

Untitled and Undocumented: Fragments of Life in the Global City

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This paper represents a number of projects undertaken between 1986 and 2005 and were presented as a poster at the *Cities and Media* conference in Vadstena, Sweden in October 2006. In the context of a scientific conference, this ‘corpus’ might appear to represent a concerted effort over two decades to build a significant body of research. The thematic that body addresses could then be described as an interest in exploring and understanding a set of problematics concerning life in the contemporary city. Although such a presupposition might be true in hindsight, in fact and in practice, the work this paper represents had more humble origins. This was a desire to produce aesthetic objects – works of art. For a reader expecting a more conventional, scientifically oriented, and empirically objective project, this paper will beg a question about the nature of research. It also raises an age-old problem or question about what art really is. I hope the following paper will shed some light on these issues. I also hope to show how the projects I have undertaken over the last 20 years through a range of media might, and correctly should, have been considered as legitimate forms of research representing a concerted investigation into life in the contemporary city.

Introduction: On the Necessity of Artistic and Cultural Research

The phenomenon of art in all human societies suggests that art responds to a fundamental human need, no matter what the form of society. Theodor Adorno¹ and Walter Benjamin² both realised that art is, or can be at least, more than an object of entertainment. Although there are many points of disagreement between Adorno and Benjamin, both would agree that art performs an important social and even essential role in the human world. For Adorno, art became a highly refined object of contemplation and reflection that enables those who encounter it to gain in their self-awareness and, through that, attain a higher level of self-realisation and edification. Benjamin sees an even more instrumental role for art. For him, art enables the individual to directly participate in the renewal of society. Through art, an individual encounters the foundational mythological formations³ of a culture, and through that encounter, participates in the transmission of the structural bonds and cultural relations surrounding the object world. This in turn results in the re-affirmation and renewal of meaning in that individual's social milieu.

i) An Evolving Practice

My ideas about the social and cultural role of art have changed over the years and there is a perceptible evolution in the projects documented by this paper. This evolution first started to take place in the intellectual approach I adopted in thinking about what I was doing. A secondary level of evolution took place in the kinds of artistic practice(s) defined in and undertaken in realising each project. To start with, although, it is important to say from the outset that art can be more than just about making beautiful, decorative objects, the projects undertaken here have been underpinned by a deliberate investigation and engagement with a problem, or, if not a problem, then with an aspect of the world each project represent.⁴ The

1 Theodore Adorno and Max Oppenheimer, *The Dialectics of Enlightenment*, London, Verso Books, 1999.

2 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Harry Zohn trans., London, Harper Collins, 1992. Benjamin speaks of these formations in terms of both traditional and capitalist society. I use the term mythology here to refer also to the work of Roland Barthes in which he too was investigating the foundational structures of belief and meaning that underpin contemporary society. See Roland Barthes, "Myth Today" in *Mythologies*, London, Granada 1982.

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4 Although at one level, artists document the world through their work, artistic representations produced and the knowledge such work realises should not be approached in terms of being an objective document. The veracity of the representation between art objects and the world is notoriously difficult to deal with, and has been one of the objections conventionally used to dismiss the validity of art as scientific research. There is first the issue of representation itself. Particularly in the fields of photography and film, and in relation to documentary and ethnographic genres, there was once much argument about the objectivity of the representation. For a time, some sought to eradicate the subjectivity of the observer by devising techniques that they thought would alleviate the problem (see, for example, Colin Young's useful overview of the problem presented in his essay "Observational Cinema", in Paul Hocking (ed), *Principles of Visual Anthropology* 3rd Edition, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter Press, 2003, pp 99-113). Some ethnographers then developed approaches to depict the relationship between the observer and their subject within the representation, thus removing the apparent omniscience of their articulating positions. The point is that in articulating these representations, there is implicated, as any articulation representing something always implicates, a relationship between the observer, the nature of the articulation or object itself, and that which is being observed and/or represented. This relationship is embodied in the position of the observer relative to the subject being observed. In the hard sciences, this issue was first addressed when people realised that, even if only observing inanimate objects, the presence of the observer changes both the state and the behaviour of the observed object, rendering the 'objectivity' of their observations less than objective. The

process of realisation of each project enabled me to reflect on whatever problematic I had chosen to focus on at the time. In a sense then, there has always been an engagement with the subject of each projects that at least aligned the work I was doing with that of a scientific researcher.⁵

On the other hand, whether one sees this work as art or as science, the labour of a researcher – as artist or as scientist – always aims to manifest an output – the production of a mediating object that represents that research. The manifesting of this research has taken place in fictional, creative, and experimental forms, and been embodied as photographic exhibitions, writing, performances, installations, websites, and even radio features. I have also, however, produced more conventional scientific forms of research that have been manifested in scholarly and academic writing. In and through the making of these objects, I have explored ideas, and sometimes a world of the imaginary, founded on observations, sometimes of the city, and sometimes of the purely subjective states of being the city structures materialise.

ii) Emotional and Intellectual Observations – The Work of Affect

During the 1990s there came another evolution in this work that represents a turn towards affected zones of human experience. This became necessary when I realised that emotions too are also an important aspect of the human cognitive⁶ understanding of the world. It became apparent that emotions provide solid ground for research in the making of art, just as much as emotions are (or if not, emotions should be) regarded as a valid form and ground for the pursuit of knowledge. It may seem facile to say that the distinction between *intellectual* practices normally associated with science involve the exercise of the human mind using faculties such as reason, logic, and rhetoric, as well as observation and reflection. This contrasts with other – supposedly non-intellectual – forms of cognition that are called *feelings*. It is not only my view that the odd and somewhat false dichotomy between

relativity between observer and subject has gradually led scientists away from making absolute statements founded on a nexus between observed facts and “truth”, and towards more modest claims and procedural positions. Ironically, it is the relativity of art’s relationship with the world that has become increasingly common in scientific practice, and not the reliance on or maintenance of distance between observer and observed. In the convergence between science and art has led some to conclude that knowledge remains subjective, and that observations of the world always implicate an observer resulting in an adoption of stances in which observations are regarded provisionally in relation to their subject.

5 I should also point out there is also an inclination towards a more amateurish kind of practice that is different to the practice of a professional, both as a scientist and as an artist. The reason for this is that in a world where professionalism invariably means also that an individual seeks to make a profit through the performing of their craft, or the exercise of their skill, there is a freedom to pursue one’s research, whether one thinks of that as scientific or artistic when one abandons the idea of making a profit from what one does. In fact, in the production of these works, I have never sought to sell the outputs of the projects as a conventional artist working in a commercial gallery context does. Nor have I tried to patent and market the ideas produced out of this research as a corporate oriented inventor or research sometimes does. The findings of the work undertaken in these projects was made available to their audiences through the generosity of the public gallery sector, or through another such like medium such as a public broadcaster, for everyone’s benefit. In this sense, the work documented by this paper is entirely that of an amateur, which I define as someone who investigates questions and problems at their leisure, as if they are a member of a nineteenth century bourgeois society of flâneurs who have the unjustifiable privilege of being able to contemplate such questions at leisure without being tied to having to make a profit or in any other way needing to make such activity pay its way. In an age of complete commercialisation and commodification of life, this may well be one of the last remaining forms of resistance available.

6 For a general overview of the cognitive sciences, see Howard Gardner, *The Mind’s New Science*, New York, Basic Books, 1987. For a more specifically film oriented approach, see David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*, Cambridge Mass, Harvard University Press, 1989, and Torben Kragh Grodal, “Art Film, the Transient Body, and the Permanent Soul”, *Aura*, Volume VI, Issue 3/2000, pp 33-53.

emotional and intellectual reasoning is due to peculiar socio-cultural bias – probably stemming from Ancient Greece – in which the intellect is regarded as a superior and a more refined form of human reasonable and rational activity.⁷ One hopes that today, there is sufficient reflexivity amongst Europeans to perceive the biases of our culture and generally to realise the folly of excluding from our epistemology other forms of cognitive reasoning and rational knowing.

Today, with the aid of cognitive science, it is possible to see that the distinction between conventional forms of intellectual activity and other forms of human cognition is partly based on a capacity one has to construct the objects of one's cognitive interactions with the world into a rational form of discursive language. Allied to this thought, and thanks to semiologists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Peirce, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, amongst many others,⁸ it is now possible to think of art as being another form of linguistic representation, although that is not, of course, the only thing that art is or can be about.⁹ Thinking of art as a form of linguistic cognition is a key to thinking about art as a valid form of research.

II

Art and the Advancement of Human Knowledge

I have argued elsewhere that artistic forms of expression – that is to say expressive languages such as visual art, performance, film, sculpture, and so on – may, and should, be regarded as valid forms of research that are distinguished from conventional scientific research sometimes by method and sometimes by approach, but always by the form of communicative strategies¹⁰ such works use to communicate their findings. Research through art is undertaken using different modes, and is represented in languages that are not normally associated with so-called objective discourses of scientific observation. What creative, practice led research does, however, is enable the researcher to deal with phenomena that are

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- 7 The Greeks maintained a bias against what they regarded as emotional responses to the world, just as they did against art in general. For Plato and Aristotle on, the so-called intellect was regarded as a superior mode of acting, even if on all other issues, the Greeks disagreed with each other passionately. See for example, Aristotle Poetics II, Plato (D. Lee trans.), "The simile of the cave", *The Republic*, 2nd edition, Penguin 1975, p 323, J.N. Findlay, *Plato, The Written And Unwritten Doctrines*, Routledge & Keegan Paul 1974, I.M. Crombie, *Plato's Doctrines, vol II*, Routledge & Keegan Paul 1971. Levi-Strauss distinguished the 'logic of the concrete' (as he terms mythological thought) from 'scientific thinking' by arguing that mythological thinking shows a "respect for and the use of the data of the senses" whereas scientific method, like Aristotle, advocates only a process of rigorous external observation and measurement from which certain conclusions are then made (p 13). See C. Levi-Strauss, *Myth And Meaning*, Routledge & Keegan Paul 1978, pp 15-24. The Greeks maintained a bias against what they regarded as emotional responses to the world, just as they did against art in general. For Plato and Aristotle on, the so-called intellect was regarded as a superior mode of acting, even if on all other issues,
 - 8 There are many sources one can refer to in outlining the contributions of many individuals to the field of semiology. Two that I find particularly helpful are Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, Oxon, Routledge, 2006, and Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, London, Methuen, 1977.
 - 9 As Foucault was at pains to point out, scientific knowledge itself is not only an ideologically neutral form of linguistic representation, but also, an attempt to codify certain relations between different epistemological bodies as well as ontological bodies, and through that codification, exact certain relations of power through knowledge. See Paul Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, London, Penguin, 1984.
 - 10 To briefly summarise these, the distinctions I make argue that scientific research often deploys rhetorical arguments using objective forms of discourse in presenting rational scientific arguments whereas artistic research more usually employs expressive and performative forms of language in order to re-present the findings of an artist's research activity. See John Grech, "Practice-Led Research and Scientific Knowledge" in Lelia Green and Brad Haseman (eds), *Media International Australia*, No. 118, February 2006, University of Queensland Press, pp 34-42.

difficult to represent, and sometimes even to perceive, through conventional observational methods and scientific approaches.

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the contribution that art (and culture more generally) can make to the development and enhancement of society, science, and to human knowledge.¹¹ Taking place around gradually emerging discourses of what have been termed the *culture and creative industries*, many of these discussions have been undertaken as rearguard actions in order to defend the creative arts from annihilation under the aegis of economic rationalism. Focused on validating and verifying the commercial viability of the cultural and artistic product, the debate surrounding the *creative and cultural industries*, just as the debate surrounding science, and particularly in pure research, has adopted and to some extent been swayed by a language that takes little account for the actual and real value of art and science. In fact, I suggest that just using a word like *industry* indicates how far already such discourses have gone in making scientific and artistic research conform to a corporate, profit oriented capitalist model of “accountability” rather than looking at the benefits of this research on its own terms. This is the language of accountants, tax collectors, and corporate entrepreneurs, and it shares little in common with the nature of the cultural, artistic, or, for that matter, the scientific project.

There is no need here to recite the arguments¹² about whether art is or needs to be commercially viable in order to prove its value. I raise this debate to make an important point about the distinctions between the work of the practice led researcher working as a scientist and the work of the practice led researcher working as an artist. This difference is only starting to emerge in the context of attempts to argue for the value of creative led research in general, over and above whatever potential that research has for commercial exploitation. This means identifying the differences between the modes and methods of the creative scientific researcher and the creative artistic practice led researcher.¹³

Yet questions of economic viability obviously have a bearing on the eventual outcome of the production of cultural and artistic as well as scientific work. Nonetheless, it is easy to overestimate the importance of money in either cultural, creative, and even scientific enterprises. The work of pure, practice led, and creative research, whether it is executed by someone calling him- or herself an artist, or by someone who is regarded as a scientist, is performed, just as any work is – by doing it. Like many scientists, most artists just get on with doing their job – responding to their calling.

There is something that remains mysterious, perhaps even quasi-religious, in the *higher* calling of an artist and a scientist, and I will not shy away from that here. For this is the real source of a living researchers’ passion and motivation, and not the imagined desire for fame, to rule the world, or even just to make lots of money that is sometimes projected on them. Humanity as a whole ought to be grateful that most artists, as well as many scientists, are determined to get on with their work rather than try to justify what they are doing in terms of economic value, power, and worth. Although this often leaves the artist and the scientist vulnerable to being exploited by sharp-shooting commercial entrepreneurs, without the far

11 Artistic endeavour might once have been spoken of in terms of an enhancement of human experience, just as science could have been spoken of in terms of an enhancement of human knowledge. It is another mark of the overwhelming fascination and capture by economic discourses of capitalism in Western democracies that one can no longer speak of an enhancement of human experience or knowledge in justifying what one does, but must now talk in terms of economic and commercial benefit.

12 An important attempt to address this issue was undertaken by Brad Haseman. Haseman argues that practice led creative and artistic research is similar but different to scholarly and academic research because it is a performed form of research. He suggests that due to the performative quality, creative practice led research should be evaluated using different criteria to conventional forms of academic research. See Brad Haseman, “A Manifesto for Performative Research” in Green and Haseman, 2006, pp 98-106.

13 See Haseman, in Green and Haseman, 2006, pp 98-106.

more earnest endeavour of such selfless individuals, the future of humanity would be very bleak indeed.

III

What is The Global City

The idea of *global cities* has been around now for some decades now. Changes in the world during the second half of the 20th Century, particularly in relation to the emerging significance of the global economy, have had a tremendous impact on the life of cities, changes that perhaps appear most pronounced in cities like London, New York, and Tokyo. For some, these three cities are the first order category of *global cities*.

In my Ph D thesis, *The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture* (2005), I argue there has been too much emphasis made on the economic and financial aspects of globalisation however. More needs to be made of the role that art and media play as the interface between the physical spaces within which people exist and the mediated spaces *the global city* has created.¹⁴ Yet many of the foremost theories of *the global city* have almost exclusively credited significant institutional and corporate actors such as stock markets, multinational corporations, and international regulatory agencies for determining the phenomenon of globalisation. What has been ignored is the importance of the individual actor, collectively the people of *the global city*, who realises in everything they do the everyday realities of that city. Along with that actor, not enough significance has been given to the role of art – as a mediating object – in realising the bonds and relations between individuals in global culture.¹⁵

The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture also pointed out that there has been too much emphasis on the centrality of the English language, and the roles of cities like London and New York in accounting for *the global city*. Even in the formulations of the cinematic global city,¹⁶ much emphasis has been made of the role played by Hollywood conventions of representing cities.¹⁷ In discussions concerning *the global city*, it appears to me that there has been a tendency to overestimate the significance, importance, and role of the United States, the English Language (and the cultural values embedded in and by that), and the economy.

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- 14 Significant studies on the emerging global structures of capitalist societies in the late 20th Century started accumulating in the 1980s, with perhaps Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London, Verso 1996, and David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Basil Blackwell 1990, being two early important texts. Numerous other books have been published since, however, with some such as H. P. Martin & H. Schuman, *The Global Trap*, London, Zed Books, 1997 taking a more alarmist tone. Alan Scott's *The Limits of Globalisation: Cases and Arguments*, London & New York, Routledge, 1997, critically analyses the global phenomena. More recent publications have focused on the links between urban, regional, and metropolitan spaces and the emergences of capitalism at the end of the 20th Century such as David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, Routledge New York 2001. Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, recapitulates Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its origins, its transformations, its prospects*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1974, by looking at the future of urban spaces in the 21st Century, while Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, London, Sage, 2000, takes a Pax Americana view of relations between cities in the capitalist global economy. Finally Allen Scott's (ed) *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, and Policy*, 2001, tries to provide an overarching discussion of both the problems and possibilities of the global city.
- 15 An exception to this is Ulf Hannerz's *Transnational Connections*, in which Hannerz recognises the significance of culture, and the role of artists in general in creating the cosmopolitan mileage. See Chapter 11, "The Cultural Role of World Cities", *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, London, Routledge, 1996, pp 127-139.
- 16 Perhaps the earliest book to directly address the concept of the global cinematic city was David B. Clarke (ed), *The Cinematic City*, London, Routledge, 1997, a book quickly followed by Tony Fitzmaurice and Mark Shiel (eds), *Cinema and the city: film and urban societies in a global context*, Oxford, U.K.; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.
- 17 See, for example, Colin McArthur, "Chinese Boxes and Russian Dolls: Tracking the Elusive Cinematic City" in Clarke, 1997, pp 19-45.

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture* I argue that too many aspects and facets of everyday life – of the people and of the modern city – have been ignored, denied, or underplayed. Not only do other, non capitalist economies continue to operate, even in the ‘wanna-be’ strongholds of the Global Emporia – places like London, Los Angeles, Sydney, and Hong Kong – but other languages, as well as localised dialects of the English language produce not just regional nuances within globalisation discourses, but actually rupture the theoretical frames that many theorists of globalisation see as hegemonic. What such *dominant* globalisation theories do is totalise the human experience of and in *the global city* while simultaneously universalising the knowledge of that city. There is a risk that discourses about *the global city* may now be in the midst of restoring an all conquering imperial project.

For that reason, I personally was quiet disappointed that some of the foremost protagonists of these globalisation discourses did not actually attend the conference at Vadstena, even though they had been given prominence amongst invited speakers, for it would have been both stimulating and essential to challenge some of the basic assumptions that they appear to make about *the global city*.

That notwithstanding, in today’s highly mediated world, the life of *the global city* takes place in every city, town, and country, global and local villages alike, whether these outwardly appear to be highly urbanised cosmopolitan centres or parochial and peripheral outposts of capitalism. From the largest metropolis to the smallest nation, in places of culture and in places of nature, there is now a pressing need to expand the study and consideration of not just the places like Paris, Buenos Aires, and Bangkok, but to incorporate even what appears to be the most insignificant places in the world, both empirically and theoretically, if the formulation(s) of *the global city* are going to live up to their presumptuous name.

Benjamin’s *Das Passagen Werk* brilliantly, if somewhat unintentionally demonstrates that theorisations as well as practical representations of *the global city* can only be discussed provisionally, in terms of an incomplete project. This is not only because Benjamin was unable to complete his project. Rather, as Benjamin himself would have found out had his life not been so tragically foreshortened, *the global city* is a constantly evolving organism and the outward and internal processes of that city can never be completely understood, theorised, or even documented.

Like all forms of organic life, cities are recursive¹⁸ entities that make both summations of their present state of being as well as predictions of the way they may perform in the future impossible to predict. There remains an essential imperative not only to conduct new and original research into even the most studied quarters of *the global city*, for even the studies that presently exist cannot be regarded as comprehensive or conclusive in themselves, but an ever present, ever urgent need to expand the field of study constantly by;

- i) incorporating new forms and areas of research as well as
- ii) enabling new research subjects and subjectivities to be voiced.

Even the most comprehensive and seemingly complete body of research must humbly acknowledge that it is constantly in need of revision, augmentation, and reconsideration.

In the practical terms, my study of *the global city* through a variety of media such as photography, scholarly as well as creative writing, radio, live performance, and the cinema has shown that it is inaccurate to argue that, for example, the most important modes of

18 In a sense, cities evolve and are like what Heinz von Foerster describes as “non-trivial machines”, that is, mechanisms into which certain inputs are processed but the resulting outputs are determined as much by the internal state of the machine as they are by the nature of the input itself. For an expansion of the notion of recursion, see Heinz von Foerster, *Seeing with the Third Eye*, video documentation of workshop produced by the American Feldenkrais Guild, c1984. Also Heinz Von Foerster, *Observing Systems*, Intersystems 1983, and Lynn Segal, *The Dream of Reality: Heinz von Foerster’s Constructivism*, New York & London, W.W. Norton 1986.

transport in *the global city* are technological, and often privatised means of consumption of space, exemplified by the motor car. Of course, the auto is important in new world countries like Australia and America, but this does not account of modes of transport people use throughout the world. As Wim Wenders' two angels in Berlin films indicate, walking remains an important and significant means by which people move through space, engage with place, and integrate and participate in the everyday life of *the global city*.

It is hard to see who and what the discourses that presently frame and dominate ideas of the global city and globalisation benefit. Such a discourse appears to delimit the concepts along the lines of power that presently govern the capitalist economy. Perhaps the animosities created by the overbearing shadow of successive Communist regimes made the hand of capitalism seem so much more benign in the early 1990s, but that era is now long past. The global limits of capitalism have also become apparent.

There is an overdue need to re-assess the continuing discourses of *the global city*, particularly when such discourses still act to privilege a few, select cities around the world, while inhibiting and denying the human capacity to imagine and create alternative economies, orders of being, and of knowing. Whether intended or not, such discourses may, unintentionally or otherwise, be helping to restore, perpetuate, and even expand the imperialistic ambitions of the diminished inheritors of the world's colonialists.

I believe the human need for self determination coupled with the desire to rid itself of all forms of tyranny, terror, and domination is irrepressible. This is so fundamental that human beings will continue to use whatever resources they have at their disposal to eradicate themselves of domination, injustice and inequity, whether military or economic, symbolic or physical brutality. This means that conflict will continue to be played out on the global stage as long as there are individuals who feel that they have the right to impose their will on others. I also believe, however, that in the end, this will result in either the eradication of all forms and states of inequity of power and domination by some over others,¹⁹ or, otherwise, bring the sad but seemingly ever mounting pile of human historical debris to an end.²⁰

IV

Researching The Global City through Media

i) Background, Methods, Approaches, and Motivation of Production

The work I presented at the *Cities and Media* conference explores a range of issues and concerns that emerge in an on-going, but varied, reflection on the conditions of everyday life in the contemporary city. These investigations have taken place in various forms and genres including photography, gallery exhibitions and installations, new media forms like web sites, scripted radio features, live performances, illustrated lectures, fiction writing, travel writing, life writing, as well as scholarly, academic, and scientific writing.

Each project employs different media forms to collect, collate, and represent data in a range of cognitive perceptual modes (visual, aural-oral, spatial, temporal, sculptural, and scripterly-writerly). Each project can be thought in terms of both being a way of 'recording'

19 I am not the first to link this to the hegemony of capitalism over the world, and neither am I the first to link this tendency to the particular social formation underpinning what once was correctly described as European, but today is better thought of as Western and capitalism. For an expansion of this analysis, see Pierre Clusters, "Of Ethnocide", *Archeology of Violence*, (Janine Herman trans.), New York, Semiotext(e), 1994, pp 43-51.

20 Needless to say, this allusion to Benjamin's angel of history is deliberate and is both affirmative and optimistic in outlook as well as remaining in keeping with the spirit of Benjamin's covert concern for human emancipation. See "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1992, pp 245-255.

subjective experiences of contemporary life as well as well as creating artifacts that enable a reflection on those subjective experiences.

My motivation in making this work has been to better understand contemporary life in the city. It has not been in response to commissions received, or a desire to make saleable commodities to be marketed through a gallery or commercial fine arts venue. With the exception of *Sharkfeed*, all projects were self initiated and, in many cases, completed prior to any thought of publication or exhibition had taken place. In general, however, all the work was produced in response to a self-defined role as an artist in society – a role I have taken very seriously in the past, but today look upon it with a little more humour.

As already indicated, the kinds of understanding the work has sought to produce is subjective in orientation. Each project does not attempt to generalise on aspects of life in the city. Rather I have attempted to take up and position my camera, the microphone, and the body – of the work as well as of the producer – in a relationship with the world of the city around them. From that position, I have attempted to engage with that world through the production of the work. In the process of that engagement, I attempt to reflect on what I perceive with the aid of the media employed.

The desire to reflect on the issues the work identifies has been informed by readings in scientific literature from as far afield as philosophy, sociology, art history, cultural studies, physics, cosmology and mythology, social and cultural history, theology, as well as readings in popular culture such as print media, radio, and television. In addition, the work has often been informed, and sometimes even conceived in response to, or in dialogue with, other cultural works such as films, music, books, individual's biographies, and so forth. Sometimes the work has arisen out of on-going discussions with friends, lovers, and close associates. These readings and discourses have taken place running parallel to the process of production.

How each artifact should be interpreted, and what it is taken to mean, has been deliberately allowed to remain as open as possible to whoever encounters the work.²¹ As an artist-researcher, or researcher-artist, each work I have produced has provided an opportunity to reflect on a particular aspect of life, or problem that the respective project identified. Once made, however, I generally leave the work to its own fate, a strategy I adopted when presenting my work at the poster session of the *Cities and Media* conference in Vadstena. I am not very interested in standing before my work and try to explain or speak for what the artifacts are about. On the contrary, I assume that the work, whatever its worth and success, was speaking for itself.

However, on occasions I have been invited to provide what in Australian public gallery parlance is sometimes described as a 'floor talk'. These are occasions when an artist or producer is invited by the Gallery they are exhibiting in to speak to interested publics about their work. Although it is difficult to predict how others perceive and approach such presentations, I have tried to maintain and adopt a position of articulating as best I can my own processes leading up to the production and exhibition of the work whenever I have given such public presentations. What remains clear, however, is that, given the authoritarianism of Western culture, audiences, even well informed and well intentioned ones, will defer their

21 This is not to deny, however, that the production of a work does not lay down certain tendencies and lines of interpretation, for as Roger Odin argues although this is done in relation to film, is that "We must [...] confront the shocking fact that not only does a film produce no meaning by itself, but all it can do is *block* [emphasis Odin] a number of possible investments of meaning. The only effect of internal constraints is to prevent the application of certain reading rules." (Roger Odin, "For a Semio-Pragmatics of Film" in Toby Miller and Robert Stam (eds), *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, Malden Massachusetts, Blackwell, 2000, p 55) The process of an individual's engagement with a work is therefore much more complicated than this brief expansion of this idea might suggest. What I am arguing is that once having established the structures of a work, which includes, naturally, the textual inhibitors that work possesses, I prefer, as a rule, to allow the work to stand on its own as it is encountered by others.

own interpretations and significance of what they encounter in a work to the ideas provided by the author or producer when they speak about or articulate their intentions.

As long as authorship and the voice of authority remains as highly prized as they presently are in Western culture, there will always be a danger that a producer who speaks before their work will predetermine and legislate how others can approach and interpret that work, and the meaning that they then can settle on in their negotiations with it.²² Rather than seeking to regulate and legislate the meaning of my work, I, like many artists, often opt to remain silent and hover invisibly around the work, while observing and listening to what others have to say to it and about it. Although there are always people who fail to even notice the work's significance or presence altogether, I know that others can and have already found something rich and valuable for themselves within it.

For, as stated above, my intention in producing much of this work was internally motivated, that is to say, it was derived from a sense and a need in me to define and respond to some problem or question that arose out of my experiences of living in the world and the encounters that produced at the time. In putting my work on public display, I become delighted when this work (and the problems or issues it raises) resonates and becomes significant – in its own peculiar way – to and for others.

ii) Issues and Concerns

In looking over the entirety of that body of work I presented in my poster at Vadstena, some general issues and concerns appear to have driven the projects' production. Each work is in some way or other concerned with and/or reflects upon or about one or some of the following;

- a) the sense of space and place;
- b) alienation;
- c) unemployment;
- d) masculinity;
- e) love and human relationships;
- f) urban decay and (later) renewal;
- g) subjective identity;
- h) subcultures and a sense or lack of sense of identification and collective life;
- i) modernity and postmodernity;
- j) migration and mobility;
- k) power and the structures of social inclusion and exclusion.

Initially I began exploring these issues and concerns around the edges of the metropolis, in parts of the urban landscape that are still not completely or thoroughly incorporated in the

22 For a fuller development of how the meaning and interpretation can be variously legislated, see Allan Sekula, "Meaning in Photographs" in Victor Burgin, *Thinking Photography*, London, Macmillian Press, 1982. Although today, theoretical discussions of photography appear to be fully developed, when I began studying and working as an artist, photographic discourses were relatively still in their infancy. Nevertheless, there were already some classic texts in circulation, amongst them, Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* London, Granada, 1981, *Image Music Text*, London, Fontana Press, 1977, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, Berkeley California, University of California Press, 1977, and *Camera Lucida*, London, Jonathan Cape Press, 1982, Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, 1992, and "A Small History of Photography" in *One Way Street*, London, Verso, 1979, as well as Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, Penguin Books, 1979. Another useful source for this discussion is Sekula's "Photography between Labour and Capital" in Lesley Shedden, *Mining photographs and other pictures, 1948-1968: A selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio*, Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Goose Lane Editions, 1997.

daily and nightly routines of the city. Initially, I wanted mostly to look at places the city and its inhabitants abandon. In the second period or phase of this work's development, the projects became more general in terms of space but focused more directly on central questions like ideas of citizenship, longing and belonging, media and the formation of the global identity in the context of a re-examination of theories of the global city and global democracy.

Above all, however, I have always been irresistibly drawn to ruins, discarded bits and pieces of everyday life. Like Benjamin's angel of history,²³ my gaze becomes transfixed in fascination by the mounting piles of human refuse, for these are, as the angel well knows, traces of the struggles between different orders, states, and beings. Yet, unlike that angel, I see hope in those ever growing mountains of rubbish, for it is clear, as I have already stated, that sooner or later this will have to stop. The world is finite. In the meantime, either humanity will find another way of doing things, or, like an insatiable parasite that knows no limits, humanity will kill its host, and with that, destroy its only habitat.

As stated above, my first tentative investigations into the abandoned places of the city took shape on the outskirts of the city, on beaches, in parks, and children's playgrounds. For the work-a-day citizen, beaches, parks, and playgrounds are places best abandoned after dark, and the few who dare to penetrate the veils of such normative abandon must clearly be doing so out of bad intentions. Only with the return of the sun and light of day do law abiding citizens come to reclaim these innocent playing fields. Like an ignorant transgressor, into such lonely places I ventured – unaided, vulnerable, and unarmed – with only my trusty witness, my camera, on my back.

The nature of the places I was exploring and the fact that I made these images at night – often in total darkness – gave many of the photographs I made an eerie quality. In these rejected zones of shrouded darkness, I was committing the unheard of violation of peering through the veils of secrecy to find – well what exactly? In fact, nothing! And certainly not the world of vice, corruption, violence we tell our kids exists out there. Yet if my camera could not reveal the mysterious hidden dreamtime that my imagination had conjured, I needed to find other devices to somehow open the doors to the festering world that lay beyond the doors of normal perception. For that, I had to turn to writing. Today, I know a world inhabited only by nocturnal creatures whose habitats and promenades are customarily denied to others only by the mundane invasions of daylight. But if they dare to encounter their own dreamtime, they will surely find it.

Needless to say, my head, long exhausted by day-time memories of beaches, parks, and playgrounds filled not altogether with pleasant memories of fun, recreation, relaxation, suddenly became intoxicated by the imaginative richness of a netherworld I had always been too terrified of opening.

The resulting images, particularly those of the beaches, somehow managed to capture an underlying sense of the *Unheimlichkeit* I have sometimes, or is it often, felt, not only because beaches are places where bullies of Sydney's Anglo-dominated West-European culture try to stake their claim of exclusive ownership over both the physical and metaphysical properties of the city, but more profoundly, because the images I was making enabled me to recognise an undeniable sense of strangeness one has in any encounter with place, no matter how familiar one dreams it into being.

The resulting works – exhibitions, performances, writings, and installations – turned sites that are otherwise usually overlooked as innocuous places of daily habituation into mystery zones and rat infested intersections where different possibilities, other orders, alternative states, hyper-real universes, co-existent times and places, and mutant morphologies meet,

23 See "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1992, pp 245-255.

challenge, revile, stroke, penetrate and violate each other's existence both willingly and pleasingly. In such an interstice, my imagination was again released to confront the horror of the mutilated other, that frighteningly super-real figure of the tortured self denied their habitat.

iii) Themes and Chronological Development

The first ten years of work presented at Vadstena comprised mainly of the following major projects

- ' *On the edge* series I and II,
- ' *Spiritus Des Corpus*
- ' *Images from the Underworld* (gallery exhibition, performance piece, and MA Thesis)

The main themes in each of these projects can be summarised as;

(good) alienation and making the world strange,

life in the post-industrial city of the 1980s

unemployment (connecting to themes of)....

(c.i) masculinity and identity and

(c.ii) migration and work.

The second ten years comprised of these major projects and works

- ' *angels and the city*,
- ' *Phantastic City*,
- ' *Sharkfeed*,
- ' *Berlin?Berlin!*,
- ' *Interempty Space – The Global City*,
- ' *The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture*

Here the work became both more complex and more sophisticated, eventually leading to the critical stances arrived at in my Ph D thesis. The main themes can be considered along several developmental lines; citizenship, migration, community, relationships between technology and the body, identity, and city/global networks in the 20th Century, and the loss of home (*angels and the city*) postmodern cities, impact of technology on everyday life, the mediation of everyday life, (bad) alienation leading to isolation and loneliness, yearning for love and human relationships technology and the city, theories of the city (*Phantastic City*) dangers of the city, stranger danger, murder, the noir city, gambling and criminality, migration, justice by mass media, racism, the constructions of childhood, and the suburban home in the 1960s (*Sharkfeed*) theory and the city, migration, tourism, and the traveller's journey, empty space and the people striving for democracy in the city (*Berlin?Berlin!*) technology and the city, the role of the internet, and imagining the empty spaces of *the global city* and the global citizens who actualise and inhabit it (*Interempty Space – The Global City*) the role of media in constructing the global city (not as globalising city, that is the city in material reality, but as *the global city*, which is already a mediated, discursive, and fictional city), questions of citizenship and mediated citizenships, ontological and epistemological questions about life in *the global city* and global citizens, that is, the work of art in the age of global culture (*The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture*)

In concluding this section, it seems appropriate to say that earlier projects appear to have reflected on and/or considered the role of media in defining the subject of my enquiries only incidentally. The relationship between the medium of representation and the life of the subjects of the work emerged only gradually. It grew organically over several years and over a number of different projects, and appears to have taken place primarily in the second period

of time. Subsequently, later projects have actively engaged with, analysed, and incorporated reflections on the role of media in the formation of the cities I have lived in and explored, which today includes London, Amsterdam, Sydney, Berlin, and the village of Gharghur on the Mediterranean island of Malta. The role of media reflects not only on the subjects of the work, however, but also the conceptualisation of the projects themselves. This means that discussions of *the global city* are necessarily tied in part to a discussion of the media in a global setting.

V

A Parting Gesture: Life beyond the city gates

Naïve as it may seem, I concluded my poster at the *Cities and Media* conference with the following passages....

In the final pages of “Beyond Human Rights”, Giorgio Agamben turns his attention to the issue that confronts cities everywhere today. Although referring to the European city and to the European Union more generally, Agamben describes the city as a refugium to which those seeking asylum go. The nature of this city, according to Agamben, is like a

Klein bottle or a Möbius strip, where exteriority and interiority in-determine each other. In this new space, European cities would rediscover their ancient vocations of cities of the world by entering into a relation of reciprocal extraterritoriality. (Agamben, 2000, *Means without ends*, 24.5)

I wish time would have proven Agamben right, for he originally wrote those words in 1993, in the heat, one might say, of the post Communist melt down at the Berlin Wall, and the euphoria which then appeared to offer a chance for a more peaceful future resolution to some of the oldest problems confronting humanity. Where it that cities could in fact be regarded as a refuge for people today, and that such cities were indeed the cities of the world Agamben sees.

In reality, today, cities have become more like concentration camps where people are kept in terror by the State which, calling upon the emergency powers of the state of exception, makes it impossible for people to live in either peace or freedom. Cities are again bordered by barriers and walls, barbed wire fences and armed guards.

In 1993, Agamben could see the future city leading back to the death camps. I recoil from that idea with horror, and hope that other people will turn their attention to reversing this trend, to turning on our rulers and insist that the city gates be opened and strangers again welcomed.

*This poster documents work that is both creative and scholarly, artistic and scientific in nature. I decided to attend this symposium because I have a story to tell. Through that story, I hoped to contribute a sense of a global city founded on a notion Lewis Mumford identified in *The City in History* as enabling of all the different peoples of the world to live under one roof and realise their human potential in their difference. I hoped to inspire that vision in others. Presenting scientific and scholarly ideas is what academic conferences are all about. Instilling vision and inspiration is never an easy thing to do in any situation. I am sure I have failed on both accounts.*

My parting gesture is this: you and I, “We”, are charged with the responsibility of realising the global city, in bringing down the walls to all the cities of the world and throwing open the gates that hold others and ourselves out and in of where we want to be and go.

Everyone has a right to be here, and there, and everywhere, for that matter, not just those privileged by the city fathers. Everyone who wants to be part of this city should be here. "We" are charged with realising this city. There is much needing to be done.

VI

Epilogue: Afterthoughts from Stockholm and Sydney

Without intentionally setting out to create a coherent body of work nevertheless I find that, when considered in hindsight, the corpus of the research I have been conducting does appear to have focused on certain interrelationships between media, contemporary life, and the city. The result is a not inconsiderable body of work in which many of the most significant questions and problems facing cities today have arisen and been addressed in some ways. One interesting thing to note in these progressions is that, while there was no over-riding problem or hypothesis guiding the work in its production over the years, there nevertheless is a discernible point, what seems to have become a natural conclusion, reached at the end of writing *The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture*. By the end of my Ph D, what had become apparent was the rising untenability of human life in contemporary consumer oriented Western cities like Sydney. This reality has been paralleled by the birth of what is sometimes called the posthuman condition in which the fusion of technology and the body becomes essential for survival.

However, in the practice of the everyday, what has taken place since the completion of my Ph D is the culmination of another project – and the birth of another child, a real child this time, full of life and fun and needs and wants, not to mention the pooie nappies, sleepless nights, and snotty running noses. With some correlation, my research interests have also shifted at this time – onto more real, and more rural, or at least more provincial terrains of regional settlements. These, it seems to me, have today become the most hospitable sites to sustain a more human life. What is apparent, both through these projects, and through the work of others, particularly Giorgio Agamben²⁴ and Paul Virilio,²⁵ is that the larger cities in the world are increasingly inhospitable to many forms of life, and rather than supporting the diversity and heterogeneity that Walter Benjamin saw in the agoras of 19th Century Paris and early 20th Century Berlin, today's largest cities are becoming mono-cultural habitats that support only one form and type of existence – the stressed-out, overworked, overdriven, hyper-competitive ghost of the consumer running between fixes in the city's shopping malls and the sites of their occasional casual re-employment. There appears to have been a shift in an age old balance between cities and the country. The country should no longer be discarded as insular, isolated, far removed, uninteresting, uninspiring, impoverished, inward looking, in-bred place to live.

On the contrary, the posthuman era upon which we are now entering has the potential to turn run down and long abandoned villages into attractive transnationally connected places in which rural livability contrasts with oppressive, congested, polluted, over-crowded, and terrified and terrorised cities. As Sean Cubitt once suggested in a series of on-line posts to a *Fibreiculture* discussion, there is much to be said for living in the hinterlands.

24 Some important sources I rely on for this discussion are Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1998, Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, California, Stanford University Press, 1999, Giorgio Agamben, *Means without ends: Notes on Politics*, (V. Bennett & C. Casarino trans) Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, (K. Attell trans.), Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2004.

25 Paul Virilio, Chapter 3 "Improbably Architecture" in *The Lost Dimension*. New York, Semiotext(e), 1991.

This brings me back, ironically, to a work I completed at the beginning of this long period of productive research, *The Holtermann Rephotographs*, a project which returns to the country and visually investigates the impact of human activity such as gold mining on Australia's natural environment over a hundred and fifty and more years. Only today, it is not just the impact of mining, farming, and the construction industries that should be re-examined, and not only how that continues to destroy Australia's native habitat, but rather, the impact of human activity generally in the world at large. What this suggests is a return also of an idea of a global village – not quite in the way Marshall McLuhan foresaw – but more implicitly, in the form of an urbane and cosmopolitan rurality.

Now finally, in rounding off the findings of my research, there are just a few points I want to re-iterate;

- 1) *The Global City* is more than just the sum total of the globalising cities of the world. *The global city* is a city that, to some, perhaps quite large extent, already exists. It comprises of a range of spatial and virtual terrains, and is comprised of the living spaces people inhabit as well as the mediated realms provided by technology.
- 2) The age-old relationship between urban and rural environments and provinces, largely a neglected area of the study of *the global city*, needs much greater earnest investigation. This promises to be a rich vein for individuals to rediscover, both intellectually and in practice, that it is no longer necessary to be in the thick of things in order to draw upon them. For being in the thick of things does not allow one to gain any better a perspective over what is happening in the vast expanses of the world.
- 3) Continuing research into cities should be focused on the problematic of *live-ability*. Here important questions arise concerning the quality of life in urban and rural precincts of *the global city*, measured not only by the quantity of experiences such dense urban environments give. Taken in correlation to a rural conflate, the rubric of the city in terror is not inconceivable. This can also be a useful intellectual foil to highlight one of the significant aspects and benefits of life in the rural quarters of *the global city*.
- 4) As argued in the opening of this paper, I believe there is a great but mostly unrecognised potential contribution to be made by practice led creative research coming from the arts and cultural sectors in the realisation of future projects about the city. And finally,
- 5) Allied to all of this the contests over notions of citizenship, of course, for cities are mere geographies of lifeless forms and structures without the individuals who inhabit and extend them. It is individuals working collectively who turn the physical spaces around us into a living habitus.

Here, issues such as racism, cosmopolitanism, migration, xenophobia, inclusion and exclusion are of concern in the re-interpretation and re-assignment of *the global city* as a both a place of refuge and a place of human asylum.

An Account of The Major Projects Presented in Vadstena

1) Gallery Exhibitions (1986–1993/2004)

The Holtermann Rephotographs (1987–1993/2004) *

format: Photographic exhibition of rural towns, villages, mining and allied industrial operations, and natural landscapes

issues and themes: time, photography, and history, social visual history, documentary, rural life in colonial Australia, Australian identity, the role of immigrants in Australia, 19th Century photographic practices, industrial relations, aboriginal people

exhibited: Toured nationally through public galleries in NSW, Queensland, and Victoria, Australia (1989–1991). Exhibited at St James Centre for Creativity, Valletta, Malta, Jan – Feb 2004.

Images from the Underworld (1989–1991)

format: photographic and text gallery installation of city landscapes at night

issues and themes: urban mythology, unemployment, immigration, masculinity, alienation, de-humanisation, and urban decay, post industrial city

exhibited: *Myth + Identity* group exhibition, concept and curator John Grech. Toured nationally through Australian public galleries; Wollongong City Gallery, NSW, Aug - Sept, 1992, Nolan Gallery, Canberra ACT, May - June, 1992, Mildura Art Centre, VIC, Mar - April, 1992, Tamworth Regional Gallery NSW, Feb - Mar. 1992, Orange Regional Gallery NSW, July - Aug. 1991.

Spiritus des Corpus (1988)

format: photographic and text gallery installation of city landscapes at night

issues and themes: unemployment, masculinity and identity, alienation, urban decay, and the post-industrial city

exhibited: *Diversions* group exhibition, Tin Sheds, University of Sydney, Australia, 1988.

On the Edge series I and II (1986 & 1987)

format: photographic gallery installation of city landscapes at night;

issues and themes: alienation from the city, urban decay, place and identity

exhibited: various group shows in and around Sydney, Australia, between 1986 and 1991.

2) Radio Features and Live Performances (1993–1998)

Phantastic City; A City of Theories and a Theory for Cities (1998)

format: scripted radio feature incorporating voice/music/sonic performance,

issues and themes: a scripted radio hour long feature exploring contemporary city life, postmodernity and the city, mediation, virtuality, and subjectivity, love, identity, and community

* Although I refer to *The Holtermann Rephotographs* in this essay, this work was not actually presented at Vadstena as it represented a rural project, and when I was compiling the material for the Poster session, I considered that it was not relevant to the conference topic.

broadcast: Radio Eye, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, (Radio National network), Feb. 23rd. 1997. Also broadcast by Radio Bronja, Public Broadcasting Service, Malta, Apr. 28. Re-broadcast on Radio Eye, A.B.C. Radio National, broadcast June 14, 1998

Isolations, (1996)

format: photo+text performance.

issues and themes: gay sexuality, suicide, alienation

performed live: “Health in Difference” Gay and Lesbian Association, Sydney University, & “Cultural Politics of Feelings”, Macquarie University, Australia. 1996

Images From The Underworld, (1993–1995)

format: voice, text, image and sound performance, (concept & realisation J. Grech.).

issues and themes: underclass, unemployment, subculture, migration, history, Australian left-wing politics, governance and the city, media and representation, voice and memory, forms of identity and culture

performed live: Harold Park Hotel Pub Theatre, Glebe NSW, and other venues inc Cultural Studies Association Annual Conference, Victoria University Of Technology, Melbourne, Australia. (See also MA Project synopsis) 1993

3) New and Old Media Installations (1993–2005)

Interempty Space: The Global City (2002/2005)

format: internet installation (web site) incorporating photographic images, text, and maps

issues and themes: the global city, cultural mapping of Berlin, cultural citizenship, notions of space and virtuality, the work of art in the formation of the global city and global citizenship

published: www.jgrech.dds.nl,

Sharkfeed (2000)

format: internet installation (web site) incorporating photographs, moving image, sound, illustrations, and text

issues and themes: cultural mapping of the city of Sydney, child kidnapping, criminality, justice, racism, media representations, childhood, and stranger danger

published: www.abc.net.au/sharkfeed, www2.abc.net.au/sharkfeed,

exhibited: D>Art00, the New Media Showcase at the 2000 Sydney Film Festival; “Metropolis” exhibition, Museum of Sydney, 2000; ISEA2000 Paris.

angels and the city (1993–1996)

format: installation of contemporary images, family archival photos, video, sound, and 3D objects

issues and themes: citizenship, migrancy, and family/community relations in post industrial cities

exhibited: (concept, direction, photography J. Grech), Wollongong City Gallery, Australia, Mar-May 1996.

4) Recent Ficto- and Cultural Criticism

“The Monday Sirens” (2005)

genre: fiction/cultural criticism

issues and themes: post 9/11 State terrorism and the city, State Dictatorship (*the state of exception*), cultural memory of terror

publication: “PubliCity” (John Hutnyk ed), *Left Curve*, no 29, Oakland Cal., USA, pp 105-106.

“Nijmegen” (2003)

genre: fiction, art and cultural criticism, travel writing, life writing/autobiography, philosophy,

issues and themes: love, family, relationships, art, history, and memory, cultural readings of cities

publication: unpublished manuscript

“Love Play at the Schiller Cafe” (2003)

genre: fiction, art and cultural criticism, travel writing, life writing/autobiography, philosophy, romance

issues and themes: love, family, relationships, history and memory, cultural readings of the city, petite bourgeoisie capitalism, Amsterdam cultural history

publication: unpublished manuscript

“Living with the Dead: Sharkfeed and the extending ontologies of New Media” (2002)

genre: scholarly academic writing

issues and themes: ontology and the screen, media and the city, new media documentaries, theories of screen culture, new media theory

published: Rob Shields, Joost van Lon, and Greg Elmer (eds.) *Space and Culture*, Sage, vol 5, issue 3, Carleton Canada, August 2002

“Beyond the binary: New media and the extended body” (2002)

genre: scholarly academic writing

issues and themes: ontology, epistemology, new media, screen culture, new media theory, philosophy

published: *Mediatopia; On-line Symposium and Exhibition*, <http://www.mediatopia.net/grech.html>.

“Empty Space and the City: The re-occupation of Berlin” (2002)

genre: scholarly academic writing

issues and themes: cultural theory, citizenship, Berlin, the global city, space and power, democracy

published: Ian C. Fletcher and Van Gosse (eds), *Radical History Review: Citizenship, National Identity, Race, and Diaspora in Contemporary Europe*, Duke University Press, no 83, Spring, pp 114–142.

5) Conventional Scientific Research (1989 – Present)

The work of art in the age of global culture: Theory and Practice

Ph D Thesis (1998–2005, conferred in 2006), University of Technology, Sydney (research also conducted at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam, 2000–2004).

The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture considers how mediated artifacts are transmitted throughout the world with a view of examining how they represent the examples

of “the work of art in the global city.” This thesis is not an examination of films about ‘the city’ per se, but a consideration of the relationship between visual forms of representation and the individual who interacts with art in the contemporary city. The objective is to examine whether and how viewers who engage with globally transmitted images may enhance their awareness of and participation in the formation and perpetuation of the global (mediated) city. By considering the role that mediated images play in this process, my thesis speculates on the continuing role of art in an age of global culture, in particular how art can help make the global city more democratic. Thus while the scope of the thesis is provided by films set in a number of cities around the world (principally Berlin, but also Los Angeles, and Amsterdam), my thesis explicates how these aid their viewer to participate as citizens in the global city. It extrapolates three different levels of abstraction in its analysis:

- 1) at an empirical level by analysing the artifacts;
- 2) at an historical and social level by analysing the contemporary city and citizenship; and
- 3) at a cultural level by analysing the role art can play in society today.

Images from the Underworld: A Mythical Cosmogony

MA Thesis by Research (1989–1995) University of Technology, Sydney

Images From The Underworld combines original photographic images with geographical and social history research, mythographical, theoretical and scientific writing, as well as autobiographical and fictional reconstructions to map a mythical underbelly of the city made up of migrants, workers, artists, flâneurs and other marginal travellers in Sydney. (See also notes on the exhibition and performance piece that came out of this work.)

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