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Bastardising Technology as a Critical Mode of Cultural Practice

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Daniel James

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Bastardising technology as a critical mode of cultural production

Abstract

An abstract of the dissertation of Daniel James for the Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Arts.

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Bastardising Technology as a Critical Mode of Cultural Practice

Technology performs (or fails to perform) numerous instrumental functions in modern society. This thesis investigates, through a suite of four artworks, how it might be possible to reconfigure and 'bastardise' technology, in order to scrutinise it. Each of these works deploy a range of mediums, including sculpture/robotics, installation, performance, audio/music and video. This interdisciplinary approach to media seeks to interrogate the plethora of hybridised ways in which technology evolves and infiltrates into our daily lives. Technology has a profound impact upon our subjectivity, and this investigation explores slippage as a mode in which bastardised technology can enable multiple (and conflicting) subject positions.

This research investigates how the integration of high and low technology, and the conflation of 'high' and 'low' art, may lead to new understandings of art as a mode of social and political enquiry. The robotic assemblages, although fairly complex technologically, do not adhere to high-tech aesthetics. The eclectic use of sampled/appropriated pop-cultural audio and video material scrutinises the mediatising subterfuge of technology. The artworks navigate a number of cultural modalities such as the grotesque, humour, the glitch, performance, appropriation and mashups, in order to create experiences of disorientation and disquiet. This body of work is an exploration of the self as inseparably complicit with, but still critically reflexive about, technology and the power-knowledge structures that it propogates.

Acknowledge(-power)ments

I would like to thank anybody who has used one or more of the following expressions in conversation with me:

etymology, subjectivity, simulacra, heterotopia, heterogenesis, liminality, photoshoppery, hack, mash, filter, ohrwürm, appropriation, compression, distortion, subjugation, hegemony, white balance, mediatisation, deterritorialisation, control alt delete, suture, gaffer tape, soldering iron, air guitar, performativity, theatricality, heteronormativity, nurse's dress, postproduction, server, open source, participatory, creative commons, frontispiece, fretless girlfriend, the girlfriend with 88 keys, werckmeister, time signature, acapella, 303, 404, 808, 909, 1200/1210 (R.I.P.), MIDI, V4, DVJ, BPM, AVCAS, MP3, WAV, MP4, MOV, H.264, HTML, PHP, FTP, GST, funding proposal, actionscript, keystone, press release.

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A layer of primer

"I use technology in order to hate it more properly"
Nam June Paik

Fig. A: Daniel Agnihotri-Clark,[1] *Séance for Nam June Paik* (2008). Curatorial project (publicity image used on posters, fliers and web).

In February 2008 I curated a project (a screening/performance event) entitled *Séance for Nam June Paik*. Approximately two years after the seminal Korean artist had passed away,[2] I wanted to see how Aotearoa/New Zealand affiliated digital media arts practitioners might create new artworks to channel the spirit of his practice.[3] I will not discuss that project (nor for that matter any of my curatorial projects) in relation to this research, but I do wish to invoke the spirit of *Séance for Nam June Paik* as emblematic of the investigation that is about to unfold.

Paik is an extremely influential figure in the field of contemporary cultural practice that intersects art with technology – he is commonly known as the 'father of video art', and he is also known as one of the first artists to make robotics artworks; he is in part notable for his interdisciplinary approach and his sense of daring in investigating how new technologies might be deployed for artistic ends; he is known for his sense of humour, playfulness and fun, but at the same time his work invokes equal doses of quiet meditation.

Channeling the spirit of this artist is a slightly cheeky thing to do – it claims a level of connection with an artist whose importance in the field is already well established; it puts emergent practices on equal footing in their dialogue with canonised practices. In short, it asks how current artists can retain a degree of reverence for the histories and established strategies of cultural practice, but then move beyond the work of established and canonised practitioners and do something new.

To create the publicity image for *Séance for Nam June Paik* (Fig. A), I appropriated an image of a séance that was held for the famous illusionist Harry Houdini, and I photoshopped in some big flatscreen televisions (in the same configuration as the televisions which were installed at the actual event). Making art invariably involves slippages and indexes from the past, *but I live and work in the present*.

Like Paik's oeuvre, my own art practice is firmly interdisciplinary: traversing the disciplines of video, audio, installation art, performance and robotics. Like Paik, I often work collaboratively: in various projects and test works produced over the course of this research I have worked with computer programmers and designers, dancers and choreographers, theatre practitioners, DJs/VJs/musicians - practitioners working both inside and outside of traditional 'fine arts' contexts. Like Paik, my interests engage heavily with pop culture and mainstream media, and I deploy strategies of deconstruction and reconstruction, appropriation and recontextualisation. Like Paik, my work balances precariously between playfulness/humour and sober meditation. Like Paik, I use technology in order to hate it more properly. *But I am not Nam June Paik.*

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1 Agnihotri-Clark was my former surname - it was the name I used at the time of that project.

2 Paik died in January 2006.

3 This project was part of *Tending Networks*, the fifth of the annual Aotearoa Digital Arts (ADA) symposia, and the event was presented in conjunction with the Physics Room's public exhibitions programme in Christchurch.

Introduction (containing a few clues about the methodology to my madness)

Technology performs (or fails to perform) numerous instrumental functions in modern society. This thesis investigates how it might be possible to reconfigure and 'bastardise' technology, in order to scrutinise it. Each of the chapters in this dissertation provides the context for an artwork. The four works are the installation *Code Monkey 1.1* (2007), the installation *School of Fine Arts* (2010), an untitled performance by Anaesthesia Associates (2010), and the installation *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0* (2009). These works deploy a range of mediums, including sculpture/robotics, installation, performance, audio/music and video. This interdisciplinary approach to media seeks to interrogate the myriad of ways in which technology evolves and infiltrates into our daily lives. Technology has a profound impact upon our subjectivity, and this investigation explores ways in which bastardised technology can enable slippages to occur between multiple (and conflicting) subject positions.

This research focuses on the integration of high and low technology, and the conflation of 'high' and 'low' art, investigating how these strategies may lead to new understandings of art as a mode of social and political enquiry. This dialectic between high and low is challenged in a number of ways. The robotic assemblages do not adhere to high-tech aesthetics – these robots are fairly complex technologically, but they are also distinctly abject, creepy and dysfunctional, and their quasi-human characteristics elicit clear affective responses from the audiences that encounter them. The use of sampled/appropriated audio and video also interrogates the dialectic between high and low. This pop-cultural material is iconoclastically re-presented as 'high' art, and the slippages that occur are a key mode for scrutinising the mediatising effects of technology.

The artworks navigate a number of cultural modalities such as the grotesque, humour, the glitch, performance, appropriation and mashups, in order to create experiences of disorientation and disquiet. This body of work is an exploration of the self as inseparably complicit with, but still critically reflexive about, technology and the power-knowledge structures that it propogates.

My theoretical research draws heavily on poststructuralist (philosophical) concepts. These concepts are analysed together with other (applied) cultural theory to formulate a theoretical position from which my art practice can be contextualised and interpreted. I use poststructuralist frameworks because, in direct contrast to structuralism's claims that meaning can be culturally independent,[4] poststructuralism rejects the idea that a text[5] has one singular meaning or purpose.[6] In order to understand a cultural text, it is necessary to study both the text itself, and the systems of knowledge which were coordinated to produce the text. In this way, poststructuralism positions itself as a study of how knowledge is produced. Poststructualism is, in its rejection of singular meanings, fundamental to understanding practices that engage with digital media and other technologies. The generation of multiple meanings *characterises* hybridised arts practices which sample, appropriate, and reconfigure existing texts.

A selection of key practical case studies are outlined and discussed in light of the theoretical issues raised. In line with my firm dedication to interdisciplinarity, case studies are not solely drawn from canonised movements in 'fine art' history. There are numerous examples presented from other spheres of cultural production, most notably popular music. I frequently use the terms 'cultural producer' and 'cultural product' in place of the words 'artist' and 'artwork' respectively. I do not use capital letters for 'fine art', nor do I capitalise the names of canonised art movements (unless I am directly quoting someone who does).

Each chapter raises a cluster of issues and asks a question. Each artwork responds by challenging and interrogating the issues raised. Concluding the chapter to which they have been assigned is not the sole duty of each artwork. This document, like the artworks that it contextualises, is resistant to hierarchy. As such, there is no meta-conclusion to draw at the end. If the artworks operate as intended, the spirit of each artwork will *haunt* the theoretical and practical issues that are raised in *all four* chapters.

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[4] Structuralism explores the relationships between language, literature and other fields, upon which higher level 'structural networks' can be drawn. According to structuralist thought, meaning is produced from within a particular person or culture.

[5] The term 'text' refers to anything with a semiotic component, to anything that carries meaning. As I use it here, the term does not only refer to written literature. An artwork is a cultural text.

[6] Further, Roland Barthes famously declared the metaphoric "death" of the author as an authentic source of meaning for a given text (1967). This destabilising of the author means that poststructuralists need to investigate other sources of meaning, such as the reader's interpretation, cultural norms, other literature and so forth. I will investigate Barthes' ideas in Chapter 2.

Research overview

If you are a (brave) reader who is tackling this document with little or no preexisting knowledge about the field under discussion, please start reading here…

During a period of time I spent in hospital recovering from an injury, I was forced to learn how to communicate with medical specialists. While I lay in hospital (doped up on strong painkillers), I received regular visits from these people. They scuttled up to my bed (usually in groups, with trainees tailing behind), and they spouted complex and unfamiliar terms at me. I had to quickly get my tongue around the words they were using in order to make sure I understood what they meant - before they rushed off and administered a course of treatment that I was not happy with.

Every field of expertise inevitably develops its own specialised language. If I were to state that my attiude towards medical terminology is 'Foucauldian', some readers would need an explanation. Other readers would immediately recognise the name of the French theorist Michel Foucault. Readers who are familiar with Foucault's work are likely to know that the medical institution was a key subject of inquiry in his writing. These readers would realise that the medical profession provides a clear example of how power and knowledge are intertwined. They would probably (correctly) infer that my statement prods back at the medical professionals I encountered - and how they used their specialist language to talk down to me, to assert their authority, and to a certain extent to evade responsibility for taking the time to adequately explain my treatment.

Unlike the medical specialists I encountered in hospital, I am not in a hurry. I actually want my readers to understand what I am talking about, and I want my work to arouse interest – to promote open-ended dialogue, rather than an unquestioning acceptance of my experience and expertise.

Having said that, there are times in which specialised language is necessary. In the section below, for example, I am about to outline the key concepts I will address, and the names of the key theorists and practitioners that I will discuss. It is an extremely abridged and jargony overview – a section that has been written for people who already have a high level of preexisting knowledge about the field. Readers with experience in academic language would expect this (even require it) in order to get a feel for how I am positioning my own work in relation to the field. I also reiterate these condensed overviews at the start of each chapter. If you find these introductory paragraphs are too opaque, simply jump in at the first subheading of each chapter, where I will start to navigate the terrain at a slower pace.

If you want to skip the preamble and cut to the critical chase please start reading here…

Chapter 1 of this research begins with a detailed study of *techne*, a notion which is central to a critical examination of the meeting place between art and technology. I commence by investigating Martin Heidegger's etymological study of *techne*. In the original Greek usage, the term encompassed functional mechanisms for bringing new *products* into being - the instrumental quality of technology. The term also, however, denoted aesthetic attempts to bring new *ideas* into being. The latter meaning has been lost in common understandings of the term 'technology' - we predominantly think of technology as purely instrumental. In a cultural context, it is crucial to revisit *techne* in order to understand the overlap between instrumental value and aesthetic value – especially for artworks which deploy technological *products* to critique *ideas* about technology. In Arthur Kroker's analysis of Heidegger's work, Kroker introduces the notion of 'reverse engineering' to theorise *aesthetic* strategies to be critical about technology's forward momentum – reverse engineering is a strategy by which artists deploy technology as both medium and subject, in order to critique it. I coin the term 'bastard media' to refer to the illegitimate usage of technology in cultural practice - for the express purpose of challenging its forward momentum.

A number of case studies from cultural practice are scrutinised based on the extent that they challenge the forward momentum of technology. I commence with mechanomorphic art from the Dada period, specifically focussing on Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass* (1915-23), an artwork in which the body is liberated from it's limitations by an ecstatic ecalation of power that is received by the repetitions of machines. Conversely, in Jean Tinguely's *Homage to New York* (1960), and in Nam June Paik's robotics artwork *Robot K-456* (1964, in collaboration with Shuya Abe), the forward momentum of technology is criticised rather than celebrated. These fluxus-affiliated artworks emphasise dysfunctionality and playfulness, drawing attention to technology's ability to be counterproductive to social progress. Moving on to more recent examples, Stelarc's *Ping Body* (1996) is an artwork that does ecstatically celebrate technology, in order to extend the biological body of the artist through technological means. Similarly, Eduardo Kac's *GFP Bunny* (2000) directly implicates technology on biological bodies, in a project that is the world's first transgenic artwork. Conversely, however, *GPF Bunny* applies scientific strategies in order to facilitate dialogue and critique these very strategies.

Unlike these artworks, which directly impact upon actual biological bodies, the grotesque is an aesthetic strategy to construct *fanciful* narratives. I will argue that this mode of operation is important because it highlights the ability for art to create *psychological* resonances (and dissonances) that challenge the status quo. Tony Oursler's *Judy* (2004) is an examplary grotesque artwork which deploys technology in order to create a fanciful narrative, but in this artwork technology is deployed as medium, but not as the subject of scrutiny. This chapter asks whether the strategies of the grotesque can directly scrutinise the forward momentum of technology – the dialectic of high and low technology, and *vis a vis* 'high' and 'low' art. Further, can fanciful narratives be deployed with a sense of humour to actually heighten the sense of disquiet?

An artwork entitled *Code Monkey 1.1* challenges and interrogates the issues raised. *Code Monkey 1.1* is an installation artwork comprised of a robotic monkey and a video projection. The robot itself is grotesque, abject and creepy, and as such it is formally critical of a high-tech design style. The technological functionality/instrumentality that the piece does have is unnerving precisely because the piece is so abject. The monkey is also easily anthropomorphised to carry fanciful narratives. Viewers experience what might be called a dissonance of cognitions, where they are simultaneously repulsed by how the robot looks and it's narcissistic behaviour, but they are also likely to find it cute, funny and endearing.

Chapter 2 investivgates the notion of subjectivity, which is central to understanding the interrelationships between humans and technological machines. I will focus on the intersection between power and knowledge. While the first chapter delineated a broad strategy of bastardising technology in order to be critical about it, in the remaining three chapters I will investigate the limits and paradoxes that are inherent to this approach. In this chapter, my key interest is how art practice can be critical of power relations, whilst operating from inside those very same structures – what I call the paradox of complicity.

This chapter commences by outlining Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* as a key treatise, because it is seminal in positing the collapse of a singular notion of absolute moral authority. I compare this with Roland Barthes' proposal that the author of a creative work, similarly, cannot lay claim to absolute authority over it's meaning. Michel Foucault's work is also crucial because it argues for the total inseparability of power and knowledge, with his neologism 'power-knowledge'. In order to understand technological formations of power-knowledge in a cultural context, I will also examine Marshall McLuhan's seminal work in media studies. Whilst highly influential, McLuhan's mantra that 'the medium is the message' is criticised here as problematic due to it's technological determinism - a position which is incompatible with poststucturalist thought which allows for multiple (and sometimes conflicting) meanings. I therefore return to the Foucauldian framework of power-knowledge, and contrast it with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's framework of the 'machinic' - which describes the interrelationships between biological and technological machines as evolutive and collective. These frameworks are key because, unlike McLuhan's work, they do allow for multiple and conflicting subject positions.

The key practical case studies I investigate are modalities of art practice that share the cluster of *ideological* concerns highlighted above, but which do *not* focus on technology. I identify a chasm in which the canonised art movements that best exemplify a scrutiny of hegemonic power relations predominantly *ignore* the role of technology, and conversely the canonised art practices in which technology *is* the focus are usually framed in a manner that does not adequately address the issue of subjectivity. I wish to learn from two art movements which attempted to systematically address the issue of subjectivity and power relations, but which failed to achieve their ideological goals – to learn from these failures and then apply this knowledge in a technological context.

The conceptual art movement of the 1960s is crucial because of its criticality about the institutional power structures (galleries, museums), and their propogation of the ideologies of 'permanence' and 'commodification'. The key reason for investigating the conceptual art movement is because the movement claimed to reject 'permanence and 'commodification', but conceptual artists still relied on galleries and museums to show their work, and the *documentation* of these works would become permanent artefacts which hold a high commodity value.

The ideological failure of conceptual art is compared to the failures inherent in Nicholas Bourriaud's more recent framework of relational aesthetics. Bourriaud claims that art facilitates 'conviviality' in order to create 'microtopias' (small, localised versions of the 'utopia'). This framework also fails ideologically, because these convivial encounters occur predominantly for the art elite, and in practice (as with the utopia) someone will always be left out. Although I highlight the failures of Bourriaud's framework, there are artists labelled as part of that canon who do cohesively address hegemonic power structures, but in a manner that is more subtle and nuanced than the framework itself allows. I draw particular attention to the practice of (the so-called 'relational' artist) Maurizio Cattelan, illustrating how self-reflexivity and humour can be deployed to create artworks which acknowledge an inescapable complicity with hegemonic structures, but which also maintain a level of criticality about these same structures.

The practical case studies cited in this chapter do not predominantly focus on the role of technology, but they do share the same cluster of ideological concerns that underpin formations of power-knowledge which are enabled by technology. This chapter concludes by asking how self-reflexivity and humour can be deployed to create an artwork which retains a theoretical focus on subjectivity but has a practical focus on technology?

An artwork entitled *School of Fine Arts* challenges and interrogates the issues raised. *School of Fine Arts* configures two robotic entities and a video loop into an installation that is reminiscent of an office environment. The work creates complex, multiple and conflicting subject relations between the elements that comprise it. The title of the

work clearly locates an element of autobiography, making the piece self-reflexively critical about an institutional stucture (art school) whilst remaining paradoxically complicit with it.

Chapter 3 investigates the notion of the glitch, and how it relates to ideas about performance. Firstly, to understand the technological glitch, we need to understand the physicality of recorded media - that data is encoded onto a physical surface (eg the surface of a CD, the hard disk of a computer), and that the changes to that physical surface will cause changes in the playback of the media. In this research, the glitch is employed in a broader cultural sense, rather than solely and specifically referring to technological malfunction. The glitch is identified as a slippage – it is a concrete example of what Deleuze and Guttari refer to as 'deterritorialisation'. The glitch, as I employ it, is a valuable theoretical notion because it can encompass slippages in formal qualities (as with glitches in electronic music), but also slippages in meaning.

I will also investigate Jon McKenzie's expanded framework for 'performance'. McKenzie's framework encompasses the term in two senses that are prescient to this research: a cultural sense (for example a theatrical performance), and a technological sense (for example a high-performance car). In either sense of the word, 'performance' assesses the extent that something or someone behaves in the way they are supposed to. Performance, in an expanded sense of the term, is about success and failure, dominance and subjugation. As such, McKenzie describes performance as a stratum of the Foucauldian notion of power-knowledge, and he claims that, in an expanded sense, 'performance' will displace the Foucauldian notion of 'discipline'.

A machine that glitches is *low performance* in a technological sense, but it can be *high performance* in a cultural sense. I will trace a trajectory of artists who deploy the glitch as a key modality of practice - case studies are drawn from experimental film, video art and electronic music. In its idiomatic usage, the term 'glitch' usually refers to unintentional outcomes, but these case studies highlight how the glitch can be a desired/intended outcome that simulates malfunction. This leads me to redefine the glitch as any slippage - either intentional or unintentional. These slippages can be purely formal (such as slippages in the aural/visual qualities of audio/video), but they can also be semantic - changes in meaning occur when these slippages take place.

The performance art tradition of exploring the physical limits of one's own body has obvious parallels to the exploration of technological limits through the glitch. The visceral performance artworks of the 1960s and 1970s - and also more recent technologically mediated visceral works such as Stelarc's *Ping Body* - emphasise live, bodily experience. The primary concern of this investigation, however, is performance practices that emphasise theatricality and mediatisation as the central concern. Robert Rauschenberg's performance practice will be highlighted, since his hybrid of performance art and theatre (as well as dance and other disciplines) provides a clear example of creating intertextual slippages of meaning by layering together seemingly incongruous images. In other more recent technologically mediated performances, slippages (of both formal qualities and meaning) are aestheticised and highlighted. One key recent case study is provided here – Avatar Body *Collision*'s *Trip the Light Fantastic* (2006) - a cyberformance artwork/project. This piece *highlights* the subterfuge of mediatised performance through live online theatre. In this project the audience experiences (and even becomes complicit in) the performative processes of deterritorialisation, and then reterritorialisation.

This chapter concludes by asking how technologically enabled cultural performance can embody an oscillating tension between high and low performance (in a sense that integrates both cultural and technological meanings of the term)? Further, the chapter asks if it is possible to achieve this in a manner that scrutinises mediatised representations of identity more closely, in relation to mainstream media in a pop-cultural context?

A performance by Anaesthesia Associates challenges and interrogates the issues raised. The performances of Anaesthesia Associates are fast-cut live remixes of audio and video sampled from pop-cultural sources. Glitchy low-tech aesthetics (pixellated video filters; compressed and filtered audio) are delivered by technologically complex means (an array of audio and video equipment), creating a tension between high and low performance in a technological sense. Glitches in the formal qualities of the audio and video occur alongside slippages in the meanings embedded in the source samples. Because of the populist material sampled, these performances are also critical of mediatised representations of identity.

Chapter 4 examines the cultural phenomenon and critical possibilities of the mashup. Mashups are cultural products in which two or more preexisting products are combined and juxtaposed to create new and unexpected resonances. I focus on audio mashups in this chapter. Firstly, to locate this cultural phenomenon theoretically, I shall investigate the notion of the simulacrum. Jean Baudrillard famously held the view that 'nothing exists outside of the simulacrum'. Baudrillard's bleak nihlistic position frames the simulacrum as encompassing only external, superficial (subjective) relations between signs, and does not allow for any objectivity. In an interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari's work, Brian Massumi reconfigures the simulacra to encompass all relations – both objective and subjective. Redefinining the simulacra to encompass all relations, I argue, makes the term far too vague to be of any use. Even if the simulacrum as Baudrillard describes it is a problematic concept, it is still more useful to have a term which has a clearly defined scope. Further, even though a singular, absolute view of reality is naïve, the realm of art pertains to creating passages of experience – signs point to phenomena in life which are *experientially real*. The subjectivity of art needs to be underpinned to a certain degree by a sense of something tangible.

In order to understand the experiential implications of living in a world of endlessly replicating signs, I turn to Foucault's notion of the heterotopia. Foucault provides a lucid theoretical framework for understanding displacement - the heterotopia is a space which is simultaneously mythic and real, and which challenges a linear understanding of time. As opposed to the 'fundmentally unreal' utopia – the heterotopia is described as a real space, which exists primarily to contest other real spaces. Foucault's ideas are especially applicable where he describes the heterotopia as capable of justaposing several real sites that are, in and of themselves, incompatible (giving the library as an example) - a notion which is clearly applicable to the cultural phenomenon of the mashup.

The state of transition where we experience these displacements can be described as liminal – a state which is characterised by ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy. A key problem exists, however, in that we live in a hyperreal cultural climate in which, as Jon McKenzie notes, liminality is the norm. If the liminal state is now the norm, it begs the question of whether heterotopias still actually function to contest established 'reals'. Unlike McKenzie, however, I do not believe that this normative dimension to liminality is a fault. The core issue is actually one of *assimilation*. Artists will always try to contest established norms of cultural practice (it is, in fact, their role to do so), but these liminal strategies will also be subject to a continual process of assimilation into a canon of accepted practice. Since this normative dimension to liminality is not actually a fault, the heterotopic state of displacement does indeed function to contest real sites. I employ the term 'informational delirium' to describe the current cultural climate. This climate is proliferated by cultural products which reconfigure other cultural products, and in which liminal cultural practices are perpetually assimilated. In this climate signs refer to a reality which is not absolute, but yet our experience of it is tangible.

Turning to practical case studies, I will investigate the history of appropriation, sampling and remix/mashup practices, focussing predominantly upon this tradition within music. It is not a thorough history, but rather it denotes a few key markers in a trajectory towards the current cultural climate - in which these tactics have become the norm. The strategies of appropriation in visual arts practice are compared to those of musical works which deploy sampling, in order to establish how mashup/sampling strategies can operate in an art context. Nicholas Bourriaud's framework of 'postproduction' is outlined and crucially criticised here for formulating well-established traditions within music (and in visual arts) as 'new trends' in the field of fine arts.

The strategies of the mashup are not located as new and original in their own right. Instead, the normative dimension to these practices is highlighted. The mashup is treated as a well-established cultural strategy which can itself be deconstructed and recontextualised. Mashups are emblematic of the cultural climate of informational delirium for two key reasons: firstly because they are disorientating and heterotopic in their own right, and secondly because mashups are not all that new, and they have been assimilated into mainstream pop-cultural practices. Chapter 4 concludes by asking how the *strategies and implications* of mashup production can be recontextualised in an installation artwork that reflects upon the nuances of informational delirium?

An artwork entitled *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0* challenges and interrogates the issues raised. *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0* is an installation artwork that is reminiscent of the dysfunctional aftermath of an abandoned party. The piece is critical about the very notion of originality, through the conflation of multiple preexisting recordings. Recontextualising audio mashups into an installation artwork, however, shifts the experience. *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0* reflects upon the aftermath of this mode of creative expression, which has been assimilated into the mainstream almost as soon as it gained cultural currency. The fun playfulness to be expected on a dancefloor is reconfigured into an experience of delirious pathos.

Chapter 1

Low *techne*: bastardising media

Psychiatric Assessment

Code Monkey 1.1's need to spend hours playing with a closed circuit video projection of his own image revolves around a pattern of grandiosity, his need for admiration, and his sense of entitlement. He often feels overly important - he exaggerates and giggles/gibbers about his achievements, and he accepts (often demands) praise and admiration. He may be overwhelmed with fantasies involving unlimited success, power, love, or beauty and feel that he can only be understood by others who are, like him, superior in some aspect of life.

There is a sense of entitlement, of being more deserving than others based solely on his superiority. These symptoms, however, are a result of an underlying sense of inferiority and can be seen as overcompensation. Because of this, he is often envious and even angry of others who have more, receive more respect or attention, or otherwise steal away the spotlight.

Code Monkey *1.1* has not sought treatment for his condition. Since he does not actually acknowledge and accept this condition, his treatment options are limited. Some research has found long term insight-oriented therapy to be effective, but convincing *Code Monkey 1.1* to commit to this treatment would be a major obstacle.

Low *techne*: bastardising media

This chapter investigates the notion of *techne*, from which the term 'technology' is derived. Martin Heidegger identifies that the term's original Greek meaning highlights an inseperable link between art and technology – in its original usage *techne* denoted 'bringing into being' in both a functional, instrumental sense (how we usually understand technology), but also in an aesthetic sense (bringing ideas into being). This link is foregrounded by the spectrum of contemporary art practices which deploy emergent technologies as both medium and subject. The term is thus important critically, because it highlights the deep history behind how art and technology are interrelated.

Firstly, I make preliminary delineations about what is happening in the cultural sphere where art and technology meet. A significant number of artists use technology in order to critique the sociopolitical implications of technological progress - the 'forward momentum of technology'. Some artists do this by 'reverse engineering' the normal uses of technology – decompiling the semiotic codes of existing technological products to make new cultural products. I use the term 'bastard media' to refer to the illegitimate cultural children of technological progress – to specifically demarcate those artworks which deploy technology in order to critique it's forward momentum.

By employing this phrase, I wish to emphasise the assumed dialectic between 'low and high'. Since the etymological origins of *techne* encompass both technology and creative practice, the term is highly relevant critically. It foregrounds a parallel – that an *artistic* scrutiny of the dialectic between 'high' and 'low' *technology* doubles as a scrutiny of the dialectic between 'high' and 'low' in *art practice itself*.

Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass* (1915-23) provides a seminal historical entry point for this investigation into art practice, because of its ecstatic mechanistic allegory. Selected works from the fluxus movement are also examined which deploy technology in a somewhat dysfunctional and playful manner: Jean Tinguely's *Homage to New York* (1960) and Nam June Paik's *Robot K-456* (1964, in collaboration with Shuya Abe). These artworks are compared to recent works by Stelarc and Eduardo Kac, which maintain a more serious tone in their investigation of the nexus between art and technology. All of these artworks address technology directly as subject. Some can be identified as celebrations of technology, and others are bastardisations that are critical of its forward momentum.

The above works - which are quite literally about the technology - are contrasted with the strategies of grotesque art, in which the emphasis is upon fanciful scenes of eccentricity. Case studies of artworks by Tony Oursler are enabled by technology (using video projections and timing circuitry), but unlike the prior examples, the technology itself is not the subject of the artworks. A key question investigated, then, is how the tactics of the grotesque can be applied to create an artwork that engages the viewer on both levels simultaneously, constructing a fanciful narrative but also maintaining a criticality about the forward momentum of the technology from which the artwork is constructed?

This chapter concludes with *Code Monkey 1.1*, an installation artwork which deploys technology (robotics, audio, and projected video) in a grotesque manner (a constructed scene of fancy – a narcissistic robotic monkey). *Code Monkey 1.1* creates an uncomfortable dissonance of cognitions.[7] The artwork is built using high-technology, but it is ambivalent about high-tech aesthetics - it is critical of the very mechanisms that bring it into being.

The piece also generates a dissonance of cognitions at a narrative level, by deploying tactics of the grotesque. The robot is a piece of technology, but it can also be anthropomorphisised - interpreted through it's quasi-human characteristics. In an encounter with the artwork, viewers can be repulsed by the robot (it is grotesque, abject, creepy, and it behaves narcissistically), but they can also be attracted to it (after spending some time with it, most people find it cute, funny and endearing) – sometimes both at the same time.

The etymology and history of '*techne'*

For the Greeks, technology and art were closely intertwined. This relationship has not simply been lost in the common understanding of the term 'technology', but rather, the emphasis has shifted from the Greek understanding to a modern focus on the instrumental or functional qualities of technology. The media theorist R. L. Rutsky asserts that high technology equipment can no longer be discussed in terms of its functionality alone. Referring specifically to a "high-tech design style", he notes that the modernist ideal of functionalist form has been abandoned in favour of an emphasis on the aesthetics of a high technology object.[8] The aesthetic metaphor buried within the phrase 'state of the art', for example, is often overlooked by the phrase's common usage, where it simply refers to highly developed technology.[9]

The English word 'technology' derives from the Greek word *technologia*, combining *techne* and *logia*. *Techne* is generally translated as "art, skill, or craft", but the term has a far broader scope than it's usual association with technology alone. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger claims that

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[7] The notion of 'cognitive dissonance' originates in the field of social psychology, and it refers to the discomforting feeling of experiencing two conflicting ideas (dissonant cognitions) at the same time.

[8] Rutsky, 1999.

[9] Ibid.

> "[the] revealing that brings forth truth into the splendo[u]r of radiant appearance was also called *techne*...There was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called techne. The *poiesis* of the fine arts was also called *techne*".[10]

Logia is commonly translated as "sayings", "words" or "discourses". Even a cursory glance at the etymology of 'technology' emphasises the inseparability of technology and cultural production. The broader context of Heidegger's position on *techne* has been widely debated. While his etymological approach re-presented a way of viewing technology as 'revealing' and 'bringing forth truth', this insight did not shrink from his embittered vision of a society driven by the 'will to technicity'. The cultural theorist Arthur Kroker describes Heidegger as

> "[a] futurist without faith, a metaphysician without the will to believe, a philosopher opposed to reason, [...] the perfect representative of the technological trajectory at the outer edge of its parabolic curvature through the dark spaces of the post-human future".[11]

It is tempting to conflate Heidegger's philosophy with his questionable personal and political life.[12] *Ad hominem* arguments generally produce fallacious thinking, but it is worth considering the possibility that, given Heidegger's proven duplicity both personally and politically, we might infer a duplicitous approach philosophically. In other words, did Heidegger use etymology to deliberately shift the meanings of terms depending on the argument he was making at the time?

For example, Iain Thompson parodies Heidegger's complicity with - but later denouncement of - Nazism thus:

> "It's as if I were to say, during the Bush years: "We must all support the war on terror!" But then I went on to suggest that by "war" I mean "*polemos*", the underlying tension of opposites that shapes our sense of all things, and by "terror" I mean "*aidos*", the awesome and terrible feeling one has when confronted with a reality too large for the mind to grasp conceptually. Finally, I could say, "on" means that we have to understand the former in terms of the latter..."[13]

Thompson's position - which I agree with - maintains that Heidegger shifted the meanings of terms in order to leverage publicity for his philosophy off the political momentum that Nazism was gaining at the time, rather than vice versa. Thompson's position is not an *ad hominem* critique of Heidegger, it implies the deeper issue of strategic and deliberate duplicity.[14] I do not, therefore, quite agree with Kroker's depiction of Heidegger as without 'faith' or 'the will to believe'. Heidegger's thinking is not really underpinned by belief (or an embittered lack thereof), it is underpinned by a motivation to uncover how *techne* can be used to assert sociopolitical power. His complicity with the sociopolitical power of *techne* is important to highlight here, since I will look more closely at the notion of complicity in the interrelationship between technology and societal power in chapter 2.

I cannot, however, dismiss the accuracy of Heidegger's etymological study of *techne* - that the Greek term encompasses poetic creation as well as skill and craft. Nor can I negate the influence[15] of his embittered vision of society's 'will to technicity', irrespective of any questionable motivations behind his formulations. Following Kroker then, even if Heidegger's cynicism towards technology were duplicitous, this very duplicity about technology and sociopolitical power is presicely what makes Heidegger such an interesting figure - especially with regard to the potential for technology itself to be fascist. For the moment I will look more generally at how to frame *cultural* responses to the forward momentum of technology in society.

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[10] Heidegger, 1978, p. 339.

[11] Kroker, 2002.

[12] As Kroker notes, some critics fault him for taking advantage of the pre-war fascist upsurge in Germany to gain a university rectorship - a betrayal of his philosophical mentor Husserl. Other critics are completely resistant to Heidegger's thought, simply because he was complicit with German Fascism at all - even if only for a period.

[13] This informal comment was made online by the user 'iaint', who identifies himself as the published Heidegger commentator Iain Thompson - author of *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (2005). His comment was made in the context of a response to Carlin Romano's review of Emmanuel Faye's *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism Into Philosophy.* Faye's book contains what is essentially a flawed 'book burning' argument, concluding that due to Heidegger's complicity with German Fascism, publishers should cease publishing the philosopher's work, and universities should stop teaching it. Thompson's online comment was highly critical of both Faye's book and Romano's review of it. The review and subsequent discussion thread can be accessed at <http://chronicle.com/article/Heil-Heidegger-/48806/>. (Note that for clarity and consistency I have italicised the Greek words, and also added inverted commas around "polemos" - these were missing from Thompson's informal online post.)

[14] It may seem tangential to discuss the slippery duplicity of Heidegger as a figure in philosophy, but it is actually very important. Heidegger's philosophy needs to be seen in the sociopolitical context from which he was writing. I am not interested in his poilitical leanings *per se*, but in the extent to which his etymological re-definitions are framed in order to exert sociopolitical power (and how in Heidegger's case these exertions are in fact moving targets). This is crucial to establish at the outset, since I will go on to examine (in chapter 2) the interrelationship between technology and power.

[15] In chapter 2, for example, I shall investigate Felix Guattari's notion of the machinic, which revisits Heidegger's analysis of *techne*.

Reverse engineering and the bastardisation of technological media

In computer software terminology, 'reverse engineering' refers to the decompiling and disassembly of redistributable codes. Kroker appropriates the term to describe a similar process in the digital arts. Emergent technologies create semiotic codes that dictate the forward momentum of a technologically mediated society. According to Kroker, these semiotic codes are being disrupted by the appropriation of these same technologies to make art. The genre of new media art "reanimates a system which is dying of its lack of creative energy with the repressed memory of that which has been excluded, both from its analog past and its electronic future".[16]

Kroker uses the term 'new media' to denote emergent technologies, and 'new media art' to denote the cultural practices that utilise these same technologies to make art. It is worth noting, however, that the term 'new media art' is commonly disliked amongst cultural producers who use technologies that are emergent.[17] This is largely because it does not actually inform discourse in any meaningful way. The term 'new media' is frequently used to describe video art for example, but video technologies have been used in art since the 1960s.[18] While there has always been new mediums invented throughout the history of cultural production, emphasising the *newness* of each technology does not actually enhance discourse about these practices - labeling emergent practices as simply 'new' does not help us to clarify the ways in which these practices actually operate.

Rather than using 'new media', or even 'digital media',[19] I shall first highlight the hybridity of current practices in the field with the term 'hybrid media'[20] - encompassing artworks that deploy digital technologies, analogue technologies, and other (non-technological) sculptural and performative elements.

Kroker's emphasis on 'newness' does not detract from the essence of his argument. He draws a clear distinction between 'new media', which is hyped to create a forward momentum toward enhanced perception, and the 'new media art' which is critical of the "numbing" effect of enhanced perception, the numbing effect that mass media technologies are best at.[21] According to Kroker, cultural production that deploys technologies which are emergent or relatively new at the time constitutes, essentially, a critique of the forward momentum of technology.

This is not always the case - if a cultural producer uses new technology, they do not *necessarily* offer a critique of the forward momentum of that technology.[22] For the moment, however, it will suffice to concur that a *significant* number of producers do indeed offer this critique (and I am one of them). Since 'new' is a term that quickly dates and becomes a misnomer, and 'hybrid' is a somewhat neutral term, I shall use the term 'bastard media' to categorise a specific subset of hybrid media artworks - the illegitimate children of technological advancement. 'Bastard media' refers to cultural practices which hybridise digital (and other) processes, but which do so with the goal of being critical about technological advancement in the artworks that ensue.

By coining the term 'bastard media', I also wish to emphasise the assumed dialectic between 'low' and 'high'. Recall that *techne* encompasses both technology and art. The dialectic between 'low and 'high' significantly infiltrates discourse surrounding both technology ('low tech' versus 'high tech') and art ('high' or 'fine' art, and conversely what is disdainfully described as 'low' art - populist cultural production). I will now turn to a practical discussion of cultural practice, investigating how (or in fact whether) a selection of key artworks scrutinise the forward momentum of technology.

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16 Kroker, 2004.

17 In New Zealand, for example, Janine Randerson writes that "[t]he term 'new media' has become widely accepted to denote computer-based artforms"; that "new media art has lost it's youth" but that "it survives as a contested term in theoretical discourse" (2008, p. 90).

18 Most sources claim that video art began when Nam June Paik used a Sony Portapak to film Pope John Paul VI's procession through New York in the autumn of 1965, and subsequently screening the footage the same day at a cafe in Greenwich Village. These origins are disputed by some sources - citing Wolf Vostell's *Deutscher Ausblick* (1959) (a piece which incorporated a television set), and also Warhol's underground screening of video work mere weeks before Paik's project.

19 To give a local example, Lissa Mitchell (collections manager at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), citing Christiane Paul, distinguishes between artworks which deploy digital media as a tool (such as digital photography) and artworks which use digital media as a *medium* (such as networked art) (Mitchell, 2008, p. 62). Again the term 'digital' is too restrictive to accurately describe the practices investigated in this research - which may use digital tools to create hybrid outcomes.

20 I first started using the term 'hybrid media' to refer to an integrated cluster of technical services that are offered by my production comapy Stray Media - which I launched together with Michelle Hughes in 2009. Whilst at that time I believed that this was a fairly novel usage, I do not claim to have coined the term. There were a certainly a number of commercial operations with 'hybrid media' in their company names, but in 2009 'hybrid media' was not in common usage as a term to refer to the mixing of digital media processes. I have since discovered that the Australian artist Adam Donovan used the term in an art context when he published his website (<http://www.adamdonovan.net>) in 2007 (and there may be others too).

21 Kroker, 2004.

22 For example, Tony Oursler's work - which I shall discuss shortly – uses technologies such as video projections and timing circuitry, but his artworks do not directly scrutinise the role of these technologies in bringing his art into being.

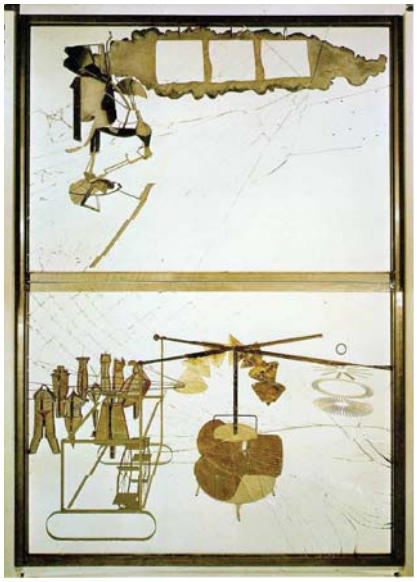

Fig. 1.1: Marcel Duchamp, *The Large Glass*[26] (1915-23). Mixed media.

The mechanomorphic[23] artworks attributed to the dada period are commonly cited as an early reference point in the history of machines in art. The key innovation of these early works was the mixing of implied bodies with mechanical schematics, to provide a template for investigations into the relationship between humans and machines. In works such as Francis Picabia's *Singulier Idéal* (1915), or Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass* (1915-23, fig. 1.1) there is an implicit sexualised rhythm – the body is liberated by an ecstatic set of capabilities, which it receives through the repetitions of machinery. Mechanomorphic works can be understood as early expressions of posthumanism,[24] offering a rigourous scrutiny of subjectivity that challenges the modernist existential concept of the singular individual, liberating the body from linear time, and resulting in a spiral of displacement – an escalation of power that Jean Baudrillard described as 'pornographic'.[25]

It is difficult to understate the importance of Duchamp's *The Large Glass* in the history of art that foregrounds technology as its subject matter. This artwork is so extremely iconic and so widely discussed that it is almost impossible to decide which key points to highlight here. A thorough analysis of the varying interpretations of *The Large Glass* is well outside of the scope of this research, but I shall provide a brief overview here to put this artwork into context.

Duchamp invented an approach which he called "playful physics" – in which he assumes the role of an amateur scientist, playing with the physical properties of the media that he was using, but also to a degree parodying the strategies found in the science of physics.[27] This strategy of playful physics found its culmination in Duchamp's use of glass and shadow effects in *The Large Glass*.[28]

Early critics[29] widely construed *The Large Glass* as depicting a 'love machine' – a mechanistic allegory for the union of male and female. A 'bride' is presented in the upper panel, and nine 'bachelors' or 'malic moulds' appear to one side of the lower panel. In the domain of the bachelors, there is also a chocolate grinder[30] – a representation of the "desire motor, consequence of the lubricious gearing".[31] Needless to say, Duchamp's art does not literally deploy machines themselves (in this artwork[32]), but he figuratively depicts these mechanisms - in relation to one another, frozen in time, incomplete.

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[23] The American psychologist Abraham Maslow also claims to have coined the term mechanomorphic himself, playfully categorising the mechanomorphic as the opposite of the anthropomorphic, thus highlighting his view that behaviourist psychology reductively treats living organisms as machines (Maslow, 1968, p. 244). Maslow is critical of both Freudian and behaviourist psychology, and he is most famous for his 'hierarchy of human needs', which has become a cornerstone of modern humanistic psychology.

[24] The term posthuman describes sentient beings who are considered to have developed beyond what would be normally categorised as human, especially by making artificial adjustments to their own form or capabilities. The term is commonly associated with the exhibition *Post Human* first seen at the FAE Musée d'Art Contemporain in Lausanne in June 1992 (see Deitch, 1992), and the term is also notably associated with the cyborg theory of Donna Haraway (Haraway, 1991), and with the work of the American intellectual Francis Fukuyama (Fukuyama, 2002).

[25] According to Baudrillard, pornography (as opposed to seduction) fixes the subject's position as powerless to control, conceal or nuance anything. Baudrillard applies his notion of pornography perhaps most notably in describing the spectacular escalations of symbolic power that occur during wartime, in essays such as *War Porn.* (Note the technological facet of wartime displays of power – an issue to which I shall return in Chapter 2.)

[26] The full title of this famous Duchamp work is *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, but the abbreviated title *The Large Glass* is commonly used for the sake of simplicity (as I have done here).

[27] The Duchampian concept of playful physics, coined in his own writing and notes) undoubtedly alludes to the French writer Alfred Jarry's notion of pataphysics (literally 'that which is above metaphysics', or even more literally 'that which is above that which is after physics'). The term could also possibly allude to Friedrich Nietzsche's *A Gay Science* (first published in 1882), which I shall discuss in chapter 2, but I do not have the space to entertain that speculation here.

[28] Perloff, 1998.

[29] Arturo Schwarz, for example, articulated this position in his complete catalogue of Duchamp's work, initially published in 1969 (Schwarz, 1969).

[30] This machine appears in two prior paintings: *Chocolate Grinder, No. 1* (1913) and *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2* (1914).

[31] Duchamp cited in Sanouillet and Peterson (Eds.), 1975, p. 39.

[32] The mechanism of a bicycle wheel is notably re-presented in Duchamp's first readymade: Bicycle Wheel (1913).

More recent critics discuss *The Large Glass* as a gesture of ridicule towards art criticism itself. In this interpretation, the 'bride' is taken as allegorical for an artwork, a mysterious and un-knowable figure who is 'stripped bare' by the 'bachelors' who court her. According to the critic Marjorie Perloff, for example, *The Large Glass* "is also a critique of the very criticism it inspires, mocking the solemnity of the explicator who is determined to find *the* key".[33] The art of Duchamp playfully problematises the dialectic between 'high' and 'low' art. Perloff writes from the broader context of an argument for the 'poetics of indeterminacy' in which the artist experiments with open-ended strategies of making: "[a]rt becomes play, endlessly frustrating our longing for certainty."[34] The playfulness of Duchamp's strategies certainly set a precedent that many future artists would follow.

For the purposes of this argument it does not actually matter whether *The Large Glass* is predominantly seen as allegorical of the interrelations of sexual union or those of art criticism itself (or both). Either way it is evident that the artwork ecstatically celebrates (and even fetishises) technology. While Duchamp does challenge the heirarchy of high and low in art, and although his strategies also parody scientific investigation, I reluctantly[35] cannot categorise this artwork as 'bastard media' in it's own right. His work cannot be seen as a bastardisation, because it is not directly critical about the mechanisations described - despite the fact that Duchampian strategies paved the way for later, more critical, investigations into technological progress.

In the 1960s, a number of artists revisited mechanomorphic thematics, but the *destruction* of technology became an important critical mode. The Swiss painter/sculptor Jean Tinguely is especially notable for his dada-esque machines which satirise the rampant consumerism and the overproduction of material goods in industrialised society. His best known project is a work he produced in 1960, *Homage to New York* (hereafter *HTNY*), which was supposed to destroy itself in the sculpture garden of New York's Museum of Modern Art.

On the evening of March 17, 1960, Tinguely allowed the eight metre high sculpture *HTNY* to self destruct. The piece was built in collaboration with the Bell Laboratories research scientist Billy Klüver and the artist Robert Rauschenberg. It was an assemblage consisting of wheels (from bicycles, tricycles and baby carriages), a bath, a piano, a meteorological balloon, bottles, scraps of the American flag, and various other elements – all powered by 15 engines. The mechanism performed for 27 minutes, to an audience of 250 invited guests. In the end, the piece's self-destruction was thwarted by a fireman (who was greeted by a booing crowd), amid concerns for the public's safety.[36] The arch-conservative critic John Canday, writing in the New York Times, outlined how "Mr. Tinguely makes fools of machines while the rest of mankind permits machines to make fools of them. Tinguely's machine" he goes on to say, "wasn't quite good enough, as a machine, to make his point." *HTNY* did not succeed in it's mechanical task, but this artwork did, I believe, succeed in performing it's aesthetic task. It's mechanical failure was an evocative aesthetic success – as evidenced by the impassioned booing with which the audience greeted the firefighter.

HTNY is commonly cited as an antecedent to the rise of both happenings and performance art in 1960s New York, but it is perhaps more poignant here to note Tinguely's core criticality about the role of technology in contemporary society - and the responsibility of artists to address the issue. While the mechanomorphic works of the Dada period ecstatically fetishised technology, Tinguely and other 1960s artists used their work to scrutinise the role of technology in broader social change. *HTNY* is a clear early example of what I have termed 'bastard media'. This artwork hybridises and uses the current technology of the time, but it does so in order to be highly critical of it.

Tinguely's collaboration with Klüver and Rauschenberg was formative in founding the seminal EAT (Experiments in Art and Technology) group, who later mounted numerous projects exploring the intersection between art and technology.[37] A key characteristic of the EAT group is their emphasis on interdisciplinarity. The founding idea was that artists and scientists could work together to investigate the potential for deploying technology to open up new creative possibilities.

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[33] Perloff, 1981, p.34.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Seen in the sociopolitical context of an horrific mechanised war, it may be possible to interpret *The Large Glass* as critical of technology to a certain extent (especially when contrasting the Dadaists with the Futurists of the same period). The evidence of his (innuendo-laden) celebration of technology, however, is far more compelling – the vast majority of interpretations focus upon his fetishisation of technology (and these interpretations derive from Duchamp's own notes on the artwork). Even if there was a degree of criticality about technology also in operation (Duchamp's work is, after all, riddled with paradox), it is outside the scope of this research to establish that level of nuance here.

[36] Description from *Art: Homage to New York*?, a review (author not identified) in Time magazine, 28 Mar 1960, accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,826163,00.html>. Tinguely's later piece *Study for an End of the World No. 2* (1962) did successfully destroy itself - detonating for an audience in the desert outside Las Vegas.

[37] I will discuss Rauschenberg's collaborations through EAT and his performance work in chapter 3.

Fig. 1.2: Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe, *Robot K-456* (1964). Robotics.

Since my own new artwork that this chapter contextualises is a robotics piece (*Code Monkey 1.1*), I shall turn for a moment to the origins of robotics in art practice. The Canadian artist Eduardo Kac traces the history of robotics in art to three landmark works: Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe's *Robot K-456* (1964, fig. 1.2), Tom Shannon's *Squat* (1966) and Edward Ihnatowicz's *The Senster* (1969-1970).[38] Kac's astute research addresses the historical importance of these three landmark projects (remote control, cybernetic entities, and autonomous behaviour), and he also elequently discusses the problematics associated with defining the term 'robotics'.[39] For the purposes of this discussion, I wish to specifically emphasise the work of Nam June Paik here.

Kac notes Paik's sense of humour and playful approach to robotics - identifying that Paik uses robots to caricature human traits, rather than to emphasise fear (of lost employment, of erased identity). In Paik's video *Tribute to John Cage* (1973), he declares that "my robot is there to increase the work for people because we need five people to make it move for ten minutes, you see. Ha ha." Paik, like Tinguely, bastardises technology in order to be critical about it.

Fig. 1.3: Nam June Paik, *The First Catastrophe of the Twenty-first Century* (1982). Performance (staged destruction of *Robot K-456*).

In 1982, Paik removed his remote-controlled *Robot K-456* from his retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art and guided it up the sidewalk along Madison Avenue. The incident was staged so that, while crossing the avenue, Paik's robot was struck by a car and fell to the ground (fig. 1.3). Paik declared this staged "accident" to represent

> "…a 'catastrophe of technology in the twentieth century', stating that the lesson to be gained from these tentative technological steps is that 'we are learning to cope with it'."[40]

As the Guggenheim Museum curator John Hanhardt expands,

> "Paik's staged event drew attention to the fragility of humankind and of technology itself. Twenty years after his first experiments with the television set, this street performance was made for television: after the performance, he was interviewed by television news reports; Paik took this playful moment as an opportunity to recall the need to understand technology and make sure that it does not control us."[41]

Paik had a well-documented affiliation with the fluxus movement. Fluxus – a name deriving from the Latin for 'flow' – refers to an international, interdisciplinary group of artists who aimed to turn the tide upon the elitism of art and to endorse broader accessibility.[42] The sense of playfulness and humour that we see in Paik's work is central to the tenets of the fluxus movement.

In Paik's work, then, we see a tension between high and low *techne* – in striking a playful balance between 'high' and 'low' technology, he also *vis a vis* foregrounds the tension between conceptions of 'high' and 'low' in art itself.

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38 Kac, 1997.

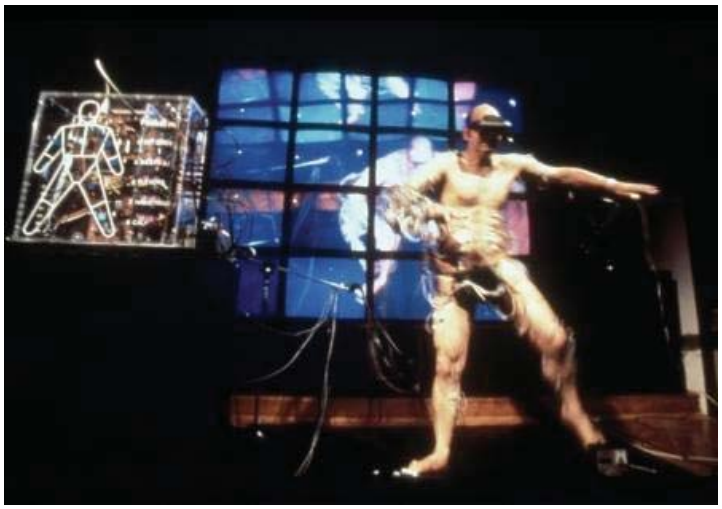
39 Kac traces mythological definitions to the Greek story of Galatea – a statue who was brought to life by Aphrodite, and to the Jewish legend of the clay anthropoid Golem. He cites Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and other literary origins, including Karel Capek's play *R.U.R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots, 1922) which coined the word "robot" (the term was derived from the Czech word *robota*, which refers to drudgerous or laborious work). He also notes that industrial robots date back to the 1960s, and the industrial definition encompasses machines/manipulators that are programmed to perform a specific task. It is important to note here that this industrial definition does not necessitate artificial intelligence or autonomy.

40 Cited in Hanhardt, no date given.

41 Hanhardt, no date given.

42 George Maciunas' 1963 Fluxus manifesto declares the aim to "promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art [...] to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilletantes and professionals".

Two recent case studies



The work of the Australian performance artist Stelarc has a far more serious tone than *HTNY* and *Robot K-456*, dramatically emphasising the ambiguities that arise when biological and technological bodies collide. *Ping Body* (1996, fig. 1.4)[43] was an internet actuated and uploaded performance in which the artist's body was wired to move involuntarily: his movements were triggered by impulses that were generated by the activity of the internet itself, by "the external ebb and flow of data".[44] While Stelarc's *Ping Body* performances exploit the mediatising nature of the internet as a medium, they also probe deeper, investigating the very nature of extreme bodily experience.

Fig. 1.4: Stelarc, *Ping Body* (1996). Performance.

Stelarc himself protests that his work operates entirely outside of the "metaphysical distinctions of soul-body or mind-brain".[45] Brian Massumi explicates this notion, identifying that Stelarc is not interested in communicating concepts *about* the body, but rather, to experience the "body *as* concept".[46] Writing on an earlier series of Stelarc's works, the *Suspension* works (1978-1985),[47] Massumi emphasises Stelarc's proposition that the body is actually obsolete. By suspending the body-object in these works, Stelarc directly targets the generality of the body.[48] The body as an object is implicated in a collision between the physical and the virtual.

A great deal of theory in the 1990s discussed prosthesis - the ways in which organic humans connect to machines and become cyborg.[49] In the work of Stelarc, however, we do not see a simple scenario of prosthesis. Bodies and technologies are *extended* rather than substituted.[50] Felix Guattari would describe the scenario as a machinic heterogenesis: humans are part of a much larger network of interconnected processual machines. I will return to this notion in Chapter 2.

The key question investigated here is whether Stelarc's practice actually critiques technological progress or affirms it. I do not believe Stelarc's work is a critique. Rather, it echoes the approach of dada/mechanomorphic works such as *The Large Glass*, explicitly *celebrating* the progression of technology, by allowing his own body to become extended by it. Stelarc's own voice makes this point perfectly clear:

> "Technology has speeded up the body. The body now attains planetary-escape velocity, has to function in zero-G and in greater time-space continuums. For me this demonstrates the biological inadequacy of the body. […] [W]e can't continue designing technology for the body because that technology begins to usurp and outperform the body. Perhaps it's now time to design the body to match it's machines. We somehow have to turbo-drive the body-implant and augment the brain. We have to provide ways of connecting it to the cyber-network."[51]

Stelarc's work is certainly a hybridisation of technology, but his ecstatic celebration of the forward momentum of technology means that his art practice is not bastard media.

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43 *Ping Body* was first performed 10th April, 1996 at Artspace, Sydney, Australia, as part of the Digital Aesthetics Conference, and it has been performed a number of times since.

44 Accessed from the official website of the artist: <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/pingbody/index.html>.

45 Stelarc, 1994 and 1995, cited in Massumi, 2002, p. 89.

46 Massumi, 2002, p. 89 (italics author's own).

47 *Sitting/Swaying event for rock suspension* (1980), *City Suspension* (1985), *Pull Out/Pull Up Event for Self-Suspension* (1980), *Event for Lateral Suspension* (1978), *Seaside Suspension: Event for Wind and Waves* (1981).

48 Massumi, 2002, p. 100.

49 Donna Haraway's influential cyborg theory seminally instigated this field of inquiry (1991).

50 Massumi, 2002, p. 126.

51 Stelarc, interviewed by Paolo Atzori and Kirk Woolford in 1998. Accessed at <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/stelarc/a29-extended_body.html>.

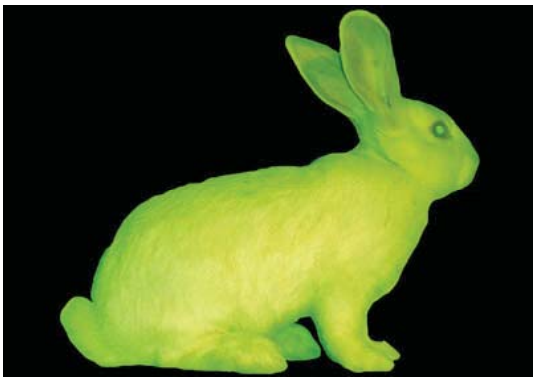

Fig. 1.5**:** Eduardo Kac**,** *GFP Bunny* (2000). Transgenic artwork.

In 2000, Eduardo Kac announced the birth of Alba, a genetically modified rabbit that is the world's first transgenic artwork (fig. 1.5). Under normal environmental light, Alba is a white albino rabbit with pink eyes, but under specific lighting conditions she glows flourescent green.[52] While genetic engineering is a notably different field of technology from robotics, it is interesting to note Kac's specific focus on the ability of an artwork to provoke dialogue. Kac identifies three stages to the GFP Bunny project:

Phase 1: Alba's Birth
Phase 2: Ongoing debate (commencing with public announcement)
Phase 3: Alba goes home to become Kac's household pet

Kac clearly locates the public discussion and dialogue as part of the art project.[53] *GFP Bunny* is a piece that has been specifically tailored to be critical about the deployment of technology (the ethics of genetic engineering in this case).

Like Stelarc, Kac extends a biological body through technology. Unlike Stelarc, however, Kac directly addresses the political and ethical implications of technological development. *GPF Bunny* achieves its criticality by embracing and deploying these very technologies – his experiment is functional/instrumental as a scientific project, and you could expect to see counterpart experiments framed as applied science. This is what makes Kac's artistic project a bastard. It is an illegitimate child of a scientific strategy - deploying that strategy in an art context in order to critically reflect upon it. GPF Bunny is an open-ended artwork, it allows the audience to reach their own conclusions, but it facilitates the airing of critical positions.

The antecedents cited from the fluxus movement (*HTNY* and *Robot K-456*) also deployed technologies that were cutting edge in their own time, but these earlier projects were arguably more playful in their approach. Importantly - and unlike Kac's work - these 1960s projects address the *dialectic between low and high technology* by embracing *both* emergent and outmoded technological materials. These fluxus works are a key point of departure for my own practice since they integrate high-tech tactics and processes with a low-tech aesthetic that also embraces found, recycled and recontextualised materials.

The projects of Stelarc and Kac deploy technologies directly upon living bodies. I will now move from cold hard reality to constructed environments of fancy. The notion of the grotesque in art has a very long history. The first artist generally attributed to the grotesque art movement (also called the fantastic movement) is Hieronymous Bosch,[54] but an explication of the entire lineage of grotesque practices from Bosch up to the present clearly falls far outside of the scope of this research. In current critical thinking, the grotesque is generally defined by fanciful scenes of eccentricity. It has been adopted by a succession of artists as a way to push beyond established boundaries, to explore alternate modes of experience and expression, and to challenge the status quo.[55]

In his recent doctoral dissertation, the New Zealand-based Australian artist David Cross discusses Robert Storr's 2004 curatorial project *Disparaties and Deformations: Our Grotesque*, identifying Storr's work as pivotal in foregrounding the notion of the grotesque in cultural practice.[56] Whilst acknowledging the value of Storr's scholarly legitimation of the grotesque, Cross also highlights limits in the scope of Storr's research – emphasising that there are almost no performance works, installation works or video works discussed. Storr's emphasis on graphic and painterly modes of art practice is an important limitation, because his research thus priviledges work that presents an "*iconography of the grotesque* over work that highlights the grotesque as *an operation or process"*.[57] Further, and perhaps more importantly for this discussion, Cross criticises Storr's formulation of the grotesque as primarily creating a 'protean artificiality' – a "cartoon grotesque" that is the realm of pure fantasy – it does not directly implicate the real and thus it "fails to disturb in any significant way".[58]

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52 When (and only when) illuminated with blue light (maximum excitation at 488 nm), she glows with a bright green light (maximum emission at 509 nm).

53 The notion of interhuman exchange will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2, in an investigation of Nicholas Bourriaud's framework of relational aesthetics (1998).

54 Bosch was a prolific Dutch painter of the 15th and 16th centuries.

55 Frances Connelly edited an interdisciplinary collection of essays on the narratives of the grotesque that have traditionally been marginalised by modernism (2003). This resource will provide a starting point for further research.

56 Cross, 2006, p. 70.

57 Ibid, p. 71. Italics author's own.

58 Ibid, p. 73.

Cross concludes that

> "[f]or art to activate a grotesque response in the spectator, it has to be grounded in and against widely held beliefs that are understood to be 'real'. When this alignment ceases to be carefully negotiated, the grotesque collapses into the altogether safer realm of escapist fantasy."[59]

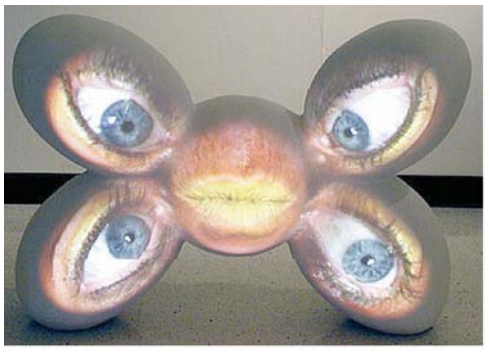

Fig 1.6: Tony Oursler, *Junk* (2003). Mixed media.

The New York based artist Tony Oursler is a key contemporary practitioner engaging with the grotesque. Oursler's works moan, complain, threaten and lament to the viewer - and these utterances are issued from disembodied heads, dummies, and amorphous forms. In Oursler's Junk (1999, fig. 1.6), for example, the viewer is confronted by a bulbous form with four huge eyes and a pair of lips[60] that complain incessantly.

Fig 1.7: Tony Oursler, *Judy* (2004). Mixed media.

In Oursler's Judy (1994, Fig 1.7),[61] the viewer first encounters a female figure trying to hide under a tilted couch, and it is easy to respond with compassion. The experience of this work shifts dramatically, however, once the figure starts to scream "fuck off".

Oursler's work is frequently described as grotesque. Practices such as Oursler's provide the perfect remedy to complacent taste, generating a dissonance of cognitions - both captivation and revulsion simultaneously. The characters and figures in Oursler's work convey narratives about psychological disturbance and unease. Because of these psychological resonances, it is clear that Oursler's works do in fact manage to disturb and thus implicate the real.

Oursler's artworks are technologically enabled (using video projections and timing circuitry), but the technology itself is not the narrative focus of the works. Similarly, Cross' research discusses a number of technologically enabled works (video installation works such as Bruce Nauman's), but the technology is solely format - it is not the direct subject of inquiry. Conversely, none of the artworks cited earlier in this chapter (which do directly address technology as subject) carry the disquieting psychological resonances (and dissonances) that the strategies of the grotesque allow.

Technology as subject matter certainly carries implications for the real. Can the strategies of the grotesque (constructing fanciful scenes) be deployed to directly scrutinise the forward momentum of technology - the dialectic between high and low technology - and *vis a vis* 'high' and 'low' art? Further, can the cartoon-like qualities of escapist fanciful narratives be deployed with a sense of humour to actually heighten the sense of disquiet?

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[59] Ibid, p. 74.

[60] While Oursler frequently films the facial features of his collaborators, in this instance the eyes and lips are the artist's own.

[61] *Judy* was a work inspired by Oursler's research into dissociative identity disorder. The critic Donald Kuspit describes *Judy* as "Oursler's most lovable, disturbed character" (Kuspit, 2000).

Code Monkey 1.1

Fig. 1.8: Daniel James, *Code Monkey 1.1* (2007). Installation.

The setting is a gallery space. The face of a grotesque robotic monkey comes in and out of view in a pixellated video projection. The monkey's gibbers/giggles echo around the space. The monkey itself sits beside a wall. It is extremely creepy, but at the same time slightly cute. It is roughly a foot high, with a white skeletal plastic body, large brown eyes, and dishevelled clumps of hair protruding from its head. It holds a small camera in its hand. As it moves the camera about, it is evident that this is the source of the video projection.

A robotic monkey is an iconoclastic form – simultaneously evoking our Darwinian ancestors and our posthuman descendants.

The term 'monkey' is also sometimes used as a mildly derogatory modifier, to link a person's vocation to the predominant medium that they use in their profession. A 'grease monkey' is a low-level automobile mechanic; a 'powder monkey' is an apprentice seaman who is responsible for the lowly and dangerous task of carrying gunpowder to a cannon. The term 'code monkey' refers to a computer programmer, and the term has a number of overlapping but divergent meanings:

1 – a low level computer programmer, that is, someone who is capable of writing code, but does not analyse their work from within the broader context of system architecture;
2 – a programmer who writes code by appropriation; someone who does not understand the syntax of a programming language – they merely piece together code by trial and error to see if their combinations will work; or,
3 – a high level programmer who wishes to evade responsibility for their work, or simply to refer to themselves in a self-deprecatingly humourous manner.

One way to grapple with the meaning of *Code Monkey 1.1* is to focus on the core mechanism that is presented – a closed circuit video loop. This loop between camera and projection enables the monkey to manipulate/mediate it's own representation. *Code Monkey 1.1* is the bastard child of the 'new-media' artwork - a parody of those who endlessly and cyclically play with each new invention, in order to narcissistically establish new ways to represent themselves. The piece ambivalently caricatures the canonised 'high' art notion of self-portraiture (and all of the associated existential crises therein).

The robot itself is constructed out of a high-tech children's toy, which has been reverse engineered in both form (the toy has been crudely skinned) and in function (the electronics have been re-wired).

How, then, does this assemblage inform the dialectic between high and low technology, and *vis a vis* high/low art?

Code Monkey 1.1 creates an uncomfortable dissonance of cognitions. The work is built using high-technology, but it is ambivalent about high-tech aesthetics - it is critical of the very mechanisms that bring it into being. In it's original form the child's soft toy has a narrow, singular purpose – to provide creature comfort, entertainment, and (pseudo) interactivity/company for the child who plays with it. In it's *detourned* form, the monkey is far less convivial – it challenges the relationship between manufactured technology and consumer. The modified monkey is not interactive – it ambivalently ignores it's audience and obsesses over it's own image. Further, the modified object challenges the commodity value of 'high-tech' and 'cuteness' with dysfunctional, abject and grotesque aesthetics. The closed-circuit video loop is also low-tech, the camera feed is fuzzy and unclear.

Code Monkey 1.1 is an artwork that has an obviously playful tone. The assemblage deliberately sidesteps the technological sophistication of projects such as Stelarc's and Kac's, instead offering a critique of the forward momentum of technology through its ambivalence towards a high-tech design style. The technological functionality/instrumentality that the piece does have is unnerving precisely because the piece is so abject, with clumps of hair protruding from a construction of plastic with exposed screws, wires and soldered joints.

The piece also generates a dissonance of cognitions at a narrative level, by deploying tactics of the grotesque. Where Oursler's work utilises technology to refer to other subjects, in this piece the technology is core subject matter. The robot is a piece of technology, but it can also be anthropomorphisised - interpreted through it's quasi-human characteristics. Viewers are commonly repulsed by the robot (it is grotesque, abject, creepy, and it behaves narcissistically), but they are also attracted to it (after spending some time with it, many people find it cute, funny and endearing). This is the operation of the grotesque at play – this generation of simultaneous attraction and repulsion links the real to the protean artificial.

Code Monkey 1.1 scrutinises the dialectic between low and high *techne* in terms of process at a technological level, but it also addresses this issue at an artistic level - offering multiple, conflicting meanings. At face value, the piece parodies the tradition of introspection and self-portraiture. This work deliberately makes it ambiguous whether the monkey truly is a low-level intelligence - narcissistic and incapable of analysing it's place in broader society, or whether it is actually being self-deprecating in a smart and humourous way – in order to *emphasise* the very dynamics of hegemonic power that dictate it's subject position.

Chapter 2

Power-knowledge: the paradox of complicity

Project Assessment

Massey University
COLLEGE OF CREATIVE ARTS
Toi Rauwharangi

Student	Daniel James

Programme: PhD	*Due Date: July 2010*
Paper Title: Http Error 406: Not Acceptable *Bastardising Technology as a Critical Mode of Cultural Practice*	*Paper Code: 213.900*
Assignment Title: School of Fine Arts	*Assessor: Dan Untitled*
Assessment Weighting: 25%	

Lecturer comments:

Daniel,

You have generated a number of test works leading up to your final piece (*SOFA*), and there is a building confidence that takes place in these testes. I can see clear evidence of a critical and self-reflexive awareness of your strategies, leading to a compelling project overall.

Having said that, there is a conflict of interest at play - your project debunks your very own art-making strategies (and it also criticises the institution that educates you and provides you with teaching employment). You need to be wary of shooting yourself in the foot.

Power-knowledge: the paradox of complicity

The notion of subjectivity – the condition of being subject (in all senses of the word) – is central to understanding the interrelationships between humans and technological machines. Technology can, and frequently does, reinforce hegemonic power structures (for example military technologies), but it can also enable voices to be heard which dissent from these same power structures (for example blogging technology). This chapter focuses on the intersection between power and knowledge. The key interest is how art practice can be critical of power relations, whilst operating from inside those same structures – what I call the paradox of complicity. (This very research takes place from within an educational institution – a hegemonic structure that exists primarily to empower people by propogating knowledge.)

In order to examine the ability art has to be critical about formations of power and knowledge, we must consider that multiple, conflicting positions exist. There are people who are situated in a dominant position, people who are marginalised/subjugated by domiant discourses, and numerous positions in between. Further, any individual occupies multiple roles in society, multiple subject positions. The intellectual climate of postmodernity is riddled by the collapse of any sense of absolute truth – what one person knows to be 'true' in their own sociopolitical/cultural context may not be true for someone else living in a different context. Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* is commonly cited as a precursor to this thinking - while he did not systematically analyse subjectivity *per se*, he did assert that we can no longer rely upon a singular position of absolute authority, through his famous adage that 'God is dead'.

Locating these ideas in a cultural context, it is important to also note Roland Barthes' conception of the death of the author. Like Nietzsche's rejection of absolute moral authority, Barthes rejects the notion that the author of a cultural product has absolute authority over it's meaning.

Michel Foucault's work is seminal in positing the inseperability of power and knowledge, with his neologism power-knowledge. Foucault highlights that, for each formation of power and contol in society, there are those who are marginalised by this formation (subjugated). Although this notion pervades Foucault's entire oeuvre, it is perhaps most commonly explicated by his analysis of Jeremy Bentham's 'panopticon' design for a modern prison – in which a central tower enables guards to surveil prisoners without them knowing if they are actually being watched. To contextualise Foucauldian ideas in a discussion of technology, I will review the commonly cited parallel between Foucault's 'panopticon' and contemporary modes of surveillance such as CCTV cameras.

In order to understand technological formations of power-knowledge in a cultural context, I will also examine Marshall McLuhan's seminal work in media studies. Whilst highly influential, McLuhan's mantra that 'the medium is the message' is criticised here as problematic due to it's technological determinism - a position which is incompatible with poststucturalist thought which allows for multiple (sometimes conflicting) meanings. To conclude the theoretical section of this chapter, I will return to the Foucauldian framework of 'power-knowledge', and contrast it with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's framework of the 'machinic' - which describes the interrelationships between biological and technological machines as evolutive and collective.

Turning to practical case studies, I will *not* investigate technologically enabled artworks. Rather, I will investigate modalities of art practice which share the cluster of *ideological* concerns highlighted above, and then contextualise these ideas with an artwork in which technology *is* the focus. I take this approach because there is a chasm whereby the canonised art movements which best exemplify a scrutiny of hegemonic power relations predominantly *ignore* the role of technology; the canonised art practices in which technology *is* the focus are not commonly framed to directly scrutinise subjectivity. I wish to learn from two art movements which attempted to systematically analyse power relations, but which failed to achieve their ideological goals – to learn from these failures and then apply this knowledge in a technological context.

Firstly I will investigate the conceptual art movement of the 1960s. This movement was seminal in it's criticality about the ideologies of 'permanence' and 'commodification', and the institutional power structures (galleries, museums) that propogate these ideologies. While the movement itself did not explicitly address the role of technology, a criticality about these same ideologies is key to understanding the trajectory of technological progress. In a capitalist economy the development of new machines is clearly underpinned by ideologies about commodification.

The key reason for investigating the conceptual art movement is because of it's failure to actually achieve it's ideological goals. While conceptual art rejected the production of permanent artworks which can be commodified, the movement is commonly criticised because photographic documentation of these artworks ended up becoming highly commodifiable objects which were collected by the art institution (galleries and museums).

A comparison is drawn between the ideological failure of conceptual art and that of Nicholas Bourriaud's more recent framework of relational aesthetics. Artists contextualised within the canon of relational aesthetics draw heavily on the lineage of conceptual art through their own rejection of artistic permanence (a rejection which is predominantly realised through modalities of installation art practice). The relational aesthetics movement reached it's heyday in the 1990s (and it still enjoys considerable currency), but like conceptual art, relational aesthetics can be criticised for it's failure to achieve it's ideological goals.

According to Bourriaud, the artwork is a 'social interstice' – a meeting place between discursive formations, and these interstices create convivial encounters. Bourriaud claims that relational artworks are capable of "re-launching the modern emancipation plan" by creating such situations of conviviality.[62] Critics such as Hal Foster and Claire Bishop challenge his framework for essentially perpetuating what they see as an elitism (read: hegemony) which is incompatible with the framework's ideological goals. It is argued here that the ideologies inherent to relational aesthetics do not cohesively work in practice - as with any utopian vision, someone will always be left out (subjugated).

These two art movements – conceptual art and relational aesthetics - highlight what I call the 'paradox of complicity'. Since 'high' art is inseparable from the institutionalised structures within which it operates, it is argued that contemporary practice must abandon utopian ideological goals and be reflexive about its complicity with the power structures at play. Whilst the framework of relational aesthetics is problematic, there are artists contextualised within that canon who do cohesively address hegemonic power structures, but in a manner that is more subtle and nuanced than the simple convivialities of relational aesthetics allows. Examples from the practice of Maurizio Cattelan (who was labelled a 'relational' artist by Bourriaud) illustrate how self-reflexivity and humour can be deployed to create artworks which acknowledge an inescapable complicity with hegemonic structures, but which also maintain a level of criticality about these same structures.

The practical case studies cited in this chapter do not predominantly focus on the role of technology, but they do share the same cluster of ideological concerns that underpin formations of power-knowledge which are enabled by technology. How, then, can self-reflexivity and humour be deployed to create an artwork which retains a theoretical focus on subjectivity but has a practical focus on technology?

This chaper concludes with *School of Fine Arts*, an installation artwork which deploys robotics, audio and video. In this chapter it is argued that *School of Fine Arts* is implicitly reflexive about power-knowledge. The piece is designed to paradoxically operate within hegemonic structures (the university, the art school, and the broader art instutution) deploying humour to reflect upon the mechanisms of subjectivity and subjugation.

Power-knowledge

The interrelationship between power and knowledge is central to contemporary critical thought, and this concept is usually framed by the notion of 'subjectivity'. The noun 'subject' can be defined in numerous ways - amongst these meanings we can think of a subject as referring to a topic/theme, a figure to be represented in art, but also to a person who is under another's sovereign rule (eg subject to the queen). In the adjectival form the term predominantly refers to this latter sense of being under the rule of another (ie 'it is subject to..'). When combined with the suffix '-ity' (the state or condition of), the noun 'subjectivity' can encompass a sense of 'topic/theme' or 'represented figure', but it also encompasses a sense of domination or rule. Subjectivity, broadly speaking, is the condition of being subject.

The Gay Science[63] is a seminal text by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Broadly speaking, the book extolls a joyful, life-affirming approach to scientific rigour and intellectual discipline – positing that this approach leads to mental freedom. The text experiments with notions of power, but Nietzsche does not offer any systematic analysis of subjectivity. *The Gay Science* does, however, present the first instance of Nietzshe's famous formulation that 'God is dead',[64] and that this 'death' would eventually lead to the collapse of any coherent sense of objective truth. This formulation is a sentiment that strongly influenced later poststructuralist thinkers.

Consider a skeleton: the rigid framework that supports the human body. If language provides the 'bones' that support thought (the 'body'), then the field of structuralism[65] describes the skeleton itself: the way that language is organised as a framework. It provides a science of signs (semiology)[66] to understand how language is structured: what is a sign, and which laws govern these signs. In the latter part of last century, thinking around language shifted in emphasis. The spaces between bones - the joints - became a point of inspiration for 'poststructualist' thinkers. A body cannot move freely without these points of elasticity.

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[62] Bourriaud, 1998, p. 16.

[63] The title of this work derives from a Provençal expression that refers to the technical skill required for poetry writing. The term 'gay' does not refer to modern associations with homosexuality, but rather to traditional meaning as 'carefree', 'happy' and 'joyous'. The term did, however, have connotations with immorality as early as 1637 – and these connotations are apt for Nietsche's work. In *Ecce Homo*, for example, he refers to one of the poems in *The Gay Science*, writing that *'[t]he very last poem above all, "To the Mistral", [is] an exuberant dancing song in which, if I may say so, one dances right over morality, is a perfect Provençalism.'*

[64] This expression first appears in section 108: "God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millenia be caves in which they show his shadow. —And we—we have still to overcome his shadow!" (Nietzsche, 1882, p.109).

[65] Structuralism explores the relationships between language, literature and other fields, upon which higher level 'structural networks' can be drawn. According to structuralist thought, meaning is produced from within a particular person or culture.

[66] The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure influentially argued that a language is not a list of names and things, but a system of signs consisting of a *signifier* (an image) and a *signified* (a concept). According to Saussure, signs do not designate an external reality, they are meaningful only because of the similarities and differences that exist between them.

One defining challenge to structuralism was made manifest in a revolutionary text by Roland Barthes, entitled *The Death of the Author*.[67] Barthes identifies that the *author's intention* usually takes centre-stage in attempts to interpret a text. The essence of his argument was that the text itself - and the reader's understanding of it - should be the primary loci of interpretation. The author had died - their intention was no longer the primary source of meaning for a text.[68]

Barthes freely associates authorship with oppression[69] (note that 'authority' derives from the same root as author[70]). When Barthes wrote *The Death of the Author*, he was not rejecting the author as a valid source of meaning – he was rejecting the oppressive condition in which the author's intention was seen to be the *only* valid source of meaning. Nietzsche's earlier formulation that God has 'died' can be understood to mean that we cannot rely on an omnipotent/omnipresent creator being who will dictate a singular, absolute *moral* position. Similarly, in Barthes' concept we see that the author (creator) cannot take an authoritative position and claim a singular, absolute meaning for a *cultural* product.

The French poststructuralist Michel Foucault, however, perhaps offers the most thorough and systematic analysis of the interrelationship between power and knowledge. Foucault coined the neologism 'power-knowledge'[71] to highlight the inseparability of the two concepts, and to emphasise the fact that power and knowledge are both systemic (structural) phenomena. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault famously compares modern society to Jeremy Bentham's 'Panopticon' design for a prison – in which a central tower enables guards to surveil prisoners without them ever knowing if they are actually being watched. The panopticon emphasises the fact that in any criminal justice system, certain people (judges, prison guards) are appointed by society to assert power over others (prisoners), and to control factors that will affect the imprisoned person (length of imprisonment, behaviours whilst incarcerated, and so forth).

In Foucault's own words, *Discipline and Punish* was intended as

> "a correlative history of the modern soul and of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives it's bases, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effects and by which it masks its exorbitant singularity".[72]

When considered from within the broader context of Foucault's œuvre, the panopticon highlights his primary interest in subjectivity - that, for each formation of power and control in society, there are those who are marinalised by this formation (subjugated).

> *"There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time."*
> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*[73]

The ubiquity of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance in modern times has been widely compared to Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon. It is prescient for this discussion to first revisit the technological media in their own right, and then to analyse the Foucauldian framework of power-knowledge specifically in relation to the deployment of these media.

The medium is the message

No thorough analysis of the field of contemporary media arts would be possible without citing the work of the renowned communications theorist Marshall McLuhan. Writing in the early 1960s, McLuhan claimed that visual (print) culture would soon be displaced by aural/oral culture, creating an 'electronic interdependence' between media. He coined the term 'global village' to describe the shift from individualism and fragmentation to a collective identity. McLuhan's work predated the rise of the internet by about 20 years, and his highly prophetic notion of the global village still retains considerable currency today.

McLuhan also famously coined the phrase 'the medium is the message', to assert that media itself - rather than the content that these media carry – should be the core focus of study.[74] In *Understanding* Media, McLuhan contrasts 'hot' and 'cool' media. Hot media engage and intensify one particular sense and do not require much additional effort to fill in the gaps (for example, films engage vision, and there is not much effort needed to make sense of the

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67 Barthes, 1968.

68 Barthes writes specifically about the field of literary criticism, but his argument can also encompass other areas of creative practice: where 'text' refers to anything that conveys meaning.

69 This invites comparisons with Marx's critique of capitalism, but such comparisons are outside of the scope of this research.

70 Latin: *Auctor* – authority is interrelated with the notion of power, but underpinned by a claim of legitimacy.

71 In his later work - particularly at his lectures at the *College de France* - Foucault developed on this notion of power-knowledge by coining the related term 'governmentality'. Governmentality develops on the idea by linking the terms 'government' (Fr: *gouverner*) and 'mentality' (Fr: *mentalitie*) – highlighting the interrelationship between government and modes of thought. Government is understood in a broader sense, referring not only to political government, but also to micro-government (such as the assertion of rule within a family unit).

72 Foucault, 1975, p. 23.

73 Orwell, 1949, p. 9.

74 McLuhan, 1964.

moving image seen). Hot media are said to be 'high definition', and cool media are said to be 'low definition'. Cool (or detached) media provide less information and more effort is required to extract value. Television, McLuhan claims, is a cooler medium than a movie – the information is presented on a smaller screen and thus does not fill the viewer's field of vision as much. The sense of participation is said to be heightened with a cooler medium. These notions of hot and cool are not, however, binary (mutually exclusive) categories – they are the extremities of a continuum, and different media sit at different points on this continuum (a comic is said to be a cooler medium than television, because it provides less visual information again, and requires yet more effort again to extract value). If McLuhan were alive today, he would probably consider a YouTube video to be cool (low definition, active, and participatory[75]), and a 3D movie to be hot (extremely high definition, encouraging passive engagement).

McLuhan's work adapts the notion of 'figure' and 'ground' from the field of Gestalt Psychology. The medium (figure) operates through its context (ground) – neither can be completely understood without the other. This framework foreground's McLuhan's core argument that each media should be studied in the historical context in which it gained prominence, and in light of the technologies that preceeded it.

McLuhan's framework is commonly understood as a type of technological determinism.[76] The present environment is shaped by the technologies of the age, and this environment gives rise to further technological advances that will affect people and societies.

While it is difficult to negate the broad influence of McLuhan's framework, some of the implications of his technological determinism are problematic for contemporary modes of cultural production. He claims that technology is inherently neither good nor bad - it can be deployed to either end. This position tends to misrepresent the role of the human hand in shaping these technologies. A bomb, for example, could only be neutral if we did not know what it would be used for - and we know very well what bombs are used for. Most (if not all) technologies are developed for a specific purpose – and that purpose could hardly ever be considered entirely neutral. Each new technology that arises has an inherent set of sociopolitical forces at play in its development - and it is a well known adage that the fastest scientific advancements occur during the sociopolitical imperatives of wartime.[77]

It is crucial to align this discussion with the poststructuralist frameworks outlined above. McLuhan was a devout Catholic and his religious beliefs clearly led him to cling to a singular notion of absolute truth. While his writing provides a useful point of departure, McLuhan's technological determinism is incompatible with the postmodern condition describing multiple subjectivities. Technology is certainly not neutral once the notion of power enters into the equation. Technologies are developed under particular socioeconomic conditions, and these conditions propogate certain values and belief systems; new technologies can be (and commonly are) developed and deployed for the express purpose of subjugation and marginalisation.

Power-knowledge and technology

The potential for technologies to subjugate leads me to return to a Foucauldian conception of power-knowledge in the deployment of technologies. As noted above, the ubiquity of CCTV certainly highlights the way in which the state can assert its power over the individual. Consider, however, an inversion of this phenomenon. In recent times there has been a drastic increase in the accessibility of video as a medium. This means that people can actually deploy these technologies to assert their own power - holding accountable those who assume a position of authority. It is commonplace, for example, to see people filming the police on their cellphones if their conduct seems to be questionable - and these videos can easily be shared with the world on video sharing sites such as YouTube. Police, like anybody else, behave differently when they know that they are being watched.

This level of accessibility of video (and internet) technology enables a plethora of new formations of power-knowledge to take place. There are numerous ways in which media technology can be deployed to assert power. In the above example, releasing documentary footage to the public domain is a technologically enabled form of surveillance - and an increase in accessibility of media now means that those who occupy subjugated positions can now also surveil with ease. Technology can, in some instances, enable the sharing (and thus the democratisation) of power-knowledge.

Another - albeit more complex - approach is to challenge pre-existing formations not simply by sharing truthfully, but by *modifying* - sampling texts (video, sound, website text/code) from those who hold a position of power, and recontextualising this material to convey alternate narratives. This tactic shall be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

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[75] Videos that appear on the video-sharing site YouTube <http://www.youtube.com> are participatory initially through the process of searching by tag words to select the viewing material, and then through the facility for viewer comments, rating of the viewing matter, and the ability to link 'video responses'.

[76] In short, determinism is the philosophical belief that everything is caused by something, and that there is no free will. According to one definition in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, determinism holds that "acts of the will, occurrences in nature, or social or psychological phenomena are causally determined by preceding events or natural laws" (accessed at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/determinism>).

[77] Note, however, the fact that once new technologies have been invented, they can be used for alternate purposes. Consider, for example, wartime technologies such as the public address system and tape recorder (invented for propoganda and spying purposes respectively at the height of German fascism), and the subsequent impact that these inventions have had upon the course of popular music.

The machinic

The work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offers one way to rethink the interrelationship between humans and technology – and the cultural products that ensue. In order to do that, it is necessary to revisit the nuances of the term *techne*. Felix Guattari's essay *Machinic Heterogenesis*[78] expands and consolidates ideas and terminology first articulated in *Anti-Oedipus* with Gilles Deleuze. To be able to analyse these complex concepts, it is useful to first understand the intellectual envorinment within which Guattari's ideas are presented.

Guattari was a rebellious student of the psychiatrist Jacques Lacan.[79] Guattari took a broad-minded approach to psychiatric practice in France, utilising disciplines such as philosophy, ethnology, linguistics and architecture. Centrally, his concerns lie with the question of subjectivity: how to produce, collect, enrich and reinvent subjectivity in order to make it compatible with universes of value. With Gilles Deleuze, Guattari described desire as linked to processing, not to repression as Freud believed. Writing on his own in *Machinic Heterogenesis*, Guattari defines different types of processing machines, framing the discussion with questions about what it means to think and create new universes.

In his exploration of different types of machines, Guattari also analyses *techne*. He refers to historical analyses of the term, and agrees with Heidegger that *techne* involves revealing, but he questions the scope of this interpretation. As argued in chapter 1, I highlighted a level of duplicity to Heidegger's analysis, and noted the sociopolitical implications therein. In contrast, Guattari writes with a far more balanced focus on subjectivity that is not tainted by his own will to sociopolitical power.

Guattari also analyses the neurophenomenologist[80] Francisco Varela's distinction between two types of machines: allopoietic machines, which 'produce something besides themselves' and autopoietic machines, which 'continually engender and specify their own organisation and limits'.[81] While Varela reserves autopoiesis for the biological domain, Guattari questions this, noting that "autopoiesis needs to be rethought in relation to entities that are evolutive and collective".[82]

Guattari's 'machinic heterogenesis' provides a mode of being and producing, a term to describe the ways in which the machines that populate the universe connect with each other, mutually affect one another, and combine to create new machines. More broadly, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of humans as incredibly complex processual machines (no metaphor).[83] Machines form assemblages and relations with other machines, and evolve to create new forms. In Guattari's summary of the mechanistic position, machines amount to no more than the sum of their parts (*partes extra partes*: machines exist externally, *in*dependent of each other, that is, without any *inter*dependence). In contrast, Guattari posits a *vitalistic* understanding, where machines are similar to biologically living beings: they can be much more than the sum of their parts through their ability to create and develop interdependence on one another.[84]

The notion of interdependence is key. If I concur with Guattari's vitalistic understanding of machines - that both technological and biological machines evolve and mutually affect one another - then McLuhan's ideas become problematic. McLuhan aims to isolate and study the formations of technological media as a line of inquiry in it's own right. McLuhan does maintain that technologies should be studied in the sociopolitical context ('ground') in which they form, but Guattari takes the discussion a step further. He posits that technological machines are actually inseperable from their biological counterparts, and that technological formations need to be considered together with sociopolitical formations, holistically.

It is worth noting that the metaphilosophical methodologies of Deleuze and Guattari are frequently criticised as insurmountable;[85] that is, critics claim that it is impossible to disagree with a philosophical position which allows

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78 Guattari, 1993.

79 While Lacan believed that language creates the subject, Guattari is very critical of the Lacanian 'Signifier', believing that it is impossible to establish terms of reference that allow ordering (1993, p. 47). For example, Heidegger had written of a commercial airliner sitting on a runway as being a 'standing reserve' of potential (for transportation), not just an object. After breaking down the idea of potential, providing the image of a hammer with the head removed as an example, Guattari turns to discussing the grounded Concorde aircraft (Ibid, pp. 46-47). Guattari asks if this standing reserve is really an eternal truth, given that the Concorde ultimately became economically unviable.

80 Varela coined the term 'neurophenomenology' to refer to his own field of study, which seeks to overcome the phenomenological dilemmas that plague the Western cognitive sciences.

81 Guattari, 1993, p. 41.

82 Ibid, p. 42.

83 Deleuze and Guattari, 1983.

84 Guattari, 1993, p. 38.

85 For example, in *The Decline and Fall of French Nietzscheo-Structuralism* (1994), Pascal Engel makes a global condemnation of Deleuze's thought. According to Engel, Deleuze's metaphilosophical approach makes it impossible to reasonably disagree with a philosophical system, and so destroys meaning, truth, and philosophy itself. Engel summarizes Deleuze's metaphilosophy thus: "When faced with a beautiful philosophical concept … you should just sit back and admire it. You should not question it" (Engel, 1994, p. 34).

multiple, non-hierarchical interpretations. Irrespective of whether this line of criticism is *philosophically* sound,[86] it does not make sense in the context of criticality about art. Multiple, non-heirarchical interpretations and meanings are *experientially* possible when encountering an artwork. To reject a philosophical framework as insurmountable due to it's challenges to heirarchy and singularity is tantamount to rejecting an artwork because it can have multiple and non-heirarchical meanings.

Whether or not one finds Deleuze and Guattari's metaphilosophical methodologies insurmountable in theory, it is extremely difficult to avoid these multiplicities and interrelationships in practice. In short, the medium is only part of the message; emergent media evolve inseparably from the varying manifestations of societal power. It will suffice to *partially* concur with McLuhan – acknowledging that media (emergent technologies) do indeed determine the sociopolitical environment *to a degree* - but to diverge from his firm technological determinism. McLuhan's focus (based upon the premise that technology is neutral) denies the possibility for multiplicity and paradox - possibilities which are especially important since we are framing this discussion according to formations of power-knowledge.

I have highlighted how theoretical frameworks need to allow for multiplicity in order to be relevant to a critical discussion of art. Similarly, in cultural practice, artworks cannot cohesively operate when they try to advance singular ideologies. I shall briefly revisit the ideological failures of the Conceptual Art movement, and compare this failure to Nicholas Bourriaud's more recent framework of 'relational aesthetics'. The ideological failures inherent to these art movements (which do not focus on the role of technology in formations of subjectivity) are analysed in order to inform the strategies of my own practice (which does directly address technology).

Conceptual art

The 1960's conceptual art movement is key, because the movement is highly critical about the structures of power-knowledge that underpin contemporary art practice. This discursive art movement was seminal for it's critique of the ideologies of 'permanence' and 'commodification', and the institutional power structures (galleries, museums) that propogate these ideologies. The movement's rejection of 'permanence' and 'commodification' was problematic, due to the fact that the strategies of conceptual art relied heavily upon the very same institutional structures that they were critical of.[87] In spite of these failures, conceptual art still provided a clear influence upon later modalities of art practice such as relational aesthetics. The ideological failure of conceptual art is crucial to revisit here, because it is a seminal example of how cultural practice is inseperably bound to hegemonic formations of power-knowledge. This failure highlights the problems associated with criticising power-knowledge formations from within, whilst remaining a level of complicity with these very same structures.

The concept of the 'dematerialisation of the art object' dates back to the early days of the conceptual art movement. This concept was first articulated in 1968 by Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, and it characterised art in two ways: 'art as idea and art as action'.[88] Dematerialisation aims to deemphasise the material aspects of art, and its prevailing orthodoxies of 'uniqueness, permanence, and decorative attractiveness' into an 'anti-form' or 'process art'.[89] Lippard quotes Sol Lewitt's statement that comes across as a slogan for generative art: 'The idea becomes a machine that makes the art'.[90]

Lewitt's statement (that Lippard cites) is the first published definition of conceptual art. The full quotation explains that

> "[i]n conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art".[91]

In conceptual art, the idea and planning is primary, and the execution of the idea into an aestheticised form takes a secondary role. Further, this deemphasis on materiality reacted against the commodification of art; attempting a subversion of the gallery or museum as the location and determiner of art, and reacting against the art market as the primary owner and distributor of art.

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86 I do not find it philosophically sound to reject Deleuze and Guattari's thinking as insurmountable. Condemnations such as Engel's are a gross oversimplification of the strategies of metaphilosophy – the *scrutiny* of aesthetics is conflated with sitting back in uncritical admiration at the beauty of a concept. It is outside of the scope of this research, however, to thoroughly argue that point here.

87 Photographic documentation of conceptual works became highly commodifiable material objects, and the artists needed to have their work represented in galleries and museums in order to be able to make a living out of their practices.

88 Lippard, 1997, p. 43.

89 Ibid, p. 5.

90 Ibid, p. xiv.

91 Lewitt, 1969.

Fig. 2.1: Dennis Oppenheim, *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn* (1970). Photograph.

A key example is the work of the American conceptualist Dennis Oppenheim. Oppenheim produced a series of land artworks in the 1960s and early 1970s that were influential in their radical rejection of the gallery space, by locating his works in the 'real world' of the urban or rural landscape. In *Gallery Transplant* (1969), for example, Oppenheim marked out the exact dimensions of a gallery in the snow, which then disappeared with the arrival of spring. His interest shifted in the early 1970s from the macrocosm to the microcosm, from land to the body. Oppenheim saw the body as a means of accessing the mind, and his own body became the site for these works. In his body works, Oppenheim explored boundaries of personal risk, transformation, and communication through ritualistic performance actions and interactions. In *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn* (1970, fig. 2.1) Oppenheim sunbathed for five hours, bare-chested, with an open book lying on his chest. He described this work as rooted in the notion of colour change, describing his skin as pigment used in a process that was analogous to painting.[92]

Like many of the other early conceptualists, Oppenheim can be criticised for the fact that *documentation* of these works (such as the photograph in Fig. 2.1) still ended up in galleries and museums. While conceptual practices (such as Oppenheim's) purported to subvert the prevailing orthodoxies of permanence (and thus the commodification of the art object), the works ultimately failed to offer a resolved and sustainable alternative to the commodification of art.[93] This failure highlights the notion of complicity, that Oppenheim and his fellow conceptualists were critical of the power relations inherent to the institutionalised structures of the art world (galleries and museums), but they were also inescapably complicit with the operations of these same structures.

The Anglo-Australian artist Ian Burn is well known for his involvement in the New York branch of *Art and Language* - a conceptual art collective that flourished in the early 1970s. Burn eventually resigns himself to a similar critique of the conceptual art movement, despite his early affiliation with it:

> "[t]he most significant thing that can be said to the credit of Conceptual Art is that it failed… to fulfil certain initial expectations and ideals, and its goals were in many ways unattainable."[94]

Burn articulates what has become a central criticism of conceptual practices: the ideals of dematerialisation cannot be attained in the real world.[95] In spite of the ideological failures inherent in conceptual practice, the movement provides a clear antecedent to later modalities of art practice.

Relational aesthetics

The French curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud posits a theoretical framework for understanding current modes of cultural production which are heavily indebted to the conceptual art movement of the 1960s. Bourriaud's conception of relational practice cites artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, Maurizio Cattelan, Vanessa Beecroft and Felix Gonzales Torres, and he first proposed his concept of 'relational aesthetics' in 1998. Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* commences with a description of artistic activity as "a game, whose forms, patterns and functions develop and evolve according to periods and social contexts; it is not an immutable essence".[96] He goes on to describe the artist, then, as the facilitator of a series of relations between contexts.

Relational Aesthetics describes those practices for which social context and human interaction are primary points of departure. The artist prescribes the nature of participation, and this often occurs within a context which simulates the everyday. Relational projects such as those characterising work in the biennales of the late 1990s provide temporary services, or sites of assembly, to primarily 'art world' audiences.[97] Echoing the strategies of the conceptual art movement, in relational practice the idea or process again takes precedence over the material presence of an object.

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92 Oppenheim, 1971, p. 188.

93 Lucy Soutter articulates a similar criticism, specifically dismissing the claim that the documentary photographs of the early conceptualists are non-essential to the work itself. Soutter claims that these photographs paradoxically take on a life of their own as self-critical documents (1999).

94 Burn, 1991, pp. 115, 119.

95 I will return to a discussion of the limitations inherent in the notion of 'dematerialisation' in chapter 3.

96 Bourriaud, 1998, p. 11.

97 Bourriaud, 1998.

Fig. 2.2: Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Pad Thai* (1991-1996). Mixed media.

The artwork, according to Bourriaud, is considered to be a 'social interstice', a meeting place between discursive formations. The term 'interstice' is borrowed from none other than Karl Marx, and Bourriaud posits that this meeting place operates more or less harmoniously within the overall economic system, and that the interstice creates opportunities for convivial human interactions.[98] A frequently cited example of this type of practice is the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, especially a suite of works in which the artist variously cooks meals (pad thai, vegetable curry and cup o' noodles) for gallery goers as artworks (see Fig. 2.2). According to Bourriaud, "[i]f a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion, and that form of inter-human negotiation that Marcel Duchamp called 'the coefficient of art', which is a temporal process, being played out here and now".[99]

The conviviality that Bourriaud describes is widely considered to be a happy interaction, a small, localised and attainable version of the utopia, which he denotes with the term 'microtopia'. The central idea described is that in an era of increasing urbanisation and displacement, relational practitioners can create microtopias in their immediate environment. If enough of these are created, it will "re-launch the modern emancipation plan",[100] and provide a counterstrike against the unattainability of the utopia. This conception of the 'microtopia', however, led critics such as Hal Foster to dismiss Bourriaud's framework and the practices it endorses as an 'arty party',[101] that is, an exclusive in-group of art elite. This line of criticism explicates the fact that the microtopia is vulnerable to the same critical blow that the utopia suffered: someone will always be left out.

Neither art nor life necessarily equate to happiness. The British critic Claire Bishop criticises relational aesthetics on the grounds that the conviviality Bourriaud describes does not allow room for other, antagonistic, forms of interaction. Controversial artists such as Santiago Sierra and Thomas Hirschorn apply a similar methodology to the relational artists usually associated with the canon, but they do so in order to provoke the audience, making them uncomfortable with their position in the social and economic system.[102]

Eduardo Kac's *GFP Bunny* offers a compelling counterpoint to Bourriaud. In Phase 2 of the 'Alba' project, Kac clearly locates the public discussion and dialogue as part of the art project. One must presume that the dialogue that this work facilitates (about the ethics of genetic engineering) is far from the conviviality that Bourriaud describes.

Fig 2.3: Santiago Sierra, *160 cm Line Tattooed on 4 People* (2000). Intervention.

The Mexico-based Spanish artist Santiago Sierra has caused numerous contoversies in his reflections upon capitalism, labour and exploitation. A common tactic of his work is to pay unemployed and/or marginalised people an exploitatively low fee to conduct a demeaning or meaningless task as an artwork. In *160 cm Line Tattoed on 4 People* (2000, fig. 2.3), for example, the artist paid four drug-addicted prostitutes a fee that equated to the price of a fix of heroin, in exchange for having a 160 cm line tattooed across their back. In other artworks, Sierra paid illegal immigrants to sit silently inside cardboard boxes in a gallery;[103] a group of unemployed men to move extremely heavy concrete blocks backwards and forwards across a gallery;[104] and he hired African, Asian and East European immigrants to have their black hair bleached.[105]

In Sierra's work, we see power relations laid out bare for all to see. The artist deliberately exploits/subjugates people who occupy marginalised positions in society, and he does this in order to expose the very mechanisms of exploitation. The ethical implications of his strategies are highly controversial, because Sierra is clearly complicit

98 Ibid, p. 16.
99 Ibid, p. 26.
100 Ibid, p. 16.
101 Foster, 2003.
102 Bishop, 2004.
103 *Six People who are Not Allowed to be Paid for Sitting in Cardboard Boxes* (2000).
104 *24 Concrete Blocks Moved Continuously during One Working Period by Ten Remunerated Workers* (1999).
105 *Persons Paid to Have their Haid Dyed Blonde* (2001).

with the very power mechanisms that he is being antagonistic towards. Whether or not one agrees with the ethics of his strategies, it is clear that Sierra's art practice is resolutely *not* convivial towards the sociopolitical environment within which it operates.

Bishop's criticism of Bourriaud concludes that "relational antagonism would be predicated not on social harmony, but on exposing that which is repressed in sustaining the semblance of this harmony. It would therefore provide a more concrete and polemical grounds for rethinking our relationship to the world and one another".[106]

The term 'conviviality' itself, literally translated from the Latin, is more accurately described as a lively interaction (*con vivo* translates as 'with life'), but this clearly runs contrary to the term's idiomatic usage. It would be confusing to most readers to propose redefining 'conviviality' to denote all lively interactions - whether amicable or antagonistic.

The problem is bigger than the nuances of the term anyway. While the framework of relational aesthetics still enjoys considerable currency, it fails to achieve it's ideological goals. Like the framework underpinning the earlier conceptual art movement, relational aesthetics is haunted by an underlying problematic - that the concepts might operate cohesively in theory, but the practitioners are inseperably bound to the very structures of power-knowledge that they are critical of. Also, some of the practices Bourriaud describes are far more subtle and nuanced than his theory allows.[107] Admittedly, Bourriaud later posited an ancillary framework of 'postproduction' to discuss the practices of the same cluster of artists (a framework which I shall discuss in chapter 4), but the point here is to highlight the limitations of his earlier thinking.

Note that this is not an outright dismissal of all art practices contextualised by Bourriaud's framework, but rather an attempt to highlight the limitations of relational aesthetics as a theoretical framework. Some (but not all) of the artworks Bourriaud writes about do indeed create unique and interesting resonances through the idiosynchratic passages of experience that they offer. In practice then, it is not possible for artists to surmount the problematics of power-knowledge - to address the issue that 'high' art is inseperably bound to broader (and heavily institutionalised) hegemonic structures. The contemporary modalities of practice that interest me most do not even try to achieve this. Two different movements in art practice (conceptual art and relational aesthetics) demonstrate that any attempts to locate art practice with an overarching ideology will inevitably fail, still naively clutching to their implicit utopian vision.

The 'relational' artists who do achieve interesting results (such as Maurizio Cattelan and Vanessa Beecroft[108]) do so because the resonances are not straightforward convivial microtopias; the artworks are not as clear-cut as the theory posits. The sociopolitical impact of an artwork cannot be controlled/contrived by an artist. An art experience certainly can transform lived reality, but – as Barthes' notion of the death of the author clearly demonstrates - this is up to the audience, it is not a planned emancipation that is deliberately orchestrated by the artist.

The Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's work has been contextualised by Bourriaud as exemplary of relational practice,[109] but his practice is not straighforward about the emancipation that is planned. Cattelan infamously presented a realistic lifesize waxwork sculpture of Pope John Paul II in full regalia flattened by a fallen meteorite.[110] He presented a waxwork sculpture of Adolph Hitler kneeling in prayer in a cathedral.[111] The nuanced dynamics of sociopolitical power are core to the musings of the 'court jester' of the art world.[112]

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106 Ibid, p. 78.

107 I will shortly investigate case studies of Maurizio Cattelan's work, which Bourriaud contextualises as 'Relational'. While Cattelan's work is less confrontational than Sierra's work, his practice is still demonstrably less than convivial towards the power mechanisms of the art world than Bourriaud's framework allows.

108 A discussion of Vanessa Beecroft's work is outside of the scope of this discussion, but in short, her *tableaux vivants* create an uneasy tension between models and audience due to the extended duration of her pieces. It is simply not accurate to describe the encounters facilitated by her work as entirely 'convivial'. In her recent work *VB65* (2009), she goes even further. Echoing the artistic strategies of Santiago Sierra, she presenting a tableaux of African immigrants (legal and illegal), eating chicken without cutlery.

109 Bourriaud, 2002, for example p. 8 and p. 33.

110 *La Nona Ora (The Ninth Hour)* (1999).

111 *It is Harder to Feel Sympathy for Him* (2001).

112 Morton, 2005.

Fig 2.4: Maurizio Cattelan, *A Perfect Day* (1999). Performance.

Cattelan's attention is also directed towards how power relations operate within the art world itself. In 1999, he suspended his Milan art dealer Massimo De Carlo to the wall of his gallery with heavy duty duct tape as an artwork (fig. 2.4).[113] In 2000, Cattelan contracted his (purportedly promiscuous) Paris art dealer Emmanuel Perrotin to spend a month dressed as a giant pink phallus/rabbit.[114] In order to represent the art of Maurizio Cattelan, you must deny any tendency you may have to take yourself too seriously.

These works elegantly deploy humour to scrutinise the commercial dealings of the art world, whist obviously remaining complicit to these same operations. These installation/performance pieces are not saleable artworks, but they are contextualised from within the dealer gallery circuit. The narrative component to these works is clearly autobiographical: Cattelan inverts the power dynamics of the art world by subjecting (pun intended) his own art dealers to these ordeals - poking fun at the commercial and contractual reality of having a dealer represent your work.

Fig 2.5: Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick, *The Wrong Gallery* (2002-2005). Curatorial project.

Cattelan also assumes the authoritative position of curator to further his investigation of art world power dynamics. Together with the reknowned art writers (turned curators) Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick, Cattelan launched *The Wrong* Gallery in New York (fig. 2.5). Peering through the window of this expensive looking door, you might be greeted by a sign that read "Fuck Off, We're Closed".[115] That door, in fact, never opened to the public. With two and a half feet of floor space, The Wrong Gallery was the smallest exhibition space in New York. During the course of it's 3 year existence, the gallery exhibited the work of over 40 internationally acclaimed artists.[116] The 'closed' sign was actually an artwork too - by the British artist Adam McEwen.[117] In another artwork, Pawel Althamer hired two Polish illegal immigrants to smash in the door with a baseball bat every Saturday - "I think we had to change four or five doors in total," Cattelan recalls, "a good way to keep the window cleaned!"[118] The Wrong Gallery curators (Cattelan, Gioni and Subotnick) state that "*The Wrong Gallery* is the back door to contemporary art, and it's always locked".[119] Upon eviction from the original location, this 'back door to contemporary art' relocated to the third floor of the Tate Modern gallery in London – a knowingly problematic enterprise.

It is clear that Cattelan's projects are complicit with the very same power structures that his practice paradoxically subverts. At the original location in Chelsea, The Wrong Gallery utilised the basement of the Andrew Kreps Gallery - facing out on the opposite block. They added a '1/2' to Kreps' mailing address (516A 1/2) and used it as their own, they used the gallery's stationary, tools, telephone line, and they drank Krep's coffee. This parasitic relationship continues in their new location at the Tate Modern, where they continue to curate exhibitions bi-monthly.[120]

The Wrong Gallery's website is similarly parasitic - if you navigate to their domain (www.wronggallery.com) you receive a set of Google search results - presumably for the name of their current exhibiting artist. The domain remains in the navigation bar for the search results page, and also for all subsequent pages visited. The search page, and (as long as you do not type over the domain in the navigation bar) anywhere else you subsequently navigate to, is framed with the header "THE WRONG GALLERY PRESENTS: GET YOUR PIXEL!".

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113 This *tableaux vivant* was planned for a duration of three hours, but the piece was stopped short because De Carlo was having trouble breathing and needed to be rushed to hospital.

114 *Emmanuel Perrotin in a Rabbit-Penis Suit* (2000).

115 Turner, 2005.

116 The Wrong Gallery was in operation from 2002 to 2005. During that time, other artists featured in the space include Tomma Abts, Phil Collins, Martin Creed, Sam Durant, Mark Handsforth, Cameron Jamie, Paul McCarthy & Jason Rhoades, Elizabeth Peyton, Paola Pivi, Tino Sehgal, Shirana Shahbazi, and more. (Details accessed from a press release on the Tate Modern gallery's official website <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/wronggallery_15-12-05.htm>).

117 Turner, 2005.

118 Ibid.

119 Cited in Tate Modern gallery press release, see above.

120 Ibid.

But then again, this (very seamless) hack just might be a commissioned artwork too. At the time I visited, the search listed results for the net-art writer Molly von Hacker - it would be consistent with the aspirations of the 'neen'[121] movement (with which she is affiliated) to turn Google itself into one's own artwork.

Creating this sense of befuddlement (accessing the gallery's site I can only make educated guesses about who the artist is and what their work is) exemplifies Cattelan's sense of humour and his critical artistic strategy. Underpinning this humour, though, is a paradoxical sense that Cattelan is critical of the power structures of institutionalised art, but that there is an underlying complicity with these very same structures. *The Wrong Gallery* is, after all, currently underwritten by the Tate Modern. Sierra's work exposes the paradox of complicity through shock tactics (predominantly artworks involving exploitative labour conditions). Cattelan's work exposes the paradox with a knowing sense of humour.

The practical case studies cited in this chapter do not predominantly focus on the role of technology, but they do share the same cluster of ideological concerns that underpin bastard media artworks which are critical of technology. How, then, can self-reflexivity and humour be deployed to create an artwork which retains a theoretical focus on subjectivity but has a practical focus on technology?

[121] In 2000 the artist Miltos Manetas commissioned the California branding company Lexicon to create a name for the first art movement of the 21st century. From their shortlist of 100 words, 'Telic' and 'Neen' were selected. While 'telic' refers to the accepted (serious) uses of technology, 'neen' refers to artworks that use technology in new and unexpected ways, especially reconfiguring cheap/accessible technologies to create seamless and technically sophisticated new outcomes. Neen predominantly refers to net art and other purely digital work, and was introduced at a performance/press conference at the Gagosian Gallery in New York in 2000. Details accessed from Manetas' website: <http://www.manetas.com/eo/neen/>.

Fig 2.6: Daniel James**,** *School of Fine Arts* (2010). Installation (detail: head of robot).

Fig. 2.7: Daniel James**,** *School of Fine Arts* (2010). Installation (detail: gaffer tape).

The setting is a claustrophobic and windowless study/office space. A humanoid robot sits at a desk, staring at a computer screen. The robot is made from all manner of recycled materials – including parts from an old CCTV surveillance system. On the screen there is a video loop from the 1933 film **Tarzan the Fearless.** *The robot's roving eye watches on as the film's protagonist - the self proclaimed 'King of the Jungle' - repeatedly punishes a monkey. As the robot watches the screen, it also erratically taps it's finger on the button of a remote control device. Beside the robot's chair there is a small rubbish bin, containing a ball of gaffer tape. Each time the robot taps the remote control device, the ball of gaffer tape shuffles inside the rubbish bin.*

This is an odd cluster of images: an robot, a video loop from an early film, and a mechanised ball of gaffer tape - assembled together in an environment reminiscent of a study/office.

The title of this piece - *School of Fine Arts* – provides a preliminary cue for how to interpret this artwork. The title locates the artwork as inseperable from the heavily institutionalised contexts within which it operates, invoking the hegemonic structures of the university, and also those of the broader art world. Expanding on this, one could deduce that the robot is a self portrait.

The robot is constructed out of accumulated (mostly technological) debris. During my time studying at Massey University School of Fine Arts, I accumulated a large amount of broken technological equipment and other detritus - materials that could have just as easily ended up in a landfill. The robot was constucted using as much of that material as possible. This processual detail is somewhat periphery, but the important point is that I am portraying myself as an accumulation of existing products. The outcome is not, as McLuhan would argue, predetermined by the media I am using. The accumulation is not passive - I actively sought out these materials, and they are actively recontextualised and reconfigured. The artistic activity of recycling products is an assertion of my own power-knowledge - arising out of the process of participating in an educational institution.

A robot studies a video loop on a computer screen – footage from an early film, in which Tarzan punishes a monkey. In *Code Monkey 1.1*, a monkey is the creator (but also narcissistically the subject) of video footage. Here, a monkey is subject – subject to the king (of the jungle), a subject of the video, and also a subject of surveillance and scrutiny by the robot, and by the artwork's audience.

The monkey is subjugated by formations of power-knowledge. In other words - taking another cue from the title of the artwork - the monkey is a subject to learn about. By seeking to understand the monkey we subject it to our point of view, frame it by discursive formations. Some audience members might feel empathetic towards it (as a marginalised creature). Some might side with Tarzan's (unclear) motivations behind disciplining it. Either way, the monkey is framed and becomes subject. It is clear at the outset that this artwork does not present a singular position on the subject.

As demonstrated by two movements in art practice (Conceptual Art and Relational Aesthetics), utopian goals always set themselves up for failure. *School of Fine Arts* is not a specific criticism leveled at the ideologies of an educational institution - it is a reflection upon the condition of being subject in a broader sense. I (the author of *School of Fine Arts*) am obviously complicit in the hegemonic structures of university education, and thus I implicate myself in any concerns I might raise towards those structures. But my intention is also dead. As per Guattari's machinic heterogenesis, both humans and machines are evolutive, mutually affecting each other - and as such they must be treated holistically.

Fig 2.8: Daniel James, *School of Fine Arts* (2010). Installation (video still).

Q. What is the robot watching?

A. A looped sample from an early black and white movie.
B. The 'king of the jungle' asserting his authority.
C. Tarzan spanking a monkey.
D. All of the above.

A sample of Tarzan 'spanking the monkey' is a fairly low-brow visual double-entendre to offer as serious academic research. Does the artwork really aim to deride arts education as an instututionalised process of reflection upon masturbation?

It is not really that simple. *Tarzan the Fearless* was made in 1933 - one can safely assume that, at the time of the film's creation, the phrase did not hold the same connotations it does now. As with any cultural product, the film would have held a particular cluster of meanings for audiences in it's own time, but in a different time and place new meanings arise. The author's intention in the creation of *Tarzan the Fearless* is unknown (but as Barthes claims, this intention is not the primary source of meaning anyway). These shifts in meaning are highlighted by the fact that the footage can be recontextualised and framed differently (making editing decisions, sampling and looping).

Perhaps the robot is being educated in the fundamentals of critical thought: to be reflexive - to remain cogniscant of the fact that meaning is not singular. Audiences at the time of the release of *Tarzan the Fearless* would probably have only seen meaning B. The 'king of the jungle' asserting his authority.

The robot is watching an assertion of power - every cultural product is in fact an assertion of power-knowledge.

The robot recieves it's education by watching, but also by participating - by doing. It presses a button and controls something.

Q. What is the robot controlling?

A. A ball of gaffer tape (never perform without it).

Chapter 3

Low performance: the glitch and performativity

Medical Practitioners accused over Death of Siamese Twin

Troubled Medical Practitioners: Anaesthesia Associates

Anaesthesia Associates, a New Zealand based duo of medical practitioners, made a fatal error during a unique operation, the General Medical Council has heard.

Anaesthesia Associates - Dr. Daniel Untitled and Dr. Paul Rockwell - were performing medical procedures which were to be a world first: separating a siamese twin who shared the same heart - one party lived in Wellington and one party lived in cyberspace. Both patients tragically died during surgery, and reports claim malpractice by Anaesthesia Associates.

Anaesthesia Associates reached international acclaim after performing a number of medical procedures together whilst in geographically separate locations, using the latest in internet technology to successfully perform open heart surgery. Reunited in the same theatre as each other again, their first operation came to a tragic end.

Dr Daniel Untitled has denied serious professional misconduct.

The GMC is hearing the case in New Zealand because the doctors are on its medical register and are licensed to practice there.

Unique operation

The GMC's professional conduct committee heard how the siamese twin - known as 'Patient A and Patient B' - were admitted to the 'UpStage' theatre, the only operating theatre with an online facility - on 08 Aug 2008 for an operation to be separated.

Anaesthesia Associates were enlisted to conduct a complex procedure in which the patients were anaesthetised, and then complex audiovisual stimuli were administered to separate the twins. Reports claim that Dr. Untitled, who was educated in New Zealand, used a contraversial anaesthetic that had not been thoroughly tested in drug trials.

The committee heard that Anaesthesia Associates were fully aware of the risks of administering untested anaesthetics during the course of such a complex operation. Counsel for the GMC Helen Varley Jamieson said the decision was indefensible.

"It falls below the standards of competent medical practitioners," she said.

> **"Neither of these healthy patients should have died"**
> Helen Varley Jamieson, GMC Council

Dr. Untitled, speaking on behalf of Anaesthesia Associates, acknowledged that the decision caused the death of the patients.

He told the GMC committee: "Had they not had this anaesthetic, the patients would still have been alive."

But he added: "I have had great difficulties during a criminal trial and during this hearing in trying to get across the fact that large doses are not only permitted but required when experimenting with such unique procedures."

Evidence

Anaesthesia Associates are accused of illegally obtaining the controversial drug, and administering it without patient consent.

Anaesthesia Associates also accused of giving the patient an excessive amount of morphine and failing to keep adequate anaesthetic records.

Ms Jamieson told the disciplinary committee: "Neither of these healthy patients should have died. Their deaths were preventable."

"They were caused by culpable failures set out in the charges."

The case continues.

Low performance: the glitch and performativity

This chapter investigates the notion of the glitch, and how it relates to ideas about performance. To understand the technological glitch, we need to understand the physicality of recorded media - that data is encoded onto a physical surface (eg the surface of a CD, the hard disk of a computer), and that the changes to that physical surface will cause changes in the playback of the media. The glitch is identified as a slippage – it is a concrete example of what Deleuze and Guttari refer to as 'deterritorialisation'.

I will also investigate Jon McKenzie's expanded framework for 'performance', which encompasses the term in a cultural sense, a technological sense, and an organisational sense. In a technological sense of the term, we speak of how well a machine 'performs' the task it is designed for (for example a high-performance car). In a cultural sense of 'performance' (for example a theatrical performance), it encompasses a sense of enactment – of occupying a role, and playing out that role to an audience. In an organisational sense (for example the 'key performance indicators' of a business), the term encompasses the ability of an organisation to achieve it's goals. 'Performance', in an expanded sense of the term, is about success and failure, dominance and subjugation. As such, McKenzie describes performance as a stratum of the Foucauldian notion of power-knowledge, and he claims that, in an expanded sense, 'performance' will displace the Foucauldian notion of 'discipline'.[122]

Using technology in an art context integrates ideas about performance in cultural and technological senses of the term. A machine that glitches is *low performance* in a technological sense, but it can be *high performance* in a cultural sense. Turning to practical case studies, I will trace a trajectory of artists who deploy the glitch as a tactic to make their work - case studies are drawn from experimental film, video art and electronic music. While common understandings of the glitch usually refer to accidental/unintended outcomes, these case studies lead me to identify that the glitch can be a desired/intended outcome - to create simulacra of malfunction. This leads us to redefine the glitch as any slippage - either intentional or unintentional. These slippages can be purely formal (such as slippages in the aural/visual qualities of audio/video), but they can also be semantic - changes in meaning occur when these slippages take place.

The performance art tradition of exploring the physical limits of one's own body has obvious parallels to the exploration of technological limits through the glitch. The visceral performance artworks of the 1960s and 1970s - and more recent technologically mediated visceral works such as Stelarc's *Ping Body* - emphasise live, bodily experience. Despite these parallels, this tradition and it's strategies are not the focus of this research. The central concern of this investigation is modes of performance that explores 'enactment' rather than physical limits. These practices emphasise theatricality and mediatisation as the central concern. Robert Rauschenberg's performance practice will be highlighted, since his hybrid of performance art and theatre (as well as dance and other disciplines) provides a clear example of creating intertextual slippages of meaning by layering together seemingly incongruous images.

In other more recent performance practices, glitches are aestheticised and highlighted in a manner that directly integrates slippages of both formal qualities and meaning. One key recent case study is provided here – Avatar Body *Collision*'s *Trip the Light Fantastic* (2006) - a cyberformance artwork/project. This piece *highlights* the subterfuge of mediatised performance through live online theatre. In this project the audience experiences (and even becomes complicit in) the performative processes of deterritorialisation, and then reterritorialisation.

How can technologically enabled cultural performance embody an oscillating tension between high and low performance (in a sense that integrates both cultural and technological meanings of the term)? Further, is it possible to achieve this in a manner that scrutinises mediatised representations of identity more closely, in relation to mainstream media in a pop-cultural context?

This chapter concludes with Anaesthesia Associates, an audiovisual performance duo. I perform together with my collaborator Paul Bradley, creating live mashups[123] integrating audio and video material that is sampled predominantly from pop cultural sources - film, television and online videos; pop, rock, hiphop and dance musics.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how Anaesthesia Associates performs the glitch, creating slippages in both the formal qualities and the thematic content of live audiovisual performance.

The glitch

The term glitch is commonly used in a technical sense, to refer to any unintended and momentary occurrence that falls outside of the normal functioning of a machine. The term is also occasionally used to refer to a momentary lapse in the performance of almost any entity (person, organisation, *et cetera*). This research is concerned with the relevance of the term in cultural practice. 'Glitch' has a broader scope in the context of cultural production than when it simply refers to technical failure.

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[122] McKenzie, 2001, p. 18.

[123] In the sense it it used here, a mashup is a mix of two or more audio/video recordings to create a new product. I will discuss mashups in depth in Chapter 4.

The editor of *The Wire* magazine (UK) Rob Young further discusses the use of machine malfunction as a creative tool. Young identifies the technological glitch as a slippage (the German word *glitschen* means to glide, slide or slip), as well as its common usage as denoting a mechanical irregularity or malfunction.[124] Writing in the context of a magazine devoted to avant-garde music, the article specifically emphasises current approaches to digital sound composition. Young's articulation of the glitch as a compositional tool, however, overlaps significantly with the practices of artists working in other disciplines. He writes that the term "suggests simultaneously a slippage of gears or wheels – a failure to engage – and a scratch, a small nick in a smooth surface that recalls Gilles Deleuze's statement that the smoother the surface, the easier it is to deterritorialise".[125]

Where a functional equilibrium gives way to change, there is what Deleuze and Guattari call a decoding or 'deterritorialisation'. Deleuze and Guattari highlight the mouth, tongue and teeth as an illustrative example; the mouth, tongue and teeth find their primitive territoriality (their primary purpose) in the consumption of food, but they are deterritorialised in the articulation of sound (a function that is unrelated to the consumption of food), and they then find reterritorialisation (their new purpose) in the articulation of meaning.[126] With recorded or broadcast media, when the encoding of an object is broken, when a record needle skips or a television remote changes channel mid-syllable, there is a glitch, a slippage, and the sound or image is deterritorialised.

The medium of vinyl audio recording provides a particularly accessible example. The stylus is at a functional equilibrium when it is following the groove of a record smoothly. If the needle skips, the stylus is deterritorialised, finding a new territory either in a different section of the audio, or in the stuttering loop of repeated audio that results if it gets stuck. Note that the physicality of encoded media is very important here, a recording is an object with physical properties that can be disrupted. However, the prevailing orthodoxy for discussing digital media actually emphasises the opposite: the de-materialisation of the art object.

Recalling the etymology of the term 'glitch', the idea of a nick on a surface draws attention to the materiality embedded in the term. Digital media practices pivot upon the fact that ephemeral events can be encoded onto physical surfaces (the surface of a CD, the hard disk of a server[127] computer, and so forth), and that these surfaces can be manipulated and fragmented both physically and digitally. I therefore position the term glitch under the banner of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialisation: a glitch *dis-places* encoded data that was previously operating at an equilibrium.

While the term 'glitch' is normally associated with accidental, unintended outcomes, we know that these decodings are commonly considered to be desirable and intended outcomes in cultural production. Since even failures or mistakes are subsequently reappropriated, I also posit that a working definition of the glitch must be broad enough to include the deliberate decoding of information. The intentional remixing of cultural products and unintentional machine failure both enable the deterritorialisation of encoded data, encouraging the generation of new meanings – meanings that diverge from the initial encoding.

While common understandings of the technological glitch define it in terms of an unintentional slippage, in the cultural sense of the term we have seen that the term 'glitch' can be defined as any slippage (intentional or otherwise) - any tactic to upset the equilibrium that encoded information attains. This formulation of the technological glitch overlaps considerably with the notion of performance. As noted above, glitches are associated with failure in the performance of a technological machine. Once the glitch is redefined to incorporate deliberate slippages, the concept overlaps considerably with other senses of the term 'performance'.

Performance and performativity

As a thinker with a history of both hacktivism[128] and performance scholarship, the cultural theorist Jon McKenzie is well equipped to introduce the notion of performance as it intersects with technology in cultural practice. McKenzie discusses an unusual relationship between the term 'performance' as it is used in cultural, organisational, and technological contexts. The words 'perform' and 'performance' can be used to refer to the actions of an artist creating work, to the ability of a business or organisation to achieve it's desired goals, or to the ability of a technological machine to behave in the way that it was designed to.[129] McKenzie researches the relationships between these three senses of the word, and discovers that they overlap considerably.

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124 Young, 1999, p. 48.

125 Ibid.

126 Deleuze and Guattari, 1975.

127 A server is a computer system that provides services to other computing systems - called clients - over a computer network. When connecting to the internet to view a webpage, the server is the computer that stores the information, and serves that information to its audience.

128 A hactivist, or politically motivated hacker, is someone who gains unauthorised entry into computer systems that are owned by another person or organisation for political reasons.

129 McKenzie, 2001.

An examination of the work of Judith Butler is central to any discussion of cultural performance. Butler famously theorises gender, sex, and sexuality as performative. She describes the gender distinctions of male and female as not essentially and naturally defined, but rather these distinctions are dictated by societal constructions.[130] To achieve this Butler borrows from the work of the French poststructuralist thinker Michel Foucault. The 'regulative discourses'[131] that Foucault describes are socially constructed, and Butler goes on to argue that we perform gender as a role.

Butler's seminal work in the field of gender studies has had an immense impact upon the field of (cultural) performance studies. Her work implies the broader idea that elements of our identity (such as gender) are not fixed, but rather performed – and it follows that these elements will be performed differently according to shifts in context.

Jon McKenzie's reading of the notion of performance takes its lead from Butler's work. McKenzie's framework investigates how performance is a stratum of power-knowledge, and how the paradigms of performance management (organisational performance), performance studies (cultural performance), and techno-performance (technological performance) can be bound together to form blocks of knowledge. He situates the movement of performance within a matrix of socio-technical and onto-historical forces, which allows deviation into idiosyncratic passages of experience, but the movement of performance also simultaneously creates new paradigms of knowledge.[132]

'Performance', in an organisational sense of the term, refers to how well an organisation (corporation, non-profit organisation, government agency, *et cetera*) achieves it's goals. In a cultural sense of the term, 'performance' refers fundamentally to expressions such as theatre, dance, music, 'performance art', and a myriad of more recent forms. In a technological sense of the term, we refer to how well a machine performs the task it is designed for - the 'performance specifications' of the technological object.

Both Butler and McKenzie are heavily indebted to Foucault. McKenzie even makes the bold forecast that "performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth, that is, an onto-hostorical formation of power and knowledge".[133] 'Performance', in an expanded sense of the term, is about success and failure, dominance and subjugation.

If hegemonic power is constructed by *high* performance (in all three senses of the word), then what about it's subjugated other - *low* performance, or the failure to perform. What does this failure look like in art practice? I will investigate technological performance through a study of the glitch in art practice, focussing on cultural production in music and in video/film. I will also look at failure in cultural performance, through an investigation of visceral performance art, and it's trajectory towards mediatisation and theatricality.

The glitch in cultural practice

Fig. 3.1: David Hall, *This is a Television Receiver* (1976). Video (stills).

David Hall's seminal video work *This is a Television Receiver* (1976, fig. 3.1) is an artwork commissioned by the BBC as the opening credits in their *Arena Video Art* programme. In this piece,

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130 Butler, 1990.

131 According to Foucault, people do not have a 'real' identity within themselves, but rather discourses are constructed to enable communication about the self. An 'identity' is communicated to others by interactions with them, but this is not a fixed thing within a person. It is a shifting, temporary construction. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, entitled *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault disagrees with the "repressive hypothesis" that the last three hundred years have been characterised by a tendency to repress our sexual desires, and more importantly, the tendency to repress discourse about them (1978). Foucault's position asserts that discourses surrounding sexuality have only intensified in the last three centuries, and that the regulation of these discourses is a social construction.

132 McKenzie, 2001.

133 Ibid, p.18.

> "Richard Baker [the well known newsreader] describes the essential paradoxes of the real and imagined functions of the TV set on which he appears. The second shot is taken optically off a monitor, the third copied from the second, and so on, until there is a complete degeneration of both sound and image, removing the newsreader from his position of authority...".[134]

Compare this piece to a recent artwork by another seminal video artist. In Bill Viola's *The Messenger* (1996), a large video projection depicts a rippling shimmer of light against a blue/black background. This shimmer slowly expands into a figure - a man slowly rising towards the surface of a deep body of water, who eventually surfaces to take a breath. Both artworks share a formal device: a central figure is distorted by the properties of an external medium. In Viola's artwork, water acts as a medium to refract light and distort the central figure. In Hall's artwork, a technological mechanism (optically copying a video recording) is exploited to a similar end.

The skipping and stuttering 'glitches' of technology disrupt the normal operation of machines. As in David Hall's seminal work in the 1970s, as each new technology is developed, artists will inevitably find processes that exploit the limits of the mechanism.

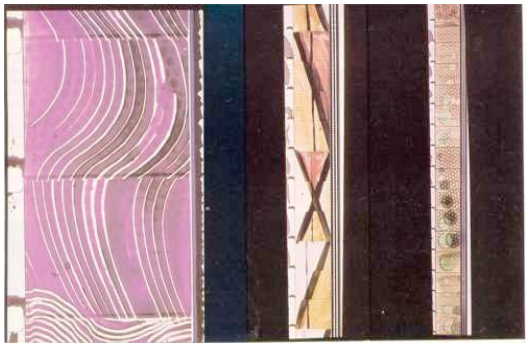

Fig: 3.2: Len Lye, *A Colour Box* (1935). Film stills.

The methodology of abusing film/video technology did not originate in the 1960s, however. The New Zealand artist Len Lye's practice spans photography, sculpture, film and batik, but his immensely influential early film work is especially pivotal as a reference point in any discussion of the glitch. Lye's early film work was especially notable for his tactics of "scratching, painting and printing directly onto film plates" (see fig. 3.2), disposing of the need for expensive camera equipment.[135] Deploying these techniques as early as 1935,[136] his practice of abusing the available technologies of the time clearly foreshadowed later analogue and digital practices both in New Zealand and abroad.[137]

Over the decades, the indeterminacy[138] of machine malfunction has increasingly become a desired and deliberate outcome. The frailty of digital media is frequently celebrated as a convergence of format and aesthetic. The 'glitches' of digital media technology disrupt the normal operation of recorded media, but they also contribute to the production of new and unexpected meanings. For example, composer Kim Cascone is well known for his "microsound" compositions, exploring the textural details of digital sound. He refers to the precariousness of the digital signal, and proposes an 'æsthetics of failure', celebrating the sonic effects of glitches, bugs, and errors. He uses the term "post-digital", examining the detritus produced by the failure of electronic equipment.[139] Cascone's peer Oval is also noted for reappropriating digital glitches to produce his audio (deliberately scratching the physical surfaces of CDs and so forth). Cascone and Oval were leading figures of the glitch music movement, and since this movement gained momentum in the 1990s, the appropriation of machine error has become commonplace. Low performance in a technological sense can be aestheticised as high performance in a cultural sense. So much so, that the term glitch is also now associated with *simulacra* of malfunction. This is evidenced by the development of software that is *designed* to process data in a manner that simulates the sound (or look) of digital failure.[140]

Performance (art)

Artwork that scrutinises technological limits has a clear parallel in another mode of practice – art that investigates the limits of biological bodies. While I will give a brief overview of the field of visceral performance to provide some context, my focus is on differentiating it from the specific field of performance that is mediated by technology. I am especially interested in slippages of meaning, and it is prescient to initiate this part of the discussion with an artist who's strategies in performance practice are seminal for that reason.

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134 Krikorian, 1984, p. 22.

135 Clifford, 2008, p. 114.

136 *A Colour Box* – an advertisement for parcel post - was the first 'direct film' to be screened to a general audience in 1935.

137 The Canadian animator Norman McLaren was a 'direct film' peer/collaborator of Lye's. Later Stan Brakhage also used direct film tactics (eg *Mothlight*, 1963), and many more recent artists have followed suit, Some recent examples include Pierre Hebert (*Memories of War*, 1982), Cathy Joritz (*Negative Man*, 1985) and Steven Woloshen (*Ditty Dot Comma*, 2001). Speaking more broadly, the tactics of drawing/scratching/painting on film slides foreshadow other later processes for making recorded media 'malfunction', by intervening directly onto the analogue or digital media.

138 The notion of indeterminacy (employing chance processes) as a compositional strategy in music dates back to two lectures delivered by John Cage in 1958 and 1959 respectively (and he subsequently published these ideas in 1961). Cage differentiates between 'indeterminacy of composition' and 'indeterminacy of performance'. The glitch movement in music is heavily indebted to Cage's ideas.

139 Cascone, 2000.

140 Some popular audio software packages that I have personally used include Reaktor, Ableton Live, Max/MSP, and Reason, but there are numerous other software/plugins that simulate the effect of glitches in various ways for audio and video.

In addition to his well-known oeuvre of painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking and photography, the artist Robert Rauschenberg has made substantial and groundbreaking contributions to the development of dance, theatre and performance art since the 1950s.[141]

> "At it's core and in many of it's forms, Rauschenberg's art is performative: it exists literally in time or bears the layered traces of it's production; it presents the body in motion or reacts to the motion of it's audience members; and, above all, it seeks to invoke senses beyond the purely visual."[142]

Rauschenberg has sustained a career-long engagement with theatre, dance and performance,[143] hybridising them with other visual arts disciplines. There is a clear overlap between his strategies in performance/choreography and those of his painting/printmaking work. Rauschenberg layers images gleaned from pop cultural sources (predominantly referencing stereotypical American iconography), massing these images together in such a way that they can coexist without necessarily evoking a sense of cause and effect.[144] In *Spring Training* (1965), for example,

> "a watermelon wrapped in a small carpet bearing the image of John F. Kennedy was carried around the stage by dancer wearing a portable screen onto which slides of canned food, the city skyline, and the Empire State Building, among other things, were projected."[145]

Rauschenberg uses multiple images which would have already been familiar to the audience as iconic media and advertising images, but by layering these images he contests the linearity and congruity with which these familiar images are normally experienced. Whilst the strategies of Rauschenberg's early dance/theatre projects (layering up iconographic images) cannot be considered as *technological failures*, they are clear examples of how I have defined the glitch in a cultural sense – as slippages of meaning which upset the functional equilibrium to generate new meanings. In Rauschenberg's performance work this occurs through the layering of projected images (as described with *Spring Training*), but also through props and set design elements (for example an oversize American flag that is unfurled in *Linoleum*, 1966), and costume elements (such as the automobile tyres attached to the legs of dancer Steve Paxton in *Map Room II*, 1965).

It is important to consider Rauschenberg's strategies in the context of other artistic activity at the time. "I don't call my theatre pieces Happenings", Rauschenberg explains in a 1965 interview, "...because my understanding of Happenings is that they came out of a desire painters had who were working with objects, or objects were their content, their subject, a desire to animate those materials."[146] Since Rauschenberg's work substantially blurs the disciplines of 'theatre' and 'performance art' - and his projects preceed the rise of 'performance art' as a movement - it is crucial to differentiate between what is meant by these overlapping terms.

The term 'performative' (the adjectival form of 'performance'), as coined by the philosopher J. L. Austin in 1955, "refers to a class of expressions that are not descriptive, and have no truth value, but rather in their very utterance *do* something (I bet..., I promise...).[147] 'Theatre', conversely, is usually understood to refer to expressions that *are* descriptive - in a theatrical work a set of characters are enacted in order to describe a narrative. In theatre, then, the bodies of performers enter roles which are outside of their own inherent subjectivity - while performing in a theatrical sense, actors embody the words, sensations and actions of the characters with subjectivities that are 'other' to their own experience.

The term 'performance art' came to the fore in the late 1960's,[148] where artists such as Joseph Beuys, Yoko Ono, Herman Nitsch, Chris Burden, Marina Abramovic and numerous others began incorporating their own bodies into their artworks, for the specific purpose of scrutinising their *own* subjectivity.

> "It was as though every maker of art at that time... had enrolled in an experimental laboratory, where each ingredient in the entire art-making process would be scrutinised under a powerful microscope and entirely reconfigured: the way the eyes see, the way the body feels, the way the mind orders connections between sight, sound, words, and sensations."[149]

Chris Burden's notorious *Shoot* (1971) is an iconic example of early performance art practice. In this piece, the artist commissioned an assistant to literally shoot him in the arm in front of a gallery audience, and the action was also committed to film. In this piece, and in Burden's other work of the period, we see a visceral scrutiny of the artist's own body and subjectivity.

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141 Hopps, 1997, p. 20.

142 Spector, 1997, p. 228.

143 Rauschenberg has "manifold accomplishments as a set, costume and lighting designer, choreographer and performer [which] dovetail with his innovations in painting, sculpture and printmaking" (ibid, p. 229).

144 Spector, 1997, p. 236.

145 Ibid.

146 Cited in Spector, 1997, p. 240.

147 The concept was first articulated in a series of lectures in 1955, and published subsequently in 1975 (Austin, 1975, p. 241).

148 The performance art movement is commonly understood to have gained cultural currency in the 1960s, but the notion of performance in fine art is commonly traced back to antecedents in Dada (eg Tristan Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck) and Italian and Russian Futurism (eg Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, David Burliuk).

149 Goldberg, 2004, p. 178.

The limits of technological machines have been a focus for some artists over the decades, and similarly, the limits of the artist's own physical body and subjectivity has been a key focus for performance art practice. Scrutinising subjectivity through a visceral investigation of the limits of one's own body, however, is not the focus of this research.

Updating her substantive oeuvre which traces the genealogy of performance art,[150] RoseLee Goldberg identifies an everpresent 'figuration' in performance practice. The body - the figure in performance – is central to practices such as Burden's, which viscerally highlight the artist's own physicality and subjectivity. She goes on to argue that

> "[w]hether in film or installation, photography and even painting, actions are tied to objects, to audiences and to exhibition spaces in ways that incorporate earlier performance art strategies, and co-opt their instructions to make art from direct, unmediated experience."[151]

Goldberg's position privileges only one facet of current performance art. The visceral, live,[152] empathetically 'felt' experience certianly retains currency in some facets of contemporary performance practice, but certain sub-stratum of performance actually highlight the *mediation*[153] of the figure.

The *mediatised* figure has gained cultural currency as an end in itself in performance practice. The figure, as expressed in performance that integrates technology, can also be treated in a manner that renders the mediatisation explicit. Goldberg does concede that the distinctions between performance art and other 'new media' have become quite blurred, but the majority of her thinking still favours the 'real', lived, and unmediated experience.[154]

Stelarc's *Ping Body* is a clear example of a visceral performance piece which is both live *and* mediated by technology - the artist's own body is controlled by the ebb and flow of networked data. As I noted in chapter 1, technology quite literally extends of the biological body. Stelarc's piece can be seen as a performance of the glitch too. Data is repurposed (deterritorialised) from its original context in order to control the artist's muscular movement. This certainly creates a slippage in formal terms, and also with respect to the meaning of the encoded data. Stelarc's work, however is a celebration of technological mediation. I am more interested in the opposite - a scrutiny of the ways in which technology mediates meaning.

The very nature of mediation/mediatisation has become a focus for investigation in some current performance practice, deploying glitches (in my expanded view of the term - slippages of both formal qualities and meaning) to actually *highlight* the subterfuge of the mediating technologies.

Avatar Body *Collision* **and cyberformance**

> *"She spent hours at the computer screen looking at a live-streaming video feed from the edge of a two lane road in a city in Finland. It was the middle of the night in Kotka, in Finland, and she watched the screen. It was interesting to her because it was happening now, as she sat here, and because it happened twenty-four hours a day, facelessly, cars entering and leaving Kotka, or just the empty road in the dead times. The dead times were the best. She sat and looked at the screen. It was compelling to her, real enough to withstand the circumstance of nothing going on."*
> Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist*[155]

The term cyberformance describes emergent cultural practices where live performers come together in real-time over the internet to create performance works.[156] Using the internet as a platform, the globally dispersed cyberformance troupe Avatar Body *Collision*[157] approach the challenge that this dispersed simultaneity poses for contemporary live theatre. The four members of the troupe are Helen Varley Jamieson (Brisbane), Vicki Smith (Harihari), Leena Saarinen (Helsinki),

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150 For example, see Goldberg, 1979 and Goldberg, 1988.

151 Goldberg, 2004, p. 178.

152 Philip Auslander's book *Liveness* (1999) investigates the notion that media technology has encroached on live events such as theatre, rock music, sport, and courtroom testimony, reaching a point where the 'live' elements to these events are hardly present. Auslander describes a pattern where the mediatised form was historically modelled on the live form, but goes on to outline how the mediatised form eventually displaces the live form's position in the cultural economy.

153 The term 'mediation' was first used in a legal sense - two parties that cannot communicate directly with one another require a mediator. The term 'mediation', and increasingly the term 'mediatised', are used to describe the ways that technology can be used to shift context, and therefore to shift meaning.

154 Goldberg has recently changed tack, arguing for the re-creation of performance artworks, and for the value of documentation of performance works. She states that "[t]hough the value of access to the "real thing" in museums should never be underestimated, […] the artwork that leaves nothing or little behind [lacks] the kind of shorthand taken for granted in discussions of the "solid arts." We may even be using the problems of reproducibility as an excuse for this ignorance" (Goldberg, 2004).

155 DeLillo, 2001, p. 48.

156 See <http://www.cyberformance.org> for more information. During the course of this doctoral research, I have undertaken a number of curatorial projects addressing cyberformance practice. My curatorial projects *Intimacy and In.yer.face* (2006), *Séance for Nam June Paik* (2008) and the *080808* and *090909 UpStage Festivals* (2008 and 2009 respectively, co-curated with Helen Varley Jamieson and Vicki Smith) all had live internet performance components. While these projects have been a significant part of my creative process, a detailed discussion of cyberformance practice and these curatorial projects is outside the scope of this research – to properly survey cyberformance practice would be a new endeavour in its own right. The case study here is provided as an antecedent to my work as a performer, not my work in the capacity of curator.

157 The italics on the word 'collision' are part of the name of the performance troupe.

and Karla Ptacek (London). Their practice thematically explores the relationship of the body to the machine, and what it means to be human in a world of intelligent machines.

Their project *Trip the Light Fantastic* (2006) originated in a proposed artist's residency at Solar Circuit Aotearoa New Zealand (hereafter SCANZ) in New Plymouth, New Zealand. Some of the members of the troupe have never actually met each other face to face (although they have been performing together online for around 5 years): this residency was to be the first time that the four members of the troupe would all be in the same place at the same time.

Unfortunately, some funding fell through, meaning that the two Europe-based members of the troupe (Karla and Leena) could not travel to New Zealand. Avatar Body *Collision* rose to the occasion. They decided to proceed with the residency *as though* all four women were there. Accomodation was booked for Karla and Leena, and during the residency Helen and Vicki carried on talking to everybody concerned as though the other two were actually there. All four women contributed to a fictional blog,[158] photoshopping[159] each other into photographs (see fig. 3.3 - note the deliberate slippages in the formal qualities of the image as well as the subterfuge of meaning), and telling stories about the mischief that they were getting up to. Karla and Leena were perpetually getting into trouble: getting stuck in the snow, running away for nights on the town, and so on. That's why nobody ever saw them in the flesh. But they *were* there…

Fig. 3.3: Avatar Body *Collision*, *Trip the Light Fantastic* (2006). Cyberformance (photoshopped image from blog).

> "Finally were are all here and working together as a group. We are hugging a lot to make up all those years when couldn't but virtually ")kiss" & ")pop"."[160]

The two week residency culminated in a performance at the Govett Brewster Gallery in New Plymouth. In front of an onsite audience, Helen and Vicki played on their UpStage[161] platform, while they waited (and waited) for the other two to show up at the venue.

Eventually, Helen started getting text messages from Leena: she was in Auckland, she had been arrested for breaking into the zoo… But it was OK though, she had bribed the prison guard with a bottle of her high quality Finnish duty free, and she could turn up online on a webcam. And so the performance progressed. At the end, to a room full of shocked faces, it was announced that Karla had been in London and Leena had been in Helsinki the whole time.

Here we see a performance project that certainly does not operate within a confined notion of space. The artists perform from globally dispersed locations, and the theatrical stage is expanded - to encompass a blog, and also the physical space of the SCANZ residency accomodation in New Plymouth - the performance took place over the entire two week duration of the residency, it was not confined to half an hour on a stage in a theatre at the Govett Brewster Gallery. The 'audience' even become complicit 'actors' - during the course of the resdency some of the artists/visitors did become aware of the deception about Karla and Leena's presence in New Plymouth, but after reaching this realisation, without fail each person decided to propogate the stories themselves too.[162]

In this performance project we see how divergent subjectivities can be stitched back together through the process of mediatisation. The artists exploit the theatrical spectacle of mediatised performance to expose it's very mechanisms. The audience experiences (and even becomes complicit in) the performative processes of deterritorialisation, and then reterritorialisation.

How might technologically enabled cultural performance embody an oscillating tension between high and low performance (in a sense that integrates both cultural and technological meanings of the term)? Further, is it possible to achieve this in a manner that scrutinises mediatised representations of identity more closely, in relation to mainstream media in a pop-cultural context?

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158 In small print, the heading for the blog read 'this is a journal of a great meeting that never happened'. This blog can be accessed at <http://bodycollision.blogspot.com>.

159 The term 'photoshopped' describes images that have been digitally manipulated using the software Adobe Photoshop (or, idiomatically, any other image manipulation software). In its idiomatic usage, the term commonly has undertones of deliberate 'falsification'.

160 From http://bodycollision.blogspot.com>

161 See <http://www.upstage.org.nz>. UpStage is an open-source piece of software that is used in the performances of Avatar Body *Collision*. Members of the cyberformance troupe are on the UpStage project team, but UpStage is also used by a growing list of other cyberformers around the globe as well.

162 I know this to be a fact from personal communication with the artists (who are friends and long term collaborators of mine) and also through interactions with numerous others attending the residency.

Anaesthesia Associates

Fig. 3.4: Anaesthesia Associates, *I Miss You, Great to See You Again* (2007). Performance (video still: *Intimacy* conference, Goldsmiths College, University of London).

The setting is a party. Two men, dressed as doctor and nurse, stand behind a bank of electronic equipment, performing a live mix of audio and projected video. The audio has a pounding four-to-the-floor electro rhythm. The video is quick-cut. "A jazz double bass player in black and white, people in a reastaurant toasting, dancers in a nightclub (Is that Jack Black? What movie's that from?), oh, that Outkast 'Happy Valentines Day' song, Sarah Jessica Parker, scratching and chopping up Sex and the City characters, black and white violinist, haha it's the Spice Girls, is that Muriel's Wedding, the riff from 'Sweet Child of Mine', was that a bit from Nine Inch Nails?"

The performances of Anaesthesia Associates are high energy (electro/dance music with fast-cut video) and highly theatrical (we assume various archetypal performance characters: 1980's rock heroes, doctor and nurse, and others). Performances take place across a number of contexts: we have performed numerous gigs at bars, clubs and music festivals; we have performed to gallery audiences; and we have presented 'cyberformances' to online audiences and/or proximal (onsite) audiences.[163]

In the performances of Anaesthesia Associates (especially those performances situated in a traditional art context: galleries, conferences), a theatrical tension exists between high and low art. The work deploys audiovisual samples from popular (and frequently low-brow) mainstream media, but the resulting performance is framed as high art. This tension is deliberate.

Glitches (slippages of meaning) deterritorialise the audiovisual subject matter to create irreverent and iconoclastic new meanings. The performances, for example, invoke gender politics heavily. Numerous instances of how gender identity is 'performed' in mainstream media (romantic comedies, love songs) are spliced together in quick succession. Juxtapositions ensure that the viewer is not presented with a singular view of gender. Instead, they are presented with recontextualised information from varying points along a continuum of mainstream media representations of maleness and femaleness. The theme of gender also implicates our own bodies as performers. While we mix/manipulate samples of others performing their gender roles, we also *enact* gender-archetypal roles through costume changes and/or avatars: doctor and nurse; camp glam rock heroes.

[163] In *The Best Air Guitar Album in the World, Ever, Vol. II* (2007), for example, we performed to an onsite audience at the Film Archive Gallery in Wellington, and the performance was also simultaneously experienced by an online audience. Conversely, in *I Miss You, Great to See You Again* (2008), I performed onsite to a proximal audience at Goldsmiths University in London, while Paul performed online in real time from New Zealand. There was no online audience for that piece.

Fig. 3.5: Anaesthesia Associates, *The Best Air Guitar Album in the World, Ever, Vol. II* (2007). Performance (photograph: *070707 UpStage Festival*, NZ Film Archive, Wellington).

The gender undercurrent is paired with images of performance itself. The aspiration to perform - the desire for attention and adoration - is encapsulated/exaggerated in samples of air guitarists, which are juxtaposed with 'real' musicians, samples of mainstream hit music, samples of dancers, dancing and dance lessons, and samples of film and television actors playing their roles.

The tension between high- and low- performance in a cultural sense operates in parallel to a tension in a technological sense of 'performance' - between high and low technology. High technology equipment is used to create slippages that subvert the production values of the mainstream media in their original form. Some (but not all) samples are low quality: video is sampled directly from compressed online sources even though the source material was originally produced at broadcast quality; audio is sampled from mp3s rather than full resolution audio files even though the music that has been sampled was initially professionally recorded. Additional filters and effects exaggerate the degree of degradation from the source. This the is 'glitch' as deliberate technological slippage, a simulacra of malfunction.

Similar to Avatar Body Collision's *Trip the Light Fantastic*, Anaesthesia Associates' performances are heavily self-referential - it is performance about technological mediation/mediatisation, performance about performance. Our performances, however, focus more directly upon the mediatising influence of mainstream media such as television and radio. We create a theatre of slippage – slippages of meaning which upset the functional equilibrium to generate new meanings: slippages in mediatised representations of identity, slippages in our own identities as performers, and the simulacra of technological slippage.

Anaesthesia is the noun for insensibility to pain or other sensation. Anaesthetic is the drug that performs the task. *An:* without.

The samples we select are "based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste ... in fact a complete anaesthesia."[164]

The iconoclastic audiovisual performances of Anaesthesia Associates encompass an oscillating tension between high- and low-performance: in a technological sense (how technology performs); in a cultural sense (how/what we perform as artists); and to a lesser degree in an organisational sense (we are called Anaesthesia *Associates* after all, it is our business to operate in this theatre). I shall reiterate the first two meanings.

Anaesthesia Associates is a high-tech performance. We mix audio and video in real time, variously using a range of equipment: computers, DVJs, turntables, synthesisers, a hardware sampler, a midi controller, an audio mixer, a video mixer, and sometimes an online performance platform, a microphone, a camera or two, and an electric bass. The aestheticised glitches (pixellation, bad video compression, low bit-rate audio compression) are tightly controlled, and they (usually) behave exactly as they are supposed to. The glitch is an aesthetic device, and that slippage is a desired outcome which is tightly controlled by technology. As well as being a formal aesthetic device, however, the glitch also denotes slippage of meaning.

Anaesthesia Associates is a high-art performance. We take hegemonic representations of identity (predominantly gender and sexuality) from their original context in mainstream media, and recontextualise the samples by editing and juxtaposing them. We also edit and recontextualise our own identites in performance, creating mixed, slippery and multiple representations about our own subjectivities. *We must be high art – we perform at galleries sometimes. We have performed at an internationally peer-reviewed 'performance art' conference in London. We have been published about in a book called The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader.*

Nah, we're pretty low-brow really. We sample from cheesy romantic comedies and famous love songs. We play dress-ups - doctors and nurses, glam rock gods. And we do it to a thumping four-to-the-floor electro beat. Actually speaking of rock gods, in that book I mentioned, there was an image of my avatar - my face was photoshopped onto Axl Rose's body, and I was saying "Make some fuckin' noise.."

[164] In our performances, a list of references is *not* provided to contextualise the samples used. Similarly, if you recognise this footnoted phrase, that's fantastic, good for you! If you do not recall encountering the phrase anywhere else prior, then you are limited to interpreting it from its new context alone. Sorry about that.

Chapter 4

Informational delirium: the normative dimension to the mashup

***** PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE *****

Copycat Crime releases two brilliant new albums simultaneously.

Copycat Crime has made the rare move of releasing two full-length albums simultaneously: *Copycat Crime's Ultimate Partymix Album*, and *Copycat Crime's Penultimate Partymix Album.* These two albums are attracting rapid critical acclaim – far exceeding the expectations that are inherent in **Copycat Crime**'s gregarious dual claim to **ultimacy** and **penultimacy**.

Copycat Crime's Ultimate Partymix Album features mashup remixes of numerous party hits past and present. The album nimbly traverses and reconciles megahits of popular music, to create a seamless flow that truly is far more than the sum of it's parts. Sampling predominantly from rock, pop, hiphop, house/electro and electronica, this album deftly mixes together artists such as **Dire Straits**, **Eminem**, **50 Cent**, **Nena**, **Jay Z**, **The Beastie Boys**, **Bangers and Cash**, **Brittany Spears**, **Robbie Williams**, **Twisted Sister**, **Queen**, **Joan Jett**, **Robbie Williams**, **Outkast**, **Def Leppard**, **Dr. Dre**, **Roots Manuva**, **Del the Funky Homosapien**, **Village People**, **Missy Elliott**, **Daft Punk**, **Kiss**, **Benny Benassi**, **Public Enemy**, **Rage Against the Machine**, **Madonna**, T**echnotronic**, **Akon**, **Tupac Shakur** and **The Eagles**.

Copycat Crime's Penultimate Partymix Album is a more left-of-field offering. This album certainly offers healthy doses of megahits by chart-topping artists such as **50 Cent**, **Dire Straits**, **Timbaland**, **AC/DC**, **The Bangles**, **Beastie Boys**, **Right Said Fred**, **New Order**, **Outkast**, **Van Halen**, **House of Pain**, **Pointer Sisters**, **EMF**, **Bon Jovi**, **Michael Jackson**, **INXS**, **The Chemical Brothers**, **Public Enemy**, **Guns 'n' Roses**, **Benny Benassi**, **Basement Jaxx**, **Queen** and **Snoop Dogg**, but there are also a few tracks from slightly left of field - such as **Beck**, **Aphex Twin**, **Peaches**, **The Pixies**, **Lyrics Born**, **MIA**, **DJ Vadim** and **Kraftwerk**.

Fans have eagerly anticipated an album length release ever since **Copycat Crime**'s runaway hit *Material Beat* (mixing together **Madonna**'s *Material Girl* with **Michael Jackson**'s *Beat It*) appeared on **YouTube**. This video was uploaded shortly after the **tragic death** of the **King Of Pop**, and it attracted an astonishingly low **112 views** during it's first two months online. The track also featured on the comilation *My Life With Madonna* (included with issue 34 of the zine *Incredibly Hot Sex with Hideous People*).

Copycat Crime is a pseudonym for the Wellington (NZ) based DJ/producer **Dan Untitled**. These two exclusive albums are available as **CDR** copies or as **mp3s** if you manage to **make friends with the artist** at a **party**.

***** END RELEASE *****

Informational Delirium: The Normative Dimension to the Mashup

This chapter focuses on the cultural phenomenon and critical possibilities of the mashup. Generally speaking, a mashup is a combination of material from two or more sources to create a new product. In a web design context, the term refers to a site which combines information (aggregates content) from two or more existing websites to create a new website.[165] The term 'mashup' is also commonly used, however, in a *cultural* context to refer to the combination of preexisting cultural products (music, film and video) to create new cultural products. In the cultural sphere, digital products can be easily copied and recontextualised – juxtaposed with other digital products to create new (and often unexpected) cultural resonances.

Firstly, to locate this cultural phenomenon theoretically, I shall investigate the notion of the simulacrum – a copy which is so far removed from it's original that it can hardly be considered to be a copy at all. Jean Baudrillard famously argued that a copy does not actually refer to the the real, but that it becomes a new real in it's own right which is more real than the original – a hyperreal. Further, Baudillaird posited that 'nothing exists outside of the simulacrum' - that we live in a world of endlessly replicating signs which point to one another.

Baudrillard's view is problematised by Massumi's interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari's work – that the simulacrum actually constitutes a space between the real and the copy. Massumi's work is critical about Baudrillard's bleak nihlistic position – which frames the simulacrum as encompassing only external, superficial (subjective) relations between signs, and does not allow for any objectivity. Reading Deleuze and Guattari, Massumi reconfigures the simulacra to encompass all relations – both objective and subjective. Redefining the simulacra to encompass all relations, however, makes the term far too vague to be of any use. Even if the simulacrum, as Baudrillard describes it, is a problematic concept, it is still more useful to have a term which has a clearly defined scope. Further, even though a singular, absolute view of reality is naïve, the realm of art pertains to creating passages of experience – signs point to phenomena in life which are *experientially real*. The subjectivity of art needs to be underpinned to a certain degree by a sense of something tangible. I posit that this space between the real and it's copy is a continuum, and that I need to reorient myself somewhere along that continuum (that is, in relation to both concepts).

Shifting the focus to the experiential implications of living in a world of endlessly replicating signs, I turn to a theoretical framework for understanding displacement. Foucault's notion of the heterotopia is reviewed - the heterotopia is a space which is simultaneously mythic and real, and which challenges a linear understanding of time. As opposed to the 'fundmentally unreal' utopia – the heterotopia is described as a real space, which exists primarily to contest other real spaces. Foucault's ideas are especially applicable where he describes the heterotopia as capable of justaposing several real sites that are, in and of themselves, incompatible (giving the library as an example) - a notion which clearly frames the cultural phenomenon of the mashup.

The state of transition where we experience these displacements can be described as liminal – a state which is characterised by ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy. A problem arises in that we live in a hyperreal cultural climate in which, as Jon McKenzie notes, liminality is the norm.[166] If the liminal state is now the norm, it begs the question of whether heterotopias still actually function to contest established 'reals'. Unlike McKenzie, however, I do not believe that this normative dimension to liminality is a fault. The core issue is actually one of *assimilation* – that artists will always try to contest established norms (of cultural practice), but these liminal strategies will also be subject to a continual process of assimilation into a canon of accepted practice.

The current cultural climate is one which is proliferated by cultural products which reconfigure other cultural products. In this climate liminal cultural practices are perpetually assimilated. In this climate, signs refer to a reality which is not absolute, but our experience of it is tangible and *experientially* real. This climate is described as 'informational delirium'.

Turning to practical case studies, I will investigate the history of appropriation, sampling and remix/mashup practices, focussing predominantly upon this tradition within music. It is not a thorough history, but rather it denotes a few key markers in a trajectory towards the current cultural climate - in which these tactics have become the norm. The strategies of appropriation in visual arts practice are compared to those of musical works which deploy sampling, in order to establish how mashup/sampling strategies can operate in an art context. Nicholas Bourriaud's framework of 'postproduction' is outlined and criticised here for formulating well-established traditions within music (and in visual arts) as 'new trends' in the field of fine arts.

Rather than attempting to locate mashup production as new and original, the normative dimension to these practices is highlighted. The mashup is treated as a 'given' – an established cultural strategy which can itself be deconstructed and recontextualised. Mashups are emblematic of the cultural climate of informational delirium for two key reasons: firstly because they are disorientating and heterotopic in their own right, and secondly because mashups are not all

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[165] For example, data from google maps could be combined with data from a site that lists restaurants in an area – to create a new site which generates maps of where to find local restaurants. Although web mashups are sometimes used for artistic purposes, they are far more commonly applied for practical/business purposes. One example of a website mashup done as an art project is the New Zealander Josh On's *They Rule* (2004, <www.theyrule.net>). This project aggregates 2004 data from web-based directories of those holding powerful positions in the top companies in the U.S.A., in order to unveil and map professional interrelationships between these people. Josh On is a member of Futurefarmers, a group of art practitioners based in San Francisco.

[166] McKenzie, 2001.

that new, and they have been assimilated into mainstream pop-cultural practices.

How, then, can the *strategies and implications* of mashup production be recontextualised in an installation artwork that reflects upon the nuances of informational delirium?

This chapter concludes with *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0* - an installation artwork which deploys the mashup music of Copycat Crime (which is one of my performance pseudonyms). As an installation, *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0* recontextualises the audio mashups of Copycat Crime into an environment reminiscent of the dysfunctional aftermath of a party.

Broken Wine Glasses 2.0 contests the conviviality of Copycat Crime - treating the informational delirium of mashup production/performance as a cultural given, and framing the very strategies of this production as the subject of investigation. I will demonstrate how displacing this music from it's in situ context (parties, mashup videos which are posted online, mp3s which are disseminated amongst friends) highlights the normative dimension to these tactics, and creates a dissonant combination of humour and pathos.

The simulacrum

Indexicality - the variation of meaning according to context - characterises digital media practice. We are bound by cycles of decoded and encoded information, by an endless process of remixing and reexamining.

In Walter Benjamin's seminal essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, the idea that artworks have 'aura' was initiated, along with the proposition that the process of mechanical reproduction destroys this aura. Benjamin's frequently cited framework posits that "[t]he presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity".[167]

Mechanical reproduction now faces the challenges of a new age of digital reproduction. While mechanically or manually reproduced objects have implicit limits to their availability/accessibility, digital objects do not have a limit of this type. In principle, an infinite number of any single digital work could be produced without a change or loss, or even deviation between any of the works. Conversely, the reproducibility of digital media also enables an infinite number of new variant works to be made, works known variously as 'cut-up', 'mashup', 'remix', 'collage', 'montage', and 'database-driven work'.

The term 'simulacrum' is central to an understanding of these types of cultural production. The term originates from the Latin word *simulācra*, meaning similarity or likeness, and coming from the same root word as *simulā* (to simulate). It was historically understood to denote something that takes the appearance of another, such as a cult image representing a deity. Fredric Jameson cites photorealist painting as an example: the painting is not a copy of reality, but rather a copy of a photograph, which is already a copy of the original.[168] In postmodern thinking, simulacra are commonly defined as denoting copies of copies, which have been so far removed from their originals that they can no longer be considered copies at all. The French social theorist Jean Baudrillard famously deployed this concept in a semiotic context, along with the concept of simulation, to analyse the phenomenon of mass reproduction and reproducibility that characterises electronic media culture. Speculating upon phenomenon ranging from Disneyland to the hologram, Baudrillard describes an endless and cyclical interplay of signs.[169] Baudrillard even proposes God to be a simulacrum, due to the cultural and social reproduction and manipulation of signs that point to the deity. The copies ultimately replace the original. Baudrillard concludes by proclaiming himself a nihilist, as one who observes, accepts and assumes

> "…the immense process of the destruction of appearances (and of the seduction of appearances) in the service of meaning (representation, history, criticism, etc.) that is fundamental fact of the nineteenth century".[170]

The Baudrillardian worldview has been commonly criticised as bleak and untenable,[171] but an in-depth analysis of this line of criticism is not the focus of this research. The salient issue is that Baudrillard views simulacra as negative phenomena – a necessary evil. In contrast, Deleuze takes a more positive view, seeing simulacra as capable of contesting and overturning established ideals. Deleuze defines simulacra as "those systems in which different relates to different by means of difference itself. What is essential is that we find in these systems no prior identity, no internal resemblance".[172]

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167 Benjamin, 1936, p. 24. While Benjamin's framework is frequently (erroneously) associated with nostalgia for a lost aura which is inherent in older modalities of art practice, it is worth noting that Benjamin firmly situated himself within a camp that believed in the progressive ability of technology to enhance art's ability to be radical.

168 Jameson, 1984, p. 75.

169 Baudrillard, 1994.

170 Ibid, 1994, p. 160.

171 A key example of criticism that addresses the purported untenability of the Baudrillardian worldview is Christopher Norris' book-length critique, entitled Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War (1992).

172 Deleuze, 1968, p.299.

The social theorist Brian Massumi's expands upon Deleuze's (and also Guattari's) ideas about the simulacra.[173] According to Massumi, Deleuze and Guattari's ideas open up a methodology that does not launch us deeper into a Baudrillardian hypercynicism, but neither does it suggest a return to naïve realism. A third way of understanding the cultural condition under late capitalism, as Massumi reads Deleuze and Guattari, is to understand the simulacrum as undermining the very distinction between copy and original.[174]

In Massumi's own words,

> "[t]he terms copy and model bind us to the world of representation and objective (re)production. A copy, no matter how many times removed, authentic or fake, is defined by the presence or absence of internal, essential relations of resemblance to a model. The simulacrum, on the other hand, bears only an external and deceptive resemblance to a putative model".[175]

If we use the term 'copy', it implies that there is a singular objective 'original' from which the copy derives. Conversely, if we we take a bleak Baudrillardian view of the simulacra – an endless, cyclical interplay of signs – then there is no objectivity, only subjectivity. What Massumi seems to imply here is that the Baudrillardian simulacrum does not allow for internal relations, only external, superficial signs which point to one another. In Massumi's reading of Deleuze and Guattari, then, the simulacrum must encompass both internal and external relations; both objectivity and subjectivity.

I agree that Massumi has accurately analyed/interpreted Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the simulacrum, but I do not agree with what it implies. If we concede to this re-definition, the simulacrum becomes too vague to be of any use whatsoever. If it is reconfigured to encompass all relations – objective and subjective - then the term loses all of the specificities that actually make it useful. The Baudrillardian definition of the simulacrum retains a certain critical clarity because it does not even claim to apply to the 'real'. It does not necessarily follow, however, that we should share Baudrillard's bleak nihlistic worldview.

Massumi asks whether "we really have no other choice than being a naïve realist or being a sponge?"[176]

Yes, I do have a choice. On one hand, I must acknowledge the shortfalls inherent to the world of representation. On the other hand, I also need to acknowledge the limitations of the simulacra as a term. I need to orient myself somewhere on a continuum between these two extremities (reality and simulation) – both ends of the spectrum are untenable by themseves. A worldview in which all copies point back to objective, verifiable reality is naïve. The Baudrillardian worldview - that nothing exists outside of the simulacra - is equally untenable, partly because it is bleak and nihlistic, but perhaps more importantly because it does not accurately describe most people's lived experience. Even if a pure, absolute notion of the real is an untenable naïvety - if all facets of life are partly simulated – most people would still hold onto the idea of their own experiential reality. It would be naïve to claim it as absolute reality, but it is still the 'reality' that they experience from their own unique subject position.

It does not help, however, to take critical terminology from one end of the spectrum (simulation), and try to force it refer to a space in the middle (as Deleuze and Guattari do). The simulacrum is most useful as a term which clearly denotes one end of this continuum - even if there are critical limitations to that position, it is useful to have a word for it. Redefining the simulacrum in the manner that Deleuze and Guattari's work implies is confusing, since it diverges from an established tradition about what the term refers to. We do not need to redefine the term itself, we need to re-orient ourselves in relation to it.

Recall that in Deleuze's earlier writing,[177] he posited that the simulacra are positive, because they are capable of contesting established ideals and priviledged positions. Identifying this motivation clearly grounds the discussion in the theoretical terrain of subjectivity, and it implies an underlying focus upon power relations. In my view - concurring with Deleuze's motivation behind his investigation (but not his conclusion with Guattari of providing a new definition for an old term) - simulation is interesting precisely because copying a cultural product implicitly critiques the power-knowledge formations that are embedded in that product.

Since redefining the term 'simulacrum' itself is problematic, however, it is perhaps clearer to investigate another option for describing the displacements that occur when cultural products are copied, pasted, and manipulated. Perhaps Foucault – who sustains a more direct focus on power-knowledge formations – will offer a clearer framework for understanding cultural displacement.

The heterotopia and the liminal norm

The term 'heterotopia' has an informative etymology: it was first used in medicine to refer to the displacement of an organ or part of an organ from it's normal position, and also to refer to the psychological condition of jumbling sounds in words. It derives from classical Greek: *hetero* translates as 'different' or 'other', -topia derives from *topos* which

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173 Brian Massumi writes from the vantage point of having worked closely with the French thinkers to translate *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) into English.

174 Massumi, 1987

175 Ibid, p. 90.

176 Massumi, 1987, p.90.

177 *Difference and* Repetition was written in 1968, well before Deleuze began collaborating with Guattari.

translates as 'place'. Alluding to the medical sense of the term, Foucault coined a novel usage of 'heterotopia' to describe a real space that is 'other', simultaneously mythic and real.[178] Foucault defines heterotopias as consisting of a dispersed network of interconnecting points that contest a linear understanding of time and space through their transitory and temporal nature. Compare heterotopia with the familiar term 'utopia'. The term utopia was first coined to suggest two Greek concepts simultaneously: *ou-topia* 'without place, nowhere', and also punning on *eu-topia*: the prefix *-eu* denotes happiness or wellness. Foucault contrasts heterotopias with the 'fundamentally unreal' spaces that are the utopias.

Foucault's conception of the heterotopia provides a framework for understanding the in-between, liminal places that appear in every culture. Importantly, he describes these heterotopic spaces as real sites which represent, contest and invert other real sites. Using the mirror as a metaphor, he proposes that these spaces reflect larger cultural patterns and social orders. In his third principle, he posits that the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing several real spaces that are in and of themselves incompatible, giving the library as an example.[179]

The notion of the liminal has been widely written about, but it is also worth providing a brief definition of this term here. The liminal state (derived from the Latin word *limen*, meaning "a threshold") is characterized by ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. Liminality is a period of transition, during which normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to something new. The term is widely used by art theorists although it was coined by the anthropologist Arnold van Genepp in 1909 and used heavily by Victor Turner and others to refer to a transitional stage in rites of passage.[180]

The quintessential aesthetic features of liminality are hybridisation, indeterminacy, a lack of aura, and the collapse of the hierarchical distinction between high and popular culture. Quasi-generic traits are given as experimentation, heterogeneity, innovation, marginality and an emphasis on the intersemiotic.[181]

Artists have arguably always been interested in the liminal. The heterotopic state that Foucault wrote about in the late 1960s is now the norm. On the internet, information is constantly hyperlinked to and thus recontextualised. As I shall shortly demonstrate through practical case studies, cultural producers ubiquitously recontextualise each other's cultural products. If power-knowledge relations are in a *constant* state of heterotopia, it raises the question of whether the heterotopia still functions to represent, contest and invert other real sites. Does the idea of displacement embedded in the medical origins of the term still apply if this liminality is the norm?

Jon McKenzie raises this issue of the "liminal-norm" in *Perform or Else*, highlighting the normative dimension to current understandings of liminality in performance practice. McKenzie writes from within a broader project, searching for a generalised theory of the term 'performance' that incorporates cultural, organisational, and technological understandings of the term. Within this context he identifies that scholars of performance studies (cultural performance) actively resist or reject definitions that firmly locate the paradigm. McKenzie suggests that in maintaining a state of 'inter-' or in-between, the liminal and transgressive becomes the norm, and that the rejection of liminality becomes a transgressive act for a performance studies scholar.[182] Although McKenzie writes specifically about liminality in performance studies, his concept arguably applies equally to techno-liminality, to the transgression of thresholds limiting how technology is supposed to perform.

While largely concurring with McKenzie's astute research, unlike him, I do not consider this normative dimension of (cultural) liminality to be a fault. The very fact that artists continue to investigate the limits of their media underscores the importance of this process. Arguably McKenzie's position verges on tautology; liminality is the norm in art precisely because it is the *role* of the artist to test limits.

If this normative dimension to liminality is not actually a fault, then the heterotopia still does function to contest real sites. It is perhaps most useful to consider the process as a cyclical pattern. Artists inherently test limits (well, good artists). Familiar concepts and images, comfortable politics, established modes of producing - these are contested time and time again when artists take us to new liminal spaces. The key facet that McKenzie highlights is the normative dimension to this activity – the process of *assimilation*.

Although I criticised Deleuze and Guattari's redefinition of the simulacrum as too vague, this cycle of liminality and assimilation echoes another idea of theirs – the notion of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation that was described in Chapter 3. Artists create works that deterritorialise, but their practices always find new territorialities - the normative dimension to liminality is actually a simple process: being assimilated into a canon of accepted practice. The fact that these practices are eventually assimilated does not, however, undermine their ability to

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178 Foucault, 1967.

179 Ibid, p. 4.

180 Liminality is the quality of the second stage of a ritual in the anthropological theories of Arnold van Gennep (1909), Victor Turner (1967), and others. In these theories, a ritual, especially a rite of passage, accomplishes change by separating participants from the rest of their social group (the first, or preliminary stage: separation); a period during which one is 'betwixt and between', neither one status nor the other (the liminal stage); and a period during which one's new social status is confirmed (the final, or postliminal stage: reincorporation).

181 Broadhurst, 1999, pp. 11-13. Broadhurst also describes the utilisation of the latest developments in media and digital technology as a quasi-generic trait of liminality, but this is not entirely accurate: practices that do not utilise new technologies are also commonly described as liminal.

182 McKenzie, 2001, p. 50.

contest established positions at the outset.

For the sake of clarity, I shall take a moment to summarise my critical position. While some people criticise Baudrillard's view of the simulacra as bleak, nihlistic and untenable, I question his position for different reasons. Simulacra, Baudrillard claims, do not point to a real - they only point to other simulacra. I argued that, although the other end of the continuum (a singular, absolute view of reality) is naïve, the realm of cultural practice pertains to creating unique passages of experience, and it is these subjective, experiential realities that we create signs to point to. Massumi's interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari trys to redefine the simulacra as encompassing both subjectivity and objectivity, but this idea is too vague. The simulacrum is more useful as a term that has a clear scope (however problematic), rather than as a vague term that encompasses both the real and the simulated. In order to frame the displacing effect of cultural products which are derived from copies of other cultural products, Foucault's notion of the heterotopia was introduced. The normative dimension of liminality, as posited by McKenzie is dismissed as verging on tautology, because artists *inherently* test limits. If that is the case, then the heterotopia still does function to contest real sites, but we need to be aware of the constant processes of assimilation at play – in which strategies which are liminal eventually find their way into the canon of accepted practice.

I shall refer to this cluster of ideas - this fusion of Deleuzian and Foucauldian thought - as 'informational delirium'. Informational delirium denotes the liminal/heteroptopic cultural climate in which artists cannot concede to a naïve and absolute vision of a singular 'reality'. Neither, though, can they concede to a bleak hyperreal world of simulation and ignore lived experience completely - especially if they are interested in notions of subjectivity and power-knowledge formations. Further, the cultural climate of informational delirium acknowledges that artists are constantly trying to *challenge* established formations of power-knowledge, but they are themselves subject to the processes of assimilation into positions *within* the hegemony of accepted cultural practice.[183]

How, then does this cyclical process underpinning the notion of informational delirium operate in practice? I will start with an investigation into the history of sampling/appropriation in music, and the normative dimension to this history.

Key case studies of sampling practice in music

> "For [Richard Wagner] believed that significant artistic creations could only arise from acts of daring similar to his own appropriation and completion of Beethoven [...] Yet he was clearly confident that nobody would dare find his own work incomplete or need to propose a future for his music dramas."[184]

The appropriation of motifs, forms and structures from preexisting compositions pervades the history of music. It is well documented, for example, that music from the late Romantic period (1850 – 1900) is characterised by the appropriation of motifs from local folk music. Sampling is the act of copying a portion of music from an existing recording, and reusing it in a new context. Sampling practice marries the (broad) methodology of appropriation with the (specific, technologically enabled) ability to copy and replicate preexisting recordings. Sampling had a long history in avant garde practice before it gained mainstream cultural currency. In order to understand the normative dimension to these strategies, it is important to preface the discussion with a brief history of these musical strategies, highlighting how each cultural shift along this history can be understood as liminal at the time that the artist(s) made their developments.

As with many artistic developments, sampling could only became possible once the enabling technology had been invented. In 1877, Thomas Edison invented the 'talking and sound writing machine' – the first of many devices to record and play back sound. Recording and playback devices took a number of different incarnations, and eventually the first phonographs became commercially available in the early decades of the 20th century.[185] A number of years later (1939), the composer John Cage created *Imaginary Landscape No. 1*. In this piece two turntables played RCA test tones and other sounds, and the speed (pitch, timbre) of these sounds was manipulated. In creating this piece, Cage initiated the idea that pre-recorded sounds could be 'played' in a musical manner - like the notes on any other instrument could be.[186] A year later, the French sound engineer Pierre Schaeffer discovered a technique for 'looping' recorded sounds by creating 'locked grooves',[187] and Musique Concrete was born. Schaeffer envisaged a music to be performed on multiple turntables by manipulating the speed of these sounds, and he went on to create a series of etudes which he recorded in 1948.

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183 Note that this facet of informational delirium echoes the 'paradox of complicity' which I discussed in chapter 2.

184 Glauert, 1999, p. 5.

185 Edison's 'talking and sound writing machine' was superceded by Alexander Graham Bell's graphophone and then Emile Berliner's gramophone. Subsequent developments were indebted to advancements made in the radio and telecommunications industries. Shortly after the telecommunications company Western Electric laboratories had introduced electrical amplification technology in 1925, Bell laboratories made improvements in the fidelity of audio recordings. They sold the licence to a number of companies, including The Victor Talking Machine Company – who became the leading producer of phonographs and phonograph records.

186 Cage's ideas relied upon the enabling technology, but they also expanded upon the musicological groundwork laid by the Italian futurist Luigi Russolo's intonamori (noise making machines) – and the ideas contained in his manifesto *The Art of Noises* (1913), which asserted the idea that each and every sound has its own musicality. Russolo made his intonamori to emulate noises from industrialised society, and then orchestrated these sounds in performances as early as 1914-15.

187 On a normal record, the stylus travels along a groove which spirals from the edge to the centre. With a 'locked groove' the stylus travels in a circle, thus playing a loop of audio.

The practice of manipulating pre-recorded sounds for musical performance remained firmly avant garde until World War II, after which it spread throughout Europe in the 1950s. Due to the prohibitive cost of sending live bands to perform for troops, DJs were assigned the duty – armed with turntables, an amplifier, and a collection of records.[188] It was at this point that DJing began to become an accepted mode of musical performance, but in mainstream opinion there was still a clear delineation between the DJ (who simply played records) and the musician (who played an instrument). During the same period, however, dancehalls[189] in Jamaica featured DJs promoting the latest American releases. It was not long before electronics engineer King Tubby (Osborne Ruddock, fig. 4.1) began creating his own instrumental mixes of popular American tracks. He pressed these 'versions' onto acetate to limit availability, and he introduced live effects (delay, reverb, equalisation, flange, phase and more) to set his own performances (with Home Town Hi-Fi System) apart from the competition.[190] Dub music was born, and the idea of musical performance through the hands-on manipulation of prerecorded material began to gain cultural impetus.

Fig. 4.1: King Tubby in his studio.

By 1969, the Jamaican DJ Kool Herc had relocated to New York and was getting regular bookings. Herc had noticed that the drum breakdown on a given track kept people dancing, and using two copies of the same record, he extended that section ad infinitum – introducing the world to the 'break beat'. Drawing upon Jamaican sound system culture he also introduced MCs into the mix, and the blueprint for hiphop was born. Hiphop remained a *sub*-cultural phenomenon for almost a decade – it was not until the late 1970s/early 1980s that hiphop would start to achieve mainstream cultural recognition.

Fig. 4.2: Grandmaster Flash. Film (still).[195]

The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel[191] is widely considered to be a milestone in the history of what would later be called 'turntablism'.[192] The importance of this track is difficult to overstate. Firtly, Grandmaster Flash's (fig 4.2) sheer technical virtuosity is astounding for the time (combining 'scratches', 'stabs', mixing, 'beat looping' and 'back to backing'[193] in a seven minute opus). The history of the technical development of turntablism (that is, who invented which technique) is well documented elsewhere,[194] the key focus here is on the cultural resonances of the practices of sampling and appropriation.

Aside from the track's technical virtuosity, *The Adventures* is also notable as one of the first 'megamix'[196] recordings (certainly the most famous of these early recordings) to be committed to vinyl. The track combines clearly recognisable excerpts of Blondie's *Rapture* (1981), Queen's *Another One Bites the Dust* (1980), Chic's *Good Times* (1979), samples from the movie *Flash Gordon* (1980), and a number of other excerpts including other tracks by Grandmaster Flash and the Sugarhill Gang.[197] Capturing the attention of his audiences with his technical virtuosity, Flash added impetus to the explicit appropriation and recontextualisation of other people's musical forms. *The Adventures* became a clear inspiration for later megamix releases such as Double Dee and Steinski's *Lesson* series of recordings, and numerous others to follow.

The hiphop producers Double Dee and Steinski used tape loops rather than vinyl to produce their influential megamixes, and their method pre-dated the advent of affordable sampling technology by a few years.[198] The first of

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188 DJ Markski, 2002, p. 5.

189 Dancehall is a commonly used term in dub music (and also the name of a musical sub-genre), but it is a bit of a misnomer – the vast majority of these concerts/parties occurred in outdoor settings.

190 Toop, 2006, p. 356; DJ Markski, 2002, p. 6.

191 Grandmaster Flash, 1981.

192 The origins of the term 'turntablism' are disputed. The documentary *Scratch* (Pray, 2001), for example, interviews DJ Babu (Beat Junkies, Dilated Peoples), who claims to have coined the term. DJ Disk (Rock Steady Crew, Invisibl Skratch Piklz) also claims to have invented the term (in the biography on his official website, <http://djdisk.net/bio.html>). Yet another claim is that DJ Supreme (DJ for Lauryn Hill) coined the term (accessed at <http://www.barbeaumusic.com/turntablism.html>.

193 A scratch is created by moving a record back and forth (whilst manipulating the crossfader on a DJ mixer) to create a rubbing sound; a 'stab' isolates a particular sound on a record (such as a note on a trumpet) without moving the record; 'beat looping' is a technique pioneered by DJ Kool Herc, in which two idendtical records are used to loop a musical/rhythmic phrase; 'back to backing' is an extension of the beat looping technique where one record plays the basic phrase, and the other record is used to isolate additional notes or beats and add complexity to the phrase.

194 Markski (2002), for example, provides an insightful overview of who invented a number of these Djing techniques.

195 This still image is from Grandmaster Flash's guest appearance in the film *Wild Style* (Fab 5 Freddy and Ahearn, 1983).

196 A megamix is a recorded work that combined preexisting recorded pieces to create a new composition.

197 Tabrizi, 2002.

198 The first commercially available sampler was the Computer Music Melodian (which became available in 1976), but early samplers such as this were prohibitively priced and could only be purchased by recording studios and used by trained engineers. The E-Mu SP-1200 (released in 1987) and the Akai MPC series (the MPC-60 was released in 1988) were priced in a bracket that artists could afford, paving the way for digital sampling practices to gain popularity.

Double D and Steinski's recordings was *Lesson 1 – The Payoff Mix* (1983), montaging numerous tracks to produce a musical piece that told the musical history underpinning hiphop music through sampling. Once digital samplers became available and affordable, artists began to experiment more widely with their use.

As with the DJ's use of the turntable, the hiphop producer's use of the digital sampler was a deviation from it's intended usage. Tricia Rose, in her excellent (predominantly ethnomusicological) study of hiphop *Black Noise*, identifies that digital samplers were initially invented to correct notes/phrases which were recorded by musicians live in the studio. "Prior to rap music's redefinition of the role samplers play in musical creativity, samplers were used almost exclusively as time and money saving devices for producers, engineers and composers […] For the most part samples were used to 'flesh out' or accent a musical piece, not to build a new one"[199] Hiphop producers, however, found that this technology enabled a "means by which the process of repetition and recontextualisation [could] be highlighted and privileged."[200] Turntablism, sampling and remixing have now become extremely mainstream practices, and the influence of these innovations can obviously be found far beyond hiphop/rap music in today's cultural climate.

In fact, all of the innovations I have cited so far have been subsequently assimilated as accepted modes of musical practice. Wagner heavily influenced the canon of Western classical music. John Cage became one of the key figures of the post-war American avant garde (musically and also in the visual arts, notably in his affiliation with the Fluxus movement). Dub music's strategies ('versioning' existing songs) and it's signature sounds (accentuated basslines and rhythm sections, delays and other filters) - pioneered by King Tubby - pervade the spectrum of contemporary dance music (albeit digital equivalents of processes that were initially analogue). Hiphop is now a highly mainstream musical genre (and it is a multi-billion dollar business in the music industry). Sampling and/or turntablism can be heard in pretty much every third song on mainstream radio. There is a clear process of assimilation at play with all of these musical innovations.

I will shortly look specifically at the cultural phenomenon of mashups (and the normative dimension to this phenomenon). The artwork which is presented at the end of this chapter uses mashups, but it is an installation - framed as 'fine art' - and it is thus useful to first investigate the parallels between sampling and visual arts practices where strategies of appropriation are deployed.

Appropriation strategies in visual arts practice and in music

> "[T]he readymade is simultaneously the operation that reduces the work of art to it's enunciative function and the 'result' of this operation, a work of art reduced to the statement 'this is art'."[201]

> "Appropriation implies that new associations are produced by placing elements from a work already known within a new framework. Hence while the readymade presupposes a factual transfer of context - from the bathroom to the art gallery – the act of appropriation presupposes a more diffuse contextual transfer […] Rather than ask the question 'what is art?', appropriation implies a questioning of the relation between the new work and the 'original'"[202]

From the Duchampian readymade and dada/surrealist collages through to pop, 1960's film, the 'appropriation art' movement originating in the 1970s, and onwards towards numerous recent modalities of practice – appropriation has a long and canonised history in visual arts practice. I will note a few key markers in this history here in order to compare the effects of the strategies of appropriation in visual art with appropriation in music.

The artist Jeff Koons is a commonly cited provocateur whose work continues to blur the boundary between 'fine art' and kitsch pop culture. His *Banality* series culminated in 1988 with a series of three lifesize sculptures of the singer Michael Jackson holding his pet chimpanzee Bubbles. This series of three sculptures were made out of porcelein with gold leaf plating, and - like all of Koon's work - they were manufactured by assistants, not by the artist himself. In an interview given after the singer's death,[203] Koons states that "I wanted to show Michael as a contemporary Christ figure: I wanted to give the viewer a sense of a spiritual authority", and that it was a way of "paying homage to his greatness".[204] This 'homage', however, is decidedly kitsch – approximately a year before the singer's death, the art critic Christopher Knight dubbed it "arguably the World's Largest Knickknack".[205] Identifying this artwork as an 'homage' does not appear to be disingenuous – it is highly likely that Koons did indeed admire the singer - but it euphemistically masks Koons' core reasons for admiring him. Koons' artwork does indeed pay homage to Jackson's greatness, but it focusses on his status as pop-cultural icon[206] rather than his specific achievements as an entertainer.

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199 Rose, 1994, p. 73.

200 Ibid.

201 De Duve, 1988, p. 389.

202 Østby Sæther, 2007, p. 51

203 Michael Jackson passed away in June 2009.

204 Koons interviewed by Farah Nayeri, 2009. Accessed at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=azbdRdMTbEN8>.

205 Knight, 2008.

206 Arguably the work implicitly highlights one particular facet of the singer's pop cultural currency – the controversial accusations of paedophilia (and the ensuing out-of-court settlements) that were directed at Michael Jackson. Seen in this light, the chimpanzee Bubbles stands in as allegorical of a small child.

The work clearly reflects his broader interest in the seductions of commodified consumer objects, and thus the singer is depersonalised by the work - it emphasises the fact that he became a (highly) commercial product – a fate which Koons' artwork itself shared.[207] As such, *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* takes on a life of it's own as a 'fine art' icon, becoming a simulacra that no longer directly represents Michael Jackson (the recently deceased person), but rather it points to other signs that index the singer. Interpreting Koons' *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* as a simulacra pure and simple (in a Baudrillardian sense), however, is problematised by the singer's status as a real human being. There would have been a clear pop-cultural backlash against Koons if he did not tread lightly around this issue whilst the world at large mourned Jackson's passing.

The American photographic artist Sherrie Levine is perhaps best know for her 1980 series *After Walker Evans*, in which she re-photographed images directly from a catalogue of iconic Walker Evans photographs. Evan's photographs are widely considered to be quintessential images of the American poor during the great depression. By re-photographing these images - and recontextualising them without any further manipulation - Levine raises issues about class, identity, the political uses of imagery, the nature of creativity itself, and the ways in which context affects the viewing experience of an image.

Levine also explicitly references the history of appropriation in contemporary art, by directly appropriating none other than the first readymade – Duchamp's 1917 *Fountain*.[208] In her 1991 work *Fountain*, Levine presents a gold-plated sculputre which is a direct replica of Duchamps' artwork - but she does not follow Duchamp's strategies of the readymade (selecting and titling commerically manufactured items). She especially manufactured her art object as a one-off, but a selection of sorts still took place - she selected the *cultural associations* which the semblance of Duchamp's iconic artwork evokes. Note here that in the lexicon of dance music, the DJ is commonly referred to as the 'selector' – the person who chooses the music to play for a given setting/context. Arguably, a good DJ chooses music with a similar degree of meta-understanding that a good visual artist employs – each piece of music has it's own cultural currency, existing as a new piece in it's own right, but also operating as an index to established histories of music (a point to which I shall return shortly).

Like Koons' *Michael Jackson and Bubbles*, Levine's *Fountain* could be seen as a simulacra - pointing to an iconographic status rather than a real entity (in this case a sculptural object). Levine's *Fountain* indexes Duchamp's 'original' artwork, but emphasises the ensuing (gold-plated) traditions of 'naming' and 'framing' that arose from the readymade and became established modalities of cultural practice.

Other visual artists also rehearse the roots of their practices in the Duchampian readymade. Speaking about his artwork *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), in which the classic Alfred Hitchcock film *Psycho* (1960) is slowed down to play over a 24 hour period, Douglas Gordon states that:

> "In appropriating extracts from films and music, we could say, actually, that we are creating time readymades, no longer out of daily objects but out of time objects that are a part of our culture."[209]

> *"What he was watching seemed pure film, pure time. The broad horror of the old gothic movie seemed subsumed in time. How long would he have to stand here, how many weeks or months, before the film's time scheme absorbed his own, or had this already begun to happen?"*
> Don DeLillo, *Point Omega* (fictional passage describing a character encountering Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*)[210]

Nicholas Bourriaud[211] compares Gordon's intervention to the DJ's use of the pitch control, varying the speed of a record.[212] This comparison is one of many that Bourriaud makes between the cultural activities found in DJ culture and the activities of visual arts practitioners.[213] By changing the speed of Hitchcock's film, the classic scenes of tension and horror are recontextualised, and Gordon draws the viewer's attention (in an extremely slow, meditative manner) to the construction of the film itself. Similarly, audio samples can draw attention to the construction of a recording.

More importantly, sampled sounds contribute to the cultural resonances of a new track. Musical sampling, like visual appropriation, creates time objects. In a musical track, samples index the histories of musical practices which preceeded the new track. Consider the common practice of sampling jazz horns in hiphop music. For an analytical listener, hearing samples of jazz horns could encourage a subconscious link between the lyrical thematics of the new track and the history of jazz music (encompassing the oppressions suffered by black jazz musicians). A listener is simultaneously in the present day and accessing time objects from the past, and this adds complexity and layers of meaning to the reception of the new track.

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207 This artwork recently sold for $US5.6m.

208 In *Fountain*, Duchamp famously recontextualised a commercially produced urinal, titled it, and called it his own artwork.

209 Gordon, 2000, p. 32.

210 Delillo, 2010, p. 6.

211 I discussed Bourriaud's earlier book *Relational Aesthetics* in chapter 2.

212 Bourriaud, 2002, p. 39.

213 Ibid. While most of these comparisons are accurate (albeit somewhat cursory), Bourriaud's cites Angela Bulloch's dubbing of Andrei Tarkovski's *Solaris*, and compares this work to toasting, rapping and MCing. This comparison is highly reductionist, ethnocentric and offensive – demonstrating a profound ignorance about the long and complex tradition of black orality that led to MCing as we know it today. For interested readers, chapter three of Tricia Rose's *Black Noise* (1994) provides an astute analysis of the traditions of black oraility and how MCing furthers these traditions.

In music, however, these associations are *implicit* – not all listeners would pay this much attention at a conscious level. In visual art, conversely, appropriated images are generally more likely to be *explicitly* linked to the meaning of the artwork than in music. Those viewing a work of collage are likely to assume that all visual images/motifs should be interpreted as part of the meaning of the piece. For a musician, it is easy to isolate and locate different sounds when listening to music, but non-musicians often have difficulty paying attention to just one sound or instrument. (I know this from years spent doing music production/performance, and hearing numerous people sound surprised when I point out a particualr sound that they had not noticed.) Even if the individual sounds constituting a track are successfully noticed and identified, some analytically inclined listeners might try and interpret how each and every sound they hear contributes to the *meaning* of a given track, but most would not.

Appropriation in visual art also explicitly evokes thematics of ownership (as I noted with reference to Sherrie Levine's work). There are numerous examples of this critique of ownership recurring throughout Maurizio Cattelan's oeuvre. In *-76.000.000* (1992), Cattelan re-presented a broken safe from which 76 million lire (Italian currency) had previously been stolen. Cattelan stole an entire exhibition of works by the artist Paul de Reus from the Galerie Bloom in Amsterdam, along with the office furnishings. Wearing the Duchampian influence on his sleeve (as Levine and Gordon also do), he then installed it all in the same configuration at the nearby De Appel gallery, under the title *Another Fucking Ready-made* (1996).

> *Caught now in court 'cause I stole a beat / This is a sampling sport /*
> *But I'm giving it a new name / What you hear is mine*
> Public Enemy, lyrics from *Caught, Can I Get a Witness*[214]

The strategies of musical sampling and those of visual appropriation could be seen as equivalent in their emphasis upon the issues surrounding ownership and originality. The seminal rap group Public Enemy, for example, frequently engage with these thematics in their lyrics, explicitly drawing attention to the fact that they are sampling the work (traditions) of others and recontextualising it to create ther own new meanings. The thematics of ownership and originality associated with musical sampling are perhaps made more explicit due to the high profile legal cases[215] that have plagued the music industry since the 1980s – in which record companies charge artists who sample with copyright violations, and the artists who are charged defend their creativity on the grounds of fair use.[216] It is outside of the scope of this discussion to investigate the legality of these practices, but my point is to claim that the media attention that copyright cases have received may have contributed to the fact that listeners are cognizant of these thematics when hearing music that contains samples.

Fig. 4.3: Maurizio Cattelan, *Untitled* (1996). Acrylic on canvas.

Critiquing the notion of originality – the ownership of ideas and forms – is central to artworks that deploy appropriation. Recall the aforementioned cycle of liminality and subsequent assimilation in cultural practice. For the revolutionary Italian modernist Lucio Fontana, the lacerations of his canvases (produced from 1958 onwards) were symbolic and violently transgressive acts. In a suite of untitled works (the first was produced in 1993, see fig 4.3), Maurizio Cattelan appropriates Fontana's gesture, but slashing his canvas with three strokes that form the shape of the letter 'z', unmistakeably indexing Fontana's work to the quasi-contemporary Disney series about the character Zorro. In this remake of Fontana's work, Cattelan humourously presents his own use of a weapon as the gesture of a comic villain.[217]

It is worth noting that in the same strike of this weapon, Cattelan's swashbuckling elegance also echoes the ethic of the character Zorro himself - the ethic of redistributing pirated material. Cattelan's piracy operates on a number of levels simultaneously: the work critiques issues of ownership by blatantly stealing and redistributing Fontana's gesture, but at the same time it also clearly demonstrates the broader issue of how context alters meaning (another theme noted above with reference to Levine's work).

Nicholas Bourriaud's book *Postproduction* suggests a transition beyond what is commonly termed 'the art of appropriation', implicitly underpinned by an ideology of ownership, towards what he describes as "a culture of the use of forms, a culture of constant activity of signs based on a collective ideal: sharing".[218] The defining characteristic of postproduction method is "the invention of paths through culture".[219]

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214 Public Enemy, 1988.

215 Visual artists such as Jeff Koons, Sherrie Levine, and numerous others have also been plagued by high profile legal cases investigating whether the appropriation in their artworks constituted 'fair use'.

216 Legally, an un-cleared sample is an infringement of copyright. Creatively, a sample is a citation - arguably an essential way to make progress in any field is to refer to and quote from those who preceed you.

217 Bourriaud, 2002, p. 59.

218 Bourriaud, 2002, p.9.

219 Ibid, p. 18.

Postproduction is a technical term from the film/television/video industries. It refers to any processes applied after the initial production (recording/filming) stage, encompassing "montage, the inclusion of other video and audio sources, subtitling, voice-overs and special effects."[220] The artist as postproducer, the 'user of forms' as Bourriaud describes her/him, is primarily engaged with manipulating pre-existing (pre-recorded) cultural texts.

The main flaw with Bourriaud's framework is that he writes (in 2002) of the strategies of postproduction as though they are recent innovations. He has re-purposed a term from a different discipline (film) and used it in a novel manner, but the actual creative strategies are well established. As I have demonstrated, artists and musicians have been re-deploying the forms of prior works for many decades. The modes of reproduction have changed over time, but the principles are the same. It appears that Bourriaud is simply leveraging attention for his own select cluster of artists off the broader pop-cultural currency (familiarity, accessibility) of the DJ.

I have also demonstrated that the samples contained within an artwork (of any media, including music) are not singular and representational – they might recall multiple moments of history, index multiple sociopolitical perspectives, cultural associations, and so forth. Once anything is recorded it takes on a life of its own.

Mashups: the bastard children borne out of music's infidelities

By the late 1990s/early 2000s, mashup[221] recordings (also known as 'bastard pop'[222] – unofficial, illegitimate remixes) started to gain popularity. Mashups combine two or more recordings to make a new track. Probably the most well known example is DJ Dangermouse, who achieved noteriety when he released *The Grey Album* in 2004 (see fig. 4.4) – mixing instrumental sections from The Beatles' *White Album* with acapella vocals from the rapper Jay-Z's *The Black Album.* There are three key things that differentiate mashup music from the broader musical strategies of sampling. Firstly, mashups do not usually contribute much (if any) new musical material such as new instrumentation, programming or lyrics.[223] The emphasis is on the intertextual relationships between the source materials sampled, not on contextualising these in relation to new material. The relationship between these existing musics *is* the new music. Secondly, mashups are notable for the *extent* to which they disorient the listener by conflating multiple musics. Prior to the rise of mashup music, producers would most commonly only take one section (for example a bassline, a drum loop) from an specific recording, not lift an entire track. In earlier modes of sampledelic production such as The Bomb Squad's production in Public Enemy's early music, there might be one or two phrases or sections in the new track which are recognisable. In mashup music there are huge chunks, and the effect can be quite disorientating. Thirdly, mashups are especially notable as a musical form for their 'smartass' sensibility – a sense of fun, playfulness and humour pervades the musical selections made.[224]

Fig. 4.4: Ramon and Pedro, *The Grey Video*[225] (2004). Video (still).

[220] Bourraud, 2002, p. 13

[221] The term 'mashup' is mainly used in this chapter to refer to musical combinations. In the previous chapter I also used the term to refer to video combinations in the audiovisual mashups of Anaesthesia Associates.

[222] The term 'bastard pop' has been used for a number of years (origins unknown). This term influenced my broader conception of bastard media which I presented in chapter 1.

[223] In my own mashup production as Copycat Crime, I usually do add additional musical material of my own (drum programming, turntable scratches), but this is done to highlight and accent the musical structures that are already present in the source tracks. I make every attempt to emphasise the nuances of the source material as much as possible. I do this to a slightly lesser extent with the mashups of Anaesthesia Associates, in which some passages of music are composed from scratch.

[224] One recent exception to my definition is the Kleptones' 2010 release of the double album *Uptime/Downtime* (only available online at <http://www.kleptones.com>). While this third facet of my definition is certainly true of the music on the *Uptime* album, *Downtime* is very slow, ambient and contemplative. The existence of this album (and other mashups which have a more serious tone) does not really detract from the essence of my definition, however, because the vast majority of mashups *are* characteristically fun, upbeat and humourous, and they retain a high level of cultural currency as such.

[225] *The Grey Video* (2004) is a mashup music video made to promote the song *Encore* (off DJ Dangermouse's *Grey Album,* 2004). In this video, footage of the Beatles (from the film *A Hard Day's Night*, 1964) and Jay-Z (from an unknown performance) is manipulated together with new footage that was filmed using Beatle lookalikes and other actors/dancers. The video depicts (among other things) Ringo Starr scratching on a set of turntables and John Lennon breakdancing.

Fig. 4.5: JamieFMusic, *DMX Vs. Ghostbusters* (2007). Audio (video still: audio track on YouTube).[231]

Some mashups highlight musical similarities, such as lyrical similarities,[226] or scenarios where one artist has stolen a riff, motif or melody from another artist.[227] Other mashups highlight difference, such as divergent lyrical thematics,[228] divergent or conflcting genres,[229] or divergent approaches to the commercial facets of the music industry.[230] The vast majority of mashups, however, do not have a clear logic behind the combination, and that is precisely the point. Musics are combined simply because they can be - the wierder the better.

As a critical strategy, mashups explicitly address - as all practices encompassing sampling/appropriation do – issues surrounding ownership and originality. Unlike previous modes of sampling practice in music - but similar to how appropriation operates in visual arts practice - mashups are notable because they explicitly engage the listener with the nostalgia and the iconographic cultural associations of older tracks. In mashup music, the juxtapositions are numerous, obvious, explicit, and they conflate musics that come from vastly different eras and cultural contexts - to create a heterotopic space in which multiple nostalgias are presented simultaneously, and these nostalgias are often incompatible with each other. The extent of the disorientation that occurs, and also the sense of fun/humour, are the key cultural resonances of mashups that I wish to emphasise.

Like all of the musical practices described above, there is a clear normative dimension to the cultural phenomenon of the mashup. MTV now commisions the production of numerous mashups to air on television. Mainstream radio stations such as BBC's Radio One have shows dedicated to mashups. When a mashup track is uploaded to YouTube, it is now viewed – at a management level in the music and entertainment industries - as a cultural phenomenon that can provide free channels of viral marketing. The managers of YouTube turn a blind eye to the copyright-violating implications of home-produced mashups that are produced and uploaded. Instead of taking them offline, they have set automated processes in place to tag these videos with an advertisement/link - so that the audiences accessing the mashup are encouraged to buy one of the sampled source tracks.[232] Similarly, the internationally successful audiovisual mashup band Addictive TV have been commissioned to produce viral mashup trailers for blockbuster hollywood movies.[233] Yet another liminal mode of musical practice is assimilated into accepted modes of mainstream practice. That which is transgressive and liminal will always sit in relation to the very power structures that it questions – "the mutations of one age may become the norms of another".[234] In the case of mashups, the mutations have certainly become the norm.

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[226] In Israel for example, a group called Bonna Music remixed the Depeche Mode song *Enjoy the Silence* (1990) with Balagan's *Sheket* (which means silence in Hebrew) to create a track called *Enjoy the Sheket* (2005). This track is also notable as one of the few legal mashups produced.

[227] *Britney's Supermassive Hole* (2006) mixes Muse's single, *Supermassive Black Hole* (2006), with Britney Spears' *Do Somethin* (2004) – drawing attention to the musical similarities (riff, key and tempo) between the two tracks.

[228] One example is the Kleptones' *Ride* (2004), combining the overtly homophobic Eminem's *My Name is* (1999) with Queen's covert celebration of bisexuality *Bicycle Race* (1978).

[229] One example is the MTV Mash track *Prodigy vs. Enya – Smack my Bitch Up/Orinoco Flow* (producer and release date unknown), mixing the overtly violent and hyped mood of Prodigy's *Smack my Bitch Up* (1997) with Enya's ambient and meditative *Orinoco Flow* (1988).

[230] One example is Party Ben's *Fugazi Vs. Destiny's Child* (online release, production date unknown), combining vocals from *Independent Women* (2001), by the chart topping group Destiny's Child with *Waiting Room* (1989), by the American punk band Fugazi – a band who were especially vocal about their independent stance and DIY business practices.

[231] Accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5nXpTuQ2jA>. Frequently producers will wish to put an audio-only track onto a video-sharing site such as YouTube, and they do this by putting a still image (or series of still images) onto the video timeline which is visible while the audio plays.

[232] The last time I uploaded a Copycat Crime track to YouTube, it took less than a minute before my video was tagged with a link to the iTunes store for one of the source tracks. I assume that the automated decision about which sampled track is actually linked will depend on which record company pays more money to YouTube.

[233] Addictive TV have produced mashup trailers for movies such as *Snakes on a Plane* (2006), *Take the Lead* (2006), *Slumdog Millionairre* (2008), *Iron Man* (2008), and a number of others.

[234] McKenzie, 2001, p. 254

For a quick hit of pathos: Ronnie van Hout

> "As an art-school dropout ('a disillusioned young punk rocker who espoused the politics of no future') who was failed in his final year at art school, van Hout has been well placed to regard the rites of art education with a maximum lack of nostalgia."[235]

Narratives of failure abound in the practice of New Zealand artist Ronnie van Hout. The artist notoriously failed from his final year at Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch in 1982.[236] In *Unemployment Records and Alien Profiles* van Hout's own unemployment records are laser printed and framed together with prints of alien spacecraft - the same way that you would usually frame a degree you had achieved. The curator Justin Paton describes the work thus:

> "For the full hit of pathos, read the fine print.
>
> > HAS JOB INTERVIEW AT ELAM SCHOOL OF ART AUCKLAND NEXT WEEK. HAS BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR IT AND CONFIDENT. HAS NAME DOWN WITH POST OFFICE HERE IN WELLINGTON FOR MAIL SORTER POSITION. POLITE WITH PLEASANT PERSONALITY.."[237]

In this brazen gesture, the artist self-deprecatingly presents the viewer with the realities of life as a working artist. In other works he turns his attention to the aspirations of others. In his *Untitled Band Embroidery* series, van Hout appropriates hand-written advertisments for musicians found in guitar shops - in a strange twist on the macho aspirations for rock stardom, the artist (sometimes ineptly) embroiders these texts onto bare canvases. "The voices of the advertisements...seem newly hopeful and vulnerable."[238]

It is difficult not to imbue van Hout's gestures with musical or filmic metaphors - there is a low-fi, punk aesthetic to the rough printmaking in *Unemployment Records and Alien Profiles* and the inept stitching of his *Untitled Band Embroidery* series; the shifts in context of his appropriations are akin to the DJ's crossfader set in the middle, to double exposures and jump-cuts in film.[239] At face value the getures might be humourous, but after dwelling on the work for a while an overwhelming sense of pathos is introduced.

Given the cultural associations and effects of the mashup outlined above, and given the pathos of watching the cultural assimilation of the mashup unfold over the past few years, the mashup is a cultural phenomenon which is highly emblematic of the cultural climate of informational delirium. Can the *strategies and implications* of mashup production be recontextualised in an installation artwork that reflects upon the nuances of informational delirium?

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235 Paton, 2003, p. 16.

236 Van Hout later went on to successfully complete his masters in Fine Art through RMIT University in Melbourne.

237 Ibid.

238 Paton, 2003, p. 20.

239 Paton, 2003, p. 42.

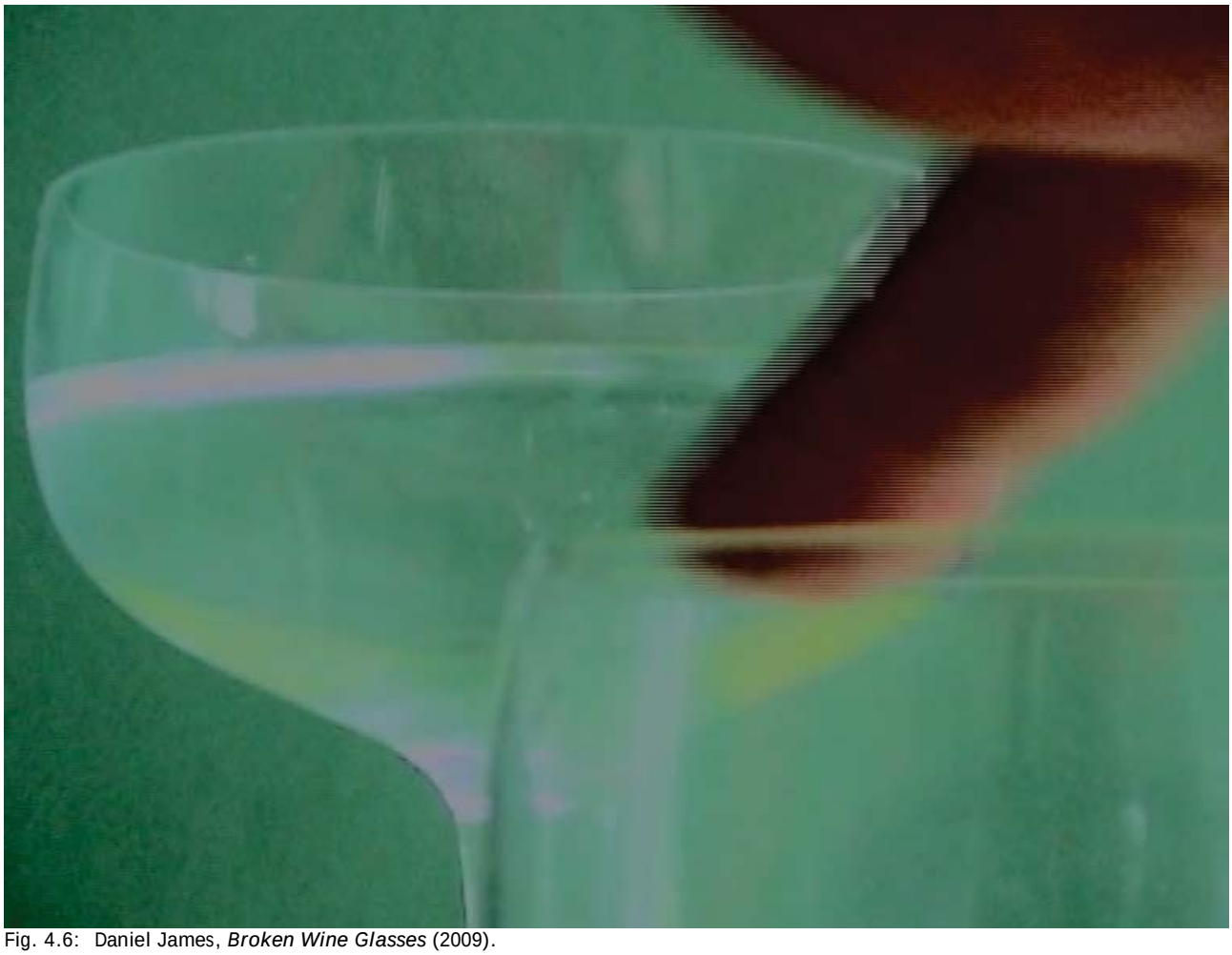

Fig. 4.6: Daniel James, *Broken Wine Glasses* (2009).
Installation (video still).

The setting is a deserted party. A slightly atypical DJ rig sits at the end of the space, blaring mashups of pop, rock, hiphop and dance music. Shards of broken wine glasses cycle mesmerisingly atop a turntable. A large video projection shines behind the DJ rig - depicting a pair of crystal wine glasses which resonate when they are rubbed by a fingertip. The droning tones of the resonating glasses mix dissonantly into the mashups, and the fragments of broken glass refract and scatter the lower edge of the video projection.

To create *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0*, I threw a party for a handful of friends and performed there as a DJ – the last ever performance of Copycat Crime. Then after the guests left I modified the scene into an installation artwork. *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0* disrupts the conviviality of Copycat Crime.

At face value, this artwork could be interpreted as a somewhat cynical take on the postmodern condition. Is this piece an example of bleak Baudrillardian nihlism – signs that endlessly point to one another but do not offer a tangible answer about reality?

No - the party and it's (reconstructed) aftermath take place as real passages of experience.

This entire discussion is grounded by the thematic of subjectivity, with a focus on how technology informs formations of power-knowledge. Even though the belief in an absolute 'real' is a naïve philosophical position, artworks create passages of experience that reflect upon the *experience* of reality. Every audience member has to assume a subject position.

The mashup itself is also a culturally tangible, real phenomenon. The 'dis-placement' described by the heterotopia is an experientially real place to occupy, and further, it is a rite of passage that exists to contest other real sites. There is, of course, a normative dimension to this strategy. As evidenced by case studies predominantly drawn from the history of contemporary music, that which is transgressive and liminal will always sit in relation to the very power structures that it questions – "the mutations of one age may become the norms of another".[240]

[240] McKenzie, p. 254

As a mode of cultural production, the mashup (and in fact any artwork that deploys appropriation as a strategy) is inseparably tied to issues of ownership and originality. Record companies focus on the dollar sign – they have a vested financial interest in pursuing royalties from artists who sample. Artists focus on creating work, and invariably fight back by claiming that the author of a cultural product does not own the resonances of that cultural form. To crudely sum up Bourriaud's position, we are all playing nicely and sharing our toys. To put it somewhat less convivially than Bourriaud does, we are all stealing from one another – but the crimes are mutual and reciprocal, it's fair game. And given the normative dimension to this game, the hegemony of the music industry eventually assimilates these modes of production (realising that they can in fact make advertising revenue from the phenomenon).

In deploying the strategies of mashup production, I have created an artwork that is explicitly critical about the very notion of originality. In the same breath, paradoxically, I also claim that I have produced original work which meets the doctoral requirements of 'new knowledge' (by investigating Baudrillardian, Deleuzian and Foucauldian thought on the simulacra, and then framing my own hybrid of Deleuzian and Foucauldian thought with a new term, 'informational delirium', to denote the current cultural climate; by locating the cultural strategies of mashup production as historically rooted in sampling and appropriation practices in both music and visual arts, and also by identifying the normative dimension to the history that underpins these strategies; and finally by creating an artwork which constitutes a unique and idiosynchratic – albeit pathos-tinged - passage of experience).

The aftermath of a party is inescapably delerious.

The overstimulation of meeting new people, the conversations and flirtations you experienced – this overstimulation gives a hangover that is compunded by the neurological aftereffects of the liquids imbibed. Your body aches from dancing too much. Your head spins in time to the platter of the turntable that someone forgot to turn off.

The aftermath of a party is a strange setting to revisit fun (and often amusing) memories.

The mashups of Copycat Crime were produced over the period of a year, and were performed in DJ sets at numerous parties during that period. This is music which was produced to be shared amongst friends. These mashups are light-hearted, fun combinations of divergent musics which resonate with varying levels of nostalgia (depending on the audience).

The aftermath of a party is inescapably contemplative.

By making a simple shift in context from the dance floor to the contemplative setting of an art installation, the intertextual overstimulation of the mashup is itself reconfigured – the dysfunctional hyperreality of the mashup becomes a subject of inquiry in it's own right. 1980's and 1990's hits – songs which were sung in all earnestness at the time – are now reconfigured as 'signs of the times', time objects, triggering memories which endlessly point to one another. When you hear it at a party, you dance to it. When you hear it in an art gallery, you analyse it.

The aftermath of a party evokes an inescapable element of pathos.

Informational delirium is characterised by cycles of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. The motif of cycling/looping is repeated numerous times in *Broken Wine Glasses 2.0*. There are countless musical loops. A turntable spins with broken wine glasses. The shards of glass refract a projection of the same glasses (intact) being resonated by a fingertip. The movement of the projected fingertip echoes the motion of a DJ cueing the next track.

This is not a conclusion

Version 1

- *End where you began. Sometimes called 'echoing', this type of ending picks up an idea/image suggested in the introduction and echoes it in the conclusion.*

Each chapter raises a cluster of issues and asks a question. Each artwork responds by by challenging and interrogating the issues raised. Concluding the chapter to which they have been assigned is not the sole duty of each artwork. This document, like the artworks that it contextualises, is resistant to hierarchy. As such, there is no meta-conclusion to draw at the end. If the artworks operate as intended, the spirit of each artwork will *haunt* the theoretical and practical issues that are raised in *all four* chapters.

Fig. A: Daniel Agnihotri-Clark, *Séance for Nam June Paik* (2008). Curatorial project (publicity image used on posters, fliers and web).

Version 2

- *End with a summary. A typical and traditional way to conclude is by restating the thesis and summarising its main support points.*

In chapter 1, I set the scene for this research - highlighting how technology has cultural value as well as functional/instrumental value. This notion dates back to ancient Greek thinking - art and technology are inseperably intertwined in the Greek word *techne*. In the present day, there is a field of cultural practice where technology acts as medium to channel ideas. 'Reverse engineering' is a name given to denote a strategy by which technology is reconfigured to shift (and sometimes challenge) it's cultural currency. I employed the term 'bastard media' to refer specifically to technologically enabled artworks which expressly challenge the forward momentum of technology.

This chapter also investigated a number of cultural projects in which technology acts as both medium and subject. While some artists such as Stelarc and Kac ecstatically celebrate the forward momentum of technology, others such as Paik are playfully critical of it. I highlighted a tension between high and low *techne*. I also investigated the strategies of the grotesque, because these fanciful scenes of eccentricity can offer a challenge to complacent taste (high art). I argued that grotesque artworks such as Tony Oursler's are not actually critical about the technologies that they deploy.

Chapter 1 asked:

"Can the strategies of the grotesque (constructing fanciful scenes) be deployed to directly scrutinise the forward momentum of technology - the dialectic between high and low technology - and *vis a vis* 'high' and 'low' art? Further, can the cartoon-like qualities of fanciful narratives be deployed with a sense of humour to actually heighten the sense of disquiet?"

Code Monkey 1.1 responsded to these issues with a fanciful scene – this installation artwork presents a robotic monkey that is creepy, abject and repulsive, but also simultaneously cute, endearing and funny. Anthropomorphising the machine's quasi-human characteristics, the monkey's ambivalent and narcissistic behaviour is funny but disquieting. Further, the work addresses technology as both format and subject. *Code Monkey 1.1* is a grotesque bastard child of technological progress.

In chapter 2 I investigated the theoretical terrain of subjectivity, and how we are each subject to multiple formations of power-knowledge. I also noted that, whilst immensely influential, Marshall McLuhan's technological determinism is problematic because it does not allow for multiple meanings - and these multiplicities characterise technologically enabled cultural practice.

I highlighted a recurring pattern in canonised art practice (conceptual and relational art) – that attempts to achieve emancipation will fail, because with any utopian ideological vision, someone will always be left out. I identified a paradox – that art is inseperably complicit with hegemonic formations of power-knowledge, even if it claims to challenge these same formations. I accepted this paradox with a knowing sense of humour.

Chapter 2 asked:

"How […] can self-reflexivity and humour be deployed to create an artwork which retains a theoretical focus on subjectivity but has a practical focus on technology?"

School of Fine Arts responded by configuring a number of technological elements into multiple and conflicting subject positions. An android watches an archival video sample of Tarzan asserting his authority (spanking a monkey). The android itself is complicit with these power-relations, and asserts its own authority over another machine, a radio controlled ball of gaffer tape. Autobiographical interpretations are foregrounded by the title of this work, identifying the interrelationships between machines as allegorical of the interrelationships and power structures found in institutions of learning. As the creator of this work, I am thus knowingly complicit in the power structures that I critically reflect upon.

In chapter 3 I turned my attention to the aestheticisation of failure. I investigated the glitch in cultural practice, and its overlap with performance (in the three senses of the term that McKenzie identifies). The cultural glitch was redefined to encompass any slippage – accidental or intentional. When encoded media glitches, these slippages (deterritorialisations and subsequent reterritorialisations) generate new meanings.

I also investigated case studies of performance (in a cultural sense of the term). In the tradition of performance art, the exploration of the limits of the body is a central theme. In technologically mediated practice, the glitch investigates technological limits. In the 'glitch' music movement (artists such as Kim Cascone and Oval), and in other visual arts practices (such as those of Len Lye and David Hall), low performance in a technological sense is aestheticised, and it becomes high performance in a cultural sense. (If the slippage is a desired outcome it also becomes high performance in a technological sense). Cultural practice can highlight the subterfuge of mediating technologies, to create a theatre of slippage.

Chapter 3 asked:

"How might technologically enabled cultural performance embody an oscillating tension between high and low performance (in a sense that integrates both cultural and technological meanings of the term)? Further, is it possible to achieve this in a manner that scrutinises mediatised representations of identity more closely, in relation to mainstream media in a pop-cultural context?"

Anaesthesia Associates responded by creating a deliberate tension between between high and low, oscillating between high and low technology; high and low art; high and low performance (in all three senses of the word). This mediatised performance creates numerous slippages of meaning. Representations of identity are glitchy and multiple.

In chapter 4 I investigated in more depth the cultural condition in which meaning is perpetually encoded and decoded, juxtaposed and recontextualised. Finding Baudrillard's view of the simulacrum to be somewhat bleak and nihlistic, I emphasised the notion of an 'experiential' reality that is not singular and absolute, but subjective and multiple. Aligning the discussion with my interest in subjectivity, I also looked at Foucault's idea of the heterotopia as a framework for understanding displacement. I found that, in spite of a normative dimension to liminal practices, the heterotopia still does function to contest the (experientially) real. I coined the term informational delirium to describe the current cultural climate.

In cultural practice I investigated the strategies of sampling in music. I also compared sampling in music to appropriation in visual art, in order to establish how mashup/sampling strategies might operate in an art context. I identified that Bourriaud's framework of 'postproduction' formulates well-established traditions within music (and in the visual arts) as 'new trends' in the field of fine arts. I also found that the mashup, like numerous other sampling strategies that preceeded it, is subject to the normative process of assimilation.

Chapter 4 asked:

"Can the *strategies and implications* of mashup production be recontextualised in an artwork that reflects upon the nuances of informational delirium?"

Broken Wine Glasses 2.0 reflected on the question and responded unintelligibly with a delirious air of pathos, a self-deprecating sense of humour, and a thrumming hangover.

Version 3

- *End with further comments from the writer. Such comments should be natural and logical extensions of the information in the body of your document.*

In this document, I presented a cluster of theoretical and sociopolitical issues, and I contextualised these concepts with selected case studies from cultural practice. I located and analysed a number of problems, complexities, and paradoxes in the field. While I can identify (and to a certain extent redefine and recontextualise) these issues, they cannot be closed down in a singular, overarching and conclusive manner – they remain open for debate.

Whilst researching the field, I developed a number of strategies for making technologically mediated cultural products. I applied these strategies, and I made a suite of artworks.

Cultural products perform most effectively when they retain a degree of open-endedness, multiplicity and ambiguity. This document contextualises four unique and idiosynchratic artworks, and it is the artworks themselves that offer new ways of understanding the issues raised. This is not a conclusion, it is simply the end of a document.

Version 4

- *End with fervour. Strategies for getting the reader's attention can be used to end your writing uniquely and memorably (e.g. stating a provocative question or an apt quotation).*

Will this aestheticised failure to offer a straightforward linear conclusion be recognised as high performance?

"Delirium or acute confusional state is a transient global disorder of cognition." <!--EndFragment-->

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1 - All hyperlinks to online sources were active as at 14/05/2010. Where an online source has been cited, I do not provide page numbers for direct quotes.
2 - The first page of each chapter (text with grey background) is a partially fictive passage to describe my own artwork. Aspects of these passages are derived from appropriated text, but these passages are new creative outcomes in their own right. Therefore - as with some of my mashup performances and recordings - I do not necessarily identify and cite the sources used in these passages.
3 - There are a number of in-text citations of text from works of fiction and lyrics from musical recordings (which appear indented, bold and italicised in-text). These are given as 'flavouring' quotes – to identify these creative works I provide the author's name and the title of the work in the text. For longer *non*-fictional sources (which appear indented in-text, but not bold or italicised), the name and title are only cited in footnotes and end referencing, not in-text.
4 – Where an artist is more commonly known by a pseudonym than by their real name (eg Grandmaster Flash), I provide their full pseudonym as the main footnoted reference (and their birth/legal name in brackets in the reference details).
5 - Where a mashup work is cited, I cannot necessarily provide full references for the mashup itself, or identify the source material that has been sampled to create the new work. Most mashups are illegal under copyright law, and thus posted online anonymously – in locations that are not static. If a mashup is taken offline for legal reasons it commonly reappears, but mirrored in different locations. I cannot thus provide accurate details beyond name and date, and sometimes even these details are ambiguous. Further, In note 2, I commented that sometimes I do not provide information about the source material for my own creative work – this is up to the audience to discern if they can (and wish to). When I am discussing the mashup work of others, however, I am speaking in the capacity of audience to someone else's work. In my critical response to the work of others, it may be relevant to the discussion to identify the source material - if I do in fact recognise it – in order to note the relevant resonances and associations that are inherent to the source works. Wherever possible, therefore, I provide the basic information for any source material that has been sampled: title, artist name and the year of release, but not the record company and release details (since I am discussing these source works in relation to a new work, not in their own right).

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