

# METRONOMAD

by

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## ABSTRACT

I constructed the *Metronomad* instrument to facilitate my ongoing exploration of the footstep as a basic epistemological unit. This portable percussive instrument assigns pre-recorded or sampled sounds from the environment to each foot; each step triggers a sound, amplified through speakers that are worn as a backpack.

My first performance in the development of this instrument took place at the crosswalk of 77 Massachusetts Avenue, where I performed for several hours during a busy time of day. For the duration of the performance the crosswalk's audible pedestrian signal sounded only when I walked. Each note of the "cuckoo" tone was assigned to one of my feet.

In this way I provided the tone pedestrians rely on for safe passage, altered only in tempo. As I walked I attempted to match my steps to the pace of another person, thus modulating the tempo of the crosswalk tone by the pace of that person.

Throughout modernity artists have treated the urban walk as an ideal site for exploration of new social, political and aesthetic roles. At this seminal site I propose through my project: a new mimetic epistemology rooted in sound and the body, rather than sight and the eye; a new spatial interpretation of the modern autonomous individual; and a confrontation with the politics of the panoptic gaze.

Thesis Supervisor: Joan Jonas  
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"We find the other the same way we find our body."

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty  
from *The Prose of the World*, p. 138



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## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

### Artist as Urban Walker

Artist as painter of modern life, observer of the city, *flaneur* in the crowd – throughout modernity artists have taken to the street, walking and looking. As conceived of and embodied by Baudelaire, the artist in this role lives out the Enlightened ideal of the free man, moving through space, led by desire or whim, bound by no other reign of ethic or state. An anonymous prince of the streets, perhaps this *flaneur* even exercises territorial tendencies to map and claim, to know New Amsterdam or Paris as Vermeer's cartographic contemporaries knew the old Amsterdam. For this *flaneur*, social contact is forbidden. "C.G." remains anonymous in Baudelaire's essay about the roaming "Painter of Modern Life," Vito Acconci never touches the Followed, but turns back. What remains is only the post-ambulatory record of the encounter, a public document for sale in gallery or newspaper, reporting faithfully on the incident. Artist as *flaneur*, as prince, as correspondent. This figure eventually found its most comfortable position behind the movie camera, making of the audience a collection of solitary witnesses, participating vicariously, eager to submit to the illusions of the medium.

The roles afforded the walking wanderer in modern life can be contradictory. As a free-roaming viewer the walker is the embodiment of the Enlightened empirical individual, dependent on none, free to look and not be seen. This traditionally male figure is also, however, able to subversively or romantically dissent against modern ways of life. The wanderer has been the place of both bohemian and aesthete, of rogue and dandy, of terrorist and scientist. It facilitates both the objective view of the surveyor and the subjective reflections and desires of the shopper or thief.

If with Marshall Berman we take Marx's manifesto as a model for Modernist art practice<sup>1</sup>, the pursuit of such contradictions may be what attracts the artist to this role in the first place. In Marx's account of the revolutionary cycles of modern capitalism, the artist becomes an ambiguously tragic figure who truthfully carries the ideals of a culture to their bitter end, drunk on the power, the thrill and desire of the act. The artist alone is able to carry out to the fullest modernity's conflicted desires to hold both the new and the old, the material and the immaterial, the sacred and the profane. Such a mission, though seemingly unavoidable, has proved itself destructive to the artist and everyone else time and again. At the end of his wild-eyed car race through the city, Marinetti winds up crashed in a ditch. Recent feminist critiques have revealed how those at the other end of the walker's gaze fare little better.

Artists of the past century have placed themselves in this paradoxical role with all manner of intentions, hopeful or desperate. I will add my proposition to the lot, a proposition explored at this seminal site of modernist art practice, the walker on the street. Unlike the *flâneur*, I will reveal my presence as an observer, making available an encounter with the observed. Yet this encounter will not attempt a Utopian community of two; it will retain isolation and strangeness. The encounter will rely on the function of the artist as mime of the world, reporting on the marginalia of the streets. Yet my report will be in real time, on the spot, to others who move through the site of observance. This report will be posed informationally, but as information that is heard, not seen, and delivered to the ears of bodies in transit. In the pages to follow, through describing and contextualizing this project I will provide a more detailed account of the discussion into which I wish to enter; and I will also introduce what new I have to offer to the conversation.

## **The Rhythm of the Walk**

If the preoccupation of this modern artist/wanderer has traditionally been spatial, my interests lie in the temporal. Unlike Acconci or the practitioners of Situationist *derive*, I study and exercise the urban path not as a trajectory through Cartesian space, but as a rhythm, a time base, a constant drone of information created by the contact of feet to earth. Utilized as a measurement of time, the repetition of the footstep provides an ever-present reference point experienced bodily as well as analytically, unconsciously and consciously.

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<sup>1</sup> Berman, p.102

Unlike Standard Time, a Cartesian abstraction which aspires to be universal, the meter of walking is anchored in an individual subject, affirmed in the fringes of the body's consciousness through the constant affirmation of gravity's pull of feet against earth. I want to accentuate and amplify this meter to allow for full experience of its possibilities as a liberating and creative measure in everyday life. If part of the function of universalized, Cartesian time and space is to locate all bodies within a commensurable, homogeneous medium, I believe it possible to utilize the commensurability of a person's individual repeated steps each day as a grid for locating oneself within a more personal and immediate experience of time and space.

In her book *The Art of Taking a Walk*, Anke Gleber finds in film a natural analog to the *flaneur's* experience of the city. In her reading, the *flaneur* "captures the moving images of city streets, acting in this way like the camera of silent cinema...I argue that the flaneur, in the process of strolling, sets out to perceive everyday life as a three-dimensional screen whose images he projects immediately into his unique form of literature."<sup>2</sup> If, as Gleber asserts, "the dream state of flanerrie has much in common with filmic reception and its hypnosis, reverie, and hunger for experience,"<sup>3</sup> perhaps the footstep serves this hypnotic state much as sound serves the illusion of film. Film critic Michel Chion argues that synched sound serves film not as mere "added value," duplicating what is seen, but by creating illusion through an "audiovisual contract." In his most physical example, Chion examines the punch as a quintessential "synch point" between sound and image. He writes:

The punch becomes the moment around which the narration's time is constructed: beforehand, it is thought about, it is announced, it is dreaded; afterward, we feel its shock waves, we confront its reverberations. It is the audiovisual point toward which everything converges and out of which all radiates...Sound is the rubber stamp that marks the image with the seal of instantaneity.<sup>4</sup>

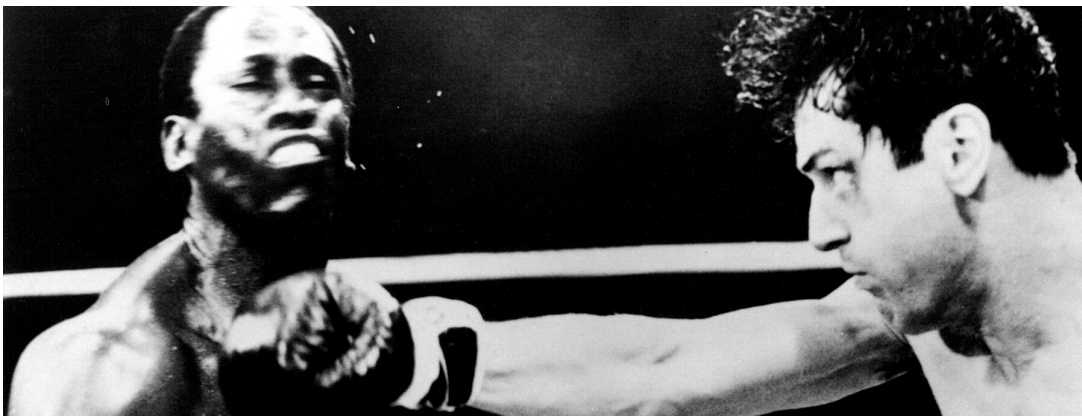


fig. 1 scene from *Raging Bull*, 1981

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<sup>2</sup> Gleber, p.x

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Chion, p. 60

Through video and performance artists have explored synched (and out-of-synch) percussive sound and image in just this way, bringing our eyes, ears, and sympathetic bodies in and out of belief. The woodblocks of Joan Jonas' *Songdelay*, or the spoon in *Vertical Roll*; the bodily collisions of Marina Abramovic and Ulay with each other and with architecture in their *Relation Work* series; perhaps even Chris Burden's *Shoot*; all isolate the phenomenon of the shock of impact as a point on which to hang belief.

In a 1998 article for *October*, Kathryn Chiong examines the use of the slam, the knock, and even the step as common to the work of Bruce Nauman and Samuel Beckett, utilized as a kind of basic existential and epistemological unit. In her analysis, one knock heard might have been a branch banging on the window. A second knock might have been someone at the door; if the knock persists, repeating endlessly, "the excess finally signals its own presence. The sound, then, not of *someone* at the door, but of *knock-knock-knock-knock* – and this mechanism of repetition."<sup>5</sup>



fig. 2 Marina Abramovic and Ulay  
*Light / Dark*, 197

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<sup>5</sup> Chiong, p.65

Chiong likens Nauman's video *Wall-Floor Positions*, in which Nauman punctuates a series of body contortions with the sound of his body slamming against the floor and wall, to Beckett's play *Footfalls*, in which the character May paces endlessly a proscribed path parallel to the stage's "fourth wall." "No, Mother, the motion alone is never enough," says May, "I must hear the feet, however faint they fall."<sup>6</sup> Speaking of Beckett's play, Chiong writes:

Striking the ground, touching it is not enough. There must be an excess of sense, a vestige of movement which consists in this pulse, however faint, of pacing. Slightly different in dynamic, perhaps, from the slam of *Wall-Floor Positions*, the beat in both is never metronomic, but the irregular pulse of a body that falters, accelerates, decelerates.<sup>7</sup>

Chiong builds an argument for the use of the body as an instrument of thought in the work of Nauman and Beckett. Drawing also on the work of philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, she concludes, "For Nauman, like Nancy, to think touches on to jump, to crash cymbals, to scream, to hear. For Nancy, like Beckett, this process (of thought touching its body) is conceived as a step."<sup>8</sup>

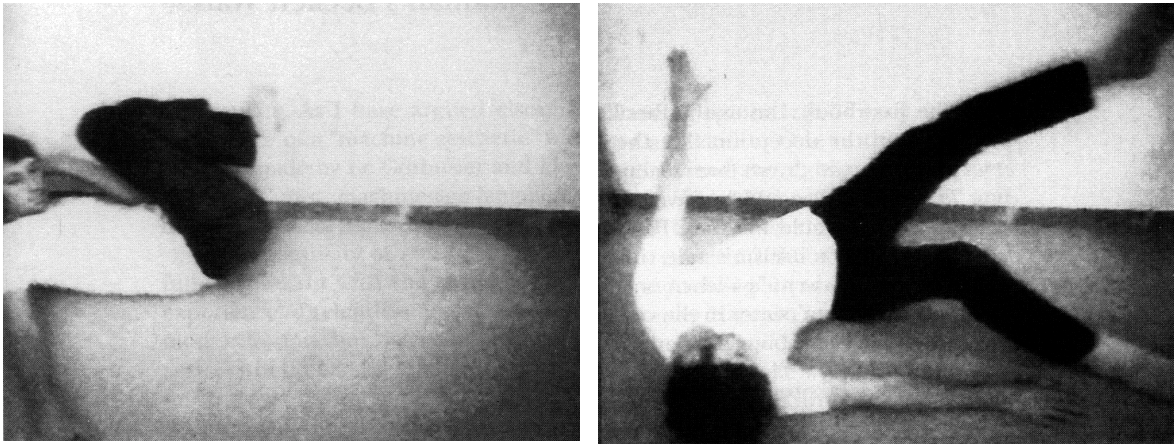


fig. 3 Bruce Nauman  
*Wall-Floor Positions*, 1968

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<sup>6</sup> Beckett, p.241

<sup>7</sup> Chiong, p.74

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.77



## Chapter 2

# THE PROJECT

I set out to explore the temporality of the *flaneur's* walk by creating an instrument that would allow me to emphasize the role of the rhythm of the feet in the exploration of the city. If vision served the first *flaneur*-artists as a mode of not only urban exploration but of social relation, fantasy, and political action, I have been curious to see how an emphasis on the feet over the eyes might affect these activities, as well.

In my first explorations of this possibility, I utilized live microphones to amplify the sound of my own feet, drawing the sound in and out of synch with the actions of myself and others. In one manifestation, I created an apparatus through which I could listen to the live sounds of my own feet through headphones, delayed by the amount of time it took for one foot to follow another in a routine pace. This enabled me to walk in time with a rhythm of my own generation, a rhythm offset just enough to render it an external beat.

In another application, I amplified the live sound of my steps loudly into a resonant stairwell. Waiting in the stairwell on the first landing up from the ground floor, I walked only when someone began ascending the steps below. As this individual began climbing the staircase I attempted to keep pace with them, providing the illusion of their own steps

amplified. In this way I treated the pace of another person as an epistemological subject the way a *flaneur* such as Vito Acconci treated a person's spatial trajectory. Yet it brought us both in synch with a sound seemingly generated by the stairwell itself, and created a specific, if paradoxical, social role for myself as an artist and voyeur. I followed even as I led, always remaining in plain sight one flight above the ascending walker.

At this point I required a medium that would facilitate more intuitive and inventive explorations of social and technological relations such as these. I decided to create an instrument which could generate as I walked not only the live sounds of my own feet walking, but any pre-recorded, synthesized, or sampled sound. This instrument, which also included a self-contained amplification system, took the form of a backpack. With it I can assign to each foot a different sound, variable in speed and volume according to how hard my foot hits the ground; it functions as an electronic percussive instrument. As a self-contained, worn instrument the backpack facilitates my exploration of the city in a role I have termed *Metronomad*.

My explorations with this instrument have barely begun. For my thesis project in the Visual Studies program at M.I.T., however, I utilized the technology from the backpack to create a site-specific performance. My role as a performer on this site was one discovered through the use of the pack, though I did not use the pack itself in the performance. This performance, perhaps a last work made in preparation for the full exploration of the *Metronomad* instrument, serves as the subject for the remainder of this paper.

I will rely in this description on a structural method of explication usually utilized by anthropologists in the analysis of ritual. In such an analysis, especially as demonstrated in the work of Victor Turner, a performance or ritual is described in terms of a processional structure, in which roles transform and mutate within a transitional or liminal space, before restoration of normalcy at the conclusion. Later in my paper I will return to the subject of ritual as a choice of method in this instance, and relate it to the site and function of the piece.



fig. 4 performance photograph

## Physical description

For 5 hours during a busy time of the schoolday I performed an intervention in a prominent place of passage for the MIT community. The work, sited at the crosswalk in front of the institution's main entrance at 77 Massachusetts Avenue, involved my alteration of the audible crosswalk signal provided for the blind. The two-note "cuckoo" tone of this signal is a distinctive part of everyday life at MIT - no other crosswalk in the vicinity features such a signal. It is not uncommon at the site to overhear a nearby pedestrian whistling or singing along with the loud and insistent tone. The sighted as well as the blind have come to rely on it for safe passage.

For my project I tied the tempo of this tone to my footsteps, assigning through a remote MIDI system one of the two notes to each shoe. For the duration of the performance I walked when the tone would normally be provided, crossing to the opposite side of the street each time the traffic stopped for a red light. In this way the signal system remained intact and consistent, differing from normal activity only in the tempo of the notes.

Each time the "Walk" sign flashed on, I began walking, modulating my pace to re-create the signal tone as close to its usual tempo as possible. After a few paces, however, I altered my gait to match that of one other pedestrian nearby, drawing up close to the person as I did so. This brought my pace, the pace of the chosen pedestrian, and the tempo of the crosswalk signal into the same rhythm. When we both reached the sidewalk again, I turned sharply to the right or left and resumed the pace of the tone's everyday tempo, walking parallel to the street until the visible "Walk" signal changed to read "Don't Walk."

I repeated this process each time the traffic stopped for a red light, inserting myself into the normal operation of the traffic signal system.



fig. 5 performance photograph

## Structural analysis

As a performance, the project is best described as a single performance repeated regularly over the course of a few hours. Each performance undergoes a series of transformations as a mimetic act, as a social act and as an act of control. Here I will briefly describe here the structural procession of each performance in terms of how my role changes as a mimic, as a social being, and as an agent of power.

As an artist working mimetically, I proceed through three stages. Through these I utilize the audible crosswalk tone as a mimetic medium, manipulating this medium with the instrument of my body. In the first stage I mimic the tone itself, modulating my pace to imitate the normal tempo of the audible signal. In the second, I depart from this act to choose a new mimetic subject; finding a fellow pedestrian, I increase my pace to match it to that of his or her feet. Once we have reached the sidewalk again, in the third stage I resume the first mimetic act, ceasing when the visible "Don't Walk" signal indicates that it is no longer safe to cross.



fig. 6 performance photograph

These mimetic shifts create a second structural procession, in which my social status shifts through several stages. I begin each performance as an anonymous member of the crowd, waiting on the curb. As soon as the crowd gets underway, I fall behind, walking an odd and irregular pace in order to imitate the signal's usual tempo, moving awkwardly and alone. Upon changing my pace to imitate another person, I move next to the person and become a member of a pair or trio. By doing so, I resume a position of anonymity and I am no longer alone. Despite this impression of a social bond or of an offering, however, I make no full social contact. My eyes remain locked on the person's feet, keeping the door to interaction closed. Upon reaching the opposite sidewalk my social status shifts once again, as my temporary partner leaves the site. I am left alone to take up the pace of the crosswalk signal's everyday tempo, moving against the crowd, awkwardly. Finally, I stop walking and take up a position as member of the crowd again. I am another person waiting on the curb, waiting to resume the process.

This procession of social and mimetic roles implies yet a third series of shifts, shifts in my exercise of power. As my control over the traffic signal becomes apparent, so do my decisions to submit freedom of movement to various systems and subjects. For example, when I first leave the curb, I utilize mimesis to perform an act of "*trompe l'oreille*," creating the illusion of normalcy at the site. This conceals the fact that I control the tone, instead making it appear as if I have submitted my actions to an external regulatory sound, as might a dancer or a soldier.



fig. 7 performance photograph

By altering my pace to match that of another, I publicly assume control of the external sound. This act of theft disrupts the regular rhythm of the site, and creates doubt in the urban infrastructure. My first act with this freedom and power, however, is to submit my movements to those of another walker. Through this act I enforce a structure on my newfound freedom, submitting it to the task of initiating a social bond, and bending the tone to be governed by the actions that it usually governs. Though I abandon this act upon reaching the curb again, my resumption of a pace imitative of the signal's usual tone carries a new significance. My position as generator of the signal now revealed, my actions are not regulated by an external signal but by conscious decision. I submit my freedom and control, as well as my body, to the urban infrastructure, attempting to restore faith and trust in the signal. I become a provider of safety, an intermediary between the city and its inhabitants, though my control over the signal is assured.

Having described the structure of the project in terms of mimetic, social, and political concerns, I will now return to contextualize these analytical descriptions within the history of how other artists have taken up similar concerns in the past. I will then return to address the significance of my repetition of these changes as a ritual, before concluding by situating my actions within the broader context of the work as an intervention in a traditional site of modernist investigation.



**fig. 8** performance photograph

## Chapter 3

# THE MIMETIC PROCESSION

Pictorial art as a mimetic activity, fulfilling other than a symbolic, emblematic or linguistic function, is usually described as a modern invention, birthed during the Renaissance. As such, it is often spoken of in conjunction with new conceptions of science, and is thus part of a larger epistemological shift. As my project purports to perform at least two mimetic acts, I would like to situate these acts in relation to the epistemological orientations of other mimetic aesthetics since the Renaissance.

As a situational device I will compare the epistemologies of two seemingly unlike aesthetic strategies, two approaches that have been of particular interest and relevance to me in my work. Examining the approaches of Dutch art of the 17th Century, and of conceptualism of the late 1960's and 1970's, I hope to ground my own project as a late modern event. According to art historian Svetlana Alpers, there are scant theoretical treatises associated with Dutch art of the 17th century<sup>9</sup>; for my purposes I will rely largely on her analyses of the artworks themselves. In contrast, the Conceptualists and their advocates produced an abundance of texts, on which I will draw here. With these two sets of sources I will attempt to set the stage for a modern mimetic aesthetic, before describing how my own project functions mimetically and epistemologically.

The two approaches, disparate at first glance, hold a few important characteristics in common. In both we find a quest for objectivity, de-emphasizing the subjective role of the artist. In both we see a preoccupation with information and text, which often manifests itself in a fascination with maps and mapping. Lastly, both retain an interest in the mechanics of vision, in optics; the Dutch are among the first to explore the camera

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<sup>9</sup> Alpers, p.xxii

obscura, while the Conceptualists push modern photography to its limits as a conventional recorder of acts and subjects.

### ***"Ut pictura, ita visio"***

In her book *The Art of Describing*, Alpers argues that Dutch art of the 17th Century, the time of Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Van Ruisdael, is part of a new science based in "natural knowledge", an empirical approach championed by Francis Bacon. An early Enlightenment *philosophe*, Bacon argued for a new science that replaced the canon of history with the canon of the physical world. The old books closed, the new scientist could put his tools to work discovering everything anew as it appeared to him, instead of as it was described to him by religion or tradition. Alpers places Dutch painters of the time in this context, preoccupied with the recent invention of the lens in Northern Europe, Kepler's new understanding of the mechanics of the eye, and with the rapidly changing maps made in Amsterdam from reports of the New World.

Viewed within this context, Dutch art of the time becomes more than a naive depiction of the world at large. Alpers argues that the picture itself becomes almost incidental, a record of looking rather than a stage set for viewing. "*Ut pictura, ita visio*," Kepler wrote, which Alpers interprets to mean, "Sight is like a picture."<sup>10</sup> Looked at in this way, the straightforward and illusionistic approach of 17th century Dutch painting does not so much privilege the seen world over subjective interpretation as it does render all viewing equal; if, as Kepler established, the eye "sees" not the world but a representation of the world projected through a lens, then everything becomes a representation, and viewing a painted still life holds little distinction from viewing an actual still life.

This results, according to Alpers, in a conflation of forms. Pictures and maps collide in the invention of the bird's-eye-view; catalogs and diagrams collide with still-life and tableaux painting. The foil for this kind of work was pictorial representation as conceived of by the Italian Renaissance artists, a mathematically conceived and verified spatial stage on which to portray objects from the world. In Alpers' analysis, the Dutch treated the picture not so much as an illusionistic window as much as a "surface on which to set forth or inscribe the world."<sup>11</sup> Whereas Albertian perspective presupposed a single, mathematically determined viewpoint for artist and viewer, Dutch painting often contained no single viewpoint, or even included the viewpoint in the picture.

Alpers finds in Vermeer's work *The Art of Painting* a simple summary of the Northern epistemology of painting. In this work the artist includes himself in the picture, representing both the viewer and the viewed, even including a meticulously rendered map

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<sup>10</sup> Alpers, p.36

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p.137

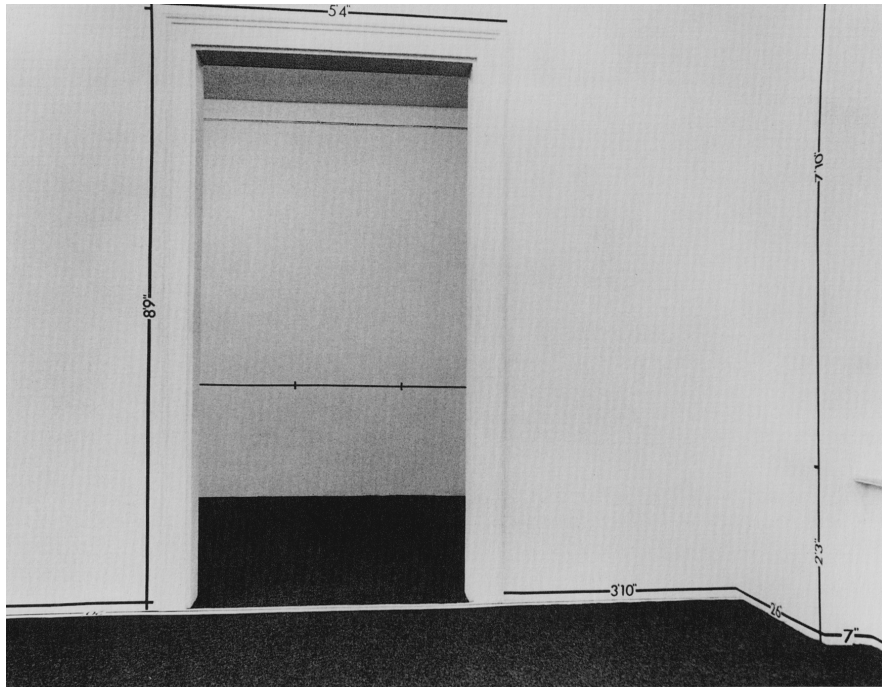
hanging in the background. Of this work, Alpers says, "Observation is not distinguished from the notation of what is observed."<sup>12</sup> What is pictured here is not a subject, but *an act of viewing*. What is left behind is only a record.



fig. 9 Jan Vermeer  
*The Art of Painting*

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p.168



**fig. 10 Mel Bochner  
*Measurement Room*  
1969**

## Art by Machine

If Alpers' subject takes place at the birth of the Enlightenment project, conceptual art is usually portrayed at modernity's opposite end. Lauded as the death knell of "high" modernism, conceptualism is usually given credit for fully "dematerializing" the art object. Of course, art objects made by conceptual artists are plentiful; arranged and catalogued faithfully in shows and books throughout its history and historicization, these objects often are portrayed as evidence or documentation of acts, rather than as acts themselves. Though conceptualists were not typically interested in the specifics of visual perception, conceptualist work often hold an epistemological position in common with the Dutch painters. They privileged the act of reading over the text, the process of perception and cognition over the perceived subject. The conceptual art object, like the Dutch still-life painting, was often incidental, a record of an act of knowing.

Working out the legacy of Duchamp, conceptualists sought to render the privileged artistic act as objective and systematic. Duchamp's choices for his readymades held still too much subjective weight. To this end the conceptual art object, such as Kosuth's *Five Words in Blue Neon*, often pointed only to itself, but depended on art's traditional mimetic function in order to do so. Occasionally it also depended on the standardized systems of measurement devised by the Enlightenment scientists. Artists such as Mel Bochner pointed not reflexively to the work, like Kosuth or Nauman, but to the measured perception of the work.

In his early essay, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, Sol Lewitt wrote that in conceptual art, "The idea becomes the machine that makes the art."<sup>13</sup> As in Alpers' conception of Dutch painting, the art object points back to the artist's act first, before referring to the subject portrayed. The comparison only holds, however, as far as a conceptual work refers to an artist's attempt to perceive or represent a subject. This would hold true to many of the works that deal with measurement, categorization, or those that seek to describe themselves. Most assuredly, this would hold true for conceptualist use of photography. Even if painters and sculptors shifted their interest away from depiction under the sway of modernism, photography could not so easily change. As Jeff Wall writes in his essay for the recent conceptual art retrospective held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, "It is in the physical nature of the medium to depict things."<sup>14</sup>

The photograph's nature as a depictive object presented a challenge to conceptual art, if conceptualism's goal was to fully and tragically carry out modernism's drive to make a work refer only to itself. According to Wall, artists like Bruce Nauman or Douglas Huebler wrested photography into this fateful modernist position, paradoxically, through acts of mimesis, in which the photograph imitates other photographic acts. Wall describes how this work sought to imitate forms celebrated even by modernism, such as *reportage* or amateurism, in order to question the "truth" of what such acts sought to document. By using the camera to document the staged event while retaining modes of *reportage*, the artists turned depiction back on itself the way that formalist painting had turned painted depiction back on itself. In this "death" of modern art, the works retain their traditional mimetic function, but simply do not depict other than themselves.



fig. 11 Joseph Kosuth *Five Words in Blue Neon*, 1965

## Application

Dutch acts retain faith in vision, in perception, but still leave the artwork to point to the act of seeing more than to the seen. Conceptualist acts also point to the act of perception, but would point to the perception of the artwork, not to the perception of the rest of the world. Both retain mimesis as a function of art, and both privilege the artist's act over the observed subject or the art object. The making of the art object, the

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<sup>13</sup> Lewitt, p.12

<sup>14</sup> Wall, p.247

mimetic act, serves as a means to the end of providing the artist with a structured epistemological encounter.

I have followed this model for my own project, creating a performative act that facilitates a perceptual exercise. In this instance the audible signal and occasionally my own body become the mimetic record, but here the record happens only at the moment of perception, not lingering in the form of photograph or painting. In this way, the project's form relates more to the mimetic work in video and performance of Dan Graham than to that of conceptualist photography or Dutch painting.

I start by concealing my control of the crosswalk signal; by attempting to re-create the tone's usual tempo I appear to be imitating an external subject. By my faithful act of reproduction, I create faith in the depicted subject; all seems normal, save for my erratic motion. At this stage, I am the traditional artist, faithfully reproducing the world, concealing my role.

By shifting my choice of subject from the signal to the pace of another pedestrian, I reveal my role and turn the mimetic act to serve my own purposes - an engagement with another individual. Having sacrificed faith in my first depiction as an aid to safe passage, the success of my second depiction has new ramifications. If I am successful, I achieve a visual union between our two bodies, moving in synch to the tempo of the crosswalk signal. Here my body reads as a picture or a mirror not of the external tone, but of another's movements.

My return in the third stage to imitate the crosswalk tone reflects a new mimetic role. If my goal is to restore faith in my illusion, my role is no longer obscured. I have revealed myself to be the generator of the signal, and ask people to place their trust not in my faithful depiction, but in my choices to stop and start when safety dictates.

Though my mimetic acts rely on vision, the instrument of depiction is my own body, my legs. By using my body as an epistemological instrument, I depart from the models suggested by Alpers, conceptualism, or even Dan Graham. Graham, Vermeer, and Huebler still rely on language to convey what they record. Though in my project the traffic signal is the informational medium, my legs convey to myself and others what is unique about an individual's pace of walking. If everyone on the site experiences the illusion of my correct reproduction of the crosswalk's everyday tone, only I experience the specific nature of another person's pace. Through my public appearance alongside the chosen subject, and through the crosswalk tone, I mount a depiction of an act of knowledge experienced only by me. By walking in synch with another person I seek to experience bodily the difference between their pace and my own

## Subjective Knowledge

In this way I acknowledge a degree of subjectivity in perception not often referred to by conceptualism or Alpers' Dutchmen. In Alpers' reading the Dutch made paintings that pointed to singular perceptual acts, more than to the Italian hope for a more universal, Platonic ideal of perception. Though the conceptualists rarely demonstrated any faith in the language on which they relied, they too are preoccupied with empirical description. If the Dutch carried great hope for such universal "natural" knowledge, the conceptualists seem damned to it. In a tragic, Beckett-like work, Dan Graham performed his work *Performer/Audience/Mirror* limited only to linguistic description of visual perception. For close to 30 minutes Graham described what he saw of himself and the audience, observing bodies without using them. His act reveals the absurdity and bondage of an aspiring universal system of description, but does not propose a new method.



fig. 12 Dan Graham *Performer / Audience / Mirror*, 1977

By placing my body in the epistemological loop, I hope to know the world in terms other than language and measurement, which aspire to be universal. If in the 17th century artists found common language in Enlightenment science's new conceptions of "natural knowledge" and empirical perception, today's science offers art a struggle with scientific truth after Einstein's theories of relativity. Anticipating phenomenology's rendering of all perception as trapped in the personal subjective realm, scientists and historians of science such as Michel Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn sought to include subjectivity and intuition in the epistemological act, without destroying the possibility of truth altogether.

Polanyi did this not by proposing a new scientific model, but by looking more closely at how science and the scientific community already function. There he sought to identify

the "personal co-efficient"<sup>15</sup> of even the most rationalistic processes. He brought attention to the prior decisions made by scientists before they even entered the epistemological process, the grids through which they perceived and collected data. Rather than decrying these as subjective and irrelevant, however, Polanyi celebrates them as an essentially human element at the center of the encounter. Most importantly to my work, he locates this human element as centered in the body. I will quote at length here two paragraphs central to this argument:

Our appreciation of the externality of objects lying outside our body, in contrast to parts of our own body, relies on our subsidiary awareness of processes within our body. Externality is clearly defined only if we can examine an external object deliberately, localizing it clearly in space outside. But when I look at something, I rely for my localization of it in space on a slight difference between the two images thrown on my retina, on the accommodation of the eyes, on the convergence of their axis and the effort of muscular contraction controlling eye motion, supplemented by impulses received from the labyrinth, which vary according to the position of my head in space. Of all these I become aware only in terms of my localization of the object I'm gazing at; and in this sense I may be said to be subsidiarily aware of them.

Our subsidiary awareness of tools and probes can be regarded now as the act of making them form a part of our body. The way we use a hammer or a blind man uses his stick, shows in fact that we shift outwards the points at which we make contact with the things that we observe as objects outside of ourselves. While we rely on a tool or probe, these are not handled as external objects...they remain necessarily on our side, forming part of ourselves, the operating persons. We pour ourselves out into them and assimilate them as part of our own existence. We accept them existentially by dwelling in them.<sup>16</sup>

In the central epistemological act of my project, that of walking in the pace of another, I apply this model to the probing of a human subject, a human body. Through my legs, I appropriate the pace of another person into my own body. I "dwell" in their rhythm as a way of making their body an extension of my own (or perhaps the other way around), if only briefly. A rhythm familiar to the other person defamiliarizes me to my own; the degree to which I am defamiliarized is revealed in how awkward my movements become as mime. In this project, I experience the new rhythm just long enough to estrange myself to my own body, without "learning" the rhythm and losing myself.

Of course, my act is not an abstract scientific investigation; it is a social act. Even Polanyi carried out his proposals to their full social implications. In his essays compiled in *Science, Faith, and Society* he investigates how when a personal subjective element is acknowledged in scientific investigation, truth becomes socially constructed. Conceptualists certainly did not ignore this aspect of their work either, and next I will address the social implications of my project's mimetic procession.

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<sup>15</sup> Polanyi, p.17

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p.59

## Chapter 4

# THE SOCIAL PROCESSION

### Skeptically free

In describing his 1969 work *Following Piece*, Acconci locates the work in the category of conceptual art, as defined in Sol Lewitt's credo that "the idea becomes the machine that makes the art." He describes himself in the work as "a kind of dumb copying machine,"<sup>17</sup> not unlike the Dutch painters who sought to become pure lenses. Importantly, however, Acconci makes the further observation that "I am almost not an 'I' anymore. I put myself in the service of this scheme."<sup>18</sup>

This extension of the implications of his role introduces the question of identity; who is behind the modern empirical eye? A shift in epistemology will necessitate a shift in the understanding of the individual. Some would emphasize that the individual as a concept is a modern invention, just as empirical science is a modern invention.

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<sup>17</sup> Linker, p.20

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*



fig. 13 Vito Acconci  
*Following Piece*, 1969

Acconci demonstrates the interrelatedness of these subjects even in his terminology. Critic Kate Linker points out that in describing *Following Piece* and other work at the time, Acconci uses the word "instrument" and "agent" interchangeably to refer to the artist's role.<sup>19</sup> Though both terms are mechanistic in nature, "instrument" connotes a less active role than "agent," which implies at least some degree of autonomy. Linker points out that around the same time as *Following Piece* Acconci began to study the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, responsible for such influential works as *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1959, and *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, 1967.

In these works, Goffman argues that the self is paradoxically out of the individual's control as well as subject to the individual's choices in the negotiation of social space. At the core of this work, the self is not stable but socially constructed, shaped by changes in immediate society. Goffman writes in his book *Encounters* of how an individual manages a particular "situated activity," in which he or she is dominated by a single expected role:

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

I have argued that a situated activity system provides an arena for conduct and that in this arena the individual constantly twists, turns, and squirms, even while allowing himself to be carried along by the controlling definition of the situation. The image emerges of the individual is that of a juggler and synthesizer, an accomodator and appeaser, who fulfils one function while he is apparently engaged in another; he stands guard at the door of the tent but lets all his friends and relatives crawl in under the flap.<sup>20</sup>

For Goffman, the only power an individual has over the self is in negotiating these demands through ritualized social encounter. All of the terms used to describe the self's role in the quoted passage are passive and reactionary - "juggler," "accomodator," and "appeaser." Acconci embodies this by surrendering his autonomy in the city to others; even in "public" space Acconci retains no freedom. His only respite is when he followed retreats into his or her own private space, leaving Acconci alone again. When alone, Acconci retains agency and autonomy. When in the company of a chosen stranger, Acconci surrenders his freedom of movement, even if that stranger is unaware of the artist's presence. The streets are an analog for the negotiations described by Goffman.

Of course, the composition of the self as described by Goffman thirty years ago sits on bedrock compared to more recent conceptions in sociology and psychology that question the existence of the self at all. Contemporaries of Acconci and innumerable artists since have constructed entire bodies of work around this question. The work of women artists deserves much of the credit for opening up these possibilities for exploration. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will limit my discussion to contemporary artists who, like Acconci, have chosen to address the freedom of the individual through spatial metaphor. By limiting my examples to artists who have chosen to remain in the tradition of the *flaneur*, I hope to situate my project in relation to a continuum similar to that of the mimetic tradition. There we found Alpers' Dutch painters close to the birth of modern empiricism, hopeful in its promises, and Conceptualists near to its death, skeptical of the possibility of the "true" record, if still bound by the same epistemological structure.

Within the continuum of this other modern invention, the autonomous individual, we might find Acconci, like the Conceptualists, near the end of this notion, skeptical of its stability, yet retaining its basic structure. Some of Acconci's contemporaries share this doubt. With no great optimism, Tehching Hsieh and Linda Montano pose their individuality as symbolically bound performing a year-long project in which they lived tethered to one another by a length of rope, without touching. They each hold even less freedom than Acconci, as for them almost any physical move requires some sort of negotiation. In an earlier work, Hsieh limited his freedom by the self-assigned task of punching a timeclock every hour for a year. Here his freedom was determined not

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<sup>20</sup> Goffman, p.40

socially, but mechanically; his radius of movement was limited to that in which he could return to the timeclock for the next punch.

At this end of the spectrum we might also find the work of Sophie Calle, who moved from following people to being followed; for her piece *The Detective*, Calle asked her mother to hire a private investigator to follow her at an unspecified time during a designated week. Calle says of this work, "I was not trying to do weird things, I wanted to show him what my life was really like, so I just did everything in an intense way."<sup>21</sup> Here the artist moves freely and alone, but always conscious of another's possible presence as a voyeur. She monitors her own freedom of movement.

Perhaps the anchor of this skeptical end are Samuel Beckett's characters, Vladimir and Estragon, who in *Waiting for Godot* aspire to leave, and cannot. "Nothing to be done,"<sup>22</sup> they remain frustrated, isolated in their individuality if occasionally and mercifully confused about their identity, unable even to communicate successfully with each other. They sit at the crossroads, but instead of tearing off like a rebellious wanderer, they are damned to remain in limbo.



fig. 14 Sophie Calle *The Detective*, 1981

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<sup>21</sup> Calle, p.32

<sup>22</sup> Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, Act I

## Romanticism and Rebellion

At the other end of this continuum, where faith in the integrity of the autonomous and mobile individual remains strong, we find an unlikely cast of romantic rebels. All through modernity, those who object to modern ways of life have rebelled through living out the modern ideal of free movement. The Situationists in Paris sought solace from the restrictions and mechanizations of modern living through the *derive*, the politicized stroll in which they sought to exercise their spatial freedom to the fullest. Other contemporary artists such as Hamish Fulton and Richard Long continue the Transcendentalist tradition of the solitary country walk, leaving the social spaces of the city behind. Less hopeful than Thoreau or Emerson, however, these artists leave behind only empirical records of their trips. Thoreau at least held in common with Baudelaire's *flaneur* a belief in the post-ambulatory composition in verse or prose.

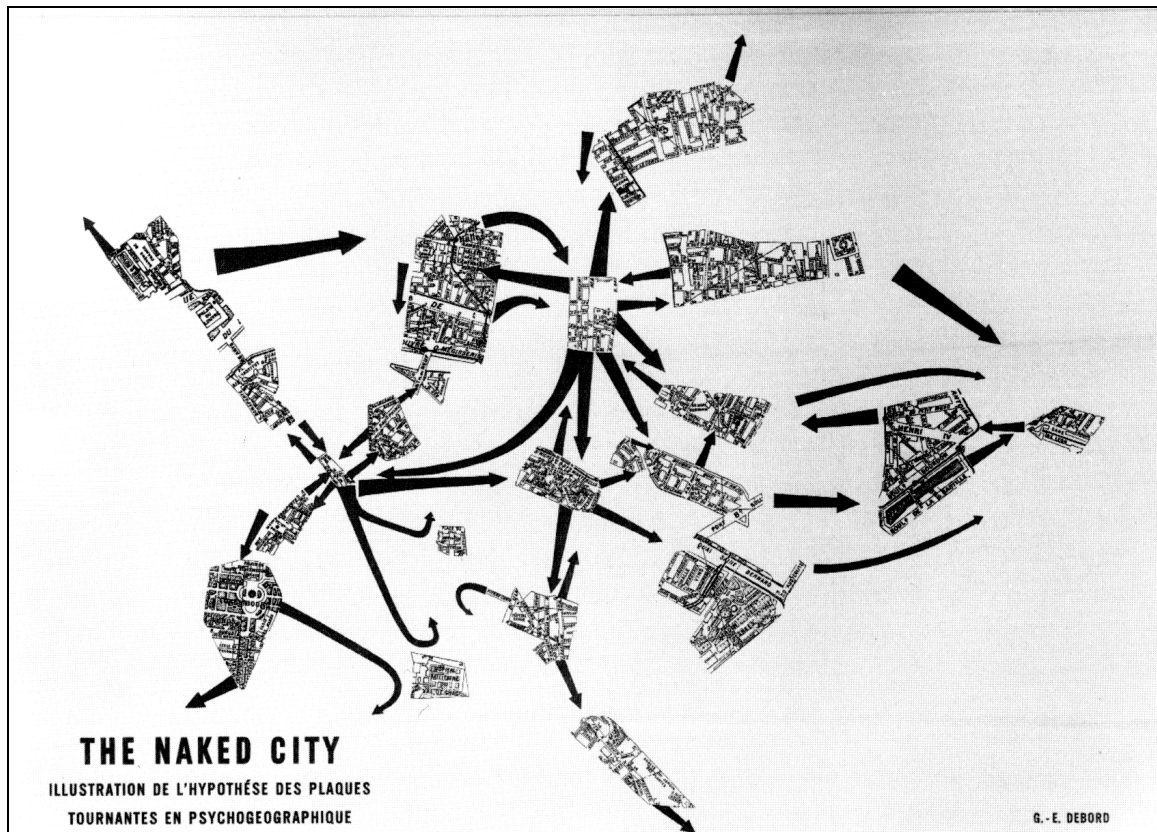


fig. 15 Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, Psychogeographical map of Paris, 1957

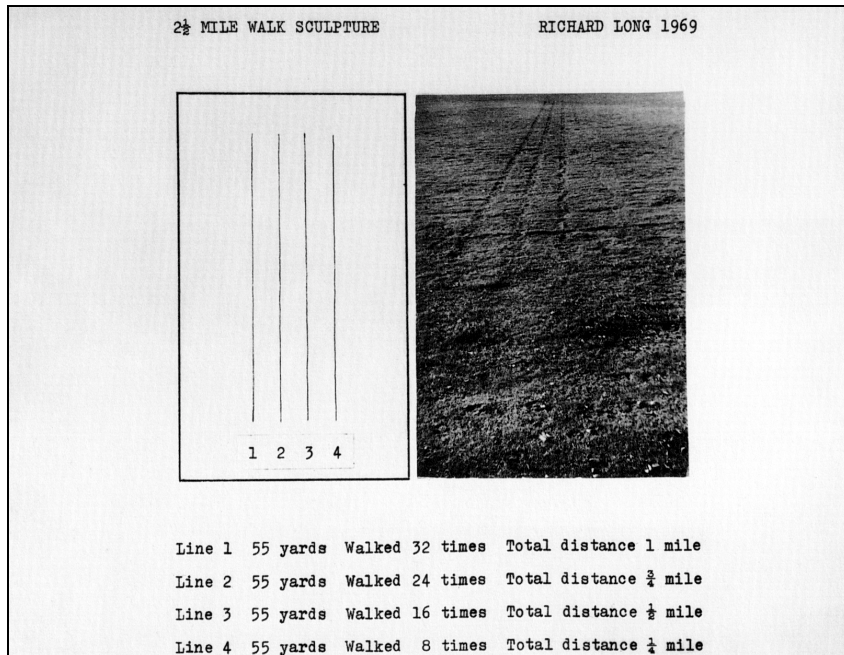


fig. 16 Richard Long, *A 2 1/2 Mile Walk Sculpture*, 1969

If Baudelaire's description of the "painter of modern life" as a *flâneur* first marked out the role as ideal for the modern artist, he probably owes credit for the role's invention to the quintessential romantic *philosophe*, Jean Jacques Rousseau. Toward the end of his life, exiled to Switzerland, Rousseau penned his last book *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, which he poses as a series of meditations composed while walking alone in the country. "Here am I, then, alone upon the earth, having no brother, or neighbor, or friend, or society but myself,"<sup>23</sup> Rousseau begins the work. As the book progresses, we find that Rousseau is not in fact alone, but lives with his wife, servants, neighbors, and even the occasional passer-by on the country road. Feigning solitude, however, he engages himself, in fine empirical fashion, with collecting and cataloging every species of plant in existence on the little lake island where he resides. Having created and possessed this picture ("I did not want to leave a blade of grass, a vegetable atom which was not fully described") to his great pleasure, he is sufficiently prepared to make this declaration:

But if there is a state where the soul finds a position sufficiently solid to repose thereon, and to gather together all its being, without having need for recalling the past, nor to climb on into the future; where time counts for nothing, where the present lasts forever, without marking its duration in any way, and without any trace of succession, without any other sentiment of privation, neither of enjoyment, of pleasure nor pain, of desire nor of fear, than this alone of our existence, and which this feeling alone can fill entirely: so long as this state lasts, he who finds it may be called happy, not with an imperfect happiness, poor and relative, such as that which one finds in the pleasures of life, but with a sufficing happiness, perfect and full, which does not leave the soul any

<sup>23</sup> Rousseau, p.31

void which it feels the need of filling. Such is the state in which I found myself often at the island of St. Peter, in my solitary reveries...What is the nature of one's enjoyment in such a situation? Nothing external to oneself, nothing except oneself and one's own existence; so long as this state lasts, one suffices to oneself, like God.<sup>24</sup>

Here we have the perfect picture of an Enlightened individual, the modern autonomous man, who has pictured the world and is now content to disconnect from it. In this description Rousseau is out of time and out of space, out of society.

As a god unto himself, Rousseau is a happy precursor to more tragic heroes of recent literature, such as Albert Camus' protagonist in *The Stranger*. A callous sensualist at the pinnacle of modern individualism, the Stranger truthfully carries out Rousseau's romantic ideal to the bitter end, in which as a lawless "god" he kills another stranger without cause. After this, the sad doubt of Acconci's self-conception as an "instrument" is not so surprising.

Who is this stranger, the other person ignored or stalked? Within the continuum I have established, faith or doubt in the freedom and autonomy of the individual artist seems linked to the fate of this stranger, this "other." Before moving on to locate my performance in relation to these other explorations of modern individualism, I'll first introduce a brief discussion of how the stranger has been defined in relation to the modern notion of the individual.

## The Stranger

Early this century, Georg Simmel, a pioneer in the field of sociology, identified the stranger in spatial terms. In 1908 Simmel wrote:

If wandering, considered as a state of detachment from every given point in space, is the conceptual opposite of attachment to any given point, then the sociological form of "the stranger" presents the synthesis, as it were, of both these properties. (This is another indication that spatial relations not only are determining conditions of relationships among men, but are also symbolic of those relationships.)<sup>25</sup>

In Simmel's description the stranger is a wanderer who has come to stay; his or her identity as spatially both near and remote suggests to others "the appearance of mobility," objectivity, and even freedom<sup>26</sup>. For Simmel, what makes the stranger both near and far is that "with the stranger one has only certain *more general* qualities in common, whereas the relation with organically connected persons is based on the similarity of just those specific traits which differentiate them from the merely universal."<sup>27</sup> This of course places more emphasis on what one does *not* hold in common with a stranger, leading to the identification of strangers not as individuals, but as a general type of stranger. Here a particular spatial orientation, a condition of mobility temporarily arrested, leads to a particular social orientation.

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.113

<sup>25</sup> Simmel, p.143

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p.146

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

In a later essay Simmel addresses more specifically the interrelation of difference, individuality and freedom. In "Freedom and the Individual" Simmel traces individuality as it was understood in the 18th century by the revolutionaries of France and America to a privileging of freedom over all else, a freedom based in a mechanistic concept of nature that aimed to describe the universal through the particular:

Even if the form of an individual phenomenon is absolutely unrepeatable, it is still a mere crosspoint and a resolvable constellation of purely universal laws. This is why it is man in general, universal man, who occupies the center of interest for this period instead of historically given, particular, and differentiated man. The latter is in principle reduced to the former; in each individual person, man in general lives as his essence, just as every piece of matter, peculiar as its configuration may be, exhibits in its essence the pervasive laws of matter in general.<sup>28</sup>

The stranger, though a true wanderer, prevents the advancement of freedom by emphasizing particular differences over the general in common; the stranger is thus less of an individual. Here the ideal free man is one free from "every restriction and special determination," more "mankind" than "man," aspiring to an abstraction. Simmel maintains that this Platonic notion of individualism is the foundation of the modern understanding of freedom, within which the familiar romantic notion of the individual as unique from all others is a more recent addition. Writing about this new phenomenon, Simmel says:

With this development, the modern striving for differentiation is heightened to the point of repudiating the form it has just won. At the same time, the drive underlying this development remains one and the same: throughout the modern era, the quest of the individual is for his self, for a fixed and unambiguous point of reference. He needs such a fixed point more and more urgently in view of the unprecedented expansion of theoretical and practical perspectives and the complication of life, and the related fact that he can no longer find it anywhere outside himself.<sup>29</sup>

Here we see the modern individual in search of a fixed point, an autonomous center, whether it be one of peculiar uniqueness or general abstract identity. Goffman's conception of the self is rooted in this search, even if for him the individual is forced to keep up a kind of dance between Simmel's fixed points. The constant is a striving after universality. Rousseau, cut off from the world and exiled, was a still a universe unto himself, and absolute. Rousseau's less romantic adversaries sought the same state of universal independence, even if the emphasis was on a unified general autonomy as "mankind," instead of a localized autonomy as a unique "man."

A contemporary analysis of individualism and freedom by Jean Luc Nancy proposes a similar description, applied to events since Simmel's work, which took place before the great surges of fascism and communism. In *The Inoperative Community*, Nancy asserts that in communism and individualism we find a similar urge - a push towards immanence, towards absolutist community. Nancy argues that individualism is based on an atomistic model in which the ideal end is "the absolutely detached-for-itself, taken as origin and

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.219

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.222

certainty,"<sup>30</sup> while the *telos* of communism is a "an absolute immanence of man to man."<sup>31</sup> Both impossible and undesirable options exclude difference through destructive elimination or through simple disregard. "The fully realized person of individualistic or communistic humanism is the dead person,"<sup>32</sup> he writes.

As a way of evading these deathly ends for all involved, Nancy moves to re-define the conception of the individual as well as the approach to community. Instead of individuality Nancy offers *singularity*, and in place of communion he offers *ecstasy*<sup>33</sup>. In Nancy's conception, the *singular* person is defined not by infinite autonomy or immanent union, by his or her finitude, and thus by the separations between singular persons. The singular being cannot aspire to autonomy, for the singular person is ontologically singular. She or he can be no more or less singular, because singularity is qualitative, not quantitative. Singular beings do not strive for communion, to lose differences toward the end of unity. Instead they participate most immediately in ecstasy, a temporary surrender of sovereignty that is not a drive toward fusion; ecstasy requires singularity.

Most importantly, if separation defines singularity, community takes place around the largest separation - that of the dead from the living. For Nancy a community of singular beings crystallizes not around a drive toward future immanence and loss of self, but around the death of its members, "that is to say around the 'loss' (the impossibility) of their immanence."<sup>34</sup> Unlike a modern individual,

A singular being does not emerge or rise up against the background of a chaotic, undifferentiated identity of beings, or against the background of their unitary assumption, or that of a becoming, or that of a will. A singular being *appears*, as finitude itself: at the end (or at the beginning) with the contact of the skin (or the heart) of another singular being, at the confines of the *same* singularity that is, as such, always *other*, always shared, always exposed.<sup>35</sup>

Within this structure, communication exists not in a social bond of recognition, but in a "sharing of finitude." "In its being, as its very being, singularity is exposed to the outside," Nancy writes. "By virtue of this position or this primordial structure, it is at once detached, distinguished, and communitarian."<sup>36</sup> When difference is incorporated this essentially, we are all strangers. Lastly, Nancy relates how for the singular person, freedom is not expressed through self-sufficiency. "The singular being, because it is singular, is in the passion - the passivity, the suffering, the excess - of sharing its singularity. The presence of the other does not constitute a boundary that would limit the unleashing of 'my' passions: on the contrary, only exposition to the other unleashes my passions."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Nancy, p.3

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p.2

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p.13

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p.6

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p.14

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.27

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p.29

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p.32

## Application

Clearly, at no point in my performance do I exercise a pure and autonomous freedom; I associate myself instead with Acconci's end of the continuum. But if in *Following Piece* Acconci can be seen as searching through Goffman's crowded field for a fixed point of reference, my path represents something different.

Returning to the reading of my work as a series of short performances, I begin each performance as a member of the crowd. As a part of a collection of beings who appear to hold in common only the general characteristic of being at M.I.T., I wait for the traffic light to change. By Simmel's definition, we are strangers to each other; our mobility is temporarily arrested, and our perceived differences are likely greater than the abstract qualities we hold in common.

When the light changes, we resume mobility, but I reveal myself to be bound at least in my manner of movement to the external environment. My "fixed point" appears to be the signal itself; before I have revealed my control of the signal, I appear to be bound to its tempo.

At this point, I speed up to match my pace to that of another person, thus taking control of that which controlled me. For a brief moment, I have become my own fixed point, even more in control than my walking companions. I am more Rousseau than Acconci, more Situationist than soldier. I hold to this position for no time at all, however, for I reveal my position of control only as a way of attaching myself to another person.

This is the point where Acconci's work began. Like Acconci, I bind my freedom to the movements of a stranger. Unlike Acconci, I assume a public appearance of union with the Followed, walking right next to the person as if we were a pair. By joining this person in the crowd, and walking his or her pace, I appear to be closing the gap of strangeness, upsetting Simmel's balance of near and far by emphasizing the near. But this is not a move toward fusion, toward immanence; I make no eye contact with the person, evading the kind of encounter Goffman described. Perhaps the person does not even see me there. We reach the sidewalk and part ways. In the end my actions to close the gap reveal ever more clearly our differences, through my social invisibility to them and through the awkward movement required of me to match their pace.

When the Followed entered what Acconci decided to be public space, the artist faced a choice. Either he could turn back, and resume a state of isolated individualism, or follow the person into private space. Within the terms of his engagement, their trajectories must either diverge or converge; such a convergence in private space would suggest their immanent union as lovers, or more threateningly, as psychotic and victim. These are the ends of individualism as suggested by Nancy, which both end in death.

When my Followed or imitated subject reaches the sidewalk, I also face a choice. I may also continue walking with the person, or turn back. Within my terms of engagement,

however, I can move no closer. As my actions are tied to the other's temporally before they are tied spatially, I have already reached the furthest point of convergence. If I continue with the person I will simply continue to copy his or her pace; the only conceivable change would be if the subject ceased walking. This would leave us both arrested, but no closer or farther from each other.

Given this possibility, I turn back to resume walking in the tempo of the signal's usual tone. This act returns me to a state of willful individualism; like Acconci, I resume my status as modern individual. He is once again in control of his own trajectory, I of my pace and of an aspect of the urban infrastructure. I however, submit my freedom to a civic duty. I move to facilitate the continued passing of others through this public space, and then resume my position on the sidewalk to wait for the next "Walk" signal, beginning where I started. By remaining on this site of transition, I make it a place for myself, a fixed point of identity; during the performance I have no destination. In this way, by Simmel's definition I am the one who is not a stranger, the one whose home is in this place of transition. My duty becomes one of facilitating and approaching the strangeness of others without seeking to erase the distinction.

Within my described continuum of faith in the modern individual, I would describe my role in this performance as a procession from skeptical autonomy to skeptical autonomy, passing through a brief respite not of immanence or communion, but in Nancy's terms, of singularity aspiring toward ecstasy. I begin and end alone, seeking to at least submit my individual freedom to a public service. In the middle, I achieve brief community in Nancy's sense, in that I expose myself and emphasize singularity and difference through passive submission of my "fixed point" of reference to another singular being, instead of to the whole abstract public.

As I described in the last chapter, this central activity is one of personal investigation, in which I seek to hold a physical experience in common with another. Merleau-Ponty followed modern empirical models of perception to their bitter end in phenomenology, where he found no possibility for assurance of existence of anything beyond "pure" perception. Damned to the position Rousseau longed for, Merleau-Ponty still struggled to understand how he could at least be assured of the existence of another person in the world, another island. In his essay "Dialogue and the Perception of the Other," he describes an instance of such assurance:

I am watching this man who is motionless in sleep and suddenly he wakes. He opens his eyes. He makes a move for his hat, which has fallen beside him, and picks it up to protect himself from the sun. What finally convinces me that my sun is the same as his, that he sees and feels as I do, and that after all there are two of us perceiving the world, is precisely that which, at first prevented me from conceiving the other - namely, that his body belongs among my objects, that it is one of them, that it appears in my world...<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Merleau-Ponty, p.136

...This means that there would not be others or other minds for me, if I did not have a body and if they had no body through which they slip into my field, multiplying it from within, and seeming to me prey to the same world, oriented to the same world as I.<sup>39</sup>

Here Merleau-Ponty finds some rescue in common physical experience from the fate of modern individualism and empiricism - he at least holds in common the shocking impact of opening one's eyes to the same harsh sun. Here I would add the phenomenon of the body's rhythmic impact with the hard surface of the earth, arresting our fall with each step. Connecting heard and felt impact, the experience affirms me repeatedly, soothingly- "...now...now...now...now...now..."

In the central part of this performance, like Merleau-Ponty I seek to use this experience to assure myself of the existence of the other, the stranger. If in Kathryn Chiong's reading of Beckett and Nauman, the repeated insistence of "...knock-knock-knock-knock-knock-knock..."<sup>40</sup> signifies presence, perhaps two knocking simultaneously signifies presence in common, even company. And of course, Nancy's conception of ecstasy, rather than communion, between singular beings might necessarily conclude in sexual ecstasy, a meeting and perhaps a temporary synchronization of rhythms.

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p.138

<sup>40</sup> Chiong, p.65

## Chapter 5

# THE POLITICAL PROCESSION

In chapter three I addressed the urban walker as an epistemological being, and in the last chapter I addressed the role as a social being. I must lastly discuss the role of the *flaneur* as a political being, before I conclude by addressing the possibilities of utilizing this activity as a ritualistic as well as aesthetic act.

### ***Flaneur as Voyeur***

If Baudelaire is the original appropriator of this role as one fit for the modern artist, his text certainly highlights the early nature of this position as one of power. In *The Painter of Modern Life*, the essay where he first advocated the position of artist as "man of the crowd," we find Baudelaire singing the praises of an anonymous artist known as "Monsieur G." The author praises the artist as "the perfect *flaneur*," and "the passionate spectator,"<sup>41</sup> who like the hero of Edgar Allen Poe's story *The Man of the Crowd* throws himself into the throngs of anonymous citizens. As a maker of pictures, however, this *flaneur* is no mere pedestrian. Among his many praises, Baudelaire writes of the man:

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<sup>41</sup> Baudelaire, p.9

The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family, just like the lover of the fair sex who builds up his family from all the beautiful women that he has ever found, or that are - or are not - to be found; or the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas.<sup>42</sup>

This artist is somewhat of a collector, an objective, if romantic ideal that surveys the world before him in the interest of capturing and taking possession of something. Baudelaire asserts that what the artist chiefly seeks to capture is not mere pleasure. "He is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call 'modernity'," writes Baudelaire, "He makes it his business to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distil the eternal from the transitory."<sup>43</sup> If we rely on Baudelaire's description of the artist's works (or if we examine the actual works of the artist, Constantin Guys), we find that Monsieur G. pictures fashion chiefly in this search for the ephemeral in the eternal. His pictures resemble the photograph as *reportage*, candid scenes of everyday life, usually of those of higher social station, where the details conveyed focus on dress and posture. Baudelaire uses the occasion of this subject matter to spend much of his essay in praise of fashion, in particular when demonstrated by women.

From his position as vicarious *flaneur*, participating in the artist's experience of the crowd, Baudelaire exercises the power of a prince. He speaks not of singular women in the artist's many pictures, but of Woman, generalizing "them" into a "her."<sup>44</sup> Like Simmel's stranger, Baudelaire's "Woman" is both near and far, near in her sharing of the same space of the street, but far in that she holds only the most general characteristics in common with Baudelaire. "She is a kind of idol, stupid perhaps, but dazzling and bewitching, who holds wills and destinies suspended on her glance,"<sup>45</sup> he writes. Also like Simmel's stranger, from her generalized position she is not allowed the status of individual.

The politicizing gaze of Baudelaire has been elaborated and critiqued thoroughly in these terms, as the feminist critique of the "male gaze" is by now canonical in modernism studies. For the purposes of this essay, my interests stay at a broader level. It is apparent from the essay that part of Baudelaire's conception of the mission of the modern artist as "man of the crowd" or *flaneur* involves a vision that empowers and protects the viewer through organizing and categorizing the world, even at the expense of the viewed. As a participant in the tradition of artist-as-urban-walker, part of my job is to position the nature of my vision in relation to that of Baudelaire's seminal figure.

In defense of Baudelaire, some have argued that his model is a defensive mechanism, built to protect himself from the shocks of modern life during a tumultuous time for

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p.12

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p.30

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

Paris. In readings by Walter Benjamin and later by Marshall Berman<sup>46</sup>, we find the writer situated in the midst of Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris. Unseemly neighborhoods have been pushed out of the city to make way for new, wide boulevards, which re-create city life. This life is one of physical danger, of abundant visual stimuli, of easy incognito, and above all, of shock. Berman finds intentional irony in Baudelaire's choice of painter for his essay; among the many he could have chosen, he chose the one whose vision of modern life did not include the likes of Baudelaire, a melancholy social outcast. In this light the poet's praises of the modern and the new acquire a tragic air. Like Marinetti in his Futurist Manifesto, Baudelaire is simultaneously charged and terrified by modernization.

Regardless of his hopes and fears, however, the poet occupies a position of power at least as a man, and surely as a *flâneur* who hides while he watches the changing crowds. The central appeal of his essay, one for the artist's faithful reproduction of modern ephemera, cannot be left as politically neutral. His understanding of this activity lies in an appeal to empirical, pictorial truth, over and against the traditions of the *salon* that would clothe contemporary subjects in ancient clothing. "The great failing of M.Ingres," he writes, referring to the painter, "is that he seeks to impose upon every type of sitter a more or less complete, by which I mean a more or less despotic, form of perfection, borrowed from the repertory of classical ideas."<sup>47</sup> He praises instead the attention to detail of brow and button demonstrated by Monsieur G., his hero.

Here we find a familiar appeal, an appeal to the validity of observation over tradition demonstrated by earlier Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Francis Bacon, and by Alpers' reading of 17th century Dutch painting. Baudelaire's appeal also points forward to the understanding of photographic *reportage* as truth, a tradition the conceptualists later took up as a problem for modernism. We have established that in its conception the empirical eye belongs in the head of an objective and free individual. How then does this individual exercise his or her freedom toward others?

### **Foucault's Panoptic Gaze**

In Foucault's analysis, the masquerade of objectivity and fairness on the part of such a perspective is a specific political stance. In *The Order of Things* he first articulates the political function of the empirical impulse to objectively categorize, classify, and represent. Later he finds the visual aspect of this aspiration epitomized in the 18th century penal invention of the Panopticon, which hides the identity of the viewer but maintains constant surveillance of the viewed.<sup>48</sup> In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault articulates how the Panopticon prison is a perfect realization of a model of surveillance already employed in other areas of modern society. Like Baudelaire's streets, authority in this model relies on vision, even losing the body in the process:

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<sup>46</sup> Benjamin, p.163, and Berman, p.150

<sup>47</sup> Baudelaire, p.13

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, p.200

...the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance.<sup>49</sup>

Writing about Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin had already emphasized the new "protective function" of the eye in the modern city<sup>50</sup>, exploring its incorporations into new spaces in public life. Finding the structure of the Panopticon in use all over society, Foucault can now carry Benjamin's analysis out to make this broad statement:

Our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces; the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralization of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.<sup>51</sup>

As an anonymous observer who makes his presence known after the fact through *reportage*, the *flaneur*-artist plays an important part in the development of such a culture. The birth of the artist-*flaneur* initiates the presence of an observer even where there is none, as in the Panopticon. This role as part of a binding and regulatory mechanism must be carefully negotiated by the contemporary artist-*flaneur* who seeks to be critical and not merely complicit.

Foucault's model laid the groundwork, however, for later work that revealed this system of surveillance to be less than perfectly executed. If the position of power in a Foucaultian view of the city provides a bird's-eye-view, (a view attributed to the stranger by Simmel, incidentally<sup>52</sup>) Michel de Certeau articulates the creativity that takes place down below, subversively, and often in plain sight.<sup>53</sup> de Certeau reads lumbering stability in the strategic deployment of a Foucaultian surveillance mechanism. By contrast, the "weak" are able to keep moving, tactically out-maneuvering the strategies of the powerful. If spatial orientation is key to panoptic advantage, the "weaker" observed use temporal orientation to their advantage.<sup>54</sup>

Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the "weak" within the order established by the "strong," an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunter's tricks, maneuverable, polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p.203

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin, p.191

<sup>51</sup> Foucault, p.217

<sup>52</sup> Simmel, p.146

<sup>53</sup> de Certeau, p.93

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, pp.36-38

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p.40

The central metaphor for de Certeau in his exploration of the creativity of viewed subjects is the walker. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau articulates a theory of tactical maneuvers practiced by the subjects who Foucault supposed to be absolutely bound by modern urban spaces of surveillance. "Urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded,"<sup>56</sup> he writes in his chapter on "Walking in the City." The creative procedures of these subjects "elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised,"<sup>57</sup> and write new histories into the regulated cityscape through the creation of story.<sup>58</sup>

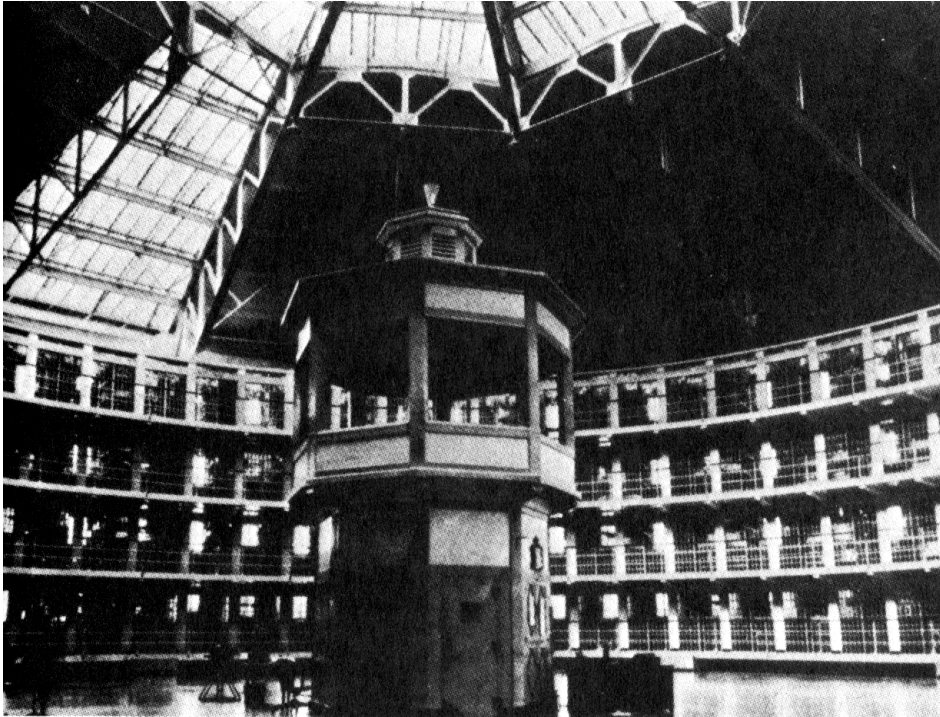


fig. 17 Interior of the penitentiary at Statesville, U.S.

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p.95

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p.96

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p.116

## Application

de Certeau's analysis helps clarify the role of those artists who have taken up the position of viewed subject, rather than viewer. Adrian Piper's *Catalysis* series, in which she went about her routine life in New York dressed in various stigmatizing guises, or Sophie Calle's work as the followed in *The Detective* (she also worked as a stripper for a time) are examples of this carried out in spatial terms. Many more artists have dealt with this strategy within the broader discussion of representation.

In my performance, I remain in the position of observer, and fulfill this position much as it was conceived of by Baudelaire, Foucault, and de Certeau. My position as a white male certainly qualifies me for the traditional conception of the position. I also fulfill the regulatory panoptic function of the position quite literally, as I have taken control of a



fig. 18 Adrian Piper  
*Catalysis IV*  
1970-71

device that regulates movement through the site. As in de Certeau's definition of the strategic position of power, I have anchored myself to a specific place, a place in which most everyone else continues to move as walkers.

The procession of my roles within this broad position, however, is more ambiguous. I begin as the *flaneur* begins, incognito, waiting on the curb, a free and autonomous individual. From there however, I secretly initiate the movements of others through my first steps on from the sidewalk, which trigger the crosswalk tones. Like the *flaneur*, I hold a secret. More powerful than most in such a position, however, I can do more than fantasize about controlling others in the space. Though others do not depend on my actions for movement, my movements can initiate the movements of others. I usually am the first walker on the street, leading the rest by a step.



**fig. 19** performance photograph

In the performance, my departure from imitating the rhythm of the crosswalk signal to pursuing another person is a contradictory move. This identification and pursuit of a single person in the crowd is a quintessential act of *flanerie*. At the same time, however, it exposes my role as an agent of power, even creating of my activity a spectacle. This is the last thing either a *flaneur* or a panoptic agent would want. In another move of submission, by moving up next to the imitated person I make my position known to them, as well. Lastly, my move to again take up the rhythm of the crosswalk tone is the most submissive move of all, as now I have revealed my control of the tone and yet choose to remain at the site, bound by civic obligation. If the performance primarily serves to facilitate my experience of walking in synch with another, like Baudelaire's *flaneur* who "enters as he likes into each man's personality,"<sup>59</sup> it also serves to expose this act as a privileged one. At the beginning and the end of each short performance, I submit this power to civic and mimetic duty. The central act of following also functions mimetically, but serves my purposes at the expense of those around me.

In the end, my role has very little freedom in this work, perhaps too little to be considered as having submitted privilege. The almost ascetic nature of the act interests me, however, as territory for future exploration. By submitting the power that I take (or that is given me), I am able to explore a role that some would avoid as too historically destructive. Of even more interest to me, by my acts I am able to emphasize the power of the viewed. In the systems I set up such as this one, the subject is always faster on the feet than I, and de Certeau is proved correct in his analysis.

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<sup>59</sup> Tester, p.4

## Chapter 6

# THE RITUAL PROCESSION

My dependence on a processional structure for the analysis of this work is in part a reflection of the systematic nature of the piece. It also reflects, however, my hopes for how such a project might function in terms of ritual, especially as explored in the work of anthropologist Victor Turner.

Through a lifetime of work in hard field research as well as interdisciplinary analysis and theory, Turner championed an analysis of ritual as "social drama," in which participants perform specific roles through a structured sequence or story of events. As rites of passage, these rituals serve diverse functions, such as elevation of status or reversal of status, and as social dramas may take place in the form of time-honored ceremony or of improvised crisis management. Common to all such dramatic forms, Turner asserts, is a procession through four phases: "breach, crisis, redress, and *either* reintegration or recognition of schism."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Turner (1982), p.69

In this narrative structure, an initial *breach* in a community's normal political and social structure brings about a *crisis* which threatens the functioning of everyday life. Through ritualized legal or religious *redress* an attempt at restoration is made; this stage may continue through multiple efforts until either a final *reintegration* of order occurs or a *recognition of schism* acknowledges change and reinstates order under a new organization. This drama may be enacted on a grand historical scale or for the duration of a short evening's entertainment, as in a Shakespearean tragedy.

In the case of a rite of passage, Turner follows his predecessor Arnold Van Gennep, who analyzed specific roles in such a drama in terms of a second sub-process. In this process, an individual moves from *separation* through *transition*, before returning to stability in the *reincorporation* phase.<sup>61</sup> In the *reincorporation* phase, individuals may be established in a new enhanced status, or may be simply returned to normalcy, though ritually prepared for some aspect of life.

Turner's main contribution to Van Gennep's analysis has been an articulation of the central phase of *transition*, which Turner has described often in spatial terms, as a *liminal* or transitional space. "Liminality," writes Turner, "is a temporal interface whose properties partially invert those of the already consolidated order which constitutes any specific cultural 'cosmos.'"<sup>62</sup> In this state, existing social, political, and even linguistic orders are made plastic for play and experimentation, usually inverting existing hierarchies. The novice is made a king, the king insulted by his subjects. For Turner this state is by definition impossible to maintain, requiring the bounds of ritualized definition within which to disrupt and play.

In applying this analysis to art's function in society, Turner reminds us of the classical understanding of art (especially drama) as a mirror.<sup>63</sup> Turner's articulation of what happens in the transitional *liminal* stages of ritual enacts this function literally, providing a reversed or reflexive picture of society for a time. This state Turner terms a condition not of dissolved structure or anarchy, but of *anti-structure*, which facilitates community differently without destroying it. The unique form of community, or *communitas*, that occurs in a liminal space, "preserves individual distinctiveness - it is neither regression to infancy, nor is it emotional, nor is it 'merging' in fantasy."<sup>64</sup> Avoiding the kind of immanent communion that Jean-Luc Nancy sees as ending in death, Turner's *communitas* preserves singularity while providing rich opportunity for free play within new and ambiguous roles.

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p.24, 25

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p.41

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p.104

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p.44

Responding to the work of Erving Goffman, Vito Acconci addressed the construction of the self as a multiplicity of roles, determined socially and spatially. Allan Kaprow, also inspired by Goffman, made more sweeping gestures to build a whole aesthetic philosophy out of the performance of everyday life in various roles. "Intentionally performing everyday life is bound to create some curious kinds of awareness,"<sup>65</sup> wrote Kaprow, hoping to inspire through "performing life" a restorative self-consciousness and alienation from everyday routine. In its most extreme application, for Kaprow the boundaries between art and life fall away, producing a utopian state of freedom and "flow" that in Turner's world is impossible to maintain. For Acconci and other early performance artists, the determination of duration in a piece acquires significance as an exploration of suspended social normalcy in a liminal state.

Like Kaprow, part of my objective in installing myself systematically in routine spaces, as in this performance, is to bring the possibilities of Turner's concept of ritual into situations and spaces made routine through repetition. Unlike Kaprow, I hope for temporary transformations or reversals that allow for play and experimentation in only a limited space and time, the way Nancy hopes not for immanent communion and fusion of individuals but only for brief experiences of ecstasy by singular beings. In Turner's terms, I seek to create rites of passage which result not in elevation of status, but in restoration of status after temporary suspension and play. Turner identifies this latter sort of rite as typically calendrical, repeated and made almost routine. For this reason I am drawn to transitional spaces of the daily commute, such as street, lobby, stairwell or hallway.

Though perhaps my choice of scenario for this performance was so limited as to allow for very little play for experimentation, the performance did manifest several of Turner's characteristics of ritual. Chiefly, at the center of my performance is a liminal inversion of a traditional structure of power, in which the *flaneur* is made a spectacle through his act of stalking. This revelation of secret desires makes possible for me the experience of a brief and cautious form of *communitas* between myself and one other person, a relationship that has as its end not communion but maintenance of singularity and strangeness. The procession of my role as crossing guard also enacts (though perhaps as a mere sketch, and not a full-blown play) the story of a Turner-ian *social drama*, in which an initial *breach* in the urban infrastructure creates a *crisis* of faith in the system, temporarily *redressed* by my re-assignment of the regular tempo of the crosswalk signal to a new pace, before a final *reintegration* of myself into the system in the last phase, restoring normalcy.

Turner's vision for the end of such a ritual, in which all is restored to its former place, is humble, though the place he gives such ritual in society is pivotal. He locates the radical *anti-structure* of liminal space as "a time and place lodged between all times and spaces defined and governed in any specific biocultural ecosystem by the rules of law, politics and religion, and by economic necessity."<sup>66</sup> This description places liminality pretty much

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<sup>65</sup> Kaprow, p.187

<sup>66</sup> Turner (1982), p. 83

everywhere. Even though each liminal transition may give way again to order restored (even unjust order), however, Turner sees in such transitions fertile ground for change:

New meanings and symbols may be introduced - or new ways of portraying or embellishing old models for living, and so of renewing interest in them. Ritual liminality, therefore, contains the potentiality for cultural innovation, as well as the means of effecting structural transformations within a relatively stable sociocultural system. For many transformations are, of course, within the limits of social structure, and have to do with its internal adjustments and external adaptations to environmental changes. Cognitive structuralism can cope best with such relatively cyclical and repetitive societies.<sup>67</sup>

In my enactments of new rituals in routine spaces, I hope to engender just such an atmosphere of epistemological, social and political creativity from within, rather than a broader revolution of dramatic, anarchic destruction and rebirth. This is where I depart from modernism, as I will explain in my conclusion.

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<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85

## Chapter 7

# CONCLUSION

In describing his hopes for ritual's transformative power, Turner separates himself from more dualistic conceptions of cultural change. Shortly before the passage I last quoted, Turner writes:

For ritual, as I have said, does not portray a dualistic, almost Manichean, struggle between order and void, cosmos and chaos, formed and indeterminate, with the former always triumphing in the end. Rather it is a transformative self-immolation of order as presently constituted, even sometimes a voluntary *sparagmos* or self-dismemberment of order, in the subjunctive depths of liminality...Only in this way, through destruction and reconstruction, that is, transformation, may an authentic reordering come about. Actuality takes the sacrificial plunge into possibility and emerges as a different kind of actuality. We are not here in the presence of two like but opposed forces as in Manichean myth; rather there is a qualitative incongruence between the contraries engaged...<sup>68</sup>

Turner's vision of progress through cycles of destruction and reconstruction holds a great deal in common with another, more influential vision of this process - that of Karl Marx. Political theorist Marshall Berman reads in Marx's manifesto a quintessential

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<sup>68</sup> Turner (1982), p.83

modernist vision, in which through increasing the pace of the cycles of revolution already begun by bourgeois capitalism, society might reach a final revolution, realizing in full the Enlightened ideal of freedom. For Berman, this passage from *The Communist Manifesto* captures Marx's vision:

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face his real conditions of life, and his mutual relations with sober eye.<sup>69</sup>

Berman identifies a paradox in this passage, in that Marx simultaneously laments this condition as the inhuman result of bourgeois culture, while also celebrating it as the only way to the final revolution. "Thus he hopes to heal the wounds of modernity through a deeper and fuller modernity,"<sup>70</sup> writes Berman. In his book *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, Berman claims *The Communist Manifesto* as "the first great modernist work of art,"<sup>71</sup> and ties the inner contradictions of Marxism, and thus modernity, to the paradoxes inherent in Baudelaire's vision in *Painter of Modern Life*.

As illustrated previously, Baudelaire appears to be obsessed with capturing what is new, current, and modern, even as he stands a great deal to lose as a peripheral figure in the wave of progress. If as Benjamin and Berman assert, Baudelaire accepts this paradox and reacts to it through an aesthetic of irony, he holds in common with Marx a kind of tragic resignation found throughout modernist literature, through Camus, Beckett, and the poet Vito Acconci.

Marx and Baudelaire also hold in common with much of modernism a common spiritual vision. As Berman helps to illuminate<sup>72</sup>, in Marx we find a preoccupation with spiritual polarity - the solid and the melting, the "real" and the illusory, the sacred and the profane. Concurrently, Baudelaire presents in his essay a central vision of modernity as both ephemeral and eternal, contingent and immutable.<sup>73</sup> Within this polemic they each also lament the "loss of a halo" in modern life. As Berman writes, "for both men, one of the crucial experiences endemic to modern life, and one of the central themes for modern art and thought, is *desanctification*."<sup>74</sup> Berman is one of many to have observed this as a central theme of modernism.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Marx, as quoted by Berman, p.95

<sup>70</sup> Berman, p.98

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p.102

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, chapter II.1. "The Melting Vision and its Dialectic", p.90

<sup>73</sup> Baudelaire, p.12

<sup>74</sup> Berman, p.157

<sup>75</sup> for an in depth exploration, see the essays included in the catalog *The Spiritual in Abstract Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*. Maurice Tuchman, editor. Abbeville Press, New York, 1985.

This is where Turner departs from Marx's vision. Though he is interested with Marx and Baudelaire in the cycles of regeneration and transformation possible in modern life, he argues in the passage above against reading ritual as a gnostic battle between cosmos and chaos, opposed but equal. In his picture the struggle is unequal, between an established order, just or unjust, and legislated windows of chaos. Unlike Marx, Turner's vision has abandoned modernism altogether, forgetting utopia. Like Jean-Luc Nancy, who wrote his essay as a response to the failure of communism<sup>76</sup>, Turner perhaps foresees the destructive end of the modernist vision, despite its noble hopes.

Like most modernist heroes, Baudelaire's *flâneur* holds a conflicted position. He is the inverse of Georg Simmel's stranger<sup>77</sup>, having come to stay where everyone else is in transit. Like Turner, I chose to admit inequality and expose the limitations and contradictions of this role, rather than swallowing the futility of the situation protected by irony or utopian dementia. Perhaps my initial performance falls short of illuminating the creative possibilities of this position. If so, may the aspirations I have outlined here be the standard of success for my future efforts.

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<sup>76</sup> Nancy, p.1

<sup>77</sup> Tester, p.61



fig. 20 performance photograph

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