

Space and Illusion

A practical and theoretical investigation into the critical status of
illusion in social space

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Abstract

In this thesis I examine how disorientation, immersion and entertainment have come to characterize our understanding and experience of social space and consider the way representation – traditionally reserved for the visual, literary and aural disciplines of painting and poetry – has developed into ideological and experiential phenomena. However, rather than a single line or logical flow running between contemporary social space and the ideological imperatives of global capital, I argue that differentiated modes of spatial illusion exist in a turbulent and contradictory system of relations.

Consequentially, this thesis explores the critical status of illusion. Taking spaces of retail and leisure as the focus of my inquiry I ask if the highly fabricated structures of shopping and entertainment provide some insight into new developments in global economy. More specifically, the relation between the ‘experiential placemaking’ of urban design and the ‘experience economy’ is analysed through their relation to discordant modes of illusion. Instead of extending the old categories of truth and illusion, I assess the histories, movements and interactions of highly constructed spatialities to ask if we can begin to think more openly and positively about the role of illusion in social space.

It is through my work with video, installation, and projections that I consider the effect of global economy on social space. By editing and projecting geographically distant spaces and activities into a single narrative I analyse the fictional realities that shape our experience of shopping, travel and leisure. Throughout the text the relation between the global and the particular is interpreted as a critical relation between ‘representational’ and ‘transcendental’ spatialities. With this empirical analysis I investigate (i) how well known tropes of illusion – traditionally thought of as ‘mimetic representation’, ‘phantasmagoric effects’ and ‘religious transcendentalism’ – have mutated into a spatial form; (ii) what relation these highly constructed modes of disorientation, immersion and spectacle have on both one another and our relationship with space; and (iii) the potential for thinking and experiencing the production of fictional realities as a critical portal into the otherwise hidden workings of global capital.

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Abbreviations

Where a publication is repeatedly referred to in the text I use the abbreviations listed below. All other references can be found in the footnotes. A full listing of these and other publications is provided in the bibliography.

AP	<i>The Arcades Project</i>
C	<i>Capital</i>
E	<i>The Experience Economy</i>
GI	<i>The German Ideology</i>
JPIW	<i>Jon Jerde International Website</i>
LP	<i>Lenin and Philosophy</i>
LV	<i>Learning from Las Vegas</i>
P	<i>Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie</i>
PM	<i>Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</i>
PI	<i>Profane Illuminations</i>
R	<i>Republic</i>
RC	<i>Reading Capital</i>
SoM	<i>Specters of Marx</i>
S	<i>The Society of the Spectacle</i>
SS	<i>Simulation and Simulacra</i>

Introduction

Summary

The Rainbow Room is situated on the 65th floor of the Rockefeller Building. On entering the room visitors can view New York through the twenty-four large windows.¹ In addition to the window view, the adjoining mirrors - which are inserted into each of the window recesses - both double and reverse the New York skyline. Consequently, window image and reflected mirror image merge into a disjointed and delirious cityscape.² In this space of entertainment and spectacle the Platonic distinctions that divide appearance and reality dissolve into a paradoxical totality. Unlike the anamorphic, extreme perspective or *trompe-l'oeil* wall and ceiling paintings of the past,³ *the context of the site is the content of the image*. In other words, this mode of spatial illusion is not set in opposition to a perceived reality or experienced as a separate sphere of activity. The distorted mirror images that circle the room not only reflect the city outside but speak of the multiplicity of experiential effects that exists throughout urban space. In this site of disorientation and entertainment the relation between space and illusion stands as a direct challenge to the normative but highly constructed systems that determine the way space is comprehended.

The relation between space and illusion forms the general parameters of my thesis. In both my writing and practice I have been concerned with articulating a critical discourse for spaces of retail and leisure, which, like the Rainbow Room, function as a site of social and economic activity. In order to do this I have had to contest a long-standing resistance to illusion and its increasing colonization of social and cultural space. Furthermore, I

¹ *The Story of the Rockefeller Centre* describes how 'Viewing New York through the twenty-four large windows of the Rainbow Room, or watching a floor show in the Rainbow Rooms sparkling splendour, visitors taste the ultimate in twentieth century entertainment' (Brochure, New York: Rockefeller Centre, Inc, 1932).

² In *Delirious New York*, Rem Koolhaas considers the influence of Coney Island on the architectural vernacular of Manhattan. With the entry of the fantasyscape of Coney Island into the business capital of Manhattan, Koolhaas suggests New York exists as a paradoxical site of pragmatism and fantasy. I return to Koolhaas' characterisation of this relation in Chapter Three.

³ Examples of these more traditional approaches to illusion and space include the seventeenth century ceiling paintings of the Jesuit priest Andrea Pozzo. Pozzo's ceiling painting in 'Saint Ignazio' (Rome) - which employs extreme perspective to create an image and effect of the heavens opening up (also discussed in relation to Jerde Partnership International in Chapter 3) and Baldassare Peruzzi's *Sala della Perspective* (Villa Farnesina, Rome).

have argued for a broader methodological approach to thinking illusion and the role it plays in spaces of exchange and recreation. To do this I have taken what might be described as a 'relational' approach to the complex network of illusions that exist in the social spaces of retail, leisure and beyond. That is, I have looked to the interrelation between different modes of spatial illusion (some visible appearances that are designed into space and others which are invisible ideological representations), to consider how we might best engage, socially, culturally and critically, with the constructed effects and immaterial forces that act on the spaces and activities associated with contemporary praxis.

The relation, then, is not one of oppositions - inside/outside, reality/appearance, *etc.* - or one of equivalents. The notion of relation will, first, be closer to thinking about how illusion is never fully visible, that it is always both here and elsewhere. In standing in for something that is elsewhere, in being a supplement or figure for meaning, there is always a relation. However, this relation will not be configured or thought through a vertical axis - where the surface appearance covers over a hidden essence. Instead, I take the relation to exist horizontally allowing for combinations between systems and networks. In this way I will explore the relation between appearances. It is this multiplicity: appearance/illusion/representation - this fusion of appearances in built space - that I will argue involves a critical status.

Throughout the following chapters I take 'illusion' to reflect this complex and dynamic relation. While it is often understood as a counter to the 'real' and the 'true', I treat illusion as a vessel or carrier of meaning that allows us to analyze the physical, ideological and social forces at work in space. In this way the four chapters take up different but interrelated features of this totality and extend my analysis into theories of representation, ideology, religion, economy, architecture and sociology. The chapter headings - Representation, Phantasmagoria, Placemaking and De-transubstantiation - all involve some aspect of illusion yet move in different directions to disrupt the possibility of any overarching categorization. In short, I take illusion to exist as a multiplicity of forces and relations. Furthermore, I take its fluid and expansive nature to move between

the physical and the ideological, between theories of global economy and the experiential effects of retail architecture and urban placemaking. In the final chapter this juxtaposition of scales, positions and spaces is taken as a critical and analytical tool of interpretation.

While 'social space' encompasses a wide range of meanings and interpretations (home, work, community, *etc.*), I use it to describe those spaces that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have associated with profitability, as they argue, 'profit can be generated only through contact, engagement, interchange, and commerce' (E, 190). Social space is the traditional centre for economic exchange and economic exchange involves social interaction.⁴ Given the indivisibility of the social and the economic, I turn to sites of retail, leisure and entertainment as key areas of social activity. In this way I take the relation between illusion and social space to consider the critical possibilities of experiential design in relation to wider global systems. This multiplicity of forces and effects is taken to constitute the social spaces of contemporary praxis.

The movement between local and global networks of exchange and social interaction has also informed my choice of sites. In each chapter I move between specific examples (the Bonaventure Hotel, the Arcades, Selfridges, the Venetian, *etc.*), while at the same time considering the wider ideological and economic forces that determine how those spaces are experienced. Following Jameson's analysis of the Bonaventure Hotel (Chapter One) and Benjamin's account of the Arcades (Chapter 2), I consider how spaces of retail, leisure and entertainment have been represented and theorised through critical texts. In the following chapters I select examples that extend the logic of those spaces to consider; (i) developments in immersive and experiential design; (ii), the relation between space and economy and; (iii) the critical status of illusion in social space. In each case the

⁴ Marcel Mauss' anthropological study of gift giving in different primitive and archaic cultures explores how exchange exists at the centre of social relations. Mauss enters the concept of the total social phenomenon in anthropological theory: the concept of a multidimensional phenomenon which is at the same time economical, juridical, moral, religious and mythological. Mauss' study is taken up by Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard and others, and demonstrates, from an anthropological perspective, the fusion of economic exchange with social networks. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London: Routledge, 1990.

individual site provides a platform for analysis and a direct link to the mutations and developments of global capitalism.

Context and Question

The issue that runs throughout the following chapters involves the question of how we might look beyond a pessimistic fatalism on the one hand, and a utopian idealism on the other. With this problem in mind I consider how the influential theories of Karl Marx, Guy Debord, Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard are bound together by a metaphysical and idealized notion of the 'real'. Consequently, illusion, appearance and representation are always determined through a register that not only divides essence and appearance but privileges the authentic ideal over the mediated copy. When considered in this way – in opposition to the real - illusion is judged according to its failure to resemble a predetermined model and therefore demonised as an immoral and corrupt category of phenomena.

This negative reading of illusion underlies Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*. Drawing on Marx's theory of *Commodity Fetishism*, Debord describes how:

..it is thus the earthbound aspects of life that have become most impenetrable and rarefied. The absolute denial of life in the shape of fallacious paradise, is no longer projected onto the heavens, but finds its place instead within material life itself. The spectacle is hence a technological version of the exiling of human powers in a world beyond. (S, 18)

Like Marx, Debord argues that the transcendental/ideological illusions that were once confined to the space of religious belief, now occupy the field of economic exchange. With the development of new technologies, however, the rarefied commodity has mutated into all areas of lived experience:

Here we have the principle of commodity fetishism, the domination of society by things whose qualities 'are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.' This principle is absolutely fulfilled in the spectacle, where the perceptible world is replaced

by a set of images that are superior to that world yet at the same time impose themselves as eminently perceptible. (S, 26)

With the proliferation of consumer goods and media images, representation has become autonomous. In this world of free floating signs the ideological imperatives of late capitalism work to create a false image of difference. That is, difference is not the product of 'meaningful oppositions', but the result of 'false representations'. Consequently, illusion becomes meaningless, not simply because it is seen to occupy a lower category of meaning, but because we are left with no access to the 'real'. Or as Debord puts it: 'In a world that *really* has been turned on its head, truth is a moment of falsehood' (S, 14).

Postmodern theory has been influential in identifying the disappearance of a category of experience identified with the 'real'. Jean Baudrillard's writings on simulacra are typical of this approach to theorising the 'hyperreality' of contemporary experience. In *Simulacra and Simulation* Baudrillard explains that:

It (hyperreality) is not about a parallel universe, a double universe, or even a possible universe - neither possible or impossible, neither real nor unreal: hyperreal - it is a universe of simulation which is something else altogether. (SS, 125)

If illusion is thought to be the unreal of the real, simulation is an excess of the same. This world of simulation, however, remains inextricably linked to an old world of 'real' and meaningful difference:

It is the real that has become our utopia - but a utopia that is no longer in the realm of the possible, that can only be dreamt of as one would dream of a lost object. (SS, 123)

The opposition between the hyperreal and a (lost) reality follows the same moral logic that distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic. Just as Plato judges the model over the copy, Baudrillard privileges a meaningful past over our present state of simulation. In

place of real change and meaningful difference the hyperreal simulates change to hide the fact that the real has disappeared:

The process will, rather, be the opposite: it will be to put decentred situations, methods of simulation in place to contrive to give them the feeling of the real, of the banal, of lived experience, to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because it has disappeared from our life. (SS, 124)

Baudrillard contrasts a past reality with our current state of mediation and simulation. He emphasizes this divide in order to suggest the disappearance of the real. Any generative or productive relation between differentiated orders of simulation are generalised into a single category (simulacra). With both Debord's critique of the 'spectacle' and Baudrillard's notion of the 'hyperreal', the 'real' comes to possess an idealised and metaphysical status.

In addition to documenting the developments of simulacra and other illusory phenomena, Baudrillard's analysis also offers an important insight into some of the problems and difficulties facing any project that seeks to engage with illusion and space. Not least, the issue of appearing passive and therefore complicit with the very system that culture is expected to resist. Douglas Kellner's detailed and lengthy attacks on Baudrillard illustrate this problem clearly. We are told by Kellner that:

Baudrillard is the latest example of critical writing which criticises everything, but rarely affirms anything of much danger to the status quo. Ultimately Baudrillard is both safe and harmless. A court jester in the society he mocks, he safely simulates criticism, advertises his wares and proceeds to enjoy the follies of the consumer and media society.⁵

Where Baudrillard articulates the demise of all meaningful existence, Kellner looks to the possibility of 'resistance' and 'struggle'; with Baudrillard and Kellner we encounter the extreme ends of fatalism and idealism. We will see, however, how these positions emerge

⁵ Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, Cambridge UK: Policy Press, 1991, p. 216

from the same epistemology; with both fatalism and idealism we find the possibilities for illusion reduced to a category of absence and void.

Space and Illusion

The issue of claiming some criticality for the complex relations between space and illusion begins, then, with a problem of method. In Chapter One I ask how we are to comprehend representation. What type of thinking, and perhaps more generally, what type of activity is appropriate for the task of engaging with the disorientating and spectacular appearances of contemporary social space?

There is little doubt that the ideological representations - that remain hidden but nevertheless determines the way we think and live – operate on a global scale and are all encompassing. As Fredric Jameson puts it:

...this latest mutation in space (postmodern hyperspace) has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual body to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively map its position in a mappable external world. (PM, 44)

We may think of these new developments as ‘the spectacle’, ‘the hyperreal’, ‘postmodernism’ or any other term that attempts to articulate the colonisation of lived experience by ideology. While such an analysis of postmodern subjectivity successfully points to the sublimation of the individual within contemporary space, it fails to consider the more turbulent interferences that operate in the differentiated field of space and illusion.

Turning back to the Rainbow Room we can see that illusion is not experienced as a religious or magical effect that the visitor can easily enter or exit, but rather encountered as an all encompassing phenomenon in which the city outside is as much illusion as the mediated mirror image inside. The fusion of mirror image and window image allows the

city to be experienced as a mediated copy. But this experience of space and illusion does not simply suggest the disappearance of the 'real'; it is not simply a case of fantasy, spectacle and entertainment replacing the space of meaningful social activity. This relation goes to communicate something about the multiple and contradictory modes of phenomena that have come to shape social and cultural space. The effect of doubling and reversing the Manhattan skyline, of interspersing window view with mirror image speaks simultaneously of cohesion and difference. That is, if the Rainbow Room speaks of the fusion of traditional distinctions (Koolhaas), it also, at the same time, articulates the relation between differences. Not only is it a question of the precise nature of the illusions involved, it is a question of their relation. Instead of the true and the false, the Rainbow Room is both a site of illusion and a space of differentiation. This relation of differences does not emerge from a category that either simulates difference (Baudrillard) or forces difference through opposition (Marx/Debord/Kellner). In contrast, *the relation emerges from a larger body of phenomena that generates difference through a series of turbulent and critical interrelations.*

For Alain Badiou, appearance exists in synthesis with being. Instead of 'being in itself', we find that it is a question of 'being there'. That is, appearance and being are always bound to a situation. They are joined by a series of relations.

We need a theory of difference according to appearance, over and above the fact that this difference may be phenomenologically obvious. This is what we will call *transcendental*: the entire apparatus which must be presupposed in order to be able to think difference within appearance.⁶

The relation between space and illusion offers some insight into what Badiou describes as 'difference according to appearance'. As we have seen with the Rainbow Room, it is not simply a case of a fusion of categories. The question now is how we begin to identify a differentiation of modalities. That is, the question of how we look beyond a totalising

⁶ Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, Ray Brassier and Albetto Toscano (eds and trans), London: Continuum, 2004, p. 182.

ideological structure that is taken to stand in opposition to a metaphysical and idealised reality but remains constructed on a ground of metaphysical idealism.

In *non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Marc Auge establishes a distinction between an ‘anthropological place’ that is ‘organically social’ and ‘non-place’ that creates ‘solitary contractuality’.⁷ Auge suggests that, unlike the anthropological place, ‘certain places exist only through the words that evoke them, in this sense they are non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichéd.’⁸ In contrast to this position, I will turn to spaces that rely on contingency and representation to argue that the ‘clichéd’ copy actively changes those sites that are anchored to the ‘places’ associated with an ‘anthropological reality’. Within this exchange, the copy can be seen to (re)inscribe the model. Or, as Jacques Derrida puts it, ‘that which seems to represent, to figure, is also that which opens up the wider space of a discourse on figuration.’⁹ In thinking about the differentiation of appearance I will consider the critical possibilities for space and illusion. In this way I will argue that the relation between space and illusion is not simply reducible to ‘the non-places of supermodernity’, rather than a passive vessel for ideological imperatives, the sites of entertainment and retail will be argued to disrupt the *transcendental apparatus of the ideological*. In this way, I will not be suggesting yet another withdrawal from the ‘real’ - of ‘place/history’ - but considering the fluidity and movement involved in an ongoing series of spatial inscriptions. In short, I will be arguing that the relation between the visible illusions of ‘experiential placemaking’ and the ‘transcendental apparatus of the ideological’ offers a critical insight into the working mechanism of global capitalism.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter One I move from thinking representation as a visual figuration – what I shall term ‘mimetic representation’ - to the later notion of a governing image of social praxis –

⁷ Marc Auge, *non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, John Howe (trans), London: Verso, 1995, p. 95.

⁸ *non-places*, p.95.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans), Chicago: The Harvester Press, 1982, p. 216.

‘ideological representation’. This analysis begins an ongoing consideration of how differentiated modes of illusion have come to occupy social spaces of retail, leisure and entertainment. Crucial to this chapter is an interrogation of the foundational logic, or more specifically, the inscribed Platonism of later theorizations of representation, that continues to generate an anxiety and suspicion around social space.

This analysis forms the underlying critical drive of the following chapters and forces the question: if Plato’s attack on representation remains inscribed within an understanding of contemporary social space, is it now necessary to consider the possibilities of new and advanced modes of representation (simulation, disorientation and hyperreality) with a logic that can comprehend the technological mutation of the imaginary into everyday praxis?

In order to further interrogate this question, I consider how Walter Benjamin expands Marx’s theorization of phantasmagoria into a critique of nineteenth-century consumer space. In Chapter Two I move between Marx’s theory of ‘Commodity Fetishism’ (*Capital*) and Benjamin’s notion of ‘phantasmagoria’ (*the Arcades*). Here I explore the mutation of the commodity into social space and analyse how new modes of illusion have become increasingly associated with urban phenomena. However, instead of demystifying the perceived phantoms of objects and spaces of exchange, I argue that Benjamin, like Marx before him, lends form and meaning to a new category of experience.

My inquiry into both Marx and Benjamin’s reading of phantasmagoria focuses on the changing status of illusion in social space. With these expanded theorisations I identify where illusion is most manifest and how it acts on experience. However, with both Marx and Benjamin we are asked to think of the site of illusion as *living relations between the dead*.¹⁰ Consequently, I ask if Benjamin’s image of the deluded masses, who are ‘observed’ (through the window of history) sleep-walking through shopping arcades,

¹⁰ An image that is played out in the film *Dawn of the Dead* (Dir, George A. Romero, 1978), when zombies congregate within an American shopping mall.

remains a useful figuration for grasping the meaning and status of illusion within social space.

Having questioned the foundational logic inscribed in the dominant critiques of representation in Chapter One, and by establishing the theorisation of illusion in social space through the work of Benjamin in Chapter Two, I turn to more recent examples and critiques of space and illusion. In Chapter Three I include my own experiences of spaces of retail and leisure to consider the mutations, affects and consequences of new modes of spatial illusion. This methodological shift develops the argument from the previous chapters and aims to broaden the scope of my research and elaborate on the key concerns of my practice. It also provides new material for continued critique.

In addition, Chapter Three focuses on the relation between ‘experiential placemaking’¹¹ in urban design and what Joseph Pine has termed ‘the experience economy’.¹² Following Benjamin’s *synchronic relation of phantasmagoric space*, I consider how today’s spaces of retail also encompass the mutations, coexistences and temporalities of a global economic market. However, in contrast to Benjamin, I will be considering these spatialities as they exist in the present.

With an analysis of Venice, Italy and *The Venetian Hotel Casino*, Las Vegas in Chapter Four, I explore the relation between two modes of illusion; or more specifically, I ask how the transcendental mode *transubstantiation*, is made visible by the representational mode *experiential placemaking*. While these illusions operate within the same system they function very differently. Where transubstantiation takes effect without altering the physical appearance of a thing, experiential placemaking moves on the surface and visibly changes the appearance of its location. Where the forces of transubstantiation are essentially ideological and, in part, external to physical space, the structure and mechanism of experiential placemaking is located in the fabric of the spatial event.

¹¹ This term is used by Jon Jerde to describe his approach to urban design.

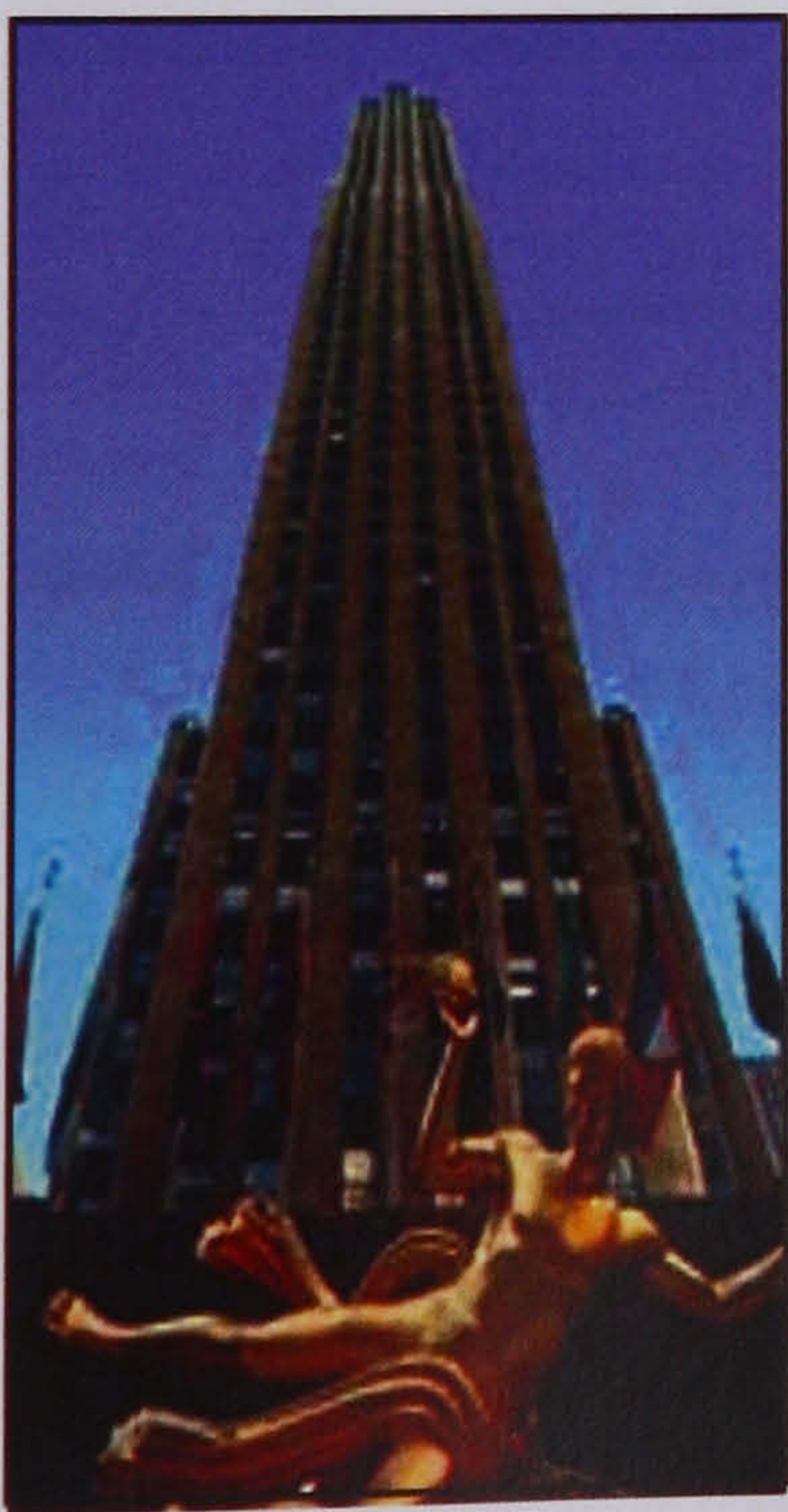
¹² Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore. *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and every Business is a Stage*, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

In this chapter I also focus on the question of how these coexistent modes of spatial illusion reveal themselves in built space. With this in mind, I argue that the highly constructed representations of urban placemaking present an important challenge to the inscribed relation between the original and the copy and, in so doing, perform a certain de-transubstantiation. This final analysis tests the relation between differentiated modes of illusion and produces findings that allow for a consideration of the critical status of illusion and social space. Instead of a single line or logical flow travelling between space and capital, I take my analysis to argue that the highly fabricated experiences that are increasingly produced in social space interrupt and negate larger global systems.

Rainbow Room, New York, 1993



1.1 - The window recesses are clad with mirrors so that the view of the city is equal parts window image and mirror image Manhattan.

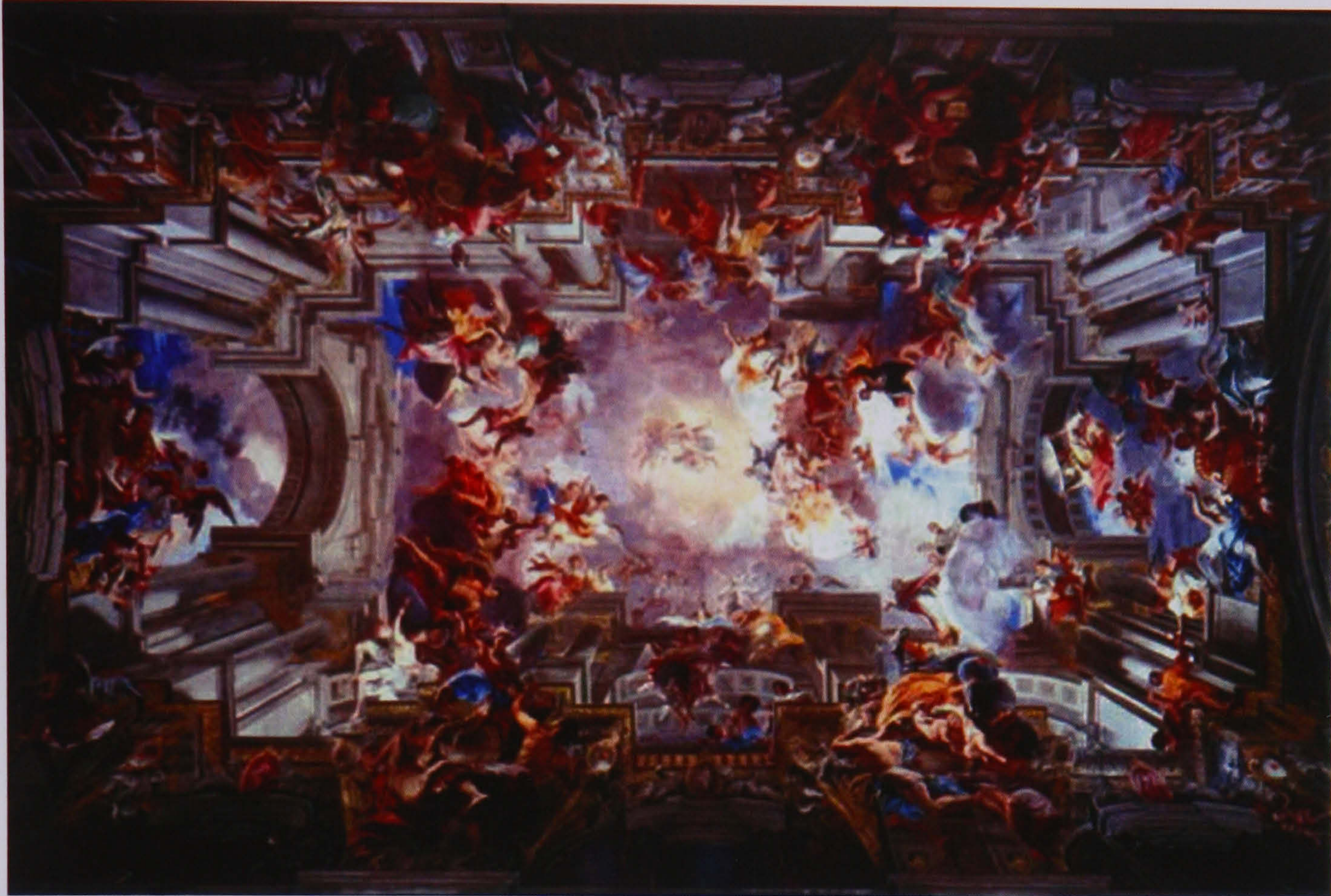


1.2 - The Rockefeller Center.



1.3 - Dining tables are arranged around the circular dance floor that slowly revolves.

Extreme Perspective and Trompe-l'oeil Wall Painting



2.1 - Andrea Pozzo, *Allegory of the Missionary Work of the Jesuit Order* (1691-94), Church of San Ignacio, Rome.



2.2 - Baldassare Peruzzi, *Salla delle Prospettive*, fresco, c.1515, Villa Farnesina, Rome.

Representation

Chapter 1

Thinking Representation

The question of how representation might be thought responds to the challenge it puts to an inscribed Platonism. That is, can we continue to think of representation as a mediating, illusory and even subversive distortion of the real when reality no longer exists in its traditional form? In this chapter I will explore the relation between representation and an assumed notion of reality. I will consider how the traditional division between the origin (reality) and the copy (representation) remains inscribed in cultural, social and political analysis to determine a reading of subjective experience that bears little relation to the practices of contemporary cultural and social space. With this problem in mind I will consider how the traditional divide between *appearance* and *essence* continues to underpin the way cultural and political representation is thought.

The critical focus of this chapter will be directed towards Fredric Jameson's analysis of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel. Having considered Plato's attack on mimetic representations and Marx's critique of ideological representation, I will ask if Jameson's theorisation of postmodern space has fallen victim to the traditional determinations of an inscribed Platonism.

The consequence of this analysis forms the underlying critical drive of the following chapters. That is, if Plato's attack on representation remains inscribed in an understanding of contemporary cultural and social space, is it now necessary to consider the possibilities of new and advanced modes of representation (simulation, disorientation and hyperreality) with a logic that can comprehend the technological mutation of the imaginary into everyday praxis? My investment in this question is not intended as a mere reversal of the old categories of *appearance* and *essence* nor considered as a counter to a 'past history of dichotomous thinking';¹³ the question instead aims to reveal the

¹³ The problem of binary oppositions is a key issue for my thesis. In this chapter I explore how thinking representation has been governed by traditional categories of thought. But as Elizabeth Grosz points out, moving away from 'dichotomous thinking' is no easy task, 'it may in fact prove impossible to definitively rid ourselves of binary-categorizations, given that our language, all of our concepts, and the intellectual frameworks that we use to think them are derived from a past history of dichotomous thinking that we have inherited' (Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside, Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002, p. 30). With regard to thinking representation, I do not intend to merely reverse these categories of thought or, perhaps more predictably, attempt to

determining assumptions that lie behind the critical discourses that inform and shape the debates around contemporary social space. More generally and perhaps more importantly, the question acts as a starting point to considering the turbulent, generative and critical relations that exist between differentiated modes of spatial representation.

replace them with a more complex or contradictory model. My intention for Chapter One is to simply highlight the way that a 'past history of dichotomous thinking' continues to determine how representation is thought philosophically, politically and culturally.

The Bonaventure Hotel (Los Angeles)

Fredric Jameson's well known analysis of John Portman's Westin Bonaventure Hotel focuses on the 'placelessness' of both the building and postmodern space in general. For Jameson, the Bonaventure serves as a representation of a much larger global system. As the title of his book clearly indicates, *Postmodernism or the Cultural logic of late Capitalism*, postmodern space is thought as a cultural representation of new and advanced mode of late capitalism. As I will explore more fully, Jameson argues that the Bonaventure is somehow out to get us. Beneath the spectacular surface of this 'fully-blown postmodern building' lies something more sinister. The question of how we position ourselves in space that has been colonised by mutations in late capitalism lies at the centre of Jameson's analysis. However, as Jameson is fully aware, this involves understanding how we are caught in a network of representations. Although Jameson does not seek to extricate us from representation, the representational mode that he finds most appropriate to our existence (as free thinking subjects) resides somewhere beyond, in an 'as yet unimaginable new mode' (PM, 54).

Jameson's anxiety about postmodern space and the forces at work therein is played out in Wolfgang Petersen's 1993 film, *In the Line of Fire*.¹⁴ Here, the Bonaventure features as the location for the final showdown between the assassin (John Malkovich) and the hero (Clint Eastwood). The problem for Eastwood, who is desperately trying to save the President from assassination, is that Malkovich is a master of disguise - playing out a number of different characters to deceive those around him into believing he is something that he is not. The Bonaventure, with its reflective glass skin, hidden entryways and spectacular interior, becomes a spatial manifestation of the film's deadly trickster. Moreover, the disorientating spaces that are joined by lifts and escalators reinforce the sense of uncertainty that characterises Eastwood's failure to visibly identify the illusive assassin. In the film we are transported through the building so that one moment we are

¹⁴ The Bonaventure Hotel features as a scenic backdrop to a number of Hollywood movies. In Katherine Bigelow's *Strange Days* (1995) and James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), the Bonaventure is similarly associated with disorientation, illusion and alienation. The other film involving political assassination is *Nick of Time*, dir. John Badham, 1995.

in the busy entrance hall and the next in the cocktail lounge looking over LA. With this sense of spatial confusion we become increasingly anxious - not least because the disorientation and bustle of the hotel's interior appears to benefit the assassin. However, in the final showdown there is no escape, trapped in the glass lift, the unmasked assassin is forced to choose imprisonment or death.

The relation between the disguised assassin (*In the Line of Fire*) and Jameson's analysis of the Bonaventure sets the scene for understanding how representation and illusion are thought in postmodern theory. The idea that social space is out to get us, or put differently, that beneath the disguise of everyday praxis lies our fate (as free-thinking subjects) goes to illustrate a more general approach to illusion (that has a long and influential history). Through this chapter I will turn to the key figures that have problematised representation. However, rather than following a linear theoretical narrative, I intend to introduce Jameson at the beginning of this chapter. In this way, we are jumping in at the deep end where we find ourselves 'submerged', 'disorientated' and unable to map our position in relation to a larger framework. For Jameson, this is precisely the problem at stake:

We are submerged in its (postmodern space) henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our new postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiating. (PM, 48)

The question for Jameson is directly connected to the relation between space and illusion; that is, how are we going to play the role of Clint Eastwood and successfully unmask the disguised assassin or, as Jameson puts it:

How are we to begin to grasp our positioning as individuals and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion. (PM, 54)

The problem with Jameson's analysis – and the issue that I will take up through this and the following chapters - concerns the assumption that there exists a figure who will

unmask the false appearances of social space and consequently save us from certain death.

Jameson begins his analysis of the Bonaventure Hotel with the entryways, which do not stand out, but appear as 'lateral and rather backward affairs' (PM, 39). Jameson suggests that the inconspicuous nature of any entrance to the building is imposed 'by some new category of closure which governs the inner space of the hotel' (PM, 40) and argues that John Portman's building aspires to being 'a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city' (PM, 40). This total environment goes to generate what Jameson considers to be a new collective practice or 'hypercrowd'. The ambition of this postmodern space is not to act as a part, but instead to function as a substitute for the city that surrounds it.

The Bonaventure is understood to perform both as space and as spatial representation. That is, Jameson argues that the hotel involves a highly visual and contemplative experience of architecture. The absence of the traditional physical properties of architectural space is considered by Jameson to have been replaced with a representation or sign of those older realities. In this way The Bonaventure 'stands in' as a representation of the rest of the city; it does this through a number of spatial tricks: small entryways, the inclusion of retail premises within the hotel, the mechanical transportation of the visitor by way of escalators and lifts (so that the space is observed rather than physically negotiated), the 'real' atmosphere of a crowd is replaced by a new hypercrowd and, perhaps most importantly, the mirrored glass on the outside of the building which distracts from the physical proportions of the external structure and reflects the city as image.¹⁵ With all these spatial effects Jameson argues that postmodern space 'has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual body to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world' (PM, 44).

¹⁵ The relation between corporate glass towers and mirrors is discussed by Jeff Wall in relation to Dan Graham's project, *Alteration to a Suburban House* (1978). Like Jameson, Wall argues that: 'the combination of disorientating, mirroric invisibility with monumentalism which is rigid, systematic, and empty of satisfying symbols of power and authority, makes the glass tower a disturbing phenomena' (Jeff Wall, *Dan Graham's Kammerspiel*, Toronto: Art Metropole, 1991, p. 42).

In contrast to the buildings of Le Corbusier and the International Style, which claimed a new utopian space of the modern, the Bonaventure Hotel conceals itself within a reflective glass skin that, rather than standing out as a monument of modernity, simply returns a distorted image of the buildings that surround it:

In a similar way, the glass skin achieves a peculiar and placeless dissociation of the Bonaventure from its neighbourhood: it's not even an exterior, inasmuch as when you seek to look at the hotel's outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it. (PM, 43)

The immateriality of this 'placeless' hotel is for Jameson not just a question of a representational image of space; it is also a clear indication of the infiltration of a new multinational capitalism. It is in this way that Jameson thinks postmodernism and late capitalism as a totality: 'everything in the previous discussion suggests that what we have been calling postmodernism is inseparable from, and unthinkable without the hypothesis of some fundamental mutation of the sphere of culture in the world of late capitalism, which includes the momentous modification of its social function' (PM, 48). The Bonaventure is a metonym for late capitalism and, like that larger economic system, the hotel stretches across the globe in one great network. In this space of postmodern architecture, capitalism is not neutralized but reproduced in a concentrated and miniaturized form.¹⁶ For Jameson, the surface representations of the Bonaventure are an outward expression of a larger global network. While this is not a disguise in the traditional sense of the word (*In the Line of Fire*), we find that Jameson's analysis understands architectural space as a representational cover through which the forces of capital assert their control.

Representation is, in this instance, influenced by Louis Althusser's redefinition of the ideological as a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real

¹⁶ George Hartly, *The Abyss of Representation Marxism and the Postmodern Sublime*, London: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 219

conditions of existence' (LP, 162).¹⁷ For both Althusser and Jameson we are always in ideology. In *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist*, Jameson writes:

The narrative apparatus which informs ideological representations is thus not mere 'false consciousness', but an authentic way of grappling with a Real that must always transcend it, a Real into which the subject seeks to insert itself through praxis, all the while, painfully learning the lesson of its own ideological closure and of history's resistance to the fantasy-structures in which it is itself locked.¹⁸

In this new postmodern society one level of representation (culture) can provide some insight into a much larger but otherwise invisible representation (ideology). This synthesis of different modes of spatial representation forms the theoretical basis of Jameson's critique. Postmodern space, with its spectacular forms and disorientating affects, is also the site of global capitalism, or in Jameson's terms, postmodern space is the latest mutation of multinational capitalism into space itself. However, the relationship between these different modes of representation – one cultural and one ideological – has overtaken the ability of the subject to locate itself in space as 'we do not yet possess the equipment to match this new hyperspace' (PM, 44). In this way Jameson believes that the representational networks that exist in space no longer make sense to us. Moreover, it represents 'an alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment' (PM, 44).

The representational reality of this new cultural condition is of some concern to Jameson. Not only do the new products of postmodern space lack the critical distance that is apparently necessary for the subject to 'act and struggle' (PM, 54) there is also an ideological colonizing of cultural space that simply serves the needs of a new and advanced phase of capitalism. Jameson demonstrates his unease with postmodern space

¹⁷ Jameson cites Althusser's reading of ideology (in *Lenin and Philosophy*) as a primary text in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. He writes: 'Althusser's formulation remobilizes an older and henceforth classical Marxian distinction between science and ideology that is not without value for us even today' (PM, 53).

¹⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, p. 13.

with an analysis of the lifts and escalators that dominate the Bonaventure's interior. The way people are transported through the interior stands in for the physical trajectories of the body. Once at the top, the city outside is experienced as an image to contemplate. In addition to separating itself from the surrounding city (in an attempt to somehow replace it), the Bonaventure uses machines as substitutes for the physical movement of the body: 'Here the narrative stroll has been underscored, symbolized, reified, and replaced by the transportation machines which becomes the allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own' (PM, 42). Jameson no longer takes the position of the flaneur but becomes a passenger or 'hyperflaneur' who is guided through space by people carriers. The fact that the visitor is passively transported about the building means that the spatial choices available are no longer determined by the individual but instead controlled by new architectural mechanisms. The movement of the lifts and escalators contains the body in order that the visitor's passage from one space to another can be fixed and determined. This narrative disorients our sense of space and prepares us for a much larger totality.

The excitement and spectacle of the Bonaventure's lifts also feature as the cathartic backdrop to Petersen's thriller, *In the Line of Fire*. In the closing stages of the film the glass lift is both a means of escape and, ultimately, a space of imprisonment.¹⁹ It is precisely this paradoxical status that drives Jameson's analysis of postmodern space: the Bonaventure liberates the body from physically negotiating a passage through the large interior while at the same time determining the way space is navigated. For Jameson, the experience of being elevated to the top of the hotel while looking over the city offers little compensation for what he argues to be the 'ideological colonisation of cultural space' – which confuses and ultimately controls the way that space is experienced.

Jameson suggests that these 'movement machines' account for much of the excitement and spectacle in the hotel interior. The entertainment that the lifts and escalators produce

¹⁹ In *True Lies* (1993), Arnold Schwarzenegger pursues a deadly killer up the glass lifts of the Bonaventure Hotel. On this occasion Schwarzenegger travels up in the lift on a horse while the villain is trying to escape in the lift next door. They reach the top of the building and run across the roof. In this instance the killer escapes, but, like the rest of the film, the scene is highly fictionalised. This sense of disorientation and entrapment is further developed by John Badman in his film, *Nick of Time* (1995).

- which appear to Jameson like 'Japanese lanterns' or 'gondolas' - turn the working mechanism of the building into a site of fantasy. They are seen to offer their own 'dynamic path' which the visitor is required to complete. Yet, for Jameson, the Bonaventure is not to be confused with the fantasy spaces of Disneyland: 'I am anxious that Portman's space not be perceived as something either exceptional or seemingly marginalised and leisure specialised in the order of Disneyland' (PM, 44). Although the Bonaventure is highly scripted Jameson is at pains to explain that it is not obviously fictionalised, constructed or 'exceptional' but something akin to the spaces encountered in daily life. However, as George Hartley has persuasively argued, the Bonaventure cannot be separated from the fictionalised landscape of Disneyland as it enters into a structural relationship with the theme park experience; not only does it compete with scripted entertainment space it completes that narrative by turning it into an extension of urban experience:

The Bonaventure functions as an extension of this futuristic fantasy of American progress while it converts the mapped and directed space of Disneyland into a saturated and disorientating space of the Bonaventure Hotel.²⁰

Rather than being distinct from the scripted spaces of entertainment and leisure we see how the everyday space of the Bonaventure (as Jameson would have it) continues the highly fabricated spatial narratives involved in Disney space. While Jameson is correct in claiming the Bonaventure to be neither 'exceptional' or 'marginalised', we find that the spatial narratives at work in the hotel's interior have a close connection with the highly constructed designs of Disney space. As I will explore, the constructed, fabricated and scripted spaces associated with the effects of entertainment space are increasingly becoming the norm.

Jameson critique is influenced, in part, by a reading of Marcuse's essay: 'The Affirmative Character of Culture', which describes the 'semiautonomy' of the cultural realm.²¹ This

²⁰ George Hartley, *The Abyss of Representation: Marxism and the Postmodern Sublime*, p. 223.

²¹ Herbert Marcuse, 'The Affirmative Character of Culture' (1937), *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, Jeremy J. Shapiro (trans), Boston: Beacon, 1968, pp. 88–133.

'older' reading of culture looks at the way culture throws back a mirror image of the practical world in forms that vary from 'flattering resemblance' to 'critical satire'. Jameson's concern is that cultural representation can no longer achieve any distance from its subject: 'What we must now ask ourselves is whether it is not precisely this semiautonomy of the cultural sphere that has been destroyed by the logic of late capitalism' (PM, 48). Jameson's critique of postmodern spatial disorientation and immersion similarly concerns our lack of critical distance. That is, the disappearance of any distance from the immediate environment is assumed to render the individual powerless. In order to regain control Jameson believes that there needs to be a sphere of experience that possesses some autonomy from the dominant order, a mode of activity that was traditionally thought to reside in the avant-gardism of the cultural realm.

What the burden of our proceeding demonstration suggests is that distance in general (including critical distance in particular) has very precisely been abolished in the new space of postmodernism. We are submerged in a henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our new postmodern bodies are bereft of special coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation. (PM, 48-49)

The problem for Jameson then, is one of spatial immersion. In the new spaces of multinational capitalism we are no longer able to navigate the spaces that we inhabit. This uncertainty is understood by Jameson to negate any possibility of resistance or change. In other words, the 'architecture' of postmodern space is understood to be in disguise, under the surface appearance the Bonaventure supports and extends the ideological forces of late capitalism.

However, Jameson's unmasking of the Bonaventure does not liberate us from the confines of ideological determinations - he does not play the part of Clint Eastwood. Unlike Peterson's film, it is not a question of breaking the illusion and saving the day. Rather than discovering the truth behind the mask we are presented with something closer to an image of a Russian doll. Through Jameson's analysis the many modalities of

representation and space are unpacked and considered. But instead of interrogating their relation Jameson forces a new hierarchy. The task, as Jameson sees it, involves designating and singling out the most appropriate mode of representation. As I will argue later, Jameson's judgment of representational modes returns us to the anti-representational logic which sets the authentic and the true in opposition to the 'false appearances' of everyday life. In this way Jameson's critique of postmodern space reflects many of the concerns that Plato voices in his attack on painting and poetry. For while representation is enjoyable and entertaining, it is understood to pose a threat to what is real and true. Although any possibility of distinguishing reality from representation is now (and perhaps always has been) only imaginable, we find that the judgments which underpin Jameson's critique to be inscribed by a Platonic mode of thought.

Totality

For Jameson, the question of the totality is central to comprehending postmodern space. Hegel's notion of *Vorstellung*, in which 'recognition', 'imagination' and 'memory' are synthesised into a single mode of representation,²² is considered to help us identify the movements, interrelations and complexities involved in the relation between the mind and the world. This Hegelian concept is developed by Jameson – *via* the work of Marx and Althusser – into a theory of postmodern totality. I will explore Jameson's understanding and application of totality later, at this point, however, it is important to comprehend representation in its widest sense. That is, with *Vorstellung*, we see a plurality of representational modes interrelating. However, as Hartley points out, we should be careful when thinking the translation of *Vorstellung* into representation as we find, with the German word *Darstellung*, another form of representation.²³ This brings us to the important difference between presentation (*Darstellung*) and representation

²² Hegel's account of the *Vorstellung* occurs in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Vol III*, 1830. Hegel's *Vorstellung* is translated as 'the immediate stage between intuition (*Anschauung*), the sensory apprehension of individual external objects, and conceptual thought. It involves three main phases, RECOGNITION, IMAGINATION and MEMORY.' Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, Mass: Blackwell, 1992, 257.

²³ 'Darstellung' signifies in German, among other things, 'Theatrical Representation'. *The Abyss of Representation*, p. 94.

(Vortellung):

The question of representation, then, does not apply to the quasi-concept of *Darstellung*. The phrase 'theatrical representation', then, is a misnomer here since the script to be represented or reproduced in the action of drama exists nowhere outside (or in another position behind) the action itself.²⁴

In *Darstellung* there is nothing behind, the narrative is 'presented' to the audience and not represented by them. When thinking about *Vorstellung* it is important to engage with what lies behind the object. In other words, the moment of drawing upon internalised images, of connecting images to what is common to them and of raising them to the universal describes, in brief, the totality that Jameson incorporates into his analysis of space. William Dowling puts this clearly when he writes:

To think the totality is thus to see in a sudden flash of insight that an adequate notion of society includes even the notion of an external universe, that society must always function as a whole that includes all things, the perimeter beyond which nothing else can exist.²⁵

When framing these concepts within spatial terms, Henri Lefebvre's distinction between 'representational space' and 'representations of space' provides some insight into understanding how space is inhabited by a multiplicity of representational modes. Lefebvre describes how:

...the producers of space have always acted in accordance with a representation, while the users passively experienced whatever was imposed upon them inasmuch as it was more or less thoroughly inserted into, or justified by their representational space.²⁶

Lefebvre suggests representational space to be 'directional, situational or relational

²⁴ *The Abyss of Representation*, p. 94

²⁵ William C Dowling, *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: an introduction to the political unconscious*, London: Methuen, 1984, p. 43.

²⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans), Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, p. 43.

because it is essentially quantities, fluid and dynamic.’²⁷ The producers of representations of spaces, on the other hand, interpret and describe space, ‘their intervention occurs by way of construction – in other words, by way of architecture, conceived of not as a building of a particular structure, palace or monument, but rather as a project embedded in a spatial context.’²⁸ If *representational space* is ‘perceived’ social space – the space of inhabitants and users - then *representations of space* are ‘conceived’ - the space of planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers. However, as Lefebvre points out, there is no clear divide between these spatialities as they are an interconnected part of the production of space.

Although mimetic representation and ideological representation can be seen to follow some of the differences and relations that Lefebvre describes, I intend to look to earlier models of thought as a guide to understanding the way the relationship between space and illusion has come to be theorised. Turning first to Plato and then to Marx, I will take up the key objections to mimetic and ideological representation. With Jameson, I will then consider how both Plato’s attack on the arts and Marx’s critique of capital are fused into a representational totality (*Vorstellung*). Moving from Plato to Marx and then back to Jameson, I will argue that, through Marx, Plato’s attack on mimetic representation is inscribed into Jameson’s chosen representational figure: cognitive mapping. The common suspicion of representation - whether mimetic, ideological or both – will be seen to be directly related to the anxiety attached to the blurring of categories and a questioning of the distinctions that separate ‘reality’ and ‘appearance’.

Perhaps more important, however, is the relation between ‘mimetic representation’ (Plato) and ‘ideological representation’ (Marx). With Jameson, we are to think of these representational modalities within a single totality. In postmodern space ideological representation (global capitalism) has come to occupy the way built space appears to perception (the representations of the body by movement machines or the reflection of the city in mirrored glass windows). For Jameson, the Bonaventure is merely a symptom

²⁷ *The Production of Space*, p. 42.

²⁸ *The Production of Space*, p. 42

of a far greater global system, which not only engages 'recollection', 'imagination' and 'memory' (*vorstellung*), it disorients and disempowers those human faculties. In momentarily unravelling differentiated modes of spatial representation (mimetic and ideological), I will be asking if the representations involved in contemporary space are, as Jameson believes, simply a 'logical' mutation of multinational capitalism.

Plato: Mimetic Representation

For Plato, the problem of representation comes into being when it fails to be true to its 'ideal form'. Plato's concern with the arts (representation) is based on their proximity to the 'real original' (by simulating a thing one catches something of the reality; one imitates the thing one is interested in, and one gradually becomes the thing one imitates).²⁹ In *The Republic*, Plato takes 'mimesis' to describe imitation in the arts. As Richard Lewis Nettleship explains, 'the use of the word 'imitation' in this wide sense was familiar to the Greeks, and its import was to put the function of the poet alongside that of other artists. 'Representation' is the best word for mimesis in this sense.'³⁰ Plato's intention is to drive some distinction between 'representation' and 'truth', as the good citizen is always in danger of imitating (in life) the world of appearances (art) and not the world of truth (knowledge).

At the beginning of his *Theory of Art* (book X of the *Republic*) Plato asks: 'Is it (painting) designed to represent the facts of the real world or appearances? Does it represent truth or appearance?' (R, 348). With this rhetorical questioning, Plato deduces that truth and appearance are a considerable distance apart and that the painter is able to make an image of every product there is in the world because his contact with things is 'slight' and restricted to the way things appear.

Consider what a painter does, for instance: we're saying that he doesn't have a clue about

²⁹ The notion that we become the thing that we imitate is explored by Roger Caillois in his study of insect life, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia'. Here Caillois describes how certain stick insects become so adept at mimicking the shape and colour of a leaf that they tragically misrecognise one another as food. John Sheply (trans). *October*, no, 31 (winter 1984), pp. 17-32.

³⁰ Richard Lewis Nettleship, *Lectures on The Republic of Plato*, London: Macmillan, 1951, p. 101.

shoemaking or joinery, but he'll still paint pictures of artisans working at these and all other areas of expertise, and if he's good at painting he might paint a joiner, have people look at it from far away, and deceive them - if they are children or stupid adults - by making it look as though the joiner were real. (R, 148-149)

Plato's concern with the painter is directly linked to the hierarchical opposition between knowledge and perception; that is, Plato argues that the senses can be easily fooled or deceived but reason (measuring and calculations) remains consistent and true whatever the conditions: 'the part of the mind whose views run counter to the measurements must be different from the part whose views fall in with the measurements' (R, 355). The mind, in Plato's view, is divided into higher and lower dimensions. What appeals to the lower part are 'superficial appearances'. The higher part, on the other hand, occupies itself with abstract knowledge (unchanging and immutable truths). Representation, as we have seen with the Bonaventure Hotel, has the capacity to deceive the spectator, the mimetic products of poets and painters pass on a falsehood which goes to corrupt the minds of those ignorant enough to confuse reality with appearance, they fatten up the lower part of the mind and corrupt a true understanding of reality.

The opposition between appearance and reality is discussed by Plato with the example of a stick seen through water: 'the same objects look both bent and straight depending on whether we look at them when they're in water or out of it' (R, 355). With this example Plato suggests that 'our minds obviously contain the potential for every single kind of confusion' (R, 355). The appearances of the perceptual world are seen by Plato to confuse the mind in the same way that the representations of the poet and the painter distort a single understanding of the world. The way things are perceived and the way things are understood through knowledge are again in conflict and because Plato believes that 'it is impossible for a single thing to hold contradictory beliefs at the same time about the same object' (R, 355), there can only be a single understanding about any given thing. Although we perceive the stick to be bent when it is seen through water, we simultaneously know it to be straight. For Plato, the choice is simply between appearance and truth, between the way things appear and the way things are. With this opposition

Plato argues that our knowledge of the straight stick is of a higher value than our perception (which tells us that the stick is bent). For Plato it is a question of repressing the (lower) part of the mind that would have us believe that the stick is bent.

This singularity is also taken to regulate the space of work. As Jacques Ranciere points out: 'he (the mimetician) does two things, whereas the principle of well organised community is that each person only does the one thing that they were destined to by their *nature*.'³¹ This multiplicity of representation disrupts the appointment of space and the allocation of time:

The exclusion of the mimetician, from the Platonic point of view, goes hand in hand with the formation of a community where work is in 'its' place.

The mimetician not only splits things in two but 'brings to light the distribution of occupations that upholds the appointment of domains and activities'.³² For Ranciere, Plato's attack on mimetic representation constitutes a clear understanding of the politics of aesthetics. That is, artists are banished from society precisely because representation disrupts the hierarchies and appointments made by the Republic. Moreover, the problem with the representations of the artists is that they break down the distinction between 'those that think and those that are doomed to material tasks'.³³ For Plato, this problem is understood somewhat differently:

All that I've been saying has been intended to bring us to the point where we can agree that not only does painting - or rather representation in general - produce a product which is far from truth, but it also forms a close, warm affectionate relationship with a part of us which is, in its turn, far from intelligence. And nothing healthy or *authentic* can emerge from this relationship. (R, 356)

Plato explains the problem of representation by making the distinction between three

³¹ Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics, The Distribution of the Sensible*, Gabriel Rockhill (trans), London: Continuum, 2004, p. 42.

³² *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 43

³³ *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 44

types of bed. First, there is the divine model made by God, then there is the copy, faithfully made by the craftsman who specialises in reproducing the products of his labour in the image of the divine original. The third incarnation, and it is with this 'type' that Plato develops his argument against representation, appearance and illusion, is twice removed from the original and is placed at the bottom end of Plato's register. In contrast, God the progenitor and his original bed are at the top and the joiner, the manufacturer of beds is somewhere in the middle. The painter, who is twice removed from the original, is held as lowest producer of beds: 'I think the most suitable thing to call him (the painter) would be a representer of others creations' (R, 348). Plato's account of beds involves a strict hierarchy. With every move away from the original that has been produced by divine craftsmanship the bed becomes further removed from reality and truth:

Whether you look at a bed from the side or straight on or whatever, it is just as much a bed as it ever was, isn't it? I mean, it doesn't actually alter it at all: it just appears to be different, doesn't it? And the same goes for anything else you mention.. So I want you to consider carefully which of these two alternative painting is designed for in any and every instance. Is it designed to represent the facts of the real world or appearances? Does it represent appearance or truth?... It follows that representation and truth are a considerable distance apart, and a representer is capable of making every product there is only because his contact with it is slight and restricted to how they look. (R, 348)

For Plato, the distance between representation and truth is considerable because representation is based upon mere appearance. The way the world appears to perception is no indication of its reality. But there is also a more sinister aspect to representation. Plato believes that the painter and the poet present a threat to a collective understanding of reality. If a painting of a bed is good there arises the potential for confusion; there arises the possible mistaking of appearance for truth. The painting is not only a copy, it is a corrupting copy. For Plato, the problem with representation is that representation not only creates an incomplete and partial image of the world; it passes on a distorted image of everything that it attempts to replicate.

Plato's attack on representation is argued on epistemological grounds. The real can only

be accessed through knowledge, it is in abstract thought that we find truth. It is important to note that representation is not simply of a lower order or value to other categories; representation distorts the truth and plays on the emotions to create an image of being that bears little relation to reality (which in this case is metaphysical).³⁴ Any move away from the given order of knowledge is perceived as a moral transgression. In this way the copy functions as a threat to what is understood to stand as reality and truth because, for Plato, there can only ever be a single or absolute image of truth. To represent the world in verse or in images is therefore a subversive act.

Plato's attack establishes a long-term belief in the corrupt nature of representation. Although Plato's formulation of 'reality' has little currency today, we will see how representation continues to be determined with this same logic. With the work of Marx, we will see how the ideological creates an incomplete and partial image of the world standing as a mediating falsehood and, most importantly, functions as a mode of representation that is far removed from truth.

What, then, does this continued suspicion of representation rest on? As Ranciere points out, the politics that exist between the actors and audiences, between active and passive participants in a community are disrupted through the representation of that very same configuration: 'From Plato's point of view, the stage, which is simultaneously a locus of public activity and the exhibition-space for fantasies, disturbs the clear portioning of identities'.³⁵ The relation between mimetic representation and ideological representation are joined by the political act of multiplication. Like mimetic representation, ideological representation forces a splitting (between the subject and the image that the subject receives). The question of how we engage with this surplus form will be crucial to thinking about the critical potential of representation.

³⁴ Plato is here referring to the tragic poets of his day such as Homer, who were extremely popular with the general public.

³⁵ *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 13.

Marx: Ideological Representation

With Marx, representation, appearance and illusion are seen as a ‘constructed’ force of political repression. This approach to thinking representation marks an important development in the way immaterial phenomena are theorised. In this section I will explore the opposition between what Marx considers to be the material reality of human activity and, on the other hand, the false consciousness of ideology. Most importantly, I will look to the move from thinking representation as a mimetic, visual or perceptual phenomena (Plato) to Marx’s formulation of representation as an ideological construct. In other words, I will widen the frame to consider how representation is understood to condition all areas of social activity.

Although Marx intended his theories to function as a ‘materialist’ critique of what he regarded as the metaphysical idealism of classical philosophy,³⁶ his attack on capitalism continues Plato’s concern with the corrupt distortions of representation. The secularisation of society has, however, witnessed fundamental developments in the way reality is conceived both scientifically and philosophically. From a Materialist or secular point of view, Plato’s notion that the highest category of reality and truth rests with God in an abstract, singular and unique ‘form’ no longer stands as a viable argument. On this basis it might be argued that representation (which has been determined in opposition to Plato’s metaphysical reality) would also require a new theorisation.

The location of Marx's reality may no longer be metaphysical³⁷ (turning instead to the material realities of human action), but the task of searching out a hidden essence still

³⁶ In ‘*The German Ideology*’ Marx and Engels explore the relationship between human thought and human actions. ‘Idealist philosophy’ comes under attack for serving the interests of a ruling ideology, for passing on a set of (ideological) principles, like those of Christianity, which dictate a certain manner of living to the individual. Marx and Engels argue that ‘Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life’ (GI, 48) and that men should not be enslaved by their own minds.

³⁷ Under the subheading: ‘First Premises of Materialist Method’, Marx and Engels write: ‘The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way’ (GI, 42).

remains. Once again we are told that the way things appear is no indication of their real meaning, or in Marx's case, the way things appear under the forces of capitalism is no indication of the human labour that has gone into their making. Marx's belief in the material relation between people and the objects of their labour is positioned in opposition to all that is deemed to exist as a surface appearance (ideology).

For Marx, the real or true meaning of things does not derive from a Platonic idealism (abstract thought), but from a materialism (labour and production). Marx's materialism has nothing to do with physical *matter* but instead belongs to an idea of a 'real life process'. Marx believes that it is human action that transforms society and it is therefore a history of social activity that allows for an insight into the reality of *being*. In other words, Marx questions the primacy of moral, philosophical and religious doctrines to argue that the life of the mind is an epiphenomenon of the conditions of production. When Marx writes about a 'transformative materialist history', he is describing the generative primacy of the labour process in the development of human history. This is placed in direct contrast to the primacy of ideas in abstract philosophical reflection. Marx's conception of the centrality of human praxis in the production and reproduction of social life asserts that new means of production go to reflect the conditions of being, which in philosophy is represented through abstract thought. In short, Marx's materialism looks to the 'relations between men' as a way of expressing an 'idea' of (what constitutes) the real or essential qualities of existence:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are directly producing their actual material life. (GI, 42)

By making tools and specialising in a given activity (labour) Marx believes that men produce a material reality that makes them a 'real' part of the world, or as he puts it, men produce for themselves their 'actual material life'.

In this way, Marx's concept of materialism is abstracted into a history of actions. Although Marx argues that his theories are born from 'the real activity of men', it would appear that those actions are represented through history. In other words, Marx locates the real outside of ideological distortion (of daily experience); the real exists as a sequence of past events that can only return when capitalism is overthrown. The problem for Marx is that the present, which exists under the forces of capitalism, does not offer a real image of social activity; it is rather an ideological construction that alienates men from the products of their own labour.

Alienation is understood by Marx to be the necessary condition for the continuation of the capitalist ideology. When social relations are obscured by a governing doctrine (ideology), the possibility of social change or struggle ceases to exist. This mode of alienation is argued by Marx to involve a degree of misrecognition. With regard to the religious ideology or governing moral doctrines of metaphysical idealism, Marx suggests that men become subjugated by what originated as a product of the human brain (Christianity). In this way alienation occurs through a process of dispossession. That is, intellectual systems and material products that arise from human thought and activity are reflected back to the individual as autonomous forces of subjugation. In *Capital*, Marx argues that when objects of labour are perceived as autonomous objects of value (commodity fetishism), 'men' become alienated by the product of their own hands. Moreover, the material relations that once gave men their identity as social and active beings are negated. In other words, the ability of humans to transform their surroundings to suit their needs has reversed so that they are now transformed to serve the needs of the capitalist ideology. In this way Marx does not consider his contemporary social reality to be altogether real but instead an 'ideological representation' of the real, 'We call communism the real movement that abolishes the present state of things.' (GI, 57)

Marx argues that consciousness must re-establish its relationship with real life-processes. Ideology represents the autonomy of consciousness and it is from this sphere of abstract

thought that an unreal fantastic world has emerged.³⁸ Marx therefore reminds us:

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence... Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. (GI, 47)

Like Plato, Marx positions reality outside the distortions of what is seen and experienced in everyday life. Although Marx is at pains to show how his theories are born out of the world and not from abstract thought, there remains the problem of the ideological distortion of the real. Marx believes that under capitalism everything is experienced as a mediated inversion of real life processes:

Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process: If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life process (GI, 47).

Sarah Kofman has explained the contradictions in which the figure of the *camera obscura* exposes Marx as only showing the derivative status of ideology but not its autonomy. The notion of the world appearing upside down through the lens of ideology 'implies nostalgia for clear, transparent and luminous knowledge.'³⁹ As I will explore further in Chapter Two, Marx's figuring of the *camera obscura* clearly demonstrates his underlying belief in an outside natural light existing beyond the dark chamber of ideological distortion.

For Marx, this inverted world of phantasmic illusion is not a poor imitation of the real original (Plato) but a false appearance that masks the absence of real human activity. In

³⁸ I consider Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophy of religious faith, which similarly asserts the alienating effects of Christianity, in Chapter Two.

³⁹ Sarah Kofman, *Camera obscura de l'ideologie*, Paris: Galilee, 1973, p. 33

this way Marx positions reality, truth and all that is essential to a productive state of being outside that which is subject to ideological distortion (everyday life). The Platonic gap between what we perceive and what we know is again brought into play. Marx's materialism positions the real in the world, but like idealist philosophy, what is truthful, meaningful and real is not available to perception. Whether through painting, poetry or ideology the world is found to be experienced through the inverted distortions of representation. What has been argued to constitute a certain idealism in Marx's theory is, then, the inscribed belief that reality and truth exist outside of representation.

In order to further argue that Marx's theories are idealist, I will first clarify how they express a very different idealism to that of Plato's. Where one derives from human activity, the other is born out of 'abstract thought'; where one is material, the other is metaphysical. In both cases, however, reality is located outside or beyond a perceived present. With Plato, reality resides in a pure and rational knowledge of the world; this metaphysical reality guides the easily deceived senses with a logic that is unchanging. In contrast, Marx finds reality located within human action: 'We set out as real, active men' (GI, 47), yet, as we have already seen, this material reality has become obscured and abstracted. We have also seen that Marx's reality is located within a historical materialism, a history of human action. This is not to say that Marx believes that reality does not exist in social activity; the problem instead is that ideological representation distorts the material relations that makes those activities available to perception.

Although Plato and Marx share the view that 'appearance' distorts and perverts truth, we should remember that this commonality is divided by a different understanding of how appearance acts on perception. With Marx it is a case of the false appearances of ideology acting on the mind, while for Plato it is the senses that mistake appearance for truth. In this respect, we might turn to Marx as a reversal of Platonism, as it is the mind, and not the senses, that are understood to be most vulnerable to the misperceptions brought about by ideological representation.

Unlike Plato, Marx takes a dialectical approach to thinking. As we have seen, classical logic denies that contradictions exist in reality, and where they are seen to exist in thought, they have to be expunged in order to arrive at the truth. Dialectical philosophers, on the other hand, claim that contradictions exist in reality and that the most appropriate way to understand the movement of that reality is to study the development of those contradictions. The question is no longer a simple choice between truth and illusion; the question for Marx is how the illusion exists as a reality, or more specifically, how the reality of material activity continues to exist under the forces of capitalism. For Plato, there is no possibility of contradiction in the world, and where it is 'perceived' to exist it must be dissolved in favour of a single truth. What concerns Marx is the degree of contradiction that exists under the forces of capitalism; human action (material reality) is understood to be perceived through what he considers to be the false distortions of ideological representation. In this way material reality is understood by Marx to be both present and absent, to exist both in the world and outside (our experience) of it.

On the face of it Plato's formal logic and the dialectical approach of Marx appear to be incommensurable and dialogue between the two systems appears impossible. Although dialectical, Marx's method is, however, a means to an end. That is, with class struggle and revolution Marx believes that the illusions and representations of the capitalist ideology will be destroyed: 'In reality and for the practical materialist, i.e. the *communist*, it is a question of revolutionising the existing world, of practically attacking and changing existing things.' (GI, 62)

What Marx proposes is quite simply to explode the contradiction in order that a single category of practical activity (historical materialism) might emerge in its own right:

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence. (GI, 57)

Until that moment of change or action arrives, we will continue to exist in a state of false

consciousness. Representation is therefore thought by Marx to stand as a force of repression and alienation, a mediatory phenomenon that must be abolished from the present state of things. In Marx's society human action (the real life process) goes to replace representation and material activity goes to define the individual as a real active being. With this logic, Marx substitutes reality and representation with materialism and ideology to again argue for the abolition of representation in all areas of society.

Althusser: Reading Capital

In *Reading Capital*, Louis Althusser analyses what he describes as Marx's 'fundamental theoretical concepts' (RC, 183). That is, Althusser sets out the theoretical path taken by Marx in his theory of political economy. In this analysis Althusser shows Marx's theory to have broken with the concept of a 'linear causality' which had previously been applied to a theorisation of economic theory (RC, 184). Marx's break from the previous mode of analysis had resulted from the need for a new analytical concept, or as Althusser puts it:

A different concept is required in order to account for the new form of causality required by the new definition of the object of Political Economy, by its 'complexity', i.e., by its peculiar determination: *the determination by a structure*. (RC, 184)

Rather than the idealist empiricist position which reads the (economic) structure in direct relation to its elements, we encounter in Marx's analysis a detour that seeks to scientifically interpret - and therefore demystify - the phantasmagorical mutation of human realities of production (materialism) into immaterial relations within the market.⁴⁰ Because the market can no longer be simply interpreted as an outer expression of its internal structure, Marx looks to an analytical concept that can account for the apparent invisibility of the internal economic structure (production and labour), a theoretical concept that can rationalise the disjunction between an outer appearance and internal essence.

⁴⁰ In Chapter Two I explore Marx's notion of phantasmagoria (*Die Phantasmagorische*) and consider its reconceptualisation in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades*.

In Marx, this distinction (exteriority or interiority are posed as distinct from their effects) often takes the classical form of the distinction between inside and outside, between the 'intimate essence' of things and their phenomenal 'surface', between the 'intimate relations', the 'intimate links' of things and the external relations and links of the same things. And it is well known that this opposition, which derives in principle from the classical distinction between essence and phenomena, i.e., from a distinction which situates *in being itself, in reality itself, the inner site of its concept*, and therefore opposes it to the 'surface' of concrete appearance; which therefore transposes as a difference of level or of components *in the real object itself*, a distinction which does not belong to the real object since it is a matter of distinction which separates the concept or knowledge of the real from that real as an existing object... (RC, 189)

In his analysis Althusser describes how Marx's break from a previous theorisation of economic theory involves a (re)instatement (in a new domain) of the requirements which have long been imposed on those sciences which have achieved autonomy (classical philosophy): '(if) an object cannot be defined by its immediate visible or sensuous appearance, it is necessary to make a detour *via* its concept in order to grasp it' (RC, 184). Just as Plato turns to measurements and calculations to avoid the 'easily deceived' senses, Marx makes a detour around the immediate visible or sensuous appearance of the world. The logic of this rational concept is also expressed by Althusser as follows:

The knowledge of a real object is not reached by immediate contact with the 'concrete' but by the production of the *concept* of that object (in the sense of an object of knowledge) as the absolute condition of its *theoretical* possibility. (RC, 184)

Marx takes this theoretical detour to avoid the sensuous appearances of political economy, to 'observe' what he considers to be the 'false consciousness' of ideology. We have seen that the distance between representation and truth is a key concern for Marx who shares Plato's belief that the way things appear to perception is far removed from reality. What is clear from Althusser's analysis is that Marx's search for the 'truth' behind political economy almost inevitably follows a 'classical' mode of enquiry:

Marx often slipped into the really almost inevitable use of the classical opposition between essence and phenomena, adopting its ambiguities by force rather than merit, and transposing the epistemological difference between the knowledge of reality and the reality itself into reality in the form of the inside and the outside, of the real, often real movement and the apparent movement of the intimate essence and its concrete, phenomenal determinations, perceived and manipulated by subjects. (RC, 190)

The rational, classical or traditional nature of Marx's methodology is most clearly reflected in his notion of ideology which, as Althusser points out, takes the form of a mode of representation: 'ideology is the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group' (LP, 158). However, as Marx argues in *The German Ideology*, the [mis]representations of an autonomous ideological structure are countered by the 'real life process':

We set out from real active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.... Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. (GI, 47)

In the above passage, Marx questions the fixity of ideology by asking how can a real life experience be represented without the possibility of movement or development. The ideological image of the real life process is seen through the *camera obscura* of morality, religion and metaphysics. These [mis]representations bear little resemblance to the material reality of active men yet they go to shape the consciousness of men through phantasmagoric means (GI, 47). Ideology is, in this instance, the sum total of ideas relating first and foremost to social life, opinions on philosophy, religion and political and economic programmes. As we have already seen, Marx describes how these ideas come to condition and control the everyday practices of the individual while remaining hidden as a determining and alienating force of repression. Ideology, in this sense, is a

false consciousness or an obfuscated mental process in which men do not understand the forces that actually govern their thinking. German ideology is in Marx's view a representation that has gained autonomy and control over the human mind, presenting an image of real life that does not correspond to the material developments of human existence. This mode of representation does not serve the interests of the people but instead benefits the hegemonic desires of the ruling minority. The question of thinking representation is, with Marx, concerned with the ideological. Although ideology has come to determine social activity it remains a false consciousness that transgresses the material realities of human activity.

Ideological Representation

In *Lenin and Philosophy*, Althusser asserts that Marx understands ideology as 'pure illusion' (LP, 159), as an 'altogether' imaginary representation of social activity which is held up as the real:

Ideology is conceived as a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness. All its reality is external to it. Ideology is thus thought as an imaginary construction whose status is exactly like the theoretical status of the dream among writers before Freud. For these writers, the dream was the purely imaginary, i.e. null, result of day's residues, presented in an arbitrary arrangement and order, sometimes even inverted, in other words, in disorder. For them, the dream was the imaginary, it was empty, null and stuck together (*bricole*), once the eyes had closed, from the residues of the only full and positive reality, the reality of the day. This is exactly the status of philosophy and ideology in *The German Ideology*. (LP, 159)

Althusser's reference to the pre-Freudian idea of a dream (that which situates the imaginary outside of the reality of the waking life), is intended to show the impossibility of thinking the political, religious and social structures of ideological representations in opposition to the real. Just as Freud revealed how the unconscious has real implications

on all areas of lived experience and demonstrates itself through the dream,⁴¹ Althusser argues that ideology can not be understood purely objectively: ‘there is no practice except by and in an ideology’ (LP, 170). For this reason the ideological is not simply understood as an inverted representation of our natural life process since it is always an active part of it. Moreover, Marx’s ideological figure of the inverting lens of the *camera obscura* no longer stands as a possible or viable construct for representing ideology. The dark chamber - in which representations of a natural world appear upside down – is reconceptualised by Althusser. No longer is it a one-to-one correspondence between reality on one side and its representation on the other. Instead, Althusser argues that it is a question of ideology representing the relationship between individuals in their real conditions of existence. As Terry Eagleton has pointed out, Althusser strikes a lethal blow at the notion that ideology consists simply of a collection of distorting representations of reality and empirically false propositions, ‘Ideology for Althusser alludes in the main to our affective, unconscious relation with the world, to the ways in which we are pre-reflectively bound up in social reality.’⁴² This view of ideology signals an important break from Marx who, as we have seen, idealises the ‘real life process’ as a site of reality and truth. In contrast to Marx, Althusser argues for a totalising image of representation in suggesting that the imaginary to be joined to the real. In Althusser’s formulation, representation exists as part of a real life process. Ideology is not just a distortion or false reflection but an indispensable medium for the production of human subjects. Like Freud, Althusser suggests the impossibility of separating the real from the imaginary when he famously asserts: ‘ideology is a ‘representation’ of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence’ (LP, 162).⁴³ That is, we act on beliefs that are imagined representations of the world and those material actions define us as active individuals. In other words, ‘representation represents the subject as a

⁴¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, James Strachey (trans), Angela Richards, (ed.), London: Penguin, 1991.

⁴² Terry Eagleton, *Ideology*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 18.

⁴³ As Stephen Helming notes, the word representation is placed in quotation marks, ‘as if to secure it by one more degree from any possibility of naïve confusion of signified with signifier.’ Stephen Helming, *The Success and Failure of Fredric Jameson: Writing, the Sublime, and the Dialectic of Critique*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 56.

representing subject'.⁴⁴

To reiterate, Althusser argues that the 'imaginary representation' of the real world are at the centre of every ideology and it is the imaginary nature of this relation which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe. The 'material existence' of ideology is understood by Althusser to be a contingent consequence of the imaginary. That is, if an individual believes in God, Duty or Justice, *etc.*, he/she participates in certain regular practices (goes to church, submits unconditionally to the rule of law, *etc.*). As a consequence of these beliefs, the individual adopts a certain attitude towards those ideas that make it difficult to hold other beliefs (as this would be either inconsistent, cynical or perverse). In other words, 'the ideas of a human subject appear in his actions which go to define him as an individual' (LP, 167-168). Althusser argues that the ideological representation of any belief system must constitute the absolute and concrete reality of the individual within it, as it is the imaginary ideological image that goes to define the material practices and rituals of an individual or social group.

Involved in this shift is the influential work of Jacques Lacan whose writings provide Althusser with a way of thinking ideological representation as a necessary condition of lived experience. Drawing on Lacan's theorising of the 'symbolic', 'imaginary' and the 'real', Althusser develops a new image of ideological representation. Ideology is now seen to adapt individuals to their social functions by providing them with an imaginary model of the whole. It is not only a case of the child misrecognising himself/herself as 'whole'⁴⁵ in order to function in the structures of daily life; Althusser argues that the same logic applies to a collective 'misrecognition' of ideological representation; what appears to be the normative is in fact a constructed fiction. Yet it is precisely this type of

⁴⁴ *The Abyss of Representation*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ For Lacan, the developing child comes to perceive itself as a 'Gestalt', that is to say, as a fixed and constant exteriority. This mimetic self perception is seen by Lacan to exist as a 'mirage', a symbolic representation that is in stark contrast to the turbulent movements that 'the subject feels are animating him'. Lacan continues, 'The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipate - and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of special identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to form a totality that I shall call orthopaedic - and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development.' Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1977, p. 4.

[mis]representation (the imaginary) that allows the subject to function as a social being. As Eagleton describes, this reconceptualisation involves a new understanding of our subjective relation to ideological structures:

Althusser tries to shift us from a cognitive to an effective theory of ideology – which is not necessarily to deny that ideology contains certain cognitive elements, or to reduce it to the merely subjective. It is certainly subjective in the sense of being subject-centred: its utterances are to be deciphered as expressive of a speaker's attitude to lived relations to the world.⁴⁶

In short, Althusser's conception of ideological representation is a totalising formulation. It goes to establish a dialectic between mimetic representation – which 're-presents' an image of the subject in society's structures – and the representation of society's structure and mechanism – which 'represents' the subject through a mental image of his/her relation to society. This ideological totality moves beyond many of the sharp distinctions that characterise Marx's thinking. Society's reliance on both mimetic and ideological modes of representation is acknowledged by Althusser (perhaps by subjecting Marx to a psychoanalytic theory of symbolic representation). Most importantly, however, ideology is no longer considered as 'pure illusion' but theorised as a real phenomenon of daily life.

Althusser's role in considering the critical status of illusion in social space marks an important step in this investigation. No longer is it a case of thinking society's structures as a relation between inside and outside or between false consciousness and the natural light of the real. With Althusser, we move beyond the position of the outside observer (Plato and Marx) to consider how representation can be thought from within. That is, rather than stepping outside the illusions produced by mimetic and ideological representation we are forced to understand ourselves caught within those illusions. Moreover, the causality of economic mechanisms in which the appearances of everyday life are understood as a direct consequence of a hidden ideological essence which, as I explore in Chapter Two in relation to Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, is rethought

⁴⁶ *Ideology*, p. 19

in a new conceptual framework. As William C. Dowling suggests, Althusser is faced with the problem of examining the functional relations among society's elements without seeing them as an expression of a hidden essence:

So it is not in an essence hidden behind or beneath the surface of things that Althusser will seek explanation of social reality, but in the *relations among elements* of the superstructure as conceived in classical Marxism. Moreover, Althusser's notion of structural causality will derive from a curious fact about structure itself: that a structure is always more than the sum of its parts. That is, once added up the elements of a structure and the relations among them we find ourselves confronting a totality that can be seen as such only as it includes something else, and this something else is nothing other than the structure itself.⁴⁷

With this 'relation among elements' we can begin to think of the relation between differentiated modes of illusion. That is, rather than being placed in opposition to the real, the relation between different modes of representation are comprehended as a structural causality in which, as Dowling puts it, the parts of a structure and the relations among them constitute something 'else'. With Althusser we see how this totality becomes recognised as society at large, as ideology as a whole. *Representation is one of many elements which do not derive from a hidden essence or metaphysical cause but maintain some autonomy from a single governing force while, at the same time, existing in a structure of relations.*

The influence of Althusser on Jameson's theorisation of postmodern space has already been well documented.⁴⁸ Moreover, Jameson describes how Althusser's redefinition of the ideological supports a new understanding of space when he writes:

The Althusserian concept now allows us to rethink these specialized geographical and cartographic issues in terms of a social space – in terms for example of social class and

⁴⁷ Dowling, William C. Jameson, Althusser, Marx: an introduction to the political unconscious, London: Methuen, 1984, p. 66.

⁴⁸ In addition to Dowling's work (cited above) Steven Helmling (*The Success and Failure of Fredric Jameson*) and George Hartley (*The Abyss of Representation*) explore the relationship between Althusser and Jameson in some depth.

national or international context, in terms of the ways in which we all necessarily also cognitively map our individual social relationship to local national and international class realities. (PM, 52)

With Althusser and Jameson we see how the mimetic and the ideological are not only bridged through ideological networks (Althusser), but how 'social space' involves an experience of local, national and global systems (Jameson).

The issue at stake, however, remains with the strong relation between Jameson and Marx. This is not simply an issue of Jameson's Marxism but a question of how this theoretical influence carries with it an inscribed Platonism.

Jameson: Postmodern Space

On the surface of things it would appear that Jameson's analysis of representation is in stark contrast to the theories of Plato and Marx. Jameson seemingly rejects the Platonic assertion that the way things appear bears little relation to their proper meaning. Moreover, it would seem that Jameson is arguing with an entirely different logic: 'What we must now affirm is that it is precisely this whole extraordinary demoralizing and depressing original new global space which is the 'moment of truth' of postmodernism' (PM, 49).

The representations of the cultural realm are for Jameson a clear expression of our current reality under late capitalism. Like Althusser, Jameson theorises society's structures in a (spatial) totality. The invisible structures that Marx thought to generate a false consciousness of actual material activity are for Jameson available 'within' the distorting mediations of representation. This shift in approach is explained by Jameson as an outward expression of capitalism's great mutation from a society of production (modernism) to a society of reproduction (postmodernism). But to argue that representation is now the site of (some) truth by no means rids it of the suspicion and anxiety that we have seen to characterise Plato and Marx. In short, Jameson's dialectical

analysis of representation does not offer a lasting alternative to the outmoded divisions that continue to determine representation as a false and alienating counter to the real.

Although Jameson acknowledges the dominance of representation throughout contemporary experience, there remains an underlying desire to replace it with a 'higher' representational form of 'global cognitive mapping' (PM, 54), a form that, as I will later consider, allows us to regain some control over the spaces that we occupy.⁴⁹ The problem for Jameson is not so much the fusion of the representation with reality but the fact that the real has come to exist as a mode of representation.⁵⁰ This blurring of distinctions is taken to signal the disappearance of our ability to locate ourselves both cognitively and spatially. Jameson believes that the current representation of all things through global information and multinational computer networks has caused the disappearance of history and suggests that our perception of the world seen through images has led to a 'historical amnesia'. That is, the images that are available to perception are removed from any historical meaning. Global communication and media networks instead give representation to a series of perpetual presents. The (visual) information that is produced by those networks is detached from any historical or social context. With this new phase of postmodern reproduction, representation has been removed from any single point of origin. The copy is now impossible because all traces of history have disappeared. What was once a supplement to the real has now freed itself to become the primary designator of all that exists (*simulacra*). In short, Jameson suggests that late capitalism's development from mechanisms of production to new and advanced modes of reproduction has eroded any sense of historical meaning. Without any knowledge of the past our society has become fragmented and now exists in a state of disorientation and

⁴⁹ This is Jameson's argument paraphrased. In the last section of this chapter I consider the proposed representational form (cognitive mapping) in more detail.

⁵⁰ The 'real' is understood by Jameson to be produced by the historical and socioeconomic conditions of postmodern space. This, then, involves not only spatial, but media representations of every kind: 'The argument for authenticity in these otherwise patently ideological productions depends on the prior proposition that what we have been calling postmodern (or multinational) space is not merely a cultural ideology or fantasy but has genuine historical (and socioeconomic) reality as the third great original expansion of capitalism around the globe...' (PM, 49). However, it is the immediate, disorientating and immersive nature of postmodern space and the representations therein that negate the 'genuine' and 'authentic' realities of social space. Consequently, Jameson argues that a new mode of representation is needed (cognitive mapping).

vertigo. Jameson believes that this development is particularly evident in postmodern architecture where the old means of orientation have been deliberately broken down and replaced by a disorientating experience of space (the Bonaventure).

As a counter to this 'dematerialisation' of both history and space Jameson theorises postmodernism within a framework of Marxist theory which attempts to assert a materialist critique of the forces of capital, or in Jameson's case, the forces of multinational capitalism. Jameson argues that the dominance of representation (which now operates on a global scale) re-presents social and cultural activity as a series of perpetual presents. That is, the configuration of everything into images exists detached from its particular or original moment in history. With the mutation of ideology into built space Jameson argues that there is an even greater erasure of a materialist past.

In their analysis of postmodern theory, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner describe the nature of Jameson's engagement with Marxist cultural criticism:

Jameson's postmodern Marxism is the first attempt to combine Marxian and postmodern positions, contextualizing postmodernism within the development of capitalism, while engaging postmodern positions in order to rethink Marxist theory and politics in the contemporary era.⁵¹

Best and Kellner go on to argue that Jameson's theory is overly totalising, exaggerating some tendencies (hyperreality and schizophrenia) which, they believe, do not in fact stand as the dominant features of postmodern society: 'Jameson tends to inflate insights that apply to limited sectors of contemporary social life into overly general concepts representing all social spheres, thereby failing to analyse each sector in its specificity.'⁵²

For Best and Kellner, Jameson is almost too postmodern: 'Jameson is seduced by the siren song of extreme postmodernism and exaggerates certain cultural tendencies.'⁵³

What is at stake for Best and Kellner is not so much Jameson's combining of Marxism

⁵¹ Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London: Macmillan, 1991, p. 183.

⁵² *Postmodern Theory*, p. 188.

⁵³ *Postmodern Theory*, p. 192.

and postmodernism, but what they consider to be his privileging of postmodern cultural analysis over a Marxian political critique. Jameson's engagement with postmodern theory is for Best and Kellner somewhat 'extreme' and because of this they argue that Jameson 'obscures the economic and class determination of culture that he otherwise wants to foreground.'⁵⁴:

He (Jameson) uses Marxism to contextualize postmodernism as a new cultural logic of capitalism and adopts postmodern positions to theorize late capitalist culture as a culture of image, simulacra fragmentation, pastiche, and schizophrenia. But those postmodern positions are sometimes incompatible with or detract from his Marxist position.⁵⁵

Best and Kellner's analysis goes on to establish the contradictory nature of postmodern and Marxist positions. Although Best and Kellner bring a sobering voice to the hysteria of Jameson's writing, there appears a stubborn avoidance of any critique of Jameson's return to a Marxian mode of analysis. Put simply, Best and Kellner attack Jameson for negating 'his Marxist position' but fail to problematise Jameson's 'Marxist' reading of postmodern culture.

Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism most clearly reflects Jameson's attempts to theorise postmodern culture through a Marxist critique. Like Marx, Jameson attempts to make us conscious of the discrepancy between contemporary subjectivity and the proper, original or real moment of *being* that capitalism is understood to have now destroyed. The abundance of representations that are generated through global information and computer networks are seen by Jameson to have advanced far beyond our ability to comprehend them, 'postmodern hyperspace has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself...' (PM, 44). Jameson returns to Marx to again suggest that the materialist activity that once allowed men to transform their surroundings to suit their needs has somehow been reversed. That is, ideological representation (in the guise of multinational capitalism) now transforms men to suit its needs. Jameson's adherence to Marx is then a means for him to reiterate

⁵⁴ *Postmodern Theory*, p. 192.

⁵⁵ *Postmodern Theory*, p. 192.

Marx's call for the material relations of social activity and labour (that once allowed men to act on their surroundings in a way that benefited their 'real' interests).

Jameson's task, however, is more complex than a mere recontextualisation of Marx's materialism. Jameson's (Marxian) reading of postmodern space turns to the issue of the relation between two modes of spatial representation. That is, Jameson asks if postmodern space can now be read as a new representational image, if the mutation of ideological representation into architectural space might offer some 'privileged' insight into the inner workings of the much larger representational form of late capitalism.⁵⁶

I want to suggest that our faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present day multinational capitalism. The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating not so much in its own right but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentred global network of the third stage of capitalism itself. (PM, 38)

In other words, mimetic representation and ideological representation are located in a single totality, the relation between these illusory modes of space is of great importance as it is the visible forms of postmodern space that provide an 'entry point' into the ideological structures that shape our beliefs. That is, for Jameson, the 'faulty representations' we encounter in the spaces of daily praxis 'offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentred global network of the third stage of capital itself' (PM, 38).

⁵⁶ I develop this formulation in Chapter Four by looking at the relation between what I describe as two distinct modes of spatial illusion; the transcendental: *transubstantiation*, and the representational: *experiential placemaking*. I argue that this coexistence of divergent modes of illusion in built space signals an important point of disruption. However, this view runs counter to Jameson's analysis which claims a linear and 'logical' progression of multinational capitalism into postmodern space.

For the most part Jameson does not develop the critical possibilities that emerge through this 'relation between elements'. Instead, postmodern space is theorised as a passive vessel for ideological imperatives and consequently slips back into the old Marxist structure of cause and effect and base and superstructure. Once again it is a case of what is visible to perception being far removed from reality and truth. While those things that appear to perception are not theorised as an inversion of a 'natural' or 'authentic origin' (*camera obscura*), the global networks of multinational capitalism stand as a *hidden essence* that directs our experience of space and the representational realities therein. Like Marx and Plato, Jameson focuses his attention on the complicity of (postmodern) space to argue that ideological representation is increasingly 'strengthened and intensified' by the mimetic products of cultural representation. Moreover, our ability to 'act' and 'struggle' is 'neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion' (PM, 54).

The question of how Jameson's understanding of postmodern space is inscribed (through Marx) with a Platonic logic is most clearly represented in his preferred representational figure: cognitive mapping. As Hartley has argued, cognitive mapping 'presses the representational apparatus to its limits, to the moment of its breakdown that casts up the illusion of the beyond in its current historical state.'⁵⁷ Rather than functioning as a means to span the gap between individual experience and knowledge of the whole (as Althusser characterised ideology), I will now consider how cognitive mapping moves us into the metaphysical terrain of the unrepresentable.

Cognitive Mapping

Jameson's belief in the disappearance of any critical distance in postmodern space leads him to stress the importance of spatial issues in the cultural realm; that is, the issue of how one might locate oneself or more specifically, regain control over the disorientating placelessness of postmodern space:

⁵⁷ *The Abyss of Representation*, p, 226.

The conception of space that has been developed here suggests that a model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organising concern. (PM, 51)

Jameson argues that the reclaiming of social and cultural space from the spectacular, distorting and alienating effects of late capitalism is a question of spatial representation. Central to Jameson's argument is the notion of 'cognitive mapping':

Disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moment of mobile, alternative trajectories. (PM, 51)

Jameson takes this mode of spatial representation from Kevin Lynch's book, *The Image of the City*, which seeks out an alternative to the alienating grid system of American cities such as New Jersey which no longer contains the traditional spatial markers such as 'monuments', 'nodes', 'natural boundaries' and 'built perspectives'. Lynch argues for legibility in the urban setting, stressing the importance of the 'environmental image', which functions as a 'generalised mental picture of the exterior physical world.'⁵⁸ The environmental image is argued by Lynch to join the immediate sensation of a place with a memory of an experience. The environmental image is then used by the individual to interpret information and navigate the body through space. This mode of spatial representation demands the reinstatement of the familiar landmarks that could be found in older cities (Lynch cites Florence) to allow for a sense of place, way finding and disalienation.

Jameson is quick to point out that Lynch's representational model does not refer to a mimetic form but to a 'precartographic' form:

The cognitive map is not exactly mimetic in that older sense; indeed, the theoretical

⁵⁸ Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960, p. 4.

issues it possesses allows us to renew the analysis of representation on a higher and much more complex level. (PM, 51)

This 'higher' mode of representation does not refer to map making, which is seen to fix a single image of the environment in the mind of the individual. Jameson instead suggests cognitive mapping to be more fluid as a representational form, 'like diagrams centred around a still-subject which mark out key features of a journey' (PM, 52). The notion of a type of itinerary that can unfold in space is for Jameson what is needed to regain a sense of location. Cognitive mapping combines the real with the imaginary so that a familiarity exists between the individual and his or her environment. Instead of a sign or a map that might mark out a linear route through urban space, cognitive mapping exist as a distinct mental image that gives the individual the freedom to map and remap alternative trajectories.

As we have seen, the relation between the physical city and the vaster network of society's structures is understood by Jameson to exist as a single totality. To argue this (Marxian) notion of society's structures as a dialectical totality, Jameson turns to Althusser's redefinition of ideology as 'the representation of the subject imaginary relationship to his or her real conditions of existence' (LP, 162). Cognitive mapping is seen by Jameson to follow Althusser's formula, the image of the totality is gained through this 'higher' form of representation (cognitive mapping) which bridges the 'imaginary' with the 'real'. This new aesthetic formula is thought to integrate the subject's immediate existential experience with a knowledge of a larger social whole. Jameson's analysis of representation therefore seeks to develop Lynch's analysis of city planning into the much broader question of postmodern culture. Jameson turns from urban space to social or ideological space to suggest the disappearance of any social, political or cultural 'familiarity' or 'location'. In this way Jameson argues that cognitive mapping is not merely a procedure for way finding, but a necessary means of locating the ideological:

Surely this is what the cognitive map is called upon to do in the narrower framework of daily life in the physical city: to enable a situational representation on the part of the

individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole. (PM, 51)

The fixing of postmodern space to a series of spatial markers that can be recognised and remembered by the subject is key to locating the imaginary, which takes its cue from 'the real conditions of existence' (PM, 51).⁵⁹ In this way the architectural space of the modern city is a clear expression of the ideological status of society. If we are unable to navigate our bodies around the space that defines our 'real conditions' (the Bonaventure) we apparently lose our ability to locate ourselves both socially and politically.

The central point that runs throughout *PM* is that we have to find some new way of representing ourselves in space. If we are to 'begin to grasp our positioning as individuals and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present is neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion' (PM, 54), Jameson believes that we must seek out a new and previously unimagined mode of representation.

What Jameson appears to be proposing, however, is a new representational form that has all the characteristics of a Platonic ideal. Cognitive mapping might in this way be argued to simply reinstate an old metaphysical logic to suggest a representational counter to the [mis]representations of late capitalism. This 'representational real' remains set in opposition to the copies of contemporary culture that are seen by Jameson to have been colonised by a developed mode of ideological representation. This view is supported by Hartley when he asks:

Does Jameson's turn to regulative judgment (cognitive mapping must function as if it were in fact capable of mapping some posited pre-existing, yet unrepresentable 'real' substratum) in a determining judgment (whereby cognitive mapping gives us some kind of genuine knowledge of the substratum).⁶⁰

The point here is that the real conditions of existence are for Jameson not real enough and

⁵⁹ Here Jameson is quoting directly from Althusser (see, LP, 162).

⁶⁰ *The Abyss of Representation*, p. 225.

the representational tools that are now available are a logical extension of late capitalism. The clarity of Plato's attack on representation is here delivered at high speed through the emphatic rhetoric of Jameson's analysis. The rational and grounding image of cognitive mapping suggests an ideal form of representation. This 'higher' representational mode is somehow immune to the sublimating hold of the ideological. In this way Jameson creates a (Platonic) order between copies: (i) the global information and media networks (being of the lowest grade); (ii) the cultural realm, which can be read as a 'representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentred global network of the third stage of capitalism itself' (PM, 38). This second order of copies is of a greater value because it contains 'moments of truth' which are both mesmerising and catastrophic; (iii) cognitive mapping, Jameson's ideal form of representation and the least 'representational' of the three orders. Like Althusser's formula for the ideological, cognitive mapping bridges the imaginary with the real. But unlike multinational capitalism, cognitive mapping 'endows the individual subject with some new heightened sense of place in the global system' (PM, 54). Like Plato's belief in the foundational truths of abstract thought, Jameson points to a mode of representation that can offer the individual unmediated access to the greater realities and truths of our postmodern condition, a representational system that will 'enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to the vaster and properly unrepresentable totality' (PC, 51).

While Jameson is proposing a dialectical approach to thinking representation in space, we find that it remains inscribed by an outmoded conceptual framework that privileges abstract thought over perception. Although Jameson's Marxian method begins with the real experiences of people, representation remains set in a system of hierarchical and metaphysical oppositions. Moreover, the singularity that defines cognitive mapping does not allow us to think of mimetic representation and ideological representation as a differentiated totality, but rather (re)introduces a metaphysical formulation to act as a counter to the new spatialities of postmodern culture.

I have considered how Jameson fails to explore the full potential of differentiated modes

of spatial representation. Furthermore, I have argued that Jameson returns to a conceptual logic that negates a fuller analysis of the forces at play in contemporary space. More generally, I have mapped out an epistemological context to the theoretical and practical problems that I address in the following chapters. Consequently, I am now able to return to my initial question with a greater critical force to again ask how it is possible to remain tied to a classical/historical/metaphysical methodology when the site of analysis bears no relation to that approach to thinking. And perhaps more importantly, how can the contemporary subject make any claim to the real (in cultural or social space) when the broad and differentiated range of representational spatialities are repeatedly theorised as the site of falsehood.

The Westin Bonaventure Hotel, Los Angeles, 1978



3.1 - The Westin Bonaventure Hotel.

The four cylinders that flank the central cylinder are made of mirrored glass and contain luxury rooms and suites. Inside of the square base of the building can be found reflecting pools, glass elevators that climb the sides, and eight levels of shops and restaurants. A restaurant on the 35th floor boasts a revolving cocktail lounge that provides a 360 degree panoramic view of L.A.



3.2 - The Westin Bonaventure Hotel (exterior view).



3.3 - Looking out from the Bonaventure elevator.

Phantasmagoria

Chapter 2

From Fetishism to Phantasmagoria

In this chapter I will consider how Karl Marx and Walter Benjamin expand the field of illusion into the terrain of social activity. In line with the technological developments of the nineteenth century, I will trace how new modes of illusion have increasingly become associated with a collective experience of capitalist space. To do this I will move between Marx's theory of 'Commodity Fetishism' (*Capital*) and Benjamin's notion of 'phantasmagoria' (*The Arcades Project*). With these accounts of fetishism and phantasmagoria, I will explore the mutation of the commodity into social and cultural space. However, instead of demystifying the perceived phantoms of capital, I will argue that Marx and Benjamin lend form to a new category of phenomena.

In Chapter One I explored a broad range of approaches to *thinking representation*. This overview began with a close analysis of Plato's attack on representation and found the underlying morality of this philosophical argument to be inscribed in the political theories of Marx and the later cultural analysis of Fredric Jameson. These philosophical, political and cultural approaches to representation were seen to continue a series of judgments concerning the moral status of the copy and consequently were argued to generate a deep anxiety around the 'representational reality' of cultural and social space. In this chapter I return to Marx to consider how his detailed and figurative analysis of the commodity lends 'illusion' form and meaning.

In *Capital*, Marx takes fetishism to inhabit an autonomous world of goods which, like religious deities, are considered to be inhabited by a phantasmagoric spirit.⁶¹ In this analysis Marx focuses on the experience of the fetishistic commodity. Marx represents this mode of fetishism with an image of phantasmagoria (*die Phantasmagorische*). Here

⁶¹ As is well known, the fetish object has its history in the worship of religious deities that were believed to possess a supernatural meaning. As the Oxford dictionary defines it: 'Fetish is an inanimate object worshipped by primitive peoples for its supposed inherent magical powers or as being inhabited by a spirit, irrationally revered'. In *Capital*, fetishism is used to describe the re-presentation of an object and the consequent distortion of its 'authentic' properties. In this way fetishism is taken as a mode of representation and mediation. If fetish is understood to occur where a meaning becomes fixed or attached to an object, person or race, then in Marx's case the original form is the commodity's 'use value': and the fetishistic or distorted representation is its 'exchange value'. In this new form the object appears to have been generated magically, to be something of a divine creation.

we find the illusionistic shows of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries used to describe the affects of the dazzling - but essentially objectifying and alienating - commodity form.⁶² With this new engagement with fetishism, phantasmagoria and the religious, the field of economic theory is expanded to include a broad range of illusory phenomena.

Central to this chapter is Benjamin's re-conceptualisation of phantasmagoria as an important critical tool. In contrast to the rational materialism of Marx's enquiry, Benjamin looks to new technological and cultural developments as a dialectical expression of the changing shape of urban experience. With Benjamin's *Arcades*, I explore what I shall term the synchronic relation of phantasmagoric space.

My interest in both Marx and Benjamin's reading of illusion centres on the changing status of the imaginary and the apparent in social space. These expanded formulations of 'fetishism' and 'phantasmagoria' attempt to identify where illusion is most manifest and how it acts on subjectivity. However, with both Marx and Benjamin we are required to think of the site of illusion as *living relations between the dead*. Consequently I will be asking if Benjamin's image of the deluded masses, who are 'observed' (through the window of history) sleepwalking through shopping arcades, remains a useful figuration for grasping the meaning and status of illusion within contemporary social space.

⁶² The term phantasmagoria became widely used in the nineteenth century with touring shows of optical illusions, which were produced by means of the magic lantern. Back projection was an important feature of these shows which succeeded in keeping the audience unaware of the lantern. With the apparatus concealed, projected figures were 'made to increase and decrease in size, to advance and retreat, dissolve, vanish, and pass into each other, in a manner then considered marvellous' (P, 27). The effects of phantasmagoria were played out in specially prepared theatres and a popular form of entertainment throughout the nineteenth century.

The Arcades (Paris)

These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-panelled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Lining both sides of these corridors, which get the light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the arcade is a city, a world in miniature, in which consumers find everything they need.⁶³

The Parisian shopping arcades have long been associated with the spectacle and delirium of nineteenth-century consumer culture. The long enclosed corridors that cut through buildings and intersect streets tempted the passing shopper with a phantasmagoric alternative to the wide boulevards of Paris. Like the Bonaventure Hotel, the Parisian arcade replaces the city by closing itself off from the city outside. The shopper moves between interior spaces where the usual dichotomy between inside and outside is replaced by a 'constructed exterior'. The illusion, however, is as much generated by the goods on display – which remain behind the glass window of the arcade shops – as it is by the surrounding architecture. As Susan Buck-Morss describes:

The publicly traversed passages displayed commodities in window showcases like icons in niches. The very profane pleasure houses found there tempted passersby with gastronomical perfections, intoxicating drinks, wealth without labour at the roulette wheel, gaiety in the vaudeville theatres, and, in the first floor galleries, transports of sexual pleasure sold by a heavenly host of fashionably dressed ladies of the night.⁶⁴

The Parisian Arcades stand as an early site of economic mutation in which the commodity is theorised as a spatial entity.

⁶³ From the *Illustrated Guide to Paris*, 1852. This citation appears as the first clipping in Convolute A of Walter Benjamin's *Arcade Project* (A1, 1). Benjamin takes this citation from Lucien Dubech and Pierre d'Espezel, *Histoire de Paris* (Paris, 1926).

⁶⁴ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Cambridge: Mass, MIT Press, 1999) p, 83.

In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin traces the mutation of the commodity into new spaces of consumer culture. Unlike Marx's rational critique of commodity fetishism, Benjamin engages in a more ambiguous approach to illusion, in addition to the ghostly phantasmagorisation of capital we also see a positive (re)conceptualisation of a 'whole new universe of phantasmagoria' (AP, 14). The ambiguity and complexity that distinguish Benjamin from the Marxian position is articulated by Benjamin in the introductory pages to his project:

What is expressed here is a feeling of vertigo characteristic of the nineteenth century's conception of history. It corresponds to a viewpoint according to which the course of the world is an endless series of facts congealed in the form of thing... Our investigation proposes to show how, as a consequence of this reifying representation of civilization, the new forms of behaviour and the new economically and technologically based creations that we owe to the nineteenth century enter the universe of phantasmagoria. These creations undergo this illumination not only in a theoretical manner, by an ideological transposition, but also in the immediacy of their perceptual presence. They are manifest as phantasmagoria. Thus appear the arcades – first entry in the field of iron construction; thus appear the world exhibitions, whose link to the entertainment industry is significant. (AP, 14)

Like Marx, Benjamin takes phantasmagoria as a 'transposition' of the ideological, but rather than opposing all things illusory, Benjamin argues that certain modes of phantasmagoria provide an 'illumination' and 'immediacy' of their 'perceptual presence'. This departure from the binary logic of Marx's analysis is explained by Benjamin in (Convolute) N: 'On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress':

Marx lays bare the causal connection between economy and culture. For us, what matters is the thread of expression. It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture. At issue, in other words, is the attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible ur-phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life. (AP, N1a, 6)

Benjamin's emphasis on the vertigo and delirium invoked by the new products of consumer culture is expressed through the *Arcades* in both content and style. After the introduction, Benjamin does not attempt to rationalise the spatial, cultural and economic complexities of the city but instead deepens the confusion, excess and disorientation with a vast collection of citations and clippings that are periodically interspersed with his own commentary. This mass of quotations and other fragments is organised into separate folders (*Convolutés*) designated by letter (A-Z and a-z) and subject heading (*Fashion, Arcades, Iron Construction, The Streets of Paris, etc.*). Moving through the book, it is as if we experience Benjamin imagining himself passing along the arcades of nineteenth-century Paris. In (Convolute) 'G, Exhibitions, Advertising, Grandville,' the textual juxtapositions range from the handbill of a Parisian textiles dealer from the 1830s: 'My desire to contribute to your eternal salvation compels me to address you' (AP, G1, 4), to Debech and Espezel's *Histoire de Paris* (1926): 'It is characteristic of these enormous fairs to be ephemeral, yet each of them has left its trace in Paris....' (AP, G4, 4), and then on to Karl Marx's description of the commodity form (1928): 'It is only the particular social relation between people that here assumes, in the eyes of these people, the phantasmagorical form of a relation between things...' (AP, G5, 1). Throughout the *Convolutés* the reader is bombarded with a vast montage of diverse citations and like a steady stream of morphological projections, there is a constant movement between the large and the small, kitsch and high culture, the spectacular and the mundane. Adorno notes, 'politics and metaphysics, theology and materialism, myth and modernity, intentionless material and extravagant speculation – all streets in Benjamin's cityscape converge in the plan of the book on Paris as they do in the city's *Etoile*'.⁶⁵ With this agglomeration of interconnected material Benjamin explores the changing economic conditions shaping subjectivity.

In the *Arcades* the nineteenth-century steps into the present mediated through time but (on his own assertion) unmediated by Benjamin. He writes: 'Method of this project:

⁶⁵ I quote Graeme Gilloch quoting these passages from Adorno. Gilloch also notes that Adorno found Benjamin's earlier book on Baudelaire (*Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire*) 'undialectical'. 'The crucial absence of any adequate form of mediation resulted, Adorno claimed, in a shallow immediacy and bald facticity – located at the crossroads of magic and positivism.' Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, p. 101.

Literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show' (AP, N1a, 8). There is an attempt to collect as much as possible and to display that material in order that we will observe and, in observing, witness ourselves in the same phantasmagoria of urban experience, a dream state from which we will then exit. 'The true method of making things present is to represent them in our space (not to represent ourselves in their space)... We don't displace our being into theirs; they step into our life' (AP, H2, 3). With this historical perspective Benjamin intends to wake us from the illusions of a 'collective dream state'; his method is to show the dream, to represent the dream as it is experienced but out of its own time. As Graeme Gilloch notes:

Elimination of the mythic is not to be achieved through reason as such at all; rather, the disenchantment of the world is to take place paradoxically and precisely through enchantment. Enchantment disenchanters modernity. It is this that constitutes Benjamin's dialectical fairy tale, the telling of which breaks the spell that holds us in thrall.⁶⁶

Benjamin focuses his attention on the industrial and cultural developments that best characterise nineteenth century Paris. These new urban forms are taken to express something about the relation between social activity and industrial capitalism. The nature of these new spatial experiences is expressed through Benjamin's repeated use of the term 'phantasmagoria'. As I will later argue more fully, this revisiting of Marx's (ideological) figuration makes a clear departure from the traditional oppositions at work in *Capital*. In addition (and perhaps unwittingly), Benjamin's phantasmagoria presents something of a challenge to Marx's rational conceptualisation of illusion. That is, if the fetish that we will see Marx associates with the surplus value of the commodity is the result of an inverted reflection of the material life process, then Benjamin's figuration involves a different logic in which the phantasmagoric illusion paradoxically disrupts the collective dream state that he associates with the inter-subjective realm of social space.

This shift in emphasis most notably concerns a new engagement with the immersive space of modernity which is seen by Benjamin to follow the logic of the phantasmagoric

⁶⁶ Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996, p. 109.

magic lantern. With new (spatial) products of industrial capitalism, Benjamin analyses the critical relation between different modes of spatial illusion: 'For us, what matters is the thread of expression. It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture' (AP, N1a, 6).

For Benjamin, the ideological is most clearly expressed in (the experience of) new urban forms. In this way, Paris is both the capital of the nineteenth-century and the centre of capital. This critical transposition importantly involves a new conceptual framework in which the illusions that Marx associated with the commodity-form are extended into urban experience, but rather than continuing with Marx's view of the mediating appearance of essential relations, Benjamin takes these urban phantasmagorias to reveal some truth about the hidden mechanisms that determine the conditions of subjectivity, or as he puts it in 'Convolute N': 'to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event' (AP, N2, 6). At work throughout the *Arcades* is a new series of relations in which illusion is employed as a mode of 'dialectical awakening'.⁶⁷

However, it would be a mistake to draw a clear distinction between the phantasmagoria of Marx's 'commodity form' and those of Benjamin's 'urban experience'. As Giorgio Agamben has observed, Marx was in London when the first Universal Exposition was inaugurated in 1851 and was in the process of writing *Capital*. Agamben suggests that, 'it is probable that Marx had in mind the impression felt in the Crystal Palace when he wrote the chapter of *Capital* on commodity fetishism.'⁶⁸ While it is difficult to know precisely what drove Marx to introduce the concept of phantasmagoria into his analysis of the commodity, what is certain is that Marx, like Benjamin, invested critically in the turbulent relation between space and illusion. In order to explore these spatial relations more fully I will now return to Marx, as it is with Marx's critique that 'fetishism' and 'phantasmagoria' are first employed as conceptual figurations. Like Benjamin, Marx

⁶⁷ Benjamin takes up the notion of 'dialectical awakening' throughout *The Arcades Project* by returning to products of industrial capitalism outside of their time. This historical perspective corresponds to: 'the realization of dream elements in the course of waking up' (AP, N4, 4). But: 'In order for a part of the past to be touched by the present instant there must be no continuity between them.' (AP, N7, 7).

⁶⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends: Note on Politics*, Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (trans), Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2000, p. 74.

intends to show the illusion, but instead of framing it by a relation of phantasmagoric events, we will see how Marx attempts to purify the commodity with the rational logic of scientific enquiry.

Exorcism

Would there be then some exorcism at the opening of *Capital*? When the curtain rises on the raising of a curtain? From the first chapter of its first book? However potential it may appear, and however preparatory, however virtual, would this promise of exorcism have developed enough power to sign and seal the whole logic of this great work? (SoM, 163)

In *Capital (Vol 1)* Marx sets out to demystify what he terms as the ‘mysterious character of the commodity-form’ (C, 164). With an approach that is akin to the project of the enlightenment, Marx aims to lay bare the immaterial relations that lend the commodity its power of fascination and in so doing, reveal the mechanisms of subjugation and alienation that he understands to be embedded within the commodity-form. As Jacques Derrida points out, this critical account of economy involves a type of exorcism. Marx intends to have done with the mystical fetishism of the commodity. In counter-distinction to market forces (that ‘conjure’ an object of human labour into an object of exchange), Marx seeks out the material relations of use and production. It is intended that the mysterious and objectified commodity will have all appearances cleared away from its body to (re)emerge as a thing of real value.

Consequently *Capital* offers a critical exposition of illusory phenomena. Marx is at pains to describe the suprasensible phantoms that attach themselves to commodities but in so doing, paradoxically gives form to the very apparitions that he intends to exorcise. The notion that there is more at stake in the commodity than its material form - that there exists a fantastical mode of value that eclipses the material properties of use and labour - lends some identity to the fetishism that he sees as emerging from the commodity-form. In this way Marx’s representation of the (otherwise) invisible and non-sensuous provides

an ‘expanded field’ of illusion.⁶⁹ In other words, Marx unwittingly brings identity and meaning to the very phenomena that he seeks to eradicate. Consequently, as we will now see, Marx’s project of demystification makes visible a whole new category of illusory phenomena.

Commodity Fetishism

In the opening pages of *Capital*, the money-form is taken by Marx as a means to introduce the enigmatic and spectacular character of the commodity.⁷⁰ What is readily available in the money-form makes visible the illusions that Marx believes to reside in the commodity-form. The fetishism that is attached to money is understood by Marx to be immediately reducible to the commodity. In other words, the designation of value in the money-form brings to light the ‘hidden secrets’ (C, 168) of the commodity and makes visible the illusory body that distorts from its material properties of use and labour. The presence of the money-fetish in the commodity begins Marx’s analysis of the illusory body of the commodity.⁷¹ With this analysis Marx attempts to reveal the alienating contradictions at work in capital.

⁶⁹ The notion of an expanded field of illusion, that is, not only mimetic representations but also ideological and spatial modes, is developed in Anthony Vidler’s article ‘Architecture’s Expanded Field’ (*Artforum*, April, 2004) in which he argues that architecture has found new ‘formal and programmatic inspiration in a host of disciplines and technologies’.

⁷⁰ The transition from the general form of value to the money-form is a transformation that sets in motion a law of equivalents. This movement involves a kind of commodity whose natural form is socially interwoven to become an equivalent form, or more specifically: ‘it becomes its specific social function, and consequently its social monopoly, to play the part of universal equivalent within the world of commodities’ (C, 162). To illustrate this point Marx looks to the social status of gold. Like the money-form, the specific natural properties of gold have become entwined with the social custom that lends it its value. This value form (gold) expresses the value of the world of commodities through one single commodity. Through this equation, the commodity assumes a value that is common to all commodities. In other words, the money form brings commodities into relation with one another as objects of exchange: ‘The simple expression of the relative value of a single commodity, such as linen, in a commodity which is already functioning as the money commodity, such as gold, is the price form’ (C, 163). Like all other commodities, the money-form works as a universal equivalent, it reduces separate and specific objects to a measure of value that is perceived in addition to and in spite of its material properties. In this way Marx shows the money-form to allow for equivalences between non-equivalents. That is, objects of labour magically assume a value that is relative and autonomous to other objects of exchange.

⁷¹ As David Hawkes has put it: ‘The most salient characteristic of money is that it does not exist. Or rather, it exists only as symbol, an idea in people’s minds, as opposed to a physical object that one could see and touch. Money, in short, is an image that has attained the status of reality: it is an idol.’ David Hawkes,

What is of importance here is Marx's use of the term phantasmagoria (*Phantasmagorische*).⁷² This new figuration of illusion extends the fetishism that is associated with the appearance of value within the commodity to address the way the market and relations between people are subject to the same objectifying illusions of capital. To be clear, fetishism is the key (immaterial) figuration in Marx's account of the commodity-form. However, phantasmagoria or the phantasmagoric extends Marx's conceptual figuration of fetishism by describing the relation between inanimate commodities in the market which in the eyes of men, stand in for natural material relations between humans. Phantasmagoria is used by Marx to describe both the external relation and subjective affect of commodities in the market (that take on the appearance of social relations between living things). As Derrida puts it: 'This commerce among things stems from the phantasmagoria. The autonomy lent to commodities corresponds to anthropomorphic projection. The latter *inspires* the commodities, it breathes the spirit into them, a human spirit, the spirit of *speech* and the spirit of *will*.' (SoM, 157).

The commodity's 'mysterious flight' into the world of exchange, and, perhaps more importantly, the (mis)perception of the commodity as a thing that possesses a value that is distinct from its material value, is the fetishistic and phantasmagoric turn that Marx sets out to demystify. To understand how commodities appear in the market, it will be necessary to show how the appearance is distinct from 'essential' material relations. Moreover, for the commodity to be purified of its fetish making appearances, the essential qualities must be seen as distinct from the superficial phenomena that emanate from the commodity's appearance. Consequently, Marx divides the commodity into (a material thing of) 'use value' and (an illusory object of) 'exchange value'. Where use

Ideology: the New Critical Idiom, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 17. It is precisely these fetishistic characteristics that Marx attaches to the commodity form.

⁷² There are varying translations of this passage from *Capital*. In more recent publications (I refer to: Ben Fowkes, trans. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1976) 'Phantasmagorische' is translated as 'The 'fantastic' form of a relation between things' (C, 165). In citations from the same passage, that appear in Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, and Adorno's, *In Search of Wagner*, *Phantasmagorische* is translated as *phantasmagoria*. The later shift to 'fantastic' is in this way problematic considering the importance that we will see Benjamin and Adorno to have attached to Marx conceptualisation of the term phantasmagoria.

value refers to genuine human needs, exchange value corresponds to the needs of the market. The problem for Marx is that the market has taken possession of objects of use (produced by people for the needs of people). Moreover, the use value that connects makers to the objects they produce is no longer visible; instead, the producers of commodities are confronted by a mesmerising and fetish-making surplus value.

While Marx's distinction works as a useful analytical tool, Derrida suggests that it carries with it a certain idealism, 'namely, of permitting one to orient an analysis of the *phantasmagoric* process beginning at an origin that is itself fictive or ideal, thus already purified by a certain fantastics' (SoM, 160). Marx's emphasis on the 'real' (material) meaning of things, and hence his opposition to what is not, or as Derrida puts it, his opposition to the 'phantom form', reinstates a new ontology of presence. I will return to Derrida's questioning of an essential or original 'use value'. The task of cleansing the commodity of surplus phenomena must first be explored more fully as it is through this process of purification, naturalisation and exorcism that Marx paradoxically expands the field of illusion into the inter-subjective realm of everyday praxis.

In his theory of *commodity fetishism*, Marx explains how the real time and labour involved in production is eclipsed by the value that a thing possesses in the market. Just as the value of gold is determined by forces external to its physical properties, the value that a commodity possesses in the market is independent of the labour that has gone into its making. As we have seen, the value that corresponds to the essential material qualities of *use* is concealed by the dazzling, fetish-making appearance of *exchange*. For Marx, the latter value is inessential: indeed, it is mere surplus. In order to further illustrate the 'mysterious' and 'contradictory' nature of the commodity-form Marx describes an ordinary wooden table:

The form of wood for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. (C, 163)

As Marx demonstrated with the money-form, the commodity abstracts from its concrete material status to become an equivalent, relative, representational, immaterial and symbolic mode of exchange (value). In this same way human labour assumes a social form, a form that distorts the proper time of production to appear instead as an autonomous and independent form of value:

The equality of the kinds of human labour takes on a physical form in the equal objectivity of the products of labour as values; the measure of expenditure of human power by its duration takes on the form of the magnitude of the value of the products of labour; and finally the relationship between the producers, within which the social characteristics of their labours are manifested, take on the form of a social relation between products of labour. (C, 164)

In other words, the natural properties of the commodity (including the labour of its making) become abstracted into relative forms of exchange: 'As soon as men start to work for each other in any way, their labour also assumes a social form' (C, 164). For Marx, the moment that objects become commodities is the moment that people become alienated from the products of their labour. This immaterial transmutation - the abstraction from material modes of labour into equivalent and exchangeable commodities - features as the object of Marx's critique.

As we have seen, the aim of *Capital* is to return the commodity to the material qualities that reflect the labour and needs of the producer 'plainly'. For Marx, this task is only possible with the aid of rational analysis. Once again, the distinction between the material and immaterial is a means to separate the essential from the superficial and the rational from the irrational. With this method of analysis, Marx intends to rid the commodity of its enigma. Marx believes that if we can distinguish between the real and the apparent then it may be possible to return objects of human labour to material relations between men.

With this in mind, we return to the wooden table which 'no longer stands with its feet on the ground, but in relation to other commodities it stands on its head, and evolves out if

its wooden brain grotesque ideas' (C, 163). From this description we might imagine the wooden table to be animated. Marx is not describing an object that is fixed to its form; the commodity is instead understood to exist as an object of contradiction.

At first sight the commodity is an extremely obvious, trivial thing (C, 164), but this impression is only because it operates in a fashion that is not immediately visible. The phantasmagoric body of the commodity is only visible on closer inspection. It is through analysis that Marx believes the enigma and fetish of the commodity to emerge as an appearance. With this, Marx can see the commodity in all of its many forms. The wooden table is a thing that transcends sensuousness. It is in this state of excess (sensuous-suprasensuous) that the table spins around and captivates its audience. Instead of an ordinary sensuous thing, the table becomes 'far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will' (C, 164). The table performs as something that it is not: it appears to Marx as an apparition. The table takes on the ghostly figuration of a 'dancer', and addresses itself to other dancers; it faces the world on its head and begins to move with other commodities in the market. Instead of an obvious or trivial thing, the commodity is for Marx both phantasmagoric and contradictory.

For the sake of analysis, knowing the commodity not to be reducible to any one form, Marx distinguishes between what is physically there and what is not, between those things that he considers to be proper to man and those phenomena that emanate from the market. The nature and mechanism of the illusion is, in this formulation, one of market forces; it is through this invisible force that the table mutates into a phantom-form. This supernatural figure evades the senses and abstracts from its physical properties. The movement from the inanimate to the animate, the transmutation from the fixity of the wooden table to a thing that is without attachment is for Marx the moment that man relinquishes all control over the objects of his labour: 'It (the table) no longer stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to other commodities, it stands on its head' (C, 163). The problem with this upside-down table is its newly found autonomy. The table moves from a thing that responds to the needs of people (use) to a thing that responds to

the needs of the market (exchange). With its flight into the world of exchange the table has gained both autonomy and volition.

The phantasmagoric body of the commodity returns us to the religious. Here also evolves a process of fetishistic transmutation. The illusory mechanism that Marx shows to be true of both the commodity and religion is one that activates a chain of relations: 'They enter into relation with both each other and the human race' (C, 163). Like the religious, the commodity stimulates (market) relations, and consequently becomes both autonomous and self-transformative: 'It is only by being exchanged that the products of labour acquire a socially uniform objectivity as values...' (C, 166). The phantasmagoric transmutation of human qualities into autonomous and relative phenomena is brought into motion by ideology. The analogy with the religious is a means for Marx to describe the space of ideology. Just as the money fetish is reducible to the commodity fetish, the religious makes visible the ideological body of the commodity-form. In the same way that religious beliefs have returned as a force of repression, the commodity has returned as an object of sublimation and alienation. In this sense, social relations (whether idea or object, brain or hand) are judged by Marx to have developed beyond the control of people:

Their own movement within society has for them the form of a movement made by things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them. (C, 167-168)

Commodity Fetishism: Religion and Alienation

Marx continues his analysis of *commodity fetishism* with a reference to the 'misty realm of religion,' 'There (in religious activity) the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own' (C, 165). The construction of a belief system that is taken to possess a life that is independent of the human brain, the conception (by people) of a force that is understood to be the judge of people is, for Marx, representative of the fetishistic hold the commodity has over its own producer. The

relationship between religion and the commodity marks an important area of Marx's conceptual framework. Not only is the mechanism of religious faith a means for Marx to understand the 'theological niceties' of the commodity-form, but the mystical nature of the religious also serves as a vehicle for Marx to articulate his hatred for all things illusory. In 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the Right', Marx argues that:

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their conditions is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.⁷³

In *Capital*, Marx's reference to religion represents much more than a mere analogy. Here, the illusions of the religious are understood to be a product of the social relations that require illusions. The task is to rid the world of all illusions. The critique of religion is an essential aspect of this project for it demonstrates the method that Marx applies both to his demystification of the commodity and to his theorisation of ideology. If religion has returned products of the human brain as a repressive and authoritative body, then the market returns objects of human labour as alienating commodities (serving the interest of the ruling minority). In showing the invisible force of the ideological to exist in religion, Marx seeks to make visible the ideological mechanisms of dispossession and alienation that he believes to reside in the fetish-making appearance of the commodity. With the religious Marx gives representation to the ideological forces that determine our subjective relation to commodities.

Marx's reading of Ludwig Feuerbach's philosophy of religious faith is key to his attack on religion. In a letter to Feuerbach Marx writes: 'Your philosophy of the future and essence of faith are, in spite of their limited scope, of more weight than the whole of

⁷³ Karl Marx, *Early Writings: Marx*, Rodney Livingstone (trans), Middlesex, England, Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1974, p. 244.

German literature put together.’⁷⁴ The influence of Feuerbach is of great significance to Marx’s formulation of the commodity. Marx builds on the ‘limited scope’ of Feuerbach’s work, applying his critique of religion to the wider field of political economy.

In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach had sought to find a way to describe how sensuous men represent salvation and perfection to themselves in another supra-sensuous world (as a projection of their own essential qualities into imaginary beings and situations). In his critique, Feuerbach suggests the idea of God to be a composite of human predicates. What is worshipped as divine is really a synthesis of human qualities:

In every case it is human power, attributes, or capacity that is deified; but once it is deified, it is separated from all specific properties attaching to the real human power, capacity, or attribute; so that, when this process of abstraction is carried to the extreme, nothing is left but a mere word.⁷⁵

Feuerbach argues that in becoming aware of this fetishistic projection, we will become capable of reappropriating our essence (which has been alienated in God) and hence, of really living out fraternity on earth.

Marx develops Feuerbach’s theory by suggesting the ‘inverted’ world of religion to be a consequence of ‘man’s’ alienation from the social relations of everyday life. Marx states that, ‘man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world.’⁷⁶ Marx extends Feuerbach’s schema to include a ‘practical critical activity’, suggesting that any critique of religion must be understood as a critique

⁷⁴ Karl Marx, *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, David McLellan (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 113.

⁷⁵ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, Ralph Manheim (trans), London: Harper & Row, 1967, 264.

⁷⁶ Karl Marx, *Early Writings: Marx*, 1974, p. 244. Later in the chapter I return to Marx’s notion of the ideological as an ‘inverted consciousness’ to argue that, although Marx first introduces phantasmagoria as a figure of ideological delusion, however, his governing conceptual framework will be seen to remain with the binary logic of the *camera obscura*.

of the social conditions that estrange people from their surroundings: 'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.'⁷⁷ Marx takes Feuerbach's thesis as a model for his critique of the commodity and simultaneously distances himself from what he believes to be the limitations of philosophical interpretation:

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.⁷⁸

Marx describes how for Feuerbach the secular is the basis for understanding the illusory mechanism of religious belief: 'the secular basis detaches it from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds.'⁷⁹ It is from this foundation that Feuerbach attempts to dispel the autonomous and illusory world of religion. For Marx, it is the secular itself that exists as an immaterial 'ensemble of social relations.' What Feuerbach takes as the real, Marx identifies as illusory: 'The religious reflections of the real world can, in any case, vanish only when the practical relations of everyday life between man and man, and man and nature, generally present themselves to him in a transparent and rational form' (C, 173).

The relationship between the 'mysterious realm of religion' and the 'hidden secrets of the commodity' is for Marx both theoretically analogous and socially entwined. First, Marx understands the commodity's power of fascination to function with the same alienating force as religion (Feuerbach). Second, Marx believes social relations, of which the commodity is a objectified reflection, to sustain the need for religious dependency. Turning back to the commodity-form we will see how Marx redirects Feuerbach's critique of religious distortion, sublimation and alienation onto the commodity-form to extend the field of illusion into the spaces of everyday praxis.

⁷⁷ *Early Writings*, p. 244

⁷⁸ *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, p. 423.

⁷⁹ *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, p. 422.

Commodity Fetishism: False Reflections

For Marx, the overriding contradiction involves the problem of reflection, or more specifically, the problem of the reflection that covers the 'real' contradiction. The commodity reflects an image that distorts its own form. In this distorted form, human labour is no longer shown as a relation between men but instead returns as a relation between objects. As Derrida puts it:

There is a mirror, and the commodity form is also this mirror, but since all of a sudden it no longer plays its role, since it does not reflect back the expected image, those who are looking for themselves can no longer find themselves in it. (SoM, 155)

Marx's table does not reflect an image of labour but rather an image that fascinates and seduces. Instead of reflecting an image of material human values, objects of labour appear autonomous and self-transformative.

Marx suggests the money-form to play a crucial role in this fetish-making abstraction,⁸⁰ circulating a dematerialised form of value in order to conceal that its value no longer corresponds to 'real' social relations between men:

It is however precisely this finished form of the world of commodities - the money-form - which conceals the social character of private labour and the social relations between individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly. (C, 168)

Rather than retaining the authentic and essential properties of production, labour is objectified into a form of exchange. Marx understands this distorting mediation to signal the entrance of another phenomenon: a fetish value that attaches itself to the commodity. With this dual identity, the commodity functions as a thing that is both material and

⁸⁰ Slavoj Žižek argues that the money-form most clearly reveals the fetish at work within the commodity because of the manner in which it alters behaviour: 'The problem is that in their social activity itself, in what they are doing, they are acting as if money, in its material reality, is the immediate embodiment of wealth as such....' 'What they overlook, what they mis-recognise, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity. They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know', *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, Verso, 1989, pp. 31-32.

immaterial, or as Marx puts it, ‘Through this substitution, the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things that are at the same time supra-sensible or social’ (C, 165). In other words, the commodity embodies the conjunction of the sensuous and the supra-sensible. What is perceived, however, is an object whose value appears to reside in its physical properties, ‘for in his eyes they are immutable, but of their content and meaning’ (C, 168). Instead of a thing that shows itself ‘plainly’, the commodity conceals the contradictions of its form to appear instead as an object that is a product of the market:

the commodity form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material (*dinglich*) relations arising out of this. (C, 165)

The mystical and fetishistic ‘inversion’ of objects into forms of value exist as a result of a misrecognition: ‘It is only the particular social relations between men that assumes, in their eyes, the phantasmagorical form (*die phantasmagorische*) of a relation between things.’⁸¹ In other words, commodities exist only because there is a collective misjudgement of their actual material value. Marx suggests that in our eyes the immaterial relations that are external to the commodity stand-in for concrete material properties of use and labour. What is considered as our misrecognition (of material relations between people for social relations between commodities), is described by Marx as *commodity fetishism*.⁸²

⁸¹ *Capital*, Vol 1, Harmondsworth: London, 1970. See note 72 (p. 76) for commentary on translation of *die phantasmagorische*.

⁸² Theodor Adorno takes up Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism when he characterises Wagner’s operas as phantasmagoria: ‘*Tannhauser*, the phantasmagoria par excellence’ (Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, Rodney Livingstone (trans), London, Verso, 1981, p. 86). This critique of Wagner is based on the way Adorno understands commodity fetishism to have put new pressures on the work of art. Adorno argues that Wagner’s operas yield to the pressures of the commodity-form. This experience of music is: ‘Phantasmagoria as the point at which aesthetic appearance becomes a function of the character of the commodity. As a commodity it purveys illusions. The absolute reality of the unreal is nothing but the reality of a phenomena that not only strives increasingly to spirit away its own origins in human labour, but also, inseparably from this process and in thrall to exchange value, assiduously emphasizes its use value, stressing that this is its authentic reality, that it is no imitation – and all this in order to further the cause of exchange value’ (*In Search of Wagner*, p. 128). For Adorno, this dream world (of mass culture) has been caught in the vortex of commodification which distorts the processes of its making to appear as a mythical form detached from material life. Like Marx, Adorno’s conceptualises phantasmagoria as a fetishistic impostor that produces a false understanding of reality.

We have seen how a thing becomes a commodity once it enters the market and how, once in the market, the use value of an object of labour is eclipsed by a phantasmagoric surplus value. This mutation from a thing of use to a thing of exchange is the mysterious turn that Marx wants to pin down, understand, expose and demystify. But it is the fetishistic affect that the circulation of commodities in the market has on those who produce commodities which is of the greatest significance to Marx. That is, objects produced by people appear not as the work of people, but as an alien form confronting them as a commodity to be purchased by them. The alien form is mesmerising and wondrous; it is phantasmagoric because it is determined by an invisible force (exchange) that conceals all the signs of its making. The material origins of production and labour are concealed by the entrancing movement of commodities in the market. Marx represents this system of fetish-making with the spectral illusions of the magic lantern. That is, the illusion is now figured through a set of illusionistic transformations that as we will see with the ghostly projections of heroes and villains, conceal all traces of its own production. Moreover, out of this movement between autonomous objects emerge commodities which, as Derrida notes, appear to possess 'a human spirit.'

I will return to Marx's notion of phantasmagoria to argue that although this new figuration demonstrates the expanded terrain of immaterial phenomena, it does not engage with the relations between differentiated modes of illusion.⁸³ The psychological, spatial and technological complexities of the phantasmagoric event are already evident in the early illusionistic shows of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although they are physically confined to the space of entertainment, the spectral shows of the original phantasmagoria present a conceptual challenge to the rational logic of the *camera obscura*. As I will later argue in relation to Benjamin's *Arcades*, this development in new technologies of entertainment offers the possibility for thinking illusion differently.

⁸³ Marx's transition from fetish to phantasmagoria is not altogether straightforward. Unlike fetishism, whose effect is organised through a subjective value system, phantasmagoria is produced mechanically through the lens of a magic lantern. As I will argue, Marx fails to develop the full meaning of this new illusory model - any extension to this figuration would suggest the human relations involved in the production of things to be themselves the site of illusion as the image projected has no more 'authenticity' than the painted slide that is held behind the lens of the phantoscope.

Phantasmagoria

In his article 'Phantasmagoria, Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie', Terry Castle describes how the illusionistic shows from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries mediated oddly between rational and irrational imperatives. Castle explains how the spectacular shows that involved projections of ghosts and monsters were thought to 'cause a new public enlightenment by exposing the frauds and Charlatans and supposed ghost-seers' (P, 16). However, rather than demystifying those ancient stories, the sophisticated instruments of the illusionist created an 'intense supernatural effect, where the audience members sometimes tried to fend off moving phantoms with their hands or flee the room in terror' (P, 17).

The play of scale and distance was crucial to the success of the phantasmagoric shows. The most famous of these projections were those of Etienne-Gaspard Robertson who, in the late 1790's, invented the first phantasmagoria. Robertson's illusory spectacle was hugely popular with audiences across Europe and many accounts of the phantasmagoric experience were published in the newspapers of the time.⁸⁴ Robertson first came to public notice in 1796 when he proposed a scheme for burning the British Fleet with an assemblage of mirrors designed to concentrate solar rays on distant objects until they caught fire. As Castle notes, these ideas may have grown out of Robertson's fascination with the magic lantern which similarly concentrated a light source with a mirror and helped Robertson to develop new technologies of illusion and entertainment.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ In his article Castle quotes from newspaper articles that document the audiences frenzied response to the phantasmagoric shows of the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

⁸⁵ The Jesuit priest, Athanasius Kirchner, invented the magic lantern in the seventeenth century by using the light of a burning candle to project painted images through a tube. Kirchner enlarged projected images by positioning two convex lenses at each end of a tube and used a groove in the middle of the device to hold a small image painted on glass. The candle light, reflected by a concave mirror, was concentrated onto the painted image by the first lens while the second lens then magnified and projected the image (onto a wall or gauze screen).

Robertson exploited the immersive potential of this image-making technology with elaborate shows in specially modified theatres. With new modifications to the magic lantern,⁸⁶ illuminated images were made to float in space and perform chilling transformations. Robertson listed some of the more complex aspects of his phantasmagoria in his manuscripts:

Several, we notice, specifically involved a metamorphosis, or one shape rapidly changing into another – an effect easily achieved by doubling two glass slides in the tube of the magic lantern over one another in a quick, deft manner. Thus the image of The Three Graces, turning into skeletons.⁸⁷ (cited in, P, 36)

As Robertson makes clear, the entire phantasmagoria was founded on metamorphoses and transformation. The projections did not jump between opposing forms but mutated into varying states of horror.

Robertson would further animate his projections by addressing the audience with elaborate introductions and theatrical conjuring effects: ‘A moment of silence ensued, then an Arlesain-looking man in great disorder, with brisling hair and wild eyes, said: *since I wasn't able.. to re-establish the cult of Marat, I would at least like to see his face*’ (P, 35). Robertson would then mix up potions for bringing such figures back to life. While this was being played out on stage, a series of projected images would be seen to float in the air above the heads of the terrified audience. The intense psychological effect of these shows is argued by Castle to run against the original ambitions of the phantasmagoric event:

⁸⁶ As the demand for more spectacular phantasmagoric shows increased the technology surrounding the magic lantern was also developed. In place of the burning candle came lime ball, hydrogen, and magnesium gaslight and the older painted slides were gradually replaced by photographic transparencies. Like other image-reproduction techniques of the nineteenth century such as the panorama, the bioscope and stereoscopic projection, the illusory technologies behind the phantasmagoria provided inspiration for early developments in cinematography: ‘Well into the twentieth century motion picture shows and many early films, such as Georges Melies, featured explicitly phantasmagorical illusions. In various ways the new medium of motion pictures continued to acknowledge and reflect on its spectral nature and origins’ (P, 42).

⁸⁷ I quote from Castle who takes this extract from the *Fantasmagorie de Robertson*, which contains a list of experiments and illusions performed at the Cour des capucines (the University of Illinois Library).

What we find, it seems to me, is that the demystifying project was peculiarly compromised from the start. The rationalists did not so much negate the traditional spirit world as displace it into the realm of psychology. Ghosts were not exorcised, only internalised and reinterpreted as hallucinatory thoughts. (P, 18)

The paradox that Castle points to raises important questions about the status of illusion in social space. To some extent Robertson's experiments appeals to reason, showing supernatural beings to be the product of human ingenuity. That is, Robertson intends to convince his audience that supernatural beings are only mystified effects of human invention. At the same time, however, Robertson devotes his attention to endowing his fanciful creations with the illusion of independent life.

The early magic lantern shows developed as mock exercises in scientific demystification, complete with preliminary lectures on the fallacy of ghost belief and the various cheats perpetrated by conjures and necromancers over the centuries. But the pretence of pedagogy quickly gave way when the phantasmagoria itself began, for clever illusionists were careful never to reveal exactly how their own bizarre, sometimes frightening apparitions were produced. Everything was done, quite shamelessly, to intensify the supernatural effect. (P, 30)

Castle argues that this mechanical conjuring of ghostly figures ushers into existence a new psychological reality. A world that had only existed in the imagination was made to exist in the social space of popular entertainment.

The subliminal power of the phantasmagoria lay in the fact that it induced in the spectator a kind of maddening, irrational perception: one might believe ghosts to be illusions, present in the mind's eye alone, but one experienced them here as real entities, existing outside the boundary of the psyche. The overall effect was unsettling, like seeing a real ghost. (P, 50)

This phantasmagoric challenge to rationalist boundaries (that attempt to divide between fantasy and reality) signals an important challenge to the laws of absolutism and determinacy. With the spectral images of these illusionistic shows reality and appearance

are no longer fixed as separate entities but coexist as an inter-subjective extension of the living present.

Derrida's reading of Marx draws directly on the paradox of these same spectral representations:

This critical ontology means to deploy the possibility of dissipating the phantom, let us venture to say again of conjuring it away as representative consciousness of the subject, and of bringing this representation back to the world of labour, production, and exchange, so as to reduce it to its conditions (SoM, 170).

Derrida asks at what point the commodity exist as a natural, plain and singular object of use value. Furthermore, is the notion that *use value* can ever be cleansed of its surplus value not itself something of a fiction? The point here, however, is that Marx's engagement with the phantasmagoric body of the commodity does not reduce it to a single category (which, as Derrida points out, begins as something of a fiction), but instead lends form and identity to the invisible movements of the market. Robertson's projections illustrate this problem clearly. If images of a dancing table were intended to rid the commodity of its own phantoms, the rationalist project of demystification appears deeply flawed. In *Capital* we find that the boundaries that separate science from myth becoming increasingly blurred. Moreover, Marx's eagerness to represent what had always been imagined forces an image of social activity that consistently involves illusion. Not only does Marx dwell on the temporal, fleeting and unstable world of appearances as a possible location of meaning, he shows us how illusion exists in the everyday.

Like Robertson, Marx endows the objects of his attention (commodities) with the illusion of independent life. These illusions of capital perform in the phantasmagoria of exchange, a type of freak show in which immaterial phenomena are 'conjured' into existence only to be told to leave. This same logic applies to Robertson's phantasmagorias, the medieval tales of ghost and monsters would be paraded on stage only to dissipate the strength of

tales of ghost and monsters would be paraded on stage only to dissipate the strength of myth and mysticism. The problem for both Robertson and Marx is that these phenomena refuse to leave. Instead, they state their claim to existence and in gaining material identity, fight for a territory in the space of social activity.

Turning back to Benjamin I will now consider how the phantasmagoric show is re-conceptualised into a critical account of nineteenth-century urban space. With this documentation of urban experience, we will see how differentiated modes of illusion converge within the new spatialities of social activity.

Benjamin: The Synchronic Relation of Phantasmagoric Space

When Benjamin argues that industrial and cultural developments of the nineteenth-century are 'manifest as phantasmagoria' (AP, 14), there appears to be a new formulation of this Marxian term. That is, Benjamin's understanding addresses the developments of new spatial forms which increasingly produce a meaning that is independent of any (privileged) point of origin. As we have already seen, Benjamin moves away from the Marxian emphasis on the phantasmagoria's veiling of its own means of production (Adorno) to focus instead on new spaces of immersion and their expressive links to determining systems of power. In this way Benjamin comes to realize that it is no longer a question of 'ridding the world of illusion' but of understanding how the fusion of commodities with new visual and spatial technologies represents a world that is itself an illusion (ideology). Adorno's fear of phantasmagoria 'laying claim to being'⁸⁸ is set aside and the phantasmagoric experience stands as an 'illuminating' vehicle for figuring nineteenth-century subjectivity.

⁸⁸ In his chapter on *Phantasmagoria* Adorno applies his Marxian conceptualisation of phantasmagoria to a critical analysis of Wagner's operas. Here Adorno explains that: 'In the absence of any glimpse of the underlying forces or conditions of its production, this outer appearance can lay claim to the status of being', Its perfection is at the same time the perfection of the illusion that the work of art is a reality *sui generis* that constitutes itself in the realm of the absolute without having to renounce its claim to image the world. Wagner's operas tend toward magic delusion, to what Schopenhauer calls "the outside of the worthless commodity", in short towards phantasmagoria' (*In Search of Wagner*, p. 85).

Instead of presenting the 'economic origins of culture', Benjamin looks to 'the expression of the economy in its culture' (AP, N1a, 6). The metaphysical essentialism that Derrida problematises in Marx's emphasis on 'use value' is rethought by Benjamin into a theorisation of industrialised urban space. As Susan Buck-Morss writes:

Marx had used the term 'phantasmagoria' to refer to deceptive appearances of commodities as 'fetishes' in the marketplace. The *Passagen-Werk* entries cite the relevant passages from capital on the fetish character of the commodities, describing how exchange value obfuscates the source of the value of commodities in the productive market. But for Benjamin, whose point of departure was a philosophy of historical experience rather than an economic analysis of capital, the key to the new urban phantasmagoria was not so much the commodity-in-the-market as the commodity-on-display, where exchange value no less than use value lost practical meaning, and purely representational value came to the fore.⁸⁹

Benjamin's new emphasis on (visual) experience and the occlusion of urban space invests in a deeper consideration of the critical and 'illuminating' possibilities of illusion in urban space. The arcades, world trade fairs and the entertainment industries ('O, Gambling, prostitution, Q, Panorama, T, Modes of Lighting') figure as both an expression of the economy in its culture and a manifestation of competing phantasmagorias. The intoxicating presence of these spatial products is not a simple extension of Marx's theory of the fetish-making commodity but figures as a causal link to a wider system of power. What is of importance in the *Arcades* is how new cultural forms compete with and outgrow one another. Benjamin illustrates how their perceptual immediacy is constantly being refined and updated. Consequently these new spaces are without fixity and, like fashion, exist as a passing expression of the moment.

Benjamin introduces his project with citations documenting the rise and steady decline of the Parisian arcades. These spaces of retail are taken as a 'dream world' that 'will charm the fancy of Parisians well into the second half of the century' (AP, 17). The

⁸⁹ *The Dialectics of Seeing*, pp. 81-82

‘intoxication’ and ‘vertigo’ that Benjamin associates with the arcades performs as a pivotal figuration for his study of nineteenth-century experience. Benjamin explores how these forerunners of the department store represent (one of many) urban phantasmagorias that, like the commodity-form, mask the century’s failure to respond ‘to new technological possibilities with a new social order’ (AP, 26). Of interest to Benjamin is how these cavernous spaces, which exist both as interior and exterior, have developed into a ‘dream-house.’⁹⁰

The arcades had to be lit by various forms of half-light, which Benjamin associates with the descent of a ‘dream sleep over Europe’ or collective phantasmagoria.⁹¹ The mental delusion thus engendered in turn infects architectural practice. But these new spaces of exchange will inevitably fall into ruin. Just as the nineteenth-century arcades replaced their eighteenth-century counterpart, they too are superseded by multi-story department stores.⁹² In addition, new railway stations, museums, winter gardens, sports palaces, exhibition halls and boulevards are shown to eclipse the spectacle of the original arcades. As Buck-Morss describes: ‘These once magnificent *fairy grottoes* that had spawned the phantasmagoria went into eclipse: their narrowness appeared stifling, their perspectives claustrophobic, their gaslight too dim.’⁹³

Benjamin’s ‘fairytale’ is synonymous with a nightmare, the arcades feature as part of a continuous movement of ever-greater phantasmagorias. Along with other forms of industrial development, Benjamin takes the arcades to exist as an ephemeral phenomena and, in so doing, shows the signs of their inevitable demise. This moving cycle of cultural and economic forms is of great importance to Benjamin’s study. Through the *Arcades* we see how monuments of industrial power and technological progress fall into ruin to become obsolete relicts of a forgotten past.

⁹⁰ The ‘dream houses’ of the modern epoch – the arcade, museum and constructions for the world exhibitions – are the ultimate settings for the phantasmagoria of the metropolis.

⁹¹ The development of artificial light in nineteenth-century Paris and its consequent affects on urban subjectivity is taken up by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in his book, *Disenchanted Night, The Industrialisation of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, Angela Davies (trans), Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1995.

⁹² The *Bon Marche* department store in Paris features as the main successor to the arcades.

⁹³ *The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 92.

Over the course of *Convolute A*, Benjamin traces how the arcades become more labyrinthine and removed from the streets outside; in short, the arcades become ‘wholly adapted to arousing desire’ (A3a, 7).⁹⁴ As we have seen, this dream-like effect is partly achieved by the interiorising of the street with glass roofs. In addition, the arcades aroused interest through their innovative and modern construction techniques which first introduced iron and glass into new buildings. Most importantly, however, was the fact that the arcade was home to the commodity. The arousing of desire centred around the display of luxury goods which, seen through the windows of interiorised shop fronts, would line the narrow corridors. Here, ‘the commodity proliferates along the margins and enters into fantastic combinations’ (A3a, 7)). However, it is not long before the arcades fall into decline. Jules Claretie notes: ‘The arcades have one great defect for modern Parisians: you could say that, just like certain paintings done from stifled perspectives, they’re in need of air’ (AP, E1, 5).⁹⁵

For Benjamin, it is in observing the decline of the once fashionable arcades that we glimpse at their truth. In documenting the rise and fall of these sites of shopping Benjamin intends to ‘break the spell that hold us in thrall’.⁹⁶ The historical displacement of industrial and spatial products of capital is taken to question the myth of progress. Like the fetishism that Marx associates with the commodity, Benjamin’s reanimation of dead arcades goes to remind us that the spectacle of innovation and progress conceals the unhappy social conditions that lie behind the products of industrial capitalism.

In addition to Benjamin’s diachronic displacement of cultural and economic forms, the phantasmagoria’s ‘immediacy of perceptual presence’ is employed as a counter to the illusions of permanence and fixity that exude from the monumental facades and wide boulevards of nineteenth-century Paris. This way Benjamin’s ideological demystification

⁹⁴ In this passage Benjamin responds to the shift from the constructions of the eighteenth-century, such as the Palais-Royal, to the nineteenth-century arcades, which open into another interior hall. In the eighteenth-century arcades the buildings open onto the street.

⁹⁵ Here Benjamin quotes from Jules Claretie, *La Vie a Paris*, 1895 (Paris, 1896), pp. 47ff.

⁹⁶ Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996, p. 109.

also involves a conceptual framework that is synchronic: 'Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each now is the now of a particular recognisability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time' (AP, N3, 1). The point here is that the 'ideological transposition' involved in the *Arcades* is most clearly exposed through what I shall call, the *synchronic relation of phantasmagoric space*.⁹⁷ What is of interest to Benjamin not only concerns how these phantasmagorias are illuminating through their 'ideological transposition, but also in the immediacy of their perceptual presence' (AP, 14). The relation between the phantasmagorias that are paraded through the *Arcades* moves away from the Marxian view of ideological distortion to suggest that the new spatial forms and the experiences they produce (in the nineteenth-century subject) are 'manifest as phantasmagoria' (AP, 14).

The demolition and rebuilding of large sections of Paris by Baron Haussmann involved the construction of new national monuments that laid claim to the supremacy of the French empire under Napoleon III. To illustrate this point Benjamin turns to D. Laverdant who in 1845 wrote: 'What fate does the present movement of society have in store for architecture? Let us look around us...' 'Ever more monuments, ever more palaces. On all sides rise up great stone blocks, and everything tends toward the solid, the heavy, the vulgar' (AP, E8a, 2).⁹⁸ In the introduction to the *Arcades* Benjamin suggests that this illusion of coherence, authority and permanence is simply another (spatial) phantasmagoria, the 'phantasmagoria of civilization itself' where 'the pomp and the splendour with which commodity-producing society surrounds itself, as well as the illusory sense of security, are not immune to dangers' (AP, 14-15). In placing the phantasmagoria of permanence and authority next to the short lived phantasmagorias of entertainment and shopping, Benjamin takes the perceptual immediacy of the phantasmagoric event as an (illuminating) critical tool. In other words, Benjamin places the political and cultural investment in architectural representations of power and control in the context of the more immediate and ephemeral character of other cultural forms

⁹⁷ What I have referred to as the 'synchronic relation of phantasmagoric space' is intended to describe the relation between the events, experiences and urban forms that Benjamin juxtaposes. In short, the relation between competing modes of spatial illusion.

⁹⁸ D. Laverdant, *de la mission de l'art et du role des artistes: Salon de 1845* (Paris 1845), from the offices of La Phalange, pp. 13-15.

(*Arcades, International Exhibitions, New Modes of lighting, etc.*). Consequently, the spectacular conjurations and projections of phantasmagoria reveal the ideological mechanism at work in urban space as a whole. Benjamin here turns to J.J. Honegger who in 1874 writes: 'Haussmann's urban works are a wholly appropriate representation of the absolute governing principles of Empire: repression of every individual formation, every organic self-development, fundamental hatred of all individuality' (AP, E1a, 1).⁹⁹ This critical relation of phantasmic illusions moves beyond the old division between essence and appearance. Benjamin demonstrates how space becomes a matrix for turbulent and critical exchanges between the illusion of historical and political fixity and the phantasmagoric spaces of consumer culture.

As Michael Jennings has recently argued, Benjamin's phantasmagoria is 'progressive not as analysis or revelation but as a device that condenses and exacerbates central, if hidden, features of time as sameness and repetition.'¹⁰⁰ In this way, the concern is not only with the diachronic 'awakening' (involved in historical displacement) but with what is revealed through a critical relation of differentiated modes of illusion. No longer are we orientated through a series of binary oppositions; through the *Arcades* we find ourselves caught within a repetition of synchronic interferences.

Soon after the section on *Haussmannisation* (E) Benjamin moves to *Exhibitions, Advertising and Grandville* (G). It is at this point in the *Arcades* that Benjamin turns directly to Marx's theory of *commodity fetishism* to argue that extravagant displays of industry erases the traces left by human labour to re-appear in a phantasmagoric form. If Haussmann's phantasmagoria of urban design reflects coherence, social regeneration and stasis as a means to conceal the social unrest that Benjamin evidences throughout the *Arcades*, then the phantasmagoria of the world trade fairs project an image of

⁹⁹ J.J. Honegger, *Grundsteine einer allgemeinen Kulturgeschichte der neuesten Zeit*, vol. 5 (Leipzig, 1874), p. 326.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Jennings connects Benjamin's returning phantasmagorias with Nietzsche's notion of 'eternal return' to argue that: 'These phantasmagorias are the product of crisis but have the unusual ability to identify and intensify that crisis itself', Michael Jennings, 'On the Banks of a New Lethe: Commodification and Experience in Benjamin's Baudelaire Book', see, '*boundary 2, an international journal of literature and culture*, (Vol. 30, number 1, Spring 2003), *Benjamin Now: Critical Encounters with The Arcades Project*, Kevin Mclaughlin and Philip Rosen (eds), p.103.

technological progress and cultural development that, like the arcades before them, eclipse the alienation of the individual worker. As Benjamin puts it, 'We can speak of fetishistic autonomy not only with regard to the commodity but also...with regard to the means of production'... 'Instead of being consumed by him as material elements of productive activity, they consume him as the ferment necessary to their own life process' (AP G12a, 3).

Throughout *Convolute G* the phantasmagoria of the world trade fair is shown alongside numerous and lengthy citations from Marx. But this engagement with Marx's theory of fetishism seems only to clarify the way Benjamin comes to think the illusions of capital differently. Benjamin cites a broad range of responses to the world trade fair including A.S. de Doncourt's account from 1867:

Whoever visited the Champ de Mars for the first time got a singular impression. Arriving by the central avenues, he saw at first... only iron and smoke... This initial impression exerted such an influence on the visitor that, ignoring the tempting diversions offered by the arcade, he would hasten towards the movement and noise that attracted him. At every point... where the machines were momentarily still, he could hear the strains of steam-powered organs and the symphonies of brass instruments. A. S. de Doncourt, *Les Expositions Universelles (Lille and Paris, 1889)*. (AP, G7a, 5)

The phantasmagorias of the trade fairs are central to the synchronic relation of phantasmagoric space. In the above citation we see how these spatial relations involve a series of competing forms (in which the arcades loses out to the new 'symphonies' of the trade fair). This cycle of spectacular forms is precisely how Benjamin constructs the whole of his project. Benjamin's parade of monotonous forms and events is a type of eternal return,¹⁰¹ which appear to him 'as an image flashing up in the now of its recognizability' (AP, N9, 7) emerges suddenly as a dialectical mode of awakening.

¹⁰¹ In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin devotes a convolute to the notion of eternal return – *D, Boredom, Eternal Return* – in which he evidences to sameness and repetition of industrial capitalism as a counter-image to the 'myth of progress'.

Samuel Webber also highlights Benjamin's use of 'synchronicity' in the *Arcades* when he writes:

Such synchronicity is constituted as much by separation as by convergence. It is precisely this simultaneity, involving both proximity and distance that is the condition of any possible 'knowledge' of images, their 'knowability.' Such 'knowability' is situated not in the interval between two fixed points, for instance between the past shedding light on the present, or the present shedding light on the past, but rather in a different sort of space: that of a convergence which does not result in simple identity.¹⁰²

Benjamin's synchronicity is, as Weber points out, not to do with creating synthesis between the past and the present in which a single identity is determined, but rather a 'disjunctive bringing together and keeping apart.'¹⁰³ This is what connects the synchronic to the phantasmic in Benjamin's *Arcades*. Like the phantasmic show, the relation between events is not intended to determine meaning to a singularity – inside/outside, reality/appearance - but instead employed as point of convergence which is both temporal and spatial.

At first sight, Benjamin's concern with documenting these spaces of fantasy and intoxication seems at odds with the possibility of any critical engagement. As Adorno puts it in one of his many responses to the *Arcades*: 'Our task is to polarise and dissolve this (false) consciousness dialectically in terms of society and singular subjects, not to galvanize it as a imagistic correlative of the commodity character.'¹⁰⁴ The theoretical ambiguity that Benjamin attaches to the cultural forms of nineteenth-century capitalism is, however, expressed through his investment in the critical potential of phantasmagoria.

¹⁰² Samuel Weber, 'Streets, Squares, Theatres: A City on The Move, Walter Benjamin's Paris', see, *boundary 2* (Vol. 30, number 1, Spring 2003), *Benjamin Now: Critical Encounters with The Arcades Project*, p. 20.

¹⁰³ *boundary 2* (Vol. 30, number 1, Spring 2003), *Benjamin Now: Critical Encounters with The Arcades Project*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ From a letter sent to Benjamin from Adorno and Grestel Karplus (02.07.1935), taken from, *Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin: The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*, Henri Lonitz (ed.), Nicholas Walker (trans), Cambridge: Polity Press: 1999, p. 107.

This series of illusions work as ‘interferences.’¹⁰⁵ That is, in their synchronic relation they work as points of disruption that are taken by Benjamin to make us conscious of the otherwise hidden mechanism and structures that are at work within urban space. The critical value of Benjamin’s investment in phantasmagoria can also be seen in the challenge it makes to the way illusion is thought by Marx, a development which further supports the critical potential of space and illusion.

Figuring Illusion

As we have seen, Benjamin’s interest in demystifying the ideological transpositions of nineteenth-century Paris does not attempt to ‘abolish’ all illusion. Where Marx uses phantasmagoria to represent the ghostly form of the dancing commodity, Benjamin’s analysis of historical experience takes the working mechanism of the phantasmagoric show as an important methodological tool. This shift from thinking within the limits of the *camera obscura* - where the real world exists as an inverted image projected through a lens into a dark chamber – to *phantasmagoria* – where the projected image is itself a painted representation and therefore disassociated from any ‘origin’ - not only signals the conceptual distance between Marx and Benjamin but goes to establish a more complex and ambiguous approach to thinking illusion. In contrast to the rational materialism of Marx’s enquiry into commodity fetishism, Benjamin looks to new technological and cultural developments as differentiated modes of spatial illusion.

In *Profane Illuminations*, Margaret Cohen argues that Benjamin’s ‘reawakening’ of phantasmagoria from the pages of *Capital* involves a new understanding of the term. The rise in importance of the phantasmagoria in the *Arcades* not only illustrates Benjamin’s move away from the language of ‘the dream’ but demonstrates a new figuring of the ideological.

¹⁰⁵ The term *interferences* is used by Michael Jennings to argue that: ‘The paradoxical hope of overcoming delusion, however intermittently, of attaining to a form of experience that might enable the recognition of truth, might reside precisely in those interferences – in Benjamin’s progressive phantasmagorias.’ *On the Banks of a New Lethe: Commodification and Experience in Benjamin’s Baudelaire Book*, see, ‘boundary 2’ (Vol. 30, number 1, Spring 2003), *Benjamin Now: Critical Encounters with The Arcades Project*, p. 104.

The technology of Robertson's phantasmagoria modifies the Renaissance technology of the *camera obscura* in a fashion aptly expressing Benjamin's challenge to the way in which 'historical vulgar naturalism' understands ideological representation. While, like the 'historical vulgar naturalism', the *camera obscura* mechanically reverses the world out there in the darkened chamber of thought, the magic lantern of the phantasmagoria inverts painted slides that are themselves artistic products (PI, 140).

In other words, Benjamin updates Marx's figuration of an inverting *camera obscura* to the phantasmagoric shows of the early nineteenth century. Instead of a fetishistic inversion, we see the reproduction of other modes of illusion. Benjamin's move away from Marx is expressed through the critical potential of phantasmagoria. As Cohen puts it; 'the fire kindled in the phantoscope (of the phantasmagoric show) transforms the unfiltered natural light of rational understanding into an energy somewhere between nature and art' (PI, 256). This new figuring of illusion is central to Benjamin's dialectical representation of nineteenth-century subjectivity. Instead of the rational oppositions that we have seen to dominate how space and social activity are thought, we find, with Benjamin's analysis of the arcades, both a generative and critical understanding of capitalist space.

This shift in thinking is further supported by Derrida's account of Marx's theory of *commodity fetishism*. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida argues that although Marx develops a theory of absence, we are asked to think of presence in relation to the absent body of the commodity. The use value of the commodity is the authentic form, a form that relates directly to the essence of man, that is, a value that reflects our 'being' in the world. This essential form is affirming and empowering, it connects us to the world of nature and at the same time determines how we are social beings that produce and develop our own reality. However, as Derrida points out, the pure form of 'use value' is also a fiction, there is no removing the corrupting value of exchange: 'use value becomes a pure origin to which no object should ever correspond, an origin that is fictive or ideal, use value is inhabited by its other' (SoM, 160). The simple opposition of absence with presence, reality and appearance is no longer an adequate logic with which to critique new forms of

capital. Instead, we must think 'two times at the same time' (SoM, 163). With Marx, the relation between surplus and use remains with the figuration of the *camera obscura*. The apparition of exchange is the moment of inversion, but this is an inversion that remains tied to a point of origin, the essence of the real object that exists elsewhere. The table may have a phantasmagoric quality to its animated and anthropomorphised projection but we find that our point of orientation lies outside of the illusion with the metaphysical concept of a plain, naturalised and purified use value. The limit of this concept is equally the limitation of the *camera obscura* that, in distorting and inverting the real original, determines a world that cannot exist, or more precisely, a world that only exists as a concept (metaphysics).

Marx's wooden table is chosen on the grounds of its inanimate and everyday character. It is positioned on stage and transformed into a distorted and anthropomorphised figuration. In contrast, Benjamin's magic show does not offer the same surprise, the urban phantasmagorias have already been animated and we are already familiar with their phantasmagoric movements. Through the *Arcade* we see the old painted slide blown up and re-animated. Benjamin supplies image after image so that we can see them exist as a series of transformations. The paraphernalia of Robertson's illusionistic show is matched by Benjamin's 'physiognomic reading, facticity and concreteness, and imagistic historiography.'¹⁰⁶ The phantasmagoria is not alchemy, we do not see concrete reality transformed into the 'supra-sensible or social'. Benjamin's show is instead quite boring and non-eventful, the transfiguration is slow and methodical. It is also very long. After plodding a while, we come to realise that the action is taking place in slow motion. At this sobering speed we see the way one representation comes to replace another, or rather, the way one cultural form out-performs another to momentarily steal the show. This way, Benjamin reveals the mechanism and movement of urban, cultural and economic phantasmagorias over time, over a long time. Benjamin takes all the fun out of the show by identifying its existence everywhere; the phantasmagoria does not mediate reality, it

¹⁰⁶ *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, p. 101.

simply ignores reality and embarks on its own cycle of projected representations and, in so doing, gains control of its own limits.

In forefronting phantasmagoria as a new analytical tool, Benjamin identifies the need for a new logic. To some extent Benjamin does in the *Arcades* what Derrida has asked of Marx, 'far from effacing differences and analytic determinations, this other logic calls for other concepts. One may hope it will allow for a more defined and more rigorous restructuration' (SoM, 163). Although Benjamin's interest in phantasmagoria is closely related to a reading of Marx, or perhaps more specifically, Adorno's interpretation of Marx's *Phantasmagorische*, Benjamin gives the site of illusion a more open and what I would argue to be a more progressive reading. The projection of a painted image through the lens of a magic lantern performs as an updated figuration of industrial capitalism. No longer is it a distorted reflection of real relations but the experience of a world that is already the product of phantasmagoric representations.

Living Relations Between the Dead

With both Marx and Benjamin we are to think of the illusions of capital as living relations between the dead. If Marx animates, automatises and anthropomorphises the commodity-form, Benjamin does the same, only in this case we encounter these illusions in the 'dead' spaces of industrial capitalism. As we have seen, Benjamin looks back at the ruins of urban forms (the arcades) and attempts to restore their phantasmagoric appeal. In both instances the site of illusion is central to understanding how we see, experience and understand the world around us, or more specifically, is key to comprehending how our consciousness of the world is both false and misleading.

The important shift that we have seen to take place in this expanded field of illusion involves a certain reconciliation. That is, in the work of Benjamin we are not subject to the same redemptive drive I have argued to characterise Marx's thought. Instead, the phantasmic illusions of the ideological are inescapable from any notion of material reality. Examining them out of their time is Benjamin's way of bringing them to light

(this way they occupy the space of dead ruins and lose their mesmerising and fetishistic hold to become a dialectical image that is 'awakening').

Benjamin's re-conceptualisation also takes the site of illusion to be somehow illuminating. The paradox of this position becomes most evident in relation to Plato's thinking. That is, if Benjamin was to argue with Plato he might suggest a different interpretation of the stick seen in water. For Benjamin, the stick will always, in some way, be bent. Moreover, in this distorted form - and alongside all the other objects seen through water - we encounter some truth. This move away from the rational logic of Platonic thought, this critical engagement with contradiction (that is to be understood rather than eradicated) is also what we have seen to distinguish Benjamin from Marx. More importantly, we can take Benjamin's shift in approach as a means to return to Plato with a new logic. Here we find that the sun is paradoxically analogous with illusion. The dazzling phantasmic light is, however, too dangerous to consider unmediated. In the *Arcades* we are perceived as too weak to gaze at the illusions of capital in the present; instead, we explore the 'afterimage' and, like the phantasmic projections of ghosts, we observe the sobering glow of dead remains.

With Benjamin, the privileged moment of pure origin is challenged by the synchronic relation of phantasmic space. In the *Arcades* the living dead do not start off as pure forms but emerge through the lens of the phantoscope. Moreover, there is not only one mode of illusion, there are a whole series of competing phantasmagorias which, in their synchronicity, go some way to revealing the hidden forces that determine subjectivity. The problem, however, is that in the *Arcades* we remain as a privileged observer looking down on the conditions of subjectivity only through the window of history.

The problem that remains concerns the status of illusion in the present. Living relations between the dead are no longer a useful figuration for grasping the meaning and status of illusion in contemporary experience. With this paradoxical half-life emerges the fear and suspicion that remains attached to the way immaterial phenomena are both thought and experienced. Just as George A. Romero has shown in his film, *Dawn of the Dead*, the

shopping mall is where the zombies stagger up and down escalators, stare with dulled fascination at department store dummies wearing fur caps and try to eat perfume bottles. It is not, however, only a question of the living relations between dead objects. As we have seen, the fetishism and phantasmagoria that figures market relations also transforms the consumer into one of the same walking dead. It is precisely this fear of becoming possessed that determines how illusion is thought.

Romero illustrates this problem clearly when he shows the movie's four protagonists looking down from the rooftop skylights into the shopping mall. While watching the zombies walking around the store, the female reporter asks, 'Why do they come here', the paratrooper replies: 'it is the place that they know, it is where they have gathered before'. Throughout Romero's film, we are reminded that the zombies might very well reflect the way we conduct our lives and we are forced to ask ourselves if the living heroes are any more alive than the half dead creatures that are driven by the sole need to consume (human flesh).

In documenting the phantasmagoria of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism Benjamin intends to show us in a dream state so that we might then wake from the illusions that hold us captive. Put differently, Benjamin turns the site of illusion onto itself to produce a sobering image of intoxication. Although Benjamin's re-conceptualisation of phantasmagoria has been awarded a critical dimension, with his analysis we remain deeply suspicious of phantasmagoric space. Turning to the present, we anxiously ask ourselves if we too are zombies. Benjamin, like Debord, Lefebvre and Jameson after him, rely on the existence of a world outside the dream (or 'world beyond the nightmare' as it is often referred to). Yet it is precisely this assumed ground – the world 'beyond the illusion' - that negates any meaningful analysis of the forces in play. Not only does this analysis lay claim to the 'natural', the 'authentic' and the 'real', this line of enquiry generates anxiety and suspicion around the spaces that we inhabit.

In the following chapter I will consider the difficulties and problems of applying Marx's critique of the commodity to a reading of contemporary social space. As we have seen

with Benjamin, Marx's figuring of the exchange of commodities as living relations between the dead (*die Phantasmagorische*) continues to determine how the constructions and affects of contemporary social space are theorised and represented. In order to test out both the value and limitations of Marx's critique, I will turn to spaces of retail, leisure and entertainment. With empirical data drawn from this research I will ask if the principle of the commodity, as Marx understood it, remains a useful tool for comprehending the economic, political and social mutations of capitalist space.

Paris Arcades



4.1 - Passage Choiseul, Paris, late nineteenth-century.



4.2 - Passage Choiseul, Paris.

Phantasmagoria

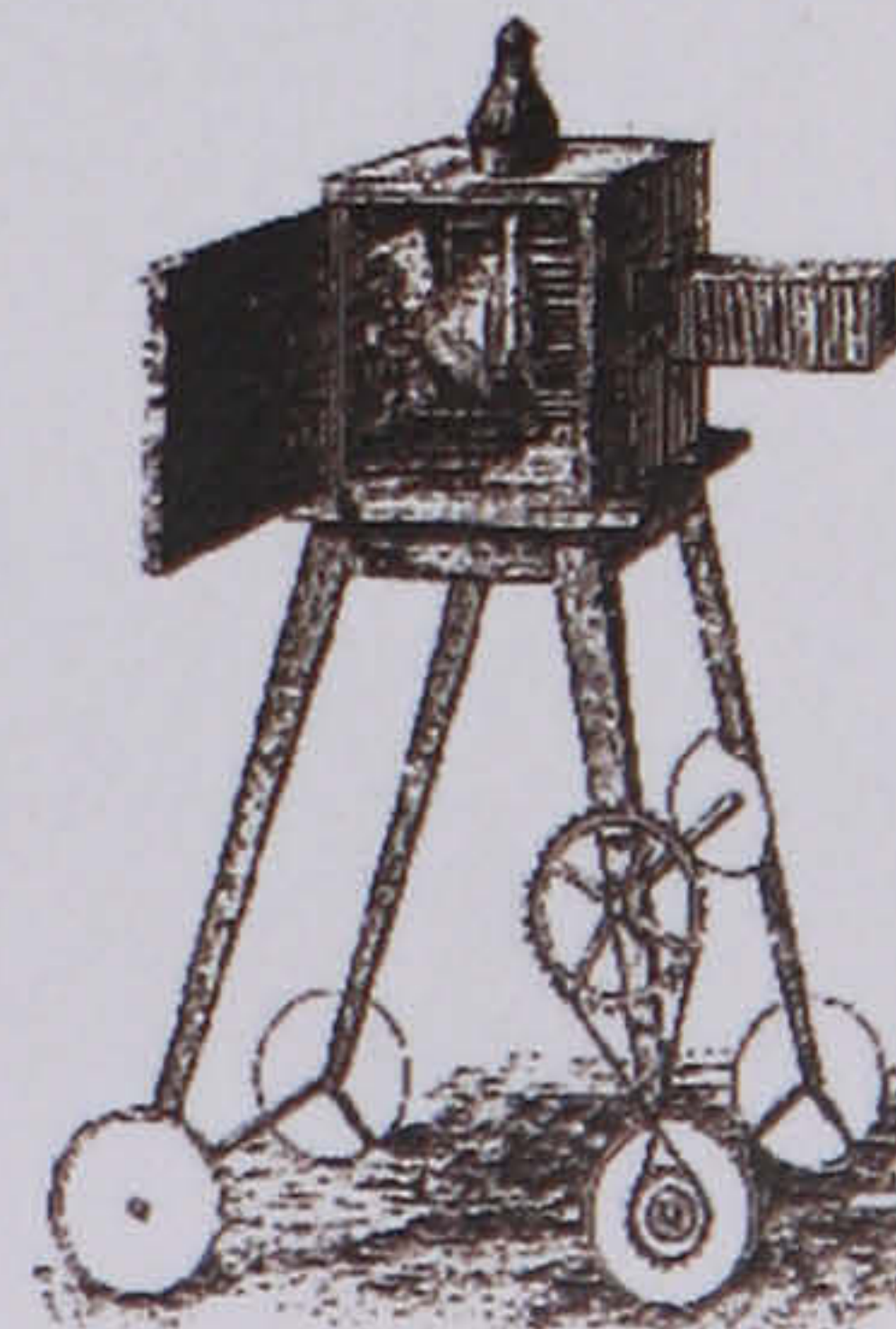


5.1 - Etienne-Gaspard Robertson's Phantasmagoria in a disused cloister in an old Capucine Chapel, Paris, 1797.

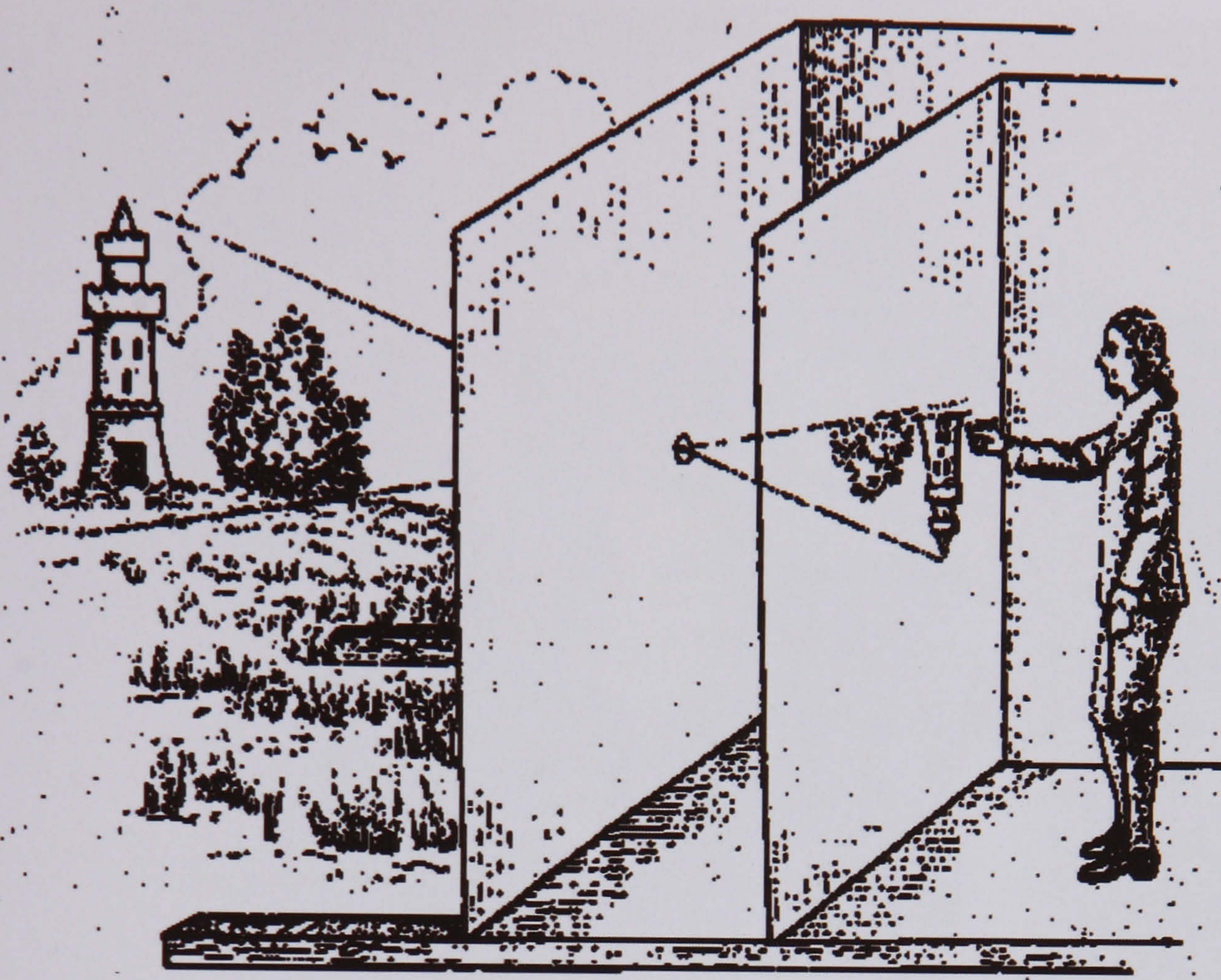


5.2 - Often the projector was behind a translucent screen, out of the view of the audience. This greatly added to the mystery of the show.

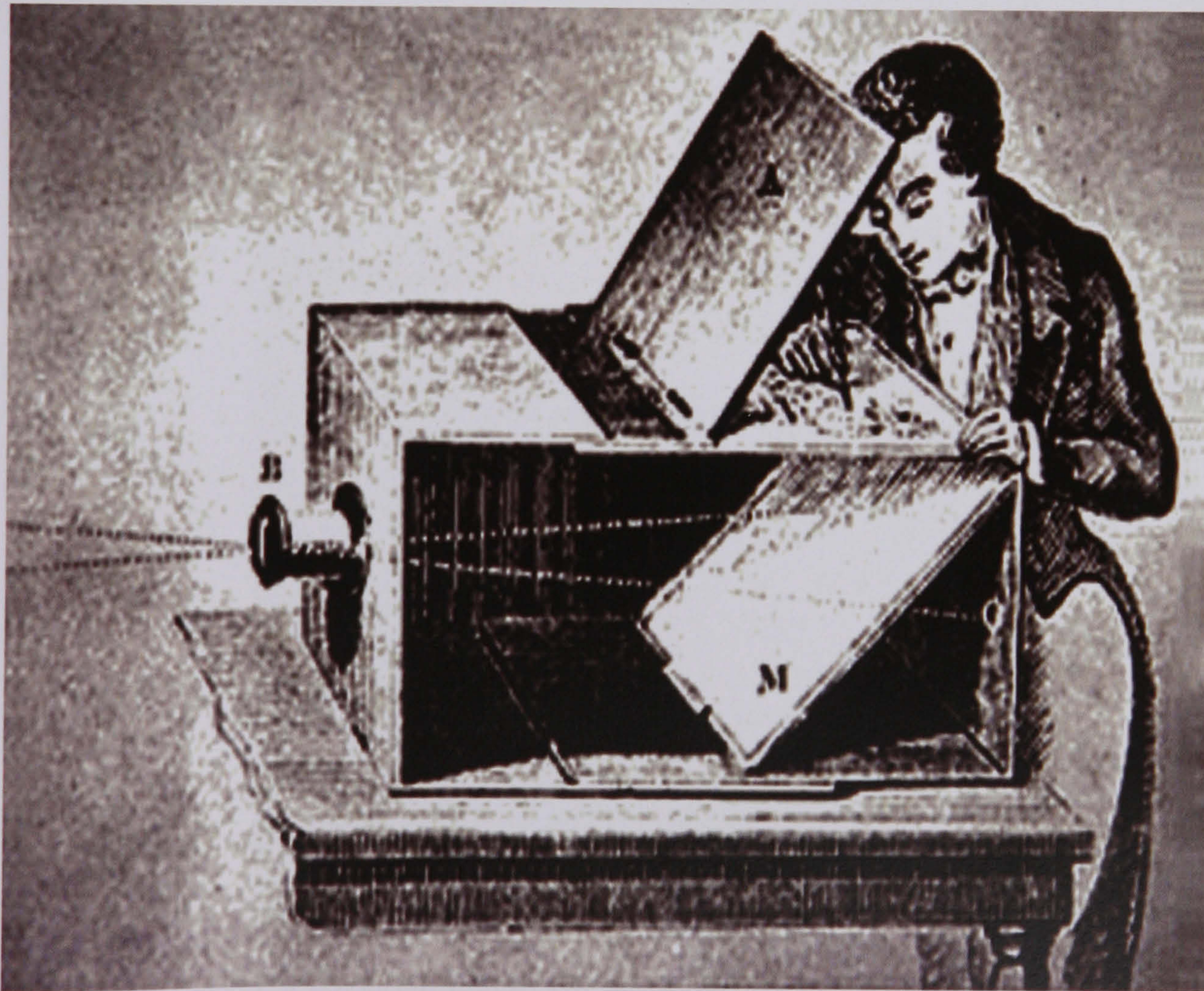
5.3 - Robertson used a special lantern on wheels, which he called a Phantascope or Fantascope. By moving the projector backwards and forwards the operator could rapidly alter the size of the images on the screen. The device was designed to keep the picture in focus and at a constant brightness as the machine moved back and forth.



Camera Obscura



6.1 - Camera Obscura, 1646.



6.2 - Portable Camera Obscura, mid-eighteenth century.

Dawn of the Dead, 1978



7.1 - Dawn of the Dead, dir. George Romero. The zombies walking through the shopping Mall.



7.2 - The view from the lift as the zombies attack the living.

Placemaking

Chapter 3

Experiential Placemaking

While the relationship between the commodity and its surrounding context remains a useful and necessary vehicle for exploring the complex and differentiated status of illusion in social space,¹⁰⁷ my analysis of space does not follow the well-known theories which seek to separate and protect culture from the ongoing mutations of global capital. That is, the development of Marx's dialectical materialism in architectural and cultural theory often focuses on the sublimation and the consequent alienation and estrangement of the individual subject living under the forces of late capitalism. Examples include the work of Guy Debord, Henri Lefebvre and Fredric Jameson. It is my intention to look beyond the materialist position to consider the possibility of critical activity within the site of both illusion and capital. My engagement with the spaces of retail, leisure and entertainment is based on the belief that the inscription – of commodity onto space - does not constitute a passive commoditisation of both space and the individuals within it. That is, instead of the zombie condemned to a half-life of mindless consumption, I will argue that the contemporary spaces of retail and leisure provide a critical insight into the global economic systems that govern our lives.

Through this chapter I will focus on the relation between 'experiential placemaking' in urban design¹⁰⁸ and the 'experience economy'.¹⁰⁹ Following Benjamin's *synchronic relation of phantasmagoric space*, I will consider how today's spaces of retail also

¹⁰⁷ The notion that retail space is now the dominant site of social activity is taken up in a number of publications. The *Harvard Design School: Guide to Shopping* offers a comprehensive study of the development and social status of retail space. In the introduction the editors write: 'Shopping is arguably the last remaining form of public activity. Through a battery of increasingly predatory forms, shopping has infiltrated, colonised, and even replaced, almost every aspect of urban life'. Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas and Sze Tsung Leong, eds, *Harvard Design School: Guide to Shopping*, Koln: Benedickt Taschen, 2001, inside front cover. The (changing) relationship between social space and shopping is also the focus of the following publications: Rachael Bowlby, *Carried Away: The Invention of Modern Shopping*, London: Faber and Faber, 2000, *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, Christoph Grunenberg and Max Hollein (eds), Ostfilden-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Jon Jerde International define their approach to 'experiential design' as spaces that 'engage the human spirit' (JPIW, 4). They continue: 'What we've been able to figure out is that place, and its persona, have the ability to trigger aesthetic emotion, and that when you create moments and vignettes, and string them together on a physical time line you have an opportunity to give the human being experiences and opportunities that are unique, even extraordinary.' (JPIW, 3).

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business is a Stage*, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

encompass the mutations, coexistences and temporalities of the global market. However, in contrast to Benjamin, I will be considering these spatialities as they exist in the present. That is, instead of the 'objective dialectics', which remain outside the spaces in question, I will be looking from within. I will be questioning the notion that social space is determined through a single trajectory that is reducible to an overarching theory of mass commoditisation. To do this I will return to Marx's theorisation of the commodity while, at the same time, exploring the differentiations, coexistences and temporalities that exist in the spectacular and disorientating constructions of contemporary space. While the relation between space and illusion remains strongly connected to the phantasmagoric movement of the commodity, I will take the turbulent and generative relation between differentiated modes of illusion to challenge what might otherwise appear to be a 'logical' or 'natural' flow between space and commodity.

Commodity, Space, Automation

It (the table) emancipates itself on its own initiative: all alone, autonomous and automation, its fantastic silhouette moves on its own, free and without attachment. It goes into trances, it levitates, it appears relieved of its body, like all ghosts, a little mad and unsettled as well, upset, 'out of joint', delirious, capricious, and unpredictable. It appears to put itself spontaneously into motion, but it also puts others into motion, yes, it puts everything around it into motion, as though *pour encourager les autres* (to encourage the others). (SoM, 153)

Like the commodities that are placed in it, the space of retail is now designed to hold a value that is independent of the traditional architectural principles of form and function. This addition is not simply an extended or excessive notion of architectural form; the phantasmagoric instead involves the morphological experiences of spectacle and disorientation. As Elizabeth Grosz points out, 'Space is not simply an ether, a medium through which other forces, like gravity, produce their effects: it is inscribed by and in its turn inscribes those objects and activities placed within it.'¹¹⁰ The generative movement between space, objects and activities inscribes both architectural space and the individuals within it. The fantasy and autonomy of the commodity has inscribed the space that surrounds it and in turn, has lent the activity of shopping a new dimension.

Like the commodity on display, retail space embodies a surplus to its material reality of use and function. This 'extra', as has already been suggested, relies on spectacle and disorientation to bring fantasy and entertainment to the activity of shopping. Automation is crucial to these immaterial and morphological additions, providing a physical and perceptual mobility that goes to support and intensify the consumer's fantasy of a living mode of architecture. It is in this sense that space appears to possess a 'human spirit'.

In the case of Rem Koolhaas's Prada store (575 Broadway, NYC), the commodities on sale have lent the interior a new level of automation. Concealed within the moving walls

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002, p. 163

of the interior, the clothes and accessories are hidden in the fabric of the building. In order to see the main collection, the shopper must step down through the large empty space in the centre of the building. At the bottom of the stairs are two small entrances. In these cavernous rooms the clothes and accessories are displayed on large mobile units. Not only are the commodities placed out of view but the display units, which are built on metal tracks, ensure that the spatial dimensions of the store can be easily reconfigured. In the changing rooms the fixed materiality of the walls are again subject to a complex reconfiguration of spatial dimensions. In addition to the familiar changing room mirrors, Koolhaas has inset a video monitor into the reflective glass. With this new perspective the consumer can see him/herself from the front and the back simultaneously. The continuous movement between mirror image and video image automates both the interior of the changing rooms and the self-image of the shopper, which is fractured into a series of competing reflections.¹¹¹ The added movement within the space increases the state of animation of the commodity and in so doing, adds to the surplus value of the goods on display.

The process of becoming automated is always an addition to the materialist notion of use and labour. The market brings a value to the commodity that is independent of its material value, *surplus value*. This immaterial extra is what Marx suggests brings the commodity to life so that it can dance with other commodities in the market. In Koolhaas's Prada Store a new level of automation develops what Marx had located within the commodity's relation to the market at large, and perhaps more importantly, works to materialize what Marx described in *Capital* as the commodity's 'metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' (C, 163). However, with this inscription there is also difference. While new spaces of retail are irreducibly tied to the commodity we find the relation to involve a displacement of some of the older laws that govern the way space is

¹¹¹ Dan Graham has repeatedly accused Koolhaas of stealing this design concept from his 1974 installation *Present Continuous Past(s)* - most notably in a lecture delivered by Graham at the Bartlett School of Architecture in 2002. The relationship is interesting as Graham's installation sets out to explore the affect of temporal space displaced into differentiated moments of lived experience. In her essay, 'Vision in Process', Bridgit Pelzer writes of Graham's *Present Continuous Past(s)* that 'by providing a glimpse of the subject's multiple incarnations, these installations materialise the space of mistaken identity (*meconnaissance*) that structures subjectivity. In other words, they describe our inevitable lie, since the place where we see ourselves is never that from which we see', *October 10*, 1979, pp. 105-121.

experienced.

With its flight into the world of exchange Marx explains how an inanimate wooden table becomes a commodity, not simply an object of use but an object that stands up and addresses the consumer. With Marx's analysis in mind, it might be suggested that the automated body of the commodity has come to inscribe the retail space that surrounds it and that, in its turn, retail space has re-inscribed the commodity to lend it a new level of movement and fascination. The automation of space is in this way a clear indication of the phantasmagorization of space - the process by which the fixed body of a store's architecture mutates into a temporal condition of movement and flux. The relation between the automated object (the commodity) and the automization of retail space is one that is always responding to the changing needs of the market. Just as the value of a commodity is determined in relation to other commodities, the (surplus) value of built space is determined by external market forces. However, the movement that is generated through these immaterial relations also emerges from within; the commodity not only puts itself into motion but, as Derrida points out, 'it puts everything around it into motion' (SoM, 153).

The importance of this inscription exists in relation to a critical questioning of the old division between the fixed and the temporal, between the 'architectural laws' that governed the outside structure of a building and the more temporal 'designs' that filled the inside. In other words, the immaterial surplus that has come to attach itself to retail architecture forces a questioning of the traditional and conservative principles which look to permanence and fixity as the overriding ambition for built space. Retail space is no longer simply required to act as a shelter or box in which the theatre of shopping can take place. The automation of this mode of 'architecture' makes new demands on the formulation of the outside structure that has previously seen itself as immune to the experiential placemaking of retail space. The relation between the phantasmagoric commodity and the space that surrounds it has not only come to describe the 'hidden secrets' involved in exchange, but also the invisible movements between object and space

have made new demands on the way retail space is thought and experienced.

Selfridges: London and Birmingham

The relation between Selfridges Department Store (Oxford Street, London) and the more recent Selfridges in Birmingham serves as an indication of the changing nature of retail space at large. Most notably, the new approach to the exterior design of Selfridges (Birmingham) reflects an important shift in the way the phantasmagoric space of retail is no longer restricted to the theatre of the interior.

Selfridges Department Store (London), which opened in 1909, was the first major retail outlet to merge fantasy with shopping in Britain. With the longest commercial neo-classical façade ever built, plunging atriums, a roof garden, nine passenger lifts, a library and silence room, a first aid ward, a ticket booking office, a bank and the potential for eight floors of retail space, Selfridges (London) has always been an image of spatial excess. However, unlike the new Selfridges, the outside of the building remains fixed as a traditional box which, despite the constant changes to the interior, has been left untouched. The traditional distinction between inside and outside both intensifies the affect of retail space and defines some boundary between the realities of the city and the fantasy of the department store.

The experience of entering the London Selfridges reflects the chaotic nature of the city outside. The space is open plan so that a range of commodities are all seen at once. The chaotic array of goods makes the journey between different types of product and brands almost imperceptible. As Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska suggest, the spatial uncertainty that takes hold of the shopper is consciously monitored by the stores management and design teams:

At times, the interior of the department store creates the impression of a casual confusion of things. But it is merely an illusion, masking the powerful application of the results of exhaustive retail analysis, coupled with the recommendations of extensive consumer research. Nothing is left to chance, every item, image, sign, display fixture, and the position of every service desk, point of sale and walkway is tested, and its effects on sales calculated.¹¹²

The 'illusion' of a chaotic abundance of things is further intensified by bright theatrical lighting (often with mock stage lights for extra effect) and a broad range of different sound tracks (depending on the location). In addition, the space is hung with plasma screens, providing the shopper with a stream of information about the store. The escalators that rise and cross through the centre of the store also intensify the effect of energy, movement and disorientation, ferrying people through the space and creating a visual spectacle of mechanised movement. This excess is carefully manufactured not only to bring the commodities to life, but also to animate the space itself. The spatial confusion encourages the visitor to browse through the commodities on sale by stimulating the senses with visual and sonic strategies. In addition, the internal design of the store guides the shopper through a carefully thought-out series of sensory experiences. However, this range of temporal experiences - that are generated through the design and careful regulation of the space - remains in opposition to the traditional and unchanging architecture of the exterior.

In the new Selfridges building in Birmingham, the architects (Future Systems) have extended the logic of an automated interior to the outside surface of the building. The curved exterior is covered with 15,000 spun aluminum disks. This highly reflective surface responds to the light of the sun and appears to move with each change in the weather. Unlike the heavy and unchanging facades of most shopping centers, Future Systems have designed a curved and reflective concrete wall. The irony is that

¹¹² Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, *The Value of Things*, London & Basel: August/Birkhauser: 2000, p. 130.

movement, lightness and reflection are created from a solid and windowless elevation. In other words, the fixed and the permanent also speak of the temporal realities of shopping, fashion and design. This outward expression of change is a site of contradiction. Like the commodity, we experience the immaterial or external effects as the key features of the building, which becomes automated as a consequence of the changes in light that take place around it.

As Marx points out in *Capital*, it is in the market that the commodity becomes automated; it is in relation to other commodities that he understands the inanimate to become animated. The immaterial surplus that is attached to the commodity is a temporal reflection of the market and, as with the reflective disks on the outer surface of Selfridges (Birmingham) consumers become dazzled by the spectacle of the phantasmagoric surplus. As we have seen, the reflected light of this surface skin is a contradiction, for while we know that the thick concrete walls could never move, on their surface we see the changing light of the sky. At this moment the form of the building can no longer be determined because it is also something else, something more than the sum of its parts, appearing as something other than itself.

The contradiction of this immaterial surplus returns us to a Platonic question: that is, the issue of the relation between the 'reality' and 'appearance', the question of territories and distinctions. Plato asks what is reality and what is appearance, what territories do they inhabit and how are they distinct? If we are to gain some insight into the morphological continuum of contemporary subjectivity we must begin to think differently. The Platonic distinctions that have moulded an image of 'the real' bear no relation to the complexities of social space. That is, the self-transformative and contradictory motion of retail space bears no relation to a fixed or determining structure. As we have already observed, there is no perceivable division between appearance and reality. The phantasmagoric space of experiential placemaking instead demonstrates the movement and coexistence of a divergent range of spatialities that now inscribes what has traditionally been designated as the site of the real (the outside).

The relationship between Selfridges Department Store (London) and its more recent relation suggests that the automated and phantasmagoric space of retail architecture has moved beyond the old distinctions of inside/outside, fantasy/reality. Instead we find that spatial coexistences and temporalities exist both inside and outside. What has been thought of in isolation (the outside or fixed structure of a building) is now thought differently, not as a division between architecture and design or permanence and fashion, but as a totality, able to speak of movement and change and to express the complexity of urban space. This phantasmagoric surplus not only externalises the temporalities and coexistences of the space within, the outer movement also ‘exposes’ the inscription (of commodity onto space) to involve a number of differentiated systems.

Re-inscription

In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord develops Marx’s theory of *commodity fetishism* into a critique of new modes of media, mass communication and consumer space. He writes:

Here we have the principle of commodity fetishism, the domination of society by those whose qualities are ‘at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.’ The principle is absolutely fulfilled in the spectacle, where the perceptible world is replaced by a set of images that are superior to the world yet at the same time impose themselves as eminently perceptible. (S, 26)

In conceptualising social space into a fetishistic spectacle, Debord reduces differentiated and critical spatialities to the status of commodity. Consequently Debord returns us to the question of how the contemporary subject might make any claim to the real (within cultural or social space) when the broad and differentiated instances of social space are repeatedly theorised as the site of falsehood.

As I have already argued, the commodity inscribes space and ‘sets everything around it into motion,’ but this process of automation should not return us to a relation that is

oppositional. That is, the commodity does not simply reproduce itself as an equivalent spatial form nor does it dictate the movements of the space around it from a position that is unchanging. In contrast to Guy Debord's argument that the spectacle of mass communication and entertainment is 'defined by the principle of the commodity' (S, 25); social space is actively produced by the relations between physical, experiential and imagined spatialities. Debord's assertion that 'the spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonisation of social life' (S, 29), overlooks the (re)inscription of the commodity by social space. Moreover, Debord's view that 'in the spectacle the totality of the commodity world is visible in one piece' (S, 33), fails to acknowledge the differentiated modes of illusion that have come to generate a new relation. This theory of an overarching spectacle that 'negates life' with new technologies of mass entertainment and communication - 'All goods proposed by the spectacular system, from cars to televisions, also serve as a weapon for that system as it strives to reinforce the isolation of the lonely crowd' (S, 22) - overlooks the generative and critical interruptions and interferences that occupy social space.

This problem is continued by Giorgio Agamben who takes Debord's analysis of the spectacle as a stable ground on which to assess the state of world politics. While Agamben is correct in linking Debord's concept of the spectacle to Marx's theory of the commodity fetishism, the assumption that Debord's analysis remains a stable foundation for thinking about contemporary space and global politics is deeply problematic:

The 'becoming-image' (spectacle) of capital is nothing more than the commodity's last metamorphosis, in which exchange value has completely eclipsed use value and now achieves the status of absolute and irrespective sovereignty over life in its entirety after having falsified the entire social production.¹¹³

Agamben looks to the 'situation' of human action as the assertion of life over the spectacle and, in passing, discusses the 'positive possibility of the spectacle',¹¹⁴ but the

¹¹³ Giorgio Agamben, Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (trans), London: University of Minneapolis Press, 2000, p. 75.

¹¹⁴ *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*. p. 82.

event of thinking beyond the all encompassing falsehood of the spectacle (which through the text remains set in opposition to 'life'), is never fully developed. Agamben's willingness to embrace the old rhetoric of 'exchange' over 'use value' and appearance over essence limits the critical potential of his project. Moreover, in thinking the spaces of political and social activity in opposition to life, Agamben once again calls up Romero's portrayal of the living dead.

The relation between the commodity, space and the subject should instead be considered within a new structure. As we have seen, the spatial illusions involved in placemaking are not merely defined by the 'principle of the commodity'. Turning back to Derrida we find that any duplication serves as a displacement to what has been thought of as a central or 'governing' origin. Derrida writes: 'The inscription is the written origin, traced and henceforth inscribed in a system, in a figure which no longer governs.'¹¹⁵ While the commodity's inscription of space is already well established, the way that space returns with a different system of relations has not been fully acknowledged. In other words, while space is inscribed by the commodity, it is not governed by that same system. With the inscription of the commodity, space opens itself to a range of systems. That is, space and illusion involve a differentiated range of systems that are not reducible to a single origin. As we have seen, this play of illusory systems 'does not' engender a single line or logical flow.

To reiterate, the relation between commodity and space is one of inscription – retail space is inscribed by the commodity-form: the commodity puts everything around it into motion. However, this process of inscription also opens itself up to other systems. While space resembles, duplicates and reflects the commodity, it also displaces it. That is, the commodity is no longer at the centre of exchange. Displaced by new spatial coexistences and temporalities, the commodity is both decentred and subject to difference; the relation is both one of sameness and one of difference. As Derrida argues in *Of Grammatology*,

¹¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass (trans), London: Routledge, 1990, p. 115

the inscription is not a 'contingent accident', but that which 'produces the spatiality of space.'¹¹⁶

The ability of the economy to reinvent itself and absorb the mutations in cultural, social and ideological space certainly reflects the constant restructuring of capitalism.¹¹⁷ Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore's account of the 'experience economy' describe the new relations that exist in social space and trace the mutation from 'mass produced object' to individual 'transformation'. Although this analysis of economy seeks to inspire maximum profitability from global business, the underlying argument provides clear evidence of how social space does not correspond to 'the principle of the commodity' and, perhaps more importantly, how the forces in play increasingly correspond to a complex relation of spatial illusions.

Experience Economy

The market value of new representational and highly constructed spatialities is already well known to the business community which has come to realize that 'experience' can be sold at a higher profit than mass produced goods. Pine and Gilmore argue that 'experiences are a fourth economic offering, as distinct from services as services are from goods, but one that has until now gone largely unrecognised'.¹¹⁸ The notion that the economy has come to produce 'experience' is of no great surprise; what is new about Pine and Gilmore's theory is the proposition that the production of differentiated experiences is quickly becoming the dominant mode of economic activity:

The experiences that we have affect who we are, what we can accomplish, and where we are going, and we will increasingly ask companies to stage experiences that change us. Human beings have always sought out new and exciting experiences to learn and grow, develop and improve, mend and reform. But as the world progresses further into the experience economy, much that was previously obtained through non-economic activity

¹¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravoty Spivak (trans), Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, p. 290

¹¹⁷ Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Gregory Elliott (trans), London: Verso, 2005.

¹¹⁸ Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore. *The Experience Economy*, 1999, p. 2

will increasingly be found in the domain of commerce. That represents a significant change. It means that what we once sought for free, we now pay for.¹¹⁹

The experience economy places a new emphasis on the possibilities and relations involved in space and illusion. No longer is space designed around the exchange of goods but it is constructed in a way that offers the consumer a continually updated series of experiences. As Pine and Gilmore point out: ‘While commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are *memorable*. Buyers of experiences value being engaged by what the company reveals over a duration of time.’¹²⁰ Although this production of experience moves beyond ‘mere entertainment’, there remains an important connection with the traditional fantasy zones of recreation and leisure. In contrast to the commodity - which automates its environment through the inter-subjective affects of the market – the sale of experiences involves the physical construction of automated, spectacular and disorientating architectural forms.

In light of these new developments we should now consider how the relation between the commodity and its surrounding context has changed. If, as Pine and Gilmore argue, the flow of the market is now conducted through ‘staging’ experience, we will need to reassess the movement between object, space and activity. From this account of economy we can see how the mass produced commodity-form has been displaced by the spaces that surround it. The mutation of object into experience is not, as I have already argued, a logical progression of the commodity into space. With this new emphasis on ‘staging’ we find a wide range of competing systems in which the relation between object and space is substituted for a more immersive relation between different spatialities.

Turning to Debord’s assertion that contemporary space is ‘defined by the principle of the commodity’, we see that this critique does not allow for any meaningful analysis of the movements and developments in play. Put simply, social space is not reducible to an overarching theory of mass commoditisation. While the relation between commodity and space remains an important vehicle for understanding the mutations of both exchange and

¹¹⁹ *The Experience Economy*, p. 163.

¹²⁰ *The Experience Economy*, p. 11-12.

our experience of exchange, we should be careful not to remain with the Marxian formulation that divides material use value and immaterial surplus value. Benjamin's engagement with the synchronic relation of phantasmic space continues to offer a more appropriate form of analysis, as it is the relation between differentiated modes of illusion that brings us closer to the turbulent and generative forces at work in social space.

Although the nature, effects and economic imperatives of experiential placemaking have developed beyond the fantasy zones of entertainment space (Pine and Gilmore), there remains an important relation with the highly fabricated and experimental techniques of the theme park and the pleasure zone. These sites of fantasy act as a testing ground for urban regeneration (Jerde Partnership International), establish a wide range of experiential and spatial effects (Coney Island, Disneyland, Las Vegas) and, perhaps most importantly, forefront illusion as the key factor in architectural design. With the *experience economy's* emphasis on 'staging' social space we find that the older and more extreme modes of spatial illusion enter into the normative zones of work and business. With this blurring of activities I will consider the economic, social and ideological consequences of these spatial effects.

Entertainment Space

Contemporary urban space is increasingly subject to the experiential entertainments traditionally reserved for the theme park. The popularity of placemaking is evident through a wide range of inner city lighting schemes, audiovisual displays, and experiential attractions.¹²¹ While the addition of experiential effects in urban design is not reducible to entertainment space, sites that have long been dedicated to leisure and entertainment have come to function as an important testing ground for the construction of differentiated experiences. I will turn to key examples of entertainment space and consider a range of spatial effects. With the dissemination of highly constructed spatialities into urban design, I will be asking if the old divisions between; leisure and

¹²¹ *Glasgow: City of Light* (2005) is one of a number of projects that has designed urban light displays to 'ensure the City will become a dazzling journey of discovery'. (British Design.com.uk)

work, fiction and reality are increasingly challenged by a competing range of differentiated spatialities.

The influence of entertainment space on urban design is clearly represented in the fantasyscape of New York City. In *Delirious New York*, Rem Koolhaas argues that the illuminated towers of Coney Island acted as a model for the design and infrastructure of Manhattan:

It is no coincidence that the ‘countless impressions of Coney Island’ – products of a hopelessly obstinate desire to record and preserve a mirage – can all be substituted not only for each other but also for a flood of later descriptions of Manhattan.¹²²

For Koolhaas, the theme park architecture of Coney Island functioned as an ‘incubator’ for the spatial designs and experiences that we now associate with the Manhattan skyline. Far from offering nature as a contrast to the busy metropolis, Coney Island responded to the influx of city dwellers with the intensification of urban experience. New technologies of automation, spectacle and delirium - which included the invention of the Roller Coaster in 1884 and the Shoot-the-Chutes water ride in 1895 – found material form. Towards 1890, the introduction of electricity made it possible to decorate the 1,221 towers of the theme park with millions of light bulbs. Unlike the later skyscrapers of Manhattan, the towers only purpose was to stimulate the imagination. As Koolhaas puts it, ‘the electric city, phantom offspring of the real city, is an even more powerful instrument for the fulfillment of fantasy.’¹²³ In addition, interior spaces were later developed to simulate tourist attractions around the world:

The Canals of Venice is a gigantic model of Venice inside a reduced version of the Ducal Palace, the largest city in Dreamland. Inside it is night, ‘with the soft moonlight typical of the city of water streets... accomplished by newly invented electric device.’¹²⁴

¹²² Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994, p. 30.

¹²³ *Delirious New York*, p. 41.

¹²⁴ *Delirious New York*, p. 55.

By the turn of the century Coney Island had developed into a 'laboratory' for generating a wide range of new and exhilarating experiences. In each case the activity was highly constructed and relied heavily upon technological experimentation and unique design concepts. As Koolhaas points out, this generation of new architectural forms was ultimately intended for Manhattan. With this mutation of fantasy into spaces of work and international finance came a much broader interest in staging experience.

From Koolhaas' account we can see that the relation between Manhattan and Coney Island does not involve the old fantasy/reality opposition but consists of a play between different levels of fabrication. In both cases experience is produced through highly constructed spatial forms.

Since Coney Island, the entertainment industry has continued to test out and develop new techniques of spatial immersion and fantasy placemaking. While theme shops and restaurants are more recent manifestations of the *experience economy*, the casinos and hotels of 1960's Las Vegas and the earlier theme parks designed by Walt Disney provide something of a formal history to new design concepts being introduced by urban planners. As we have seen, the shift in economic structure, from 'tangible goods' to 'memorable experience', forms an important relation with the way architectural design is now thought. For this reason, the older spaces of fantasy and entertainment provide an important insight into understanding some of the formal techniques involved in staging experience. Moreover, it is their introduction into places of work that goes to challenge the common assumption that experiential placemaking can stand in opposition to a 'real', authentic or normative experience of space.

In *Learning From Las Vegas*, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown describe how the architecture of Las Vegas obscures the normal modes of orientation (daylight, local context, *etc.*). They observe how without these psycho-geographical markers of space and time, the casinos and hotels disorientate the participant. Just as the Roman church was conceived as a site that might transcend everyday experience, Las Vegas architecture is

commonly understood to separate itself from the repetitive cycles that define spaces of work and international business.¹²⁵ Most importantly, Las Vegas architecture generates excitement, intrigue and curiosity with a series of visual contradictions. Venturi and Brown articulate this phenomenon with the notion of the 'decorated shed', 'this is architecture as shelter with symbols on' (LV, 35). The sharp divide between inside and outside space, the negation of the natural environment, night becoming day (outside), day becoming night (inside), allows for an experience of architecture that contradicts the fixed structures of the building's physical properties. What is visible to the participant is always accompanied by an awareness of what is invisible.

Venturi and Brown suggest that Las Vegas architecture might offer a more dynamic experience of space. Instead of the 'rational transparency' and 'truth to materials' of modernist architecture (the glass box), the decorated shed conceals its internal space in order that it might exist independent of any distractions from the surrounding environment. The decorated shed abandons pure form in favour of a symbolic preoccupation with the facade, the proliferation of pictorial space (neon signs) divides the front from the shed like structure of the back, 'regardless of the front, the back of the building is styleless, because the whole is turned toward the front and no one sees the back' (LV, 77). The apparent grandeur of the facade defines the space, what is immediately visible is made impossible to avoid. In addition to maximising the spectacle of the facade, the screening or partitioning of space determines the participant's trajectory from the exterior through the interior.

Venturi and Brown's account of Las Vegas architecture might be understood to take concealment as a productive and dynamic articulation of space. In always keeping something from view, in emphasising that there is always 'more' elsewhere, the casinos

¹²⁵ While the common perception of Las Vegas is shaped by its exceptionality, we should remember that Las Vegas remains the fastest growing city in the USA. Like 'Celebration' outside Disneyland, many people choose to live within the fantasyscape. Moreover, Las Vegas is quickly becoming the model for urban design. As Bruce Begout writes: 'Las Vegas represents nothing more than what is all around me these days as an ordinary *homo urbanus*.' Bruce Begout, *Zeropolis, The Experience of Las Vegas*, London: Reaktion books, 2003, p, 11.

and hotels engage the spectator in a series of changing appearances. In addition to encouraging the shopper or gambler to partake in the process of exchange, the logic of containment and control works to liberate space from a fixed material framework. This fantasyscape allows the imagination to extend experience into a terrain that is always in motion.

Like Las Vegas, Disneyland is central to the development of entertainment space and its influence on urban design. In an essay on 'Disney Space', Chuihua Judy Chung explores how the creation of Disneyland in the early 1950's brought a series of new design principles to architectural practice.¹²⁶ The success of Disney's animations had led to the possibility of a built environment that offered visitors the chance to 'live' the cartoon world that they had seen on TV. These Theme Parks not only entertain but involve the visitor in an unfolding story. To design this fantasyscape Disney drew from a range of cinematic techniques and the expertise of the animators or 'imagineers'¹²⁷ as they were otherwise known (Disney's imagination engineers). Scale manipulation and forced perspective were both employed as key principles behind the designs. With cinematic tricks of scale and perspective visitors could experience the park as if they had entered the film. Disney had designed this mode of fantasy architecture as a sequence of events that integrated geographically and architecturally unrelated elements into a seamless, apparently logical whole.

Judy Chung also describes how with forced perspective, a device well known in motion picture production, the eye could be tricked into seeing structures larger and taller than their actual size: 'The view through Main Street frames sleeping Beauty Castle, making it appear 'more' stately and imposing than it really is.'¹²⁸ At the end of the forced perspective is the fixed point of focus that pulls visitors into the scene. To achieve this, the focal point must be visible from any place in the park. The castle, tall enough to be

¹²⁶ Chuihua Judy Chung, 'Disney Space', *Harvard Design School: Guide to Shopping*, Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong (eds), New York: Taschen, 2001, pp, 270-297

¹²⁷ 'Disney Space', p, 276.

¹²⁸ 'Disney Space', p, 277.

seen throughout Disneyland, is the Park's focal point and provides the fantasyscape at the end of the vista.

While the influence of entertainment space on social spaces of retail and leisure accounts for many of the design concepts involved in urban development and planning, there is an important shift that takes place when these spatial illusions enter the arena of everyday praxis. As Pine and Gilmore point out in their analysis of experience economy, entertainment is only one aspect of the experience: 'Companies stage an experience whenever they engage customers, connecting with them in a personal memorable way. Many dining experiences have less to do with the entertainment motif or celebrity of the financial backers than with the merging of dining with comedy, art architecture, history or nature.'¹²⁹ It is precisely this interrelation of differentiated modes of illusion that demands a new understating of space and the way it is experienced. No longer is it a case of leisure and work, fantasy and reality or essence and appearance, the relation instead consists of a play of illusory systems which, like the morphing images projected in phantasmagoric shows, generate a changing spatial narrative.

Scripted Space and Experiential Placemaking

For Norman Klein, the 'unfolding narrative' of the theme park is increasingly becoming a major feature of retail outlets across America. Klein describes this construction of spatial narratives as 'scripted space':

Scripted spaces are a walk through or click through environment (a mall, a church, casino, a theme park, a computer game). They are designed to emphasize the viewers journey—the space between—rather than the gimmicks on the wall. The audience walks into the story. What's more, this walk should respond to viewer's whims, even though

¹²⁹ *The Experience Economy*, p. 3.

each step along the way is pre-scripted (or should I say preordained?). It is gentle repression posing as free will.¹³⁰

Scripted space is concerned with the physical realisation of a fictional narrative. The ambition of these spaces is to transform fiction into a lived experience and to lend a material body to a collective imaginary.

Experiential placemaking, which has been employed in a number of American cities, reflects an important development in the way the formal origins of scripted space (Coney Island, Las Vegas, Disneyland, *etc.*) has been introduced into retail space. In this wider context, experiential placemaking might not function as a physical interpretation of a film or animation (although this has been known), but as a more general stage set that represents or refers to a space that is elsewhere. In addition, the role of experiential placemaking has come to take on a new social function. In place of rundown city centers new mini-cities offer the urban experience as it is imagined.

The large-scale developments of the Jerde Partnership International (JPI) provide some insight into the social and economic ambitions of experiential placemaking. Fantasy and entertainment are the main ingredients of the Partnership's designs and with a spectacular range of audio and visual effects, JPI's aim is to both 're-introduce the chaos and disorientation of the city' and to 're-connect public space with a lost communal scene' (JPIW, 4). *The Fremont Street Experience* (1997) in downtown Las Vegas is a key example of the JPI's approach to retail design.¹³¹ The main requirement facing the architects was to create a level of entertainment worthy of luring the crowds from the spectacular casinos and hotels of the competing Strip.

¹³⁰ Norman M Klein, *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects*, New York: the new Press, 2004, p. 11.

¹³¹ The Fremont Street Experience (FSE) is a barrel vault canopy, ninety feet high at the peak, that covers four blocks or approximately 1,500 feet. It was Jon Jerde's first Las Vegas project before he went on to design the facade of Treasure Island, the Bellagio, and other projects on the Las Vegas Strip. The underside of the canopy is covered with an LED display, referred to as 'Viva Vision' and built by the LG Corporation, programmed to show periodic sound-and-light presentations after dark.

When designing *The Fremont Street Experience* (FSE) JPI looked directly to the vernacular of high Renaissance church building. The vaulted celestial field that houses Fremont Street recreates a wide range of artificial environments that draw from the anamorphic perspective of the sixteenth century ceiling painting of Andrea Pozzo. Just as church painting sought to engage the congregation in a transcendental realm of experience, the architectural language of experiential placemaking and the motion and fantasy associated with scripted space aims to immerse the visitor in an environment that is removed from what is already known. What is clear is that the JPI's designs for Fremont Street followed a tradition of designing perceptual illusion into space, a tradition that evolved out of church building:

To create the paintings on the vault of the church, artist Andrea Pozzo designed an illusory architecture with a perspective so precise that the vault is meant to be viewed from a single spot only, otherwise the figures are at odd angles and the details distorted. After experiencing this anamorphic perspective, I realized we could move away from building mechanical reality and, instead, create perceptual reality illusionistically.¹³²

To access the full phantasmagoria of the Las Vegas vernacular Jerde turned to a type of spatial illusion that distorts its parts in order to create an effect. The 2.1 million LEDs that are built into Fremont Street's celestial ceiling produce images that are only perceptible from a fixed distance. With this use of light and illusion architecture takes control of both what is seen and how it is seen. What is available to perception is built on a misperception, what we perceive is produced through distortion. The concealment of the parade's physical reality allows for perception to override the material constraints of the supporting structural framework. With this manipulation of space Jerde suggests the audience is, 'totally immerse[d] in an environment without predictability.'¹³³

¹³² Jon Jerde, 'Revitalised City', *Tate: The Art Magazine: The Urban Myth*, Century City Special Issue 24: Spring, 2001, p. 29.

¹³³ 'Revitalised City', p. 29.

Jerde's notion of experiential placemaking is part of a much larger ambition than the mere design of retail outlets.¹³⁴ Jerde explains that the challenge that the Partnership face is: 'to inspire-to-trigger-unity' out of the dismembered, disassembled parts of the once-cohesive city, within the abbreviated time frames of our fast-past world' (JPIW, 1). The aim is not only to create the conditions for a lost urban diversity, cultural identity and communal scene, but to (re)create what has traditionally evolved over hundreds of years in the space of a decade:

Today market forces require that similar evolutionary processes acting on space are completed in ten years. Participants in the global economy no longer have time for slow growth. Our landscape and environments are now designed as instant worlds. (JPIW, 1)

The idea of an instant world that comes equipped with all the trappings of a culturally vibrant community represents the aims and ambitions of experiential placemaking. In order to achieve this, the Jerde Partnership recreates the space of the city through constructing a lived narrative that unfolds through time.

The emergence of experiential placemaking and scripted space in urban development and city planning demands a new understanding of the status of illusion in social space. There is no doubt that the influence of entertainment space on experiential placemaking has been central to the formal development of urban design. However, just as the principle of the commodity is not reducible to an understanding of space, the introduction of new spatial illusions into urban design does not render those developments reducible to the logic of a theme park. Instead of a homogenous space of immersion, entertainment and delirium, we find the relation between space and illusion to be made up of a complex

¹³⁴ In the Phaidon publication of JPI designs, *YOU ARE HERE, The Jerde Partnership International*, the transformative nature of experiential placemaking is further described: 'Transformative projects occur in built-up areas in inner cities and suburbs, which have been blighted or fallen into decline. They can revitalize such neighborhoods, taking architectural cues from the existing and surrounding environments and transforming their previous identity. These interventions often act as catalysts for economic growth and social regeneration.' *YOU ARE HERE, The Jerde Partnership International*, London: Phaidon Press, 1999, p. 4.

series of relations.

In exploring these relations I have been considering how illusion provides us with a clear insight into how space is constructed. No longer is it a case of the relation between the commodity and space, what is of importance now is the relation between spatialities. This shift not only demands a rethinking of post-Marxist critique (Debord, Lefebvre, Jameson), these new spatialities serve as an important framework for understanding the developments and mutations taking place within global economy. Moreover, with the emphasis on constructing 'transformations' in both the individual (Pine and Gilmore) and urban regeneration (Jerde International), differentiated modes of spatial illusion are becoming increasingly visible.

Differentiated Space

The analysis of space *envelopes* may be expected to take markets (local national, and hence also worldwide) as a starting point, and eventually to link up with the theory of networks and flows and the theory of use value, so badly obscured and misapprehended since Marx, will be restored and returned, complete with complexities, to its former standing.¹³⁵

Like Debord, Lefebvre applies Marx's analysis of the commodity-form to a critique of capitalist space. Andy Merrifield puts this succinctly when he writes: 'what we have here (in *The Production of Space*) is a spatialised rendering of Marx's famous analysis on the *fetishism of commodities* from Volume One of *Capital*',¹³⁶ and goes on to point out that 'Lefebvre's shift, accordingly from conceiving *things in space* to that of the actual *production of space* itself, is the same conceptual and political shift Marx made from *things in exchange* to *social relations of production*.'¹³⁷ While Lefebvre draws out the

¹³⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans), Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, p.151.

¹³⁶ Andy Merrifield, 'Henri Lefebvre: a socialist in space', Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds), *Thinking Space*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 171.

¹³⁷ 'Henri Lefebvre: a socialist in space', p. 172.

political forces at work in space and establishes what he terms *differential space*, the categories used to define spaces that are ‘productive’ and ‘unproductive’ remain fixed to the materialist critique of the commodity. Lefebvre writes:

The contradiction that lies, then, in the clash between a consumption of space which produces surplus value and one which produces only enjoyment – and is therefore unproductive. It is a clash, in other words, between capitalist ‘utilizers’ and community ‘users’.¹³⁸

The question of how we distinguish between ‘capitalist utilizers’ and ‘community users’ assumes both the possibility and desire to remove ourselves from the movement and flow of the global market. With these old oppositions a seamless movement takes place ‘from the space of consumption to the consumption of space *via* leisure and within the space of leisure.’¹³⁹ Lefebvre’s divide between productive and unproductive space is firmly grounded in a Materialist critique and fails to comprehend the movements and interruptions that occur with the staging of new urban environments.

In spite of Lefebvre’s renewed emphasis on use value, *The Production of Space* provides us with an important insight into how space is conceived, perceived and lived. Moreover, Lefebvre carefully considers how space is littered with complexity and motion:

Just as white light, though uniform in appearance, may be broken down into a spectrum, space likewise decomposes when subjected to analysis; in the case of space, however, the knowledge to be derived from analysis extends to the recognition of conflicts internal to what on the surface appears homogenous and coherent – and presents itself and behaves as though it were.¹⁴⁰

As we have seen, this close analysis of space is inspired by Marx’s analysis of the commodity. Lefebvre intends to get to the root of things and get beyond the fetishism of the observable appearance. Although the relation between commodity and space remains

¹³⁸ *The Production of Space*, p. 360.

¹³⁹ *The Production of Space*, p. 354.

¹⁴⁰ *The Production of Space*, p. 352.

a necessary vehicle for exploring how space is produced, there are limits to how far this analogy can be usefully applied. While Marx's critique provides us with a method of interpretation for understanding the contradictory relationship between visible and invisible phenomena that exist in products of capital, it is no longer possible to remain with the old opposition (that may or may not move into a dialectical mode) of surplus value and use value.

Differentiated modes of illusion are not set within the framework of use and surplus or productive and unproductive space. Moreover, my analysis of illusion does not seek to look 'beyond' appearances but sets out to consider the relation they have within a larger global system. It is in these relations - between differentiated modes of illusion - that arise internal conflicts, conflicts that interrupt and expose the forces at work in space.

Space and Economy

What, then, emerges from considering recent shifts in economy alongside examples of experiential placemaking? First, these spaces coexist and perform as a relation between the global and the everyday. It is not simply a case of Jerde International reflecting new trends in economy; in these sites of fantasy and illusion the highly constructed experience can be seen to coexist with the space of global economy. However, the inscription is always followed by a re-inscription. If - as we have seen through the work of Marx, Benjamin, Debord and Jameson - the economy can be clearly seen to inscribe social space, we should begin to consider how the staging of experiences in retail and leisure marks the economy (I return to this central point throughout the next chapter). In addition, there is a sequence of differentiated spatial illusions that unfold through space. Although 'scripted space' certainly features in the experience, this changing narrative is interrupted and broken by a range of competing effects. The close relation between economy and placemaking means that highly fabricated experiences compete and overlap with one another. Instead of a single narrative we find a range of scripted spaces producing alternative experiences.

Jon Jerde's design for *Citywalk* (1993)¹⁴¹ clearly illustrates this synchronic relation of constructed space. Built to connect Universal Studios with the car park, Universal Citywalk is a 'between space' that houses a wide range of shops, bars, restaurants, nightclubs and theatres. The movement from car to street and then on to Universal Studio Tours involves a series of highly constructed experiences. As Klein writes, 'Jerde was operating at the intersection of many ideologies at once: shopping, tourism: real estate, global entertainment – and finally, local imaginaries.'¹⁴² This juxtaposition of space involves moving between a series of spatial illusions that have entirely different functions. The street that connects the car park to the theme park is highly staged but is only one element in the whole experience. Moving through these spaces, any indication of being inside or outside the space of fantasy, entertainment and illusion has been set aside. In place of the old boundaries that maintained some difference between the real and the artificial, we find a change in experience that is as visibly constructed as the next.

In her article, *Jon Jerde's Consuming Fantasies and Other Urban Interiors*, Karin Jaschke asks if 'Jerde's ready-made dreamscapes really have the potential to generate more than business.'¹⁴³ Jaschke's question is important, as on first inspection it would appear that experiential placemaking merely serves the needs of new mutations and developments in capitalism. However, while these highly constructed urban landscapes tell us something about the state of global economy, although experiential placemaking reflects new ways of making increased profit, the relation between space and economy is not simply a question of cause and effect. Jaschke takes this same issue up when she writes:

It is impossible to predict how possible it will be to appropriate Jerde's urban interiors and subvert their inherent social and cultural limitations and political dangers. It would be

¹⁴¹ See illustration.

¹⁴² Klein, Norman M. *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects*, New York, The New Press, 2004, p. 258.

¹⁴³ Karin Jaschke, 'Jerde's Consuming Fantasies and Other Urban Interiors', *Architectural Design: New Babylonians*, Iain Borden and Sandy McCreery (eds), London: Wiley Academy, 2001, p. 72.

wrong though to underestimate the potential of urban high impact projects to transform and reconfigure urban situations in unexpected and sometimes positive ways.¹⁴⁴

The internal conflicts that take place in these ‘urban high impact projects’ are not determinable. The struggle between diverse systems of constructed realities does not involve dividing truth from illusion or reality from fiction. Moreover, it is not simply a case of positioning experiential placemaking against the ‘historic’, ‘authentic’ or ‘normalised’ experience of space. To put it simply, our entire urban and social environment is constructed. When considering what is positive about this realisation – a realisation which for many cultural theorists is a catastrophe (Baudrillard) – we should return to the critical contradiction of contemporary spatial illusion. That is, we are not only subject to the illusion, we are increasingly aware of the mechanisms through which our experience of space is produced.

When placed in opposition to ‘the real’, the relation between space and illusion appears homogenous and the internal conflicts - which arise from the interrelation of differentiated modes of illusion - are overlooked. Through my analysis I have considered the extent to which illusion shapes our experience of space, not as a single line that is reducible to an overarching theory of commoditisation, but as a play of differentiated modes. As we saw in Chapter Two, Benjamin’s re-conceptualisation of phantasmagoria engages with the critical potential of illusion in social space. Instead of the origin of the projected representation remaining as the outside light of the real, a moving cycle of illusory phenomena was produced by a carefully painted slide. Like the Arcades and International exhibitions of nineteenth-century Paris, experiential placemaking transforms the phantasmagoric cycle of constructed realities into lived experience. These spaces of social activity are projected through the lens of economy, which, as we have observed, has shifted away from objects and moved towards the exchange of experiences.

Earlier in this chapter I considered the relation between the commodity and the spaces that surround it. I argued that it was not merely a case of the mutation of the commodity

¹⁴⁴ Jerde’s *Consuming Fantasies and Other Urban Interiors*, p. 72.

into space but of space re-inscribing the commodity. Turning back to Elizabeth Grosz, we find the assertion that space is inscribed by and in its turn inscribes those objects and activities placed within it, in need of updating. Although this inscribing movement remains important for understanding our role in defining the spaces that surround us, the question of how highly constructed spaces interrelate and inscribe one another to produce experience requires a new understanding of the relations in play. With the emergence of the *experience economy*, the commodity (as mass produced good) shifts to a new emphasis on the staging of experience. In place of a relation between objects and space we see a relation between highly constructed spatialities. As I will argue in the following chapter, this change marks an important development in the critical status of illusion in social space. Rather than a 'logical' or 'natural' continuation of our capitalisation, I will consider how the site of illusion provides a critical insight into the turbulent forces that shape our lives.

Prada, New York, 2001



8.1 - Prada, 575 Broadway.



In addition to the moving walls and live video feedback displays inserted into the changing room mirrors, Rem Koolhaas' interior for the flagship Prada Store is adaptable to cultural performances. In the centre of the store a concealed stage flips out of a large internal ramp. Performances are also made possible by the movable overhead towers that allow the garments on display to be pushed to the back of the store.

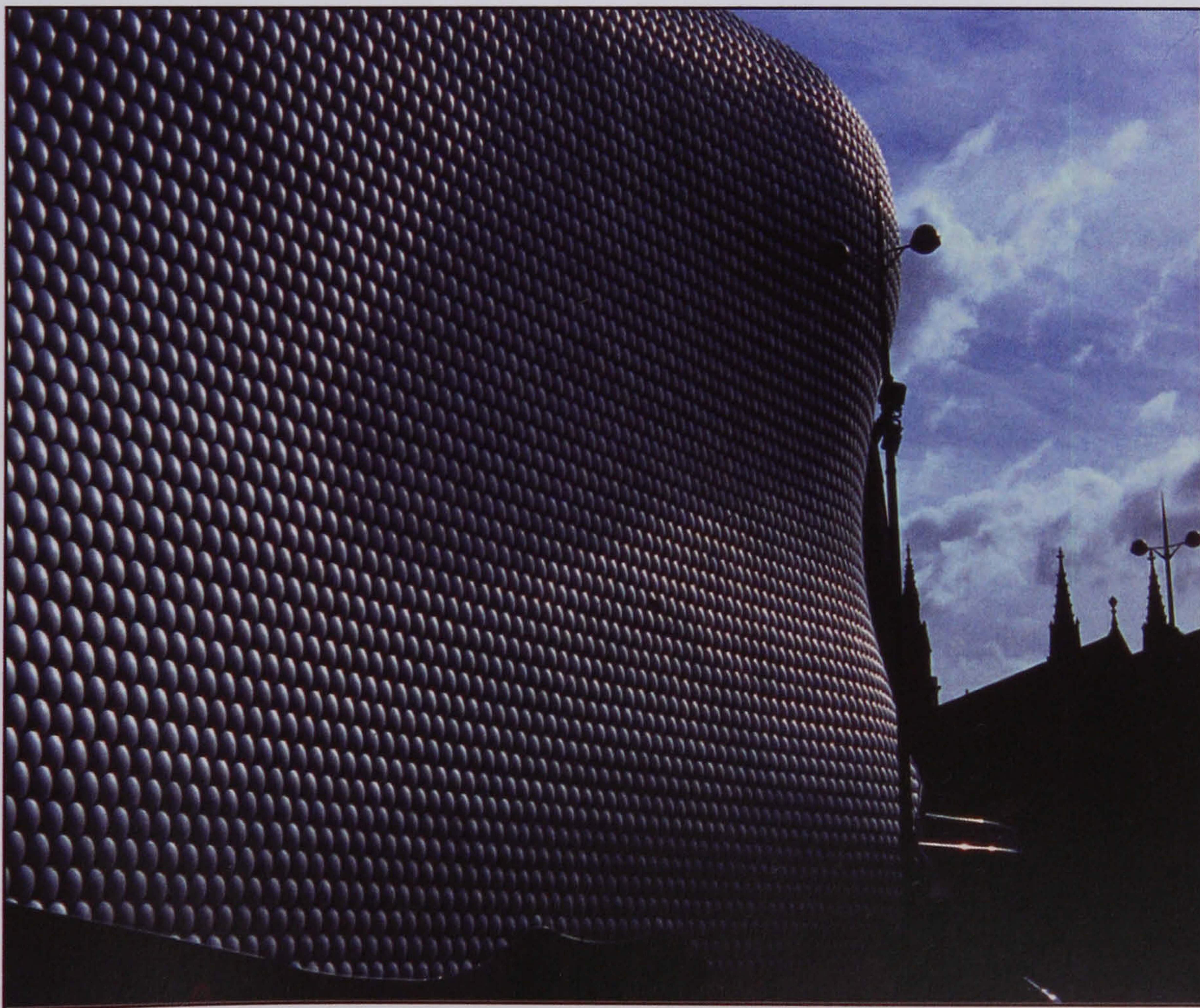


8.1 - 8.2 - The walls in the stores basement can be moved on the metal tracks that cross the floor.

Selfridges



9.1 - Selfridges, Oxford Street, 1909.



9.2 - Selfridges, Birmingham, Future Systems, 2003.

Selfridges - Automation



10.1 - Selfridges, Oxford Street, 1909.

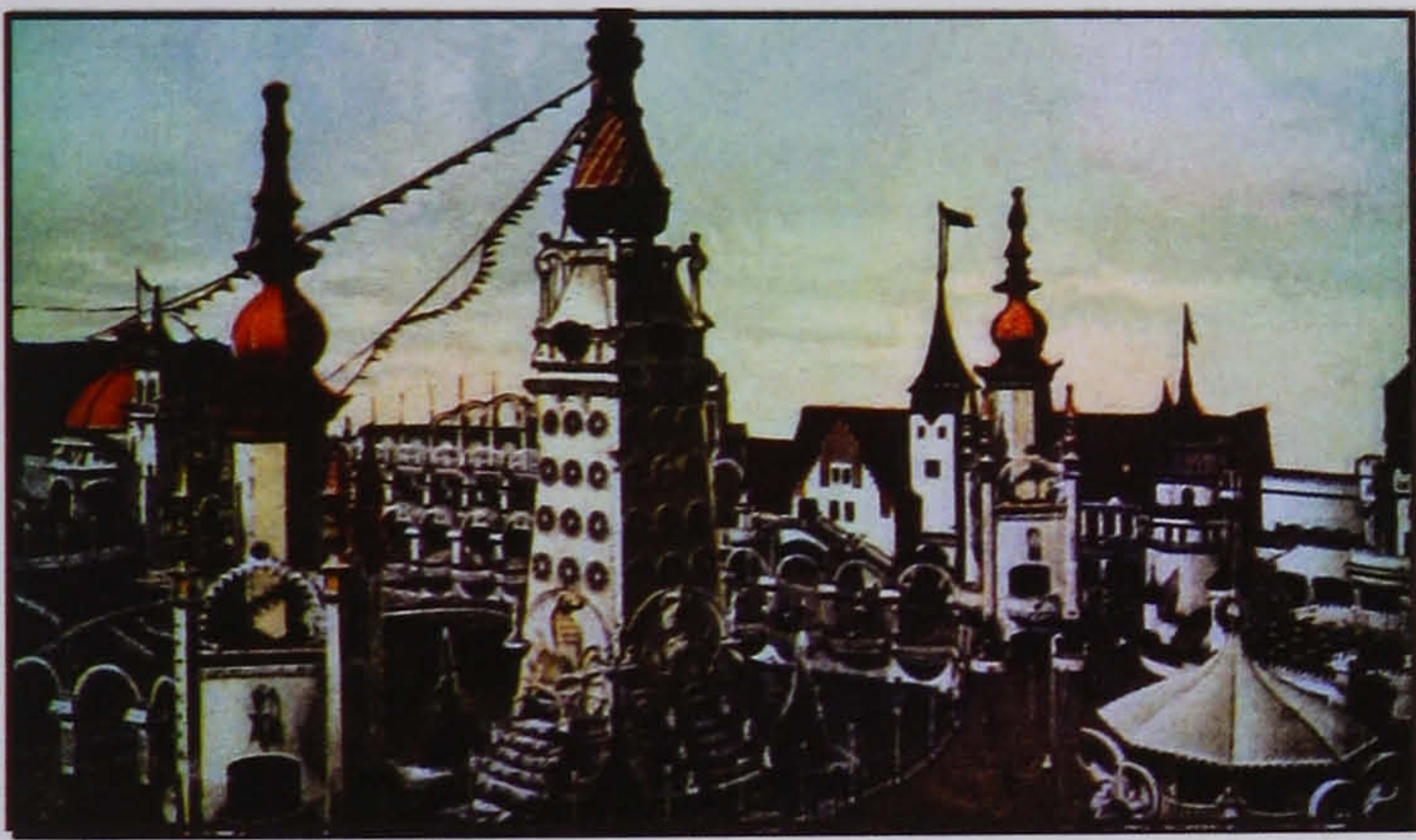


10.2 - Selfridges, Birmingham, Future Systems, 2003.

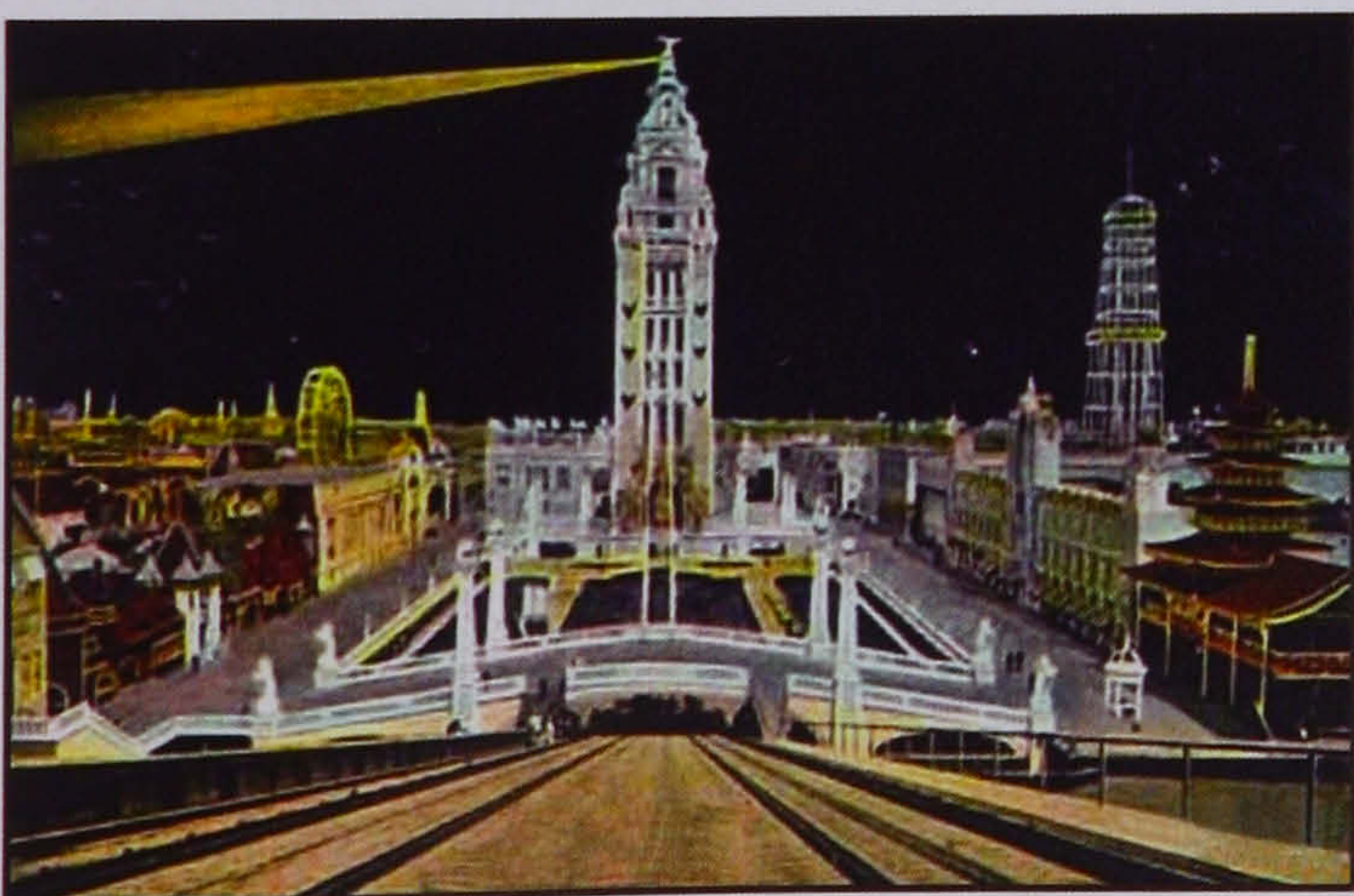
Manhattan and Coney Island



11.1 - Manhattan skyline at night.



11.2 - Luna Park skyline by day, 1903.



11.3 - Beacon Tower at night.



11.4 - Towards the end of the nineteenth-century Manhattan's bridges and transportation technologies made Coney Island accessible to the masses.

Disneyland



12.1 - Sleeping Beauty Castle.



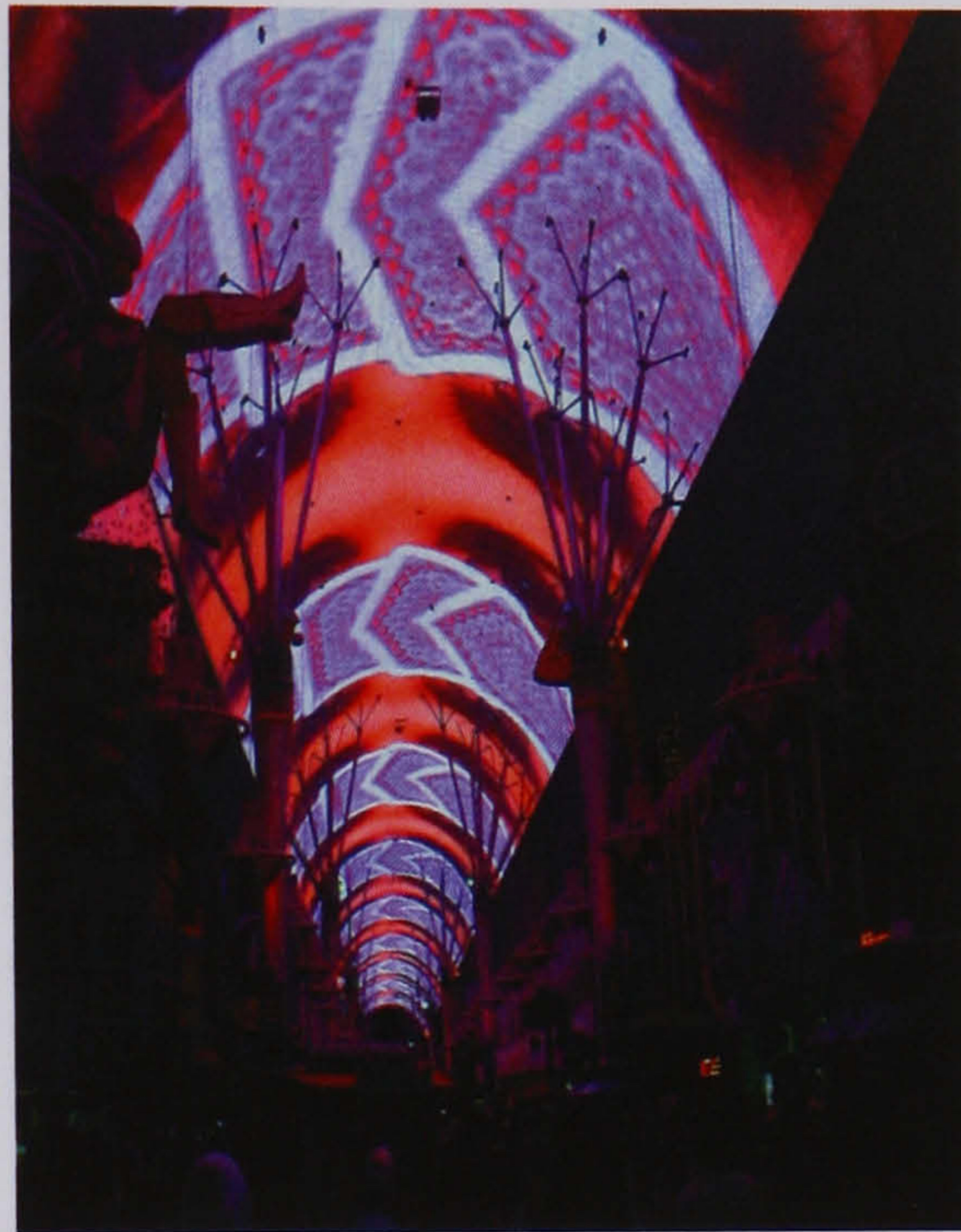
12.2 - Walt Disney World Resort.

The Fremont Street Experience, Las Vegas, 1997

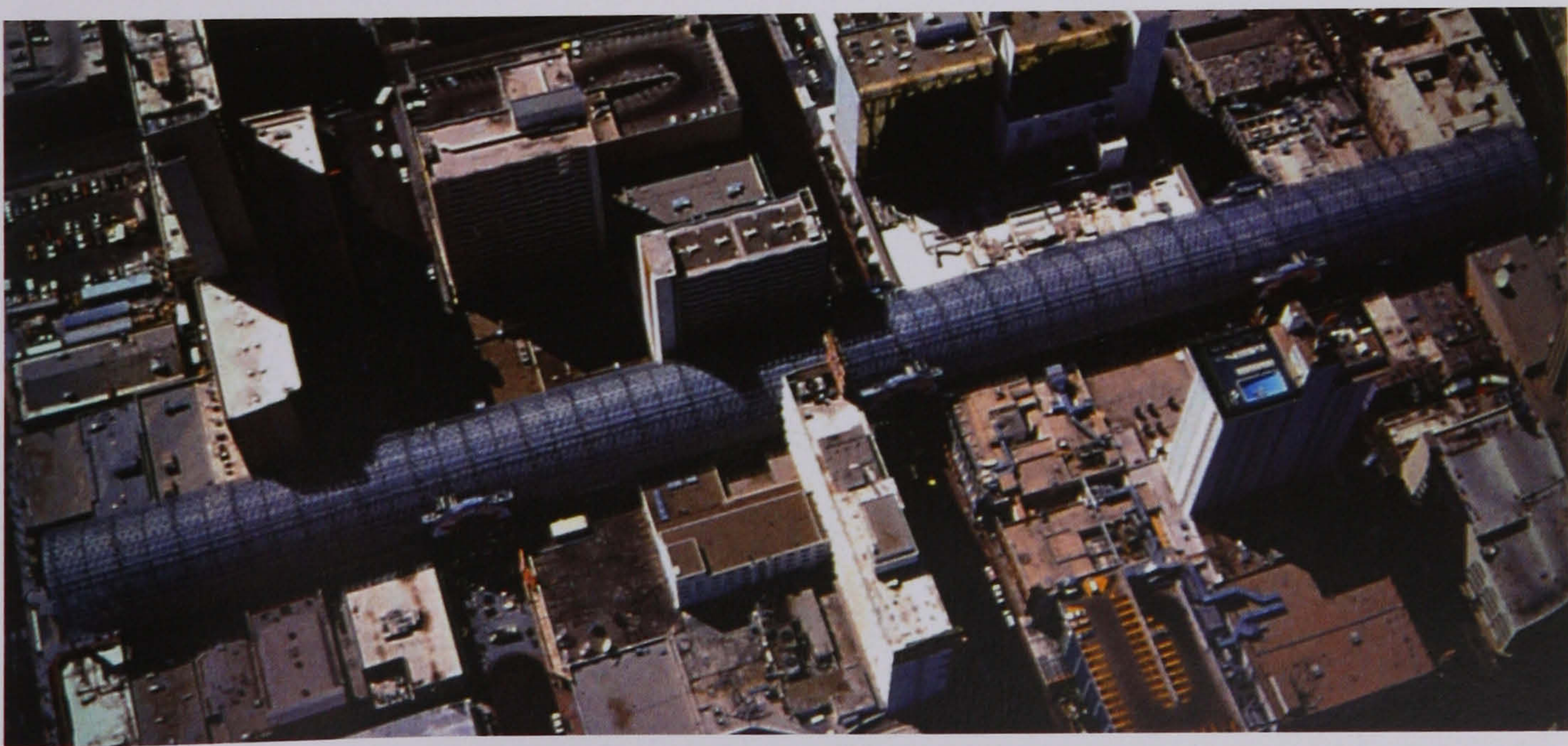
The Fremont Street experience is an example of urban placemaking. The Jerde Partnership International were commissioned to build the project with the brief of luring the crowds away from the Strip and back to downtown Las Vegas. To do this they fashioned existing neon-covered casino facades into a 'tube of light'.



13.1 - Different stages of the light spectacular designed by Jeremy Railton.

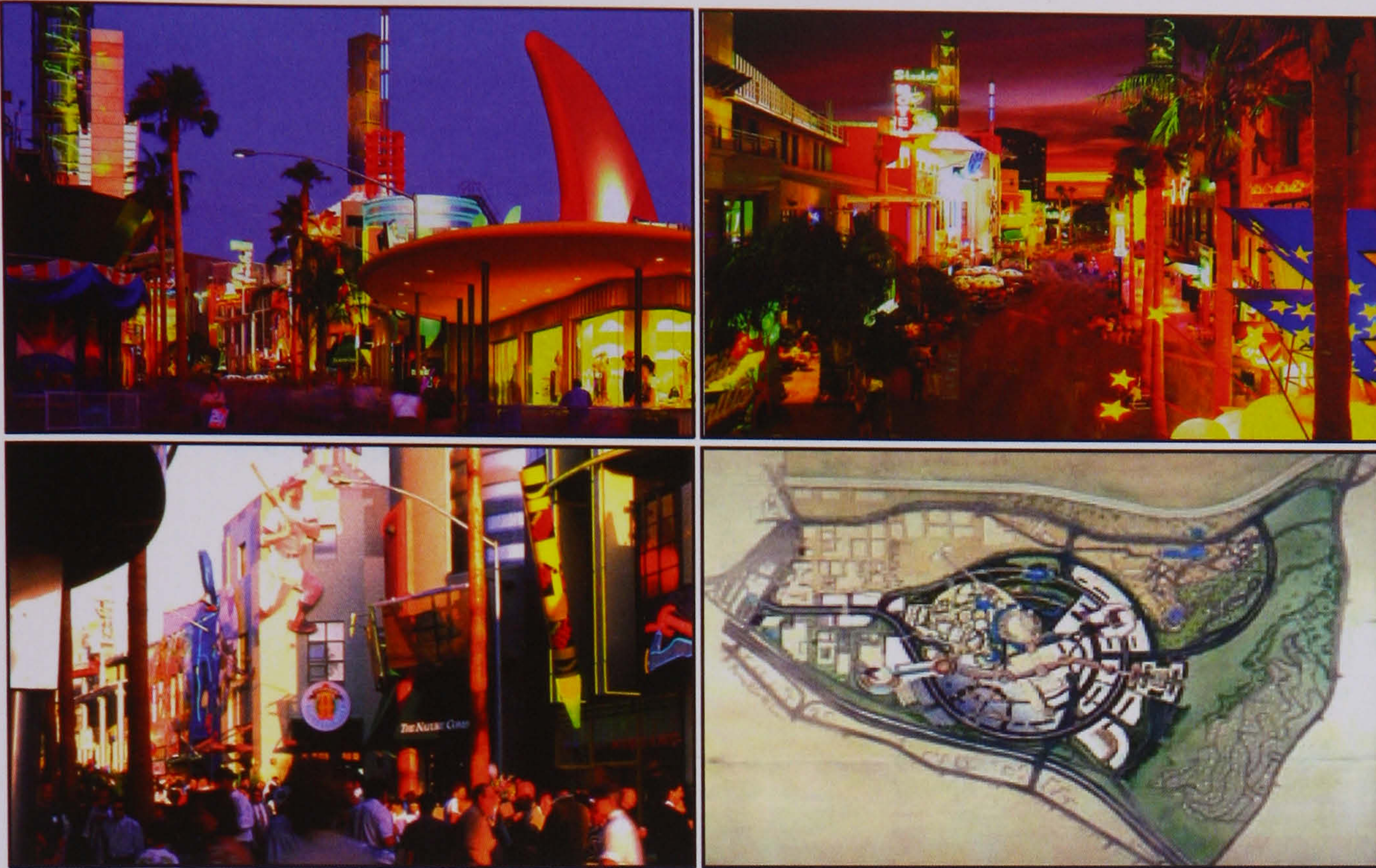


13.2 - The 'celestial vault' is covered with 2.1 million lights and is activated every hour after dusk with a light show. This digitalized light display is accompanied by symphonic sound booming out of a 540.000-watt sound system.

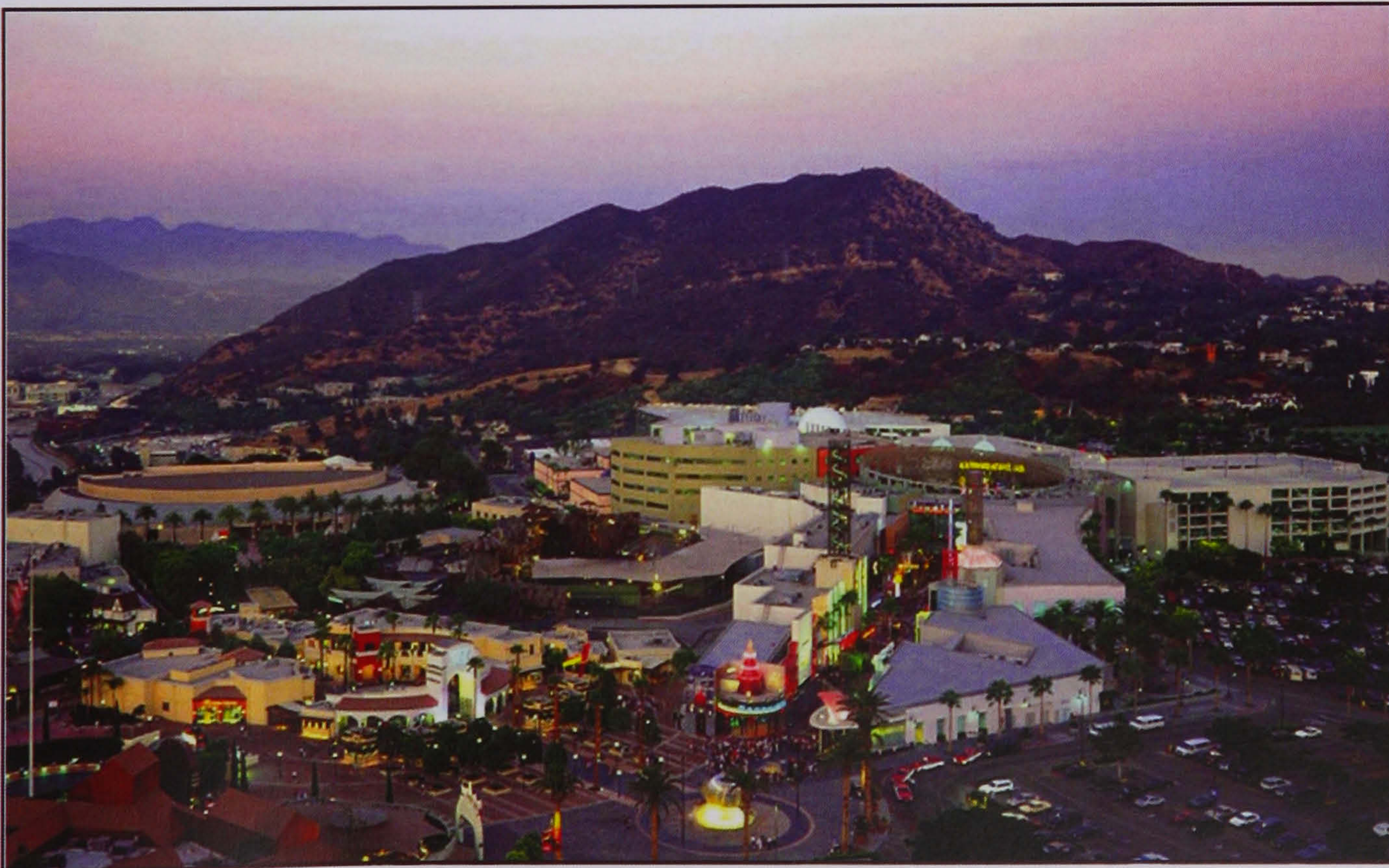


13.3 - The vaulted canopy spans four blocks of downtown Las Vegas.

Universal Citywalk, Los Angeles, 1993



14.1 - The 1,500-foot-long strip is intended to house a shopping mall, movie theaters, along with production studios, and executive offices, is the first phase of a large-scale project for the whole entertainment compound known as Universal City. Designed using computer-compiled traces of local Los Angeles architecture, *Universal Citywalk* reproduces at a larger scale its streetscape. A circular plaza hinges together two blocks of restaurants, retail stores, nightclubs, bars, theaters, offices and classrooms that stretch along a promenade connecting an 18-screen movie theater with the Universal Studios Hollywood theme park, tour and amphitheater.



14.2 - *Universal Citywalk* forms the central spine of the Universal City Masterplan, a plan which seeks to recreate the image of the city on the hill.

De-transubstantiation

Chapter 4

Summary

At the start of this investigation I considered a range of spatial appearances at play within the Rainbow Room, New York. Looking out from the 65th floor of the Rockefeller Centre we saw how mirror image Manhattan (reflected back from the window recesses adjacent to the twenty-four large windows that circle the room) was as much an illusion as the unmediated cityscape seen through the window. In contrast to anamorphic, extreme perspective or *tromp-l'oeil* wall and ceiling painting, we saw how *the context of the site was the content of the image*. However, while the spectacular cityscape and its mirror image fell into the general category of appearance, I argued that their 'differences' were key to understanding the turbulent interferences that operate within social space.

Through the following chapters I have both identified different modes of spatial illusion and tried to understand their relation. The foundation for this analysis involved Plato's attack on the mimetic representations of artists' and Marx's conception of 'ideological representation' as 'false consciousness'. With Jameson's analysis, we saw how both critiques of representation (Plato and Marx) are compressed into a single account of postmodern space:

I want to suggest that our faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present day multinational capitalism (PM, p. 38).

The relation that Jameson identifies moved between the spatial *effects* of postmodern architecture (the Bonaventure Hotel) and the ideological *affects* of global capital. While Jameson identifies an important relation between differentiated modes of illusion, his conflation of illusory systems continues a traditional belief in the fixed and stable structures of the real (cognitive mapping) and consequently fails to identify the points of rupture that exist within the relation between systems.

Instead of mimetic representation being subsumed by ideological representation (Jameson, Lefebvre, Debord), I look to what I identify as a critical tension between these

differentiated modes. Benjamin's investment in the term phantasmagoria is certainly useful for understanding how space is filled with illusions of every kind and how these illusions are not simply a poor imitation of the 'real' or the 'natural' world but how they exist as a consequence of a highly constructed universe. While there is some 'shock' involved in moving between different instances of phantasmagoria (*Arcades*), Benjamin's critical conceptualization of the fantastic projections of the magic lantern continues to operate from the position of the privileged observer. That is, urban experience is viewed through the window of history. From this elevated position we observe the subject caught in the intoxicating system of mass consumption.

One ambition of critical theory is to return us to the 'real' where we can once again 'live' as freethinking subjects. No matter how complex the theorisation of space and illusion, we find there is always an underlying determination to *break the spell*. In the case of Lefebvre the full complexity of social space is brought to the surface and analysed in great detail. However, as we have seen, this theorisation of space remains committed to a utopian belief in 'use value' and 'natural life': 'In the areas set aside for leisure, the body regains a certain right to use, a right which is half imaginary and half real, and which does not go beyond an illusory 'culture of the body', an imitation of natural life.'¹⁴⁵ It is Lefebvre's reliance on 'use' and the 'natural' - as a site of stable meaning - that renders his formulation highly unstable.

The question of the critical status of illusion in social space cannot be considered from a constructed exteriority nor can it be defined by reference to assumed notions of error or truth. Indeed, I start out from the principle that people are able to identify the structures and mechanisms at work in space and therefore 'choose' to take part in those spatialities. As Žižek has put it, 'one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it.'¹⁴⁶ The notion of 'mass deception' (Adorno), 'dream sleep' (Benjamin) or 'living dead' (Romero) implies that it is only the critical theorist or social scientist that has the capacity to comprehend the

¹⁴⁵ *The Production of Space*, p. 353.

¹⁴⁶ *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 29.

ideological structures at work within spaces of capital. Moreover, it is this privileged individual who has the power to extricate us from our world of false appearances. The question of the critical status of illusion demands a new approach to understanding the agency of social space. The relation between differentiated modes of spatial illusion is crucial to questioning the fixed relations that remain determined by an oppositional framework of essence and appearance or truth and illusion. These binaries exist as a consequence of highly constructed forms of rhetoric and work to negate any claim to knowledge that we might seek through an experience of contemporary social space.

In this chapter I will (re)turn to the relation between the mimetic constructions involved in placemaking and ideological transubstantiation to consider how these different modes of representation coexist as a force of movement and change. As I have already demonstrated, it is in the staged spaces of retail and leisure that we see representational narratives competing for our attention. Rather than a single flow of global capitalism we find interruptions and interferences that demand an engagement with a range of systems. Through this final analysis I will again focus on the relation between the mimetic and the ideological to ask: (i) if the fabricated representations of contemporary social space challenge utopian notions of ‘authenticity’ and ‘truth’; (ii) how mimetic representations (placemaking) act on ideological representation (transubstantiation); and (iii) if we can understand the relations between space and illusion as a site of action and change.

De-transubstantiation

The *inscription* is the written origin: traced and henceforth inscribed in a system, in a figure that no longer governs.¹⁴⁷

In this analysis of space I want to focus on the relation between two modes of illusion; or, more specifically, I intend to consider how the ideological mode *transubstantiation* is altered by the mimetic mode *experiential placemaking*. These modes of illusion operate within the same system but function very differently. Where transubstantiation takes effect without transforming the physical appearance of a thing, experiential placemaking moves on the surface and visibly changes the appearance of its location. Where the forces of transubstantiation are ideological and, in part, external to physical space, the structure and mechanism of experiential placemaking is located within the fabric of the spatial event. These illusions are tied to the market and emerge as a product of social relations; their effects on space and the subject's experience of space are always in flux and bound to the changing conditions of capital. In this chapter I will explore how these coexistent but disjunctive modes of spatial illusion coexist in social space. With this in mind, I will argue that in the fusion of spatial illusions, social space negates and disrupts the inscribed relation between the original and the copy and in so doing, acts as a site of change.

The notion of 'spatial inscription' will be linked to the mimetic mode of experiential placemaking. As we saw in the last chapter, experiential placemaking has come to describe something akin to a sophisticated stage set that mimics or references a space that is elsewhere. A clear example of this is the Venetian Hotel Casino Resort in Las Vegas, which recreates St Mark's Square and the canals of Venice to add a new level of wonder to the experience of shopping. The scaled-down reproduction, however, does not exist as a passive representation. Instead, the inscription is ongoing. In the case of the Venetian hotel, we find that Venice the city is inscribed with new meaning. The question that I consider relates directly to the consequences of this spatial inscription. With this re-inscription, I will be asking if the ideological forces that determine how space is

¹⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass (trans), London: Routledge, 1978, p. 115.

experienced are themselves acted upon by the mimetic representations of experiential placemaking

In Christianity, the term *Transubstantiation* means the change by which the substance (though not the appearance) of the bread and the wine in the Eucharist becomes Christ's real presence, that is, his body and blood. The bread and the wine may not appear to be the actual blood and flesh of Christ but to the Christian believer the substance has been transformed into an extension of Christ's body. The Christian ideology has within its means the power to substitute ordinary food and drink for the extraordinary substance of Christ's body. The bread and the wine that is consumed in the ceremony may not appear to be transformed, yet for those who take part, for those who live with religious belief, plain organic matter comes to possess a supernatural meaning.¹⁴⁸

Alienation is understood by Marx to be the necessary condition for the continuation of the capitalist ideology. When social relations, which once defined people as active individuals, are obscured by a governing doctrine (ideology), the possibility of social change or struggle ceases to exist. This mode of alienation is argued by Marx to involve a degree of misrecognition. With regard to the religious ideology or governing moral doctrines of metaphysical idealism, Marx suggests that men become subjugated by what originated as a product of the human brain. In this way alienation occurs through a process of dispossession. That is, intellectual systems and material products that arise from human thought and activity are reflected back to the individual as autonomous forces of subjugation. As Marx suggests in *Capital*, the forces of the market follow this same logic. The phantasmic and transcendental forces that surround commodities do not physically alter their material reality; instead it is the shared belief (or false

¹⁴⁸ Transubstantiation is derived from the Latin term *transubstantiatio*, meaning 'change of substance'. This term was incorporated into the creed of the Fourth Lateran Council in A.D 1215. Between 1545 and 1563 the doctrine of Transubstantiation is stated by the Council of Trent as follows: 'In the sacrament of the Eucharist, when the bread and the wine are consecrated the whole substance of the bread is thereby turned into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and the whole substance of the wine is thereby turned into the substance of his blood. This turning of one substance into another, the council affirmed, was aptly named by the holy Catholic Church: 'transubstantiation' (Session XIII, ca. 4).

consciousness) of those individuals that live within the capitalist system that goes to transform objects of use into commodities that are desired and fetishized:

In order, therefore, that a commodity may in practice operate effectively as exchange value, it must divest itself of its natural physical body and become transformed from merely imaginary into real gold, although this act of transubstantiation may be more 'troublesome' for it than the transition from necessity to freedom for the Hegelian 'concept', the casting of his shell for a lobster, or the putting-off of the old Adam or Saint Jerome. (C, 197)

The ideological powers of transubstantiation (that Marx believes to reside in the commodity) are not merely linked by 'analogy' but directly connected to our experience of social space. The relationship between commodity, space and social relations is determined by a complex network of immaterial phenomena.

With this in mind I will turn to the relation between the highly visual illusions of experiential placemaking and the invisible but nevertheless transformative and determining forces of transubstantiation. Unlike the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, which does not change in its physical appearance but none the less stands in for the immaterial body of Christ, or perhaps more importantly, unlike the commodity that appears 'in the eyes of men' to have transformed into an automated and autonomous object of value (which also remains unchanged in its physical appearance), the illusions involved in experiential placemaking go to transform the appearance of physical matter. This 'change in substance' is different to the Christian and Marxian formulation as, with experiential placemaking, the structure and mechanism by which things are transformed remain physically determined. While these spatial 'changes' seek to direct us through highly constructed spatial narratives they do not claim a metaphysical status for their effects.

Consequently, the mutation of capital into place and matter is not altogether logical.

While the mimetic illusions of experiential placemaking and the ideological forces of transubstantiation both serve the interest of the market, the relation between these modes of spatial illusion works to interrupt and rupture a wider global system. In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that globalisation is not eroding sovereignty but rather is transforming it into a system of diffuse national and supranational institutions. This shift is argued to signal an all-encompassing state of Empire. What Hardt and Negri have described as the 'non-place' in which the older designated sites of sovereignty have been subsumed into a global *Empire* can also very well describe the autonomy and fantasy of retail architecture and social space in general (given that there is no fixed relation within the physical identity of these sites). Moreover, the privatisation of social space (the shopping mall) is also a highly concentrated location for the new global market. As Hardt and Negri point out: 'profit can be generated only through contact, engagement, interchange, and commerce' (E, 190). It is precisely in the junction point of retail space that the movement of capital is located and most clearly identified. The interference emerges from the transparency involved in these locations - that is, out of how these sites of fantasy lend form to the movements of a world system that exists 'both everywhere and nowhere' (E, 190). It is no longer the commodity that holds the 'secrets' of capital: it is the space around it that speaks most clearly about the new world order. This emphasis on contact, engagement and interchange renders social space the most conducive to capital.

This view is supported by Pine and Gilmore who not only argue that our economy is fuelled by the staging of experience (a distinctly spatial phenomena), but also that the production of subjectivity is only competitive when it 'transforms' the individual subject:

What set of experiences bring about the necessary transformation? How can a customer be changed from where he is today to where his aspiration lies, or should lie? Transformations, of course, build on experiences that will cause the customer to realize his aspirations whether or not he can articulate what they are. ¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ *The Experience Economy*, p. 179.

What is important here is that ‘transformation’ takes place through contact, engagement and interchange within the social spaces of exchange. Unlike a ‘false consciousness’ imposed upon us, we are made aware of the constructed nature of experience; it is precisely this production of experience that transforms subjectivity. While the claim that the market can actually change the ‘*being* of the buyer’ appears somewhat unsavoury, it should be no surprise that the market economy changes us. After all: ‘People value transformation above all other economic offerings because it addresses the ultimate source of all other needs: why the buyer desires the commodities, goods, services, and experiences he purchases.’¹⁵⁰ If the transubstantiation of the bread and wine of the Eucharist functions as a transcendental process that is entirely external to the object, the illusions involved in our experience of social space remain physically bound to the site. Like the seventeenth-century ceiling paintings of Andreas Pozzo, the working mechanism that creates the affect of disorientation and spectacle remains physically tied to built space. It is in the spaces of retail and leisure that we see the mechanism through which both things and subjectivities are transformed. However, the affects of experiential placemaking are of a different order to the illusion that Marx found to exist within the commodity. Not only does the appearance of material space change before our eyes, this primary illusory mechanism (experiential placemaking) provides an important entry point into the ideological forces that condition the way space is experienced globally.

The Venetian

Turning to the superstructures of Las Vegas, it is not difficult to see how illusion has transformed the activity of shopping into an experience of fantasy, disorientation and spectacle. The imitation has become so elaborate that Venice, Paris, New York and ancient Rome all exist as scaled-down reproductions. In the case of the Venetian Hotel Casino Resort, the streets and canals of Venice have been transplanted to the second floor of the building. Shoppers pass along winding streets that cross the squares and canals of

¹⁵⁰ *The Experience Economy*, p. 172.

Venice. This elaborate recreation is simply designed as an extravagant addition to shopping. The Venetian is designed to entertain the shopper who is immersed in a space that simulates daylight with vaulted ceilings and electric lights. This illusion is further strengthened by restaurant waiters who ask their customers if they will be dining inside or out. But instead of the natural cycles of light and dark, the time at the Venetian is permanently set at dusk.

At first sight the Venetian Hotel Casino Resort corresponds to the Platonic opposition between the authentic original and the fake copy; there is a notable correspondence between the historic original and the themed copy. Plato's attack on mimetic representation is based on a fear of misperception, of the impoverished copy being mistaken for the original. For Plato, this misperception is dangerous. The illusions of the painter and the poet distort reality and truth by passing on a falsehood that bears little resemblance to the ideal form. Although Plato's metaphysical notion of the pure original is now something of a redundant abstraction, the hierarchy between the authentic original and the false reproduction remains in place. For some, however, the copy holds more value than the original. In the case of Las Vegas, the copy is more efficient, cleaner, newer and fresher.¹⁵¹ But this comparison is to miss the point, it is no longer a question of Platonic categories of reality and appearance but instead a question of *what the copy reveals about the changing state of its model*. This mimetic mode of representation (the themed reproduction/experiential placemaking) is directly linked to the imperceptible effects of spatial transubstantiation. The failure of the Venetian to be faithful to its model (the Rialto Bridge has been built to include a Travelator and the gondolas are designed with hidden motors) provides a useful insight into the actual state of things. The visible mutation of one thing into another, of the original city reduced and transplanted into the Nevada desert, forces the hidden workings of spatial transubstantiation to surface. It is at this very moment, however, that the turbulent relations between spatial illusions perform something of a de-transubstantiation. That is, instead of the bread and the wine mutating into the body of Christ, it is as if we begin to see a change in relations. To continue the

¹⁵¹ In the television documentary, *Superstructures of America* (produced by Greg Lanning, Channel 4, 2002), the architecture critic Paul Goldburger makes the case for the Venetian, arguing that it easily resolves many of the discomforts of the 'real Venice'.

analogy, it is as if both the ceremony and our participation in the event can be understood to act on and change the transformations that take place before us. This shift from the Platonic categorisations - that continue to inform received assumptions about space – marks an important challenge to the dominant theorisations of space and economy.

The architecture critic Paul Goldburger describes how the ‘crowds are attracted to each city, not for work but to be entertained’.¹⁵² Goldburger argues that while there are clear differences between the ancient Italian city and the recent superstructures of Las Vegas, ‘increasingly the real Venice is like the theme park and Las Vegas is the same thing’.¹⁵³ The divide between the original and the copy merely operates as a surface appearance, beneath the traditional inscription (Venice reproduced as an inferior representation) lies an important change in relations. Plato’s privileging of origins has been rendered wholly inadequate, not because the model has disappeared, but because the copy has returned to speak of the changing identity of the original (as I will argue, this does not merely return us to the theorisation of ‘simulation and simulacra’ proposed by Baudrillard - I will not reflect on the ‘catastrophic disappearance’ of the ‘real’, the ‘authentic’ or the ‘essential’; instead, the focus has remained on the relations, movements and interruptions that take place between differentiated modes of illusion). That is, the movement and flux operating in what is perceived to be fixed is, by way of the copy, brought to the surface and made visible. Consequently, the effect of the Venetian can be argued to inscribe and alter our perception of the ‘real original’ (Venice): the reconstruction of its streets and canals in Las Vegas gives a clear indication of the current identity of the model. It is precisely the fabricated constructions involved in experiential placemaking (mimetic representation) that are not only enmeshed with the workings of global economy but which also change it.

In this way the inscription is not a passive representation, the act of inscription instead forces a re-inscription. This movement describes something about the way space speaks and like the immateriality of the spoken word, it is the immaterial representations of

¹⁵² *Superstructures of America*, Channel 4, 2002.

¹⁵³ *Superstructures of America*.

experiential placemaking that articulate the social realities of social space. The nature of this spatial inscription is at once rigid and fluid: the obsessive attention to recreating the original perversely acts on what is being copied. The relation between the mimetic representations of site and the ideological representation of economy do not perform as a unified entity: it is not simply a case of one mode subsuming another. The dialogue between the model and copy, between economy and site, serve as a cycle of changing relations.

Writing on Las Vegas, Peter Weibel argues that both Venice and Las Vegas are cities of consumption:

Venice is a model for Las Vegas as the first consumer city of the old world, as Las Vegas is the first consumer city of the new world. Therefore Las Vegas is architecturally imitating the most scenic views of Venice and one of the most famous hotels is called The Venetian Casino Hotel Resort.¹⁵⁴

Instead of producing goods for exchange, these cities rely on tourism, recreation and entertainment to support their economies. Weibel points out that the relation between Venice and Las Vegas also involves important differences. Unlike Venice, 'Las Vegas was never a city of craft, production, and trade. It was conceived from the beginning as a place of consumption and recreation and services became the only function.'¹⁵⁵ The point here is that, as Venice has followed Las Vegas in its move to consumption, the historic original has mutated into a new form. In short, Venice has changed into a city that is more akin to its own reproduction. With the advent of the *experience economy*, these similarities have become even more transparent. Not only are both sites at the forefront of staging experience; Venice, like Las Vegas, elicits a context for change, both sites are in the business of generating transformations.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Weibel, 'The City: A Place of Consumption in the Post-industrial Information Society', *The Magic Hour: The Convergence of Art and Las Vegas*, Germany: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2001, p. 187.

¹⁵⁵ 'The City: A Place of Consumption in the Post-industrial Information Society', p. 187.

It is *via* this representational mode of spatial illusion (experiential placemaking) that we can challenge what is perceived to be 'authentic' and 'natural' as a stable carrier of meaning. At this moment the forces of transubstantiation emerge and we are reminded that while the physical appearance of Venice does not change, it is nevertheless subject to one of the greatest and most sophisticated of spatial illusions. Although the outward phenomena remain fixed in time, the transcendental forces of transubstantiation are working to determine the course of future developments. What we see is an ancient city that has preserved its cultural heritage over the centuries. What exists is the total and absolute commoditisation of space (the Venetian). Instead of producing goods, the city has developed in line with the movements of global capital to exist as a commodity in the market, selling its services to anybody who wishes to visit. As Weibel points out, Venice, like Las Vegas, is a city of consumption and the thing that is being produced is experience. The old Platonic principle that takes origins, models and essences as the site of truth and meaning must now be reconsidered.

The relation between experiential placemaking and transubstantiation involves a correspondence between differentiated modes of both space and illusion. Where one is explicit, the other is imperceptible, where one is seemingly specific, the other is general. What is clear is that, as regards transubstantiation and experiential placemaking, both instances of illusion are tied to the changing needs of the market. Placemaking not only functions as an outward expression of a developed ideological force; that is, the relation is not merely a question of cause and effect. As we have seen, there is an active and dynamic correspondence between systems in which the copy alters the model. Before I consider the wider implications of this relation I will turn to a force that is otherwise hidden - a determining force that conditions space on a global scale and transforms matter without altering its physical appearance. The relation between these modes of spatial illusion is of great importance because together they describe - and in so doing negate - the transcendental movement and flow of an entire global system.

Simulation and Simulacra

The interrelation and coexistence of differentiated modes of illusory is precisely what Jean Baudrillard identifies in *Simulation and Simulacra*. The fantasy of Disneyland, he argues, is ‘there to conceal the fact that it is the real country, all of real America, which is Disneyland’ (SS, 172). Future worlds, the frontier, pirates, etc. play out the values and social frameworks of American society for children. This mode of experiential placemaking involves the physical construction of spatial narratives around both the real events and the dominant mythologies that have shaped a collective consciousness. These mimetic representations are not only simplified in form (scaled down and reduced to nominated zones of activity), but also reduced to a series of basic codes (history, science, myth, *etc.*). For Baudrillard, this primary mode of placemaking simply ‘masks and perverts a basic reality’ (SS, 170). Through its miniaturisation and simplification of a mythological, historical and social relations, Disneyland distorts the complexity and hence the reality of the ‘real original’. But Baudrillard also identifies third and fourth order simulacra to exist in the American theme park. It is this developed phase of simulation that corresponds to the relation of spatial illusions that I have argued to condition a wider experience of space:

Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle (SS, 172)

The third phase simulacrum ‘masks the absence of a basic reality’ (SS, 170). This more ‘basic’ mode of illusion is argued by Baudrillard to have advanced to a developed stage. The fourth and final incarnation not only conceals the fact that reality no longer exists, it reproduces the real to maintain a semblance of the real.

Baudrillard’s schema goes some way to articulating the relation of spatial illusions. The visible and perhaps more basic illusions of second order simulacra (experiential placemaking) maintain the imperceptible forces of third-and fourth-order simulacra

(transubstantiation) which transform physical matter without changing its appearance. This final phase of simulacrum/transubstantiation is not so much a false representation as an ideological force that maintains an image of old oppositions through the simulation of differences: 'it bears no relation to any reality whatever: [it is] its own pure simulacrum' (SS, 170). However, Baudrillard's linear passage of the false is inscribed by a metaphysical system of belief that continues to judge between truth and illusion.¹⁵⁶ This procession of simulacra describes the victory of the illusion over reality and truth. In short, Baudrillard's critical framework is bound to a set of determining judgments that equate the rise of immaterial phenomena with the catastrophic demise of the real.

With this problem in mind, I propose that the relation between experiential placemaking and transubstantiation, between the mimetic and the ideological, is not a march away from a basic reality but a disjunctive entry point into a new system of relations. That is, the spatial illusions of placemaking are, as Baudrillard has suggested, joined to the imperceptible forces of transubstantiation. However, this relation does not work to 'conceal' the operation of a more general and advanced illusory mechanism, nor as Baudrillard has stated it, 'feed the illusion of the real with imaginary stations' (SS, 172). Given that scripted spatial narratives and experiential urban planning are now a model for the way space is conceived in towns and cities around the world,¹⁵⁷ the placemaking of the theme park should instead be thought to externalise the mutations of ideological representation. It is not a question of the difference between the imaginary and the real being simulated or constructed to maintain the semblance of difference (Baudrillard). Although difference does not exist in the old framework of reality and illusion (and perhaps never has), we should not resort to the rhetoric of catastrophe and fatalism. As we have seen, meaningful difference exists - only today it appears in the form of an active and dynamic relation.

¹⁵⁶ See, Douglas Kellner, 'Baudrillard and the Return of Metaphysics', *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, pp. 177-186.

¹⁵⁷ In 'Disney Space' Chuihua Judy Chung writes: 'Disney Space is the invention of a new urbanism by a single individual, Walt Disney, whose yearnings for an idealized environment produced a series of, in retrospect, visionary moves that irreversibly transformed the composition of the twentieth-century city' 'Disney Space', p. 271.

It is, then, not a case of the illusion masking the fact that reality has disappeared (Baudrillard) but the differentiated modes of spatial illusion revealing reality to exist *within* the site of social space. Moreover, this relation does not merely indicate the absolute catastrophe of the modern world (Baudrillard), but instead establishes an important challenge to theoretical representations of the ideological. It is precisely the relation between placemaking and transubstantiation, between the mimetic and the ideological and between site and economy, that allows us to map the new territories and movements that have come to envelope our spatial surroundings. Moving in these ‘imagination stations’ we find ourselves hard-wired to the reality of an ever-changing world system that has moved beyond the older physical geographies of time and space. Baudrillard’s fear of our immersion/sublimation into a false appearance and consequent disappearance as freethinking subjects should be set aside. Although these spatial illusions are attached to the same mechanism of power, the relation that takes place is reciprocal, just as our spatial surroundings are changed by mutations in economy those same surrounding act on and alter that larger world system.

The invisibility/total reign of what Baudrillard has termed the fourth phase of simulacra is mapped out in the highly fabricated sites of retail, fantasy and entertainment. The experiential placemaking of social space short-circuits the transcendental commoditisation of social relations. As we have seen, this disjunctive coexistence of spatial illusions not only provides an important insight into the global framework and mechanism that shapes the way we think and live, the relation serves as an instrument of change. In addition, it is now clear that the old opposition between error and truth, and illusion and reality involve many problems and difficulties. Not least, we find that these idealist categories distract from any meaningful analysis of the critical differences that exist within the networks and mechanisms that surround us.

The critical status of illusion in social space

In contrast to the key theoretical arguments explored through the previous chapters, I have argued that *both space and the ideologies that exist therein are not fixed to an*

unchanging construct of power but are subject to a process of changing relations. Consequently, we can see that illusion, in all its differentiated forms, is not merely or simply imposed upon us. If, we take ideology to mean a changing system of shared beliefs¹⁵⁸ and not - as Marx would have it - *false consciousness*, ideology can be comprehended as a construct that is anchored to the realities of social space. It is here, at this point of *contact, engagement and interchange* that the critical relations between space and illusion come into play.

The focus of this final analysis rests with the force of representation, how the copy appropriates the model and how this inscription forces change. In light of these generative relations I will return to the earlier fusion between mimetic and ideological representation or as I have put it, placemaking and transubstantiation. What passes between these systems means that the event of transubstantiation (as it is played out through economic exchange) can no longer claim itself to be the sole agent of transformation (we knowingly buy transformations). With the inclusion of placemaking, with the presence of social space, the old formulation of false consciousness (transubstantiation) is reversed. Rather than simply manipulating social *contact, engagement and interchange*, we see that *ideology is subject to and inscribed by the determinations of social space*. What I have described as a de-transubstantiation goes to illustrate this change in formation. Before moving beyond this important point I will return to the question of ideology, as it is through this concept that we begin to understand how illusion is caught within a generative cycle of relations and, perhaps more importantly, we see how social space is a site of agency and change.

For Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, the ideological is a representation of a new spirit in capitalism. It is this latest mutation in capital that now stands as a dominant ideology:

We may indeed speak of the *dominant ideology*, so long as we stop regarding it as mere subterfuge by the dominant to ensure the consent of the dominated, and acknowledge that the majority of those involved – the strong as well as the weak – rely on these schemas in

¹⁵⁸ As I discuss, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello takes this view in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*.

order to represent to themselves the operation, benefits and constraints of the order in which they find themselves immersed.¹⁵⁹

Boltanski and Chiapello's conception of ideology is not determined by it being true or false but is understood as a reflection of the formation and transformation of 'the justifications of capital.'¹⁶⁰ Moreover, ideology remains 'rooted in the reality of things, in as much as it helps to inflect peoples action and thus fashion the world they act in'.¹⁶¹ This engagement with ideology, which remains tied to the dominant modes of power, contests the definition of ideology as 'false consciousness'. Not only does the older definition of ideology as false consciousness (which I have explored through the work of Plato, Marx, Debord, Jameson and Baudrillard) assume that some ideas match or correspond to things while others do not, the very notion of false consciousness implies that there is a correct way of viewing the world. Moreover, as Terry Eagleton points out: 'the belief that a minority of theorists monopolise a scientifically grounded knowledge of how society is, while the rest of us blunder around in some fog of false consciousness, does not particularly endear itself to democratic sensibility.'¹⁶²

As argued in Chapter One, moving beyond Marx's notion of ideology as false consciousness is central to understanding the critical status of illusion in social space. However, the 'dominant ideology' is only open to change when it enters spaces of *contact, engagement and interchange*; in other words, the dominant ideology is rooted within both social space and the social relations that occupy space. When Eagleton asks if ideology is 'less a matter of representations of reality than lived relations',¹⁶³ we should be careful to avoid reconstructing the very oppositions that we have worked to dissolve. The relation between lived social relations and representations of lived experience should not be separated into distinct spheres. As we have seen, this is precisely the distinction that Lefebvre makes between 'representations of space' and 'representational space' and the very problem that Debord faces when he casts the world as a representational

¹⁵⁹ *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁰ *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 11.

¹⁶¹ *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 11.

¹⁶² *Ideology*, p. 11.

¹⁶³ *Ideology*, p. 20.

spectacle. Ideological representation and mimetic representation coexist as differentiated systems and it is only when they are analysed as distinct entities (Marx) or as a homogenous mass (Debord) that the world appears fixed within a 'fatal strategy' of image saturation, paroxysm and implosion (Baudrillard).

Understanding the critical status of illusion is key to comprehending the political, economic and ideological relations that operate in social space. As I have argued throughout, the constructed, the fabricated and the false do not exist as a homogeneous entity but coexist as fields of differentiated modalities. Turning back to the *Republic*, we should once again consider Plato's motivation for banishing artists from his utopian state. As we saw in Chapter One, the products produced by the artists are of a 'different order' or 'lower grade' to the bed, the chair or the bridal made by the craftsman. At the same time, however, everything produced by the hands of men is only ever an inferior reproduction. Plato judges between the good and the deviant copy and with this moral division avoids any analysis of the relation between differentiated modes of illusion. In other words, the relation between copies is covered by a desire to keep them separate. In banishing the artists from the Republic Plato does not rid the state of illusion, he simply divides between different modes. What presents the greatest challenge to the rule of law, those appearances that promote and provoke action and change, and those representations that threaten the sovereignty of the model and the autonomy of rational logic are simply removed. This moral, ideological and political censoring of illusion is precisely the problem at stake.

Turning to Plato, Jacques Ranciere argues that the stage (Greek theatre), 'disturbs the clear portioning of identities, activities and spaces.'¹⁶⁴ That is, the work of the artists intervenes with the general distribution of labour. However, as Ranciere points out, it is the 'indetermination of identities, the deligitimation of positions of speech, the deregulation of partitions of space and time' that is political.¹⁶⁵ By banishing the mimetic products of the artist, Plato seeks to depoliticise the *Republic* and establish a stable

¹⁶⁴ *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁵ *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 13-14

community in which everybody knows their place. For Ranciere, Plato's opposition to the mimetic products of poets and painters goes to describe the politics, antagonism and subversion of the redistributing of the shared experience:

Politics plays itself out in the theatrical paradigm as the relationship between the stage and the audience, as meaning produced by the actor's body, as games of proximity and distance.¹⁶⁶

The Platonic principle, which divides and opposes reality and appearance, is set in place to protect the regime. As Ranciere argues: fiction is nominated as an exception to the real. By banishing the arts altogether, Plato removes the possibility of this subversive influence. The staging of experience is both a theatrical and political proposition. Given this relation, it might be argued that the re-inscription of the sensible through experiential placemaking serves as a subversion of government and a disruption of the portioning of space and time. However, before such an assertion can be made, we need to question the model of power that Ranciere's analysis relies on. As I have argued throughout, the forces that preside over social space are in a constant state of flux and not tied to a monolithic and unchanging regime of governance. It is precisely Ranciere's division between change and stasis, between 'art' and 'work' or reality and fiction that emerges as a highly unstable and problematic foundation for considering the critical possibilities of social space. With Ranciere's reading of Plato the divide between the governments distribution and the artists redistribution of the sensible is fixed in a system of inside and outside, the rule of law and external opposition.

Through the previous chapters I have repeatedly returned to Plato: not because the *Republic* can help us 'lay down the terms of the problem',¹⁶⁷ but because the problem is so often understood in Platonic terms. At the start of this analysis of space and illusion I asked how it is possible to remain with a metaphysical logic when the site of analysis bears no relation to that approach to thinking.

¹⁶⁶ *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 17.

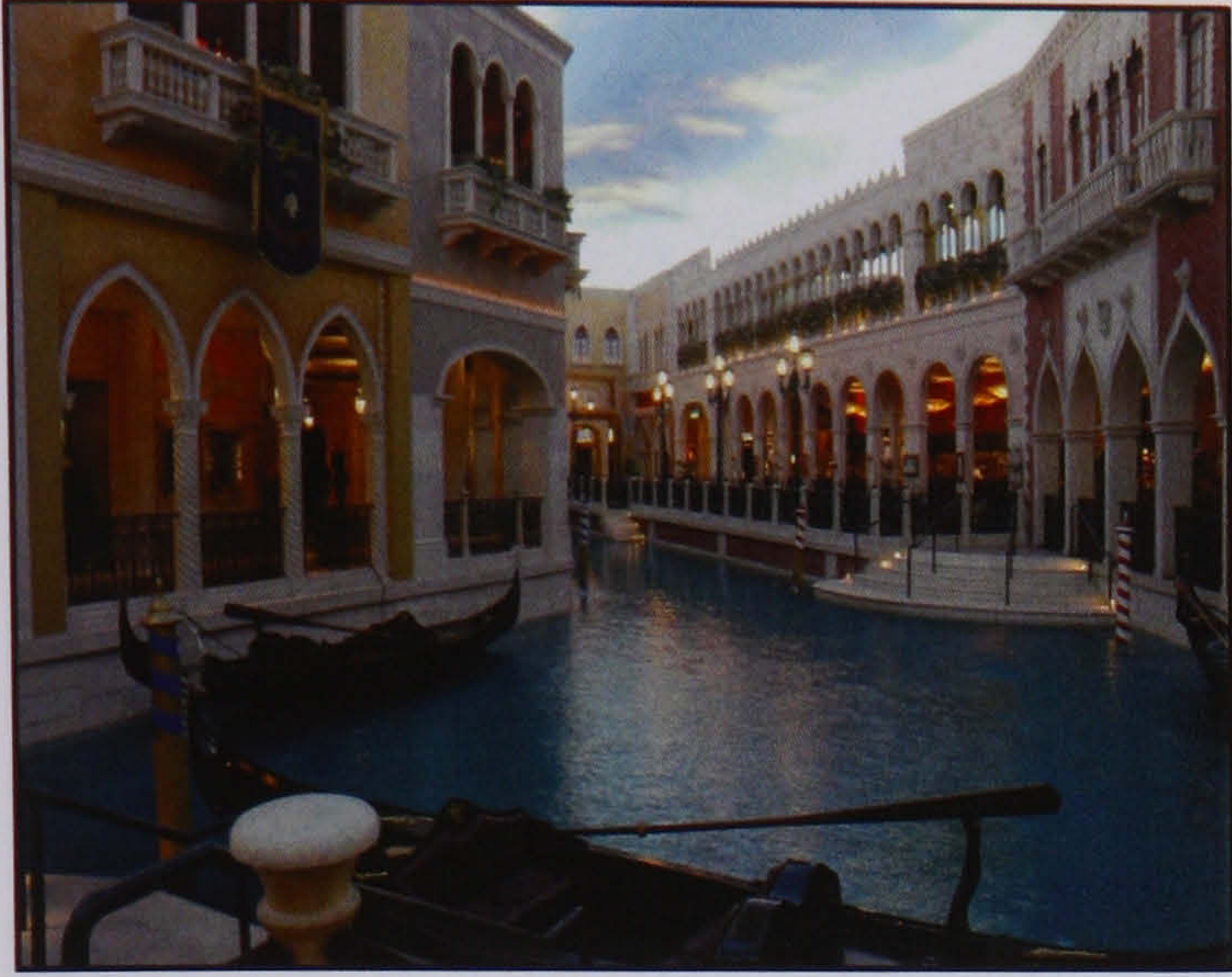
¹⁶⁷ *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 42.

Instead of remaining with an unchanging image of governance, my interrogation of differentiated modes of illusion has involved a consideration of mutations and developments in capitalism. Here I have argued that changes in economy and the ideologies inherent in exchange are both reflected in and inscribed by staging, placemaking and the scripted narratives of urban design. This relation - between placemaking and transubstantiation - has challenged a number of key texts (which continue to idealise the real and homogenise differences and relations in social space into a single category of false consciousness). The critical status of illusion in social space has not emerged from a constructed opposition to global networks and the spaces they affect. Instead, it has come into play as a consequence of the relation between ideological and economic forces and, immersive and disorientating spaces of retail, leisure and entertainment. Together these systems perform a critical function. That is, the spaces of social and economic activity allow for some entry into the structures and mechanisms of global economy. Our immersion within these spaces does not constitute a passive compliance with capitalism nor does it signal our fate as freethinking subjects. The interruptions and interferences that we have seen to occur between systems involve our own participation in the new geographies and networks that shape and reshape the real.

Finally, de-transubstantiation should not be seen as a move to rid the world of illusion and our need for illusions (Marx). While I have taken the image of the Eucharist to mark a passive encounter with the affects of an ideological system that trades in metaphysics, I have argued that the affects of this modality are only compliant with an image of false consciousness when seen in opposition to the real. In contrast, the relation between differentiated systems shows us as active participants acting on mutating forces of power. Consequently, the theatrical paradigm that divides the stage from its audience is no longer an accurate image of the systems in play. Our proximity to the stage is, quite literally, that of actors. The shift from spectator to participant has far-reaching consequences, as it is here that we see the possibility for action. De-transubstantiation not only marks the disappearance of a passive audience, it also asserts the critical status of illusion in social space.

The Venetian Hotel Casino Resort, Las Vegas, 1999

The 63-acre resort is a miniature Venice complete with replicated statuary, hand-painted frescoed ceilings and tributes to familiar Venetian landmarks.



15.1 - The Grand Canal is situated on the first floor of the hotel.



15.2 - A replica of the Rialto Bridge is placed outside of the hotel.



15.3 - The façade of the Doge's Palace is recreated (on a reduced scale) and serves as the main entrance to the hotel.

Conclusion

Chapter 5

Research Findings

Throughout this research I have been asking how we might conceive of illusion as a site of difference, criticality and change? To do this I have explored how the spectacularisation of social space in the form of experiential placemaking continues to be theorised as a mode of false consciousness. With terms such as spectacle, hyperreality and simulacra, the traditional opposition between 'authenticity' and 'reality' - and the 'active' or 'passive' activities that those binaries are understood to allow for - continues to determine how social space is theorised. Assessing the critical status of illusion in social space is then a starting point for thinking about the turbulent and generative relations that exist in the highly constructed universe of urban space. No longer is it a case of maintaining a critical distance (Jameson) or even mourning the disappearance of a lost reality (Baudrillard), but as I have argued throughout, the possibilities for social space reside in *a new evaluation of the relations between differentiated modes of illusion*.

From the outset there has been something of a question mark after the term illusion, not least because it immediately calls up the very possibility of 'the false' and consequently its idealised opposite: 'the real'. The aim and focus of this research has been to consider how illusion can be thought differently, how Benjamin's notion of the synchronic relations of phantasmagoric space for example, can help us to think of illusion as a field of differentiation and consequently, how the spectacularisation of social space can be understood to embody difference, criticality and change. In order to evaluate the relations between differentiated modes of illusion we have had to dispose of the idea of urban space as simply complicit with a totalizing ideological framework in which 'real human relations' are replaced by pseudo representations (Debord) and the space of 'real history' overrun by pastiche, disorientation and media images (Jameson). To this end, more recent studies of capitalism have helped trace the complexity, mutation and flux of the market (Boltanski and Chapiro) and theorise the global forces that affect and are affected by the spatial systems in play (Pine And Gilmore). From these accounts we have seen how developments in economy go to structure and restructure the spaces we inhabit with a range of spectacular and differentiated effects. It is precisely these effects and their

changes and developments, that provides the coordinates to the ideological forces that remain out of sight.

De-transubstantiation is intended as a means of articulating the critical relation that takes place between differentiated modes of illusion. In other words, the systems, forces and relations that produce social space have been considered through their relation to economic, ideological and cultural global systems. More specifically, we saw how those spaces that produce the appearance of authenticity (Venice) can be explored through their spectacular simulation (the Venetian). Here I have argued that it is not just a case of experiential placemaking giving some insight into the hidden workings of global economy: but with the mimetic representations of placemaking we come to understand space differently. That is, the transcendental movements and flows of an entire global system are seen to act on what 'appears' fixed. In other words, the critical status of illusion serves as a vehicle for understanding the mutations and changes in space when, on the surface, space is seen as immutable. It should be noted that this relation does not return us to the old causality of a hidden essence-surface appearance. Unlike the knock-on consequences of cause and effect, the movements and flows that pass between these systems are always in flux and subject to the changing conditions of both social space and economic systems. The relation between representational and transcendental spatialities has been argued to perform a certain de-transubstantiation. This undoing of the mystery, myth and mysticism attached to the illusion of authenticity, this questioning of the assumed value that conditions our understanding of social space is made available by highly constructed and spectacular means.

From here we have been able to conduct a better evaluation of the critical status of illusion in social space. Consequently, the following points can now be posited:

- the relation between mimetic and ideological representation involves a fusion of differentiated systems;
- illusion functions as a heterogeneous site of agency;
- the copy acts on and changes the model;

- spaces of retail and leisure do not simply answer to an overarching theory of mass commoditisation but involve moments of rupture, interference and force.

There is no doubt that we exist in a world of constructed fictions. Yet this is not *The Wizard of Oz* or *The Truman Show*: there is no 'real world' behind the stage set. The critical status of illusion exists in the relation between the local and the universal, between social space and global networks and between people and economy. In each case we find differentiated modes of illusion; in these differences there occurs movement and change. This play of illusions maintains a critical status because it cuts in a number of ways. It is well known that illusion affects us; we know this - not because critical theory attempts to expose it - but because we knowingly shape our lives around fictional constructs. However, the question for this thesis has been concerned with how illusion serves us, how it re-inscribes global networks and how the social spaces of everyday praxis interfere with and rupture the flow of global economy. This is not intended as a justification for capitalism; on the contrary, the aim of this study has been to identify illusion as a critical force that acts on economy.

Context

These research findings - that have been developed through a new notion of de-transubstantiation - impact directly on the way art practice can be thought. By focusing on the context of experiential placemaking, scripted space and retail architecture this research has led to new ways of considering the critical potential of artworks that engage with the spaces, products and technologies associated with commerce and exchange. That is, practices derided for conforming to the values of the market simply because they employ spectacular means of production or engage with sites of retail, leisure and entertainment, might also be considered to embody some critical potential.¹⁶⁸ That is not

¹⁶⁸ Assessing the critical value of art works through notions of opposition, resistance and struggle continues to determine how contemporary practice is judged. Typical of this approach is Benjamin Buchloh's review of the 2001 Venice Biennale in which he writes:

'Exhibition value - the condition of the secularized modernist work as fully emancipated from cult value and myth - has been replaced by spectacle value, a condition in which media control in

to say that all large scale works that employ new image making technologies are inherently critical but that artists engaging with new media or sites that are deemed to extend the alienating and pacifying affects of 'spectacle' can work through those means without simply conforming to the values of global capitalism.

To reiterate, practices that adopt the vernacular of the market, that follow new mutations in capital and explore spaces of contact, engagement and interchange, also have the potential to embody new modes of critique. Perhaps more specifically, works such as Carsten Holler's giant slides in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern (*Test Site*, 2006) or Pierre Huyghe's acquisition of the copyright to Ann Lee, a Japanese manga character awaiting activation (*Two Minutes Out of Time*, 2000), function beyond questions of complicity on the one hand or resistance and struggle on the other.¹⁶⁹ While these works take their forms from the entertainment industry they embody difference. This, however, is not played out through strategies of opposition or distance but instead experienced as a complex system of differentiated affects, associations and relations. While a proper consideration of these examples demands a whole new line of research, it is important to note that the differentiated field of illusion that has been explored through the spectacularisation of social space extends to comprehending the critical potential of practices that transcribe the phantasmagoric and disorientating activities of consumer culture into the context of contemporary art. That is, artworks that are not simply concerned with 'removing us from the apparently invisible spell of hermetic closure that the languages of media technology, architecture and design have established in the service of spectacle and commodity production'¹⁷⁰ but those that demand that we remain

everyday life is mimetically internalized and aggressively extended into those visual practices that had been previously defined as either exempt from or oppositional to mass cultural regimes, and that now relapse into the most intense solicitation of mythical experience.' Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Control, by Design*, Artforum, September 2001, page 163.

¹⁶⁹ Daniel Birnbaum has argued that Carsten Holler extends Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of 'Relational Aesthetics' to an inner plurality: 'relational art can be about more than playing games with others. Plenty of people exist inside each one of us, people whom we do not yet know. Some we will probably never know.' Here Birnbaum is concerned with returning the individual, disorientating and pleasurable experience of Holler's work to a notion of (inner) community. Daniel Birnbaum, *Mortal Coils*, Artforum, January 2007, p. 76.

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin H.D, Buchloh, *Control, by Design*, Artforum, September 2001, page 163.

actively engaged with the systems in play, require that we begin to consider new modes of immersion, entertainment and spectacle as possible forms of critique.¹⁷¹

De-transubstantiation is then one way of evaluating the critical status of illusion within a differentiated field of relations. When we begin to conceive of contemporary art practice as being firmly situated in a broad field of highly constructed experiences, affects and social environments, its critical status is no longer dependent on notions of distance, opposition and the fate of community (at the expense of spectacle) that continue to dominate critical discourse. Within this broader context the question of how art remains authentic or autonomous, or indeed concerns about how art is simply the same as the activities associated with everyday life, are superseded by the consequences and affects that art has on the spaces and activities that it transcribes, appropriates and mediates.

Practice and Theory

The focus of this research has been on the development of new artworks and their role in testing and facilitating different ways of understanding the critical status of illusion in social space. However, it will already be clear to the reader that the emphasis does not lie with other practices. Instead, the focus has remained with the affect that differentiated modes of illusion continues to have on a global condition. That is to say, this research is cross disciplinary in both its concerns and methodology and while it is firmly situated in the context of contemporary art practice, the intention has been to reach out to a wide range of references and sources, in particular new research around capitalism, economics, experiential placemaking and urban planning. The absence of examples of other artworks is then a consequence of orientation, method and theoretical development. In other words, the aim has been (i) to conduct research that allows for dialogue between art practice, architectural theory, social theory and economics; (ii) explore how social space

¹⁷¹ In the symposium, 'Rethinking Spectacle', Claire Bishop and Mark Godfrey examined whether the denigration of art as 'spectacle' masks an elitist resistance to populism, or if it contains a more serious critique of the global market and the role of art. The notion that spectacle embodies some possibility for critique was developed by Godfrey who argued that its 'means' could be turned on its 'ends'. Symposium: *Rethinking Spectacle*, Tate Modern, 31st March, 2007.

is constructed, cinematic and scripted; (iii) produce new artworks and curate exhibitions that test how lens based media is a lived facet of architectural space and; (iv) consider new approaches, both practical and theoretical, to engaging with the spectacular, experiential and disorientating affects of social space. Throughout this research the relationship between practice and theory has been key and while the written component and the development of new artworks have followed dedicated lines of enquiry, their points of interaction have enabled the project to be ambitious and far reaching in both its theoretical scope and practical experimentation.

The field trips that underpin the research for this thesis have been instrumental in facilitating a productive relation between practice and theory. Primary research in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New York and Venice has informed the line of argument pursued through the previous chapters and provided a testing ground for a number of videos. These locations have been a starting point for new art works, which have then fed back into and informed critical developments in the writing. This method of working has anchored this thesis to a number of sites and consequently allowed the research to move between theoretical and practical modes of enquiry in a productive and generative formation. In addition, videos such as *Grand Canal* 2005, *Shaft* 2004 and *Reeperbahn* (2002) have provided important empirical data about how sites are used, designed and experienced. Moreover, these works have explored the relation between differentiated modes of illusion through editing, layering and restaging the spaces analysed in the text. The consequence of this has led to the research findings stated earlier and the completion of a substantial body of work.

The changes and developments in the practice have both informed and been informed by the theoretical research carried out for this thesis. This cross-fertilization is also reflected in the development of objects and projections (pp. 202-211). The move from working with lenses and mirrors as tools of mediation and affect (*Camera Obscura*, *Blue Lens*, *Stereoscopic Orange*), to working with projected images of highly constructed, cinematic and staged interiors (*Barrel*, *Floor Projector and Box*) has directly informed and supported a number of theoretical developments, in particular the move from Marx's

conceptualisation of the *Camera Obscura* as a figure of ideology to Benjamin's re-conceptualisation of *phantasmagoria* as a critical tool of enquiry. As we saw in Chapter Two, Benjamin's conceptual development of *phantasmagoria* avoids the rational oppositions that I argued to characterise Marx's thought. Instead, the phantasmagoric illusions of the ideological were argued to be inescapable from any notion of an authentic natural world existing outside the mediating lens of ideology. Working through this development both theoretically and practically has led to a focused and sustained enquiry into the movements, flows and relations that exist in social space while simultaneously providing the scope for new research across a broad range of activities.

The production of new videos has been key to the development of this research. The recording, editing and restaging of spaces of retail, leisure and entertainment has provided the means for understanding how social space is produced through a differentiated field of representations, affects and ideological systems. In the three videos that accompany this thesis (*Grand Canal, Shaft and Reeperbahn*), social space is filled with a broad and disorientating range of highly constructed experiences. Here we are required to move within a series of sites and experience the flows and ruptures that operate between the systems in play. The development and production of these videos has laid the ground for a better understanding of how spaces of retail, leisure and entertainment involve moments of difference, criticality and change and consequently has come to inform the theoretical development of the thesis as a whole.

In addition to the individual works already discussed, the research findings have been tested through a continuing series of curated group exhibitions. Long-term curatorial projects such as *Episode: the pleasure and persuasion of lens based media* and *One Way Street: experiencing ideology as affect*, have involved site specific environments that fracture and disrupt any single or overarching reading of the works exhibited.¹⁷² In each

¹⁷² *One Way Street*, Sheppard Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno (Feb-March 07) and KX Gallery Hamburg (Sept 07). Co-curated project with Amanda Beech and Matthew Poole, including works by Pierre Bismuth, Mark Leckey and Roman Vasseur. *Episode*, Temporarycontemporary, (London, Dec/Jan 05). Leeds Met Gallery, (Leeds, April/June 06), South Florida Art Space (Miami, Sept/Oct 06). Co-curated project with Amanda Beech and Matthew Poole. Participating artists include, Julie Henry and Mike Marshall.

of the exhibitions, large cinematic screens have been positioned to divide the gallery into disorienting and forceful architectural environments. Placed within these structures, the individual works are made to compete for attention and are experienced as an ongoing series of fractured moments or episodes. This series of international exhibitions has provided a dynamic context for *Grand Canal, Shaft and Reeperbahn* and extended the scope of the research findings to a productive engagement with architectural space and its relation to lens based artworks.

The movement between writing, making and curating and the cross pollination of practice and theory has expanded and developed what I understand practice to mean. My engagement with a broad and differentiated range of activities has led to the very interactions, interferences and relations that I have argued to constitute the critical status of illusion. Consequently, this thesis has provided a context for my practice by facilitating research into the generative relations between systems - both within the context of contemporary art and beyond. The outcome of this is not only evident in the theoretical findings and the production of new works; it is manifest within a new understanding of the conditions and relations that determine the critical status of practice.

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Documentation

Practice

While my practice is not ‘explicitly’ identified in the text, my work with video, installation and projection is ‘implicit’ within the writing and central to the project as a whole. The following images are intended as documentary evidence of this research. In addition to this documentation, *Grand Canal*, *Shaft* and *Reeperbahn* are included on DVD (placed in the pocket on the inside of the back cover). These videos were shown as part of an exhibition for my final examination.

In my video works I have used editing techniques and fixed camera positions to explore how space engages with global networks and extends perception beyond the physical possibilities of a single site. By constructing spatial narratives in video and installation I have experimented with highly fabricated and fictionalised interpretations of space. With this work I have explored questions that are central to my thesis as a whole. Most notably, I have looked to the relation between local and global sites of contact, interchange and exchange; manifestations of global economy in space; and the critical possibilities of illusion and effect. The outcome of this research has formed the basis for a series of international exhibitions and continues to feed into and inform my written work.

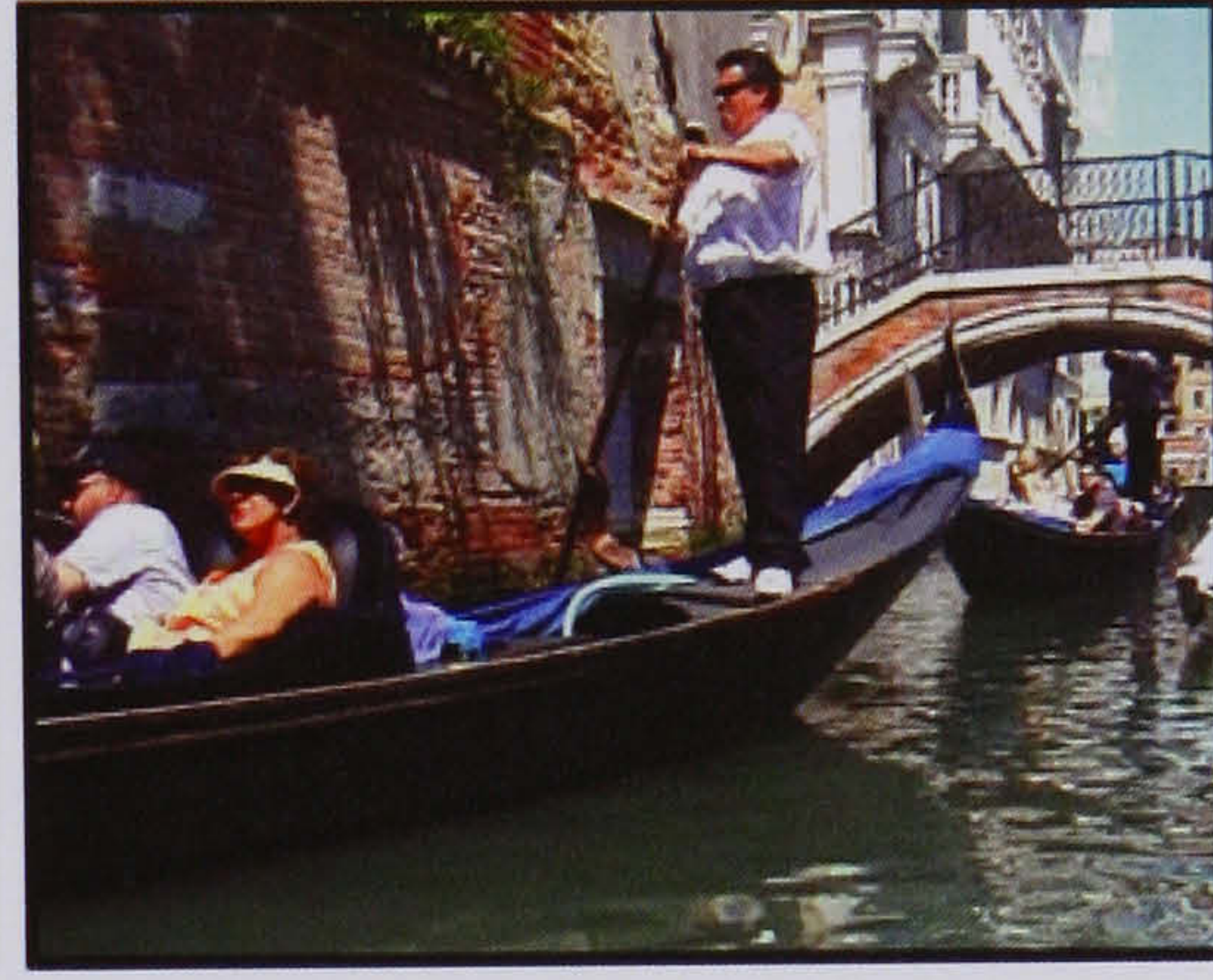
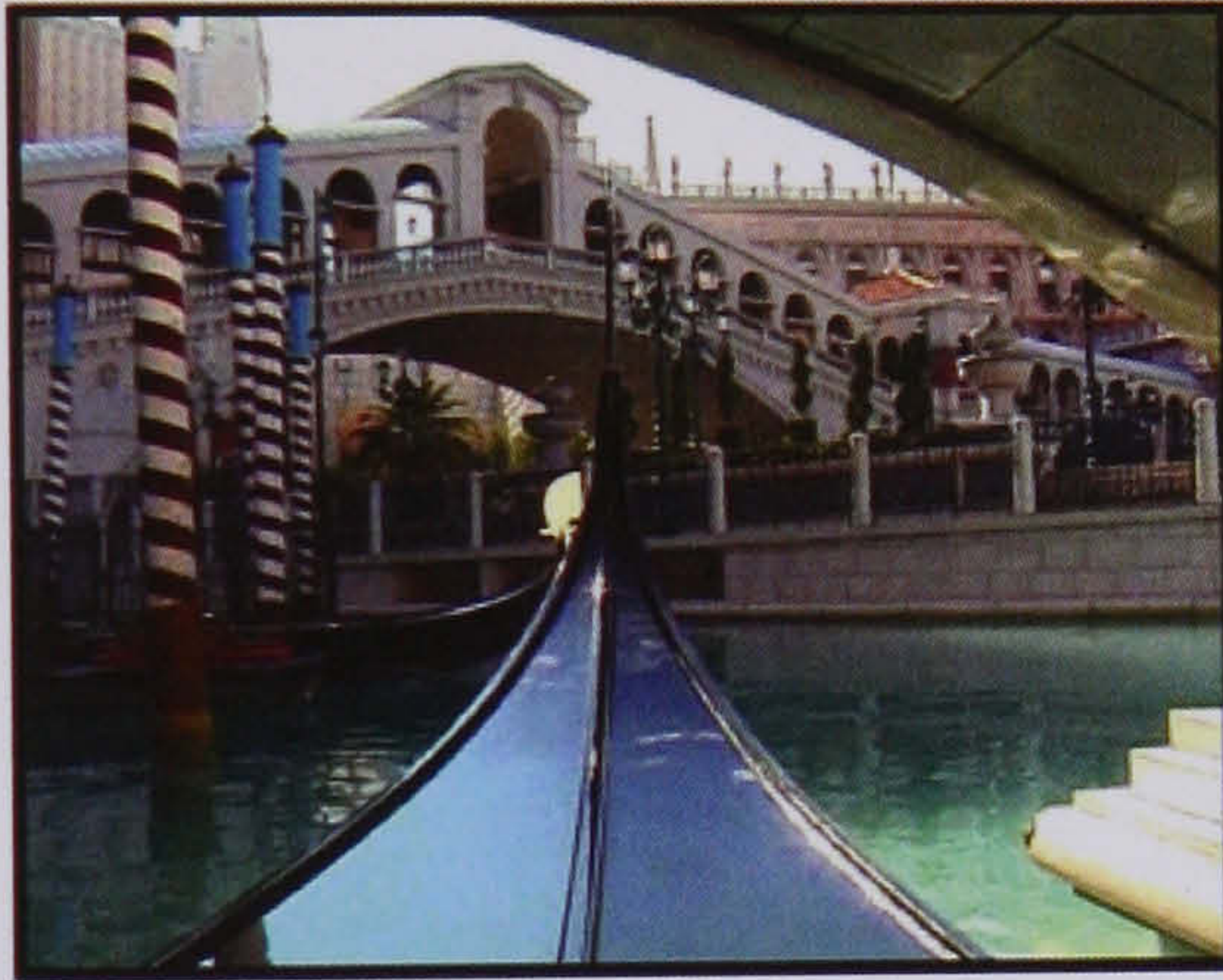
Videos (2002-2006)

Grand Canal

2005, 2mins 30secs

Grand Canal cuts between The Venetian Casino Hotel Resort (Las Vegas) and Venice (Italy) while at the same time focusing on the Gondola rides that ferry tourists around the canals of each site. As the work progresses the relationship between the 'authentic' city and the 'themed reproduction' becomes increasingly blurred to the point where historic, cultural and geographical differences are overrun by highly constructed spatial narratives.





Shaft

2004, 4mins 30secs

Shaft takes the viewer through a number of department stores in London and New York. In the video the lift doors are treated as an editing device. This effect allows for a seamless journey between sites so that the carefully designed interiors of each store are built into a single architecture. The individual interiors appear as follows:

Tiffany's 2nd Floor,

Bloomingdales 3rd Floor,

Liberty's 3rd Floor,

Dickens and Jones Lower Ground,

Debenhams 5th Floor,

John Lewis 3rd Floor

Bloomingdales Ground Floor,

Bloomingdales 2nd Floor,

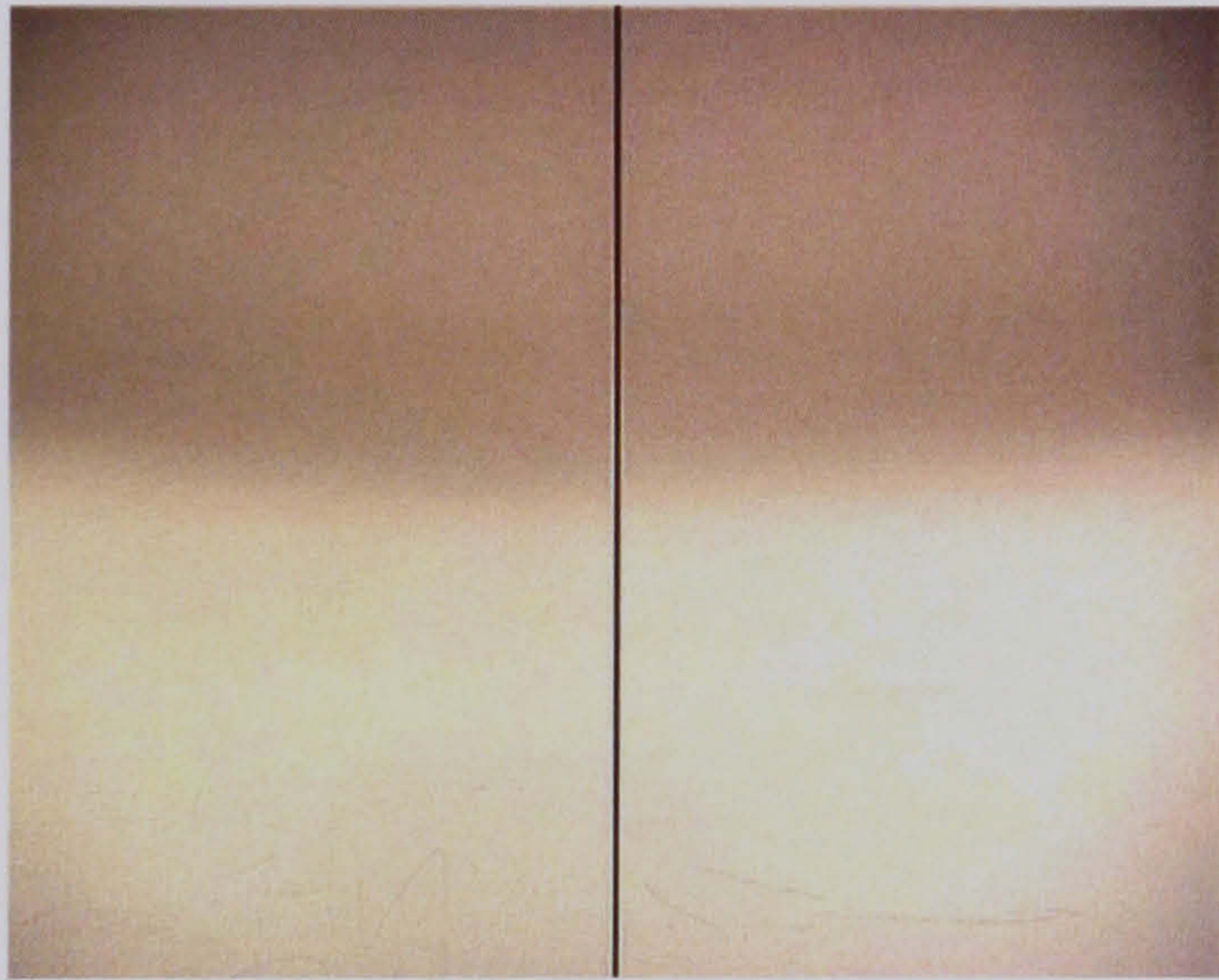
Liberty's Ground Floor,

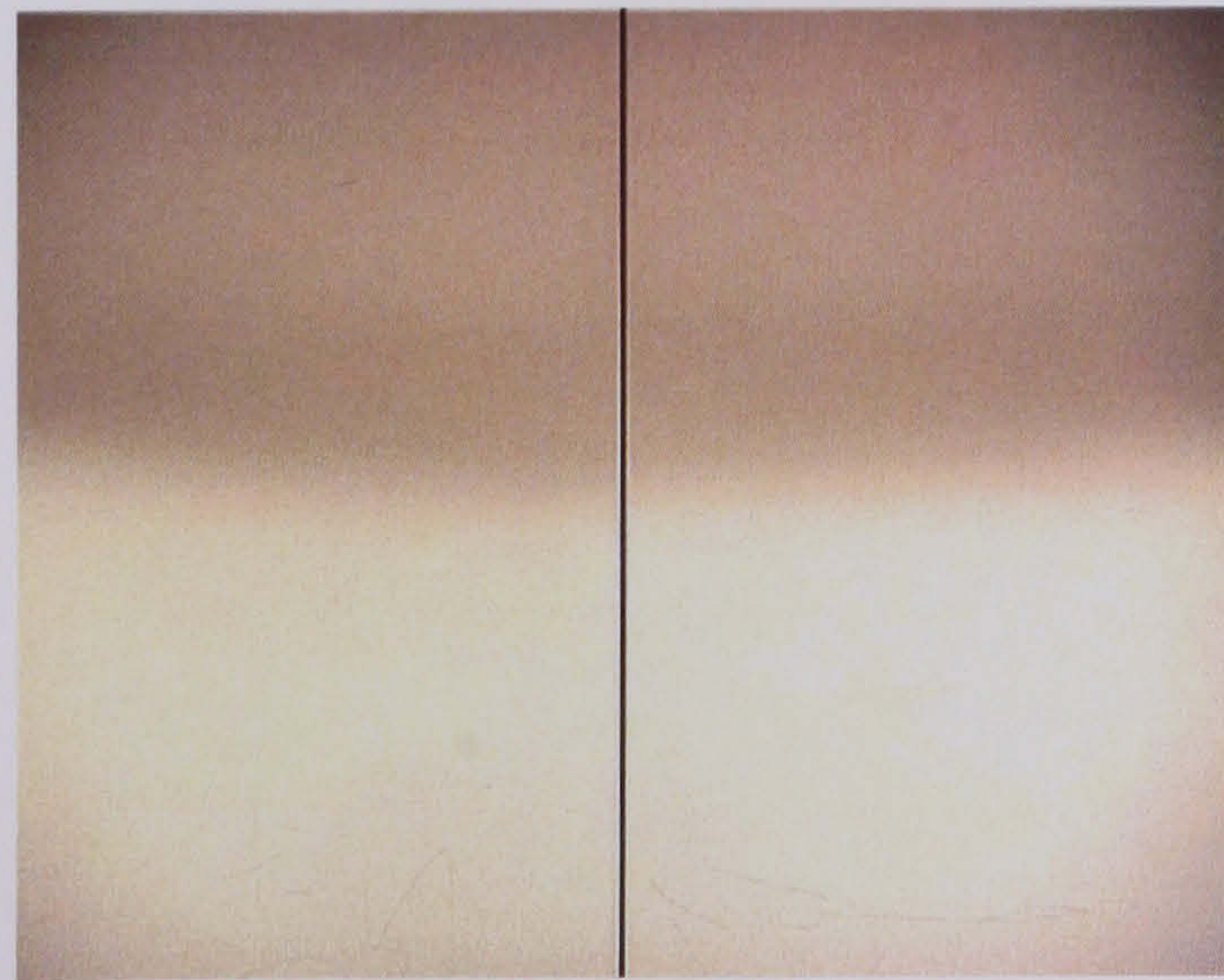
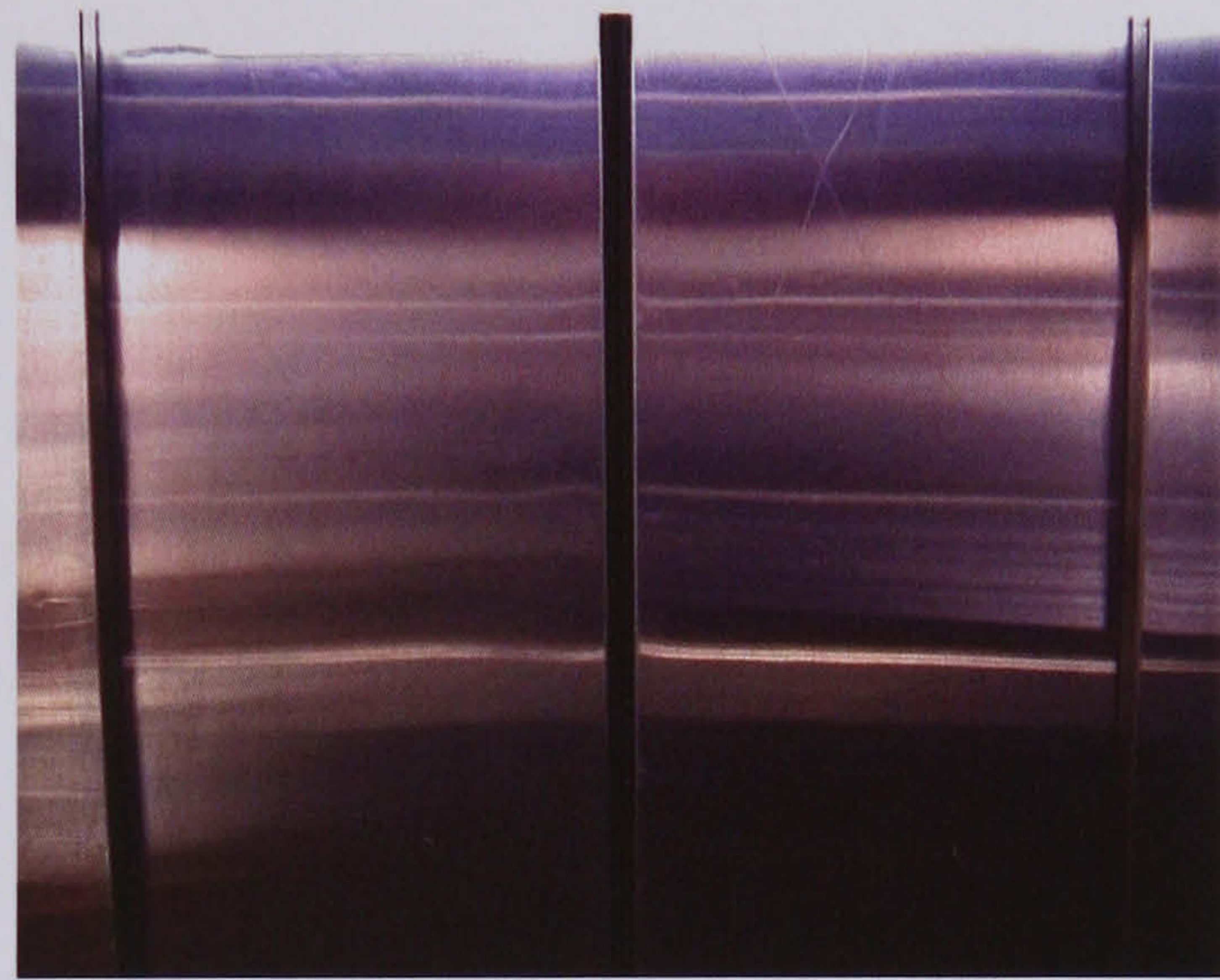
Liberty's 4th Floor,

Asprey's Ground Floor,

Asprey's 1st Floor,

Bloomingdales Lower Ground.





Reeperbahn

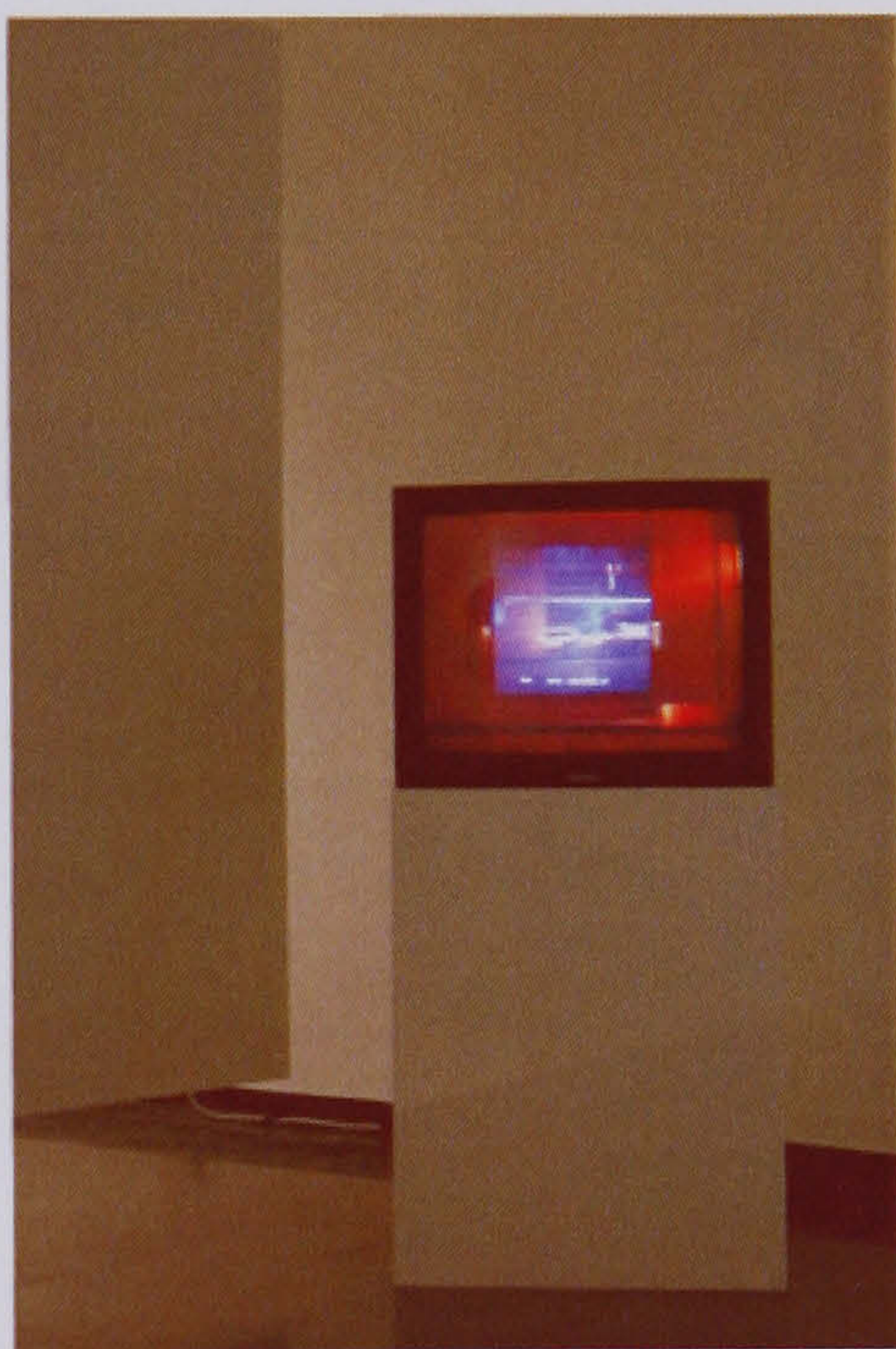
2003, 4mins

A tracking shot of the Reeperbahn (Hamburg) is back-projected onto a large glass shop front on the Caledonian Road (London). Included in the frame of *Reeperbahn* are cars and buses passing in front of the projected street in Germany; the flashing light of the mini-cab office directly adjacent to the shop; and the words 'Pleasure Garden' (which are reflected from the sign on the other side of the road). As the video progresses, these layers of representation compete for attention and interrupt any sense of a single narrative, journey or flow.





Reeperbahn, 2004



Richmond to Woolwich

2002



A video of the train journey between Richmond and Woolwich (the length of the North London Line) is back projected onto the window of the gallery. Throughout the video the position of the camera remains fixed. This position is determined by the building where the video is projected. As the train passes the back of the gallery, the view from the train and the view from the back of the house converge.



Objects and Projections (1995-2006)

Titles and Descriptions

Barrel, 2003 (pp. 204-205).

The green metal barrel has been converted into a projector. The projected image is the bottom corner of the barrel's red interior.

Floor Projector, 2001 (p. 206).

The large wooden box projects the floor beneath it. In this exhibition the projected floorboards took on the appearance of bricks.

Box, 1998 (p. 207).

The MDF box is simply constructed but carefully positioned. The inside of the box is projected onto the wall of the gallery.

Economist, 1998 (p. 208).

A mirror is placed outside the large foyer window. The reflection shows the Economist building towering above.

Stereoscopic Orange, 1997 (p. 209).

Two oranges are pinned to the wall. When the viewer looks at the oranges in the mirror – so that each eye can only see one side of the mirror – the effect is of seeing through the skin of the orange.

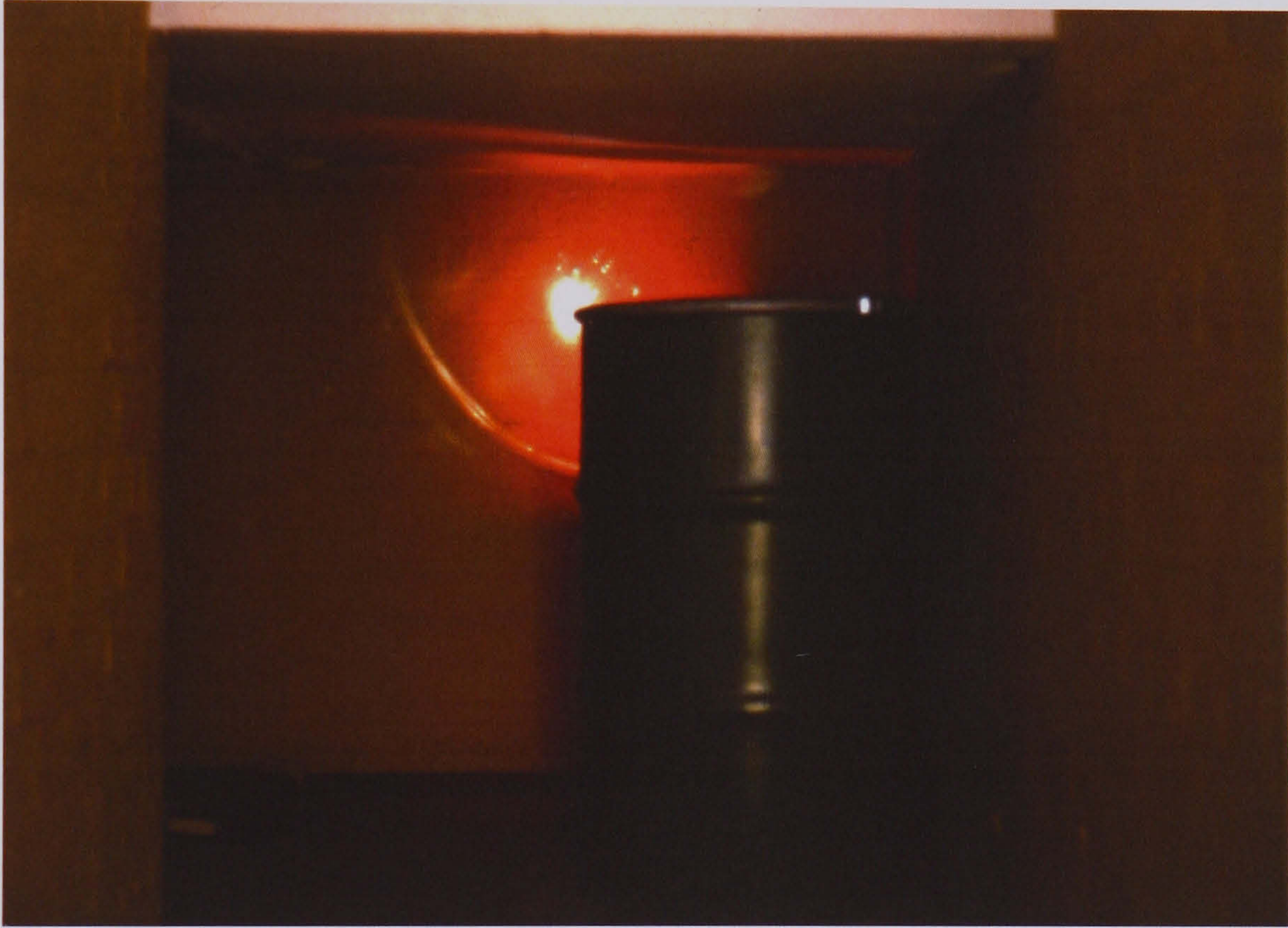
Blue Lens, 1996 (p. 210).

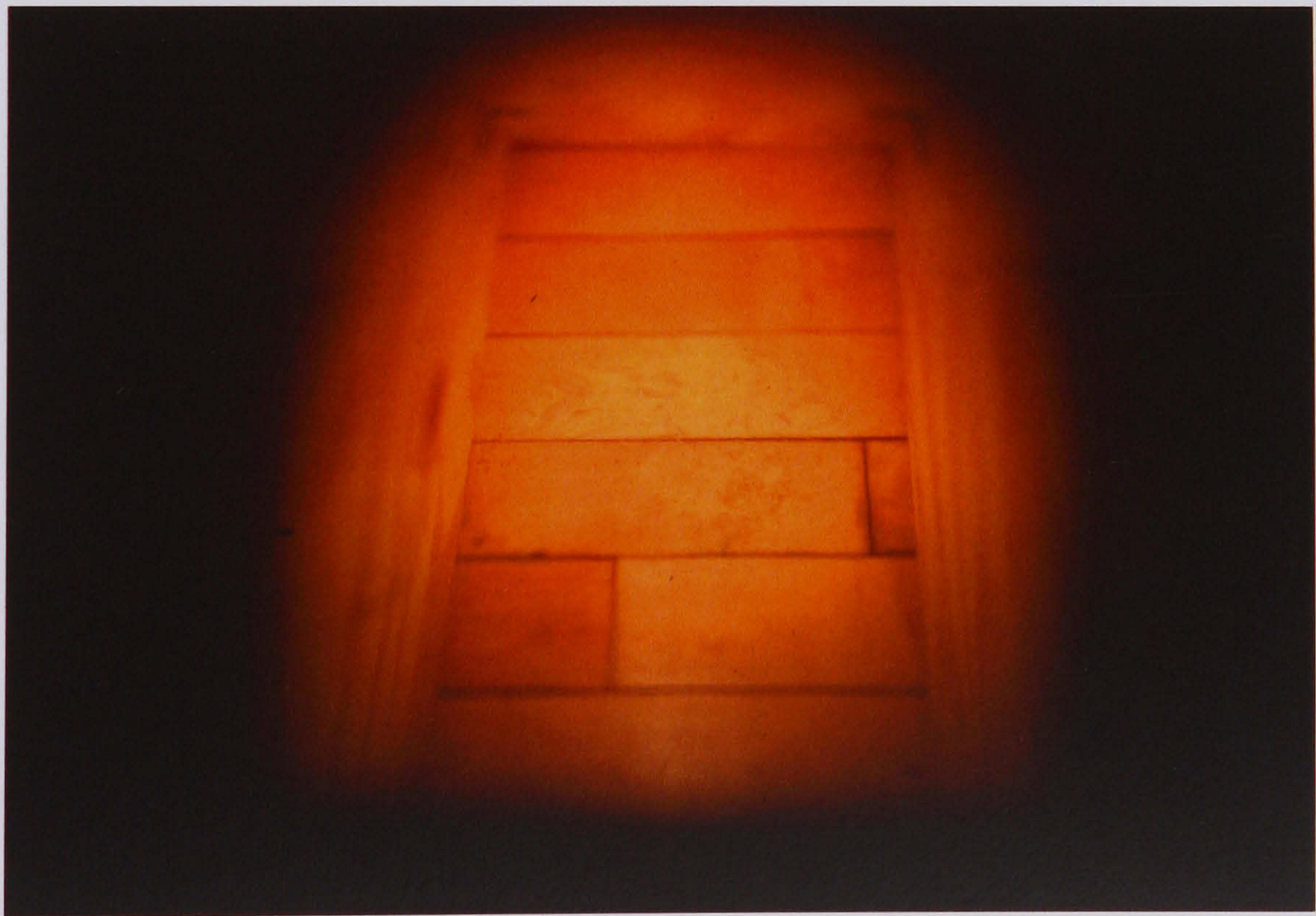
A blue Fresnel lens is inserted into the door. The blue frame is cast in resin.

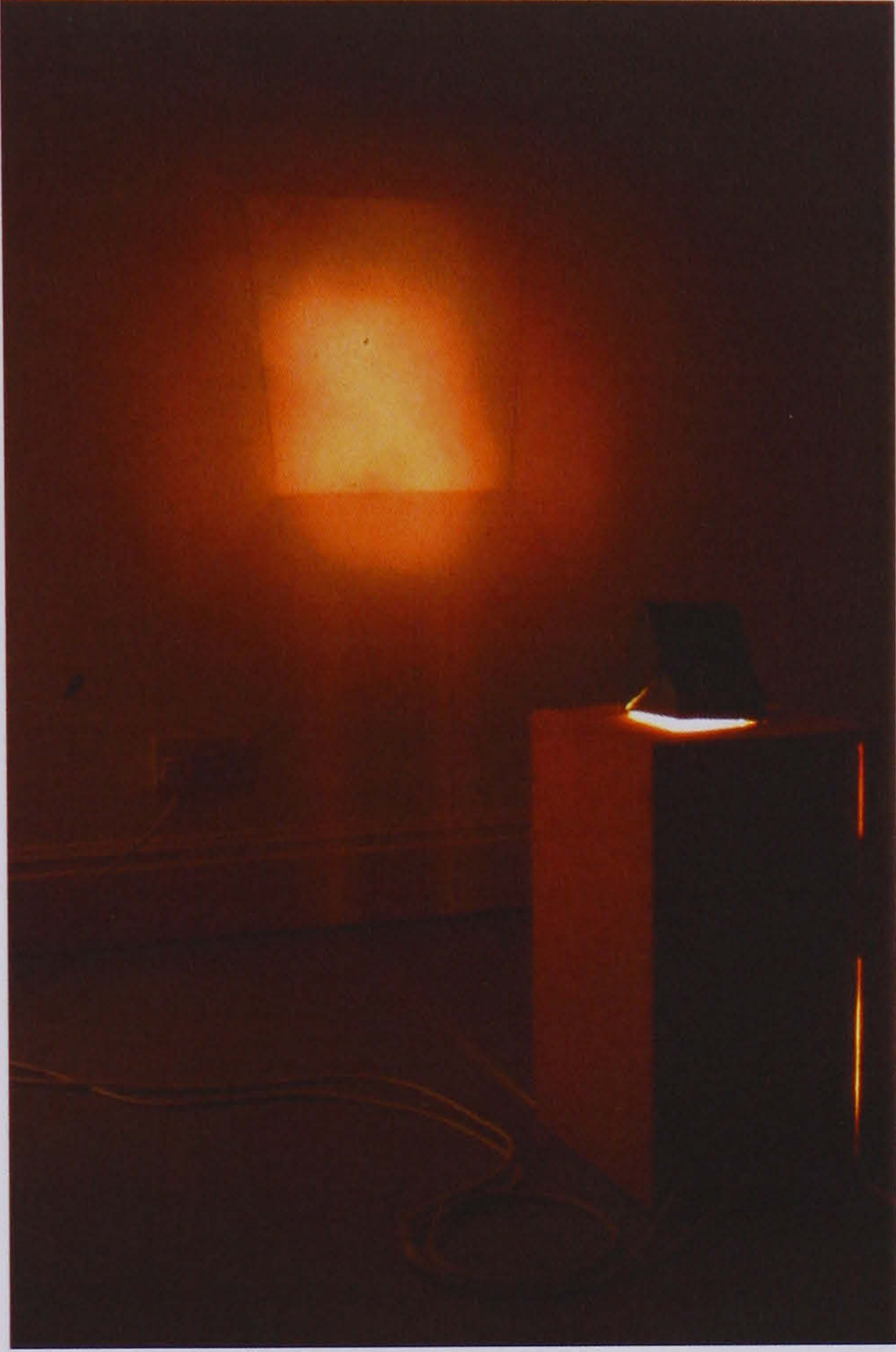
Camera Obscura, 1995 (p. 201).

A series of lenses are positioned to project the image of the street (outside the window) onto the gallery wall.

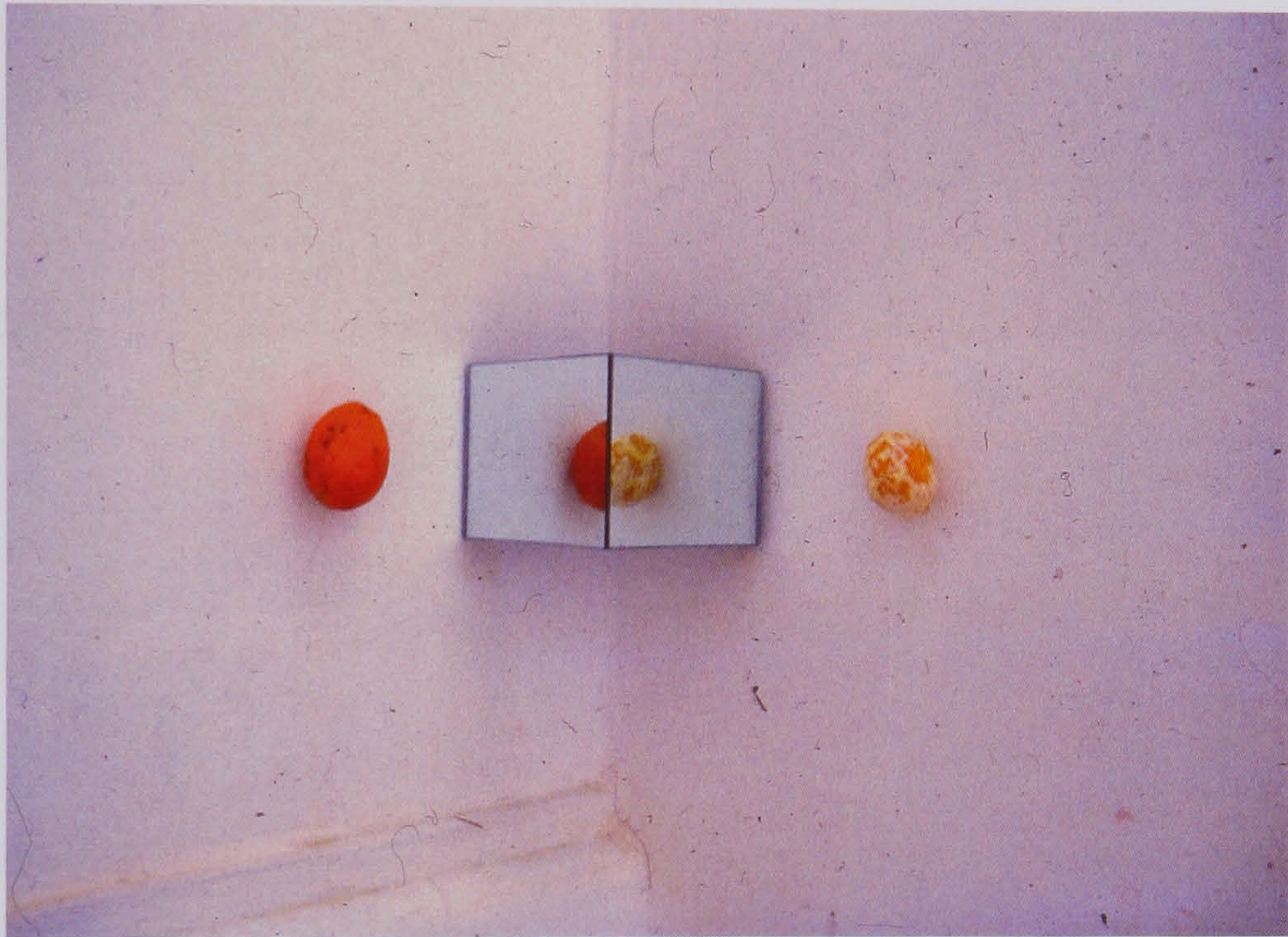


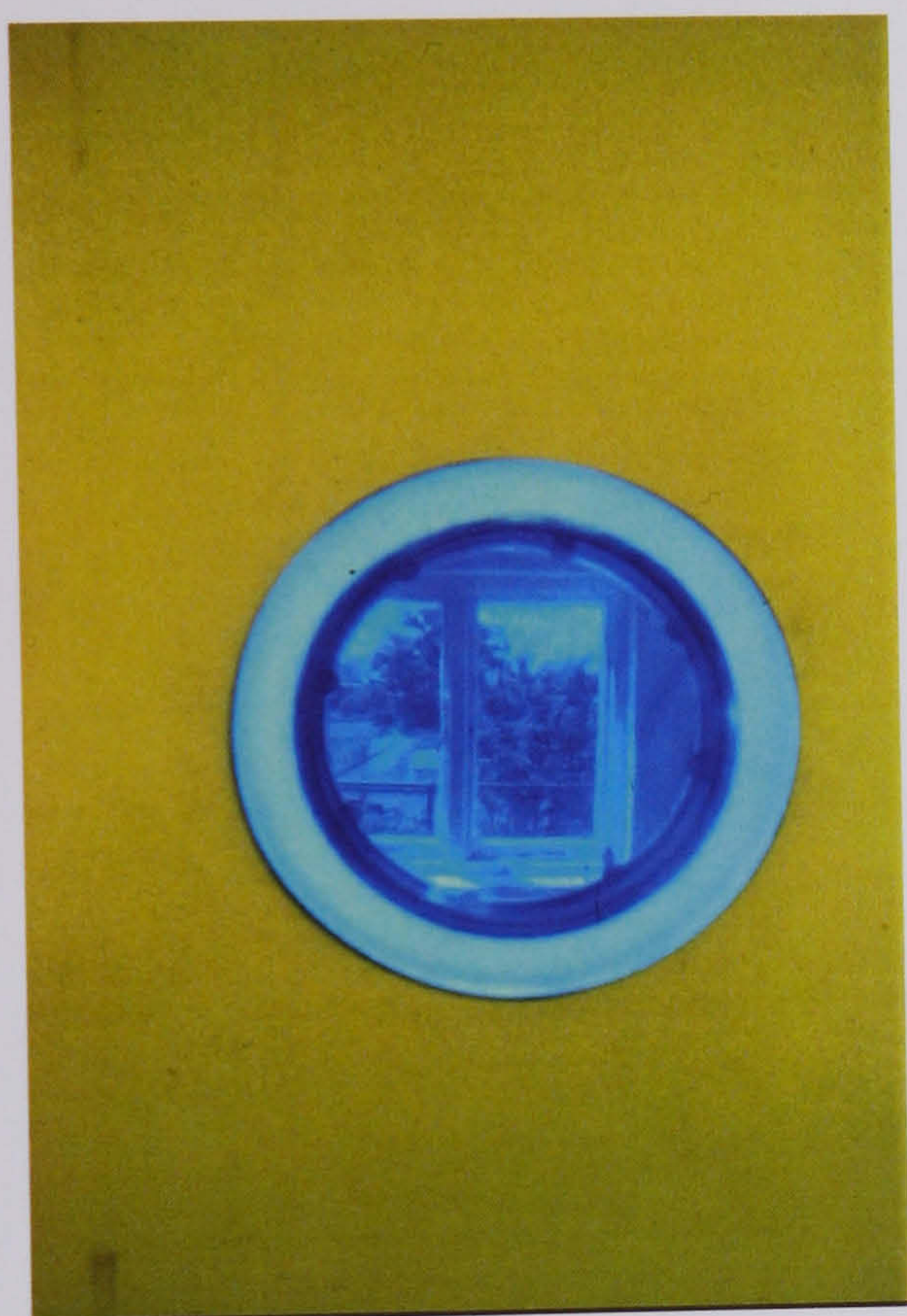












Exhibitions and Publications

Selected Exhibitions 1989-2007

2007 The Art of the Book



Exhibitions and Publications

Selected Exhibitions 1999-2007

- 2007 *One Way Street*, Sheppard Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno (Jan-Feb 07).
Co-curated project with Amanda Beech and Matthew Poole, including works by Pierre Bismuth, Mark Leckey and Roman Vasseur.
- 2005-6 *Episode*, Temporarycontemporary, (London, Dec/Jan 05). Leeds Met Gallery, (Leeds, April/June 06), South Florida Art Space (Miami, Sept/Oct 06). Co-curated project with Amanda Beech and Matthew Poole. Participating artists include Amanda Beech, Mike Marshall and Julie Henry.
- 2005-06 *ALL FOR SHOW, UK Video Works Retrospective*.
Curated by Lee Campbell, Venues include: Studio 1.1, London, Café Gallery, London, Edgezones, World Arts Building, Miami, Southern Exposure, San Francisco, USA. Physics Room, Christchurch, New Zealand. Lump Gallery, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. Soap factory, Minneapolis, USA. Mighty Screenland Theatre, Kansas City, USA. International film festival, Rotterdam, Gallerie Verticale, Montreal, Nexus, Philadelphia.
Participating artists include: Beagles and Ramsay, Marion Coutts, Doug Fishbone, Angela Hicks, Elizabeth McAlpine.
- 2005-06 *13+*, domoBaal Gallery, London and the Thai Film and Video Biennale, Bangkok. Participating artists include Ron Haselden, Jenny Perlin and Kim Noble.
- 2004 *Pilot: 1*, Limehouse Old Town Hall, London (nominated artist).
Artists' & Curators' forum - 5 day event in which 100 international curators, artists, collectors, and writers nominate one emerging artist to exhibit and be present at the event.
- 2002 *Predator*, KX Gallery (Hamburg).

Co-curated project – Participating artist include Julie Henry, Seth/Talentire, and Italo Zuffi.

- 2001 *Rutger Hauer*, Perry's Motors, London.
Included works by Anne Tallentire, Julie Henry and Karin Ruggaber.
- 2000 Perry's Motors, *New Work* (solo).
- 2000 *Without Touch*, Margaret Street (Birmingham). Curated by Nayam Kulkarni as part of the Wheatley Fellowship.
- 1999 Asprey Jacques Gallery, *New Work* (solo).
- 1999 '210-297', Arthur R Rose Gallery, London. Participating artists include Andrew Grassie, Matthew Higgs, David Musgrave, Elizabeth Price and Mark Titchner.

Selected Publications (2000-2006)

- 2006 'The Artists' Talk, Transmission: Speaking and Listening', co-authored with Sharon Kivland, *Axis: Contemporary Art Journal*.
- 2006 'Daily Encounters', *Transmission: Speaking and Listening*, vol. 5, Sheffield: Site Gallery and Sheffield Hallam University.
- 2004-06 *Transmission: Speaking and Listening*, (editor, vols 4-5), Sheffield: Site Gallery and Sheffield Hallam University.
- 2006 'Transmission: Working from the Collection' (editor), *Angelaki: Humanities Journal*, London: Routledge.
- 2006 'Becky Shaw', Commissioned by The Yorkshire Art Society.

- 2005 'De-transubstantiation', www.art-omma.org, *Art and Text: Inscription*, Online Contemporary Art Journal, issue 11.
- 2005 'Art and Text: Inscription' (editor), www.art-omma.org, Issue 11, online contemporary art journal.
- 2005 'Sharon Kivland', *The Internationaler*, Pilot Issue.
- 2004 *Spectacle and Disorientation in Retail Architecture*, co-authored with Nayan Kulkarni, London: Artwords Press.
- 2000 'Without Touch', *Phantoms of Reason*, London: Darwin Press.