the example of the Naumburg cathedral may point to the existence of ‘curators’, if indeed we accept to adopt the use of this term in a project of this sort. The Naumburg Masters might be an exemplary case of a group of people who did their work in a very distinct, some would say even subversive, manner³¹, however, they were not the only ones to take upon themselves the curatorial orchestrating of such immense projects.

Scott describes the process of constructing a gothic cathedral and the ways in which the work was designed, planned and coordinated. Within this premise, it seems the interior of the construct had primacy over the exterior design. Architects would work in close collaboration with what Scott terms ‘designers’, professionals in the field that were in charge on the coordination of this vast artistic project, making sure that indeed, every part of the construct corresponds with another within the harmonious plan that was supposed to attract heaven into earth according to the Gothic ideological premise.

³¹ In a recent interview I have conducted with Matthias Ludwig , the archivist of the Naumburg Cathedral archive and library, we had shared a mutual interest in the politics that seem to emerge from the interpretation of the position of each sculptures within the hall of sculptures in the West choir. It is almost impossible to ignore the feeling of intrigue and the tense relationships that are depicted in the gazes and the bodily gestures that the sculptures take. It seems almost certain that the Naumburg Masters had planted within these relationships some form of subversive political critic of the church as an institution, and the commemoration processes more specifically. The disposition of the characters and their relationship seems almost cynical in relation to the general ethos of the catholic church. While I could not find any research to support this assumption, it might as well be that the fascination with these characters and their arrangement derive exactly from this contradictory aspects that are embedded within the curatorial organization of the church.

Such 'designers' or 'master-builders' as Scott calls them, were educated, together with architects and artists within that masonry schools of the time, As Scott writes: *Just as the theologian had been trained to think through the implications of adopting, say, position A on one issue for positions taken on all other issues, so the master builder approached his task by thinking through in advance the relationship of the parts of a building to the whole, contemplating how the decision to configure an arch in a certain way, build a nave to a certain height or length, or construct a window to a certain width would affect other parts of the building*". (Scott, 2003, p. 130). This education had provided them with vast cross-disciplinary knowledge, not only of the constructive elements of architecture, or the artistic mastery of style, but also of philosophical and theoretical agendas based on both theological and scientific texts.

As such Scott calls them 'scholars' – experts in the ideological constructs and thoughts of their time, able to negotiate a vast array of meanings to audiences through the meticulous planning of the project of the cathedral, which in itself was considered one whole unit of meaning, which hosted within it a variety of other creative premises: *"Scholasticism forced the designer to articulate this planning clearly, rather than just grasping it intuitively. The intention of Gothic design was for all of the elements to work together to produce the coordinated effect the builders desired; thus, everything had to be designed as a whole and each decision constantly reconsidered in light of decisions made on other elements [...] The master builders ... working back and forth between the various architectural and sculptural elements until they achieved a logical organization that subordinated all parts to the whole."* (Scott, 2003, pp. 130-131)

Such master builders, designers, scholars, had a primal role in assuring the church's position of power in the eyes of the people, as the art and architecture of the time were utilised in reinforcing the political structure and the cultural dominants of the time. It seems to me that such 'designers' or 'scholars' had responsibilities similar to those of contemporary curators and it seems to me the education they had received complies with the array of responsibilities that a museum curator, for example, is assigned with.

Re-reading history through the eyes of curators, couldn't we go back and read the Romanesque cathedral and its back yards filled with weird creatures, tamed and educated by the twelve apostles? Wouldn't we be able to draw a certain comparison between such curatorial premises and those of the Exposition Universelle in Paris of the 18th century? Or maybe even the renowned exhibition 'Les Magiciens de La Terre' curated by Jean Hubert Martin in Paris of the 20th century?

Indeed I would argue that the same analysis, which sees those exhibitions as part of the imperialistic effort to position the western white man in superiority of the colonized other (or, from the other perspective, as a post-imperialist attempt to reverse such a presentation), can be attended in our attempt to better understand the histories of Christianity's temples. Considering those constructs as 'meaning-making-halls' where curatorial thought resides, we can expand our gaze even further, re-reading the construction of cultural memory and social relations across the boundaries of time.

Through such spaces of *the curatorial* we can understand that curating, in the extended field, is always part of mass communication systems and should be regarded closely from a perspective that takes into account its silent and seemingly invisible operations. These are not necessarily tied to one specific institution, history or ideology. It points to a fundamental and intricate relationship between curation, power and systems of belief (religious or other). I contend that spirituality, the search for self-awareness and the meaning of our presence as bodies in this simulacrum of a world, is imminent in this curatorial quest for meaning and its dissemination. The conditions for the production of such meaning, the platforms upon which it is read, are the main interest and motivation of curatorial practice.

THE NAUMBURG MASTERS IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY READINGS INTO THE CURATORIAL

Jean Paul Martinon, in the introduction to the book *The Curatorial* also suggests a certain extension to the history of curatorial practice to 19th century France. For Martinon it was the work of Mallarme on a vast multi-sensory series of events, which he named *This Is*, that might could be seen as the prototype of a curatorial project. Martinon writes: "Overall, Mallarme's aim is to expose 'thought thinking itself' and to synchronize poetry and art with the movement of the universe, and in the process allow the Absolute to expose and perform itself everywhere once and for all" (Martinon, 2013, p. 1).

When Robert Scott attempts to describe the Gothic Enterprise and its goals, he quotes Panofsky's understanding of Suger Abbot's interpretation of scholastic ideology: "Like the High Scholastic Summa, the High Gothic cathedral aimed at 'totality' and therefore tended to approximate, by synthesis as well as elimination, one perfect and final solution. In its imagery, the High Gothic cathedral sought to embody the whole of Christian knowledge, theological, moral, natural, and historical, with everything in its place and that which no longer found its place suppressed." (Scott, 2003, pp. 128-129).

Of course, the purpose of this premise was, as Scott writes later in the same chapter of his book: *“to materialize and reflect spiritual perfection in the earthly sphere”* (Scott, 2003, p. 131)

Couldn't we, then, identify the similarity between these two premises? When reading those words I could not but be struck by the similarity of those two suggestions. True, Scott and Panofsky perceive the Gothic premise in relation to the scholastic tradition of the time, which in itself sought the unity of all things; however the application of such a theory could have taken many forms. In my eyes, this mutual wish to display, in parallel, different works, in order to convey the relationship between them, and through their relationship, convey a meaning- whatever it may be. This seems to be the underlining, continuous backdrop for curatorial practice. As Martinon continues in the introduction to his book, *“This Is might perhaps resemble a failed attempt at a ‘Total work of Art; it might also be delusory and grandiose beyond reckoning, but it is also a contemporary curatorial project before its time: the author is dead, disciplines are blurred, it is performative, open-ended, synaesthetic, potentially politically transformative and above all, as Mallarme’s notes with their endless numerical figures testify, regulated by financial concerns for its realization”* (Martinon, 2013, p. 3)

Just as Martinon refers to Mallarme, I would not like to suggest the Gothic cathedral as the ultimate curatorial project to which one should aspire, rather, I would like to think of it as a possible opening in the field of curatorial enquiry, that might assist us in understanding the roots and resources of the development of curating. In my mind, the Gothic ethos, which pre-figures in many aspects that of the Renaissance and with it, the birth of the modern museum, might be a pivotal point, a moment of change within curatorial practice, which may assist us in re-reading its histories.

APPENDIX 3

VAINS- VISUAL ART INTERPRETATION AND NAVIGATION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

The following case study will outline the ongoing development of the Visual Art Interpretation and Navigation System otherwise known as VAINS. VAINS is an online curatorial platform for the representation of art. The VAINS database draws upon the Computer Fine Arts Collection¹, courtesy of artist and collector Doron Golan. The CFAC is an extensive and diverse collection of early internet-based art works. It currently forms one of the largest available online archives for such works.

This following text will attempt to position VAINS within the historical contexts of digital art curation, as well as stress the culturally urgent reasons for reframing the relationship of curation to digital art, digital technologies and the body in its relation to those, while also challenging notions of 'the interactive' and 'the virtual'. This discussion provides theoretical as well as practical models for an evolving and processual participatory curatorial platform, and documents the experimental work that had been undertaken in the last three years of developing the system².

The purpose of this text, is to provide the practical experimentation which has informed the writing of this research, most notably in relation to the fourth chapter, where I attempt to construct an alternative understanding of what spatial organization could mean in an online context. Hence this text does not circle and detail all the tools developed in the past few years as part of the VAINS project, but outlines those tools which seem to have a significant meaning in the construction of the ideas laid forth by the research as a whole. While a general overview of the VAINS projects will be given, only one of the components of the website, *The Textless Alley*, will be closely investigated, to

¹Doron Golan's Computer Fine Arts Collection can be accessed through <http://www.computerfinearts.com/collection>

² VAINS sees itself as a project under constant evaluation and development. The tools designed for the VAINS platforms had been made available to the wide public during certain periods of time in order to collect data, analyze it and proceed to developing further tools. The project is currently dormant as a negotiation is in process with funding organizations to provide a commercial platform within which public access to the tools developed will be offered.

provide the necessary data that supports the conclusions reached within the course of this research.

The VAINS platform had been presented in various international conferences, most notably, in DRHA Body and Space conference in 2010 and in ISEA 2011, hence some of the materials presented here, have been published in different forms and on different platforms³.

ART, CURATION AND TECHNOLOGY – A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Edward A Shanken in his article *Art in the Information Age: Technology and Conceptual Art* (Shanken, 2002), makes a point in re-negotiating the history of art and its relationship to technology. In his article he eloquently shows, how art and technology were always in a relationship of exchange. He therefore argues that the separation of art and technology is a recent and artificial one. He uses Jack Burnham exhibition *Software: Information Technology and its New Meaning for Art* (1970) as well as other conceptual artworks that were exhibited during the 1960's which underpins the relationship between art practices and new technologies.

Jonathan Crary in both his books *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) and *Suspension of Perception* (1999) offers a reading of art history in dependence of its relationship with new scientific discoveries and technological advances. For Crary, those developments have set the course for many of artistic developments and styles, within those he includes Impressionism and Cubism as two movements who were dramatically influenced by new discoveries in physics and in optics and by the development of representational technologies.

Pioneering artists are often involved in searching technology's latent possibilities, and in recent art historical terms, be it photography⁴, television, video⁵ and now digital communication technologies, are dramatically and continuously influencing artistic manifestations and mediums. It is quite safe to say, that artists have rarely missed an

³ To access the DRHA online journal please follow:
<http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol1001/eleanordare/eleanordare.pdf> (last accessed 3/6/2014; 23:17) To Access the ISEA 2011 paper please follow:

<http://isea2011.sabanciuniv.edu/paper/encountering-body-art-online-vains-visual-art-interrogation-and-navigation-system-abjection-ap> (last accessed 3/6/2014; 23:17)

⁴ like the example of Eugene Durieu, Oscar Gustav Rejlander; later examples may include Edward Muybridge and Gertrude Kasebier. The list is vast and long

⁵ like the example of Nam June Paik and the EAT group, Valie Export, Bruce Nauman and many others

opportunity to investigate new technologies, utilize them, criticize them, and find ways in which they can be differently conceived.

From such a perspective, it seems art has been walking hand in hand with science and technology, advancing toward the investigation and the development of new frontiers in cultural development - while art theory and art history often remained behind, analysing the past and criticizing the present as Shanken notes, an ideological attempt to separate artistic practice from media technologies can be identified within such art historical and art critical writings. These attempts may be related to an anxiety, which was discussed in the third chapter of this research, relating to the 'uselessness' of artworks which endows them with the special status in the cultural field. The relationship between technologies and artworks is dangerous, in the sense, that it destabilizes the value of the artwork, denoted from any technological function, and may allude to a useful purpose for the art-object.

These attempts to separate art and technology became most prevalent within the discourses that have coincided with the industrial revolution, the invention of the camera, and the development of a critical discourse around the influence modes of production have on human culture and consciousness. A discourse found its expression with Benjamin's seminal *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) and the texts that, up until today follow its footsteps⁶.

The rejection of photographic and cinematic images as part of the artistic cannon in the 19th and early 20th centuries can be seen as an introduction to the authored separation between art and technology that seem to have governed the modernist ethos. The modernist project forcefully encouraged this partition - and Michael Fried's and Clement Greenberg's numerous manifestos seem to follow a direct line of development from the platonic perception of painting, in their absolute rejection of the illusionary and the theatrical aspects of the artwork - within which - 'magic' created by technology seem inappropriate for the 'authenticity' of the artistic message. To some extent, this kind of separation between art and technology continues until today. While photography and video-art are already considered within the canon of contemporary art media, digital

⁶ Within digital media theory, Douglas Davis' *The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction* (Davis, 1995); Bill Nichols' *The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems* (Nichols, 2003) and Krzysztof Ziarek's *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Electronic Mutability* (Ziarek, 2005) are some of the most explicit examples of writers who sought to follow Benjamin's trail of thought in order to analyse the influence new communication media has on contemporary art production and meaning. While not all of them are in complete agreement with Benjamin, Benjamin's vast influence on the theoretical analysis of the relationship between modes of production and the work of art can be demonstrated to this day.

communication media, the World Wide Web and their affiliating art practices, seem to still hold a position outside of the mainstream understanding of art. (Lambert in: Lambert, McNeil, & Quaranta, 2014, pp.12-17)

The deferral of new technologies from the vast majority of current displays in museums and galleries, might be related to old-fashioned understanding of art, and more specifically, might point to the difficulty in assigning a financial value to such objects which do not exist as a self-contained unit of matter or information, that can claim the status of the original and easily bought and sold in the art market. However, such problems had proven, historically, to be only a temporary hurdle. With photography and videos, solutions had been found, and a number of start-up companies⁷, are already looking into the possible solutions of disseminating digital art on a large basis. It is therefore reasonable to expect that there will be a striving market of some sort, circling around digital-media art in the near future.

Somehow, curatorial practice, always seems to be within the most severe delay in thinking of new media in relationship to its own practices, and usually follows the lead of others, artists, engineers, broadcasters, and private initiatives, not providing with solutions, but disseminating ready-made products, which in themselves already dictate the course and operation of curatorial practice and its relationship with new technologies.

A recent shift in curatorial practice since the development of independent curatorial practices, is the move from object-centred displays, to curatorial projects that seek to provide a platform and represent creative processes. This shift can be traced to the development of conceptual art during the 1960s and 1970s and a growing tendency towards the dematerialization of the object (Lippard, 1997). This shift is demonstrated through a variety of curatorial activities on various platforms. To name a few, Hans Ulrich-Obrist and Hou Hanru project *Cities on the Move* (197-1999), a touring exhibition which had sought to create a platform for the collaboration of artists and scientists. Within the different international stops the exhibition has travelled between, the display was never the same, and the process of re-assigning meaning to the creative and the curatorial project was highlighted. Another example is *Living as Form* (2011) a collaborative project of curators Varol Becker, Claire Bishop, Teddy Cruz, Brian Holmes, Maria Lind, and Shannon Jackson aimed to provide a historical context and provide a platform for socially engaged art practices of the past 20 years, highlighting the importance of process in long-term artistic projects who are engaging in social activity.

⁷ Clay.do is one such start-up company who is seeking a solution of commercializing digital art through modes of accessibility rather than the model of 'original' and 'editions'.

Unfortunately however, the realm of new media art and internet based art are not reviewed as frequently. While there are a few curatorial projects that examine the role of the curator in relation to such practices, as they have been reviewed in the introduction to this research, their participation within the technological field of the internet is still limited. The VAINS project aims at opening a possibility of experimenting with creative or 'passionate' curating, as I termed it in the third chapter, within the technological tools at hand. Within this premise, Dr Dare and myself had considered the medial conditions of curating online. As it had been noted, in this array of media, we see context, space, time and attention as seminal fields for the creative act of curatorial practice.

CURATORIAL CONTEXT ONLINE

Sarah Cook, in her article *Towards a Theory of the Practice of Curating New Media Art* (Cook, 2003) writes: "*One of the primary roles of a curator, whether in the field of art, history, anthropology or science, is in the creation of a context.*" (Cook, 2003, p. 169). In a similar manner it seems the common denominator of many texts that attempt to explicate the role of the curator the idea of 'context' which can also be interpreted as setting up the conditions for reading an object or a form, seems to be a primary concern. Whether we think of the curator as a collector, that arranges objects of knowledge in their categorical position within a series of other similar objects, or if we think of most contemporary forms of art-curating, where curators are striving to provide artists with optimal conditions for experimentation and display – curatorial practice can be defined as the management of context.

The idea of context and its possible manifestations and meanings, is analyzed and explained in Edwina Taborsky's *The Discursive Object* (Taborsky, 1990). Through the analysis of objects' attributes, and their reading through both their originating culture and the receiving culture, where they are displayed, she acknowledges that the negotiation of an object's meaning should take into account the three aspects of context that are corresponding with the three facets of the discursive object: The object in the context of its own meaning as an independent unit of significance; the object in relation to its original cultural pertinence, and the object (within which the original culture is embodied) in relation to its new context within its display, and in relation to the 'museum society' as Taborsky defines it.

As Simon Briggs concludes it: "*An important part of a curator's job is not only to contextualize artwork into existing artworld discourse but to also research the context that*

*the work emerges from and address that in public in an attempt to present the work as a living thing, emerging from a real context, whether that be the street (as in graffiti art) or media art sub-culture”*⁸ echoing Taborsky’s theory of curating, and reinforcing its relevance, not only for museum studies, but also for the curating of new media art, street art or any form of innovative, processual art-work.

With internet based art, the internet complicates the idea of what ‘context’ might mean and more specifically, it might be harder to establish what an ‘original’ context of the work, and to what context it is transferred through the act of curating, because the two are practically one and the same thing in the sense that in both cases the artwork is displayed from within its address online. However, while the notion of display might be relevant to curating offline, online, visibility is replaced by the notion of accessibility, as it had been demonstrated in the introduction and the fourth chapter of this research.

While mimicking the construct of the gallery or the museum online, is a proliferative model, we found that this strategy only removes the artwork from its original platform, hence affecting its meaning in an attempt to ‘purify’ or ‘isolate’ it from the environment within which it would normally be found. As such, we felt that this model did not really construct a contextual framework for the artworks that would render their meaning accessible. For even if one artwork is presented next to another, as in the model of the white cube, supposedly informing a context for each other, the curatorial context created for their reading, is an artificial one, in the sense that it does not engage with the ‘native’ or ‘original’ conceptual materials that the artwork refers to, as in Taborsky’s definition of the discursive object.

CONTEXT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Hence, a question emerged, in constructing VAINS, what would ‘context’ actually mean in the flat world of the screen. In our analysis, William J Mitchell’s analysis of social media, virtual worlds, and imitation of cityscapes within the World Wide Web, in *Replacing Place* (Mitchell in: *The Digital Dialectic*, 2001, pp.122-127) allowed us to identify an important aspect of positioning and contextualizing online. Mitchell analyses social networking and communication models online, more specifically those online spaces which are attempting to generate the experience of an ‘ex-web’, urban experience, mimicking the design of a cityscape. In analysing the main mechanisms that work behind notions of

⁸ Simon Biggs,, quoted by Sarah Cook in *Towards a Theory of the Practice of Curating New Media Art* , (Cook, 2003, p. 173). This quote was originally published in a posting within the CRUMB mailing list, 11th February 2002.

centrality, imminent to the city structure, Mitchell explains how accessibility is a central term in understanding modes of centrality, and modes of social networking online.

For us the idea of 'access' not only in its relationship to centrality, but in relationship to visibility in online architecture became a prominent concern, and within these structures we found a temporary answer to the question of context online. The idea of temporality, replacing spatial arrangement in computing language⁹, allowed us to understand that the curatorial series within which we are placing the artwork is in essence, the route the user goes through when accessing the artwork. In this sense, the journey the user takes in her/his attempt to access an artwork, what s/he would view before and what s/he would view after, might set the context for her/his reading of the artwork as well.

To give an example that will clarify our thoughts: let us imagine we would like to find artworks online, and for doing so we would use a search engine as a platform for accessing information. In order to access the information, we would need to feed keywords or concepts in the search box. Normally such keywords are reflecting the values which we feel are central to the items that we are looking for. Let us imagine, for this example that we are looking for **images** that are prominently **blue**. The key words

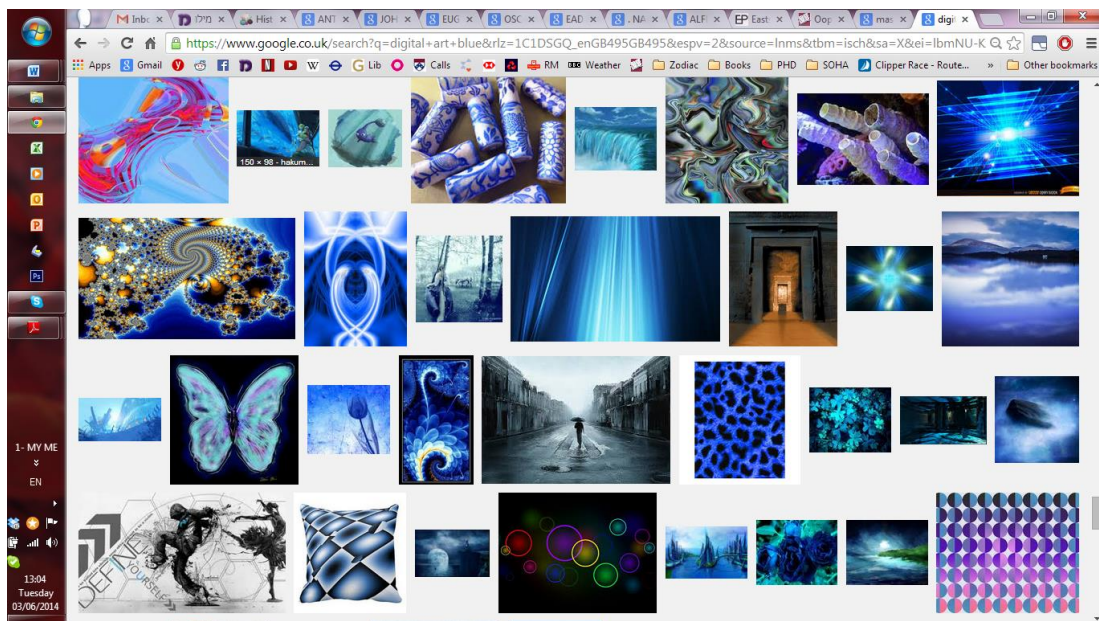


Figure 1- 'Digital Art Blue' Search Results in Google Images. Accessed 03/6/2014

⁹ As eloquently explained by Katharine Hayels in her article *The Condition of Virtuality*: "To understand the interaction between time and space in this medium, it is important to know something about the way the medium works. When computers speak their native languages-assembly code, and beneath that, machine language-they operate within a profoundly non-Cartesian space. Distance at this level is measured by clock cycles." (Hayles, 2001, p. 90), suggesting that time and space in the digital realm are exchangeable. This has a relationship to the theories circulating the idea of the flatness of space and time in modern and postmodern life as they have been discussed in discourses around urban space, most relevant to this research are the writings of Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord and Paul Virilio.

highlighted here, might be our means of describing our request but at the same time, the search-results that we will get, might be very diverse in terms of colour distribution. Nevertheless, since we set the conditions for our search in advance, and we are looking for a response to our expectations, we will inevitably direct our attention to the 'blueness' of the images displayed. Even if, within these search results we would find images that are not particularly blue, we will be compelled to ask for the reason this image was included in the search results, and in attempting to answer this question we might diverge into metaphorical or figurative thinking, already performing a process of interpretation, within which the image is always judged in relation to its blueness.

For us this process seem to bare resemblance to a process of curatorial contextualization - or as it has been defined before- setting up the conditions for reading an artwork, and so we started experimenting with different modes of accessibility, different types of search engines, and different types of 'gatekeeper' programmes, that might have a relationship to setting such preliminary conditions for interpretation. The development of search engines through different methods of data filtering, allowed us to experiment with the idea of 'accessing' as 'contextualizing'.

However, a question remained with regards to the viewer's agency and her/his ability to reconstruct her/his conscious reading mechanisms within such process. In online space, search tools and the way they are constructed, are also setting the course for our reading of search-results. While it may seem to us, that by entering the keywords within the search box we are to a large extent controlling the reading of the results according to pre-determined conditions we had set ourselves, the question of our ability to remain aware to the 'choices' the search engine is making for us in this process, remains untouched.

CURATORIAL SELF-REFLEXIVITY

The questions that revolved in the creation of VAINS were primarily driven from a need that curatorial practice will emerge from, will be in contact with, and dissolve in artistic practice. This type of thinking is deeply informed by contemporary discourses in Curatorial Practice which underline the role of the curator as the negotiator of platforms for artist experiment, and for artistic representation. Within such discourse there is a tension between the wish of curating to become transparent in its support of the artwork's visibility, so not to interfere with the artworks interpretation, and an increasing awareness of the importance of political, social and cultural contexts within

which the artwork is embedded and from which it emerges, in the reading of the artworks' meaning.

At the same time, these tensions are kept in a form of equilibrium through the presence of the third factor in the reading and construction of meaning, that of audiences, or in the case of online navigation, the individual user. In the introduction to his book *Curating in the 21st Century* (2000), Gavin Wade introduces what he sees as the core question of contemporary Curatorial Practice: "*The Question 'as a curator do you look after the art or the audience?' is just predicated on the idea of art as object rather than as audience*" (Wade, 2000, p. 8). It might as well be said that the curator is the symbolic link between an audience and its reflection in the meaning of an art work, be it an object, a performative act or a process; curating is therefore a bifocal practice – on the one hand it focuses its attention on the form s/he represents and on the other hand, s/he focuses her/his attention on the viewer. If we proceed with this idea, we would also have to acknowledge, with the development of theory around the meaning of this bi-focal focus, that the awareness to curatorial operations is a third point of focus in the process.

We can therefore start to think of a possible prospect that can somehow perform the role of a melting pot of these three participants in the curatorial act. For Dare and myself, the notion of 'transparency', was useful, not in its meaning as the 'disappearance' of the medium – as in Bolter's and Grusin's definition (Remdiation: Understanding New Media, 2000) but rather as 'exposure'. Indeed if we could pinpoint what postmodernist tendencies mean for curatorial practice, we would note an attempt to lay bare the curatorial agenda and process, in exposing the elements that underlines the curatorial intervention, which inevitably presuppose an interpretation of the artwork. In this process of 'exposure' we might find that the agency if the user is resurrected in the user's awareness to the process of retrieving information online. This moment of user-agency had intrigued Dare and myself in the scope of online curating, and had become one of the leading principles in developing VAINS.

VAINS, hence, aims to provide a space for the user's agency by exposing the context and its influence on the interpretation of the artwork. Within this attempt there is hope that the artwork will arise again from behind its representation – and an encounter will be formalized beyond the context or interpretation suggested by the process of rendering the work accessible. This, might allow the examination of meaning from a pluralist position, rather than an affirmative one.

VAINS would like to be a system that engages with various aspects of online activity, and its self-criticality, is one that exposes the media that are used in such processes to its users, providing them with means to critically examine their engagement with digital media through VAINS multiple browsing and searching experiences. As such, it borrows some of its appearance and modes of operation from different platforms online and translates them into customizable user experiences.

CONTENT GENERATION

Although the internet, in the web 1.0 generation, was mostly seen as a repository, or at best, as a supermarket, the web 2.0 generation has proved the internet to be an important social arena, reviving chat rooms, forums and social networks (that were considered dead after the explosion of the dot com bubble during the early 90's). As a social environment, what web 2.0 invented which maintains a productive and interesting arena for cultural creation, is "user generated systems". These systems do not rely on authored content, but rather relies on users in generating content, activity, and business for the system as a whole. Such systems include the most successful social networks and websites that are operating online such as Youtube, Facebook, Wikipedia, Blogger etc.

Relating to the grammar and language of the World Wide Web, VAINS seeks to engage in participatory and collaborative activities, and to become a platform for the accumulation, dissemination and representation of user generated content. While its core data base relies on the computer fine art collection, it is our aim to further expand this database, to include the work of those that will participate in our user-generated content areas.

With a prime focal on digital, new media, computational and online art practices VAINS introduces both a data base of significant artworks, as well as a space for sharing, discovering, discussing and interpreting artistic online activities.

EXPERIMENTING WITH VAINS

For the reader's convenience, this case study will first outline the conclusions which have been reached throughout our experiments with VAINS. This is to underline their relationship to the chapter that it is attached to (Chapter 4). The second part of this text will offer a through description of the whole system as it was developed up until this point and will offer an explanation to its design-logic which is based on the ICOM code of ethics for museums. It will also offer further theoretical contextualisation of the VAINS

system within trajectories of embodied and situated cognition, to complement the theoretical aspects developed in the chapter.

It is important to note that VAINS is an ongoing research project which continues to change and evolve throughout time as knowledge is accumulated and constructed in this context. Conclusions presented here are offered as a temporary reflexive arrest in practice and are not conceived as definitive or instructive. Rather they attempt to offer alternative routes for thinking curatorial practice online with hope that this would propel further innovation, experimentation and creativity in the field.

An initial database based on the result of an extensive collaborative filtering process involving over 200 users matching artworks to suggested icons and images, moods, sounds, textures, geographical location, gender and weather is the core playground upon which further navigation tools had been created. Information was gathered through an online questionnaire that users could access from their home computer. Initially we asked users to match artworks from the CFAC with images we found interesting or affective. These images or icons were a means of replacing keywords in search tools developed.

The curatorial process in terms of choice and interpretation was therefore based on a combination of users' reaction and initial choices made by Dare and myself with regards to the images suggested. This system offers a model for using collaborative filtering whereby curatorial authority is used as a starting point for user interaction, however with time, these curatorial choices are altered, re-negotiated and oftentimes effaced by further user activity. The data accumulated from users' responses in this process has a vast effect on the reading of artworks through their matching with alternative 'tags' in this textless tagging technique and looks at enhancing user participation as a core element in the design of the interface itself.

Further tools, which will be presented in the sections to come, such as the hepatic keyboard, the abject applications, the 3D interface and the NAN tool were tested on a smaller scale. Each of those tools were tested by an average of 10-15 participants. The tools were assessed through in-depth interviews and assistive questionnaires. The questionnaires sought to explore three main questions:

- 1) Did the interface change users' relationship to the artwork and time¹⁰ spent with each of the artworks?
- 2) Did the interface change users' relationship with the technologies at stake?
- 3) Did the system change users' relationship to themselves, their bodies or their perception?

These three questions allowed us to further understand the conditions for users' agency under the circumstances prescribed by the interface and locate the spaces where *the curatorial* may appear. Most of the users who participated in these experiments maintained anonymity. Some of the experiments were conducted with professionals in the field, namely curators and researchers of digital media technologies. In accordance with users' consents it is only such responses that I am able to quote and relate to here. These will be added to the side of the main text and will also include and interpretation of further data accumulated through anonymous responses. These testimonies are representative and hopefully support the temporary conclusion we have reached with this experiment.

¹⁰ Time here relates to the subjective perception of it rather than an empiric evaluation of time dedicated to each piece. VAINS is a system interested in users' *experience* rather than objective quantifiable data, and therefore the questions also attended the subjective experience of users and their internal consideration solicited by the use of the system. The results hence do not pretend to describe an objective reality, but suggest a general review of users' reaction and the commonalities which we could find between them.

TESTING ICONS:

USER EVALUATION WITH SENSORY AND NON-VERBAL INTERFACES

In order to investigate the validity of using non-verbal and sensory art interpretation tools we undertook a series of depth interviews and testing procedures with volunteers. The tests we undertook enabled users to construct their own interpretive methods and conceptual frameworks, while the structured interviews we conducted were designed to elicit complex and multi-layered responses, rather than a fixed set of *a priori* outcomes or material for specific 'action plans'.

The purpose of these interviews was to try and understand mechanisms of interaction and interpretation that suggest a non-verbal link to content. The data collected from the participants in these experiments are further used in our curatorial procedures and form the primary database for our content recommendation tools.

Volunteers were given links to five diverse artworks from the Computer Fine Arts Collection database. After exploring each work the subjects were asked to choose one image from forty visual images that they felt could best represent or interpret the work they had just seen. These images were randomly chosen by us and were not overtly



Figure 3-Part of the Testimony given by M, one of our volunteer in-depth interviews of the icon and sonar navigation tool

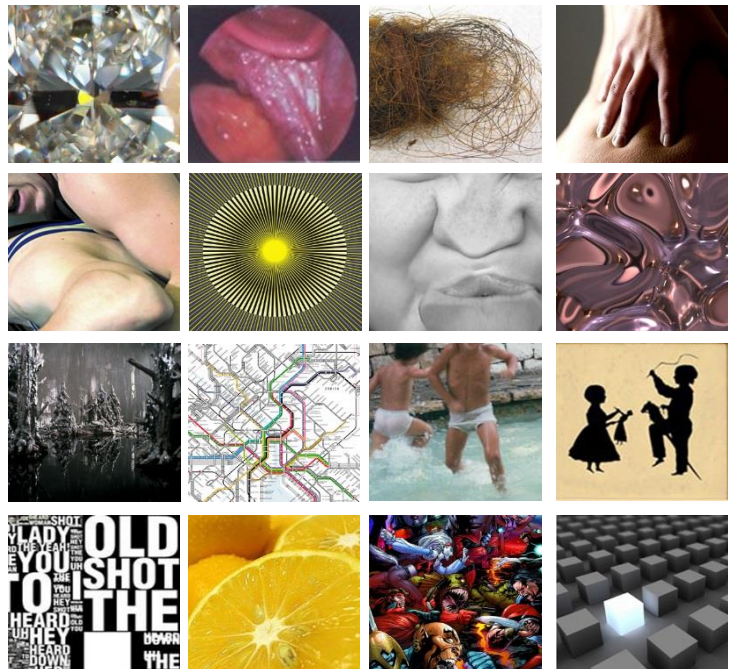


Figure 3- Some of the icons that were suggested for the navigation and categorization of content

related to the artworks. After choosing an image (or symbol) to represent the site they were then asked to touch a range of textures and choose an appropriate texture out of stone, carpet, seashell, paper, fur, ice, an old leaf, leather or plastic. Finally they were asked to listen to five diverse sounds and choose one sound that best represented or interpreted the artwork for them. After the subjects had undertaken these tests we then interviewed them in depth following a pre-written set of questions.

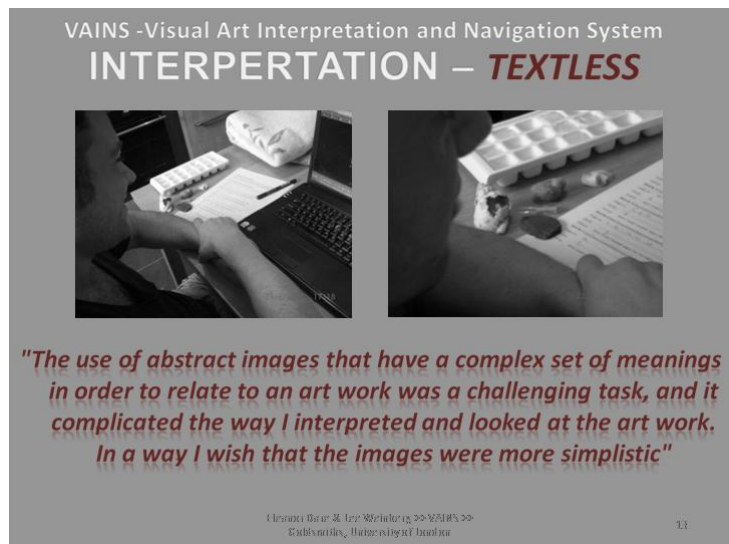


Figure 4- Part of the Testimony given by M, one of our volunteer in-depth interviews of the textural and sonar navigation tool

As we realistically anticipated, reactions to the use of icons, sounds and textures varied, from subjects who could not easily make use of this interpretive method, to subjects who, often unprompted, provided detailed insights into why they had selected certain images, sounds and textures to interpret the works we provided. One subject wrote *“The simplicity of the art works picturing complex emotions fascinates me.”* She reported that she had chosen the icons instinctively, though she did also use a process of elimination to choose what she felt were appropriate icons, reducing the forty icons to six then selecting the most apposite image from the final six.

Generally, subjects have found the link between artworks and sound the least useful or expressive as a means of re-mediative interpretation. One subject observed *“the sounds weren’t related to the artworks, I couldn’t find meanings”*. The same subject had no difficulty using images or textures as interpretive tools, and indeed reported that she found it more useful than using everyday language. Her reported interpretations ranged from the figurative to the abstract, for example choosing fur to interpret Dekok’s *Zabnulvier* because it was *“fluffy, random and structureless”* while an image of wrestlers was chosen as her interpretation of So Ahn’s *‘Inbetween’*, which she described as ambivalent residing in a place that was *‘stuck between other things’*

The subjects nevertheless testified that they felt a different type of connection to the artworks they were presented with, and that the unusual request to engage with the artworks in non-verbal means, allowed them to prolong their attention further, and become more curious about the images displayed and the relationship between them.

In the discussions following the experimentation we have conducted with those tool, Dr Dare and myself were keen to explore the notion of attention and suspension within curatorial platforms online. Drawing from both curatorial practice discourse and human-computer interaction (HCI) theories, we have come to develop the Neural Art Navigation tool, which for short we named: N.A.N.

THE N.A.N TOOL, EXPLORING THE SPEED OF TIME

Hans Ulrich-Obrist in his article *Kraftwerk, Time Storage, Laboratory* (Obrist, 2000) suggests that one of the potentialities, where curatorial practice emerges as an opening up



Figure 5- Nimrod Vardi, Curator and Director of AreByte Gallery, London experimenting with the VAINS 3D Access Application Interface.

"I enjoyed more engaging with the space... I guess you could compare it to the experience of walking through an exhibition ... you have a chance to experience the space as a whole rather than each individual artwork ... I guess I prefer looking at the artworks than reading the labels ... when I walk in an exhibition I first look at the artworks and rarely read the curatorial text ... I guess that it felt more like I have a choice in this experience..."

Vardi's reaction to the textless interface confirmed our assumptions regarding the nature of space-perception online and our understanding that such perception could be related to the parallel display of virtual-objects and their position in relation to one another within a dynamic interface design. This interface was developed as an alternative the commonly used curatorial methodology applied to 'art spaces' online - that of creating a representation of a gallery or a 'white-cube' as a contextual framework for artworks. We contended that the illusion of a three dimensional space is not an efficient model for corresponding with the meaning of spatial organization in curatorial practice. We felt a need in developing further understanding of 'space' in the 'flat' world of the screen.

VAINS 3D access-application used parallax scrolling to allow the users' movement between elements on screen. Parallax scrolling was used as an alternative to a linear perception of virtual space, conditioned by the standard design of webpages online; in this regard, content is normally made accessible in scrolling up and down, creating a hierarchical model accustomed mainly to traditional text. However, we felt that this model does not correlate with notions of 'cybertext' or ergodic literature, which we felt are fundamental to online artworks and curating. The ability to roam freely around different axes within the 3D interface of the VAINS system allowed users to participate in the construction of the space at hand (and hence, also the construction of their own narrative and their own meaning) as they chose their own path in arranging the content presented. This flexibility seems to have attuned them to a different type of attention (divided - between the object as a singular entity, and its relationship to the rest of the virtual space) and a different perception of space/time (non-linear).

This suggests a curatorial premise embedded in the inter-relational contextualization of elements in the virtual space that is present on the level of interface-design and its code. The application of user-generated data as a means of re-arranging the space and constructing the possible verbal and emotional reactions to the artworks is a further extension of these same concepts.

to an alternative realm of exploration, is in its ability to create the platform upon which relative “slowness” is produced, so that the viewer is able to prolong, to ponder to think. If this is a challenge in a gallery or a museum where the physical space and the cultural context already implies a different behavior, it is surely a challenge in an online environment, where there is no physical or actual separation between the “high street” and the “museum”.

The challenge is reinforced as VAINS aims to present the works in relation to their original context, which is exactly the high street of information streams that the internet is. So how can we allow this kind of “slow motion” in the online context where the direct relation to a social behavioral code that applies a museum or a gallery doesn’t work? Although part of the fast rhythm of the internet, we still believe that a curatorial platform should present an opportunity for a careful reading of an art work rather than a hovering through it.

N.A.N TOOL- A DESCRIPTION

Before providing the theoretical background and the experiment that we have done with the NAN tool, I would like to enclose here a short description of the system, to provide the reader with a context for reading the paragraphs that will follow.

The Neural Art Navigator is a physical computation system that deploys EEG



Figure 6 - a user engaging with the VAINS NAN tool

(electroencephalography) to sense the electronic brainwave frequencies of individuals while they are visiting online art sites. The EEG device had been incorporated into a headset which reads the user’s brainwaves in real time, allowing an average reading of the underlining ‘mood’ or tension level of the user that wears it.

The system analyses the patterns of electroencephalographic signals and matches them to suitable art works based on a collaborative filtering algorithm developed over the last two years. This forms a complex recommendation tool, which pretends to match artworks to what viewers may read as their mood or general underlining feeling or sense of being.

The information gathered by the NAN tool is displayed on the same monitor as the artwork presented, and the user can refer to the way in which the artwork changes the wave length that are produced in her/his brain. The wave lengths are interpreted into a colorful graph: each column's height represents the prominence of a certain wave length on the computer screen.

The system automatically recalibrates after a few minutes of interaction, and automatically suggests a new artwork, in relation to the new state of mind that has been created. The user can skip any artwork by pressing a forward button. This button again recalibrates the system, and offers a new artwork in relation to the user's EEG readings.

The Neural Navigator designed was informed by an enactive and situated methodology that positions actions, and the user's agency within her/his own perceptual realm at the centre of its task. Naturally, this approach is less interested in an a priori objective reality and therefore the system is meant to encourage different levels of engaging subjectivity within the browsing procedure.

Since the system is interested in embodied, situated and enactive methodologies, it favours a fluid and an ever-changing set of navigational pathways. The EEG based system seem to assist us in creating a loosely enactive model for engagement, since it configures itself uniquely to each individual, first observing the flow of their brainwave activity in order to calibrate the system, then allowing for a period of further observation before forwarding users to artworks that have been curated with consideration of the putative 'states of mind' that might correlate to alpha, beta and gamma waves (etc).

N.A.N TOOL ATTENTION AND HCI

The fourth chapter of this research provides further analysis that rests on neuro-scientific evidence that imply the relationship between subjective temporal perception, spatial perception, motoric activity and the construction of memory. The idea of divided attention being a preliminary condition for the extension of subjective time perception and its relationship with the ability to maintain longer attention spans, had been further confirmed in our research into human-computer interaction within attempts in digital interface design. More specifically, research into this area allowed us to further understand the tools we have initially developed for visual and visceral navigation through content online.

In this sense we have found recent Neurological studies into attention divide a resourceful tool in understanding some of the aspects of introducing immersive systems for art viewing. In the comprehensive preface to the subject in the book *Human Attention in Digital Environments*,



Figure 7 - Phaedra Shanbaum, new media curator, art-writer and researcher, interviewing after engaging with several tool sin the VAINS system.

"I have worked with these kinds of artworks before so I am familiar with the content of the CFAC ... I did feel this renewed affective connection to the artworks ... which allowed me to stay with them ... the physical presence of the technological tools (referring to the EEG headgear) did not affect me as much ... I am accustomed to wearing technology and experimenting with new, clunky and uncomfortable bits attached to my body ... I can imagine it to be different in the case of users that are introduced to such equipment for the first time ... there is a playful element here that certainly changes my approach to the artwork..."

Shanbaum's response to the system acknowledged two main conclusions which reflect and corresponds with further user reactions recorded. The first, supported by 82% of our case-studies, is that the system encouraged them to think about their subjectivities: their emotional and mental states, their opinions and their thoughts, while using the NAN tool.

One comment which seem to be central to this enquiry could be generally phrased as: *"I wonder why the system chose this specific artwork for me at this specific moment?"* Users felt that there is a specific and subjective relationship to the artwork which, in Shanbaum's word, translates to the notion of affect. In their subjective perception, users felt that the works are more interesting and engaging and that they had more internal space/time to stay with them for what they perceived as longer periods of time.

Based on this affective relationship, many users (approximately 45%) came back to us with questions about the curatorial procedure and were interested in understanding how the system chooses what works to match to each set of 'moods' read by the EEG headgear. This highlights an extended curiosity, not only towards the artworks themselves, but a curiosity about the system in use and the curatorial operations that stipulate the engagement with it. Worthy to note here, that these conclusions were reached through a comparison of users' reaction to the artwork within and without the VAINS system: when users engaged with the works using a standard web browser, such questions were not brought to the surface by any of the users.

The second conclusion in Shanbaum's testimony is the role of interactivity and playfulness in creating affective design and navigation tools. This relates to access applications developed for the VAINS systems which require the user to engage competitively with technology in order to access content (the 'pong' application requires users to win a pong match and the 'frustrator' application requires users to 'catch' a link rapidly bouncing on the screen). The competitive nature of those games and the juxtaposition of the user against the technology used highlights the relationship between 'body' and 'technology' and a brings forth questions on notions of control/lack of control facing technology.

Claudia Rauda explains *“Multi tasking involves switching from one task to another... the switch itself may generate interference (in attention) [...] (Attention) Capacity Theories argue that a limited pool of cognitive resources is available... Other theorists argue for a multiple resources theory, by which different cognitive and perceptual processes are supported by different sets of resources and therefore performance under divided attention varies depending on whether the targets required the same resources or not... The visual channels dimension predicts that focal vision requires a different set of resources than ambient vision. Finally, the processing codes dimension predicts that analogue/spatial processes use a different set of resources than categorical/symbolic (e.g linguistic) processes”.* (Roda, 2011, pp. 19-20)”

From this perspective it seems that the mixture of language based and visual based content can interfere with the ability to maintain attention on one form of content or the other, in other words, a full immersive visual experience can be interfered by linguistic content. Therefore we are interested in experimenting and testing systems that offer text-less navigation through visual content as a tool that might successfully introduce a different experience of the visual online.

The Neural Art Navigation tool had requested to use divided attention in another, resourceful way which provides the viewer a space for self-reflexivity when engaging with the VAINS system. Besides the curiosity which is embedded in the use of a device that can supposedly ‘read’ your mood and your brain activity, the relationship between users and their technologies are further exposed, and form part of the context within which the artwork is embedded.

USER EVALUATION WITH THE NEURAL ART NAVIGATION TOOL

After setting up the system, we have set to empirically test our assumptions in relation to the value of divided attention and the possibility of engaging users in self-reflexive contemplation.

The experiment included 25 volunteers, who had tested the system in 3 different dates. The volunteers were requested to observe artworks from the CFAC using the NAN tool, and answer a questionnaire which touched upon different topics. The questionnaire was filled twice, once before the interaction with the NAN tool and once after the interaction with the NAN tool.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 set of questions. The first set of questions referred to one's own mood and general state of mind; the second set of questions referred to one's expectations from the experiment and from using the NAN tool; the third set of questions referred to one's subjective impression of her/his interaction with the artworks presented, and the fourth part consisted of 3 open questions which provoked the users to share more about their experience, their feelings and the way the system had or had not affected their state of mind; their understanding of the technologies that the use and any further comments which they were interested in sharing.

Users' reactions were also observed by Dr. Dare and myself, and recorded while the users were experiencing a seemingly sub-symbolic, autonomic process of interaction with online artworks. We set to examine whether the neural navigation tool could provide with different viewing and browsing experiences, and to seek evidence that the experience the users have testified, correspond with our understanding of an embodied and situated experience. Furthermore we were interested in examining the influence of the embodied experience on the artworks could in some way change the relationship between the viewer and the artworks displayed.

The results have been accumulated and analysed after the experiment had taken place, and the results have underlined the efficiency of the N.A.N tool. the vase majority of the participants in this

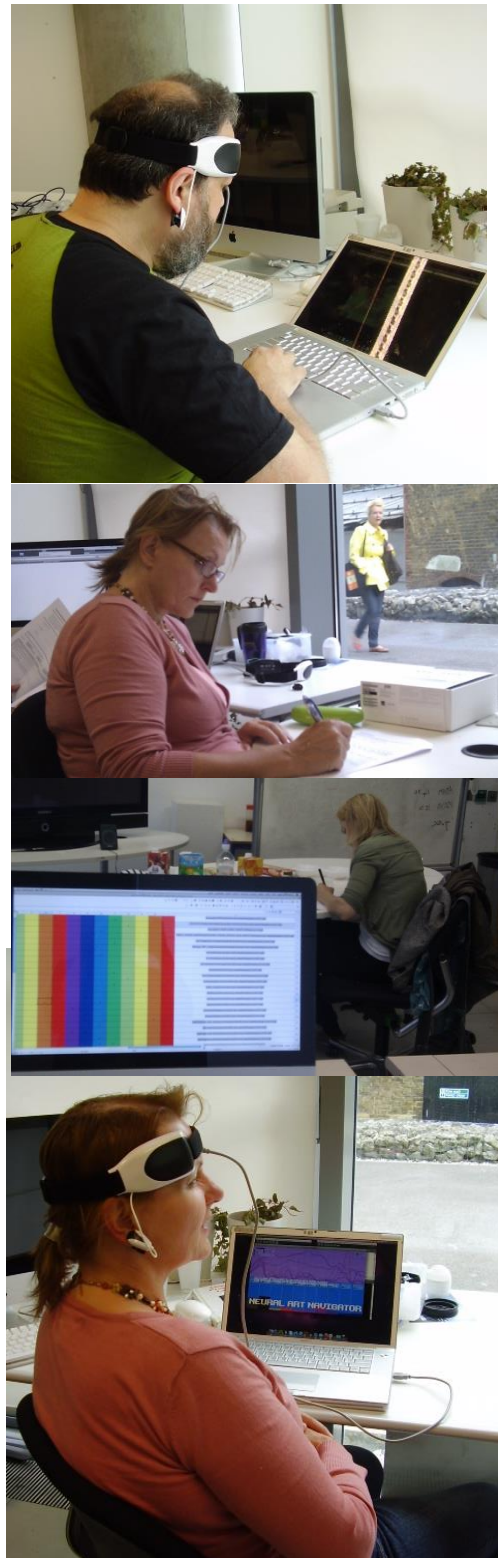


Figure 8 - Users engaging with VAINS NAN tool, s part of a series of experimentations conducted in the Goldsmiths Media Lab Studios. The screen in the fourth image shows the data accumulated on the artworks in relation to the colour assigned to each of the wave lengths detected by the EEG.

experiment had reported in an increase level of self-awareness and self-reflective thoughts. Awareness to bodily posture and sensual inputs other than visual while navigating the system has also increased. These two conclusions enabled us to confirm the embodied experience of the users' interaction with the system, and also revealed to us the possible gap within which the user's agency had come to play, within these moments of self-reflexivity.

With regards to expanding and stretching time perception and attention span, most viewers have noted that what enabled them to prolong their attention in their encounter with artworks was the visual representation of the neural

navigation tool, which allowed them to see how their states of mind change with each encounter. This seem to have confirmed the assumptions I have laid in the fourth chapter, that a division of attention between self and object through the inclusion of a third focal point which reflects the user back to her/himself, indeed increases the chances of a meaningful encounter with artworks in digital and online environments.

Another interesting and surprising conclusion we have inevitably reached, rose from the open questions section of the questionnaire, where our volunteers were generous enough to share with us the type of self-reflective thoughts they have encountered during the



Figure 9- Elinor Carmi, writer, researcher and blogger, PHD candidate in the Media and Communications Department at Goldsmiths, University of London, engaging with the NAN tool.

"I am not very interested in art as such ... definitely the system made it more engaging for me, more interesting ... there was this aspect of curiosity and anticipation ... but I am reluctant of the system's ability to read my emotions ... I would like the system to tell me more about what it reads and how it reads my emotions so I can better understand it myself.. "

Carmi's response demonstrates how the system, by presenting a seemingly inter-subjective relationship to the user, encourages agency, criticality and self-reflexivity. The system here is revealed not only as a means of accessing the artworks themselves but as a means of engaging with the users' state of mind and the relationship that is assumed between the user and the technologies she/he uses beyond the accepted dichotomies of object/subject relationships.

Generally speaking, the questionnaires revealed a tendency for this type of self-reflexivity as the users became more aware of their states of mind, emotional condition and bodily posture when using the system. Many of the users enquired the system's 'reading' of their emotions and were critical of the interpretation the system offered to their subjective experience. At the same time, many users demonstrated curiosity towards the contradictions between their perception of themselves and the system's 'perception' of them. Users testified in their questionnaires to have become more curious about how the system functions and the implications of its use on their perception of the artwork and the perception of themselves as subjects.

experiment. Many have reported to consider the relationship between the NAN tool and their agency; they raised notion of control and arbitrariness, and were preoccupied with understanding their role as conscious being in affecting the system and its operation.

Furthermore, many of the participants thought about the conditions of curating with such a system, and the relationships that have been stipulated between artworks and their respective wave length or 'mood'. Volunteers seem to ask themselves whether the pre-determined interpretation given to those artworks set in accordance with what they felt the artwork was about. This reinforces the suggestion, that it is possible, that within alternative multi-sensual means of navigating information, criticality is awakened and alternative readings of the artworks at stake are suggested and reconstructed.

Finally volunteers shared their doubts about the system's ability to actually provide them with accurate information on their supposed state of mind, and they seem to have come out of the experiment with more questions about the technologies they use and take for granted. This had confirmed that indeed and embodied and enactive interaction allows a certain criticality when it comes to using and exploiting technological tools.

We found these conclusions to be significant in our hope to achieve an unpredictable system of discovering content online, but even more importantly; the system seems to have enhanced a liminal state of interaction, where users find themselves on the threshold between control and helplessness; immersion in content and self-awareness. It is our conclusion that this liminal state is meaningful to questioning pre-determined and hierarchical relationships between subject and object.

VAINS STRUCTURE

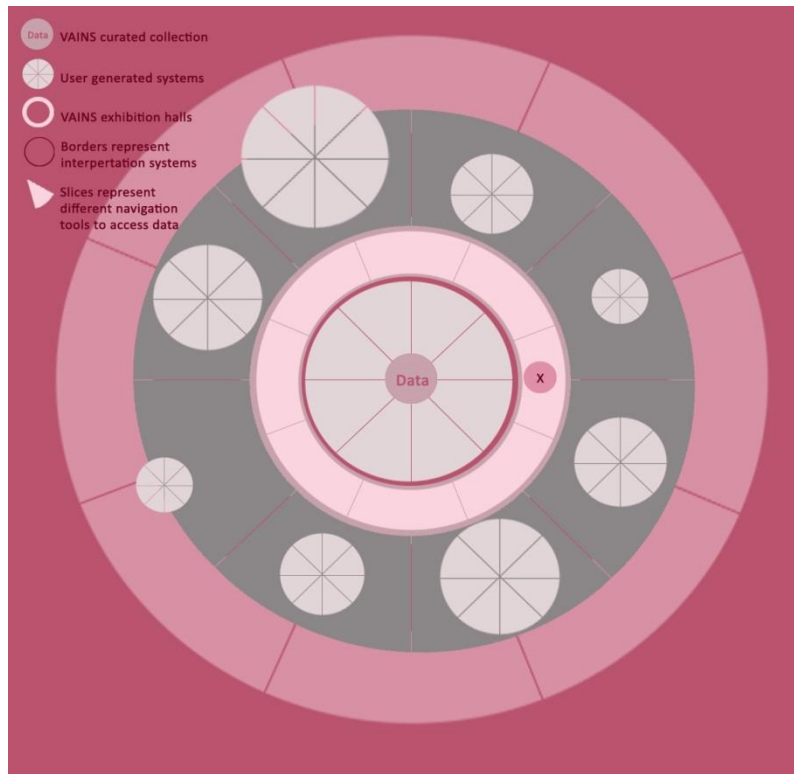


Figure 10 – Diagram representing VAINS structure

To answer these different criteria, VAINS is developing a structural basis which describes in the diagram on the left.

The diagram represents the type of areas that the site is constructed to have in its final manifestation. At the core of the website is its archive or collection, which as explained above will be further extended to include an

increasing number of artworks. Works selected for the database will be collected on the basis of two main premises: the first is that subjective curatorial choice is a meaningful way of offering an interesting selection of works which are believed to have significance in the history of their field. The second is that within online systems, subjective judgment is meaningful within a voting procedure and that the canonized works are not necessarily those that have been curated, but those that gain momentum within a certain community of users.

Therefore selection processes include both curatorial choices and exhibitions, but also accumulates data on the number of 'votes' works that have been uploaded to the outer circles of the user generated content area receive. At the same time, we are looking to create a pluralist platform for curatorial choice suggested by a variety of professionals in the field. Such choices are published and discussed within the community which will use VAINS interface.

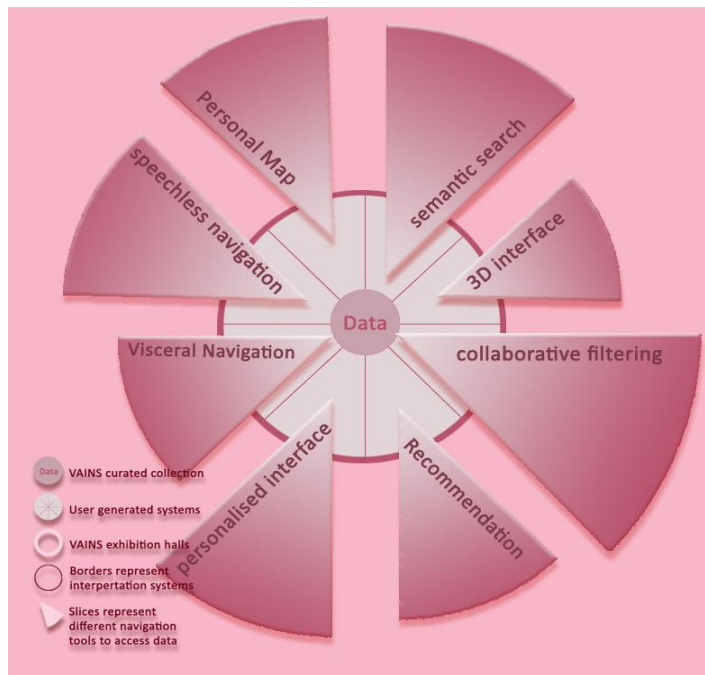


Figure 11 – Diagram representing VAINS navigational tools

Content within the database will be accessible through a variety of search tools, setting up the contexts in which works are read, discussed and interpreted. The outer circle of data-access tools is represented in the diagram on the left.

The core database is a central point of interest for VAINS, however the difference between VAINS and other curatorial archives online is

the way in which the user engages with artworks. The context is therefore constructed through the user’s choice of filters and the variety of ‘search alleys’ that are offered by the system.

VAINS offers many ways of accessing the database. Each “alley” or “path” within the system creates a different context, a different filter through which the artwork is interpreted. In this way, one artwork, may be approached through different contexts, and subsequently, different interpretations arise in relation to its position within the journey the user takes in accessing it. What is suggested through such a system is that every user of becomes aware of the context provided and similar to audiences roaming through an exhibition hall, a suggested narrative or logic is constructed by the user’s joueny.

VAINS AND THE ICOM CODE OF ETHICS FOR MUSEUMS

The website itself includes 4 departments, or sections, which correspond with what seems to be the curatorial responsibility in taking care of a collection. The ICOM code of ethics for museums is used as a guideline to what the website contains. In the following section, each of the core sections of VAINS, is analysed in correspondence with the core principles of the ICOM code of ethics:

1) **The database** corresponds with the idea of a collection, and seeks to answer the first preliminary requirement of the ICOM Code of ethics *Museums preserve, interpret and promote the natural and cultural inheritance of humanity* The curatorial procedures that are offered as part of the collecting mechanisms of VAINS, correspond with our interpretation of the second and the third principles of the ICOM: *Museums*

Name	Last modified	Size	Description
Parent Directory			
01_Abrams/	24-Jul-2010 15:06	-	
01_Osg/	19-Jun-2007 03:15	-	
KSJ/	25-Nov-2006 10:04	-	
MRA/	05-Jul-2007 09:38	-	
RSS/	25-Nov-2006 11:07	-	
YOUNG HAE CHANG HEAV...>	25-Nov-2006 11:55	-	
Abrahams/	25-Nov-2006 08:37	-	
Ahn/	25-Nov-2006 08:38	-	
Amesha/	25-Nov-2006 08:38	-	
Andrews/	05-Jun-2007 16:34	-	
Biggs/	25-Nov-2006 08:43	-	
Bookchin/	05-Jun-2007 16:34	-	
Boredomresearch/	27-Jul-2007 02:16	-	
Bravo/	25-Nov-2006 08:43	-	
Brown/	25-Nov-2006 08:43	-	
Brooker_cohen/	05-Jun-2007 16:34	-	
Bunting/	25-Nov-2006 08:52	-	
Burton/	25-Nov-2006 09:08	-	
Cahan/	25-Nov-2006 09:09	-	
Campbell/	06-Jun-2007 06:14	-	
Chaconsky/	25-Nov-2006 09:12	-	
Cheney/	25-Nov-2006 09:28	-	
Clausz/	25-Nov-2006 09:28	-	
Cloninger/	25-Nov-2006 09:40	-	
Covarrub/	25-Nov-2006 09:41	-	
Daqqett/	25-Nov-2006 09:41	-	
Deck/	12-Sep-2007 12:29	-	
DeMott/	25-Nov-2006 09:44	-	

Figure 12- a screenshot of the Computer Fine Art Collection archive

that maintain collections hold them in trust for the benefit of society and its development and Museums hold primary evidence for establishing and furthering knowledge. Our belief is that the ability to further knowledge within online platforms is intimately related to mechanisms of direct voting and collaborative filtering that are the prominent ‘curatorial’ methodologies within online content selection. The ability to vote allows an influence on what type of knowledge is forwarded and kept.

2) **The Social Network**

Attached to the website, is user-generated area, which corresponds with how we interpret the third and the sixth principles of the ICOM code of Ethics: *Museums work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serve and Museums hold primary evidence for establishing and furthering knowledge.* Within the online culture, user generated content, rather than hierarchical constructs of taste and judgement is a testimony of the cultural heritage that the World Wide Web offers. It is a unique space because it creates a form of equality, or at least an illusion of equality, which stipulates that everyone, everywhere can express themselves freely. Most of the accessing procedures of discovering content online are achieved today, either by collaborative filtering and recommendation algorithms and/or through social networks. The VAINS social network aims to create a platform within which individual can promote their content, discuss, vote, share and provide further links and further information on their own artistic practice. This is a means of further collecting primary evidence for establishing and furthering knowledge, as well as a means of working in close collaboration with the communities which VAINS represents and serves.

3) **The Navigational Tools and the Exhibition Halls:**

Internet users today, not only generate content, but they also generate hierarchical organization of content according to the majority's preferences. Although this might be seen at first as a possible democratization of culture, it actually holds the danger of marginalizing and ignoring minorities, and risks a generalization, simplification, and stratification of culture. With this in mind VAINS navigation system provides diverse ways of accessing content on the website raising awareness to the path through which one retrieves knowledge as the contextual framework of its interpretation.

VAINS navigation system would like to enable a multiplicity of interpretation through a multiplicity of "paths" or "corridors" through which an art work can be approached. The navigation system includes standard (semantic) modes of searching through content, but it also offers alternative navigation, recommendation and discovery tools. Some of these different "Corridors" or "Paths" will be

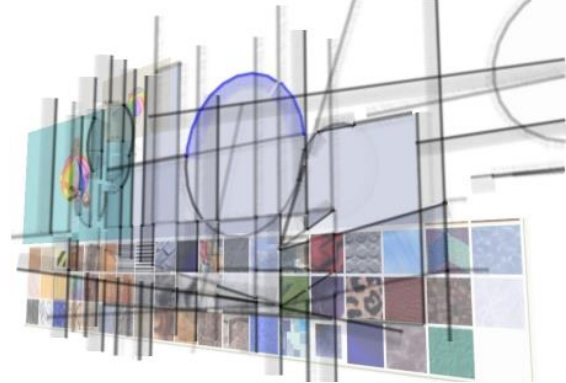
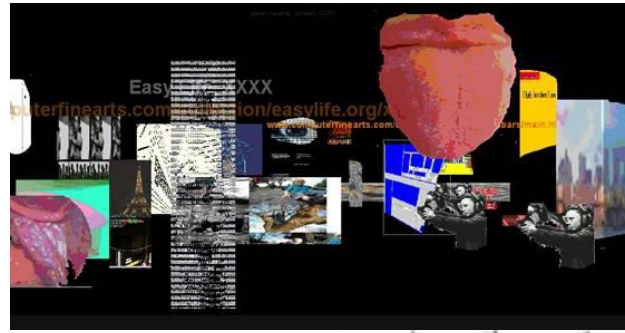


Figure 13- Suggested Exhibition Halls, Top two images are halls curated by Dr Eleanor Dare. the bottom exhibition hall was curated by Lee Weinberg

approached in the second section of this case-study, dedicated to the description of the tools developed for VAINS.

As it has been explained above, we see navigation tools as an alternative to exhibition halls in the online context. At the same time, VAINS hosts a number of curated events which allows a portion of the collection to be periodically exposed to users, providing a platform similar to that of the museum changing exhibition programme. We believe that those principles correspond with the first,

the third and the fourth principles of the ICOM. As the first and the third principles had already been presented before, I will put the focus of this explanation on the fourth principle: ***Museums provide opportunities for the appreciation, understanding and management of the natural and cultural heritage.***

The exhibition halls and the navigation tools allow the user to put the works she/he encounters within a meaningful context which aims to allow the conditions for reading and interpretation, both from a subjective perspective, but also from a traditional curatorial perspective, as a necessary means of evoking thought and discussion.

The suggested exhibition halls presented above, are attempts in reconstructing the idea of Euclidian Space and the way this can be interpreted with the interactivity of the technological tools that are offered online. Each of those displays is a live- parallel display mechanism (that is - all artworks in the grid are operating simultaneously). The user can navigate through those virtual spaces, and each time the cursor gets closer or hovers above a window, she/he has an option to delve into the selected work. The parallel display is a means of creating a Gestalt notion of the exhibition space, as it opens up in front of the viewer's eyes. It also aims at re-thinking possible ways of avoiding a linear interaction with time and space. In this sense the exhibition halls intend to provide a form of soft architecture which is responsive to the viewer's interaction with it. This, we believe, allows the viewer a curatorial authority of her/his own.

VAINS is taking into consideration potentialities of presenting works of art online, as it is proposing a different approach to the dimensionality of the art work. While the first three dimensions: Height, Width and Depth in an online context are not "real" and are perceived as a simulation of reality, movement and time can act as a way to convey a different sense to the navigation through the virtual exhibition space.

4) **The VAINS Research and Education Centre:**

this part of the website is dedicated to apps and tools which explore the nature of the artworks presented providing more and less conventional tools of analysing artworks. These might include iconographic and formal analysis tools, such as the *Rule of Thirds Applets* and *The Abjection Application*¹¹. The research Centre also allows a platform for the development of new and different analysis applications. It provides empirical information on the website's structure, statistics, and a 'naked' archival list of the works presented which exposes the bare skin of the curatorial tools that are offered in the other areas of the website. We believe that this corresponds with most of the

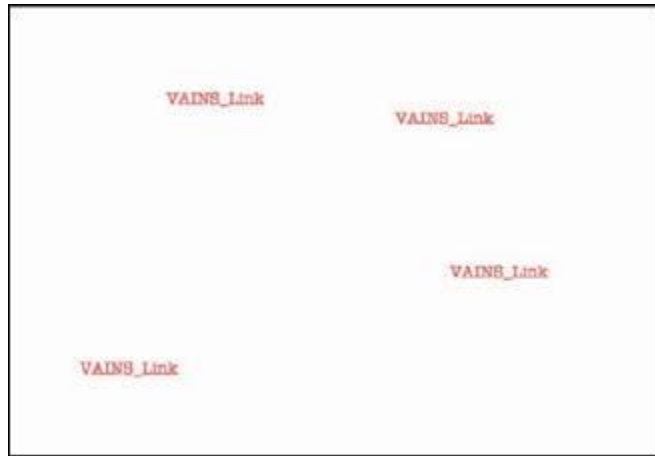


Figure 15- Above VAINS reflex linking interface, visitors are taken to different links according to their physical reaction times to an on-screen stimulus. The prototype system collects reaction times and links them to user preferences so that it may make aesthetic or navigational predictions based on embodied reactions, such as the reflexes of visitors.

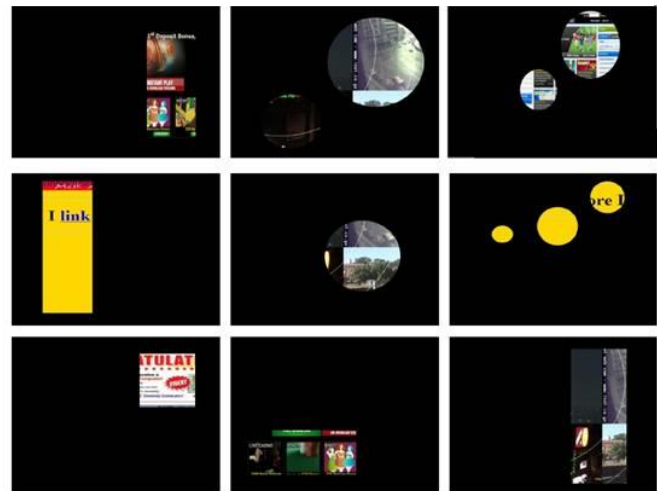


Figure 15 - Above, the rule of thirds applet - reveals compositional conventions in web pages and web based artworks

principles of the ICOM code of ethics, however it more specifically relates to the fourth principle mentioned above, and the fifth principle: ***Museums hold resources that provide opportunities for other public services and benefits.*** The research centre, indeed works as a lab, a platform for experimenting with technology as well as a resource of information that is not necessarily related specifically to viewing art and could be shared to provide a wider array of services online.

¹¹ Both tools can be accessed in the VAINS Concept website at: <http://vains-pro.wix.com/vains#!comercial>

VAINS ENACTIVISM, EMBODIED AND SITUATED COGNITION

Historically speaking, computation and more generally speaking, technology, has been perceived as a disembodied structures. This means that they are perceived as aliens in relations to subjectivity. This ambiguous relationship with machines and technology is accounted for in various science fiction literary works, and these have been analysed and looked at from various perspective within new media discourses. (Hayles, 2001, Heim, 2001 and Suchman, 2007). Computers, more specifically, are considered an epitomization of objective response, managed by a top-down hierarchy, while information is normally seen as a flow of independent matter that flows through them. (Hayles, 2001 and Suchman, 2007)

Embodied and Situated cognition, as well as enactivist theories, complicate the relationship between the subjects and her/his environment, considering a reciprocal exchange that is embedded in notions of perception. (Nöe, 2004 and Maturana & Varela, 1992). These theories place perception at the centre of the subject's ability to act, and refer to embodied action as the meaningful way in which one constructs ways of negotiating perception, as well as altering it. (Nöe, 2004). This corresponds with the idea of agency which I have introduced in the first chapter of this research, and indeed allows a theoretical backdrop for the way in which VAINS seeks to position itself within current theories of perception and computation.

It was our assumption when we embarked on this experiment, that methodologies suggested by enactivism and situated cognition would allow us to construct alternative ways of performing *the curatorial* within the interaction with digital systems. Part of the experiments are set to indeed explore such relationships and provide evidence to the benefits of such alternative means of interpreting the relationship between subjects and technologies; subjects and themselves, and subjects and art in offering a non-binary and non-hierarchical system of analysing these relationships.

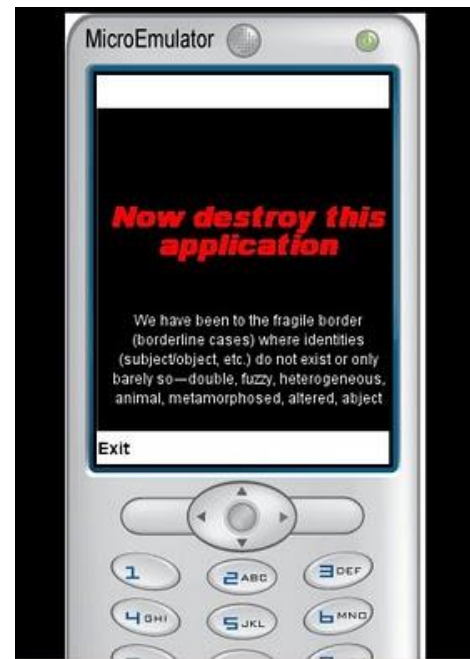


Figure 16- Above, a screen shot from the VAINS mobile application Abjection. This application investigates the direct relationship between body and technology through the bodily residue that users leave on their devices.

The tools developed for VAINS platform are meant, to quote Maturana and Varela, a means of understanding how *'our world, as the world which we bring forth in our coexistence with others, will always have precisely that mixture of regularity and mutability, that combination of solidity and shifting sand, so typical of human experience when we look at it up close'* (Maturana, Varela, 1992:241).

VAINS NAVIGATIONAL TOOLS

THE TEXTLESS ALLEY

Is there such a thing as art beyond representation? Let alone a curatorial practice that places itself beyond the representation of an art work?

Generally speaking, when encountering an art work in any form of conventional artistic platform, be it a gallery, a museum, an art fair, or an art festival, art is conceived, interpreted and referred to through text. The art work can be compared to the trunk of a tree, which is



Figure 17 - an illustration of how an Ivy is occupying a tree, rendering the structure of the tree invisible, as in the metaphor suggested in the text

covered by a fungus of some sort; this type of relationship can be beneficial to both parts, but it might as well become a form of parasite in certain types of relationship. It is not exactly a parasitic relationship, as the fungi normally doesn't kill the tree, it usually has more of a symbiotic relationship with the tree, so that at the same time that it covers the tree, strangles parts of it and prevents its further growth, it also protects it, contours it, defines its place in time – shapes it so it is understood – represented.

It is a symbiotic relationship where not only the viewer benefits comfort from reading the shape of the trunk through the shape created by the fungus, or the ivy, in the image embedded above, but, if we return to the signified of this metaphor, the text also benefits the artist. In the same way the text contextualizes the art work, it also contextualizes, affirms, and gives a space for the artist as subjectivity.

The following section is dedicated to a general review of the core reasons and way of thinking of the TextLess Alley, as well as a description of the tools developed for it and

the experimentation that has been conducted in relation to those. The tools that are going to be analyzed here are:

- 1) The Icon Navigation Tool
- 2) The Textural and Sonar Keyboard
- 3) The N.A.N Tool

CURATORIAL TEXT ONLINE AND ITS MEANING

The curatorial text online, many times, is not a direct interpretation given by a critic or a curator, but is actually, already embedded within the media's grammar. The only way to navigate efficiently through data online at the moment, is through the gatekeeping construct of text and key-words. This also shapes the current economic structure of the web, as companies like Google, are using these keywords as a means of promoting content online. Every company who has a team of online marketing, knows and responds to those keywords as 'must haves' within the content that is created. This potentially restricts the way content is constructed and the type of information that one can access, and is one of the most efficient self-censoring mechanisms that exist.

This impossibility of navigating the web without text, means that even navigating through visual media is first and foremost introduced by text, enclosing the alternative readings that might have occurred should the viewer encounter visual data through an array of alternative routes. Such routes may have the ability to further expand the sensory experience of online browsing and at least provide other means of categorizing data, which do not necessarily correspond to an empirical or rational way of thinking.

We find that there is a direct connection between the critic's text, interpreting and art work, and the primacy of linguistic search mechanisms in online browsing. While we acknowledge the importance of textual interpretation of art works, VAINS as a system of "enabling", would like to suggest that there are other ways of referring to, understanding and encountering art works which can be encouraged through a selective abandonment of semantics. One of the tools VAINS aims to suggest to the future visitor at the website is a way to conceive of art works, not through their semantic, or in Deleuzian terms "Representational" nature, but through resonance and contemplation, similarly to a type of critic that Baudelaire might have imagined when he had written the Salon of 1863.

The text-less area, is intended as a laboratory for thinking of parallel possibilities- a rhizome, if you like, of images, sounds, textures that could correspond with, put aside to

an art work in an attempt to develop a different, and potentially a more complex understanding of it. In this attempt we are aware that these experiments might bring to a resolution of the art work, or to better phrase it, a resolution of the encounter, but we do believe that it encourages an active and creative correspondence that might give rise to a more subjective and personal reading.

In this way the art work does not become fixed to a set of terms which contextualize it or historicize it within a certain curatorial, theoretical or any other framework, but allows the art work to remain in a space of uncertainty – in a space of *the curatorial*.

ICON NAVIGATION TOOL

One of the ways in which the TextLess environment explores the language of online communication systems, is its experimentation with the notion of the icon. This corresponds with a visual tendency in web-design which is based on the use of icons as symbols that comport and carry various meanings. Usually used as trademarks and logos, these enable a faster and

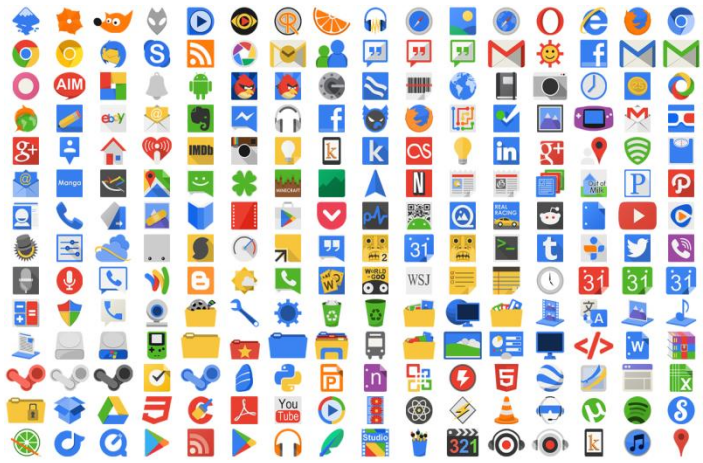


Figure 18- A Random Selection of a group of icons taken from one day of online and mobile navigation

more immediate acceptance of ideas. The logos, or icons contain within them a whole set of socio-economic-political context and in many times correspond with different ideologies and sets of beliefs. In this sense it can be said that a discourse is developing on a new linguistic ground, enriching contemporary culture with symbols which are unnecessarily words, but are still visual manifestations of a semantic field.

In this sense these icons have a lot to do with the traditional use of the word, in art historical contexts. We are interested in both exposing this old/new paradigm, explore it, develop it and the possible meaning it has in terms of being on the border of that which is beyond representation – beyond the symbolic order.

The icon navigation tool engages the viewer in a maze of icons, each of which connects to a particular group of works which have been curated in relation to the icon presented. While the initial categorization is a product of subjective curatorial choice, the viewer has also a means of voting the image as appropriate to the icon by which it was represented, or suggest a new icon to relate to it, finally creating a combination of an original curatorial choice which is gradually over-written by collaborative filtering and user traffic.

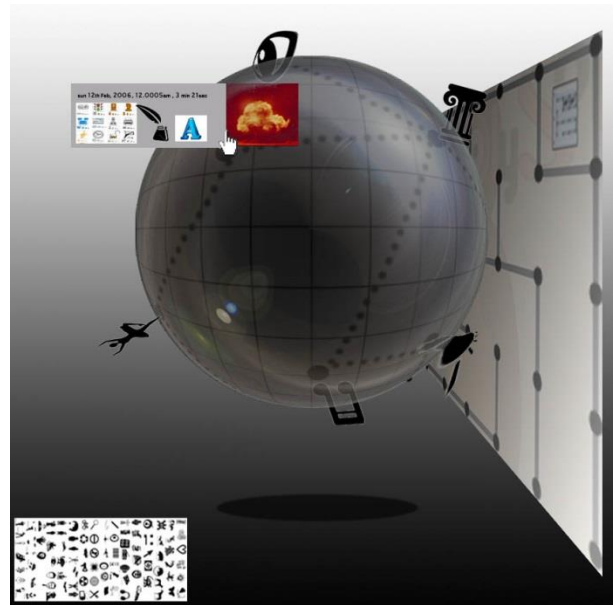


Figure 20- The Icon Navigation Personal User Diary

The navigation through the TextLess alley of the icon navigation tool is done with the help of a specific navigation



Figure 20- The Icon Navigation Ruler

ruler, which is operating in relation to iconographical signs as well. The ruler, depicted in the image on the right, allows the viewer to store and recall his journey within the icon navigational tool. The system collects data on the amount of time the viewer had invested in each of the works presented to her/him, and this data is displayed as part of the diary that records the users motion within the website.

The Textural Keyboard and Sonar Navigation Tool

Similar to the icon navigation tool, we have experimented with other sensual stimuli which might form alternative means of categorizing and understanding the artworks presented. The content's curation followed the same rules of the icon navigation tool, only that instead of a pool of icons, the users were given different textures and different sounds, and were asked to categorize the presented artworks within a sound or a texture category.

Both the icon navigation tool and the textural and sonic keyboard have been experimented with. 10 users were asked to comment and record their selections, and two in-depth interviews were taken with volunteering participants, to understand their experience of changing means of navigation¹².

Participants that engaged with both those navigation tool testified that they have experienced a unique connection with the artwork presented, and the need to categorize them in a 'blind' intuitive fashion, enabled them to prolong their attention of the artwork presented and understand it on levels which are not necessarily rational or intellectual, but have a more emotional character. This enabled them to refer to the artwork from an emotive point of view and provide them with alternative means of thinking about the content that was presented to them.

¹² The data collected from the in-depth interviews can be accessed through the VAINS Concept Website on: <http://vains-pro.wix.com/vains#!comercial>

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