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BOOK 1

GROUND ERASURE:

**an investigation of the notion of "territory" through
theories of deterritorialisation and machinic connectivity**

A PhD Thesis submitted by

RUTH BIANCO

Kent Institute of Art & Design / University of Kent at Canterbury
in partial fulfillment for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Art

KIAD / UKC

November 2004

Imaginative work...is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners...

VIRGINIA WOOLF

This is where it starts...It never occurred to me it wasn't the beginning, it was the moment... right then

THE HOURS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank those individuals who have helped to supervise and support me throughout the creation of this project and the writing of this thesis: Joanna Lowry (KIAD), Richard Davies (KIAD), Vaughan Grylls (KIAD), and David Reason (UKC).

ABSTRACT

This research project was developed in practice through the production of artwork. Alternating between art and reflection, my aim was to develop a strategy for artistic research that was targeted towards the goal of an integrative project supported through information technologies. This idea developed out of my position as an artist working at distance, from a small island (Malta). My problematic, therefore, was focused around the question of territory. This research endeavoured to investigate the notion of "territory" through theories of deterritorialisation and machinic connectivity.

A fusion of interdisciplinary practices and critical analysis across poststructuralist, postmodernist and postcolonial political and cultural theories shaped this journey, interlacing various processes of practice and reflection in a non-hierarchical way – the practice informing the theory and vice versa. Interrogating the concept of territory, my research question was based on the observation that the parameters of art are changing; that as artists living in society, our understanding of territory is becoming increasingly ambiguous chiefly because of the internationalisation of capital and the expansion of communication media.

Ground Erasure has been constructed as a conceptual framework engaging machinic spaces to respond to issues of deterritorialisation and dislocation. Comprising two interactive books, Book 1 outlines Deleuze and Virilio's concepts of deterritorialisation, relating this to the development of contemporary art practices. Aspects of Latour's Actor-Network Theory are explored as a methodological device for reterritorialising art practice in a global context. Book 2 explores the way in which these theories have been interrogated in processes documented through artistic productions.

Findings, pointing to an art territory forming out of ambivalent uneasy tensions, are articulated in an audio/video installation embodying a machinic relational spatiality of actants and art-site. This aspires towards a way of looking at art practice through a connective vision focusing on a shift away from representational, isolationist modes of perception towards distributionist networks of production.

INTRODUCTION

My research was inspired by a set of concerns about outreach and a need to identify my position as an artist in a new communications geography that has been restructured by information and image spaces in a world whose boundaries have become progressively narrowed, more undefined and unstable. In effect, the question that intrigued and excited me as it emerged from the conditions governing my own practice was: What is the meaning of territory? But this broad question was pointedly focused on a perspective linking political and artistic deterritorialisation in my practice. This interrogation was triggered by the observation that the notion of "territory" has become increasingly elusive; that it seems to embody simultaneous tensions, increasingly defined and refined at a regional scale yet dematerialising and losing definition at a global level. These ambivalent phenomena, remapping and negotiating our political boundaries, persevere through protracted conflicts and wars, the growing forces of globalisation and trans-conglomeration, progressive unification pacts (such as the European Union May 2004 expansion), and most notably the intervention of rapid technological advancement. Integral to my hypothesis is the observation that art, seen as part of the flow of social production, is a product of these dislocating effects of deterritorialisation. Pointedly, the conceptual framework of Ground Erasure I develop in my project as a strategy to approach my research question, is focused upon an interrogation of the machinic spaces within which the contemporary artist is operating. In the process of this, my research engages a spectrum of distances that shape a spatial taxonomy of machinic relationships, a position from which to respond to certain issues of deterritorialisation and dislocation and the reterritorialising process through my own practice.

Essentially, this research question stemmed from a need to understand more clearly the implications, the potential, the limitations, and indeed, the opposing tensions occurring within the new spatial configurations of our restructured spaces through dynamically shifting the parameters of art practice. As a Maltese artist working in and out of a small nation state, a densely populated Mediterranean island hemmed in by cerulean skies and an expanse of deep blue waters, I grew up with the desire to transcend highly competitive but necessarily parochial surroundings. I sought to widen my horizons by pursuing an education that paralleled my art training through English Literature, and post-graduate studies in Educational as well as Diplomatic International Studies before progressing to the UK for a Masters in Fine Art. My project, therefore, has been to counter the cultural lacunae and exclusivenesses endured in some places because of isolation and distance barriers, and to examine the substantive role of art as a form of cultural production that fosters practice upon a wider communicative platform and in the context of fast transforming network spaces. I have embarked on this *in-situ* from Malta as a primary research experience exploring new digital geographies and spaces. These views find support in Stewart and Cohen's statement that, "our new communication technologies are beginning to knit all of the different multicultures into a new entity – a 'superculture' that can be called 'humanity'."¹ These scientists, studying how the cultural evolution of human intelligence and extelligence is propelled through a constantly developing aggregation of different cultures, presently observe how complex planes are now forming of new socio-cultural connectedness in a world technological society. Similar thinking led me to explore art practice within a framework of socio-cultural production underpinned by theories and critiques

¹ IAN STEWART - JACK COHAN, *Figments of Reality – The Evolution of the Curious Mind*, Cambridge University Press, 1997: <http://home.earthlink.net/~denmartin/for.html> (last accessed 23.05.05)

connecting political fields of thought with the new cultural processes that are transforming the visual arts. My direct engagement with machinic space enabled me to register an "alterity of proximity" across a connective plateau of distances and creative production, and being formed by a perceptual position that veers away from earlier, systematic structures of autonomous representation.²

The argument for a perceptual connective productivity stems from the observation of a less stable sense of territorial belonging occurring as the older structures of modernity give way to new global frameworks. From a personal angle, artists like myself living and working across different countries and cultures and seeking to overcome the problems of territorial isolation are affected by this. From another angle, the growing phenomenon of the "glocal" is creating a complex interaction between the global and local characterised by a cultural borrowing and hybridism that cannot be simply reduced to clear-cut manifestations of sameness or difference.³ This argument is put forward by more optimistic theorists in response to more pessimistic sceptics and their arguments concerning a homogenised disappearing of the local. My view from an artist's standpoint is that processes of dedifferentiation and blurring boundaries necessarily occur and that as artists we need to find positive, creative ways forward in a global situation where living across cultural borders may mean both the loss of some meanings and the gain of new ones. This finds correspondence in Steger's observation that postmodern frameworks are characterised by a less secure sense of identity, knowledge and effects whereby "reconstructed feelings of belonging coexist in uneasy tensions with a sense of placelessness".⁴ The

² FELIX GUATTARI, *Chaosmosis. An ethico-aesthetic paradigm*, Power Publications, Australia 1995, 45.

³ MANFRED B. STEGER, *Globalization*, OUP, Oxford 2003, 75.

⁴ *Ibid.*

changing boundaries of art are wedged between different tensions of cultural change, political powers and economic expansionism. In general, acceleration and rapidity give a sense of space/time compression and a reduction in the meaning of geographical distance, producing a sharpening polarisation of new speed and affects.⁵ At the same time that frontiers dissolve and give the impression of a closer, mobile world, borders become more guarded, monitored and controlled. The progressive changes of a technological, conglomerate and developed world also brings with it the intensification of other negatives: a rise in pollution levels, in international crime, terror networks, and a profusion of illegal trade and transnational trafficking (such as that of drugs, armaments, children and sex), apart from the subversive hacking or viral cyber-attacks violating the Internet. As the Northern hemisphere of the world develops, this calls into question how and whether growth and expansion filter down to a less developed South or indeed, whether these differences and rifts get wider. As this extensive social and geo-political landscape shifts, the boundaries of how we live and work as artists is also impacted and being transformed. These influences reshape the way we are being informed, the way we exchange, socialize and communicate with each other.

The interrogation of territory was kindled by the issues springing out of my artworks in dealing with territorial transboundary movements and world situations. Some of the artworks documented in this research such as the *Wall_of_Prayer*, *WorldSNAPS*, *Doubletake*, *Red Alert*, and the audio track of *WeatherTALK* are situated between the documentary, reportage and the staged. Others deal with a combination of broader political and conceptual forms of

⁵ ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *Globalisation. The Human Consequences*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 1998, 18-26.

detritorialisation, such as the Brixton research (to be titled: *Don't Run Over the Birds, Please*), *Demarcations, If I Just Turn and Run* and my last submitted works *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision*. These artworks range topically across conceptual world subjects surrounding war and environment and social repositioning, placed in the wider contexts of media saturation, pollution, climatic weather changes, and the obstruction and intrusion of land in my developmental works, and across conceptual statements of geographical and historical erasures in my last works presented in this research.

Ground Erasure, the collective title given to this research project, is a key term in this text and has been created as a conceptual framework where practice and epistemology intersect. It presents, therefore, a catalytic plane for the compounded meanings and connective processes in this research to take place. These processes are related to "pools of activities" that ripple, overlap, interact and trigger one another into complex formations. Deterritorialisation is the thread linking these activities. Thus, the spectrum of activities motivating Ground Erasure concern: First, a position of *personal* deterritorialisation as an artist-researcher working from a distant location. This involved working with the developing techniques of computer-mediation between overseas sites for professional communication with institutions, and dealing with certain practical issues of mobility, transportability, and feasibility. Beyond this, as my interest involves working with global subjects, this provokes a particular kind of artistic exploration: working with data-space, internet image/audio and footage-grabbing or digital transportation to publish or exhibit work in another overseas country. Secondly, my research involved a *conceptual/artistic* deterritorialisation. This is embedded in the political and transboundary themes expressed in my artworks. Artistically, the combination of these ideas inspired technical practices

which I refer to as "erasure practices" or "creative-violences" involving digital manipulation, collage and montage and a "tearing out of context" to re-plot, reformat and piece together in new constructs. And, thirdly, these creative practices are combined with a *theoretical* deterritorialisation. This concerns the fusion of philosophies through the intersection of Deleuzian universality and creative deterritorialisation, and from a divergent angle, Paul Virilio's diagnostic global politics and delocalisation critiques. Ground Erasure, therefore, is about disjunctive synthesis; bringing differences together. And these three "pools of activities", the personal, the conceptual/artistic and the theoretical, are elements interacting towards a complex connective network of relationships.

This research, therefore, focuses on how I am responding, as a practicing artist engaging with machinic spaces, to the observation that the boundaries of art are being transformed. Ground Erasure incorporates this and is referred to as a deterritorialised territory, a mobile territory, or a network territory. This is because it compounds different layers of meaning, activities and issues functioning on literal and metaphorical levels connectively. In so doing, Ground Erasure combines levels of the artistic/practical and conceptual with those of the political and philosophical. It is referred to as a deterritorialised territory because it deals with issues of an elusive artistic territory where contemporary art seems caught in a dilemma between different social economic forces. This is because art seems to be trapped between a nomadological fluidity that de-stratifies whilst, at the same time, seeking to reterritorialise and ascertain some strata and stabilisation. From another important practical angle, Ground Erasure is referred to as a deterritorialised territory chiefly because it addresses art practices and themes dealing with territorial transboundedness and hybrid forms of machinic production. I refer to Ground Erasure as a mobile territory likewise because of

these shifting motions but also because it is open to interacting flows, productivity and "becoming", modes of thinking inspired through Deleuze. Further to this, Ground Erasure is also called a network territory because it is about connectivity, a concept inspired by both Deleuzean philosophic ideas of the rhizome and machinic deterritorialisation and, from a sociological perspective, Bruno Latour's reterritorialising "actant" methods as they are expounded in Actor-Network Theory. "Actor-network" embodies a tension. It is intentionally oxymoronic, the tension lying between the centred "actor" on the one hand and the decentred "network" on the other. In this respect ANT is a theory that argues against fixity and singularity and studies the process of stabilisation through a symmetrical viewpoint. In this, both the human and non-human are active participating agencies integrated in the same conceptual framework. The elements forming a complexity of interacting networks are referred to as "actants" or "actors" (they act and are acted upon).⁶ In a similar way, the "pools of activities" operating and forming my research project are actants.

I have attempted to explain the concept of Ground Erasure in detail because it is a term that recurs frequently throughout my text, and its meaning has developed in the course of writing, reading and making art. It was actually initially motivated through a number of factors, one being the *Wall_of_Prayer*, one of my key developmental artworks triggered upon the 11th September 2001 whilst I was in London at the time that marked an important turning point in this research. Ground Erasure, as a phrase, actually emerged soon after as my research

⁶ Actor-Network Theory was developed by BRUNO LATOUR, JOHN LAW, MICHEL CALLON and others. JOHN LAW, *Topology and the Naming of Complexity*, Centre for Science Studies, University of Lancaster, Lancaster, UK updated 2003: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/sociology/papers/law-topology-and-complexity.pdf> (last accessed 16.05.05); see also MARTIN RYDER, *What is Actor-Network Theory?* 2003: http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html (last accessed 16.05.05)

developed when I was thinking upon the idea of unfixtured to reflect an expandable artwork as an "insecure art object" that matches an "insecure world". The *Wall_of_Prayer* was designed as an artwork that grows larger and more complex with the successive onslaught and diffusion of world terror attacks and human tragedies that occur. Prompted by the development of this piece of work, Ground Erasure was stirred by theories coming from Deleuze and Virilio: Deleuzian "inhuman philosophy" that advocates shedding the "foundation" or the "ground" of being human, which we use as a form of exchange for everything outside ourselves existing in the world; an exchange conducive to racial disequilibrium. Beyond this, Deleuze talks of "uprooting the tree", in order to grow a rhizome and expand ground. This sense of a philosophical deterritorialisation was compounded in my thinking by Virilio's analysis of an erosion of territoriality on different levels. Virilio talks of a diminution of physicality, a pollution of distance, loss of the territorial body and loss of art's "ground" or presence. Ground Erasure developed out of a combination of these meanings as a double negative that plays paradoxically on the erasure of erasure. This cancellation creatively implies the erasure of erosion through artistic production; forming new meanings of presence through machinic spaces. These nuances seemed appropriate for my artwork which dealt with world subjects and damage whilst conceptualising connective modes of creativity through methods exploring technology and communication media. These "erasure practices" present a further process: that of looking at existing meanings or artistic processes in a radically new connective way. Creatively speaking, for instance, "accidents" are equal to "lines of flight" in terms of the disruptive trajectories that unleash and point to new opportunities. My own line

of flight in Ground Erasure eventually emerged in the process of these disjunctive meanings, amalgamations and syntheses.⁷

My practical work on this project had begun by concentrating on forming links between nuclear disaster and toxic poisons, the Chernobyl legacy, Gorbachev's plea to demilitarize and clean our sea-beds, and the sinister manufacture of vaccines in Porton Down in Salisbury in the UK. This focus spread onto other disparate world hotspots: the Kosovo war, genocide, the foot-and-mouth in the UK, toxic ships, electro-magnetic leaks from the Vatican pylons in Rome, and others. These issues, explored using the internet, TV or news journals, started to form an intricate net of complex associations onto which to build art such as the *WorldSNAPS* digital outputs. A combined metaphor for my work and concepts emerged with the idea of "weaving webs of poison", a method of working and intertwining images electronically. These "webs" were about the pollution of place and the pollution of war, exacerbated by what Virilio calls the "information bomb" – a totality of bombardment. These thoughts of pollution, war and a heavily media-saturated world found further materialisation during my personal presence in London on the 11th September 2001, an event followed by a period of potential accident, toxic threats and invisible enemies which inspired the creation of my *Y-War* sketches and the *Wall_of_Prayer*. My interest in Virilio, hence, was ignited by his forecast that virtualisation was a scary, insidious omen that would bring an ecological never seen before "totalising accident"; a form of annihilation overshadowed by previous exterminations. Virilio sees life as a "kaleidoscope of impending catastrophes" experienced daily by contemporary civilization, the 9.11 tragedy being part of this legacy. He uses Chernobyl as a paragon of the

⁷ See Diagram 4, Appendix A, 102.

accident. All accidents are "information Chernobyls", he says.⁸ The coinciding of my practice with Virilio's foreboding cataclysm, which harked back to Chernobyl, fired the writing of Book 1 in this text. The deeper engagement with Deleuzian concepts of deterritorialisation fused the political and visual language of the connective artistic processes I was exploring. Deterritorialisation, for instance, is looked upon by Deleuze as creative montage – processes of tearing out of context to create new dynamic connections. From a philosophical perspective, deterritorialisation is a practical creative means to counter the monopolization of the media or its control over historicity that gives the impression of a linear progression of time and order. But this is not all. Deterritorialisation can be seen as a particular way of perceiving; as a way of creatively *ir*-rationalising an experience even as we are experiencing it. This exercise is one I attempt in the first Section of Book 1 where the experience of watching the 11th September event on TV screens is contemplated as a virtual-actual interaction through the multiple facets of temporal events and memories coexisting in the Deleuzian "crystal".⁹ This is seen from the position of *actant*, as one acting and being acted upon, or in Deleuzian terms as one affected and affecting, so that the experience is at once disorientating but artistically creative. This is used as a way of bringing the divergent points of deterritorialisation in Virilio and Deleuze, together. Hence, Ground Erasure is my personal line of flight, taking off where my artwork meets the intersection of Deleuze and Virilio's deterritorialisation and dislocation.

⁸ PAUL VIRILIO - SYLVÈRE LOTRINGER, *Crepuscular Dawn*, Semiotext(e), NY 2002, 135; PAUL VIRILIO, *The Writing of the Disaster*, Foreword for *Unknown Quantity* at the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, 2003:

http://www.onoci.net/virilio/pages_uk/virilio/avertissement.php?th=1&rub=1_1 (last accessed 23.05.05)

⁹ GILLES DELEUZE, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, Athlone, London 1989, 68-224.

Motivated through the idea of the machinic assemblage, I propose in Ground Erasure a connective approach inspired by a distributionist and holistic mode of seeing in order to make sense of the hybrid processes operating in the context of contemporary art. The traditional and singular viewpoint of looking at art can no longer suffice. The societal, cultural and technological shifts taking place, suggest a need to take into account the various elements and processes coexisting towards an objective (e.g. a project).

The key objective of Ground Erasure as a framework for my research, offers a way of looking at known art processes in a radically different mode. This contends a move away from the isolationist and disconnected territorial perception of earlier models. The implication in Ground Erasure is that art is not seen aloof from the other processes of life – from what is happening in politics or science for instance. Network approaches promote strategies for team relationships; a shift from the dominant to decentralized consensus. Indeed, in the geo-political landscape this kind of connectivity is encountered in the demand for consensual action in dealing with issues that share world borders – the environment, security, and population growth, for example. These problems and the growing contiguity of trade, business, technology, food, health, education and culture necessitate a move from national centrism to the wider arena of international and multi-lateral collaboration. In the perspective of science, emergent theories in cognitive research suggest that human perception, rather than being subservient to the formation of a centralized representation of the world, models a “co-functioning of highly distributed parts or elements many of which are in the environment, not in the eye or brain”.¹⁰ This has marked a

¹⁰ JOHN JOHNSTON, “Machinic Vision”, in *Critical Inquiry* 26, University of Chicago (Autumn 1999), 42.

move from a traditional cognitivist, symbolic, top-down approach to a contemporary connectionist, neural-mapping, bottom-up method. These findings are used in the development of artificial intelligence in teaching machines to recognize complex phenomena. But the main issue here lies in the recognition that higher cognitive activities take place through interactions with external resources, be they machines, methods, or both.¹¹ The important point is this move from the hierarchical towards decentred, highly distributed systems and the possibility that most human activities are "distributed functions". It would seem, therefore, that these discoveries, pre-empted already in the Deleuzian machinic distributionist assemblage, can provide a theoretical backbone in a post-production age for a connectionist approach in the practical and conceptual apparatuses of our multifaceted artistic processes. Such processes are exemplified in art practices constructed upon an assembly of heterogeneous elements, activities and external connections.

In the context of art, earlier traditional processes persist in a position of separateness where art practice is isolated from other disciplines or practices. This centralized position, maintaining singular representation and exclusiveness, is conducive to standardising, homogenising systems of production. Such systems are acquiescent in the established, the institutionalized, and the authoritarian – a hegemony of vision.¹² Opposing this regime is the denunciation of power walls through forces that disrupt uniformity and slant into the corporate desire-machine. In practice, decentring processes challenge and question

¹¹ Ibid. 43.

¹² JACKIE HATFIELD, "Disappearing Digitally?" In *Digital Desires. Language, Identity, and New Technologies*, edited by Cutting Edge (The Women's Research Group), I.B. Tauris, London 2000, 194; see also CRAIG OWENS, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism" in *Postmodern Culture* edited by Hal Foster, Pluto Press, London 1985, 57.

existing definitions; break rules and modify borders between genres and cultures. Isolationist modes promote self-referential and introverted systems that "trace fixed points" and form closures. Alternatively, connectionist systems "map flowing lines" and are open to hybridity, interaction and deterritorialisation.¹³ This is significant in view of the complex relationships and poly-semiosis built into contemporary art languages that cross-fertilize and sit ambiguously between different "territories": different forms of expression, different cultural nuances, different modes of temporality and mutability. The mindset from the traditional to the connectionist marks a transition from the monolithic and hierarchical to the unfixed and distributed. But the new strata are not about a utopian totality. More are they about differentiation that now, in a post-9.11 politics, deal not only with a "tolerance of incommensurability" as Lyotard implied, but also with the sharpened tensions of the inconstant and uncertain - a diffused sense of locatedness.¹⁴ The distributed function of perception is already implied to be both everywhere and nowhere in the assemblage. Deleuze suggests, in the time-image, that what is perceived is not located at any single place or moment in the topology of time.¹⁵ In what I am calling Ground Erasure the fusions of the political and conceptual address the question of locating sitedness in art. The permeable boundaries of our age where distance and demarcations are characterized by satellite signals, communication flows and speed make this important.

It is with this in mind that my research investigates an actant mode as a way to experience and look at art through a network-metaphor. A position similar to

¹³ GILLES DELEUZE - FELIX GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Athlone Press, London 1988. See Foreword by Brian Massumi, xiii.

¹⁴ See JEAN F. LYOTARD, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge (1979)*, Minnesota & Manchester, 1984.

¹⁵ DELEUZE, (C2), 98-125.

that of the haecceity where the actor, in the process of connecting, also changes: "A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome."¹⁶ This project focuses on pulling different viewpoints together; on flows operating not as isolated agencies but as multidimensional relationships interacting together to form practice. This kind of collage of experiences also finds resonance in the Deleuzian cinematic idea of creative disjunctive multiplicities oriented together.¹⁷ For us as artists the situation of a shifted territory cannot be denied inasmuch as the Internet, virtual environments and communication technologies have infiltrated our lives. It is this connective approach, from the isolated to the network, that I try to convey through the concept of Ground Erasure.

¹⁶ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 263.

¹⁷ JOHN RAJCHMAN, *The Deleuze Connections*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2000, 4-14 and 50-76.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This project involves a methodology of practice-led research based upon the processes of making art. To this purpose the shape of this research was constructed as a three-stage strategy pursued through an initial stage of practical research development (labwork); a second stage of theoretical/textual alignment (text as process); and a third phase leading to a deeper associative theoretical and practical summation in the final artworks submitted for exhibition.¹

In responding to the question of territory, the heuristic approach adopted at the inception of this project sought an intercepting political and artistic visual terminology. The construction of Ground Erasure enabled an appropriate framework for my engagement with machinic spaces as a way to interrogate and respond to my research question and, through practice, to investigate ways of dealing with aspects of dislocation and deterritorialisation pertaining to contemporary practice. This focus is inscribed within Ground Erasure, the emergent meaning of which is detailed in my introduction, and which essentially provides the methodological machinery to deal with a spectrum of distances through three perspectives of deterritorialisation.² These comprise: a personal perspective in working on this research and communicating with a university at distance; an artistic perspective in dealing with subjects concerned with world issues and methods of machinic practices; and finally a theoretical perspective on philosophies of deterritorialisation mainly through Virilio and Deleuze, and other aspects of postmodern and postcolonial reflections through other thinkers and

¹ See Diagram 1, Appendix A, 99.

² See Diagram 2, Appendix A, 100.

writers, curators, or exhibitions, such as Jean Baudrillard, Okwui Enwezor and Documenta 11, Carol Becker, Felix Guattari, Marc Auge, and others.

In setting up a laboratory of theory and practice for these purposes, the textual part of my thesis functions as process. Through its active role and mobile format, the text helps to develop the conceptual aspect of the practice while still in the flux of formation. This machinic mobility is implemented to allow the flexibility of moving between layers and segments; of reading the different sections in the text not necessarily sequentially and of moving between the territorial hyperlinked surfaces connecting the theoretical and visual material in parallel streams. This conceptual treatment of the text's format finds important correspondence in the intellectual arguments about territories and machinic connectivities that this research is concerned with. Such a format also finds resonance in Deleuze's theories where he talks of "mobile sections of movements"; his Cinema works in particular, where filmic temporal segments inspire the creative fluidity of intercepting philosophic concepts.³ This fluidity is exemplified in Deleuze and Guattari's own work, *A Thousand Plateaus*, a text which they suggest may be approached or begun from any of its plateaus. The textual part of my project is modelled on a similar principle, a principle reflected also in the composite structure of my research. Through its own machinery this interdisciplinary project demonstrates productivity through a network of compounded processes that integrate a circulation of overlapping activities taking place between art, theory and method. Diagram 2 demonstrates the integrative processes that combine the structural nodes of this project into a coherent network. Actor-Network Theory has been selected in this project as an appropriate method for the purpose of dealing with these co-functioning activities

³ GILLES DELEUZE, *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image*, Athlone, London 1986, 23.

because it focuses on interaction as consequence. ANT efficiently equips us with a methodology, language and vocabulary to discuss things of a socio-technological nature; for explaining the interplay between things social, political and technological. This has involved the translation of a theory originally intended as an ethnomethodology; as a way of talking about information artefacts, information structures and information systems and their role in the social structures that utilize them, and as a way to elaborate on how these various information technologies affect the social structures around them and concurrently are affected by the same. This systems way of thinking provides an insightful and powerful tool because it helps to study a problem by identifying the other problems surrounding it: what happens within the boundaries and how the issues with the problem at hand connect with the environment (i.e. outside the defined boundary). Diagram 2 describes a network topology for the different elements (spectrum of distances and pools of activities) to interact through a language of actors, networks and inscriptions; a language transposed into my research to talk about artworks, different processes, actions, materials and various elements networking into each other. Actors are entities that can be human or non-human (e.g. machines, computers, social structures, information, environments, etc.) forming complex networks constructed through connections between actors, various links and communication channels. Inscriptions are the acts or processes by which actors (e.g. the artworks in this project) perform on other actors shaping their attributes and properties into a complex network of human and non-human actants performing on each other towards shared objectives. In my thesis, inscriptions are interpreted as the flows of production taking place in the relationship between myself as artist and the computer as machine. In this way ANT is used as a general method to elaborate upon the ontological shared territory of art and technology, providing the basic concepts to

do empiric work that in itself also generates more theory. Hence, theory and practice interact, support and produce one another. This productive performance goes on ceaselessly and is vital to the concept of "performativity" integral to Actor-Network Theory. For these reasons, this theory has instigated a connective way of perceiving a multifarious web of activities. This perspective of examining the artworks as "players" (actants), builds upon Latour's statement that it is "the movement, and the flow, and the changes that should be stressed".⁴ ANT provides this research with the methodological means to develop the concept of productive connectivity in my thesis proposing actant-strategies as equitable processes of stabilisation operating upon the complex relationship between creative practice and technology in the context of contemporary fine art.

The application of ANT as a methodology for connective theory is supported by Deleuzian rhizome theory. But although these theories bear similarities in propounding connectivity frameworks, there are essential differences. I use Deleuzian rhizomorphology mainly as a philosophical medium to argue for the expansion of the territoriality of our thinking mind and creative processes through deterritorialisation. This, whilst having relevance for the technical processes of my art practice as a collage/montage/installation artist, also provides a theoretical juxtaposition with Virilio's opposing standpoint concerning the political obliteration of territoriality through his theories of disappearance. The intersecting resistance points of these two thinkers' machinic theories provide my own line of creative productivity.⁵ I use Latour's Actor-Network Theory in my research as an extension to Deleuze's rhizome theory, looking more

⁴ BRUNO LATOUR, articles, 2002: *A Prologue in form of a Dialogue between a Student and his (somewhat) Socratic Professor*: <http://www.ensmp.fr/~latour/articles/article/090.html> (last accessed 23.05.05)

⁵ See Diagram 4, Appendix A, 102.

at ANT as a technically defined sociological device to study how and why things are the way they are; the relational elements forming networks and the allocation and distribution of power within them. I attempt to use ANT to describe the connective flows shaping my network of practice as an interactive conceptual plateau, the exhibition/presentation processes forming strategies and critical moments of territorialisation. The rhizome and ANT theories, therefore, form my methodologies to structure a countering response to dislocation and dissolution theories, allowing me to leap forward with my own theory of liberating the accident through its conversion into flights of creative practice in Ground Erasure.

These processes are embedded in a post-11th September 2001 politics placed under an "erasure" metaphor. This idea is inspired in part from Jean Derrida's *sous rature* deconstruction theories articulating the interplay between absent/present intertextualities. I translate this into an architectural metaphor to talk about arguments concerning the iconic symbolic reappearance of the World Trade Centre buildings through hype and media after their physical disappearance. This is paralleled by Virilio's theory of the "aesthetic of disappearance" and his forecast of the most integral accident. The 11.09.01 event provides a referential springboard in this research serving a number of purposes. First, this period brought a turning point in my research when my presence in London during this period prompted some of the key developmental works in my art practice. *Y_War* and the *Wall_of_Prayer* deal pictorially with the historical episodes of this event, and have been vital in the expansion of my conceptual framework on Ground Erasure. Further to this, Virilio's theories on the accident matched my art practice, particularly the same *Wall_of_Prayer* project since he (as one of my key references in this research) describes the 11th September event as a most deliberate and expected accident. This event

therefore provided an inspirational link between my practice and literary material. Second, this event has brought with it a deterritorialisation of Western thinking. This point was illustrated during Condoleezza Rice's first official mission to France as the new US Secretary of State during February 2005. Here she opined France as important bedrock of critical thinking. Because of this, she felt it seemed most fitting to state that post-9.11 it had become clear to the western world that the resistance coming from some parts of the world indicated we quietly needed to rethink those ways which may be deemed excessive by other cultures that feel differently.⁶ The 11th September event has brought an outpouring of cultural and critical literature concerning this rethinking which provides important contemporary references in my analyses of the meaning of territory, the dissolution of space and breakdown of boundaries. This conceptual material is built directly into the themes of some of my artworks (*Y-War*, *Wall_of_Prayer*, *Doubletake*, *Red Alert*). The practical relevance of this material to my research also inspires speculation on the role of art in a post-11th September context following this onslaught on Western capitalist thinking. This interest drove questions on whether, for instance, shifts in social thinking surrounding these political events affected new positions of deterritorialisation in art practice.

This form of theoretical enquiry parallels a complex build-up of web connections. This constructs an allegorical labyrinth weaving levels of meaning and artistic themes into a series of theoretical questions in the different sections of my thesis that address the issues of the pervasiveness of virtualisation, the loss of art's presence, the emergence from dystopia, intensified propinquity, and strategies of connectivity.

⁶ Cable TV, Skynews, February 2005.

The text in this thesis is divided into two interactive books, **Book 1** and **Book 2**, which are connected through hyperlinks in the electronic version enabling the user to move back and forth between the two volumes. This machinic format has been created as a conceptual connective correspondence matching the territorial debate and research question under analysis. This is also reflective of the strategy undertaken in this thesis whereby text and making art function as an aligned symbiotic process during the writing phase towards reaching resolution in the submitted works placed on exhibition.⁷ The two books may be viewed open together in the printed version for cross-referencing. The links between Book 1 and 2 serve as bi-directional departure points for expanded discussion interspersing the visual documentation of the artworks in Book 2. Apart from this purpose, the electronic version contains the digital references in the footnotes and bibliography hyperlinked to websites and online material used in the review of literature and artwork in this research. The digital version of Book 2 has also been designed as a way to record and view the electronic multimedia files sampling my artwork material through Microsoft PowerPoint and digital video-files that open in a media player on the computer.

Book 1 is divided into five Sections. These set out to examine and juxtapose the machinic visions of Deleuze and Virilio, looked upon in this research as intersecting machines. My thesis in Book 1 revolves around these two key models supported by a circulation of other references and texts to examine the divergent effects of deterritorialisation. Deterritorialisation is scrutinized from the double perspective of art and politics as interacting components in the social cultural machine. This perspective is maintained both from a theoretical point of view and from a practical perspective as the overlapping activities of writing,

⁷ Diagram 1, Appendix A, 99.

researching and making art develop concurrently. Hence, the political meanings of territorial transgression, the decay of land, and the breakdown of frontiers, are matched with the "erasure practices" of artistic cut and paste, image transpositioning, lacerating, ripping, merging, or manipulating. These combined practices give rise to certain terms like "creative-violences" springing from practice and theory to parallel a conversion of Virilio's "accidents" and Deleuzian "lines of destruction" into "lines of flight" and artistic creations. Book 1, therefore, sustains the investigation of deterritorialisation through the models of Deleuze and Virilio as a way to interrogate the changing parameters of artistic territory and the implications affecting the role of art and artists. The forces of delocalisation, dislocating virtualisation, and a shrinking territoriality are countered by a positive understanding of deterritorialisation as a creative energy that drives new connections, perpetual renewal and an expanding territory. Sections 2, 3 and 4 of Book 1 argue for turning Virilio's statement that "art today is nowhere", inside out. This is examined in these sections through a connective way of looking and perceiving art through interactive flows or channels of communication as extensions to previous notions of fixed points, a concept inspired from Deleuze. This idea is deepened in Section 5 which describes Actor-Network Theory in detail, as a strategy used to make sense of the cohesion of diverse energies and elements feeding into the interdisciplinary subjects of Information and the Social Sciences (studies involving complex systems). Since the deterritorialisation phenomena I examine in Book 1 break down boundaries, it has been important to seek ways for creating stabilisation in contemporary practice which will counter those effects of too much de-stratification and deterritorialisation that can risk sliding into another regressive totality. Ground Erasure explores Actor-Network Theory as a reterritorialising platform offering the potential of a radically different framework for understanding the operation of

art in the contemporary context. In this section I attempt to put ANT and Deleuzian connectivity into practice by juxtaposing two specific art exhibitions on show in London during the time of research. This analysis reveals their networks through the differences between a homogenising corporate exhibition (*Earth* by Yann Arthus-Bertrand) that feeds into a standardising system, and a deterritorialising hybrid exhibition (*Atlas* by Gerhard Richter) that de-stratifies and strives against sameness.

Book 2 expands on these ideas through a continuous flow of text and visuals describing the methods and conceptual development of a selection of my own artworks. Book 2 functions as an accompaniment to Book 1 and the hyperlinks between the two books trigger an expanded dialogue through artistic processes that entrench arguments forming in Book 1. Whilst Book 1, therefore, elaborates on the processes of deterritorialisation that are shifting the territorial boundaries of art and artists, Book 2 describes the processes of reterritorialisation through the links, methods and practices connecting a rhizome of production through a body of developmental artworks. On this connective plateau, the different artworks, the text, materials, concepts, sites, computers, programmes, actions, machines and people engage in a contiguous terrain of intersecting actants. These elements (human and non-human, abstract or concrete) act as channels of communication operating between the practical and theoretical, as well as between the inner workings inside each artwork and the outer relationships networking these actants towards a larger goal (project). Book 2, hence, has two main aims: that of documentation and that of practice analysis. The principle intention of this analysis aims at documenting the developmental processes in a laboratory of studio practice in order to arrive at a final resolution of theory and practice. I feel this to be an appropriate method for practice-led

research consciously set up to test specific issues of Ground Erasure and machinic spaces through different materials and processes of format based presentations within a spatial concept examining the different dynamics of communication to an audience. These formats are tested through a variety of computer mediated art languages which include print works, book art, installation, video and projection to different scales and site testing. The objective of Book 2 in my thesis therefore, is that of a process methodology aimed broadly around my research question on territory. That is, to elaborate on the labwork methods of my developmental research as a form of recording taking place in a rigorous process in order to instigate the best way forward for Ground Erasure. My practical objective aims at reaching resolution and culmination in an evaluative conclusion consolidated through the production and exhibition of submitted works.

The laboratory of practice deliberately planned for this purpose has enabled the interrogation of different art languages in order to arrive at an informed decision as to which process best expresses Ground Erasure in the submitted works. The theories of Virilio, Deleuze and Latour, fused in the methodologies of these processes and inscribed in the reflective analyses of the production of artwork, find ultimate embodiment in the economic, trimmed down presentations of my Ground Erasure installation exhibition.⁸ The audio/video works *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision* installed in the Herbert Read Gallery in the Kent Institute of Art and Design, England with parallel screening in Waikato University, New Zealand, in the end required gallery presence to design a studied spatial and relational distribution of machinic connections merging themes of geographical and historical erasures. On-site presence enabled me to finalise the interplay of

⁸ Refer to Installation of Ground Erasure Exhibition, Appendix B, 103.

actants and art site. This installation draws conceptual trajectories between computer, projector, screen, and TV through the interjection of the viewer in the space.

The method of working at distance and travelling between two sites, Malta and England, is an apt choice in view of my research question that examines the new territories of practice for artists. This is an essential part of constructing a laboratory of practice inspiring particular ways of carrying out practice and research. The two audio/video final works were ultimately accomplished through an elaborate series of testing, filming in different locations, on land, sea and air (Malta, England, in flight, and in the Czech Republic, inside tunnels, in open spaces, in different moving vehicles, climates and temperatures) and finally, editing in digital programmes whilst working between my own studio in Malta and the DARC (Digital Arts Research Centre) studios in KIAD, England. These works are a culmination of my labwork in working with world issues and different sites, tested in a particular conceptual way that both depict a sense of locale while essentially erasing and transcending it. Out of the coming and going and the elaborate video tests, the *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision* evolve as corresponding statements intellectualised through an immersion of time, space and duration in artwork that departs from the previous works. Research now incorporates a further dimension of deterritorialisation through the perspective of time in addition to the themes of political and artistic deterritorialisation in my labwork. This kind of ongoing development demonstrates the essential set-up of a laboratory of practice appropriate for this project as a method of interrogating practice-led research to shed light on new knowledge and arrive at a conclusive evaluation of findings through to exhibition.

For the purposes of a practice-led methodology this research is further supported through two Reflection Journal-diaries included in the CD attached to this thesis. The first Reflection Journal developed into ten working-papers as a method of researching, writing, recording and reflecting on visual and textual research material during the earlier part of research. The second Reflection Diary developed into five working-papers over the remaining time of research as concepts and practice advanced and shaped my project. Both these Journal Diaries provided suitable methods of evidencing and communicating the research process regularly by email to my supervisors in England. Apart from recording the early stages of the research process, they also provided an essential stimulus for potential artworks. These methods were supplemented by other computer mediated communication methods including regular research visits to the UK.

As an evaluative means of audience and site testing in the professional space, these research methods included the regular exhibition and presentation of my artworks under production. An exhibition list is inserted in Book 2. These practices included the primary experience of on-site construction and interaction with other artists in international exhibitions (e.g. *Breakthrough* in The Hague, Netherlands). Apart from these physical presences combined with vast Internet research, these approaches were also supported by regular visits to numerous art shows particularly during my visits to London as a method of testing, equating, and interrogating my own practice against the professional arena of other artists and international practice. A sample of these include: Eija-Liisa Ahtila (Tate, April-July 2002); Willie Doherty (*Re-Run*, Turner Prize, November 2003); Eva Hesse (Tate, November-March 2003); Marina Abramovic, Pipilotti Rist and others (*Video Acts*, ICA July-October 2003); Alia Syed (*Eating Grass*, INIVA, October-November 2003); Kutlug Ataman, Llangland and Bell, and Jeremy Deller (Turner

Prize, November 2004); Fiona Tan, Anri Sala, Francis Alys, Rijke and Rooij, and others (*Time Zones*, Tate, October 2004-January 2005); and Joseph Beuys (Tate, February-May 2005). *Time Zones* was in fact one of the last major exhibitions visited at the time of developing my last video works. This audio-video collection of international artworks dealt with the subjects of time and duration. These became integrative components in my own intellectual arguments of Ground Erasure. The *Time Zones* exhibition therefore, stands as a prime example of the ongoing rapport between my work and that of other artists as a live method of continuing research and international professional practice and enquiry.

The methodologies built into the different aspects of this research combine in Ground Erasure as an overall conceptual framework and title for this project. Whilst research as a whole has been designed as an integrative international practice project at distance between the sites of Malta and England, the third phase of research outlined in Diagram 1 was undertaken through my own on-site presence in the UK to construct the final exhibition between England and New Zealand. In order to demonstrate the practical methods of this project, presentation of research materials and developmental work took place in the Cragg Seminar Room alongside the exhibition of submitted artworks, *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision*, in the Herbert Read Gallery. A similar package of research and art materials was sent for external examination to New Zealand as part of a planned web-conferencing viva examination, arranged across the different time-zones of the two countries. Web-casting and the simultaneous screening of an exhibition across the two sites were ultimately deemed the appropriate means to create a conclusive coherence of practice aligned with the conceptual issues and arguments of territory, distance, deterritorialisation and machinic space underpinning Ground Erasure.

1. ...BIG SCARY SPIDER...

The Pervasion of Virtualisation

The twin phenomena of immediacy and of instantaneity are presently one of the most pressing problems confronting political and military strategists alike... After the globalisation of telecommunications, one should expect a generalised kind of accident, a never-seen-before accident... Nobody has seen this generalised accident yet. But then watch out as you hear talk about the "financial bubble" in the economy: a very significant metaphor is used here, and it conjures up visions of some kind of cloud, reminding us of other clouds just as frightening as those of Chernobyl... – PAUL VIRILIO ¹

This quote from an article by Paul Virilio first appeared in *Le Monde Diplomatique* in August 1995. Reading this article on the Internet years later, it seems to ring with extraordinary premonition. Was the "financial bubble" an ominous foreboding of the 11th September World Trade Centre "accident"? Is the looming cloud left in its wake the "global terror state" haunting the early 21st century? Or is Virilio forecasting further future catastrophes?²

Virilio's statement has a sinister air and is of significant interest because this project began by exploring political landmasses and transboundary movements. With a particular focus on the transgression of landscape and territory, an ecology search on the internet led to a connection of a series of "accidents". This started with a curious investigation of the images and material surrounding the **Chernobyl** reactor explosion of April 1986 in the Ukraine. This move instigated a study of Mikhail Gorbachev's compelling strategies for demilitarization to render

¹ PAUL VIRILIO, *Speed and Information: Cyberspace Alarm!* Published in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 1995: http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72 - www.ctheory.net (last accessed 18.05.05)

² JOHN ARMITAGE, *Virilio Live. Selected Interviews*, Sage, London 2001, 16.

down bio-chemical and germ-warfare production. Denuclearization, calling for urgent disarmament underpins a new politics following the incredible tragedy of the Soviet nuclear-power plant. Gorbachev set up Green Cross International as a potent initiative promoting an eco-educational restructuring programme in the wake of the Cold War to persuade the world and people of the necessity for a decentred *co-existence* with their surroundings; for a co-habitation in a preventative, peaceful environment that takes posterity into account and other innocent nations suffering the consequences of fall-out and poisons caused by the detritus of military weapons, chemicals and the perpetuation of their production.³ Building on the Chernobyl example Gorbachev insisted on a crackdown of the future supply and export of armaments, in addition to dredging land and sea-beds from discarded missiles and old chemical instruments lying fortuitously for future abuse or disasters like Chernobyl. This research took place when Porton Down, the secret chemical weapons centre in Wiltshire near Salisbury in England, was mysteriously resurfacing in the media with fresh controversy and scandal concerning hideous military exercises and the accidental deaths of servicemen during ghastly gas experiments in the Cold War. When chemical weapons are cited – for instance, Saddam Hussein's crimes and his use of chemical weapons against the Kurds – some of the mystery is attached to the name of Porton Down.⁴ Early in 2001, precautionary antidotes to bio-chemical poisons were reported as being stealthily manufactured at Porton Down to be used in the instance of future defence. Then, later that year, the 9.11 World Trade Centre accident occurred followed by a spate of terrifying anthrax attacks and an infinite sequence of bio-chemical threats, warnings and terror attacks in a complex build-

³ *Green Cross International*: <http://gcinwa.newaccess.ch/index.htm> (last accessed 19.05.05)

⁴ BBC News, *UK Porton Down - A Sinister Air*: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/426154.stm> (last accessed 19.05.05)

up of political issues ever since. With this unexpected turn of events, this research came to a watershed since this new calamity directed creative ideas towards reflective interrogations surrounding territorial dissolution and the fracturing of world geo-political landmasses. These themes have been investigated through a fresh input of material and contexts, ground erasures, transgressions, disparities, flights and accidents.⁵

In the eyes of Virilio, world accidents are symptomatic of the techno-scientific age. Even natural or negligent disasters are what he calls "deliberate accidents" since they are the eventual product of technological development. The same may be said for all other frequently occurring technological accidents we hear about every day such as plane crashes, train derailments, sea and ship disasters, car collisions, pile-ups, smashes and so on. Virilio believes that every new technological breakthrough brings also a negative, entropic side revealed in an innovative type of accident. As technology and speed accelerate, so does the risk of future accidents, since the positive and the negative are two sides of the same energy. Consequently, in this line of thinking, the Chernobyl explosion is another "deliberate/negligent accident". To Virilio, Chernobyl is seen to have been the inevitable and expected outcome of atomic and nuclear invention; an outcome that is not isolated but is historically linked to other accidents and occurrences emerging in the shape of "extermination methods", such as Auschwitz and Hiroshima in the Second World War. In a similar vein, he describes the Twin

⁵ This implies a fusion of Virilio and Deleuze as a creative springboard giving rise to the idea of looking at traditional processes in a different way and at art as the conversion of "accidents" into creative "flights". E.g. the 11.09.01 accident triggered the *Y_War* research, the *Wall_of_Prayer* installation, the *Doubletake* video, and *Red Alert* bookwork. Other artworks e.g. *WorldSNAPS*, *WeatherTALK*, *Speed_Journeys*, *Tunnel Vision*, were inspired from the "accidents" of pollution, speed or history. All these works involve *erasure practices* or *creative-violences* implied in "tearing out of context" or "timeline ripping" – disruption and deterritorialisation to reconstruct or reformat through manipulation, digital collage and video/audio montage.

Tower disaster in the USA as another deliberate accident and the obvious outcome of a larger accident, that of the globalised world. In this sense, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, the WTC accidents are all "information Chernobyls".⁶ This situation, he insists, is producing a "dislocated and delocalized" society conditioned by the immediate, the instant and the virtual.⁷

Virilio connects the growing phenomenon of virtualisation precariously to the growth of a dominant world power; one he perceives through the "information bomb" as an imperceptible menace calculated through an increasingly technified world and the pervasive powers of a web-like militarized "gaze". Although he states that he does not oppose technological progress, he sees contemporary society disturbingly as succumbing to the totalising powers of virtualisation. His target is primarily aimed at dominant capital control where he sees an incipient "techno-fascism" emerging in the rampant marketing of new technology without any real concern for the accidental outcomes on society. "Globalitarianism", he says, brings a new form of totalitarianism through the convergence of time to a single time and a world economy to a single market. As an example, Virilio directly implicates Microsoft CEO Bill Gates as one of the world's leading advocates of globalism, stating: "telecommunications conglomerates is a new totalitarianism, a totalitarianism of totalitarianism, and that is what I call globalitarianism... gigantic companies are not the exact equivalent of Hitler or Stalin yet bad things are possible".⁸

⁶ VIRILIO - LOTRINGER, (CD), 135-179.

⁷ ARMITAGE, (VL), 128-130.

⁸ Ibid. 29-32.

From a different philosophical standpoint, Gilles Deleuze focuses on the connective universe, an expanding territory of potential and affects, where creative possibilities unfold eternally. In response to an increasingly technified world, Deleuze argues that confronting inhuman, machine or disconnected forces beyond our recognition is "active thinking". By engaging in the "untimely" through artistic and conceptual activity we are able to provide a means of disrupting the very force that allowed capitalism to emerge, which produces the tendency to sameness. Capitalism, he implies, is only possible because we can reduce the complexity and difference of life to a single system of exchange.⁹ Therefore, in reply to our era of capitalism where any exchange is quantifiable and reinvented to produce further exchange, Deleuze insisted on an expenditure and excess through "productions that are not for any foreseeable or calculable end but that produce the new as such".¹⁰ He saw this as a way to liberate ourselves from capitalism's "machinic enslavement": "He or she is subjected to the machine and no longer enslaved by the machine".¹¹ Here Deleuze distinguishes between regimes (apparatus of capture) of the capital machine. People can be active "subjects" as opposed to passive "pieces of a machine that overcodes the aggregate".¹² In a world of increasing communication and information, Deleuze argued for the countering forces of art and philosophy. That is, the philosophic creation of concepts and art that *resisted* and complicated exchange and recognition through eternal newness. In a not very dissimilar stance from the Deleuzian philosophical approach, Virilio upholds a combatant position for the active role of art as one of "liberal resistance" and not one of

⁹ CLARE COLBROOK, *Gilles Deleuze*, Routledge, London 2002, 64-66.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 66.

¹¹ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 457.

¹² *Ibid.*

"collaboration" with the dominant power: "It's not conservative resistance, but liberating resistance".¹³

Current reactions have looked upon the 11th September event as a sign of Western capital excess that has in effect produced an "anti-self"; views that query whether perhaps we have exceeded the limits of deterritorialisation and capital overindulgence. Deleuze died in 1995, prior to the WTC event but his philosophy still provides a radical democratic on-goingness and offers value in practice today where it can continue to counter the homogenizing forces inscribed within a growing transnational and conglomerate world economy. Deleuze's relevance to present-day cultural politics is obvious in at least two prominent ways: First, because he propounded a theory of difference and becoming; this implying differentiation in *motion* which produces not mere inclusiveness but dedifferentiation (blurred zones). This is important in view of present-day postcolonial discourses confronting multiculturalism where this is now viewed to have perpetuated racial difference institutionally.¹⁴ And second, because of a "refusal of who we are", he proposed a decentring power of argument by insisting that we were trapped by preconceived "grounds" and images, primarily our self-image, that of being human against which we exchanged everything including each other. This implies Deleuzian "inhuman philosophy" as a way to counter prevailing racialism. Colebrook reiterates this point in Deleuze:

In an age of 'multiculturalism' where it is asserted that we are all human and the same deep-down, Deleuze insisted that the human was an imposed image that imprisoned us, the most racist of all images. For it is racism that can only accept difference if it has already been tamed and recuperated by the same.¹⁵

¹³ ARMITAGE, (VL), 140.

¹⁴ See RASHEED ARAEEN, "A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics", Epilogue of the *Third Text Reader on Art, Culture & Theory*, edited by R. Araeen - S. Cubitt - Z. Sardar, Continuum, London & NY, 2002.

¹⁵ COLEBROOK, (GD), 66.

Within Deleuzian theory the "artistic machine" offsets the "political machine". This, it would seem, is even more significant where rapid economic change also generates social changes and other forces; where for instance, transnational capital brings also transnational violence in what is observed today as a (neo-imperialist) terror politics, along with an uprising cultural racism. This is discussed later in relation to the power of the media in creating an *enemy* as a form of control and self-fulfilling prophecy. Provokingly, Virilio sees globalitarianism as causing the decay of the physicality of cultural production through "total-totalitarianism" – an infiltrating entropic homogeneity. He states: "I use the doublet total/totalitarian and global/globalitarian... a grave menace".¹⁶ The alternative response in Deleuze offers creative and positive liberation contained in a nomadological understanding of the world; one that is constantly shifting and where active deterritorialism opens new interactions and new territoriality.

Ground Erasure is an artistic strategy conceived with these concepts in mind, as a means to interrogate the notion of "territory" through an exploration of overlapping deterritorialisms, and through eroding and evolving meanings. In essence, territory for the contemporary artist has become increasingly equivocal and ambivalent because of the internationalisation of commerce and culture caused first, by the massive expansion in global media technologies and second, by the globalisation of capitalism. Ground Erasure is contemplated as a plane where issues, concepts and practice are converging elements. Certain words like "accident" and "violence" are artistically reinterpreted; and site is an "actant"

¹⁶ ARMITAGE, (VL), 30.

space connecting artworks, texts and experiences alike.¹⁷ The literal and the metaphorical, the political and the artistic, the practical and the conceptual are interwoven together.

In what follows, the 9.11 episode is contemplated within a reflection upon contemporary cultural discourse and politics in order to examine different aspects of this event's deterritorialising effects through my perceptual experience as an artist in London at the time. In the process of this, a Deleuzian deterritorialisation is conceptually visualized through a "virtual-actual" split, contending also with Virilio's theories of dislocation and disorientation. In this example the *viewer/actor* undergoes an *active-reactive* experience – like cut and paste moving segments in a filmic montage.¹⁸ This is inspired from the Deleuzian concepts on the "crystals of time" and "montage" in his Cinema works.¹⁹ In this way the artistic and the political are brought together as interlocking machinic processes running together. That is, the "machinic visions" of Deleuze and Virilio are looked at as two intersecting machines. This disjunctive synthesis is made as a creative means to map intersections across different deterritorialisms. In this metaphoric, artistic context the accidental is looked upon as **falling on a situation**. This implies being in a certain place at a certain time that can trigger a new artistic direction or productive flow (the following diary excerpt attempts to illustrate this example through which the *Wall_of_Prayer*, *Doubletake* and *Red Alert* were inspired).

¹⁷ The concept of different "elements" coming together as "actants" is inspired from Actor-Network Theory (BRUNO LATOUR and others). This theory is discussed in detail in Section 5, Book 1 of this thesis.

¹⁸ COLEBROOK, (GD) 33 and 96-99.

¹⁹ DELEUZE, (C2), 68-97; DELEUZE, (C1), 23 and 80.

THE UNAVOIDABLE ACCIDENT

From a personal diary entrant, London on September 11:

It was quite by chance that I arrived in Gatwick just shortly before September 11... We were looking at the new fashion collections round London's west end on Tuesday afternoon. It was about 3.30 pm. Stopped in John Lewis for tea and slapjacks - then a strange SMS from home zapped my phone: '...watch out in London...plane in Twin Towers NY, another in Pentagon...' But the message didn't strike much sense right then. In any case...left tea and scurried up the escalator to the electronics section on the other floor. There was this high bank of multi-stacked TV monitors...sound off...all displaying the same image... And repeatedly, a plane hurtled itself into and through the shaking zoomed area of these tall buildings that appeared to be the World Trade Towers. It was quite bewildering and confusing...yet these mounted screens were so impressive to the eye - beautiful even. No information came from around. People looked blank and oblivious. No one said anything, life carried on. Those live streams actually looked like excerpts from Airport or Siege and I mulled over the veracity of things at that very instant. The films circled round on repeat. Red fire explosions on the buildings in sync looked stunning. Realities, like thoughts, overlaid each other. Did not sink in at first, yet concerned. But the text message from home alerted attention. And then the plane plunged into the tall buildings again...and I saw people run.

Within hours the tension in London spread... terror and sabotage in New York instantly conveyed. By 6.00 pm mobiles were jammed, tubes chock-a-block, buses and taxis blocked, surface trains late - Canary Wharf, Heathrow, Gatwick placed under immediate surveillance and red-alert. Eerie insecurity set in. Small pockets of people hung around screens in cafes and bars Tuesday evening... news trickled in a bit at a time. Disbelief hung in the air. The city felt crippled. Not a lot of information. But fear is a powerful contagion. Those burning red screens stay in my head. And London lingers expectantly as the next possible target...

Clapham, London, Sept 13th 2001

Planes of perception converged with the literal. It was clear later that fiction and reality had blurred for many at that moment. Intersections of movie, memory, reality, fantasy, aesthetics, other places, this place, that moment, this moment, cut in with the logic of presence. Like untimely segments these pieced together in a mental montage. These durations at the moment of perception disorient the actual and like a thinking-movie collide in aesthetic-conceptual "ground erasures" - accidental convergences meeting through forms of creative-violence. This artistic equivalence of deterritorialisation implies a disruption of the timeline.

That is, pulling out of context and reformatting through cut and paste, collage, montage, assemblage and so on, similar to what Deleuze refers to in cinematic montage as the piecing together of different but conflicting sites of movement itself which is decomposed and recomposed to effect mobile sections in "a temporal perspective or a modulation".²⁰ The perceptual, physical and political "territories" of the 11th September were encountered in each other in this *virtual-actual* instant (a double flow of experiences).²¹ This virtual-actual interaction also alludes to Deleuzian thought on singularities: "only when the world, teeming with anonymous and nomadic, impersonal and pre-individual singularities, opens up, do we tread at last on the field of the transcendental". This immersion is creatively transposed in the dual role of the deterritorialized actor-viewer pulling different viewpoints together as *actants* in a single occurrence; a conceptual collage also implied in the idea of multiple things held together in "disjunctive synthesis".²²

From a critical angle, the paradox of perception is alarmingly analyzed by Virilio.²³ He states that the more informed we become, the greater the price of confusion and the more is society on the brink of a "fundamental loss of orientation... a duplication of sensible reality, into reality and virtuality". He implies that media saturation, cyber-culture and Hollywood are numbing our perceptual sensibilities of the real which is leading to greater delusion and self-imposed disinformation. Virilio cautiously forecasts that a total loss of bearings of the individual looms large: "what lies ahead is a disturbance in the perception of what reality is, it is a shock, a mental concussion". This judicious perspective

²⁰ DELEUZE, (*C1*), 23; COLEBROOK, (*GD*), 43.

²¹ GILLES DELEUZE, *The Logic of Sense*, Boudas, New York, Columbia UP, 1990, 103.

²² RAJCHMAN, (*TDC*), 4-5. This interaction of differences is also conceptualised in ANT.

²³ VIRILIO, (*S&I*, 1995): http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72.

of the accident springs from concerns of the controlling power of the media, where this schemes to political ends and global powers. His final implication is that the breakthrough of technology has brought the accident of disorientation.²⁴

For Deleuze, the ability to step into the "untimely" promotes a "line of flight". As a form of active deterritorialisation, this is intellectually and artistically valuable in order to counter the notion of the accident creatively. Beyond this, as a mode of thinking and performing, this can help to bring into focus alternative views through active decentring. Deleuze sees the problem as related to the way human beings perceive time. Accordingly, people are generally "fixed" in their perception of time and see life as a linear sequence of events. This, Deleuze thinks, is both misleading and can be proved to be politically expedient. Critically, he says, this illusion is exacerbated by information media in their attempt to construct and legitimate history by locating events within a hierarchy of time and place. It is a way of homogenizing information so that everything is equalized within a single measure or "territory" of capital exchange.²⁵ This inverts society's perception of time and reality and makes judgment questionable. Deterritorialisation as a form of active thinking can offset the negative or manipulative effects (including those of the media, State or Church) that may hinder the liberty of our minds and free thinking through the enforced reproduction of established values.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid; see also ARMITAGE, (*VL*), 16. In an interview with John Armitage Virilio reveals a personal perspective:

As a so-called "war baby", I have been deeply marked by the accident, the catastrophe, and thus by sudden changes and upheavals...

²⁵ COLEBROOK, (*GD*), 65.

²⁶ PHILIP GOODCHILD, *Gilles Deleuze and the Question of Philosophy*, AUP Cranbury & London 1996, 33.

The 9.11 event can be taken as a case in point. Re-broadcasting and exposure have continued to remind us of the WTC's disappearance. Bulent Diken suggests that although the Twin Towers died their physical death, they relive in the world in an even more powerful symbolic presence: "The WTC had not only two towers but two bodies, the absence of the one now makes the spectral presence of the other even more pervasive".²⁷ Diken implies that excessive suggestion has created a fetishlike symbol of the 11th September establishing the event as an *origin* in a linear time order. This seems to give the impression that terrorism began with this event, when in fact terrorism has been around as long as human beings have. If the 9.11 is conceptually deterritorialised from the context of history, this event can be seen with other flows of time and in the perspective of other "becomings". Becomings are like artistic durations (movies) in cinema. From this perspective, the 9.11 event can be imagined as duration amongst others beyond its own time-frame; that is, not as a "fixed singularity" (one system) but as part of a "block of eventful becomings" (other systems) creating time itself. Extracting the 9.11 out of a hyped perspective detaches this event from its singularity, away from an elevated viewpoint that disengages from *difference*. Looked at as "duration" (like a film segment), this event can be hauled from the prominence created by the media. In so doing other time-events, the Palestine-Israel "duration" for instance, cut in with equivalence and presence in the potential of time. Deleuze looked at how cinematic affects and duration can inform our thinking (and philosophy) itself. By going beyond perception, cinematic deterritorialisation reaches the genetic element of all possible perception and changes the differential of perception itself by putting

²⁷ BULENT DIKEN, "Immigration, Multiculturalism and Post Politics after Nine Eleven", in *Third Text* 57, Routledge (2001-02), 3. This architectural symbolic "reappearance from erasure" also bears a conceptual connection with Jacques Derrida's linguistic concepts of "sous rature"; see MICHAEL CHOROST, *Writing Under Erasure*, deoxy - philosophos: <http://deoxy.org/alephnull/erasure.htm> (last accessed 19.15.05).

"time into the body, as well as thought into life".²⁸ This helps to dissolve the finite perception and position of judgment. This is an explicit point for Deleuze particularly in the case of moral judgment, since the problem with any moral system is that it takes an *active* selection in affirming good or evil. That is, when we assert something, we do so by rejecting another. This perspective presents things reactively and operates through a pre-determined set of fixed and immutable values. In urging us to free ourselves from fixed opinion, Deleuze states: "The philosophy of communication is exhausted in the search for a liberal opinion as consensus".²⁹

In other words, shifting the paradigm of time from sequence to "becoming" instils an elevation of the empirical that unfixes us from the pre-set images that enslave us. A pre-set image is like a fixed belief-system through which we exchange our experiences. It is important to shift our mode of time because it helps to liberate us from set "grounds or foundations" and from the way we interpret situations and form judgments. Deleuze felt humanism and subjectivity to be obstacles to freeing our thinking to "becoming" because of "interpretosis" – the Western disease that traces becomings to some origin. He states: "In truth, significance and interpretosis are the two diseases of the earth or the skin, in other words, humankind's fundamental neurosis".³⁰ The task is therefore to free ourselves from previous models, axioms or grounds in order to increase the territory of our creative experiences. This also implies an ethical side to deterritorialised thinking. Deleuze described this as the ability to perceive the culture or essential origin from which specific characters and actions emerge and therefore, no longer judging from a pre-set ground of who or what one is. This should relieve us from

²⁸ GILLES DELEUZE, (*C2*), 192.

²⁹ GILLES DELEUZE - FELIX GUATTARI, *What is Philosophy?* Verso, London 1994, 146.

³⁰ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 114.

blaming condemnation and the human tendencies for primitive and visceral reactions.³¹ Thus, we are urged to recognize the "micro-fascisms" in us all. This is rather poignant at a time when extreme, opposing political reactions, such as the present "War on Terror" begun by the USA, and the "war on liberalization" by fundamentalist groups such as Al-Qaeda, provoke primordialism in people; a fervent otherness that forces society to choose sides whether on nationalistic, religious or ideological grounds.

The purpose, therefore, of *consciously* activating deterritorialized thinking – that is, "thinking becoming" – aims to unchannel the artistic but also, philosophically, to level out judgment and diminish hierarchy in our thinking. Essentially, this implies combating the *unconscious* or indoctrinating powers of information – for Virilio those of media and advertising; for Deleuze those of fixed belief-systems. To this effect, stepping into the *untimely* is *thinking becoming*. This decentralizing mode of thinking opens up perception to varying differences and "pure vibrations", perceiving life creatively.³² Life progresses in two directions: one towards chaos from whence it emerges and the other towards forming a ground or foundation. The creative flow of time happens between a constant shift of deterritorialisation and territorialisation. The artistic act is similarly motivated. Thinking untimely aims at unlocking perception but brings these notions of the artistic, the political, and the ethical together, stretching creative thinking to the limits of the imperceptible. Deleuze called this "thinking inhuman" as a way to expand our understanding from other perspectives and to open to multiple encounters, intersections and possibilities. Unfixing the locatedness of being human, implies a vision from the points of view of other

³¹ COLEBROOK, (*GD*), 71-72 and 134-136.

³² DELEUZE, (*CI*), 8-9. This alludes to the unfolding segments of a film (that is, looking at cinema philosophically).

living creatures, objects and the inanimate too. All are *actants* in the site of the "real" - an active space of connectivities.³³

Ground Erasure concerns this connective site through which to pursue an intellectual enquiry into the meaning of territory from the opposing tensions of *disappearance* and *expansion*. The "accident" of disappearance provokes expansion through "flight". The 9.11 and the disappearance of the Twin Towers has been used to activate this enquiry since this event involves the physical erasure of architectural-place yet paradoxically involves a symbolic return through the media, whilst also connoting ambivalent erasures in other metaphysical senses - structural glorification, belief-systems, ghostly presences. To deterritorialise a moment is to place it into the untimely. In practice, this decentralized position allows for the decoding and recoding of life and situations artistically; but also for these to be reflected from a profound position regarding the state of the world and how they may point to the future.

In effect, looking at situations from an *open* viewpoint goes beyond those dualistic systems of good and evil, right or wrong, which Deleuze found problematic. In a similar vein, Baudrillard sees the crucial point of this moral distinction of the relation of Good and Evil lying in the total misunderstanding on the part of Western philosophy and on the part of the Enlightenment. He states: "We believe naively that the progress of Good....corresponds to a defeat of Evil. No one seems to have understood that good and evil advance together, as part of the same movement".³⁴ In the light of this, it is ironic to recall President Bush

³³ PETER HALLWARD, "'Everything is Real': Gilles Deleuze and Creative Univocity", in *New Formations*, "Complex Figures" no. 49, Journal of culture/theory/politics, London (Spring 2003). The concept of connective "actants" is inspired from ANT.

³⁴ JEAN BAUDRILLARD, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Verso, London 2002, 13.

declaring that his country was "the champion of good" and that the battle against terrorism would be "a monumental struggle of Good versus Evil (where) Good would prevail". A language difficult to speak after the collapse of the USSR since, as Virilio notes: "America's new world hegemony has mainly made itself felt by an arrogance based on its crushing technical superiority rather than its elevated morality".³⁵

The falling of the Twin Towers brought about a range of ambivalences - cultural and political erasures and a multitude of opposing reactions: blurring faiths, morality, heaven, hell, suicide, murder, grieving in New York, cheering in Palestine - *philanoia*, where the common factor was death. The rest of the world caught this event in pictures and films. But how closely did these images transport us to the real agony of situation and misery of people? Were these images inscribed with politics rather than real disaster and tragedy? Merryl Wyn Davies describes the dual-power that lies in the camera to capture the most "real, unmediated raw horror" or alternatively, how we can be led forward by "lies and half-truths". Scrutinizing the images of 11th September, she questions "the message we should take from the lens". She asks why so many images dwelt on Stars and Stripes rather than the eyes of people, where true meaning lies. During the 9.11 memorial, politicians insisted flags should be flown and the "icon" of that moment became one of unfurling and raising flags. Was this another war-mongering gesture perpetuated from World War II meaning evil must be warred against?³⁶ Poignantly, Davies concludes:

The images in 'The Day that Changed America/God Bless America' are constructs, icons that simulate the emotion, images being used as moral

³⁵ PAUL VIRILIO, *Ground Zero*, Verso, London 2002, 36.

³⁶ MERRYL WYN DAVIES, "September 11: The Visual Disaster", in *Third Text* 57, (Winter 2001-02), 21. Davies refers here to the raising of flags in Iwo Jima, during one of the bloodiest battles in World War II.

authority on which hatred and vengeance are built. If the firemen could but look, if they could focus their eyes they would see the same echoing stare, the abyss of agony opening in the eyes of children and women in Afghanistan. Disaster has no scale, or all disaster is on the same scale of incomprehensibility when one's world blows apart, be that a mud village in Afghanistan or one of the tallest buildings in the world in New York.³⁷

To critics of media like Virilio and Baudrillard hypermediation exacerbates inauthenticity, illusion and imbalance. The 9.11 event itself is seen as a negation or inversion of itself – two sides of the same coin; two value systems, capitalism and fundamentalism annihilating one another. To them, fundamentalism is the product of globalisation rooted in complex political histories and choices. Hence, the 9.11 is a confirmation of World War IV, the war of globalisation, in a progressive sequence of other histories – World War I representing the collapse of Europe, World War II the collapse of Nazism and World War III the fall of Communism.³⁸ And now what Baudrillard perceives as the most “complete” and “symbolic” of war events, the 9.11, continues to propagate the excesses of globalisation through the covert presence of the terror-enemy in the media. We consume images and are consumed by them, for at the same time those images exalt the event they take it hostage: “Reality and fiction are inextricable, and the fascination with the attack is primarily a fascination with the image (both its exculpatory and catastrophic consequences are themselves largely imaginary).”³⁹ Concurring with this, Virilio sees the hegemony of innovative information-media as fictionalizing our reality and blurring the boundaries of truth and illusion to the extent of creating a pure construction of terrorism long *before* it even happened. This fictionalization is in part what these critics mean by virtualisation – a hidden power of “pre-construction”. They also imply however, the loss of territoriality in

³⁷ Ibid. 22.

³⁸ BAUDRILLARD, (*TSOT*), 11; BAUDRILLARD, 2003: [The Violence of the Global](http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=385) - http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=385 - www.ctheory.net, (last accessed 19.05.05)

³⁹ BAUDRILLARD, (*TSOT*), 28-29.

the sense of erosion of space through corporate internationalisation, where the local and global are subsumed within what is coined as the *glocal*.

This kind of "disappearance" is alarmingly viewed as a twofold terror of terrorism. Virilio equates political violence with artistic violence stating that: "Terrorism is not just a political phenomenon, it's an artistic phenomenon". He is particularly referring to the manipulative and suggestive power of the image pervading advertising, reality shows and pornographic media. Virilio and Baudrillard's attacks are aimed at the intrusive and centralized control of information; their radical criticisms are driven against perpetuating hegemony and power struggles where capital monopoly and military mobilization are shielded behind pretence of open plurality. Further to this, Virilio speaks from first-hand experience of the Second World War as a child and his fears of totalitarianism are rooted in his personal memories of Fascism. Concern lies in fear of a persuasive language; of the oppressive power by a mighty few over other human beings. This criticism must be viewed in its political objective which is to obstruct that which is essentially anti-democratic; and to ward off any newly uprising totalities or semblance of past extremities and massacres.⁴⁰

In the light of such fervent criticisms, all the more it would seem that contemporary art plays a political role to translate "artistic violence"; and, where art operates within the machinic, to seek definition beyond the *image* that enslaves us, in order to generate reflection in ways that counterbalance the negatives of excess. Beyond this, what emerges is the overriding ambivalence presiding over the present. Virilio himself points to the contradiction of our age

⁴⁰ ARMITAGE, (VL), 16. See also JAMES DER DERIAN, *Dialogues: Future War. A Discussion with Paul Virilio*: <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/futurewar.cfm> (last accessed 19.05.05).

of "techno-scientific power, [that] like political power, or religious power, is at once both a blessing and a calamity".⁴¹ This in a sense implies a dilemma of territoriality. It also implies a reflexology – the dual nature governing a mediated world. News-media for instance thrives, on the whole, on negative information. At the same time as it connects and informs, it pulls apart and distorts. And, paradoxically, whilst our world is controlled by satellite power, this alternatively also holds in check contravention, where states or politicians for instance step out of line and are immediately shamed to the rest of the world.

Ground Erasure draws in these different realities forming the ambivalent territory within which as contemporary artists we form part of life, society and perception. In this space, the creative challenge is to seek ways of converting notions of the accident into new creative experiences, exploring artistic violences as a practical metaphor for artistic forms of deterritorialisation. Through rhizomatic theory, Deleuze talks about expanding territory not through the structural powers of hierarchical walls but through the lateral forces of rhizome-departures.⁴² The political implication here is art's eternal role to defy the fixture of the systems within which it exists. From a practical standpoint, these parallel connectivities stimulate conceptual and artistic equivalence within the sensibilities of human perception. Deleuze offers us a philosophic understanding of how we perceive the realities of the world around us. The *actual* world that we perceive, he says, is the composite of *virtual* tendencies where past, present and future combine in the "crystals of time".⁴³ There is always more than the actual world. There are also all the potential worlds that we might see. Perception therefore, is a complex flow of pure difference like virtual flows of light opening many

⁴¹ ARMITAGE, (VL), 155.

⁴² DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (ATP), 3-25.

⁴³ DELEUZE, (C2), 68-97.

possibilities by the human eye. Not only is the actual world we perceive expanded by a virtual plane of potential becoming, but there is also a virtual dimension at the heart of every perception. What appears as the stable world is not stable at all. It is really a flux of "becomings". And our actual perceptions of things as "beings" or "events" are just relatively stable moments in the flow of life manifesting itself.

The interest here has been to initiate an analytic examination of different positions through my own visual experience in London during the 9.11 event. An intellectual argument springs from a physical experience, which is to interrogate territory through the Deleuzian concepts of the "virtual-actual" and "crystals of time". The aim was to place myself at the heart of the subliminal symptomatic while yet retaining a conscious observation, myself as a unit within the larger machinic-system of life, experiencing the visual effects. What is attempted is first, an *unconscious deterritorialism* associated through various positions of the "delocalized" and "dislocated". That is, the immersive virtual-space/real-space fusions that Virilio describes as having become part of our contemporary visual experiences. Secondly, this is placed within a Deleuzian *conscious deterritorialisation* in order to contemplate the same situation. Any apparent contradiction is not so much due to opposing positions but is more due to the paradoxical position of being at the intersection of two notions of deterritorialism where they cut across each other, which I use in a conceptual way to explain my position in relation to Virilio and Deleuze.⁴⁴ This is like a collage of a double experience. The person experiencing the "accident" (symptom) and the visual "lines of flight" is the same *actant*. The political and the artistic therefore meet in the visual accidents and different ground erasures as a creative expression of the

⁴⁴ See Diagram 4, Appendix A, 102.

2.

...WHERE ANGELS LEAP...

Loss of Territorial Presence

Today it is the very space of habitation that is conceived as both receiver and distributor ... the control screen and the terminal which as such may be endowed with telematic power - that is, with the capability of regulating everything from a distance... - J. BAUDRILLARD ¹

Both Baudrillard and Virilio take a militant approach to the erosion of distance connecting this to increasing remote and satellite regulation of human vision and space. In their view globalisation is "fake", a construct towards the ulterior motives of power, technology, capital, tourism and market. To Baudrillard "the globalisation of exchanges puts an end to the universalization of values"; universalization, (that is, the development of rights, liberty, culture and democracy) is vanishing because of globalisation.² To Virilio globalitarianism is a totalizing process leading to "disappearance" because of ubiquitous control and surveillance.³ Essentially these thinkers perceive media technology through mobilizing mechanisms in a globalised system where information is commodified in processes homogenizing difference across time, distance and societies. This is grimly surveyed through a history of hi-tech modifications of military warheads pushing the limits to the ultimate "eye", innovated through laser, beam or electro-magnetic pulse surveillance and devises to close the time-lap. Within this perspective the present notion of terrorism is seen first, as "the contemporary

¹ JEAN BAUDRILLARD, "The Ecstasy of Communication", in *Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster, Pluto Press, London 1985, 126-133.

² BAUDRILLARD, (*TVOTG*, 2003): http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=385. See also BEN ATTIAS, *Welcome to the World of Jean Baudrillard*, 1996: <http://www.csun.edu/~hfspc002/naud/> (last accessed 19.05.05).

³ ARMITAGE, (*VL*), 29; VIRILIO, (*S&I*, 1995): http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72

partner of globalisation" and second, as a Western self-inflicted violence. Information is viewed as the belligerent fabric of "artistic violence" wherein image and data are assault and missile weapons. In this way the military and artistic are combined. These meet in the conversion of time from long-durational difference to the instant, until the absolute triumph over physical land and air is reached. Hence, a loss of territoriality is conveyed in different senses. Virilio depicts the disappearance of territory specifically through a dematerialized information gaze; the invasion of reality by virtuality.⁴

My interest at this point is to map the parallels delineated through Virilio's perspective of the military and artistic where they converge in a "loss of presence". This is important because Virilio paints the political scenario of present-day world realities through a radical view of technological purpose and design. These realities throw light on some of the underlying factors determining the increasingly undefined connotations surrounding territory politically and artistically. Apprehended from Virilio's perspective, "territorial loss" is projected as irrevocable, since he forecasts that this progression towards disappearance can only be stopped by "an integral ecological accident".⁵ Art is implicated in this, particularly where artists operate in the machinic since, in Virilio's view, the history of art from pointillism onwards gradually heads towards disappearance. He also provokes artists into being either "liberators" or "collaborators" in the dilemma of the "non-place" of art. The challenge to artists, he insists, should be to "resist and transfigure", not in a reactionary way but in a revolutionary way:

⁴ JEROME SANS, *Dialogues: The game of love and chance. A discussion with Paul Virilio*: <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/futurewar.cfm> (last accessed 19.05.05).

⁵ ARMITAGE, (VL), 16.

"Not words but visions!"⁶ Faced with the threat of a dissolution of art, he asks if "forms of dislocation" could be an attempt at such resistance in what he calls, in his interview with Catherine David, as the dark spot of art.⁷ With this artistic question in mind my aim is to detail some of the literal and political conceptions of deterritorialisation from Virilio's perspective of an erosive violent machine in order to see how these "violences" can be converted and positively offset through Deleuzean creative-machinic deterritorialisation - a position which also opens the possible emergence of new network territorialities offered through formats of "lines of flight".

Virilio talks of an "aesthetic of disappearance". Provokingly, he says that contemporary artists do not want to die but "want to be already dead".⁸ They want to be rid of the pain and labour of having a body. They want to shed the flesh and they want to be already "angels". Virilio looks upon virtualisation as producing an all-pervading obscurity of physical territory which is inextricably linked to loss of the body as a unified whole. He foresees this act of disappearance persisting through cybernetics, genetic engineering and cloning; not merely through prosthesis but through further internal intrusive chips until the ultimate breakdown of distance is accomplished; that between "place and place" and "body and body", for "mind to mind". The territorial *body* is naturally bound to its physical *place*. The erosion of territory therefore, is an inseparable body-place relationship. The virtual body now finds its territory in the imploded space of cyber-architecture. The deconstruction of space brought by cybernetic technologies is paralleled in actual-space, where architecture undergoes other physical transformations. Looking at this through a vision of acceleration and

⁶ Ibid. 157.

⁷ Ibid. 134.

⁸ Ibid. 137.

speed, Virilio asserts that we have reached a point of "critical space". Fractal discovery has brought a departure of architectural unity, which was the foundation of modern architecture. From an entropic perspective, fractalization is seen as the assimilation of matter. In a metaphysical sense therefore, Virilio determines fractalization as the homogenizing force decaying the entire unity of space. Consequently, critical space encounters its accident through fractal geometry.⁹

This analysis is extended into the deregulation and regulation of military organisation as a system for coding and decoding the archaeology of space and for manipulating the demarcation and mobility of people within that space. Virilio traces the progression towards virtualisation in line with rapid hi-magnification reconnaissance, developed primarily for military surveillance and control. But this progression he connects to a systematic route of extermination. Inadvertently, extermination tools have become more refined in an effort to eradicate extermination itself. Virilio envisages this feeling to perfect disappearance as the dangers of the virtual where it can become a form of extermination. He maps extermination through a history of battle over territory where this has involved forms of total annihilation - that is, the extermination of people implying the obliteration of "body and land" as a system. This kind of disappearance of body and place is equal to their disqualification. Nazi death camps are alluded to as an attempt to bring on this annihilation since territorial destruction becomes more total when it is not only the place and the body that is exterminated but the system that that place and body stands for. Such was the objective of Nazism and Stalinism in the 20th Century that aimed at a systematic wipe-out, systems which Virilio tells us he lived through during the Second World

⁹ Ibid. 24.

War. Broadly, Virilio's attack is aimed at the dangers of methodical forms where they risk becoming manipulative tools for total control. In a contemporary world, he assails the military-industrial complex where policies shape a threat to democracy. The alarm is lodged specifically where a kind of "virtual democracy" starts to be talked about in a "spirit reminiscent of fundamentalist mysticism". Pointedly therefore, Virilio's theory of disappearance targets the suggestive powers of what he terms a **narco-capitalism** where it comes concealed behind a façade of social policy, meaning a subjugating threat similar to that applied successfully in history before. He goes so far as to question whether the developed countries are not pushing ahead with virtual technologies "in order to turn the tables on the under-developed countries, which are, in Latin America especially, living off, or rather barely scraping by, the production of illicit chemical drugs".¹⁰ He proceeds to trace the loss of territory through an evermore sophisticated evolution of systems, method and strategies devised to control physical land and territory through its violation in more surreptitious ways.

In this sense *disappearance* is equated with *violence*. Virilio describes how we have, over time, transformed weapons from sticks-and-stones to electromagnetic laser beams. From swords to trenches; from ground to air; from man to man combat to remote-sensing distance missiles. As inventions "shrink" time, they reach further territorially; that is, the more instant and invisible, the more sweeping and targeted they become. Consequently, electronic systems enable new manoeuvres where territory becomes more immaterial and less important. Again, Virilio traces immateriality to the recent battlefields: The Vietnam war, for

¹⁰ VIRILIO, (*S&I*, 1995): http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72.

instance, took place over a number of years where land and territory played a huge role, since physical fighting had to take place in rice fields, across deserts and fortresses. By contrast, the Gulf war was instantaneous strategy. This battle lasted just a few weeks and took place within one territory tele-guided by satellites. From the battlefields above Kuwait, the Middle East and Iraq, satellites were able to transmit back to another territory (the USA) from where precise weapon guidance was controlled. And hence, the USA "won the war without a war". By the time of the Kosovo war, territorial space was nearly totally bypassed since it was a war that took place almost entirely in the air. The implication is that as time goes by, the "walls of fortresses disappear".¹¹

Real-time and cybernetic technologies propose a wall-less ubiquity. Cybernetic space implies omnipresence; that is, "territory" is everywhere and nowhere at the same time. To Virilio, the fragmentation of space culminates in this. Hence his conclusion that virtualisation is responsible for disappearance. But the crucial point here is where he connects the immateriality of our inventions with the immateriality of human vision and perception. Deterritorialisation for Virilio is perceived through the revolutionary changes imposed on human sensibility and perception through "delocalization"; a gradual process of detachment and fractured realities. He connects the dematerialized *warhead* with the dematerialized *image* where the "loss of territory" ensues in the "loss of inscription".¹² The history of art enters at this perspective of fractalization. Yet again, Virilio, who sees the image as a "weapon", traces the loss of inscription through the evolution of maps, the historic coding of the land and earth. For instance, survey maps, once drawn on paper, were transformed into photographs

¹¹ ARMITAGE, (VL), 82-87.

¹² Ibid. 129 and 150.

and film by World War II. Today, we draw the geo-strata of land, climate, sea and air through vast satellite surveillance systems. The extension to human vision, to see from a distance, means that the power and control over territory has changed. "One day", Virilio says, "deterrence will no longer be caused by weapons but the gaze".¹³ Seeing information as ammunition, it follows that deterrence is controlled by speed – how quickly information is transmitted in order to take action. Beyond nuclear power, supremacy has shifted from the *explosive* to the *communicative*, which means that power is measured not so much by the speed of destructive missiles as much as by the speed of radars and satellites. Virilio's "information bomb" provides a metaphor for dematerialized power (a dictatorship of **speed**) subsumed in a perverse and furtive "aesthetics of disappearance".¹⁴

This aesthetic is attached to loss of the physical, which in terms of art, Virilio portrays through "the telepresence" or "spectralization of art".¹⁵ He sees this paradoxically, as the **accident** emerging from the desire to attain ultimate proximity. Our world of progressive acceleration propels to absolute propinquity. But the feedback from this aspiration is diagnosed through the condition of dematerialized perception defined as "double vision" - a dual-perspective creating the conflation of two planes of realities: that of real physical space with that of virtual real-time artificial space. This implies seeing life through the *real window* onto a horizon line with a vanishing point in real space, concurrently with looking through the *virtual window* of our screens and monitors and a non-linear spatial horizon. Virilio announces this blurring of body and place as bringing the termination of our territorial-body which he equals to "loss of the earth" and,

¹³ Ibid. 85.

¹⁴ Ibid. 32-33.

¹⁵ Ibid. 139.

consequently, to the loss of presence in art. According to this view, our desire for proximity is implicated in this dilemma of non-presence - the "dark spot of art" - since the body, Virilio says, is being "wrenched away" where its appearance was essential.¹⁶

A problem arises at this point where Virilio talks about art with the same controlled perception of the military eye. His concern for loss of presence is angled from a view of virtual technologies surveyed through the suggestive powers underlying what he calls a "narco-capitalist" wired world threatening a cybercult vision towards manipulative and disproportionate ends. From an artistic standpoint, machinic vision can respond in ways to *liberate* the dictates of controlled vision through innovative departures without ignoring the political prejudices and realities of a contemporary world put forward by Virilio. This is where art progresses through transformations, and shifts old grounds towards new connective formats. Deleuzian theory provides for art's eternal challenge to disrupt known grounds, particularly the assimilating forces of capitalist excesses. Virilio however, seems to trace an entire history of art in a linear progression of controlled and systematic dematerializing movements in the same way as he looks at war. This ensues in an evolution of changes where the physical proximities of site, body and materials have gradually become detached. He describes "delocalization", proceeding from body-painting and primitive cave-drawings in inner recesses, to an eventual chassis, onto an easel and mobile canvas, and now into the ephemeral.¹⁷ That is, an artistic process, where early inscriptions on stone and skin have now evolved into forms of pure energy. True, the territorial surface of art has been transformed over time in a process that is

¹⁶ Ibid. 128-143.

¹⁷ Ibid. 129.

parallel to scientific breakthroughs and new-founding knowledge. In accordance with this, content, plasticity and material supports in art have changed along with our concepts of time and perspective and the way we see the world - be it from flat cave spirals to virtual perspectives; from painting bison to gods or aliens; or from using reed-pens to brushes or a mouse. However, the issue for Virilio remains that art has been traversed by the accident because it has lost its physicality and material fixity. He says for instance, that whilst frescoes and mosaics still held to their grounds and were localised, easel painting started to step out into space as a displaceable, nomadic object. Arguably, however, *detachment* can be seen as *expansion*. Art has always thrived on creative adaptations and new available tools. Rather than hurtling towards "loss of presence" therefore, it can be said that art has consistently sought to articulate newer forms of "presences". It can also be argued that at least since the avant-garde movement, artists have deliberately manipulated change and impermanence in their subjects by infusing aesthetic ideas of mutability and temporality into visible, visual arguments. Beyond this, it can be said that the same "spirituality" emanating from stained glass in cathedrals has now entered another field of light; that of electromagnetic proximity through impulses and feedback.

Within these changing processes Virilio sees the great deterritorialising movements in art, divisionism, pointillism, cubism, and abstractionism for instance, monitored by the accidents of scientific breakthroughs - the splitting of the atom, fractal geometry, particle physics and the decay of matter. But such a view also tends to give the impression that art is enslaved by the logistics of scientific discovery. Artistic deterritorialisation in a Deleuzean sense has, alternatively, continued to challenge decay through newness that disrupts the

entropic and homogenizing forces of breakdown and assimilation. Hence, fractal space in artistic creation attempts to reterritorialise and re-contextualize; that is, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are tendencies proceeding together. The processes of pulling apart are accompanied by the processes of pulling together. Collage, montage, assemblage, and installation are such attempts to disrupt and dislocate in order to reformat - *not* to disintegrate but to transfigure. Virilio insists on a viewpoint of "decomposition", a view that seems to fix art under the complete control of other processes. New objects and spaces for cultural expression including VCRs, CDs, DVDs, and now websites and the Internet have not, to the artist, been instruments for further "decay" but facilitations for new transformation, transportability, extension and *more* human communication. The physical order of objects now mediates with the electronic in ways that transcend limitations and open connective opportunities. Art is not merely enslaved by the accident of scientific process but consciously says something about that accident and acts upon it in ways that seek to set free. In this position, telematic space is ground erasure not in the form of obliterating inscription but in devising an expansion of space where feed-forwards instrument **new forms of inscriptions** and presences within the communicative.

In contemplating these new forms, reterritorialisation and future spatial transformation is being explored in relation to machinic space and extended vision. For instance, in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, G.M. Matthews reflects on a new understanding of physical space and unity, arguing for a position where 4D-dynamics is not just confined to the insides of a computer. This position involves the new relationship of architecture and virtual space and considers the challenge of its reterritorialisation as lying in the *communicative*: "media have become part of architecture... (and) help shape and programme the space of

habitation".¹⁸ Matthews writes about the parallel realities of our physical architectural spaces wherever we go, perceived as co-existing fragments varying from a fraction of a second to centuries old through a kaleidoscope of possibilities by various technological mass media all around us. He talks about the "intrusion" of our private spaces by technologies, the response to which has brought about various "postmodernisms". But, from these, two major strands seem to emerge in architecture: one as a critical resistance and evasion rather than an art of building masterfully; the other as a demand for "communicative architecture". Matthews insists on the need for a spatial transformation from the previous condition of architecture as a *habitable place* to that of a *communicative environment*: "The narrative idea of architecture has been elaborated, broadened, softened, opened up to embrace the software world of the media and the computer and all the possibilities this presents to invade the body (architectural space) and multiply its realities".¹⁹ The question for architecture now is not aimed towards monumental, static forms but towards "invoking the event" with 4D-dynamics involving the movement of people and information. The participation of the body is no longer just a front-end situation but extends into the interactive, conversational future. Matthews insists that as new design proceeds to dematerialise actual space, the objective must be to find ways of structuring virtual space to serve the intersubjective needs of a fleeting world. "Actual space on its own is dead space, marked by absences", he says, "the absence of the living reality of the virtual". Provocatively he ends: "Sooner

¹⁸ G.M. MATTHEWS, "Invasion of the Body Snatchers: Architecture and Virtual Space" in *4D Dynamics Conference on Design & Research Methodologies for Dynamic Form*, edited Alec Robertson, Proc.4D Dynamics, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK 1996: [Cyberbridge 4D design http://www.dmu.ac.uk/ln/4dd/synd3h.html](http://www.dmu.ac.uk/ln/4dd/synd3h.html) (last accessed 19.05.05).

¹⁹ Ibid.

rather than later, the body snatchers must be invited to invade."²⁰ This implies a new perception of "territory" wherein space and body are not seen as separate entities but as integrated extensions of each other. As human beings we are seeking ways of multiplying the realities of the software territory of our "body-place". This implies a spiritual dimension to human perception that visualizes the inner electromagnetic fields of matter and motion, rather than only the outer coordination of fixed, separate forms. Here the extension of interactive time is sensed within ubiquitous and synchronous presences. In this conceptual meaning real-space and real-time are seen as extensions of each other as opposed to the split "double-visions" deduced by Virilio.

This view is expanded by John Johnston who outlines some important distinctions between Deleuze and Virilio through "machinic vision".²¹ Johnston finds Virilio's analyses of space and perception problematic and lacking in "positive value" in that he "remains bound to a notion of the unified natural body...and can only view technology as an alien and external prosthesis...producing only disorienting, alienating effects".²² On the other hand, Deleuze views the unified natural body as "never given once and for all but always adapting to (and evolving with) not only the forces of the natural environment but the social and technological assemblages within which it is always found".²³ Johnston notes further that the double movement of Virilio's deregulation and regulation of space finds correspondence in Deleuze and Guattari who also propose a system of human decoding and recoding through deterritorialism and reterritorialism. But within this, the body and organs are formulated on a system of connections and flows

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ JOHNSTON, (MV), 27-48.

²² Ibid. 32.

²³ Ibid. 33.

towards *production*; a concept that subverts the ground of the human body, its subjectivity and origin. Virilio on the other hand is concerned with overarching power systems that mobilize society and hence have command over the body. He also firmly upholds that the human body shall not "be tinkered into something better", into "Superman" or some techno-scientific eugenic being, but its form as we know it will terminate. In his interview with John Armitage, Virilio explicitly states his opposed view to "Nietzscheanism" in Deleuze and Derrida and the *Ueberschensch* (Will to Power).²⁴ He qualifies this by saying that "man is the closing point of the marvels with the universe".²⁵

In view of what these positions may mean to artistic perception and images, Johnston concludes that the points of departure in looking at the image for Virilio and Deleuze are different. Whilst Virilio looks at the image to examine the logistics and practices in which it partakes and how these give shape to the body, Deleuze looks at how the image appears, its durations and flights towards new visual effects and human perceptions. Deleuze and Virilio present us with opposing tensions of the machinic where the positive and negative contend with each other. Their diversions however, converge in their view of an unstable, straddling and shifting world conceived in the deterritorialising movements of "nomadological" and "dromological" theories.²⁶ From these philosophical positions a vision emerges of a world at once **constant and random**. In literal terms both thinkers provide reflection for furthering democracy and warding off a

²⁴ ARMITAGE, (VL), 25.

²⁵ Ibid. 21. Virilio makes this statement from a Christian outlook: "Homo est clausura mirabilium dei" from St Hildegard of Bingen.

²⁶ Ibid. 40. In reflecting on the nomadological war-machine, Virilio declares a convergence with Deleuze & Guattari:

Nomadology is thus an idea which is in total accordance with what I feel with regard to speed and deterritorialisation. So, it is hardly surprising that we clearly agree on the theme of deterritorialisation.

dictatorship of vision. In essence, Virilio uncompromisingly paints the facts, threats and façades of a monitored political world, whilst Deleuze inspires the "untimely" to combat the biases and excesses of the accidental in an adapting and evolving process. There is, beyond this, a further noteworthy point where Virilio seems to offset his own position. He himself states that a difficulty often arises through negative interpretation of the "accidental". He says that he equates the accident to the "unheard-of" pre-Renaissance period: "Before the incredible explosion of the Renaissance there was the tragedy".²⁷ Just as the invention of the perspective of real-space by artists in the Quattrocento revolutionized that period, absolute speed will revolutionize the 21st Century with the perspective of real-time.²⁸ With the impending *catastrophe* then, there is the impending *innovation*: "What a daunting situation it is, to topple over into an unheard-of and ungraspable world...you also have to recognize that it's fantastically exciting!"²⁹ With this Virilio seems to invite us towards an imaginative leap into the accidental.

Hence, from a creative standpoint we can respond that contemporary artists are not tempted by the "angel's leap" because they want to "disappear" but more because the machinic offers new extensions and connectivities for *presence* rather than isolation. Virilio states that democracy can only be furthered if we oppose the global-capital philosophy being hatched for us by big multinational corporations at breakneck speed in the technological race:

Something is hovering over our heads which looks like a 'cybercult'. We have to acknowledge that the new communication technologies will only further democracy if, and only if, we oppose from the beginning the caricature of global

²⁷ Ibid. 143.

²⁸ VIRILIO, (S&I, 1995): http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72

²⁹ ARMITAGE, (VL), 143.

society being hatched for us by big multinational corporations throwing themselves at a breakneck pace on the information superhighways.³⁰

While this may be true as well as the fact that so much money is abusively invested in research on games and amusement whilst the major part of the world grapples with poverty, equally however, ICT tools exist now and await to benefit society and be used in the right way by individuals and governments alike. For artists, it would seem that machinic deterritorialism can provide for production in a new politics that seeks to respond to the negatives in positive, alternative ways. Part of the challenge for artists living in a compact world is conversely, to find ways of defeating the stifling, aridity of working in isolated situations which can be so unproductive, introverted and retroactive. In this sense *network* suggests a re-emergence from *disappearance* through creative "erasure" within a machinic territory. This deterritorialised territoriality seems to be pervading the working environment of the contemporary artist and can be equated with the kind of frameless terrain conceived in ANT which is discussed later, and which is employed in this research as a reterritorialising device to respond to deterritorialisation and dislocation. But at this point, as the different grounds and old formats are eroded, rather than annihilating the inscriptive, these are being invested with all possible forms of "actors" (human and non-human, literal and non-literal). That is, interactive space is *actant* with networks that act on each other through "inscriptions [that] make action at a distance possible by stabilising work in such a way that it can travel across space and time and be combined with other work".³¹

³⁰ VIRILIO, (S&I, 1995): http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72.

³¹ NANCY VAN HOUSE in MARTIN RYDER *What is Actor-Network Theory?* 2003: http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html (last accessed 19.05.05).

In terms of this research this perspective invokes a deterritorialised space or virtual realm where artworks, texts and processes can be looked upon as complicit productions that effectively influence and mutually change each other. This might also imply the flow happening between the "interrogator" and the "territory" where a change is effected not merely in one or the other, but in the in-between. Flow itself is territory - an unfixed dimension where human beings and inanimate things (such as machines) act upon each other. This interactive territory inspires a "presence" which Stewart and Cohan define as extelligence - a counterpart for intelligence which comprises forms of information to be found not only *in* things (for instance intelligent chips/machines/books/CDs etc.) but also in the external interchanges generated where mutual alterations occur.³² These scientists, studying the evolution of human intelligence, suggest that collective intelligences existing in societies are now entering a new extended plane or entity of communicative knowledge, a "superculture", forming through all the multiculturalisms melding together through new communication technologies. In an artistic sense the differences that occur in interactions are motivating active forces that can be seen as new forms of materiality and durability in an expanded territory for cultural expression. Within this deterritorialised space, presence can perhaps be imagined as an actant artistic flow questioning itself through its own metamorphosing process.

³² MIKE HOLDERNESS, *Presence in Collaborative Virtual Environments*, 1998. Holderness quotes IAN STEWART and JACK COHAN in researching deterritorialised spaces and virtual realms where the complicit individuals effectively influence and mutually change each other in CVEs (a space also referred to as "collective intelligence" by Pierre Levy): <http://www.poptel.org.uk/nuj/mike/presence.htm> (last accessed 19.05.05)

3.

...OUT OF EREHWON...

Emerging from Dystopia

Erasure is a making of traces in the form of what has been erased, but where in analogue media what is revealed is the surface which the erased drawing itself erased, in the digital there is no pre-existing surface, only the space created by the act of recording, so that what erasure produces is the evidence of a surface that never existed prior to the erasure. At the same time, however, the erasure is never complete, but approaches asymptotically to the mystical point of zero existence. - SEAN CUBITT¹

Ground Erasure is conceived as a convergence of different displacements encountering the physical with the virtual and the political with the artistic. Whilst Virilio says art is "nowhere", Deleuzian deterritorialisation is a radical response to changes in society through erasure of old "grounds".² Ground Erasure responds to these concepts by attempting to turn nowhere inside out. There is a play between the literal and metaphorical in that this implies the erosion of the Earth and Ground through the breakdown of land, of political and cultural barriers, and bordered territory as we knew it. It also implies a shift from the fixed parameters of *closed* systems to more *open* systems - a mobile territory reformatted with new connections, transformed energies and unfixed boundaries - an open landscape. The quote above suggests an emergent fragment or trace from the negation of a pre-existing surface, implied also in the resistance of total erasure ever. The concept of the asymptote provides a useful analogy in the nomadic field in implying the *approach* towards a value which is

¹ SEAN CUBITT, "As" (The paper formerly known as "Good Vibrations: Time as Special Effect"), keynote address for Symposium on Cultures of Time and the Everyday, Univ. of Toronto, 2000, in *Being on Time*, edited by CHLOE BRUSHWOOD ROSE et al, issue 24, 4: http://www.yorku.ca/public/public/backissu/v24_4.html (last accessed 15.05.05).

² ARMITAGE, (VL), 128.

never quite reached or crossed – a reality visualized in the fluctuations and differences of energy-flows and transmissions. Ground Erasure contemplates an artistic territory similarly poised, metaphorically speaking, between utopia and calamity (that is, implying theoretically, between expansion and disappearance).

Because this relates to a deterritorialised territory, it is pertinent to reflect on how the nomadic relates to the machinic and perception in terms of deterritorialisation in order to see how these concepts extend into new space and practice in art. In so doing Ground Erasure is being proposed as a phenomenon in the production of new machinic space – an operational territoriality for art. In this space, the real and the virtual combine to produce new platforms, networks and movement or “territories for angels” (Virilio’s artists) in the double erasure of time – being nowhere and everywhere. The question continues to examine the Ground for new orientation and the forces towards reterritorialisation emerging within the negation of time and space, that is, presence from the erosion of territory. Conceptually, this plays here on the double negation implied in “erasure of erasure” (which recalls *amnemotechnics*, the technical application to remove the final trace of inscription in IT). But this is being imagined constructively as a “deterritorialised territory” for artists, wherein the combined perceptions of a noosphere and non-place evolve a fertile network-territory not merely as vehicle for flows to take place, but for connections and projectiles as new forms of expression and inscription (albeit transient and fleeting) in themselves. Ground Erasure attempts to point to a paradigm of space navigating new geographies within an understanding of a reconfigured territory. Whilst looking at the realities perpetuating the disappearance of territory as Virilio cautions, ways *forward* cannot be engulfed by fears of departures; more by seeking ways of externalizing and bettering those dark spots and being enthralled

in this potential and power of life. Even, if like the asymptote, this attempt is energized in the potential, a "becoming of differences" to "remain in tension" like Deleuze suggests.³ This transition-space concerns the processes and connections engendered in flux; seeking coherence in an environment of new possibility.

The nomadic and machinic can be seen as orchestrating the activity of this transition-space, similar to the deterritorialised space of a non-place. Marc Augé alludes to the "non-place" as the place where "everything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time" and no organic social life is possible.⁴ Such places include airports, shopping malls, stations, hospital clinics, phone booths, ATMs and Internet-cafes which are "in-between" locations.⁵ In contemplating her journey between art biennales, Carol Becker says about such places: "In the extreme these places can appear as blank spaces".⁶ And to Virilio, the non-place "heralds the spectre" and "progresses toward the immaterial". But beyond these meanings, both on a conceptual and physical level these places can be seen as *nomadic-machine-places*. This is meant in the sense that they are transition-spaces where people connect with machines which in turn reconnect with each other, intersect, and crisscross in transit to generate further connections, journeys and flows. These *human-to-machine* movements are not "dead"; symbolically, they fashion a deterritorialisation in the vibrant communicative of the potential, where arrivals and connections to new destinations take place onto others. Ground Erasure alludes to a similar paradox; it concerns the unfixturing of

³ COLEBROOK, (*GD*), 49.

⁴ MARC AUGE, *Non-places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso, London 1992, 104.

⁵ *Ibid.* 75-115.

⁶ CAROL BECKER, *Surpassing the Spectacle. Global Transformation and the Changing Politics of Art*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers inc., USA 2002, 123.

territory, for a transformed territory. This transformation is reflected through Virilio and Deleuze's intersecting concepts of the machinic.

Johnston detects the conflictual in the two machinic visions of these thinkers: Virilio's machine remains "nonhuman"...ushering in a "new regime and condition for media"; he insists that "objective perception – how machines might perceive things – will forever be beyond us". Alternatively, the Deleuze machine is constituted upon "a refusal to valorize a set of oppositions (like the human versus the technical, or the biological versus the mechanical)". The fact that machines are there, "initiates a decoding of perception and flight into the perceptual unknown that artists and some philosophers will necessarily follow and explore".⁷ Deleuze therefore, provides a way to sidestep given categories and fixed presuppositions in order to "expand the territory" of human resourcefulness.

It could be argued that their two opposing "machines" work together. Virilio decodes the *political-global* dimensions of the present, Deleuze the *philosophical-universal* within the politico-behavioural aspects of society. To one, the machine is a delocalizing device, to the other it is a liberating concept. As Johnston outlines, images to Virilio are weapons polarizing and delimiting human vision, to Deleuze the multiplicity of images free the imagination from the strictures and power boundaries of the known. In other words, Virilio traces the walls threatening to bring *closed* systems, while Deleuze permeates these boundaries through an *open* system. The dual-motion of the world functions between speed and inertia with gathered momentum. And within the process of this acceleration, breakthroughs and accidents are the outcome of each other.

⁷ JOHNSTON, (MV), 38.

So, whilst Virilio is a diagnostic, painting the harsh realities of an ailing world, Deleuze offers healing solutions for application and apparatuses for functioning within those realities. The "web" is a common factor – one focuses on the "spider", the other on the "connective tissues". By looking at the open abundant system of the universe Deleuze looks at life through adaptation (human beings connecting with machines). As discussed earlier, all life starts from the flux of "difference" wherein divergences and trajectories are not so much disasters as productive departures. The positive side of deterritorialisation thrives in that it can unlock *any* fixed system such as capitalism onto exchange and interaction and produce flow (e.g. economic flow). The tensions of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation proceed together in the same way as inflation fluctuates between the polarities of demand and supply, production and money-flows. Likewise, human creativity is lodged in the deterritorialised activities that bring growth and expansion. And yet these tensions proceed symbiotically with the tendency towards equalizing all things through similar exchange values. Activities that are intrinsically motivated, (the artistic and philosophic), can promise absolute deterritorialisation for Deleuze. By eternally reaffirming this challenge of difference, they are the vital human expressions that oppose the homogenizing powers of the *desire-production machine*. Speaking for the arts, Virilio emphasises: "résistance...to combat technology, not to destroy it, but to *transfigure* it".⁸ The *unconscious* disorientation inflicted by technology can be countered by a *conscious* deterritorialisation in a creative thinking society. Just as our daily reality takes place between the *actual-virtual* planes of perception, the *conscious-unconscious* is a dedifferentiation (a blurred divide) and has the same double-movement that both thinkers seem to reflect.⁹ In demarcating my

⁸ ARMITAGE, (VL), 157.

⁹ Refer to The Unavoidable Accident and the virtual-actual exercise in Section 1.

position in this research, I have argued that Virilio's accident can be equalled to the Deleuzean lines of flight in terms of the disruptive trajectories that open up new directions. In an artistic sense this implies that accidents can be seen as "forms of erasure" that create departures; an image or a photograph that goes wrong, for instance. It is perhaps worth noting Virilio's own declaration that "accident" in no way connotes the "apocalyptic", and the "absolute catastrophe" he foresees is part of the same Energy.¹⁰ From another perspective, Pollock's "chaos" paintings sprung as lines of flight from what may have been an "accident" – the spillage and splattering of his paint pot.

Within the machinic processes of life hence, disruptions take place between the fluctuations towards striation and territorialisation. Between these processes an "active new territory" is generated where lines, flows and new creations take place (presence from erasure). The difficulty lies in conceptualising this new territory because it is not *fixed* in the same sense as we once understood a bordered territory. As barriers dissolve and space deconstructs, more so is territorial unfixtured and loss of belonging experienced, as Virilio detects. But Deleuze offers the promise of "escape" if the power of difference is kept alive. Ground Erasure concerns these ambivalences and erosions wedged positively in the emergence of a new space reformatted on the wider platforms of the communicative and connective. In conceptualising this space, Virilio and Deleuze seem to converge, and yet, at the point where one arrives the other seems to take off. The point here is that the value of these two thinkers in this project is not so much where they differ but where they *intersect* and trigger my line of flight.

¹⁰ ARMITAGE, (VL), 155.

In practice, the Deleuzian interpretation of the machinic has important bearing to us as artists in how we produce, perceive or create space or images. The machine is not a metaphor for life, but life itself is a machine.¹¹ This machine is not seen in terms of mechanical or representational imagery, but inversely the assemblages of images we create are the *productive flows* of those very connections. The idea of the machinic assemblage is founded on a series of complex connections and processes towards a **Body without Organs**; starting, for instance, from the interconnections of the human organs, the complexity grows beyond this when human beings connect with machines, hence generating infinite new connections and flows. Theoretically, **deterritorialisation** occurs when a new connection is made beyond its normal territoriality. For example, whilst the teeth, tongue and mouth find their natural territoriality in food, these organs are deterritorialised during the function of speech. On a metaphorical level, Deleuze suggests a deliberate deterritorialisation to "expand the territory" of the creative mind. The idea of the **rhizome** as a sprawling and spreading root is conceived within this kind of nomadic growth and fluidity. The rhizome, as opposed to hierarchical **tree** structures, symbolizes nomadic ground; a concept applied to the machinic which Deleuze appropriates from the archaic war-field strategies of the ancient Orient.¹² Brian Massumi draws this comparison of the nomad-machine "as not immuring itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority but moving freely in an element of exteriority".¹³ Massumi expands the idea of the Deleuzian nomad-machine from the everyday practice of life and thought into the complexities of the political machine. Here he defines the "space of nomad thought" as significantly different from "State space". Nomadic space is an open equation as opposed to a closed equation. In a political sense, *force* must be

¹¹ COLEBROOK, (*GD*), 55.

¹² DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 351.

¹³ *Ibid.* Foreword by Brian Massumi, xii.

distinguished from *power* – “The modus operandi of nomad thought is affirmation, even when its apparent object is negative...Force arrives from outside to break constraints and open new vistas. Power builds walls”.¹⁴ This is likened to a brick that can be used to build a wall (power) or thrown at a window, creating a trajectory (force). In creative terms, this is like tangential ideas that unexpectedly project into the grounds of discovery and constellate within and beyond unknown parameters. In political terms, nomadism is the counter-extreme of State-despotism. Nomadism is described as “fluid” because it seeks to unite without the dictate to form a single body, and separated from the unidirectional drive to Dominion: “It is the unity *in fluctuation* of a collection of disparate elements whose disparateness is not denied (drops of water...)a unity that does not preclude divergence (... and may stream to different seas)”.¹⁵

The nomadic, as Massumi suggests, invokes an “open equation” in the shaping of space. This provides a conceptual analogy for the kind of operational space and politics of the machinic entailed in the flexible, open systems for practice and information networks in art, particularly in how these facilitate novel platforms for debate, exchange and possibilities. As indicated, Ground Erasure implies the nomadic-machinic from different perspectives in the literal and conceptual - territory erased but being reconfigured in both the inner and outer landscapes of contemporary practice.¹⁶ In contemplating this, Massumi’s “deterritorialised flowing movement” as expressed in the Ideal of **nomadic fluidity** in his study on

¹⁴ Ibid, xiii.

¹⁵ BRIAN MASSUMI - KENNETH DEAN, “State-Extreme, Extremist State” in chap. 2 of *First and Last Emperors - the Absolute State and the Body of the Despot*, 1992: http://www.anu.edu.au/HRC/first_and_last/title_page.htm (last accessed: 19.05.05).

¹⁶ This implies the shared borders of the personal and collective; the real and virtual; and the local and global, reflected in each other like intersecting strata.

social formations, clearly resonates with the Deleuzian philosophy of "difference and becoming":

(Nomadism) is a mode of being in geosocial space that may assume many forms, all of which nevertheless share a common dynamic. Nomadic formations are those which value motion over fixation, variation over order; which affirm the spaces between stops rather than bee-lining to a promised land; which reach a resting point only to use it as a relay to a future move; which have no finality, only process; which skim the surface rather than implanting a symbolic edifice or superimposing a code or statistical grid; which "occupy space without counting it" rather than "counting space in order to occupy it" [Deleuze and Guattari 1987:477]; which involve "arraying oneself in an open space" rather than arranging a closed space around oneself, fortress fashion [ibid. 353, 380]; which smooth without striating.¹⁷

Akin to the Deleuzian connectivities and the nomad-machine, the abstract fluidity implied in these concepts convey the variable and deterritorialized territory being formulated within the communicative flows and unfixed locatedness pervading both physical social remix culture as well as cybernetic mobility and new space-augmenting technologies. Notably, the resistance to any unidirectional "dominion" or unitary dictate echoes the decentralized move contained in postmodern and media cultural theories.¹⁸

In evaluating the relevance of machinic vision to the present, Johnston creates a link between Deleuze and human cognitive perception. This is useful in that, first, the perceptual obviously relates to the mechanism of artistic sensibility and production. Second, the Deleuzian concept connecting the machinic with psycho-analytic perception and the spatial stimulates new associations for artists

¹⁷ MASSUMI - DEAN, (*FALE*, 1992):
http://www.anu.edu.au/HRC/first_and_last/title_page.htm.

¹⁸ Examples: JEAN F. LYOTARD, (*TPC*); LEV MANOVICH, *Cultural Software*, new-media theory in Text/Articles, 2004, www.manovich.net/ (last accessed 19.05.05); JACQUES DERRIDA (with reference to theories of difference/deconstruction) in ANTHONY EASTHOPE - KATE MCGOWAN, *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1992, 101-132.

in the combined planes of the conceptual and practical, through *lines of flight* and infinite imaginings of new network-territorialities. And third, these machinic connections collectively seem to convey a general nomadic movement as a cultural phenomenon in metaphorical and literal senses or grounds in practice; that is, parallels can be imagined between shifting realities of the perceptual, the practical, the conceptual and the physical through the Earth and Ground's changing geographies, cultural identities and politics. Art therefore, appears to operate both as an *organ* within this huge, nomadic-machinic world and as a *body* internalizing and externalizing these changes.

It would seem therefore, that the Deleuzean vision of the nomadic and machinic can continue to provide a theoretical backbone in a post-production age which in turn, can be infused in the practical and conceptual apparatuses of our multifaceted artistic processes. Interestingly, Johnston observes how machinic vision in the earlier studies of Deleuze on the time-image, and on human perception and image-production can be further theorized within continuing cognitive research where there is a shift towards *decentred* and *highly distributed systems*. Artificial intelligence responds to neural networks through the "connectionist" and "teaching machines to recognize complex phenomena". Here, programming has involved the experimental production of nonlinear effects of emergence and self-organisation.¹⁹ But emergent theories suggest that "[perception is not] subservient to the formation of a centralized, fully explicit representation of the world but models perception as a cofunctioning of highly distributed parts or elements" which are more in the environment than in the eye

¹⁹ JOHNSTON, (*MV*), 42: A self-organizing system is one in which higher-level behaviour emerges spontaneously or without external input from the interactions of many lower-level elements, components or agents.

or brain.²⁰ A split follows between a traditional "cognitivist, symbolic, computational, top-down" approach and a contemporary "connectionist, neural net, emergent, self-organisational and bottom-up" one. But the main issue in cognitive science today is the realization that higher cognitive activities take place through interactions with external resources.²¹ Clearly, the connection with Deleuzian machinic becoming is aligned in the move towards distributed systems. The notable point in this observation is that not only higher cognitive functions, but possibly most human activities take place through *distributed interactions*, dependent on "external props or scaffolds" be they machines or methods, or both.

This recalls the Deleuzian "assemblage" which conceptualises the **distributionist** and connectivist in the *open space* of the machine. On a practical level, this invokes the nomadic space of new practice within the communicative processes, new architectures and geographies being reconfigured. On an intellectual level, the assemblage echoes the rationalizing human brain as a *distributed* cognitive engine where human computational power and expertise is spread across a heterogeneous assembly of brains, bodies, artifacts, and other external structures. Deleuze fuses this into the perceptual sensibilities and creative powers of the human mind.²² In his *Cinema* works, he had invoked the brain in looking at how the time-image informed philosophical concepts in its durational connective and parallel orchestrations, expressed through the idea of "cinema of the brain or body" or in "the world itself as a brain" or "the identity of

²⁰ Ibid. 42.

²¹ Ibid. 43.

²² See DELEUZE, (C1 & C2).

the brain and world as a noosphere".²³ The significance in all this is that Deleuze foresaw the distributed functions of perception to be "everywhere and nowhere". Moreover, the idea of the nomadic-machine markedly prevails in the present intervention of information machines, even though as Johnston notes, Deleuze "never explicitly describes this new machinic space".²⁴

The deterritorialized territory envisioned in *Ground Erasure* connects in practice, to an open connective territory conceptualised in this new machinic space as productive, multifaceted alterities.²⁵ The particular value to practice in this concept lies where Deleuze pushed beyond the Bergson philosophic viewpoint through the cinematic from where he took off. Whilst Bergson had proposed that "the viewer was always already in the image, positioned within a field of interacting images", Deleuze proposed the *force* of the trajectory in the lines of flight. These conceptualise a *feed-forward* in the operational and tangential senses of artistic practice; linking and hyper-connectivities; and also conjure departures onto newer decodings, situations and configurations. These conceptual flights can be envisaged in the transient and temporal streams of the new territorialities produced in the communicative field. They are offered in *potential approaches*; in the bi-directional realities that take place in the virtual planes of the interactive with the possibility of multi-directional occurrences. Philosophically, this suggests a concept of reality not fixed at location A or at location B (example, in the object or the spectator) but an interchangeable reality

²³ DELEUZE, (C2), 204-215. In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze invokes the brain in an implication of a distributed form of perception. "Distributed Perception" also implies connectivity. This recognizes perception as occurring not as the result of a single or isolated agency but of several contiguous agencies working in concert or parallel. This parallel of the "cinema of the brain" also invokes the rationale within Actor-Network Theory wherein all the functors or agencies are associative actants (both human and non-human).

²⁴ JOHNSTON, (MV), 47.

²⁵ See GUATTARI, (C), 33-57.

located in the interstice or connective flows in-between. Here these perceptual and conceptual deterritorialisations combine in a nomadic landscape traversing simultaneous plateaus and multiple sites. The physical eye cannot perceive $360^\circ \times 360^\circ$ vision (surround-vision) in the same way as the human ear can perceive $360^\circ \times 360^\circ$ sound (surround-sound) due to the properties of sound and light waves, but also the anatomy of our eyes and ears. Concurrently, the permutations taking place between the virtual-actual in the human psyche are reflected across other physical transboundary realities. Deleuze tells us that we must "put time into the body" in order to transcend the limitations of our physical organs and open to the boundlessness of time and life beyond our sensibilities: "The attitude of the body relates thought to time as to that outside which is infinitely farther than the outside world".²⁶

²⁶ DELEUZE, (C2), 189.

4.

...THE TERRIBLE NEARNESS OF DISTANCE...

The Intensification of Proximity

The postcolonial today is a world of proximities. It is a world of nearness not an elsewhere. - OKWUI ENWEZOR ¹

Ground Erasure concerns the dissolute within the cultural and physical terrains of the Earth. Characterized by transport signals and satellite footprints, our world is described as one in the flux of deterritorialisation; one whose territory is subsumed in a growing complexity of issues, and becoming increasingly undefined through global expansion and the internationalisation of commerce and culture. Okwui Enwezor ascribes to the postcolonial a wider connotation relative to a "smaller" world of intense proximities in terms of a global transnational world of capital and exchange; one of instant and satellite "nearness not elsewhere".² In the present state, he sees this enforces a new form of relations of difference; a global form in culture intensified both by the breakdown of distance and lingering, colonial legacies but, bolstered now by a form of capitalism emerging from an eternal "War on Terror".³ Inevitably, whilst political tensions make tenuous the relations where the local and global intersect, they are also compounded by other conflictual realities and deepening insecurities. These occur where, on the one hand, unification processes in certain parts of the world and advancing communication systems succeed in dismantling the distance

¹ OKWUI ENWEZOR, "The Black Box", *Documenta 11*, Hatje Kantz Publishers, Kassel 2002, 42-55.

² Ibid.

³ See STEWART MARTIN, "A new world art? Documenting Document 11" in *Radical Philosophy*, 122 (Nov/Dec 2003), 7-19.

barriers, yet conversely, new restrictions and controls are set up every day to police our physical movements and curb our freedom. The mounted vigilance for an intangible "enemy" in the wake of 9.11, for many of us opens conflicting questions such as: Whose enemy is it? And where is it located? The vacant gaps of the "non-place", in airports, stations and big cities, it would seem, are teeming with hidden eyes, guarding our every move with a stealthy satellite "gaze". Ironies therefore, grow: our world gets smaller, yet more confined; more plural, yet more manipulative. While constant terror alerts control our TV headlines and cyber-news, in the "sidelines", creeping in between are the lethal subtexts: global-warming, toxic ships, fresh mad-cow breakouts, new cyber-bugs, travel-bugs, and the daily web-like poisons eating our lives. George Myerson describes this as a new "Ecopathology...a diffused way of talking, and it penetrates the mainstream media in stray remarks and vivid asides".⁴ This, as the same social and political issues heralded in the industrial era trail now into our technological age. Only this is the global age, where power, data and money are equalized. Hence, these difficult problems now defy location across all nations and blur divides between victim and culprit; between responsibility and action; between the ecosphere and the state, the global and the local, the collective and the individual. Questions concerning sustainability, the environment, over-population, military insecurities, uneven economies and distribution are perpetuated in the aftermath of old wars, mass-immigration, post-colonialism, asylum-seeking, and fresh conflicts - all hugely contesting democracy.

Within these issues pervading global culture, nomadism contends new meanings, not least that of the "networked citizen". Carol Becker addresses some literal

⁴ GEORGE MYERSON, *Ecology and the End of Postmodernity*, Icon Books, Cambridge, UK 2001, 60.

meanings around what the "global citizen" might mean in terms of the transmigratory and transnational and the impact of new hybrid culture on the global art world.⁵ The internationalized art world now is not expressed merely by juxtaposing identities, travel shows or international biennales – the art of different countries. More is it the production of a hybrid culture emerging from different places – the art of a de-differentiated society. The questions confronting us at this time concern the point of impact in a global art world where no one society dictates; where no one material, single discourse or art language is dominant. Where the role of the artist has become as protean as the artwork; being painter, writer, sculptor, curator, technologist, poet, politician, diplomat all rolled into one. Within this multifarious arena, Becker views the challenges of an internationalized hybridity infusing an art world that needs also to identify with "dystopia" and the "dislocations" of people: those forced across borders, the discomfort of territorial unfixtured, the multiple identities they vie with at every turn, and the affect they have on their new locations and vice versa. Pertinently, Becker questions if the "global nomad" is a romantic ideal created by globalisation obscuring new rifts between the "rich and poor nomads", the elite who travel to expand their world and the disenfranchised poor who live on the margins desperately trying to improve their conditions. She asks: "is nomadism in the Deleuzean sense a truly superior reality – one that transcends the apparatus of the state?" And "how", she asks, "can the local permeate the global, when even in art-making, it may speak different discourses, represent different constituencies, classes, and forms, ones that the art world often excludes?" It would seem she says, that all this activity "fits nicely into the directions of global capitalism".⁶ Clearly, while these shifts determine an

⁵ BECKER, (*STS*), 117-125.

⁶ *Ibid.* 123.

inevitable future for global expression as Becker predicts, a *global art world* also needs to meet the new disparities, ruptures and anxieties bound to arise. To some measure, confirmation and response to these globalizing effects are found in the curatorial project and theories forwarded by Enwezor and Documenta 11 (2002), opportunely taking place a year following the WTC disaster of 9.11.⁷ Enwezor views the *postcolonial* as a new, global cultural politics conditioned by intense globalisation now entering, as Stewart Martin describes, an "intensively globalised (strictly speaking, 'non-colonial') form of imperialism". The global imperialism Martin implies here refers to media propagation on the War on Terror.⁸ Post 11th September, Enwezor interrogates *democracy* within the meanings of western hegemony, now that we are confronted, he says, not only with "the asymmetry, limitations and the materialist assumptions of globalisation" but also with "the terrible nearness of distant places that global logic sought to abolish and bring into one domain of deterritorialised rule". We are deemed to think on "democracy as an *unrealized* project".⁹ Both in his text and curation, Enwezor positions the postcolonial to counterpower a legacy of international art founded on Westernism. Hence, the Documenta exhibition attempted to deterritorialise the avant-garde by provoking a break from the narrative of historical development, displacing this with a radical alternative postcolonial world. The significant value of Enwezor's project is its attempt to engage in a *reterritorialisation* of art and discourse expressed through novel forms of postcolonial political culture. According to Martin however, the postcolonial project as a "global enfranchisement" that promises the dramatic transformation of social relations remains currently "highly indeterminate [and] in

⁷ Enwezor's curatorial project can, in a creative sense, be seen as conversion of the "accident" (the Sept. 11 disaster) into a "line of flight" (the Documenta 11 exhibition).

⁸ MARTIN, (*ANWA*), 9.

⁹ ENWEZOR, (*TBB*), 42-55.

debt to a future that demands a formidable struggle".¹⁰ In practice, Documenta 11 articulates a *dedifferentiation* achieved through an essential relation of difference.

The dilemma of art it seems, lies in seeking reterritorialisation within such dissolute grounds where globalisation incites all these social cultural shifts and movements while new politics, supplanting the disillusionments already ushered in by postmodernism, provoke a rethinking of Western values, practice, and narrative. It would seem that whilst Deleuzian nomadism provides an apparatus for new flows and exchange, the social realities outlined by Becker and inscribed now within a re-evaluation of globalist values and practice continue to press for new paradigms of reflection and action. In such circumstances where the cultural world seems caught between Scylla and Charybdes, re-connection may be conceptualised through some inherent questions: Can *democracy unrealized* be looked at as *democracy unfinished* - seeking reconciliation and reparation in the process to fulfillment? Can global consensus still find scope in *political will* (international law, like canon law, thrives on faith)? Whilst realist positions can be finite to *order*, the rational can open to *justice* and the reciprocal. Can art make a *difference*, located in the liberal and the consensual negotiating itself in the processes of transmutation and things becoming other than what they are? With this in mind, can the *accidents* (of globalisation) be turned into *lines of flight*?

Beyond the theories of difference and incommensurability (the impossibility of applying a common standard to our different decisions and dilemmas) the consensual lies at the creative level of coherence where commonalities intersect

¹⁰ MARTIN, (ANWA), 18.

towards larger purpose, energy and goal.¹¹ It is possible to visualise positively, that as global space shrinks, the more are we able to detect what goes amiss anywhere in the world; the more is it immediately recognized, widely known or made shameful; the more instantly can action be taken; and the more can responsibility be shared in order to effect *force not power – trajectories not walls*. Deleuzian theory proposes a challenge in recognizing the *balance*, the point where difference exceeds its purpose, “inflates” and tips, and then starts to regress in homogenization. Whilst political stance needs to identify where democracy turns into capitalist hegemony by harnessing the disparities of a globalised world as postcoloniality contends, Deleuzian theory possibly provides more than the “romantic ideal” (implied by Becker) in its social applications to human creativity. This is for instance, where rhizome theory urges a *conscious deterritorialism* applied to *any* facet of one’s life in order to “expand territory”; to ameliorate our creative lives, but also to kindle empathy to understand otherness and counter the negative powers that subvert difference.¹² Deleuze insists that art and philosophy have the power to enforce the *positive* flow of deterritorialisation by sustaining the eternal challenge of difference and hence, countering and abating other negative tendencies (such as over-commodification) that go on in fixed systems. Beyond this, Deleuze links “difference” with “becoming”, consequently producing a motion of *dedifferentiation* – explicitly, difference is not static but in flux, which as a result produces *indistinct divisions*. Both philosophically and conceptually this allows us to recognize **diversity**. In application to the political and global, this means

¹¹ From a creationist view Deleuze, after Spinoza, talks of “spiritual automation” where action becomes creation within “the luminous plane of immanence” and universal variation, (Deleuze *(CI)*, 100/68). This philosophically invokes a reduction of “oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one’s zone of indiscernibility with other traits” and enter the impersonality of the creator and “becoming”, (Deleuze *(ATP)*, 280). See also HALLWARD, *(EIR)*, 69.

¹² DELEUZE - GUATTARI, *(ATP)*, 3-25.

perceiving not single locations but multiple locations from within a field. Nomadic philosophy implies fluidity in that *dominion*, as Massumi describes, is not located in a single location but looks for striation as it streams, ripples and trajects into many different locations to open "new vistas" - power is distributed and unfixed.¹³ The focal point is not in the singular but in the multiple; in the "surround". Whilst the limitations of the physical eye can only see a perspective in relation to land and sky, beyond this, imagination charts territories where intersections sphere out and the same meeting points that are destinations are also departures.

Translated into the politics of the practical art world, this implies that the move forward is not through assimilation (the breakdown into similar components). Inversely, where the junctions cut across they are more likely to lead to fruition, new journeys and experiences. Vicente Todoli attested to this when in his inauguration statement as director of the Tate Modern he stated: "Art is not caged... Globalisation is the essential spirit of art", implying internationalism as a lively platform for diversity.¹⁴ An aesthetical globalisation undoubtedly does not imply homogenizing identities and differences in order to efface cultural tensions, without incurring great loss. To reconstitute the relation between identity and difference, new tensions inevitably arise. But, without sounding too utopian, a globalisation of aesthetics tries to generate dialogues between those very differences and tensions; bridging gaps and dispelling exclusions for greater understanding and opportunities through meeting points where art provides a

¹³ MASSUMI - DEAN, (FALE, 1998):
http://www.anu.edu.au/HRC/first_and_last/title_page.htm

¹⁴ VICENTE TODOLI, appointed Director of Tate Modern on 29.05.02 and took up appointment on 02.04.03: http://www.tate.org.uk/home/news/newdirectorm_04-2003.htm (last accessed 19.05.05). Speech in *The Art Newspaper.com*, International Edition: <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=10177> (last accessed 19.05.05)

bonding, communicative language. Within this activity and in the light of new politics, internationalism is debated in the changing formats of shifting grounds. As mentioned earlier, this sees the emergence of more cultural hybridity and an amalgamation of various positions happening between the political, the economical, and the cultural Translations occurring across the transboundary movements of people, practice and activity. Some of the raw facts were revealed by Becker who places the productive and energetic in direct confrontation with the conflictual, political and social problematics. These tendencies are perhaps most clearly pronounced in mainstream art as Becker describes (eg USA and UK), because Western education is part of an active capital both investing and attracting activity through a curious mix of those seeking to widen their cultural horizons or opportunities through work and study, of refugees, Diasporas, and all those forced to move across borders. Certainly therefore, globalisation transforms previously-held conceptions of the "international" within an expanding revolutionized cultural-remix that demands growing definition. This new meaning is compounded by speedy technologies spurring the compression of time-space horizons. Our cultural geographies are being rapidly reconfigured into a global space of permeable frontiers and boundaries; one no longer local and contained, but contiguous and wide-spread, where cultures are thrown into intense and immediate contact with each other. Indeed, this new confrontation provokes an "Other" that is no longer simply *out there*, but also *within*.¹⁵ Immersed within present world politics such "terrible nearness" as Enwezor calls it, instigates a greater coherence between the individual and the collective through a radical relation of difference, similar to that proposed by postcoloniality.¹⁶

¹⁵ See KEVIN ROBINS - DAVID MORLEY, *Spaces of Identity*, Routledge, London, 1995.

¹⁶ ENWEZOR, (*TBB*), 44-46.

The "global form" encompassing this relation of difference suffused in the idea of postcolonialism, emphatically marks a shift from the micro to the macro; from the reductionism of the "unified colony" to the expansionism of open global space. Postcoloniality as a cultural-political theory contended by Enwezor, does not merely imply those societies that are in the process of decolonization and asserting their sovereignty or nationalism but implies a break with the historic teleology of development and avant-gardism.¹⁷ In this sense it vies with the earlier conceptions of *internationalism* developed since the Cold War. Historically internationalism has its political roots in theories based on the belief in the importance of full global participation to the security and prosperity to one's own and all nations. This belief stood previously, in direct opposition to a now obsolete isolationism where a nation's interests were best served if the nation secluded itself from other nations and avoided forming alliances with others. In the post-war period a vital internationalism was promoted for freer trade in order that shared interests and prosperity would foster a new world order and peace among nations. The growth of capital transnational economies, conglomerates, and globalizing technologies have eroded and transformed the meaning of internationalism beyond mere legal pacts and trade agreements. This is manifested in the far-reaching implications of the instant and widespread which, inadvertently bring about and enforce interdependence through vested interests and common factors generated in commerce, production, price controls and national growth. Politically speaking, interdependence and an interconnected world promote reciprocity and mutual interest in place of isolation. In theory at least, this implies that isolation becomes less pervasive as faster and cheaper IT systems develop and become more easily available across different developing nations and civilizations; and also, common issues like war, peace, security, the

¹⁷ MARTIN, (*ANWA*), 9.

environment, health, wealth, education and food achieve team motivation and universal objectives. At the two extremes, traditional internationalisation (in terms of vast capital) is attacked on the grounds of becoming predatory, parasitic and depleting; isolation by comparison can lead to aridity and oppression, fundamentalism, despotism, ethnic cleansing and genocidal totalities. On the scale of contemporary politics, the local-global nexus provokes the collapse of boundaries and the erasure of extreme grounds. Social-political theorists observe that the new tensions confronting countries now are between enlargement (internationalism) and restriction (localism). Midst this, the global-local dynamic could be forging new forms of bonding and belonging. The question of such affiliations is whether the parochial and introspective can be re-imagined "in more ecumenical and cosmopolitan terms"¹⁸ - a sociological viewpoint which, in this wider meaning, resonates with the "universal variation" implied in Deleuzian theory.

Beyond these theories, contemporary postcolonialism proposes a destabilising and radical erasure of the conservative and formal *centricity* implied in modernity, and as a theory fundamentally postdates the legacies of historical colonization that have infused the processes of internationalisation. Critically, Enwezor claims that the political and historical vision of Western development and the avant-garde has remained narrow and done little to constitute a space of self-reflexivity that can understand new relations of artistic modernity not founded on Westernism.¹⁹ Essentially, the postcolonial argument involves a fundamental strategy rejecting the colonial logic of "including the marginal or

¹⁸ See ROBINS - MORELY, (*SOI*).

¹⁹ ENWEZOR, (*TBB*), 42-55.

other", and instead insists on "empowering the marginalized without making it partake at the centre, while displacing the centre or arbitrator's empowerment".²⁰

This transformation is a deliberate remove from Euro-centric historic colonialism, decolonization, and the present emergence of "global imperialism" expressed through Terror-War, the media, and sustained through international trade and commerce. Enwezor asserts that postcoloniality: "exceeds the border of the former colonized world to lay claim to the modernized, metropolitan world of empire by making empire's former 'other' visible and present at all times...through the media...the mediatory...the spectatorial..."²¹ The postcolonial logic therefore, disputes the politics of space while negotiating the freedom of mobility and hence, finds resonance in orientalism and nomadism. In this way postcoloniality theoretically partakes in the Deleuzian universal machinic through a conscious deterritorialisation of history, time, space, subjectivity and politics represented in a radical relation of difference. Notably, this relation purports a *dedifferentiation* since it is negotiated fundamentally in interactive displacements of margin, centre, inside, outside, identity and self – that is, it incites not merely a juxtaposition or inclusion of differences but blurs the divides. In essence, this dislocates the perception of sequential time while contesting the established fixed notions or "grounds" of western capitalist thinking by disclosing a different world to that disclosed by modernity and the historical avant-gardes.

The importance of the politics of postcoloniality is where it shifts "dominion".²² It does this by contentiously rupturing the margin and centre that dominate

²⁰ MARTIN, (*ANWA*), 8.

²¹ ENWEZOR, (*TBB*), 42-55.

²² See MASSUMI – DEAN, (*FALE*, 1998):
http://www.anu.edu.au/HRC/first_and_last/title_page.htm.

coloniality. Art and politics come together in a philosophy of the "real", expressed in a cultural sphere that brings to the centre forms that have developed "outside or in opposition" to an imperial state, hence inciting an expansion of territory for exchange and difference. Deleuzian nomadology provides the apparatus to destabilise the fixed ground of an emerging imperialism, or what Virilio attacks as incipient "fascism". And in this sense internationalism as we perceived it is shifting its foundation and traditional connotations. Arguably, cultural avant-gardism, as the product of large urban capital internationalism, pushed its own boundary conceptualised in a philosophy and expression of anti-commoditization (e.g. Duchamp, Dada, etc). But, beyond this, the politics of postcoloniality attempts to decentre a western "art world" where it becomes itself an exclusive ground for marketable exchange enslaved within its own argument. Moreover, globalisation inevitably continues to enforce a steeped political and cultural hybridity that *transforms* earlier established conceptions of the "international". This, as mentioned earlier, is immersed in changes in society bringing a spatial and temporal compression where distance and time asymptotically approach the instant and the point of zero erasure in time lap.

Global theory expresses itself in the move from a geopolitics of centre and margin to one where margin and centre immanently (from within) enter relations where they do not dissolve completely but displace and transform each other in a dynamic relationship "suspended in tensions of difference" and in the "challenge of eternal return".²³ This reflexivity is enhanced in cyber and information communication technologies that facilitate this kind of immersion expressed in this dedifferentiation of margin and centre projecting a semblance of the "real" in

²³ COLEBROOK, (GD), 67.

the communicative flow of every day life. These transformations reconstitute our perception of space, self and practice. Ground Erasure is conceived within these many shifts of place, physicality and meanings wherein cultural territory has become deterritorialised and less stable. The term "international" like the territories it is attached to is shifting ground and transforms now into a connotation that negotiates a permeability between the inner and outer to effect expansion; one that does not merely *pronounce* difference by its inclusion but one that *erases* the edges of difference through blurring, changing and shooting off to the new. This it does by entering an arena beyond the "suspension of disbelief" of traditional theatre that separated audience from art, subject from object, where players now transcend the "fourth wall" to enter the field of interaction. This does not merely imply the abstract plane of technology but the *virtual* plane in *actuality* where reality takes place in the communicative realms. That is, in relationships between people with others, with objects and creatures and everything else that expresses itself in the world through "One-All" energy.²⁴ This is reflected in a conscious deterritorialisation where subjectivity is decentred and is what Deleuze implied by "becoming inhuman", in order that everything in the world is not merely exchangeable and measurable against the ground of being human which can lead obliquely into the narcissistic or most racial conditions of all.²⁵ Alternatively, Deleuzian theory supplies a vision of universal connectivity manifested in creative diversity. This flow of mobility is the interplay between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. These "two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialisation ever further".²⁶

²⁴ HALLWARD, (*EIR*), 61-74.

²⁵ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 112. Refer also to notion of "becoming imperceptible" in COLEBROOK, (*GD*), 125-145.

²⁶ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 10.

Artistic territory re-legitimizes and reterritorialises itself in this communicative mobility, which then may be seen productively in the conversion of the accidental into lines of flight. This implies departure from the known into the unknown, as Hallward states, a "letting go" in order to "rent the firmament" and let in a bit of chaos. In this respect, Deleuze states that we tend to identify with our *organic* limits (of being human) rather than seeking the *anorganic* connections we share with the rest of the cosmos. According to Hallward, beyond the consensual interests of common sense, Deleuze suggests we seek to "become-other" in order not to fix or align ourselves with our particular fragments of territory. Rather should we pursue those creative lines of flight that cross every boundary and uproot every dwelling, so as not to preserve "our bio-cultural distinction at the price of creative sterility" (through consumption, recognition and classification).²⁷ To articulate a new artistic narrative and conceptualise reterritoriality within the dissolutions, displacements and radical decentredness that converge in this mobility implies a discomfort and is difficult. This is because such a conceptualisation attempts to fix that which is in the flow of unfixity and hence, becomes paradoxical. This oxymoronic interaction is already disclosed in ANT, a method that reconfigures participative roles within new social constructions:

The paradox is upon us. By talking in this way I make a fixed point in order to argue *against* fixity and singularity. I do so because I turn myself into a spokesperson for this name, the theory of the Actor-Network, ANT.²⁸

In this context, where reassertion and re-establishing territoriality becomes obscure, contradictory and impossible, presence is conceptualised from erasure. When Deleuze said on nomadic thought that the dwelling is not tied to a *territory* but rather to an *itinerary*, he charted an infinite territory by implying a reality

²⁷ HALLWARD, (*EIR*), 67.

²⁸ LAW, (*T&NC*, 2003): <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/sociology/papers/law-topology-and-complexity.pdf> (last accessed 19.05.05)

perceived in motion; an unfixed reality to be found in negation, or "blank" in-betweeness, the creative chaos which contains the thrust-forward transmuting into otherness. Hallward describes the paradox of this creative space through Deleuze, who had stated in *Difference and Repetition* that "things reside unequally in this equal being".²⁹ This implies the space of creative chaos as the expressive force wherein there is the eternal play and "infinite turbulence" of difference and creations engaging in the encompassing energy of "One-All" univocity.³⁰

Creativity is set in this paradoxical plateau. Here, Ground Erasure is suffused in the anomalies, diffusions and displacements within which the contemporary artist is working and moving; an open territory, metaphorically, of the nomadic-machine. This ambivalent territory concerns the physical erosions of land, boundaries and meanings that transbound, change and transform. It concerns dislocation, decentredness and delocalization. It is not about protectiveness and insulation from outside intrusiveness. Nor is it about disappearance, confrontation or power walls. It is about forging a territory of workable tensions and dedifferentiation – linked areas. This occurs where differences intersect and traject into diversity emanating where ideas are scrutinized, debated and exchanged. Such networks engage a form of "artistic diplomacy" envisaged where art and politics can meet in the consensual onward to becoming other; where artists like political players are in the role of the participative without losing track of endeavours. This implies balance; a position similar to the one that negotiates though does not compromise the tensions inherent in creative processes.

²⁹ DELEUZE, *Difference & Repetition*, 55/37, quoted in HALLWARD, (*EIR*), 64.

³⁰ HALLWARD, (*EIR*), 61-74;

Hallward points out the importance of balance in the creative process which also spells out a philosophical position:

It remains a matter of defeating chaos because while our task is to think chaos, to let chaotic thought through us, in order for such thought to continue we ourselves must remain at a mastered distance from chaos. To fall entirely into chaos is to be consumed in a kind of conceptual black hole.³¹

Translated into Ground Erasure, these meanings imply a deterritorialised territory where our vision of the world is two ways, of us looking at the Earth and the Earth looking at us; where sidelines are as eloquent as headlines and where arrivals or destinations can also be departures.

³¹ Ibid. 67-68.

5.

...WHERE ALL ARE A-N-T PLAYERS...

Strategies of Connectivity

In networks of humans, machines, animals, and matter in general, humans are not the only beings with agency, not the only ones to act; matter matters. – LARS RISAN¹

"Artistic diplomacy" potentially engages a **network-territory** coming into play through the various deterritorialized "roles" meeting in Ground Erasure. This flow of activities finds resonance in Actor-Network Theory (ANT), an interdisciplinary approach seeking to develop a participatory model for the social sciences and technology whereby active roles are ascribed to both the human and non-human, as Risan implies above.² In a move that seems to bear strong comparison with the notion of Deleuzian "inhuman" connectivities, Latour and Callon propose in practice, through **Actor-Network Theory**, a set of negotiations in which both human actors and nonhuman participants (whether artifacts or naturalized constructs like bacteria) are equally "actants" assuming identities and qualities according to prevailing strategies of interaction. Such a method can tentatively be translated into the practical context of the art-space or studio-space, imaginatively constructing a communicative "mobile stage" where artifacts perform as heterogeneous elements of aligned interests; that is, as deterritorialized "actors" in interaction shaping and assimilating into a network.

¹ LARS RISAN, in answer to "What is Actor-Network Theory?" in RYDER (*ANT*, 2003): http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html (last accessed 19.05.05).

² Ibid. Actant-Network Theory has its origins in studies of the networks of interdependent social practices that constitute work in science and technology. ANT evolved from the work of Michel Callon (1991) and Bruno Latour (1992) at the Ecole des Mines in Paris. In addition to Latour, key figures in ANT include: M. Callon, J. Law, M. Lynch, S. Woolgar, and S.L. Star.

This idea can also be extended into the form of relationship taking place between practice and theory, implemented in the way these respond and act upon each other and shift each area. In this research this is speculated within Ground Erasure as a space for possible reterritorialisation emerging from the flows between actor and actant components. This specifically instils "flow" as an active deterritorialised territory of productive exchange and interrogation between various elements, whether abstract or concrete; for instance, texts, concepts, materials, environments, locations, circumstances, experience, conversations, artworks, spaces, computers, programmes, people and so on. The implication is that an action (network) never happens in a total vacuum and there are many things that influence how something is done. ANT seems to provide for this and is described as a rich methodology that embraces scientific realism, social constructivism, and discourse analysis in its central concept of hybrids, or "quasi-objects", that are simultaneously real, social, and discursive. Different factors are related or connected to how one acts under the influence of a wide range of surrounding factors. The act being carried out and all of these influencing factors should be considered together. This method insists that "the stability and form of artifacts should be seen as a function of the interaction of heterogeneous elements as these are shaped and assimilated into a network".³

ANT was created with the purpose to dissolve the hierarchy between different components (actors) and view things as consequence rather than cause. Actors' identities and qualities emerge during negotiations between representatives of human and non-human actants, and are defined relationally as arguments or "functors" in the network. The term "actor-network" accomplishes exactly this:

³ BERND FROHMANN, (*ANT, 2003*):

http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html.

An act linked together with all of its influencing factors (which again are linked), producing an actor-network. An actor-network then consists of and links together both technical and non-technical elements. Metaphorically speaking, "not only the car's motor capacity, but also your driving training, influences your driving".⁴ Hence, ANT talks about the heterogeneous nature of actor networks. Latour describes ANT as a method that takes into consideration the distinction between subjects and objects, the subjective and the objective. He suggests finding the uniquely adequate account of a given situation which describes the concrete state of affairs. In a creative sense, actants may take all sorts of forms including "accidental" or chance forms (directions). These may be "enrolled" or "allied" data or evidence to give strength to a position. Latour finally points out the importance of looking at the actors being described in order to examine the *difference* these actors are making through their engagement. Clearly echoing Deleuze, ANT raises the challenge of studying reality as transitional in its becoming, and as a set of trajectories of creation. Elucidating this, Latour himself engages in Socratic dialogue, to debate the open *non-framework* roles of actant-network and comments on this directly in this conversation staged between professor and student:

Prof: ANT is a method, and mostly a negative one at that; it says nothing about the shape of what is being described with it....It depends entirely on what you yourself allow your actors, or rather your actants to do. Being connected, being interconnected, being heterogeneous, is not enough. It all depends on the sort of action that is flowing from one to the other, hence the words 'net' and 'work'. Really, we should say 'worknet' instead of 'network'. It's the work, and the movement, and the **flow**, and the changes that should be stressed. But now we are stuck with 'network' and everyone thinks we mean the World Wide Web or something like that...⁵

⁴ OLE HANSETH, (*ANT*, 2003):
http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html.

⁵ LATOUR, (*Prologue*, 2002), <http://www.ensmp.fr/~latour/articles/article/090.html>.

In what follows, ANT is looked at in a conceptual way to study the actions manoeuvring art and politics in a real life situation. This is being imagined through a kind of nomadic straddling between different "world stages" or scenarios, to see how different players interact and create network-associations relevant within the theoretical aspects of this project but that also influence the practical aspects. This visualization in the world scene of the everyday and political is where art and politics cross paths like actors in the flows of production. In a broader sense, *actor-actant* network implicates a complexity of variant roles negotiating towards "translation", a multifaceted interaction forming a construct or "network". In this political metaphor, actors "put actants into circulation" so that focal, active roles and allied or "behind the scene" roles are all part of the plot. Inscriptions are processes with agency creating delegations that represent actors (human and non-human). Within the plot, actors co-opt each other in the pursuit of individual and collective objectives and look to construct common definitions. Both actors and actants share the scene in the reconstruction of the network of interactions leading to the stabilisation of the system.⁶ In this way an action is seen as a consequence of surrounding factors and not just an antecedent, wherein these factors pull together in a kind of sociological field. The relevance of these theories to this project is where things can be seen in the light of extelligent flows.⁷ That is, the machinic and the human are interacting deterritorialised agencies of many other complex intelligences and participants in the formation of a network (project). In a Deleuzean sense, all players are holistically part of the connective machinic.

⁶ TIERRY BARDINI, (*ANT*, 2003)

http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html.

⁷ See HOLDERNESS, (*CVEs*, 1998): <http://www.poptel.org.uk/nuj/mike/presence.htm>.

In what may be seen to correspond with the above visualisation, Nikos Paperstergiadis in *Everything that Surrounds*, talks about the shift in contemporary theory from the modernist binary divisions (for instance between the Western and the exotic) to one where viewers (players) are subjected to a "multiplicity of perspectives for seeing the world". Reflecting on the interconnected roles of globalisation, art and the everyday, Paperstergiadis observes that the processes of cultural hybridization and translation account for the need of such a perspective to map the deterritorialisation of contemporary culture beyond the increasingly obsolete methods related to *fixed* geographic boundaries. Further to this, he debates what he observes as the "process of symbolic feedback" taking place in the dialogue between art and politics in the social arena. Arguing that art is never purely and autonomously "outside" or "above" the dynamic field of social change, he states:

When art challenges the boundaries by which we understand the aesthetics of the everyday and combines this experience with a new understanding of connection to our surrounding world, then it could be argued to have expanded the sphere of politics.... As a sign that is made in society art always has a historical consciousness, however this consciousness is often only articulated through the non-literal work performed on the material content of art.⁸

Contemporary cultural practices perform through interdisciplinary, protean roles from *within* the open connective stage of the world and not in aloof isolations or *fixed* vacuums. This is becoming more prevalent where forms of communication and expression are situated ambivalently across different practices, art-languages, materials, media, spaces and new technologies. This implies deterritorialisms (ground erasures) occurring not only in the *inner* logic of works but in the *outer* and external logistics, as well as in the relationship between these. That is to say, an unfixturing of boundaries occurring between different

⁸ NIKOS PAPERSTERGIADIS, "Everything that Surrounds", *Globalisation, Art and the Everyday*, *Third Text*, 57 (Winter 2001-02), 74.

media inside the work; between different areas of knowledge or culture such as the social-sciences, theatre, cinema and fine-art (as examples); and also between various forms of situational interventions where artists engage with the prosaic to negotiate new "erasures" and connections between their works and spaces. This activity is forged through new processes that form and inform their work. Site here is reflected upon as a catalytic space of connectivity, and the artist as creating these catalytic spaces which facilitate interactions and developments intrinsic to the creative process. This encourages looking at processes as new forms of inscription that inspire interaction between the physical and machinic through the experiential and performative involvement of various participants. In this perspective, the practitioner operates in a range of domains and contexts which demand new applications of their skill and knowledge. This continues to be explored in physical spaces where artwork finds agency in unorthodox or non-art sites such as community settings (outdoors, business, higher education, schools, prisons or churches, as examples). Beyond this, the machinic and the cybernetic add other perspectives to this dimension of collaborative settings and operational skills, whereby actual settings contend with virtual ones to promote new forms of inscription. These inscriptions inspire communicative presences that reach wider zones shaped through virtual coordinations, artworks and projects between people and audiences at vast distances. This suggests that more creative deterritorialisations of site and environments persistently push the conceptual territories of the studio, the artwork or art-space into interrogations beyond their known boundaries. This situational aesthetic of art inspired through *actant-connectivities* is an active ingredient inciting the expansion of the political sphere, and continues to build on what may tentatively be called site appropriation in addition to appropriated material content.

An example of this kind of practice can be seen in a "painting" (i.e. a photograph of a painting) in a bomb-site by Don McCullin. McCullin, a war photo-journalist, staged a blown image in an actual demolished site in 1960 set against a space of its origins of inspiration and bravely forecast the potential and political reconfiguration of the art-object outside the gallery/museum circuit of its time with this work. The photograph was a collaboration with a painter, Peter Hobbs, and was titled: *A Painting by Peter Hobbs in a London Bombsite*. The work is credited to McCullin. Writing on the rise of the sixties, Thomas Crow states that Hobbs took "the situational aesthetic further into a process of isolated nomadism (against the backdrop of the then American artists who were working through issues of street life and general disorder)". McCullin and Hobbs, as photographer and painter, extended their collaboration conceived through a series of canvases which had no fixed home, installing them as freestanding panels on bomb sites in the East End of London. Crow writes: "Making an art work with the idea of it being photographed at the time was a markedly different thing from conceiving painting as directed to eyesight alone".⁹ When these artists staged their first images in these situations, the works assumed the most humble of positions at the time in that a painting could be viewed in a totally new "outside" context. Yet, much is probably owed to this idea in present, contemporary terms in relation to site, installation and the machinic in the way artists are addressing such issues now.

All this suggests that contemporary artists continue to operate and engage in a variety of domains, contexts and roles, often beyond the professional venue, in innovative ways and are themselves catalysts of change. This is important to artists as these aspects serve as active ingredients which drive and motivate the

⁹ THOMAS CROW, *The Rise of the Sixties*, Orion Publishing Group, London, 1996.

form and nature of the work. In this context processes are "inscriptions" in that they provoke productive ambivalences in plateaus of variable and actant movements. In effect, this entails a *metamorphosing* art object that "becomes" and reveals new identities, actions or meanings in relation to other actants and connections outside its own territory, thus enacting a wider politicization of object, site or materiality. Art, in practice, is at its most powerful when it deterritorialises. That is, when it causes a shift by pulling out of context to discover new connections. It is primarily through these catalytic processes that art challenges the boundaries of the everyday and political, as suggested by Paperstergiadis. This occurs when art creates trajectories which expand onto new perceptions beyond the actual and possible within the "machine" of the social-political. The emphasis on situational processes metaphorically gives voice to the Labour actor-actant *flow* between the human and non-human participant-players where "inscriptions make action at a distance possible by stabilising work in such a way that it can travel across space and time and be combined with other work".¹⁰ In the case of the art field, the inanimate, "art's material content" and the "non-literal", are catalytic enrolments along with the human aligning interests in the interactive perspective of a network or mobile stage.

The following two art exhibitions, part of a recent London research journey, are juxtaposed through this perspective in order to examine the *difference* they provoke as actors in the context of the city at this time. The consequence of such an engagement throws light on the kind of networks cast by actant roles within these artworks as "functors" in the social-political arena, revealing for instance how art either feeds into the system or transgresses as an agent of

¹⁰ NANCY VAN HOUSE, (*ANT*, 2003):
http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html.

change. Viewing these works within an "actant-plot", beyond viewing them as separate aesthetic entities, enables insight through space viewed as a *catalytic space of connectivity* defined by deterritorialisation and difference within a nomadic "assemblage" of interactions. An assemblage implicates territories. For Deleuze assemblages are "states of things" and also implicate processes of deterritorialisation, movements of deterritorialisation.¹¹

...art in London - Feb-Mar 2004...

The Whitechapel Gallery by the Aldgate East tube is the venue for *ATLAS*, an extensive exhibition that comprises an insightful compilation of images coming from over 5,000 photographs, drawings and diagrams by Gerhard Richter. This archive of over 40 years work travels into the soul of a wide-ranging life-project during which Richter boldly redefines painting astride with photography, into photography *as* painting. *Atlas* navigates a complex exploration of many dialogues between drawing, sketching, painting, photography, montage, found media images, installation, diagrams, documentation and proposals, traversing history and memory, perception and representation.¹² Hierarchy is demolished. Richter's project is a deterritorialising practice in the act. The grounds between figuration and abstraction, the incomprehensible and the literal, the high and the low, are erased. Richter took a "line of flight" in 1961 leaving East Germany along with a personal departure from realist painting, claiming in his own words that "...through photos I was relieved from the obligation to choose and construct a subject" (1962). In this new ground he radically shifted the territory of

¹¹ PIERRE-ANDRÉ BOUTANG. See D for Desire: *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze, avec Claire Parnet*; directed by Pierre-André Boutang; overview Charles Stivale, Wayne State University, 1996: <http://www.langlab.wayne.edu/CStivale/D-G/ABC1.html> (last accessed 19.05.05).

¹² GERHARD RICHTER, *Atlas* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London: 06 December 2003-14 March 2004. Introduction and images: <http://www.whitechapel.org/content568.html> (last accessed 19.05.05).

painting through photography by releasing it from the political and symbolic burdens of Socialist Realism or Abstract Expressionism.

Mapping his ideas and processes across different areas, from his own photography to found mass-media stuff, from mundane flower montages to friends, family babies and births, to stunning images of the Reich, Hitler youth and concentration camps, Richter's work falls ambiguously between documentation and history painting. As the exhibition introduction comments:

The encyclopedic range of *Atlas* can also be seen as a reflection of recent German history, from the "unpaintable" photographs of the concentration camps to images of the Baader Meinhof to a commission to inaugurate a new Reichstag for a united Germany.

We enter the artist's mind sifting through material from source, selecting, marking, altering and transferring to inspiration. The hand jostles with the machine - paint is photographed, photographs are painted. Large-scale abstract oil paintings jostle with small figure portraits; small photo studies with larger photo installation. There is no division between the colour or monochrome image, between the anonymous 1960 fashion magazine model and the famous Marilyn Monroe, between the sexual orgy or the death camp side by side, between the good photograph or the bad one, the focused or the blurred - all are players in the Richter enactment; an enactment of the most democratic in the concept of art and practice. The viewer is transported evenly across geographies of time and place, earth and sky, heaven and hell. *Atlas* demolishes the ground of the monumental, scaling artistic boundaries to one of the inclusive, the practical and the possible. But, what perhaps remains notable in the Richter presentation is the powerful use of the diagrammatical. For instance, the small photo-mounted sky installation studies that transform skies into seas and seas into skies not only shift perspectives but are like "unfixed maps" in that they

open potential and point to territories of spatial expanse and large installations, similar in design to the large-scale Weather-project occupying the Tate Modern foyer at this time.

Running concurrently across the river in South Kensington is the *EARTH FROM THE AIR* project. By contrast to *Atlas*, the world is surveyed from a different set of values; a corporate presentation of a 160 large-scale equally sized and beautifully lit images span the east gardens outside the National History Museum in Exhibition Road. These aerial photographs, the result of a 10-year project by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, show the patterns and colours created in landscapes all over the world, some of which are created by human activity such as farming, industry and habitation. This tourist attraction stands as a visual testimony of the changing environmental conditions of the world today: "a world with a growing population, shrinking biodiversity, polluted lands and oceans, a changing climate and a shortage of drinking water".¹³ A shop has been set up in the grounds selling postcards, souvenirs and a publication as mementos. And an adjoining video-projection documents an interview with the artist whose mission, he states, was to create a photographic record of the natural world at the start of the new millennium. Notably, this project addresses some pressing issues concerning the excesses of the world's industrialized societies and attempts to persuade its passing audience with a number of poignant text statements appended as captions to the images: "What kind of world will future generations inherit? How can we preserve the heritage of natural abundance?" This, however, is implemented through an aesthetic language combining a technical

¹³ YANN ARTHUS-BERTRAND, *Earth from the Air* in the east gardens of the Natural History Museum till Spring 2004: <http://www.earthfromtheair.com/> (last accessed 19.05.05).

sophistication with the pictorial seduction of highly polished representations that, conversely, seem to fit neatly in the context of industry.

In these visuals the roles of the photograph and the artist fall unambiguously within a regulated categorization and control that promotes *sameness*. This is the category of the narrative, to "tell a unique story" (as it says in the programme) giving the impression of continuous time and an orderly sequence of events. Unlike the "functors" in *Atlas*, the roles in *Earth* striate in order to unify and erase the ambiguities of difference. The actants at work in this exhibition align towards flows of propagation that endorse the corporate institutional commoditization and architectural enterprise within which they are produced. As a sign in society, these inscriptions do not provoke movements of deterritorialisation but inversely, they code a commercial form of production striating towards a homogenous territorialisation. This implies forms of inscriptions that feed directly into capitalism's tendency driving itself towards "limit". Deleuze describes this as part of the process of the production desire-machine. The role of the machinic-reproductive cultural aesthetic at work in the *Earth* project, promotes the kind of signs that play into this "desire-machine". Capitalism's desire-machine drives relentlessly towards "limit".¹⁴ Limit, in turn, being the point at which total assimilation occurs and differentiation ends.

Clearly, the networks in the *Earth* exhibition and *Atlas* operate through a very different set of actants. *Atlas* performs within an open equation or destratified body of unfolding, unfixed and non-stratifying flows. Its actants partake in an

¹⁴ This implies the Deleuzean Body without Organs: At capitalism's limit the deterritorialised socius gives way to the body without organs, and the decoded flows throw themselves into desiring-production. See TERRY SMITH, *Schizoanalysis*, 2002: <http://freespace.virgin.net/drama.land/projects/schizoanalysis/index.html> (last accessed 19.05.05).

assemblage moving within a diversity of crosscutting deterritorialisations that stimulate *difference* and defer homogeneity. Conceptually, the works in *Atlas* are "functors" that transgress by disrupting the smoothness of time and order. In this way, they are part of the "eternal challenge" that Deleuze insists is the role art must undertake to counter the negative effects of capitalism's homogenizing tendencies driven towards "limit" (fixed territory). As opposed to the *Earth* presentation, *Atlas* activates inscriptions of ambiguity, which implies difference. Deleuze and Guattari see these signs of difference as important where they "suspend in tension" as this stimulates flux rather than erasing differentiation. In theory, they talk of the double articulation of the natural Earth in its molecular formations and strata. They advice on the importance of keeping a balance between "strata" and a "plane of consistency" (unformed, unorganised processes); rampant strata can lead to totalising powers but, on the other hand, some strata are important otherwise the plane of consistency can go into annihilation. It is vital therefore, to deterritorialise as much as possible and keep as little strata as possible.¹⁵

Within these conceptual movements, *Atlas* enrolls catalytic actants of change. Here, the roles of aesthetics and of the photograph are used to subvert the commercial reproductivity inscribed within machinic programming.¹⁶ In a creative sense Richter executes "artistic violation", a disruption of the fixed functionality of the mechanical apparatus which he transforms by deterritorialising the instant snapshot. By contrast, the *Earth* photographs seek to territorialise through a unified landscape where, for instance, classic beauty

¹⁵ ALAN TAYLOR, *Mus(e)ings on Deleuze & Guattari*, University of Texas at Arlington, 1998. See section on Strata: [http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/mus\(e\)ings/d&g.html](http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/mus(e)ings/d&g.html) (last accessed 19.05.05).

¹⁶ See VILEM FLUSSER, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Reaktion Books, London 2000.

becomes a static exchange for the diverse realities of the world. Arthus-Bertrand does not distort the function of the programmed machine and, unlike Richter, surveys a mechanical, illustrative view of the world from the singular viewpoint of a common territory – undifferentiated planes of vision. Deleuze and Guattari have warned that “so much caution is needed to keep the plane of consistency from becoming a pure plane of abolition or death, to prevent the involution from turning into a regression to the undifferentiated”.¹⁷ *Atlas*, on the other hand, deterritorialises these effects through artistic juxtapositions and a breakdown of systematic “decay”. Visually and conceptually, this idea is perhaps most powerfully exemplified in the concept of “erotic rot” evoked, for instance, in the sexual-orgy images playing side by side those of naked prisoners standing in the Nazi extermination camp, awaiting death. To expand on this thought using Virilio’s terms, the *Earth* works might be described as systematic “collaboration” whilst the *Atlas* works provoke “liberation” by invoking *presence* and artistic difference – both through the machinic.

The *Atlas* exhibition politicizes by decentering cultural production. In visual terms, this is accomplished by subverting the commercial function of the photograph through aesthetic forms of hybridity: mixed techniques, material difference, surfaces, textures and juxtapositions; pulling out of context and piecing together to create conflicting visuals and montage; artistic tensions negotiating ambivalent connectivities that break down hierarchical codes. Richter engages in these experimental interventions through tactile variance, papers, glues, lacerations, marks, slashes and a variety of informal processes and discords that are not concealed but *revealed* through moving back and forth, painting back into the photograph, cutting and pasting. He draws and splices into mounts where sea,

¹⁷ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 270.

land and sky transpose positions and point diagrammatically to other possibilities. These are processes of curiosity and discovery. The viewer is invited to partake in the artist's mind; to share in this artistic investigation at work. Hence, these works arouse a powerful, visual interest different from the highly orchestrated, glamorized, even, detached surfaces of the *Earth* images which would fit more easily in a travel agency, Shell advert billboard or airport lounge. Whilst these *Earth* images are driven specifically towards outcome and *product*, Richter carries us through a personal collective experience that focuses on *journey*.

In essence, *Atlas* is about ongoingness, searching the world from *within*. On the other hand, the *Earth* exhibition centralizes and surveys the world from an outside detached vision, conceptualising this within an equalizing exchange system measured against the industrialized human - concepts central to a hierarchical capitalist cultural form of production and representation. The slick aesthetic uniting these *Earth* images strives towards commonality behind a promotional internationalism that is in conflict with a contemporary global politics driven against the hierarchism of culture and commodification. The *Earth* project does not deal with world issues conceived within a *post-national* politics inclusive of *difference*. Conversely, it deals through an internationalism conditioned by an imperative of making "common" through the seduction of media. By erasing difference, these images arguably feed into the world disparities that it tries to reveal in its own text statements. *Earth* traces a plane of uniformity through a stratified world-vision *fitting* the historicity of its site: The History Museum is a national, ornate Victorian-Renaissance styled monument, originally intended as an architectural glorification, a "cathedral to science", spanning geological strata through canons of history and regularity. Contrasting this formality, the Whitechapel Gallery in east London is the venue for *Atlas*, a non-profit-making

space for art; one of low-key frontage and a democratic, clear, informal vision. Here, Richter *transforms* his art-space into a catalytic network that maps the world through planes of diversity, conflicting realities, horror, passion, decodings and shifting territories. In this regard, through the example of the rhizome, Deleuze insists on the importance to "map" rather than "trace" space in order to "expand territory".¹⁸

The "machines" of these two exhibitions function in opposing directions, like two "minds" or ambivalent actors in the city. My intention has been to look at these works through a form of actant-component analysis that enables these distinct networks to be revealed: one as a homogenizing network, the other as a deterritorialising network. The *Earth* exhibition functions within the tourist industry as a cultural commodity, part of London's market and capital flows. The *Atlas* exhibition functions in the cultural flows in a different way; whilst being assimilated into the same capital flows, the art *resists* through deterritorialising the flows driven towards limit and standardized production. Media technology has been employed to different intents and purposes. The *Earth* images seduce through the mechanical techniques of the camera; the *Atlas* images distort and subvert the technical "vehicle" in place of conceptual provocation, visual disturbance and artistic invention. Conclusively, "internationalism" plays very different roles in these two projects. *Earth* appropriates world landscapes into territorial singularity. In *Atlas* however, Richter deterritorialises fixed territory, mapping the world through *life* - difference and becoming - a creative ongoing process of divergences. It would seem, consequently, that whilst the *Earth* exhibition plays *into* the system, *Atlas* expresses signs of transgression and

¹⁸ Ibid. Plateau 1.

conceptually challenges geographical fixity since we see the world in its "surround".

In the sense implied earlier by Nikos Paperstergiadis, *Atlas* "expands the sphere of politics". This it does by deliberately mediating *difference* through an artistic language of ambivalences and discords that bring into play elements of hybridity and marginalities. Art and politics intersect at this key point where these shifting notions of *hybridity* and *transnationalism* correspond as prominent characteristics inherent in movements of global remix culture and flux.

On a significantly more complex level, Ian McLean scrutinizes the evolution of capital hegemonies and elaborates on how these characteristics function in the larger machine of capital production and exchange.¹⁹ Hybridity and transnationalism emerge as parallel elements inextricable from a growing cultural internationalism and capital expansionism. Through Fredric Jameson, McLean traces the shifting history of Western capitalism since the 19th Century; from national, to empirical, to present multinational capitalism. Jameson parallels the three evolutionary stages of capitalism with the period styles and movements in art, from romantic realism, to modernism, to postmodern and postcolonialism in the present.²⁰ Hence, an intricate correspondence emerges between the increasing expansion and ambivalence of transnational capitalism and the deterritorialized multicultural identity of contemporary culture. Echoing Jameson, McLean goes on to debate that "in becoming universal, capitalism itself becomes

¹⁹ IAN MCLEAN, "Back to the Future: Nations, Borders and Cultural Theory". *Third Text* 57, (Winter 2001-02), 23-30.

²⁰ Ibid. 25; FREDRIC JAMESON, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, quoted in MCLÉAN.

a believable fantasy of identity that challenges existing ones".²¹ Emphatically, he goes on to argue that although "nationhood" has changed in character through multiculturalism, yet the power of the "nation-state" far from diminishing maintains a "ghostly persistence" subsumed within "multinational capitalism". This disappearance, yet ghostly presence of the notion of nation-state creates increasing ambivalence:

So where and what is the nation-state today? Does it, like the dead Father, enjoy a more powerful ghostly existence in which it even manufactures its own dissent, or is its well reported death merely a measure of its ideological hold over our imaginations?²²

"Borderlessness is a border practice" McLean insists, since "the only way for capitalism to survive is to expand".²³ However, whilst boundaries and movement for Capital and information may be freer, this is not the reality for people. What all this implies in terms of the politics of culture is that as yet "we don't live in a post-national landscape, but in an *inter-national* and *trans-national* one".²⁴ Critically, it appears that a few all-powerful capitalist nation-states still control the world's economies. This implies in essence that mainstream culture remains part of the same (hegemonic) capital production dominated by world market economies, money flows and exchange.²⁵

The main interest here is to see how changes in contemporary artistic practice reckon and converge with political changes. But, countering the effects mentioned above, Deleuzian deterritorialisation essentially perseveres in the role of art where it radically resists and transmutes the power of exchange, the hierarchism of culture and commodification. Yet again, where the dilemma of

²¹ MCLEAN, 25.

²² Ibid. 24.

²³ Ibid. 25; SLAVOJ ZIZEK, *Tarrying with the Negative*, 1993, 209, quoted in MCLEAN.

²⁴ MCLEAN, 27.

²⁵ Transnational exchange mainly between New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, Frankfurt, Milan.

culture lies in its vulnerability to the systems that produce it, the eternal challenge remains where art counters homogenization through *difference*. Potentially, contemporary culture does this where it engages more critically and actively in a relationship to its broader social and cultural context. In effect, this is where art thrives "against the grain" or "out of joint" and motivates new forms of mobility that shift "grounds" outside and beyond the institutionally sanctioned. Politically speaking, deterritorialisation in art is significant where it aspires towards greater liberty and democratic plurality. This implies its subversive function where, paradoxically, art critically engages with the system from which it also seeks recognition in order not to be simply reduced to a reified commodity.²⁶ In relation to this point, Rasheed Araeen debates postcolonialism versus multiculturalism and states on the present role of contemporary art: "art has a historical responsibility, that is, it has a subversive function which can only be achieved if one is able to penetrate the system and challenge its structures".²⁷ Arguably, the signs of the "post-national" (beyond the mere "inter-national") are apparent in contemporary artistic activities at this point, where they develop and seek to propose radical models of cultural and social production that go beyond the current hierarchical, mediatised and commercial imperatives of contemporary culture and are actively politicized through decentralizing cultural production.²⁸ Gerhard Richter in *Atlas* expresses this movement in the way he draws art and the world through a description of life and political undercurrents combined in a practical language that distinctly shifts territorial fixtures through focus on *journey* and *process* rather than "product". The *Earth* exhibition by contrast runs

²⁶ ARAEEN, (*TTR*), 333-345.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 341.

²⁸ J.J. CHARLESWORTH, "Twin Towers: The Spectacular Disappearance of Art and Politics", *Third Text*, Vol 16, Issue 4 (2002), 357. Debating the emergence of a new political radicalism in contemporary culture and mainstream art, Charlesworth states that "politics in art is back", and that the turn of the new century is seeing a growing attention to art engaging in a socio-political context.

at completely opposing tensions, depicting a world inscribed in signs of "Earth colonization" perpetuated within the identity of national power systems, representation and hierarchy.

These opposing tensions signal a growing ambivalence emerging as one of the distinct characteristics inherent in the movements of globalisation and change - a pervasive ambivalence that currently infiltrates the interrelationship between global politics, culture and territorial space. Speaking from the perspective of international politics, McLean describes this ambivalence as permeating the increasingly covert nature of the "nation-state". The nation-state, he says, is a "ghostly persistence" subsumed in a diffused *multinational capitalism* that expands as boundaries erode. This kind of "spectral presence" is similarly evoked in Virilio's theories of disappearance and delocalization, paradoxically summoning a "presence from erasure". In the social and creative perspectives, ambivalence makes itself visible through forms of hybridity and shifted territories pervading the different aspects of postmodern culture. The changes contesting political and artistic borders and boundaries can be seen to run parallel. For instance, where communication technology, globalisation and international political pacts incite transboundary movements which in turn influence cross-cultural hybridity in art, design, film, fashion, media, advertising and other areas; changes having a predominant impact in cities of Capital exchange where mainstream culture and discourse proliferate. These political and artistic deterritorialisations are bound to create opposing tensions. Art and politics intersect at these junctions creating erasures and "territorial unfixtures" providing breeding grounds for newness.

In practice, the contemporary artist works within this ambivalent notion of territory where art continually renegotiates its role and creative expressions

through new presences, new forms of inscriptions, and new communicative networks. *Atlas* exemplifies this catalytic activity in different forms, where the artist as mover of change shifts between art and political undercurrents. Richter in his work, visibly enrolls in these permutations and can be sensed in practice negotiating between his ideas and processes in an open journey of hybrid flows, search and investigation. The Latour actor-network concept similarly sheds a fixed framework for deterritorialised actant roles where interaction shapes an unfixed "work-net". But, further to mere connections, Latour suggests we look at the movement itself, the flow, the changes, and "the sort of action that is flowing from one to the other".²⁹

Actant analysis enables this flow to emerge through examining the components at work. As a consequence this throws light on the networks at play, not as fixed shapes, but as interacting motions. Hence, *Atlas* can be described as a deterritorialising network; *Earth from the Air* as a homogenising one. As Latour says, ANT is a negative method and, in the case of the *Atlas* and *Earth* "state of affairs" (their descriptions and actions), this flow emerges through their differentiation. This has been considered through their different roles as "functors" in an "assemblage" – the social-political machine. But these functors enrol actants that both act and are acted upon through their roles; those for instance, of aesthetics, materials, photography, site, environments, techniques, artists, media, machines and technology. The flow of actions connecting these actants corresponds to the motions of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, tendencies which Deleuze says run together in the "nomadic-machinic". These two exhibitions perform at opposing tensions through different processes in this motion towards reterritorialisation. The actants in *Atlas* resist fixity or

²⁹ LATOUR, (*Prologue*, 2002), <http://www.ensmp.fr/~latour/articles/article/090.html>.

framework. That is, the work is presented as process in action; artistic inscriptions flowing through interactions of *difference* and diversification. The actants in *Earth*, on the other hand, drive towards fixity; they function within the framework of *sameness* through coded inscriptions flowing within the "production desire-machine" of capitalism, commodities and limit.

These actions disclose further actions concerning the machinic space of the city as a space in the flux of cultural mix and movement. *Atlas* and *Earth* as different actors trigger a form of ambivalence: one as a deterritorialising hybrid installation, the other as a corporate standardising one. These actions constitute different tensions at play in the "assemblage" of the city where many other different networks weave into each other. Latour tries to diminish the hierarchy between micro and macro, subject and object, in place of a field of network-flows or interactive inscriptions. This is similar to the Deleuze assemblage implicated through movements of nomadic deterritorialisations. This movement corresponds in principal with the "double-articulation" of the natural Earth's sustaining functions of strata which Deleuze sees as ambivalently "beneficial and unfortunate" - in practice, we move by necessity between processes of disruption and preservation.³⁰ *Atlas* and *Earth* are networks diffusing into other networks in the motions of the city, its capital and flows. Whilst *Earth* is representative of capitalism, *Atlas* destratifies the forms of unified representation. Capitalism flows relentlessly towards limit. This "limit" (plane of consistency; the unformed, and glacial) is also referred to as the "Body without Organs" which in theory, is like the asymptote, a limit unreachable and remains active in the approach.³¹

³⁰ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 40.

³¹ SMITH, (*Schizoanalysis*, 2002):

<http://freespace.virgin.net/drama.land/projects/schizoanalysis/limit.html>.

The city can be described as a catalytic space of ambivalent actions and paradoxical practices. In this sense it invokes this body without organs causing these intensities whereby opposing tensions and difference deterritorialise and dislocate its institutional space, and yet, it seems to thrive on these transgressions in order to territorialise itself by assimilating difference into its "machine". Deleuze and Guattari inspire this ambivalence in their double-articulation and the fine balance to deterritorialise as much as possible and keep as little strata as possible. Deleuze believed that some strata are important not to regress into annihilation, but he also saw the importance of leaning towards the "Body without Organs" (non-stratification) to prevent the repressive and totalising powers of rampant strata: "Is it not necessary to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects, and assemblages?"³² This view must be seen in the context of post-structuralism following the communist era within which Deleuze was writing. But the theories of seeking balance and preventing regressive totalities can still be applied on the opposite pole, for instance to the excesses of capitalism today. It is interesting, and perhaps opportune, that these two exhibitions *Atlas* and *Earth*, have taken place at a time when the city of London is under so much tension. When it appears to be liberal, vibrant and open, and yet a great insecurity is sensed in its mood due to trans-global terror that threatens to impede these flows. Indeed, *Sky-news* reports at this time that civilians may expect to be captured on camera at least three hundred times in the space of a normal day, caught unawares, just walking the streets of London going about their daily business.³³

³² DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 270; see also TAYLOR, (*MOD&G*, 1998). D & G maintain a fine balance between BwO and strata:

<http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/d&q/astrata.html>.

³³ Cable TV, *Sky-News* reports of 20th March 2004.



BOOK 2

GROUND ERASURE:

an investigation of the notion of "territory" through theories of deterritorialisation and machinic connectivity

A PhD Thesis submitted by

RUTH BIANCO

Kent Institute of Art & Design / University of Kent at Canterbury
in partial fulfillment for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Art

KIAD / UKC

November 2000

LIST OF MY ARTWORKS AND EXHIBITIONS UNDERTAKEN IN RESEARCH

Developmental Artworks (December 2000–December 2004):

Don't Run Over the Birds, Please (audio/video in process)
(EXterritorio photograph and accompanying Brixton video-work in process).

WorldSNAPS (2001- digital printworks)

Uber (group installations), Hilton Basement, Paceville, Malta, January 2002;
Traverses (group show), Herbert Read Gallery, KIAD, Canterbury, England, September 2002.

DEMARCATIONS (2002 - mixed media installation)

Cityspaces (group installations), Valletta, Malta, August 2002.

Y_War (2001- mixed media research work for WALL_OF_PRAYER)

CDAK (international art & design exhibition & publication) Seoul, Korea, 2001.

WALL_OF_PRAYER (2003 - print & mixed media installation)

Borders (group installations & publication), Pinto Wharf, Valletta, Malta, February 2003;
Breakthrough (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Grote Kerk Den Haag, The Hague, Holland, July/August 2004;
Nieuwe EU Landen, (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Regentenkamer, Kunstzentrum, The Hague, Holland, November 2004;
Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury, England, September 2005.

WeatherTALK (2002 - audio/video)

Uber (group installations), Hilton Basement, Paceville, Malta, January 2002.

IF I JUST TURN AND RUN (2002 - bookwork)

In the collection of Tate London; Victoria & Albert; Royal College London; KIAD Library.
CDAK (international art & design exhibition), Seoul, Korea, 2002, (Cover);
Traverses (group show), Herbert Read Gallery, KIAD, Canterbury, England;
Breakthrough (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Grote Kerk Den Haag, The Hague, Holland, July/August 2004;
Nieuwe EU Landen, (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Regentenkamer, Kunstzentrum, The Hague, Holland, November 2004;

Red Alert (2004 - bookwork)

Breakthrough (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Grote Kerk Den Haag, The Hague, Holland, July/August 2004;
Nieuwe EU Landen (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Regentenkamer, Kunstzentrum, The Hague, Holland, November 2004;
Future Hope, HSBC, Canary Wharf, London, April 2005.

DOUBLETAKE (2004 - audio/video)

Breakthrough (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Grote Kerk Den Haag, The Hague, Holland, July/August 2004;
Nieuwe EU Landen (EU accession inaugurating exhibition), Regentenkamer, Kunstzentrum, The Hague, Holland, November 2004.

PhD Submission: Ground Erasure Exhibition (March 2005):

Speed_Journeys (2005 - audio/video) and **Tunnel Vision** (2005 - audio/video)
Herbert Read Gallery, KIAD, Canterbury, England with parallel screening in Waikato University, New Zealand, March 2005.

.....WEAVING WEBS OF POISON.....

Networks of Art

Nomadic waves or flows of deterritorialisation go from the central layer to the periphery, then from the new centre to the new periphery, falling back to the old centre and launching forth to the new. - DELEUZE - GUATTARI ¹

Ground Erasure is a plane for the collusion of artistic and political deterritorialisations. This plane provides a catalytic passage for the non-hierarchical processes traversing theory and art as a framework conceptualising the relationship between practice and epistemology. In my project, artistic practice operates within a machinic assemblage of actant connections negotiating the movements between different processes. This motivates a nomadic journey of reflective making fused within spatial considerations and creative activities. There is no hierarchical regularity for the individual art projects I have created during this research, which have been integrative to the process of forming ideas and concepts. These artworks have emerged out of a searching and selective journey informing and informed by a developing theoretical approach. Some artworks sprung from the middle of other artworks, some in parallel, and some continue to be instigated from external unexpected but connecting events. In general the artistic outcomes are to be considered as "landings" emerging as a flow of connective reterritorialisation; a production-flow navigating in and out of different artworks, materials, writing and texts in a contiguous mobile terrain of intersecting departures and arrivals. My aim is to describe my artworks as actants in a symbiotically connective plane of processes. Actant-process extends hence, from the internal workings of art into a form of relationship taking place

¹ GILLES DELEUZE - FELIX GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Athlone Press, London 1988, 53.

between practical and theoretical processes, implemented in the way these respond and act upon each other and shift each part. Flow instills difference and becoming and is a deterritorialising energy provoking productive exchange between various actant elements, whether abstract or concrete, whether human or non-human. These actant-elements include for example: concepts, materials, texts, experiences, environments, locations, conversations, machines, actions, people and space. These flows form a network-territory. Actant components act and are acted upon as they combine towards stabilisation and reterritorialisation realised in artworks or "communicative inscriptions" traveling across space and distance to connect with other work and effects. In describing my artworks as actant-connections, as Bruno Latour suggests, "it's the work, and the movement, and the **flow**, and the changes that should be stressed".²

My intention in this research has been to interrogate the meaning of territory. This is inspired by the fact that the parameters of art are changing. Our understanding of territoriality as artists in society has become increasingly ambiguous and equivocal in view of the internationalisation of culture and capital growth, amplified by the rapid expansion of information media technologies. The concept of Ground Erasure that I develop in the thesis draws the literal and metaphorical together where land erosions and territorial erasures collide in different layers of meaning; concerns about transboundary movements that cut across tensions relating to the ecological breakdown of landmasses and the political breakdown of distance and isolation. These meanings are constructed out of the growing ambivalence of our sense of space and vision which we

² BRUNO LATOUR, Actant-Network Theory, articles 2002, *A Prologue in form of a Dialogue between a Student and his (somewhat) Socratic Professor*: <http://www.ensmp.fr/~latour/articles/article/090.html> (last accessed 25.05.05). See also MARTIN RYDER, *What is Actor-Network Theory?* 2003: http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html (last accessed 25.05.05).

experience through different forms of physical and political deterritorialisations. These occur because, as a contemporary society, we live our present lives in a world saturated by high levels of information and opposing tensions. At present, for instance, we experience an environment that is heavily mediated by repeated news on global terror and growing world insecurity. Whilst speed and acceleration give the impression of a shrunken and more closely connected world, borders in the real world tighten security, and, more and more, we live in environments monitored by remote sensing, satellite surveillance and controlled detection. Also, for that part of the developed world becoming more intensely accustomed and dependent on developing technologies, societies live the different realities of crossing between real and virtual time horizons. In general, the tensions connecting the forces between *particularism* and *universalism* are forging a growing interdependence between the local and the global at a pace unprecedented at any other time.³ The multiplication and intensification of social networks and activities incurred by the ongoing condition of globality incites myriad often-repeated descriptions implying the compression of time and space, growing world interdependency, the blurring of political, economic and cultural boundaries, and changes in human interaction and consciousness. Not least of all, these dramatic intensifications mean a receding in the importance of geographical boundaries and distances which fosters a sense of becoming part of a global whole. The implication is that "local happenings are shaped by events occurring far away, and vice versa". In this meaning, globalisation and localization actually imply each other and "the 'local' and the 'global' form the endpoints of a spatial continuum".⁴

³ MANFRED B. STEGER, *Globalisation*, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford 2003, 2-7.

⁴ *Ibid.* 11.

It is these spatial ambivalences and reconfigurations, creating a sense that things are faster and that distances are shrinking, that have driven my interrogation into the meaning of territory and the need to investigate the current positions of art and the role of practice in this cultural-political rapid environment. The deepening connections between different peoples and vast distances bring about varying forms of human contact. Potentially these impacts reinforce the need for a shift in the paradigm of human perception away from separatist or isolationist modes towards more connective approaches in order to restore a sense of sitedness and reterritorialisation. In the context of art, this shift suggests that the traditional, hierarchical way of looking (singly) at the pictorial formal surfaces of art (away from the multidimensional actions feeding into it) can no longer suffice and societal/cultural/technological change demands a distributionist, connectionist mode of perception beyond this that takes into account the various intensities, diversities, actions and processes collaborating toward a network (artwork/project). The actant model (ANT) of Bruno Latour offers a sociological network-approach that stresses the importance of interaction between players and participants in policy formation.⁵ This theory possibly supports a stabilising platform for looking at contemporary hybrid and artistic modes of practice through a connective approach that focuses on the associational interactions operating in the formation of intense and multidimensional relationships. This seems applicable in view of the idea of Ground Erasure I am conceiving as a "network-territory" for reterritorialising practice operating within the connective plane of the machinic as a way to counter the isolationist, representational and singular viewpoints of earlier art processes. Old structures need a fresh awareness to meet the cross-fertilization of meanings and manifold languages

⁵ See PETER JOHN, *Analysing Public Policy*, Critical Political Studies, Continuum, London & New York 1998, 66-91. This text provides a succinct overview of developments and criticisms of political policy formation models.

interrelating in the perspective of a growing complex remix culture. The descriptive mode documenting my artworks in this section is approached with this in mind.

Reterritorialisation and deterritorialisation are dual-forces incumbent upon each other. In dealing with these issues in this research, Virilio and Deleuze have provided the key models through which to examine the deterritorialising effects in relation to art practice in a contemporary environment where speed continues to determine the rate and pulse of how we perceive time, space and territory. Virilio perceives these accelerations and movements polemically and precipitously through a vision of dislocations, polluted distances, velocity and a delocalised, *disappearing territoriality*. Deleuze, from a different angle, describes our perceptual realities through the multiple interventions of time and memory in the actual and virtual; shifting realities paralleled by the inner glacial movements of flux and strata. Life creatively moves forward for Deleuze. Deterritorialisation is an action *expanding territoriality*. Together these visions conceive of a world of interdependent tensions; a world of territorial unfixtured and displacement but also of perpetual renewal and ongoing connectedness.

The conception of deterritorialisation inspires art-practice involving a nomadic interchange between different processes, concepts, materials and sites where these are pulled out of context in order that they can be reformatted through new extensions to promote territorial expansions. This process inspires rhizomorphic action, as an "acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without an organizing memory or central automation". The rhizome concept opposes arborescence and hierarchical, stratified, tree-like thinking. Deleuze believed that the root-model had "made us suffer too much" and had ingrained

itself in various forms of cultural and social manifestations by imposing a heavily restricted economy, a structure of power and dominance.⁶ By contrast, rhizomorphic action, as a laterally-connective grass-like mode, is more natural to us. In view of the totalising effects that too much or indeed too little stratification can cause, Deleuze and Guattari maintained a fine balance. Because they were aware of the overpowering forces of rampant strata, their tendency leaned towards the Body without Organs, the unattainable deterritorialised "limit" or plane of consistency. It is impossible to abandon strata altogether without tipping negatively into an annihilating regression. Deleuze, for this reason, sustained a positively ambivalent position and insisted on the importance of deterritorialising as much as possible and to keep as few strata as possible. With this in mind, we are encouraged to defeat the tree and "become a rhizome" in order to increase our creative territory by deterritorialisation and "extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency".⁷

In this research, my engagement in contemporary practice is contemplated as part of this itinerant machinic territory, a transitional space for "flights" and "escapes" mediated through creative production, cross-cutting processes and continuous challenge. This challenge for me involves a continuous balance between opposing and unstable tensions. These thoughts find resonance with the concept of haecceity and flux as an active plane for practice that keeps open to the profusion of energies and intensities but is totality-resisting in any direction; that sustains openness to the "body without organs", preserving the desire-production-machine, but that also maintains a minimum of strata and

⁶ ALAN TAYLOR, *Mus(e)ings on Deleuze & Guattari*, University of Texas at Arlington, 1996: <http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/d&g/arhizome.html> (last accessed 25.05.05).

⁷ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 11. Refer also to *WeatherTALK* artwork.

fixture while resisting the negative forces of over-stratification.⁸ Ground Erasure is an "unfixed territory" conceptualised in artistic and political displacements. In this field of activity, artistic and political deterritorialisms combine and are realised where practical and conceptual forms of inscription meet in "nomadic waves", flows, intersections, junctions, disjunctions, difference, speed and affects. This stimulates an ongoing machinic system of practices and artworks (actants) that map reterritorialisation through connective strategies.⁹

The concept deterritorialisation subsumes within it the theories of *difference* which state that there is no single concept or narrative that unites all fields of knowledge.¹⁰ This concept relates directly to the machinic:

Because the machine has no subjectivity or organizing centre, it is nothing more than the connections and productions it makes; it is what it does. It therefore has no home or ground; it is a constant...becoming other than itself.¹¹

Colebrook describes how nomadology perceives all aspects of life as machinic and, in fact, implies that all life only works and *is* insofar as it connects with some other machine. In practice, artistic deterritorialisation involves a machinic decentring and reterritorialisation of different cuts (e.g. collage or cinematic montage). From a social-political angle these notions of machinic becoming tie in with "nomadic fluidity" where flowing movement contrasts with despotic fixture, the fluid seeking unity in fluctuation of a collection of disparate elements.¹²

⁸ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 263.

⁹ (*ANT*, 2003): http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html.

¹⁰ See associations between DELEUZE and JACQUES DERRIDA in *I'll have to Wander all Alone*, Tympanum: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/tympanum/1/derrida.html> (last accessed 25.05.05).

¹¹ CLARE COLEBROOK, *Gilles Deleuze*, Routledge, London 2002, 55-66.

¹² BRIAN MASSUMI - KENNETH DEAN, *First and Last Emperors*, 1992: http://www.anu.edu.au/HRC/first_and_last/chapter_2/state_extreme.htm (last accessed 25.05.05).

Fluid nomadism also prompts the connectivity of spatiotemporal haecceities; floating and machinic positions not so much between the ephemeral and the durable, but between two modes of temporality: "haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected".¹³ It is also worth observing that the concepts of the haecceity and the actant in ANT invoke similar positions in that actants "act and are acted upon".



EXterritorio

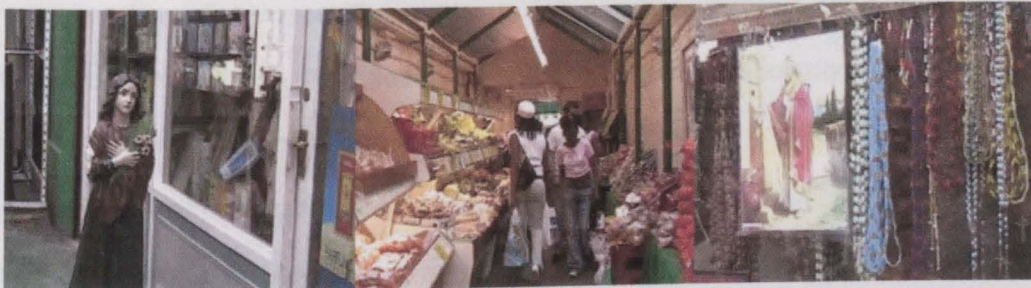
Graffiti installation with reclaim objects, trolley, traffic cone, garbage, Brixton walls.

This photograph records on-site research conducted on 15.04.03. This improvisation was carried out as experimentation on demarcating territory. The photograph accompanies the Brixton videowork which is in process at this time and which will have the same title as the graffiti, *Don't Run Over the Birds, Please*.

The idea of fluid nomadism prompts reflection on a video-work in process that I did in Brixton with the idea of seeking to align a real life situation with theoretical

¹³ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (ATP), 260-265.

concepts on deterritorialisation, demarcations and transboundary movements. The study, therefore, was focused around the itinerancy of people's nomadic moves and sprung from my curiosity and fascination with the idea of a new resting place within a nomadic context in looking at territory where massive cultural translation has occurred. This ambivalence, the movement between deterritorialisation and territorialisation, is concentrated in this area of London through spaces shifting, driven by a social repositioning of landmass. My aim concerning this visual interrogation was to contemplate "territory as crossroads", where people from different lands come to rest for various political, social and economic reasons, and form new territorial relations and then travel on. These Brixton frame-grabs have been extracted from a more extensive documentary consisting of photos and video recordings, and stand as raw image research to convey the flux of thought and process as part of my archival method of working, collecting and sifting documentary material.



Video-stills: *Don't Run Over the Birds, Please* – 2003/04

The linked stills have been repositioned into these panoramas without any further interventions at this point. The idea is to reveal the process of this project, working in flows and positioning these in relation to other reflective intensities as concepts and intellectual decisions collide and practice forms. Deleuze talks about relations of movement and rest, of speed and slowness (longitude) placed in degrees of potential (latitude). The artist moves similarly between layers, from centre to periphery and vice versa, shifting between material elements, affects and "differential speeds". In this instance, the conceptual processes meet in an investigation of the itinerant that could demonstrate a nomadic position of journeys that come to rest in a new territory and then perhaps move on somewhere else. In this fluid kind of journey, different tensions intercept each other, stay on pause, reconnect and await further departures. This reflects an itinerant and nomadic form of connective practice.



Digital capture was selected as a practical choice of medium for working between these modes of temporality, with a documentary realism and an eventual machinic manipulation. This involves working within a repositioning flexibility of moving swiftly back and forth between materials, methods, different histories and lands. This Brixton study was carried out during a research visit to London. The choice of on-site photography was, therefore, also an intellectual decision that enabled me to access an authentic intimacy with the subjects themselves; an immediacy and a brisk application to capture such realities particularly in zones that are unsafe and insecure to an outsider in the vulnerable position of working

live with a camcorder where even accidental eye-contact can code a physical threat. Additionally, digitalisation, the Internet and the World Wide Web have facilitated for me a new means for combining diverse collaborative processes: working between different distant locations, physical or online sites. In practice this involves transporting material into a computer and merging the actualities of real-travel with virtual-travel by adding realities from other contexts; or manipulating downloads from disparate places and episodes of time (e.g. *WorldSNAPS*). The Brixton work (images or video) could, for instance, potentially be superimposed with other internet-grabs through translocations ferried between different methods and machines. These practices make available new connectivities for working from distance. Also, these different circuits of practice and temporalities open parameters for thinking art in combinations and visualities that extend the mixed fields of cut-and-paste painting into multi-dimensional and interactive modes of spatiality between fixed and virtual dimensions.

To some measure this kind of interactive spatiality is conceptualised through the language of installation in the film experiences of Willie Doherty in *False Memory*, where technological and media interventions become an idiom for the dichotomies inspired from Irish situations and recent political histories.¹⁴ His multi-screen projection works combine the *virtual space* of right-angled or opposite screens with the transitional *real space* of the viewer in between. *Re-Run*, is a particularly compelling example: projections on two translucent screens opposite one another show the red filtered image of a man running towards the spectator on one screen and on the other running away.¹⁵ The viewer feels

¹⁴ WILLIE DOHERTY, *False Memory*, Irish Museum of M. Art, Merrell Imma, 2002.

¹⁵ WILLIE DOHERTY, *Re-Run* (2002), video installation, Turner Prize 2003 entry in Tate Britain: <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/turnerprize/2003/doherty.htm> (last accessed 25.05.05).

caught in the eternal silent loop and the no-one's-land in the intercepting space between. This particular conceptual interaction renders the spectator more than a passive viewer, whose physical presence becomes an active integral part of the work's interiority, thus enacting a user/viewer role. These formal presentations echo the dichotomy in Doherty's subjects that draw documentary and political



tensions together in a perpetual switch between victim and stalker, roles within which the spectator's own presence becomes lobbied.

These methods describe examples of deterritorialised practices important to the concept of Ground Erasure. These are practices where artistic and political deterritorialisations utilizing "erasure qualities" collide in visual, conceptual application and real/virtual spatial play. Doherty's art, for example, is contingent upon the "fallible gaze" and deals with a highly contested terrain in which the documentary status and "truth-telling aspects of visual representation" in photography and media is hotly debated.¹⁶ But apart from these issues, his photo and film art make use of a deterritorialising erasure quality in compelling the viewer to move "beyond the surface of the picture to examine its social, political, psychological and economic dimensions" in juxtapositions of language and imagery extracted from media images of IRA suspects. And further, in that his work exists "on the borderline between the documentary and the staged, in a world shaped by television news coverage, cinematic fantasy, tourist information,

¹⁶ DOHERTY, (*FM*), inner cover introduction.

popular stereotypes, and collective memory".¹⁷ Doherty's work therefore, compounds forms of deterritorialisation exuded through different levels of persuasion aligned in political disruption and artistic erasure-practices inscribed in real/virtual connectivities activating user/viewer concepts of space. These machinic combinations urge a connective vision, conceptualized in actant flows. This motivates a way of looking beyond the traditional picture's territorial, static formalities, in order to immerse within an equitable reterritorialisation between multiple contextual meanings. A reterritorialising vision is essential to stabilise the different modes of temporality and dimensions contained in the dissolved surfaces of fleeting screens.

In other words, the changing parameters of art compel a shift in *how* we perceive interactive spatiality due to the complex factors competing in real-virtual environments and surround viewpoints. These temporal "erasures" linked to political narratives are particularized in two other installations I saw in East London; one through celluloid in *Asylum* by Julian Rosefeldt, the other through an array of different materialities, by Yoko Ono.¹⁸ *Asylum*, Rosefeldt's 9-channel film installation assembled in a large basement, unfolds a highly theatrical almost



muted action of men and women from distinct locations and ethnicities going

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ JULIAN ROSEFELDT, *Asylum* (2001/2002), 9-channel 52 min loop installation, Atlantis Basement, Brick Lane, London, 19-26 October, 2003: <http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lon/acv/aus/de103382.htm> (last accessed 25.05.05).

about their labour in scenes of incredible banality. The asylum seeker's social position represented in this work addresses the serious geo-political crises we meet daily in the media. Characters in the film, Turkish garbage men, Chinese Fast Food chefs and exotic Thai women expose affects of alienation and arbitrary borders "drawn to serve governments not people".¹⁹ The viewer's interaction, caught as it is between the nine double-sided screens placed at irregular angles, is likewise alienated in the almost dizzying affect of film streaming horizontally in a merry-go-round flow. Like Doherty's work, *Asylum* compels a user/viewer environment in the way the spectator's presence breaks through the fourth-wall theatricality of cinema or the stage. We wend our way through a maze of multifarious horizon-zones between these tableaux, questioning our stereotypical perception of the immigrant.

A different set of erasures takes place in Yoko Ono's *Odyssey of a Cockroach*.²⁰ In a Kafkaesque displacement the viewer identifies with an insect and enters a phantasmagorical journey of a cockroach roaming the gritty streets of New York. In this theatrical *mise-en-scene*, bill-board prints line the walls of a musty smelling warehouse. We enter a dialogue between ranges of materials, from audio to piles of debris, from text to blood sodden garments. Surreal larger-than-life objects pop out illusively from the photographs into tangible space erasing the ground between sculpture and flat surfaces. These hang together with yet another dimension in the shape of a translucent veil spanning the space.

¹⁹ FRANCESCA VON HABSBURG, exhibition introduction, *Asylum*.

²⁰ YOKO ONO, *Odyssey of a Cockroach*, mixed media installation, ICA East, London, 5 Feb-7 Mar 2004; first seen at Deitch Projects, New York, October 2003: <http://www.ica.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=12988> (last accessed 25.05.05)

Here, propaganda text from Hermann Goering echoing the legacy of the Reich command into the present state of affairs, reads:

Naturally, the common people don't want war, but after all, it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag people along whether it a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. This is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country.²¹



A dimly lit table strewn with fragments of a world-map stands in front of this hanging interrogating the logic of a fixed geography. Wafts of Japanese incantations drift from the corners as visitors are invited to stamp the words "Imagine Peace" anywhere on the map. Bridging the past with the present, Ono states in her exhibition statement:

Right now we are so steeped in the psychodrama we have created we can no longer see our reality, except through influences of various propaganda. I have decided to be a cockroach for a day and see what is happening in this city through its eyes...Through the eyes of this other strong race, we may learn the true reality of what our dreams and nightmares have created. I invite you to join me on this odyssey.

Like *Re-Run* and *Asylum*, Ono's installation draws art and politics in a theatricality of space. This and a flamboyant mix of fantasy and contexts, appeal to a new Baroque. But inscribed in this hybridity is a catalytic spatiality wherein the viewer is the actor/actant *inside* the "stage". I have attempted to describe these installations for the particular way they demonstrate this shifted stance, from a singular perspective to the distributionist decentredness from within the assemblage.

²¹ HERMANN GOERING, *Nuremberg Trials*, after WWII, quoted in *Odyssey*.

In my own practice, working with contemporary technologies has allowed network in and out of the computer, utilizing erasure practices that have unchanneled important ways in working in a prosaic, documentary mode, making images and art about present life, artistic issues, global crisis and juxtaposed world situations. This seems an appropriate way to manifest these ideas as an art language situated between documentary, cinematic processes and a sense of living reality. Moreover, the availability of ready material through internet-grabbing and electronic archives also extends an artist's means for mixing and working with new forms of appropriation and experiences without the necessity of having to travel distances to be physically on-site (see *WorldSNAPS*). These methods have prompted me in a plane of experimentation initiated on different approaches to deal with philosophies and issues that align with strategies and deterritorialisations specifically to do with seeking meaningful statement through combining firsthand material with a saturation and accumulation of material extricated from media sources such as the internet, TV, paper and online newspapers and mundane news capture (see *Wall_of_Prayer*, *Doubletake*, and *WeatherTALK*). These mixed composites enter further dimensions of practice through additions or subtractions and manipulations using editing software such as Photoshop or Premiere. This ability to move between planes of activity and planes of realities incites multi-directional flows that widen the territory and breadth of practice in **new forms of inscriptions**. This means that machinic connections open up a range of possibilities utilizing the communicative realm of new technologies in the erasure practices described as well as collaborative practices across distant places, events, people and image planes. These are nomadic, deterritorialising experiences that involve a situational aesthetic promoting a network vision that looks at connection flows forming an **actant-territory**. Ground Erasure implies these unfixtures or erasures that compel an

energetic connective expansion of territory; a platform of reterritorialising visualities viewed as extensions to earlier, traditional notions of isolated studio space, artwork or indeed artist.²²

Creative-Violence conceptually draws together an allegorical network of different forms of "violences" and deterritorialisations. This is a creative concept where political and artistic deterritorialisations converge in a metaphorical and literal collage of issues, strategies and practices. Here webs, nets and erasures conceptualize connectivities weaving different levels of meaning and flows feeding into my art and research. "Creative-violence" merges a politicized and artistic language. Actions of collage, dispersing, reporting, intercepting and demarcating are strategies interlocking the art with the theory, one in the other. Streams of political information, reportage, media, life, the mundane, the prosaic, the bizarre, dislodgment, territorial transgressions, denuclearization, pollution, capture, war and poisons provide thematic material for ideas and making. These are issues that deal with aspects of transboundary movement; with trans-political and trans-territorial forms of violence, such as the intractable invasion and intrusion of pollution upon landscape regardless of location. Creative-violence makes juxtapositions conceived within a machinic network that knits aspects of the human, non-human and inhuman into an actant-plot. It is interesting here to allude to the Cannes Film Festival of 2004 and see how certain productions debate issues of creative-violence through their work in film in strikingly opposing ways. *Fahrenheit 9/11* by Michael Moore mixes politics, war and celluloid in a contentious documentary fiercely critical of the Bush

²² This idea of extended connectivity also draws from Stewart & Cohen's notion of "extelligence" conceived in "interactive deterritorialised space" in the context of CVEs described in Book 1. See MIKE HOLDERNESS, *Presence in Collective Virtual Environments as Extelligence: Virtuality and Collectivity*, 1998: <http://www.poptel.org/nuj/mike/presence.htm> (last accessed 25.05.05).

administration, the lies about the Iraqi war and going after the wrong enemy. These are projected as abusive political "violences".²³ From another notoriously extreme angle, Quentin Tarantino explores the perversity of violence through "pulp fiction". Tarantino's films, *Kill Bill 1 & 2*, were shown in Cannes just after *Fahrenheit 9/11* won the film award. Described as "a giant 4-hour opus" with a hundred deaths in a single scene, *Kill Bill* fulfills in part what Tarantino states is his dream "to shoot the most violent film ever made." This deterritorialising juxtaposition, placing *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Kill Bill* side by side, conceptualises an ironic convergence of *political action* and *pulp fiction* coming from disparate poles. The point here is how aspects of the machinic conspire in compounded *violences* and *machines*: the war machine and the creative machine; the social machine and the universal machine. Lines of flight and lines of destruction intercept each other. From the point of this research, seeing things from a decentred middle position (haecceity), rather than as beginning or destination, provokes a bi-directional perception of the machinic-human relationship; a position that sees humans looking at others and the world around, and *the other way round*, of the world and all other things looking at humans.

Creative-violence is also implied in cosmic creative eruption which Deleuze describes as "molar and molecular" movements. For example, Deleuze suggests a letting go in order to "rent the firmament" and let in a bit of **creative chaos**. He states that we identify with our organic limits (of being human) rather than

²³ *Fahrenheit 9/11*, barred in the USA and described as "the film that nobody wants to buy", actually took the 2004 Cannes Palme d'Or in a jury presided by Quentin Tarantino. Tarantino, director of *Kill Bill 1 & 2* is holder of earlier Cannes award for *Pulp Fiction*. These media comments are quoted from the *UK Times* and *Sky TV*, May 12-23, 2004. See also Festival de Cannes archives: <http://www.festival-cannes.fr/jurys/index.php?langue=6002> (last accessed 25.05.05).

seeking the anorganic connections we share with the rest of the cosmos.²⁴ The accidental and the violent in a creative explosive sense give birth to *events*. In this sense also, accidents equal lines of flight. In a circulation of events, intensities, and meanings, the artistic and political breach barriers in real and metaphorical planes. For instance, the diffusions of "space-poison-pollution-information" fuse in conceptual superimpositions; the pervasive, the transgressive and the ubiquitous intercept. In theory, Virilio critiques the totalising violence of speed. He talks of the "information bomb" to connect an aesthetic captive seduction with a warring eroding distance protracted in a delocalized or dematerialized "gaze". But this metaphor also conjures the vaporous nature of toxicity – a poisoned *air*. Today, nuclear, bio, germ and chemical production and many other invasive poisons and pollutants infringe and erode the physical boundaries of land, sea and sky anywhere. Apart from this, a global terror state implies deepening insecurity and a closely monitored satellite world; an ambivalent state of spatial profusion and occlusion; a world of apparent freedom yet growing obstruction. Information and pollution are contiguous, web-like nets – insidious, spreading and blanketing. What happens in one location has impact and fallout in another; the event is no longer isolated and is shared. This connotes intense acceleration and situational speed – the terror of **speed**.²⁵

Men-in-Masks is a raw research-image of Internet downloads in which information and pollution collide in reportage. A conceptual re-juggling occurs in this formation: information-pollution=pollution-information and informed-pollution=polluted-information. These concepts work together in juxtapositions of

²⁴ PETER HALLWARD, "'Everything is Real': Deleuze and Creative Univocity", *New Formations*, "Complex Figures" no. 49, Journal of culture/theory/politics, London (spring 2003), 67.

²⁵ Refer to *Speed_Journeys* artwork.

histories and locations threaded through different political issues and transgressive infringements. These photo-grabs span a radioactive infected children's dormitory during the 1986 Chernobyl disaster; germ antidote testing during 2000 in Porton Down near Salisbury, England; and the anthrax spate of attacks in New York following the 2001 WTC attack. The masked men in these documentary photographs inadvertently link these visual and political deterritorialisations; conceptual "ground erasures" providing material for artistic creative-violence.

Men-in-Masks

Chernobyl, Russia - 1986



New York, USA - 2001

Porton Down, UK - 2000

(Image-research 2001)

Creative deterritorialisation finds resonance in the nomadological movements of the Earth's machinic assemblage. Deleuze sees the creative forces of the Earth's double-articulation inscribed in its "molecular, glacial processes" which compound to articulate its outer stratified expression or substances and forms.²⁶ Here, the world's action proceeds on "pushing deterritorialisation ever further" through universal becomings, intensities and energetic expansions taking place between

²⁶ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (ATP), 40-42.

deterritorialising and reterritorialising connectivities.²⁷ Artistic creativity proceeds through similar forces initiating itself within a spatial void of uncertainty and potential. Processes, like violent eruptions, traverse between action and expression, between disruption and preservation in a rhizomorphous flow of actant connections and forces.

In *Ground Erasure* literal and metaphorical meanings converge interactively in a politicized artistic vocabulary of conceptual connections. "Accidents" are not finite fatalities, rather are they feed-forward projectiles opening potentials for creative interventions or "lines of flight". Neither do these creative escapes happen in sequence but can be inspired from any direction unexpectedly, in parallel, as the result of, or as a departure from another arrival. Similarly, violence is interpreted creatively and superimposes layers of meaning to incorporate different forms of artistic practices, for instance, the unfixing of images and space through: cut, paste, drag, rotate, invert, erase, merge, composites, collage, montage or mixed-media installation assemblages. In essence, these imply the disruption of time-lines or frame-rates. Artistic deterritorialisation therefore, involves correspondences where "violences" transmute through disruptive intensities producing the creative procedures of pulling pieces out of context or *tearing apart* to dismember, distort, bend, transfigure, reformat and re-invent presence through erasure.

These interrelationships articulate the internal and external processes of deterritorialisation in the making of artwork; deterritorialising activities that align with Deleuzean creative philosophy and the "interplay of form and substance". Because this corresponds with the making processes of art it is interesting to see

²⁷ Ibid. 10.

how Deleuze actually talks about the geological irruptive formation of the Earth articulated in the emotive double-action of "content and expression". Double-articulation expresses itself in two actions: The first action concerns *content* and looks inside at the substrata molecular motion of matter; and the second action concerns *expression* which is the substance or outward form we see. Translated into the artistic, this cellular or molecular activity can be paralleled with digital pixilation. The "violence" of manipulation occurs at this pixel level which is decoded and recoded within the substance or image that emerges. The deterritorialising and reterritorialising movement is occurring at the "substrata" of the artwork where (metaphorically) "the organisation of the epistrata moves in the direction of increasing deterritorialisation" in seeking stratification towards outer expression. In other words this means that "forms" (parastrata) relate to a process of coding and decoding in their formation as fixed substances or "formed matters"; formations seeking territorialities through the movements of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation taking place internally (epistrata).²⁸ The territoriality of the artwork can be seen in this molecular perspective as a re-mapping shaped by the flowing energies exchanged in its interiority and exteriority and other spatial connections beyond these. On a wider plane, these processes induce similar connective streams between artworks forming in "nomadic waves or flows of deterritorialisation". Not as fixtures, or sequences, but as constellated circulations of intensities contained in departures "launching forth' to new possibilities".²⁹ Artistic creativity involves this primal infusion of energies driven through an "undoing of space" and its redoing. I am looking at my artworks through their relational positions as catalyst actors in an integrative artistic and politicized space. Actor-Network instigates a connective symmetry in

²⁸ Ibid. 53.

²⁹ Ibid.

the internal and external productive flows networking towards a system or formation of "players".³⁰ In the spatiotemporal haecceity, the individual artworks are not thought of as singular epitomes but as connective strategies operating within the machinic and mapping a plane of experimentation and *next* "events".

WorldSNAPS are digital artworks that have played an integral role in the development of this theoretical perspective. The process by which they were made can clearly be seen to parallel the creative movements and artistic violences implied when the interrelationship between literal and metaphoric deterritorialism comes into play. The Deleuzian synthesis that followed the making of *WorldSNAPS* enabled these processes to be looked at in a different light. These works were conceived within a nomadic form of connective experimentation and discovery and can be described as "ground erasures" in a number of different senses. From the perspective of the pictographic these monochrome renderings are smoggy, black, landscapes composed from images of polluted sites round the world. Fragments are drawn from various locations tracking a nomadic virtual journey, surfing the internet for flotsam and stuff. The sources span landfills in the United States, polluted fish in Brazil, waste wood in Borneo, confiscated guns in Zaire, foot-and-mouth culling in England, skulls from the dumped bodies of murdered civilians in Bosnia, and many others. From a conceptual and technical angle these images have an itinerant origin born as they were inside a computer, from World Wide Web documentary bits of information.

³⁰ (ANT, 2003): http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html.



WorldSNAPS - 2001

WorldSNAPS are hybrid “network productions” dealing with issues of dumping and eroding, poisoned landmasses. They also stand as a statement directed at the quick-snap seduction of the instant camera that as Vilem Flusser said has turned our lives into programmed common machines that perpetuate and continue to feed into a homogeneous Matrix-control.³¹ Now, the sophistication of Photoshop and digitalization continue to facilitate an ease of production designed not to expose the human onslaught on our world or on each other but to support the seduction of the electronic image and promote evermore marketable products that expand and flow into the same dominant Capital Machine that produces

³¹ See VILEM FLUSSER, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Reaktion Books, London, 2000.

them.³² *WorldSNAPS* are oblique statements conceived within deterritorialising strategies that seek to resist these totalities.



That deposited and that disposed... (Internet research jpegs) – 2001

These two internet-grabs are placed here as a technical and conceptual example of the disparate elements and sources that contributed to the making of *WorldSNAPS*. The images concern abusive situations. One shows the dumped remains of slaughtered civilians exhumed during the mid-1990s Balkans ethnic cleansing. The other image represents an example of the many mixed waste dumping grounds abundant everywhere. My motive in adjoining these images concerns thoughts on states of decay. States of repression perhaps at their most abject neither subject nor object, similar to what Kristeva describes as: "...the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object etc) do not exist or only barely so – double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject".³³ These images concern the furtive dumping and inhuman treatment of the unknown civilian and the degradation of the body as a disposable object. The same can be said about our environment. These

³² A full analysis of the distinction between a radical deterritorialising strategy and a totalising capitalist one is given through a comparative study between two London exhibitions (*Atlas & Earth*) in Section 5 in Book 1.

³³ JULIA KRISTEVA, *Powers of Horror; An Essay on Abjection* (1980), trans. Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia University Press, New York 1982, 207-210.

analogize the voices of Lyotard's "silent partners". Silencing, to Lyotard (like eliminating a player from a game), is equal to a terrorist act and the *differend* marks the silence of an impossibility of phrasing an injustice.³⁴ When he said to wage war on totality, Lyotard meant that to stifle the silent voice was equal to suppressing life's creative potential. Virilio too, implies an ecological disappearance when he talks about the **annihilating** forces of war and about the terrible deterrent cleansing methods of history which he aligns with what he calls **narco-capitalism** as a threat to democracy.³⁵



Internet jpeg downloads: bombs, waste-wood, tins, polluted fish (research material) – 2001

Transported into Photoshop, these prosaic jpegs were "shredded", pixels pulled apart. Colour was stripped, black and white being a deliberate choice that adds austerity to the subject. The technical journey involved several moves, in and out between multiple layers and bytes, adding or subtracting, smudging, blurring, dragging, rotating, purging or resizing – a dynamic series of lacerations and erasures, morphing, remolding and obliterating original boundaries and edges till they merged into smooth territorial surfaces. Like pliable cells these were fractured, inverted, eclipsed and then rejoined, recombined and rewritten. These surfaces however, are places and territories that are **nowhere**. They do not exist in reality. They are images whose origins, zones and time have been dislocated; machinic totals re-emerging in new seamless simulations. It is interesting to compare the equivalence of a seamless structure in film, for

³⁴ See JEAN-FRANCOIS LYOTARD, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Manchester University Press, 1986; LYOTARD, *The Postmodern Condition, A Report on Knowledge* (1979), Minnesota & Manchester, 1984, 71-82.

³⁵ PAUL VIRILIO, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, "Speed and Information: Cyberspace Alarm!" August 1995: http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=72 - www.ctheory.net (last accessed 25.05.05).

example *The Hours*, which deterritorialises different decades of time into smooth transitions without flash-backs or voice-over narratives hence weaving disparate episodes by insinuation, inference and precise editing.³⁶



WorldSNAPS - 2001

The *WorldSNAPS* are nomadic journeys, deterritorialised and unknown. They are depictions of gutted, suffocating environments; a hyper-reality that is sober, ugly, and suggestive of states perhaps more real than the real. These images have been constructed through an art language of immediacy. A documentary reality utilizing an erasure quality (tearing out of context) afforded by digital

³⁶ DAVID HARE, *The Hours*, based on the literary work of Michael Cunningham, directed by Stephen Daldry: http://www.iofilm.co.uk/fm/h/hours_2002.shtml (last accessed 25.05.05).

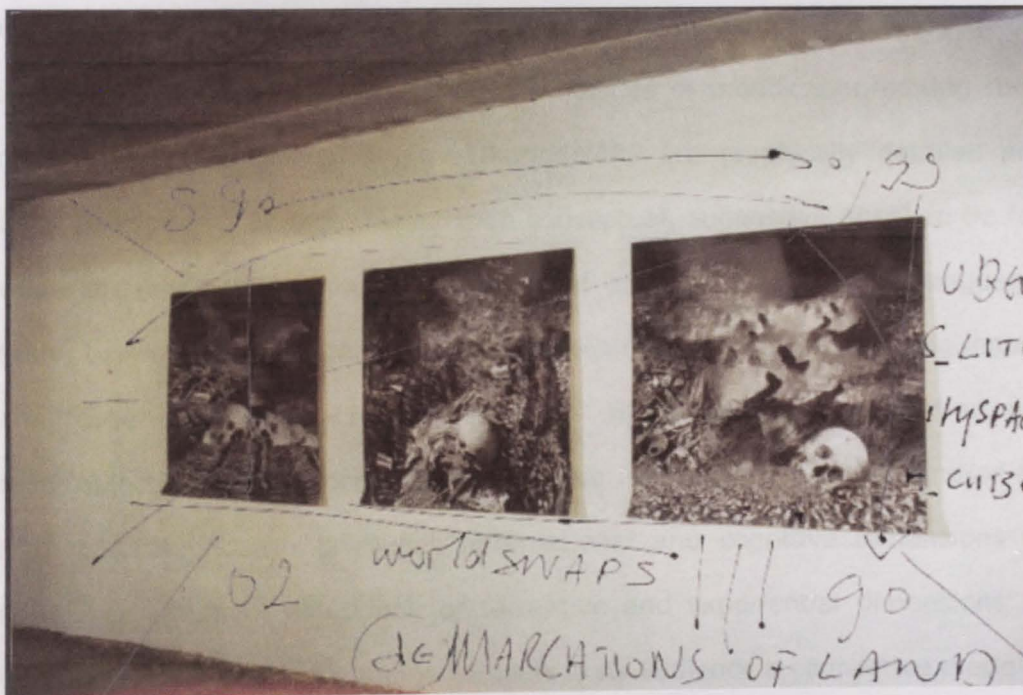
editing software (Photoshop and Premiere) offering forms of artistic modification that extend the practices of darkroom chemical technologies. Furthermore, the Internet makes possible an accessibility that erases the physical need to travel to all those countries and sources that in reality would have been feasibly impossible. This implies an appropriation of site. The catalytic, interactive space of the Internet opens the parameters of physical territoriality and extends my reach as an artist through a supply of material and the flexibility of being able to work on world issues from distant locations.³⁷ These images would not have been created in this way without the accessibility of the Internet and the Web.



WorldSNAPS - 2001

³⁷ Images are available for purchase in online archives (e.g. Reuters or Corbis), apart from a plethora of flotsam and drift-material as well as other free supplies discovered, for instance, on Chernobyl and other websites.

This creative expansion stimulates a distributionist way of looking at the connective accessibility of contemporary technologies motivating new approaches and a different conception of territory. Digital space adds a perspective for conceptualizing and working with combined practices that can counter the problematic of distance for artists creatively. The shift from *isolation* to the *network* marks a new virtual territory.³⁸ This view presents a way of turning nowhere inside out and attempts to respond to Virilio's declaration concerning the disappearance of inscription through cyber-technologies.³⁹



The *WorldSNAPS* are artworks that seek to align machinic processes in a poignant statement. At first intended to remain as virtual images, these jpegs were later resampled into tiffs for Epson output; printworks however, that do not hide the memories of ghostly pixels. They are situated between the tensions of the virtual and the real, the documentary and the staged. In conjunction with another

³⁸ The cognitive scientific shift in perception from *hierarchical* to *distributionist* is discussed in Section 3 of Book 1. Connectivist concepts are also implied in ANT.

³⁹ JOHN ARMITAGE, *Virilio Live - Selected Interviews*, Sage, London 2001, 129.

artwork (*WeatherTALK*), *WorldSNAPS* were installed frameless, suspended informally on wooden spacers in a raw concrete subbasement; a temporary site under construction at the time and permitting a single collaborative exhibition.⁴⁰

The *WorldSNAPS* images are not "pensive" in Roland Barthes' sense of the term, that is, a type of image he found subversive because of its intellectually *textual* stimulus, beyond itself. "Photography", he said, "is subversive not when it frightens, repels or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks".⁴¹ When Barthes wrote this in *Camera Lucida* (1981), he was not thinking of the extent of digitalization and the infinite possibilities of modification/editing tools and manipulation. Conversely, the *WorldSNAPS* are graphically detailed and visually "outspoken" images (rather than conceptual, suggestive ones) to be felt through an emotive, experiential, direct and affective iconographic language. Notably, in *Post-media Aesthetics*, Lev Manovich responds to the lingering legacy of the "coded approach to reading images". He states: "by approaching any cultural object/situation/process as 'text' which is 'read' by audience and/or by critics, cultural criticism privileges informational and cognitive dimensions of culture over affective, emotional, performative and experiential dimensions".⁴² This suggests that the digital image compels in its audience a connective mode of perception that interacts with the different flows and processes forming its experience, rather than one that separates the formal pictorial surface from its experiences.

⁴⁰ *WorldSNAPS* were exhibited in *Uber*, Paceville, Malta, February 2002; and in *Traverses*, KIAD, Canterbury, England, September 2002.

⁴¹ ROLAND BARTHES, *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London 1993, 38.

⁴² LEV MANOVICH, *Post-Media Aesthetics*, (line 309):

http://www.manovich.net/DOCS/Post_media_aesthetics1.doc (last accessed 25.05.05)

Arguably the photographic image today subverts not so much because it provokes "a different meaning from the literal one" (as Barthes said) as much as because digitalization speeds up evermore hyper-literal simulations. The *WorldSNAPS* are "simulation works" that disrupt the traditional processes of the ready image of the instant camera in the sense that they originate as Photoshop reworkings of found internet-jpegs and then emerge out of the computer as resampled photo-prints without the use of a camera. The variability possible through Photoshop's transform-options that can skew, distort, stretch, bend, invert, twist and clone, offers a range of permutations through translucent electronic veils and layer compressions beyond traditional colour separations and earlier re-photographing chemical processes. Post-photographic manipulation also means that several layers and replicated fragments can be rendered at once. Above all, there is the accessibility of the instant source of ready-made images through internet-grabbing and electronic image-archives, as well as the advantages of the availability of digital tools at hand in home computers without having to resort to an outside specialist darkroom. The *WorldSNAPS* are "merges", drawn from multiple internet fragments, and aligned into a new "plot". They have a sense of documentary reality and yet the context and place never exist and never will. They are subversive because they are situated between the documentary and the staged, in a world saturated by media images and fantasy. They frighten and repel by provoking plausible disaster. In the context of news-media documentary, this calls to mind the suspected "staged psychological operations" of brutal violations of American and British troops over Iraqi prisoners; images that caused commotion in the newspapers of May 2004.⁴³

⁴³ CNN & BBC, TV news report 10th May 2004 (Iraqi war 2003-04). Later BBC news of 14th May reported that the British photographs proved to be staged and Daily Mirror editor Piers Morgan who had published them in the tabloid had no choice but to resign. The American photographs were proved to be real.

Midst the old realist/constructivist dispute, the photographic image originally sought claim as a "scientific/objective" medium to describe time and reality and truth of vision (at least in the context of its documentary function).⁴⁴ But progressive technological possibilities continue to provide superseding and unprecedented ways to create seamless surfaces that beguile the eye. Looking at the impact of changing processes over time, Brandon Taylor refers to the early collision of art and photography that spurred hot debate around the emergence of new meanings and how to construct them. Taylor quotes the Soviet monteur Gustav Klutsis as noting in 1924 that "a combination of snapshots had taken the place of a graphic depiction". The observation of these changes led Klutsis to write at that time that "what this replacement means is that the photographic snapshot is not the sketching of a visual fact, but its precise record".⁴⁵ This presumes that whilst the *sketching* of events allowed a gap for artistic interpretation, the *precise record* presupposed a mechanical objectivity for factual reality. With reference to recent debate, Martin Lister now states that digital technology today gains status as an essentialised medium to vie with photography "but this time, not one which guarantees access to reality but one which celebrates its impossibility and offers to construct virtual ones instead".⁴⁶

Within the historical context of artistic photo-montage, early key innovators of photo-manipulation, John Heartfield and Raoul Hausman, undertook laborious methods in their political satires to disguise the trim, cut and camouflage-edged

⁴⁴ MARTIN LISTER, *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, Routledge, London 1995, 9-11. Lister gives an account of the early debates between the realist/constructivist divide in photography later transposed to the divide between photography/painting, and now reemerging as a "resurrected monolithic view" of photography versus digital technology.

⁴⁵ BRANDON TAYLOR, *The Last Decade*, introductory essay in bookwork by R. Davies, Pratt, UK 2002.

⁴⁶ LISTER, (*TPIIDC*), 11.

juxtapositions of photo-paper surfaces. Digital software extends methods that can distort, manipulate and simulate layers of realities that are fictive in ways that lend themselves more readily to the instant and simultaneous, to infinite variety and morphing swiftness. Examining this development, Brandon Taylor starts by describing the Cubist structure as the picture-plane that predates photomontage when the overlapping and abutment of fragment-realities first began. The Cubist picture-space, Taylor affirms, was a heavily materialized space of ruptures and edges that gave "discontinuity to the eye: a space which bends, folds, and then unfolds its matter within the confines of a literally flat pictorial array". Lending its distinctive picture-plane to the first experiments in photomontage, Taylor defines this within the new narrative of computer technology specifically through Photoshop as offering photo-manipulators today an extended "range of new and startling possibilities". Photoshop engages a reconfiguration of visual effects through ambivalent continuities, smooth surfaces and merged hyper-realities. Commenting on this historic development, Taylor states:

While Cubism inaugurated modernism, Photoshop spoke to the image-field of postmodernism, in which all events and visualities can be presented together and at the same time. Inevitably, the arrival of Photoshop takes montage to a new stage. This in turn reminds us how closely the technical evolution of picture-making matches, just as it separates, the ruptured time-zones of the geopolitical arena.... Photoshop may do things quicker, but also does them differently, and with a whole new battery of semantic and perceptual implications.⁴⁷

The collision of fictions offered through computerised mobility, rapid evolution and change means, Taylor surmises, that as observers we are left "with a sense of uncertainty as to which is the more fictive – the image, our perception of it, or the place itself".⁴⁸

⁴⁷ TAYLOR, (TLD).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Fractured time and evolving "uncertainty" allude also to Virilio and Baudrillard to whom the "loss of the real" implies a displacement in human consciousness through either "delusion", seen as expedient to forms of political control, or "derealisation" - a reduction of "real" social exchange in a world of simulated signs detached from material existence. These dystopian views of nightmare and prophecy in connection to new technologies are countered by divergent utopian argument predicting "radical and liberating breaks with the past".⁴⁹ Michelle Henning suggests a viable position that sees no "pure" isolated severance of newer media overtaking or displacing older ones but rather an increasing digitalisation of older forms in the flow of creating more efficient re-adaptations. Between these views it would seem that the challenge to the fine artist is to critically assess ways to convert the negatives to positive advantage and innovative practice given the availability of the growing range of tools and possibilities as Taylor acknowledges. Indeed, it can be argued that besides the speed and agility facilitated through digital tools and manipulation software, compared with the more time-consuming and arduous processes of the conventional chemical darkroom, these advance methods that attest to radical changes from the "closed finished perfection" of early photography to the "open...recombination of elements" of digitised post-production manipulation. These altering, variable mechanisms are "always in the process as they are used...never reaching a final destination of fixed settled meaning: that is any kind of 'closure'". This suggests that, as opposed to the "closed photograph", post-photographic digital practice is "polysemic", open to many texts "to mean more than one fixed thing", and can be described as a counterpart to post-structuralist

⁴⁹ MICHELLE HENNING "Digital Encounters: mythical pasts and electronic presence" in Lister, (*TPIIDC*), 219.

theory.⁵⁰ The *WorldSNAPS* net-grab manipulations are deterritorialisations produced through an interaction of electronic practices using these erasure methods towards a *heightened* statement connecting practice with a hyperrealist eroding landscape.

Conclusively, all this suggests that as perspectives and horizons shift on virtual screens, this revolutionises ways of looking at art beyond a traditional pictorial singular vocabulary. A shift occurs in the paradigm of human perception as familiarity grows with the open, polysemic post-photographic renderings of digital technologies used in their different contexts and purposes. In the context of art this implies that digital practices demand innovative sensibilities and connective ways of perceiving the fictional realities transmuted through simulation software and manipulation media. The traditional method of a separatist pictorial lexis requires the vision of a connective language in ways that imply a participative *active user* beyond the *passive viewer*. The picture plane can be described as a network plane of simultaneous flows. Actant-Network Theory stimulates a productive mode of perception as a way to look at art that takes into account how the component actant parts interact with each other towards an unfixed territorial surface (a complex network of relationships). The *WorldSNAPS* are machinic productions that aspire to such a network approach further than isolating the literalness or formal aspects of their picture surface.

Artistic deterritorialisation functions on that which subverts through *difference*; on disruptive intensities and incongruent differences and what Deleuze refers to as "irrational cuts". In this, Deleuze is really talking about cinema but he also

⁵⁰ Ibid. 17. Additionally, an argument on the fracture of cultural representation influenced through collage/montage is given by GREGORY L. ULMER, "The Object of Post-Criticism" in Hal Foster, *Postmodern Culture*, Pluto Press, London 1985, 83-87.

uses this to draw philosophy and politics together when he talks about a "positive capitalist tendency" in all aspects of life to open up any system on to an exchange and interaction through deterritorialisation.⁵¹ Cinematic montage is a form of "creative-violence" that subverts the linearity of time by the piecing together of different but conflicting sites of movements. In this sense, the camera enables the freeing of a singular viewpoint through placing this viewpoint or flow of time alongside others in a montage of divergences; flows that do not happen in a line of time but that create time itself. Deleuze believed that cinema could teach us to see time as "becoming", that is, time as differing from itself, since in actuality time as becoming is imperceptible because the act of perception itself reduces the difference of time and durations. Artistic "violence" is used here to connote artistic deterritorialisation as a practical format for the disruption of fixity through the deliberate methods of displacement and reconfiguration of meanings, space, durations and connections – artistic truncations as **demarcations** of difference. This machinic metaphor provides a method for practical and conceptual connective productivity.

DEMARCATIONS is an installation I created that prompts these ideas through fusing concepts on land obstructions and intrusions, or what Virilio refers to as the militarization of space, within an aesthetic of parallel situations.⁵² This site-adapted installation was assembled in an old roof-shed at the top of a long, spiraling staircase in a disused building, a former brothel, which was actually on the market for restoration as offices.

⁵¹ COLEBROOK, (GD), 65.

⁵² **DEMARCATIONS** was exhibited in *Cityspaces* (group installations), Valletta, Malta, August 2002.



DEMARICATIONS installation: shed, prints, plastic, barrier tape – 2002

A plastic enclosure was suspended from the ceiling encasing four hanging rows of digital print montages spanning different locations around England. The enclosure was cordoned by barrier tape. These photographs ranged between agricultural interventions, wire boundaries, poles, field divisions, electrical pylons, and the gates and crossings around the nuclear plant in Dungeness. A window, transformed into a natural light box, and a door in the shed-room became actants in this visual semiosis signaled through a series of interconnecting barrier zones; elements aligning in a collusion of invasions engraved in the land. These suspended "durations" were then interrogated within further durations whereby, during this same period, I transported replications of the print-works back to their country of origin in England and re-photographed them in a journey round barricaded sites in Bethnal Green in London. On my return to Malta, these new photographs were inserted into the original installation in the shed as a wall-work mapping a recombination of text, plastic and photographs that expanded the journey.



Re-photographing DEMARCATIONS printwork placed round London Bethnal Green barricades - 2002

This installation was constructed around the testing of these various processes in a potentially unending situational flow negotiated between different durations, countries, sites and journeys creating a mobile context for a metamorphosing art object that, in theory, resists finality and fixity whilst at the same time dealing with the issues of barriers and obstacles that constantly invade our lives. In this sense, the work itself embarked on a rhizomorphous journey prompted by its own visual question investigating borders, demarcations and territorial intrusiveness. The temporal nature of the installation, the impermanence of site and materials, and the interplay between 2-Dimensional and 3-Dimensional spatiality, were translated into a material language politicizing the physical territoriality of the artwork through its own existence as an experiential, emotive,

deterritorialised series of negotiated situations. In this work the artistic (conceptual) and political (contextual) deterritorialisms are interactive "ground erasures" enacting contentious self-denying flows. These flows are "nomadic waves" moving from the centre to the periphery in cross-processes between different placements and moments resisting fixed demarcations.



Timed camera: re-photographing DEMARCATIONS prints in Bethnal Green - 2002

The *WorldSNAPS* and *DEMARCATIONS* are part of an initial practice that informed my theoretical approach. The negotiations taking place between art and reflection form vital actant processes. This theorization is further developed within actant theory which provides an open frameless platform for reterritorialisation in a mobile (sociological) field of surrounding factors.⁵³ This engagement with Actor-Network has inspired me to describe my artworks as "actors" and look at the intrinsic connections linking them into a complex network of activities. In this context the political, conceptual and metaphorical elements all align towards a common interest in an actant-plot I call Ground Erasure. In this spectrum of activities, the individual artworks are nomadic actants in

⁵³ See (*ANT*, 2003): http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/ant_dff.html.

interacting positions. In this sense they are themselves individual production flows (networks) participating in other production flows (other networks). This implies that the artworks share interests but are not driven towards homogeneity. They are not autonomous isolated "souls" or representational subjects; instead, they are non-hierarchical productions moving towards subjectivity (expression) through their surroundings. Each artwork becomes an individual project with open edges, formed through its own surrounding circumstances and contributing energies that overlap with those of other artworks. Actant elements include: opportunities, timing, funding, sites, available skills, tools, assistance, facilitation, materials, machines, and so on. In addition to these factors, there are aesthetic and intellectual decisions that determine an art language chosen according to: concepts, ideas, philosophies, themes, group objectives and other forces. These elements embrace all the practical considerations which are important determining factors to the realisation of outcomes. In the light of this argument, the streams of productions are held in tension through differentiations not sameness. Ground Erasure manifests this catalytic approach of network productivity visualized as a dynamic field of overlapping, rippling circles of activity.

This instills, in theory, viewing things in the *surround*, a position Felix Guattari encourages in *Chaosmosis* by discarding traditional Western Platonic conceptions of subjectivity in place of a "plural and polyphonic" production flow.⁵⁴ He emphasized the dire need for this in view of older, structural, universal and representational models of subjectivity "incarnated by capitalist colonialism in both East and West" that had led to a massive ubiquitous "subject-making

⁵⁴ FELIX GUATTARI, *Chaosmosis. An Ethicoaesthetic Paradigm*, Power Publications, Australia 1995, 1.

machine". This, Guattari saw, had gone "bankrupt". He implies Freudian and Lacanian Unconscious psychoanalysis that had provided scientific answers to express an objective knowledge of the psyche.⁵⁵ Placing this criticism in the social arena, Guattari felt that we had become engulfed in existing totalising systems that seemed to "close down" rather than "open up". This critical situation has perpetuated mentalities unable to deal with present crisis, and certain conditions of a postmodern, postcolonial and postindustrial world:

Our survival on this planet is not only threatened by environmental damage but by a degeneration in the fabric of social solidarity and in the modes of psychical life, which must literally be re-invented. The refoundation of politics will have to pass through the aesthetic and analytical dimensions implied in the three ecologies--the environment, the socius and the psyche. We cannot conceive of solutions to the poisoning of the atmosphere and to global warming due to the greenhouse effect, or to the problem of population control, without a mutation of mentality, without promoting a new art of living in society.⁵⁶

Guattari and Deleuze's theories and Latour's Actor-Network Theory argue for flexible open paradigms and the "ground erasures" of closed framework models. These theories also recognize the difficult, conflictual and paradoxical situations engendered by such concepts by the fact that any model runs the risk, with the right machinery, of metamorphosing itself into the monolithic totalising monster it is trying to eradicate. These theories however, maintain an open ambivalence and are offered as "invitations" and as mobile options to reject or to partake in areas and ways where they can possibly liberate systems that have become stifling and discriminatory. The value of these "negative" theories therefore, lies mainly in freeing restrictive modes of thinking and acting by insisting on the *productive nature* of things. That is, in recognizing "the ethical and political dimension of the act of theorizing, and in its openness to the possibility of

⁵⁵ Ibid. 10-11; 1-31.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 20.

change".⁵⁷ These theoretical erasures are offered in an ethical, political and aesthetical liberality to challenge delimiting belief systems and seek new forms of balance and understanding. The productive flows and open territories offered in these theories are seen, in the context of my own research, within this kind of "auto-enriching" flux and exchange; an aesthetic creative ongoingness Guattari speculates as "autopoiesis": "Part of autopoiesis comes from a new field...autopoietic systems want to keep "going".⁵⁸

The dynamics negotiating between modes of temporality is reflected within the internal conceptual and technical mechanisms inside the individual artworks and in their relation to the other artworks in a fluid field of interactive connections. Looking for the moment at the *WorldSNAPS* and *DEMARCATIONS* artworks, both these artworks deal with artistic and political territorial unfixtured explored within very different forms of expression, affects, surfaces and spatiality. In essence, the two works proceed through diverging motions. *WorldSNAPS* were born on the internet from a multitude of bytes, information, sites, layers and fragments conflated into a morphed unknown reality as virtual landscapes, and later they entered the real world as resampled large 2-Dimensional printed surfaces. *DEMARCATIONS* originated from personal engagements on actual sites and entered an exchange of machinic and physical active transformations to unfix territorial demarcation within the space of a hybrid, *continuing* installation. These artworks instill interplay between the dimensions of the actual and virtual, between process and reality, and between physical and non-physical materialities. In different ways, they interrogate a similar set of issues and

⁵⁷ A. TAYLOR, (*M on D & G*, 1996):

<http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/d&g/asubjectivity.html> (last accessed 25.05.05)

⁵⁸ FELIX GUATTARI, *Chaosmosis*: <http://www.pmc moo.org:7788/824> (25.05.05)

ground erasures but yet remain suspended in tensions of difference. Like connected projectiles in a rhizome territory they initiate a body without organs.

Deleuze talks of the importance of "dialogues" stemming from these tensions that occur through a sustained differentiation which conceptually expands the territorial stream. This open plateau of connections is like the plane of consistency where artworks produced in a "spatium" are in communication with other "plateaus" or artworks. This is how Deleuze describes the BwO (body without organs), as a "component of passage". The BwO is in ambivalent tension, swinging between two poles: "the surfaces of stratification into which it is recoiled...and the plane of consistency in which it unfurls and opens to experimentation".⁵⁹ This plane of experimentation is the plane for creativity, a fluid territory in continuous flow which in artistic terms can be described as the plane for the creation of artworks. This creative dimension where artworks connect in a conjunction of flows or continuum of intensities evokes turbulent tensions between the motions of stratification and experimentation. The BwO is not a space, it is a series of practices on the plane of consistency (or plane of the *real*), where it causes intensities to pass and circulate, reaching forever towards an unattainable limit. The BwO is a "matrix of intensity" producing and distributing these intensities in a spatium that is itself intense but lacking extension. The creative forces towards formation and substance are in the turmoil of opposing tensions; a "violence" described in the molecular nascence of matter: "a perpetual and violent combat between the plane of consistency, which frees the BwO, cutting across and dismantling all of the strata, and the surfaces of stratification that block it or make it recoil".⁶⁰

⁵⁹ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 159.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 159.

I have described Ground Erasure as a field of activity for the production of artwork dealing with artistic and political deterritorialisations. In this, artworks are "nomad-actants" forming from the ambivalences and turbulences between planes of stratification and experimentation. Creative-violences are metaphysical ruptures of space, time and information (materials) for these deterritorialisms to find expression through a communicative machinic field of overlapping actions. Hybridity, temporality and issues of sitedness are factors that link my works together. They are also linked through their themes in dealing with forms of transboundary movement and political issues, and in exploring a machinic metaphor of erasures, ripping and re-formatting contexts. The process of describing my works in this connective way is aimed at how this might effectively make one look at a whole complexity of issues in a different way, thus reterritorialising the practice.

The **WALL_OF_PRAYER** meets war with environment in a network of fractures, truncations, erasures, erosions, and transboundary flights and destruction. This artwork emerged following the chance situation of being in London during the 9.11 Twin Tower "accident". At this time a flood of shocking images and war-mongering headlines poured into the media in the midst of terrifying expectancy of a further disaster also befalling London after New York; an event immediately followed by a sequence of anthrax poisons, and a complex build-up of terror warnings and calamities since. This period unexpectedly diverted my research in a new direction prompting a spontaneous diary of images and notations, a series of mixed-media studies using photocopies and newspapers which were seminal to the **WALL_OF_PRAYER** which eventually developed.⁶¹ The **Y_WAR** sketches were scanned into my computer, and emailed to Korea for a book publication in that

⁶¹ See *The Unavoidable Accident* diary insert in Section 1 of Book 1.

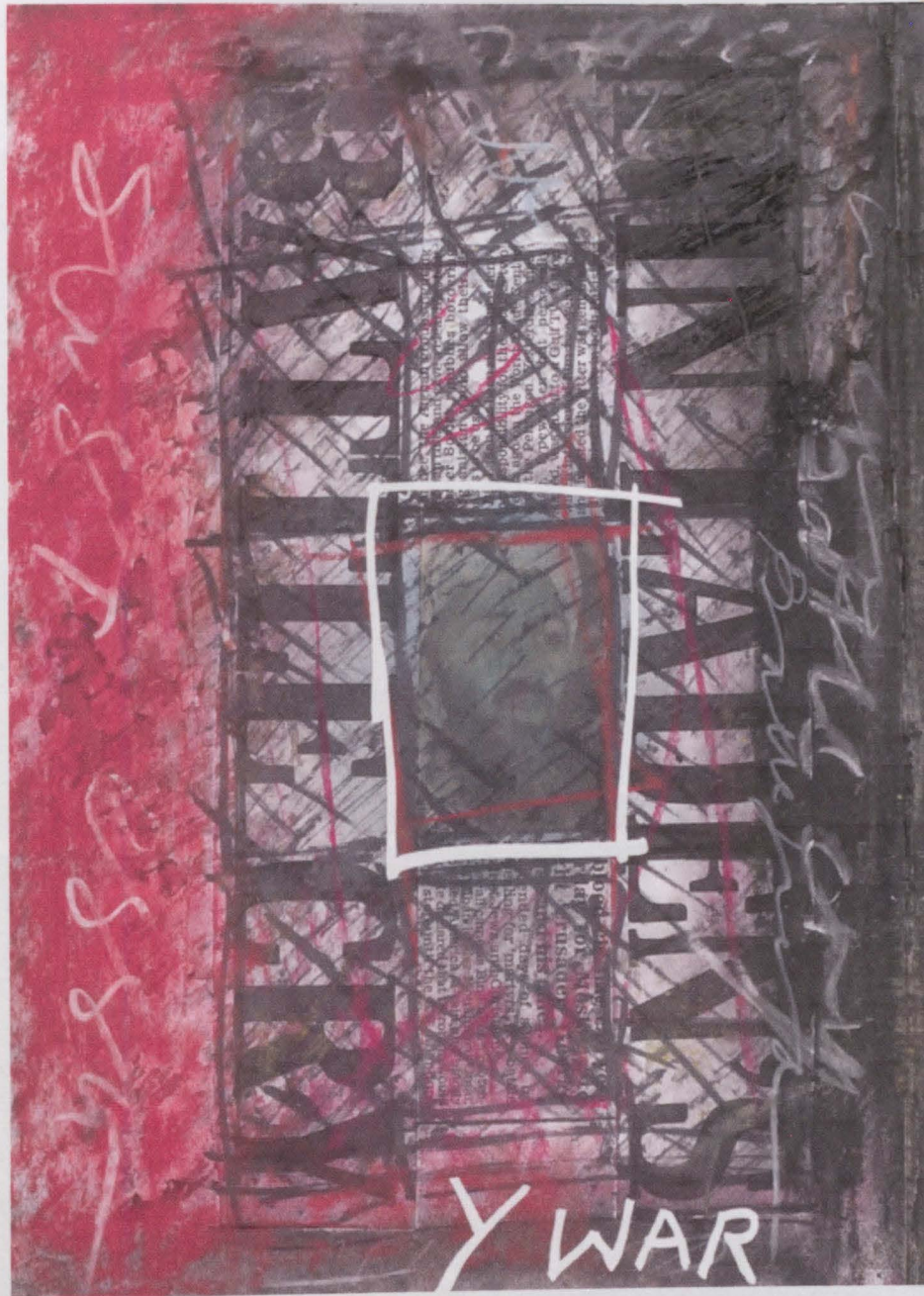
country accompanied by a separate large montage-work on hand-made paper mailed for exhibition.⁶² This explains forms of practical ground erasure. The fact for instance, that artwork can be relayed electronically for output in a distant country and exhibited there as printwork or paper publication breaks new ground for artists creating, communicating or collaborating at vast distances. Virtual space has become part of the studio space.



Y_WAR mixed-media collages (research work)

Photocopies, paint, wax and chalk used to create a bookwork of sketch-studies – Sept/Oct 2001

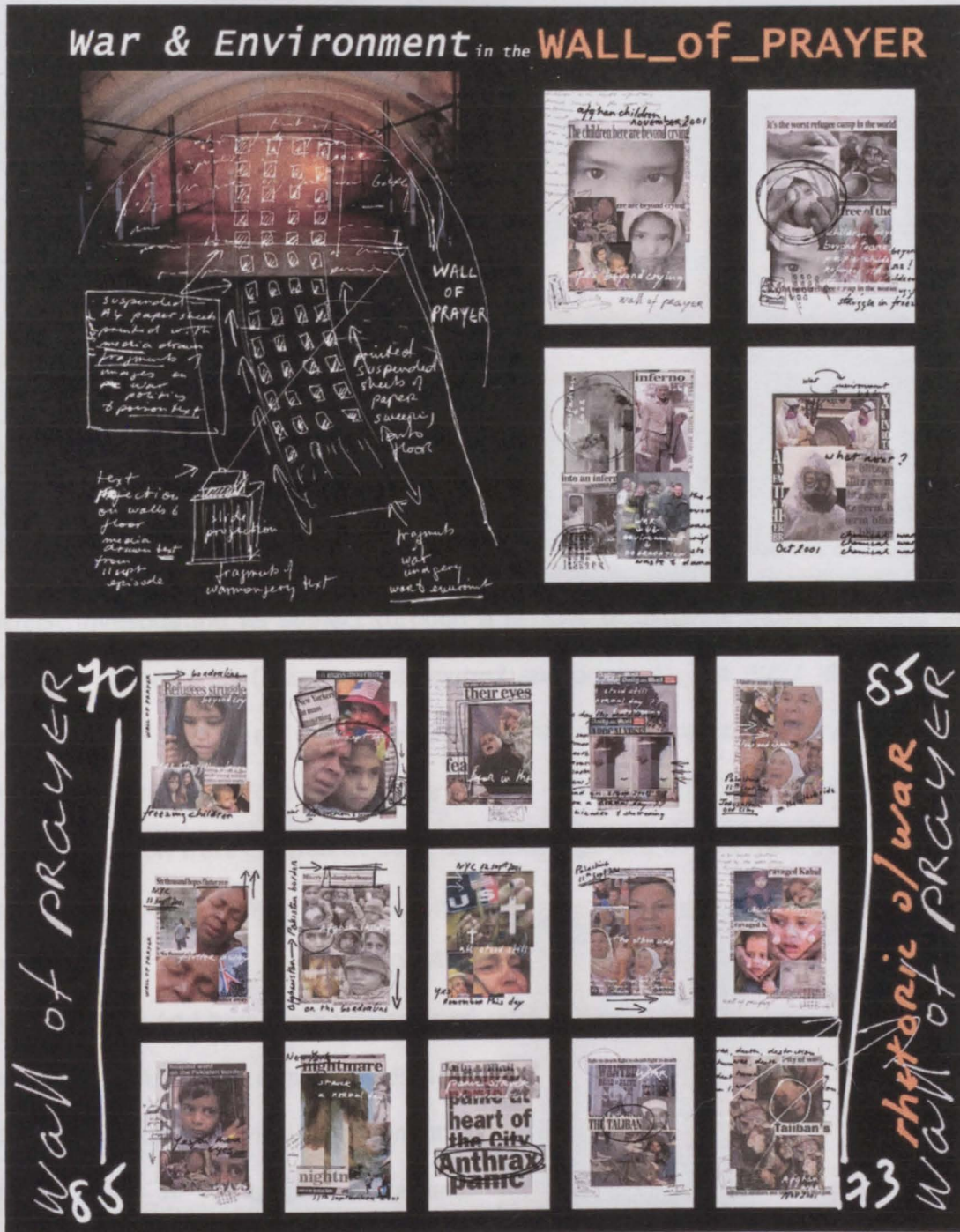
⁶² The Y_WAR collage work was exhibited in CDAK (International Art & Design Exhibition) Seoul, Korea, 2001. Selections from the Y_WAR collage work were scanned and emailed for an accompanying publication for this exhibition in Korea.



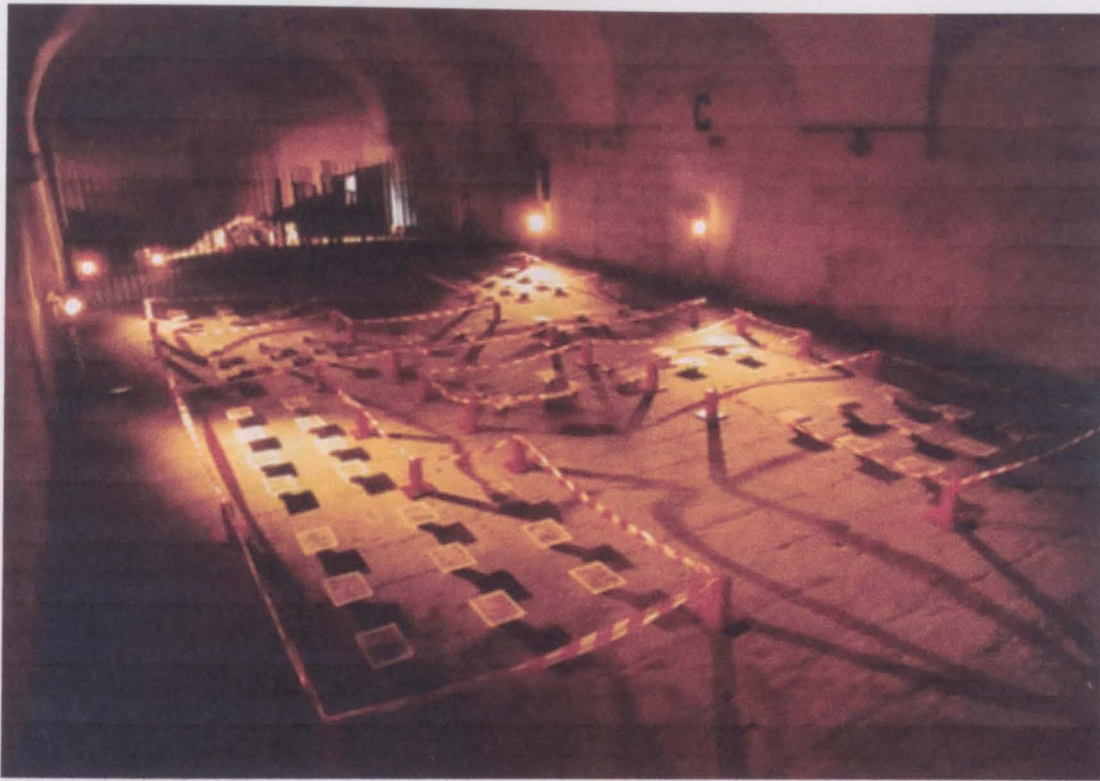
Battle Cry (from Y_WAR series Sept/Oct 2001)

The *WALL_OF_PRAYER* installation interrogates a different set of spatial and aesthetic investigations to *WorldSNAPS* and *DEMARCATIONS*, yet it articulates elements of both. The WALL work actually materialized for a first showing after these two works, but as such, started as an accident (an opportunity)

intercepting the flow of the other works and continued in process and in parallel to them during this research.



Wall_of_Prayer installation-plans & digital graphics - 2002



WALL_OF_PRAYER installation - 2003

Whilst investigating its subject through a series of dynamic moves working in and out of machines (scanners, computers and printers), the *WALL_OF_PRAYER* explores the idea of an unending artwork that grows with the everyday world issues circumventing our lives in the media. The hand-deckled paperworks for this installation were created through digital collage and output from scanned and internet-grabbed news, images and headlines. Unlike the *WorldSNAPS* which distort and blur the boundaries of worldwide sites into a new landscape, the *WALL* work retains the fragmented differences of multiple locations, weaving these into a tapestry of raw, journalistic, juxtaposed realities connected through breakdown and conflictual upheavals. The machinic processes in this network of violences traverse "infestations" of media and information, war and



pollution in a complex web. This is a history collage of accidents, bombings, people and places; an assemblage of political and artistic interpolations fusing metaphors of flight and destruction.



There were two sections in the Wall_of_Prayer's first installation: a walk-in area of cordoned zones inside the gated section and a rubble candlelit vigil site consisting of stone-heaps, newspapers and red candles on the outer side of the gates (see left and bottom).

Site played an integral role in this work, instigating a politicization of space. The WALL work was first exhibited in the 17th century Pinto Wharf bonding stores which were undergoing conversion into a new Sea Terminal in the Valletta Harbour. The period of exhibition coincided with a time of political turmoil and division in Malta leading up to a referendum for EU membership. My presentation was part of a group of installations collectively called *Borders*. The exhibition in effect took place in the process of structural works on the façade and entire building. One of the former uses of these vaults was to store



war-time ammunition during the British military settlement. My selected site in

this building was a vaulted chamber marked by high gated divisions and black lettered sections on the adjacent walls. These powerful signs of previous regiments and occupations were conceptually central and fused into the *WALL_OF_PRAYER*, a work essentially dealing with territorial divides and political transboundary movements. The title of this work was actually triggered by the improvised sites around New York where people plastered desperate notes and photos to reach their missing relatives immediately following the September 11th tragedy. This sparked an artist's diary, an archival journey of images, television recorded footage,



newspaper cuttings, texts, headlines, and internet downloads from a range of sources. This project is conceived as an ongoing history-painting within a spectrum of distances and combined digital approaches. Although this collection of material seemed to "frame" a particular event, it unlayers a complexity beyond and outside the time-frame of this singular event. Images travel across places and distances, from New York to Afghanistan, Palestine, Israel, Indonesia, Kenya, London, Iraq, Madrid, and Saudi Arabia in a growing network of political intrigues and events. Presented on the floor, the WALL took on a series of connotations and references to the kind of epitaph sites or prayer walls found round the world such as the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem or the Berlin Wall, the prayer mats in Islam, the Buddhist prayer wheels in Tibet or the Bayeux tapestry in France.

The concept of catalytic space references a set of actions. The spatial interventions of installation produce a relationship between actants that heighten the emotive and communicative nature of the performative elements. In this context, the WALL work explores a situational transience. During its first showing and event this situational aesthetic was explored through an installation disrupting the conventional meaning of "wall" in that the work was placed on the floor. In so doing, this change in perspective instigated an altered proximity between artwork and audience. The literal meaning of a wall is an upright structure that stands parallel to the body. The wall on the floor inverts and disrupts the fixed boundary of meaning, fusing this with other conceptual transpositions that shift the physical relationship of the body in that the viewer is able to enter *inside* the parameters of the work. This engagement incites different actions, walking and stooping between edges, images and zones, enacting a performative and experiential exchange between space and spectator. This interaction, in concept, ruptures the "4th wall", which in theatrical terms fashions the conceptual barrier between stage and audience. The work resists the fixture of object by sustaining a dynamic flow of contiguous meanings and intersecting affects, fragmented images and space and tampered proximities. The paperwork was placed flat on tiny plinths, offset by



low lighting that dropped shadows charging the floor with affects and three-dimensional chiaroscuro. The interplay of light and materials act within this "becoming" to create a network of deterritorialised moves: a temporal installation in a changing building; a collage of ruptured spaces, people, places, floating images, texts and borders; restrictions and controlled moves converging in a

plateau of frames, spaces, red blocks, zones, delineations and barrier tape drawing a large political graffiti.⁶³

Accidents are part of the creative-violences inspiring escapes or Deleuzian lines of flight. The *WALL_OF_PRAYER* developed from a collision of accidents and flights; a "machinic assemblage" that intertwines art and politics in a deterritorialised combination of technical approaches and concepts. In effect, the *WALL_OF_PRAYER*, along with *WorldSNAPS*, has been essential in informing and determining my theoretical concepts in this project. The concept Ground Erasure emerged out of these works with the further interrogation and insight concerning the elusiveness of territory, borders and transboundary movement. This is important because the connective framework I propose in Ground Erasure is aimed at countering the effects of deterritorialisation debated within Virilio's in-depth notion of "disappearing territorialities" where he implicates the presence of art in the universal accident by stating that today "art can be nowhere". Virilio's "war-machine" brings an erasure perpetuated through a neoliberal/imperialist, technoscientific capitalization; a contractile war-machine whose objective promotes peace whilst operating through a terrifying dematerialising strategy that no longer needs "a qualified enemy" but functions on an axiomatic against an "unspecified enemy". In discussing the conspiring maneuverings behind the apparatus of capture and war, Deleuze himself specifically describes Virilio's conception of the war machine as an "organized insecurity or molecularised, distributed, programmed catastrophe".⁶⁴ In this vision, virtualisation, the "accident" of globalisation, brings a new totality: an "aesthetic of disappearance". A connective vision in art, therefore, is vital to

⁶³ The *WALL_OF_PRAYER* was presented in *Borders* (group installations) in Pinto Wharf, Valletta, Malta, in February 2003.

⁶⁴ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 467.

combat these dislocations and transfigure this disappearance encountered through the machinic. I have tried to describe this connective approach through the *WALL_OF_PRAYER* as a creative expression finding its stabilisation from accidents of journey and disaster.

The accident of the machine for Deleuze, unlike Virilio, is not delimiting but offers connective escapes of deterritorialisation into artistic territories yet to be explored. Although Deleuze died a few years before the 11th September event, his account of the nomadological war machine bears astute perceptiveness relevant to this event. He defines the war machine through two poles. At one pole, the war machine takes war for its object and forms "a line of destruction prolonging to the limits of the universe". At the other pole, "with infinitely lower 'quantities'" the war machine has as its object "not war but the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and the movement of people in that space". Deleuze states that at this second pole, the war machine does indeed encounter war, but it does this as a supplementary or synthetic objective "now directed against the State and against the worldwide axiomatic expressed by States".⁶⁵ Deleuze's analysis is intriguingly interesting in the way the two planes interweave the artistic and political maneuverings of the war machine that takes shape against the apparatuses that "appropriate the machine" towards strategies of capture, dominion and colony. This reconnaissance finds correspondence with Virilio's "gazing machine" and the unavoidable accident in the way the *lines of flight* connect with the *lines of destruction* to turn into a: "plan(e) of organization and domination".⁶⁶ In connection to this, both Virilio and Deleuze invoke the ecological. Virilio,

⁶⁵ Ibid. 422.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 423.

critic/lover of technology, promotes an ecology that is "material and spiritual" whilst forecasting the accelerated inevitable: "an integral ecological accident....a generalised accident", "...there are no gains without losses".⁶⁷ Deleuze, universal philosopher, upholds the state of affairs through creative ongoingness and recuperation. The worst of the world war machines, he says, "reconstitutes a smooth space to surround and enclose the earth" – a smooth space implying undifferentiated striation. "But", Deleuze continues, "the earth asserts its own powers of deterritorialisation, its lines of flight, its smooth spaces that live and blaze their way for a new earth".⁶⁸

The *WALL_OF_PRAYER* and the *WorldSNAPS* initiated theoretical reflection through the similar tensions motivated between *haecceity* and *stasis*. These two artworks connect in thematic and technical "ground erasures" albeit each work engages upon a different set of motions and spatial considerations. The *WorldSNAPS* enter a labyrinthine passage through the machinic, smoothing out boundaries into a network of lost origins and digital distances. These merge into a borderless "stasis" shutting into images of death, decay and destruction whilst conversely reopening onto new visual perspectives. Their process involves a "haecceity" in the sense that their origin is reclaimed material; dispersals grabbed from the internet and their destinations do not exist. In a different way, the *WALL_OF_PRAYER* explores a haecceity in that it opens and diffuses centrality; the viewer circulates inside its middle, no beginning or end. This work truncates and re-truncates digital fragments into smooth rejuggled juxtapositions in a veritable production that regurgitates and accentuates media-saturation. Both these projects activated forms of recycle and art-making that have tested

⁶⁷ ARMITAGE (*VL*), 16; 147.

⁶⁸ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 423.

my technical barriers through digital manipulation and conceptual erasures. In a personal way these works exemplify flows of experimentation that operate in the nomadic-machinic in ways that press against fixture through a mode of search and making in the unknown. Deleuze tells us that the haecceity has neither origin nor destination, "it is a rhizome".⁶⁹ This encourages practice that functions in a circulation of options and exploration that defies arrival or destination in an open territory of possibilities.

The tensions between "haecceity and stasis" are similar in concept to those between flux and strata. Through rhizomatics and the haecceity, Deleuze and Guattari were actually looking at the "is-ness" of language and theory where stratification occurs and freezes singular meanings or forms to be seen and grasped. Conversely, this fixture is opposed by perpetual universal "flux" and hidden connectivity; a concept derived from Heraclitus and Ancient Greece which espoused a practice of rhetoric that rejected totalising, monolithic theories in place of co-existing arguments.⁷⁰ Rhizomatics provokes a plane of such motion that, in theory, counters "stasis" which can be deadly by effectively killing the free flow of particles and vital energies of unique multiplicities by shutting down the desiring-production flows. Indeed, it can be argued that stasis and stagnating fixture can be countered by artistic productions that induce haecceities through deterritorialisation and hybrid activity. Ground Erasure activates this network-territory of deterritorialised production-flows where different projects are intersecting activities in a connective process of speed and affects. This

⁶⁹ Ibid. (ATP), 263; A. TAYLOR, (*M on D & G*, 1996):
<http://www.uta.edu/english/apt/d&g/ahaecceity.html>.

⁷⁰ HERACLITUS claimed an underlying connection between opposites. He held that between all things there is a hidden connection, so that those that are apparently "tending apart" are actually "being brought together." (540BC)
<http://www.kat.gr/kat/history/Greek/Ph/Heraclitus.htm> (last accessed 25.05.05).

communicative plane for describing my practice is seminal in providing a reterritorialising platform through seeking reconciling relationships between differences.

WeatherTALK is a looped audio-video installation which I designed for the same exhibition as *WorldSNAPS*.⁷¹ This work was motivated through similar ecological issues as the *WorldSNAPS* which in fact drove me to experiment further in this video piece. The practice of blurring edges and images extracted from global-media was now equalled in sound. *WeatherTALK* is an audio



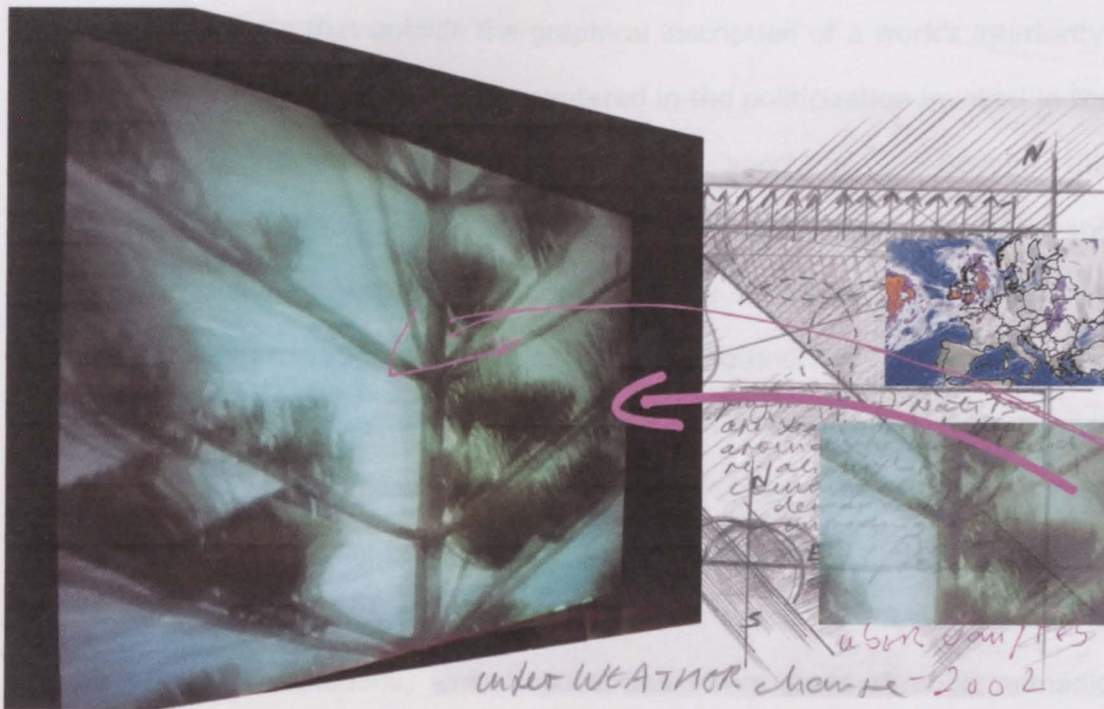
montage created from overlapping worldwide weather reports. The editing process involved cross-phase superimpositions of a collage of sound clips recorded from television news on a video-camera for digital manipulation in Goldwave. The recordings, which were actually produced during winter 2002, covered spells of extreme weather reports from blizzards and hurricanes on one side of the hemisphere to forest fires on the other. The piece was designed as an

⁷¹ *WeatherTALK* was presented in *Uber* (group installations), in Paceville, Malta, in January 2002.

atmospheric melding of anonymous weather reporters painting a sound-scape engulfed in the shifting patterns of global climate change.

This sound montage, created from secondary material was aligned with first hand material from the video of a zoomed conifer tree in a gale-storm. The piece developed as a series of conceptual overlays of *on-site* footage and *distant* televised material. The frame-rate was slightly speeded and the time-score trimmed to an eleven-minute loop. Within this duration, the tree-image became swamped in condensation and phased into droplets of water and cyclical transformation. *WeatherTALK* was screened on a large wall in a raw, fully blacked-out subbasement still under construction.

This artwork fuses a number of concepts. It looks at a redefinition of landscape through a time-based language politicizing the transitory nature of materials with those of a raw impermanent site and the theme, the weather. The weather, transient and changing, is amongst the most mundane of subjects that comes to us in passing, as "sidelines" at the end of news, and yet, our lives are dominated by its forces. *WeatherTALK* combines the actual with the distant – the tree that could be anywhere in the world. Within the spaciousness of installation the user/viewer identifies with the tree in this contest of vulnerability; human versus nature, questioning the power of one over the other. These concepts stood adjacent to *WorldSNAPS*, depictions of decay and wasteland. The two artworks project an environmental impasse; political interrogations of transboundary pollution contended in the problem of global warming and environmental degradation.



The creative-violences of video montage - cutting, truncating, dragging, looping - comprise a circulation of actions converging in a disrupted timeline. These processes fuse with Deleuzian "violence" in his metaphor of "uprooting tree" to deterritorialise hierarchical structures. *WeatherTALK* is a composition of variable elements. In this instance, the viewer is invited to recognize him/herself in the tree, which (in a Deleuzian context) is being violently uprooted, disheveled and dislocated within an ecological statement.

These concepts, the methods, issues, materials, and the territorial interventions of site and surfaces, are all catalytic actants; surrounding factors driving towards expression (reterritorialisation). In this arena (as inspired from ANT), the complex exchanges of relationships between different elements enrolling each other seek equitable territoriality. Art and politics intersect in this network enacting a politicized space. In an essay entitled *Toward a Metaphysics of Shit*,

Jean Fisher suggests that outside the graphical inscription of a work's interiority, the political in contemporary art is encountered in the politicization invoked in the relationships taking place between space and spectator.⁷² Beyond this perspective however, machinic deterritorialisation connects issues of politics and spatiality functioning in both the interior and exterior territories of the installation works in this research. Space is used as a catalyst to find ways of territorializing the sphere of politics by mediating difference through an art language of hybridity and ambivalences conceptualised in the interactions between surrounding actants connecting site, spectator, artwork and themes. This was central in a physical way, for example in the *WALL_OF_PRAYER* and the *DEMARCATIONS* installations, where space was interrogated through nomadic situational positions and an ongoing artwork in conjunction with the political issues dealing with obstructive systems inherent in the work. These works are machinic deterritorialisations that explore "untimely becoming" through hybrid media and movements activated in installation. *WorldSNAPS* are maneuvered through the machinic in frames captured and frozen within a reversed process. That is, a photographic composite created from other photographs inside the computer. The flows taking place between the different actants inspire a virtual plane. The connectivity in this plane can be described as extelligence. This implies, as explained earlier, that beyond the intelligence (information) contained in an object, there is an exchangist flow happening in either direction.⁷³ The idea of the haecceity also generates this spatiotemporal relation of activities.

These ideas are important in inspiring a new way of conceptualising space and new virtual and hybrid environments. In the concept of Ground Erasure the

⁷² JEAN FISHER, "Toward a Metaphysics of Shit", in *Documenta 11*, Platform 5, Hatje Kantz Publishers, Kassel 2002.

⁷³ HOLDERNESS, (*CVEs*, 1998) <http://www.poptel.org.uk/nuj/mike/presence.htm>.

connective way I am proposing for looking at art inspires a different mode of perceiving through a position where energy has a **multidirectional flow**: spectator upon object and object upon spectator and other participating "actors". This visualizes actant-roles where both the artworks and the component elements are seen as players in a machinic field of activities. The description of the bookworks that follows continues to explore this intention. By looking at known processes such as installation and bookart through a connective approach, this throws light on the kind of operational flows taking place between art and technology. This connective platform offers a way of creating materiality as a means of reterritorialising practice to counter some of the deterritorialising effects and loss of sitedness perceived in contemporary art in its engagement with technology.

IF I JUST TURN AND RUN explores **network-practices** through the compact



format of bookart.

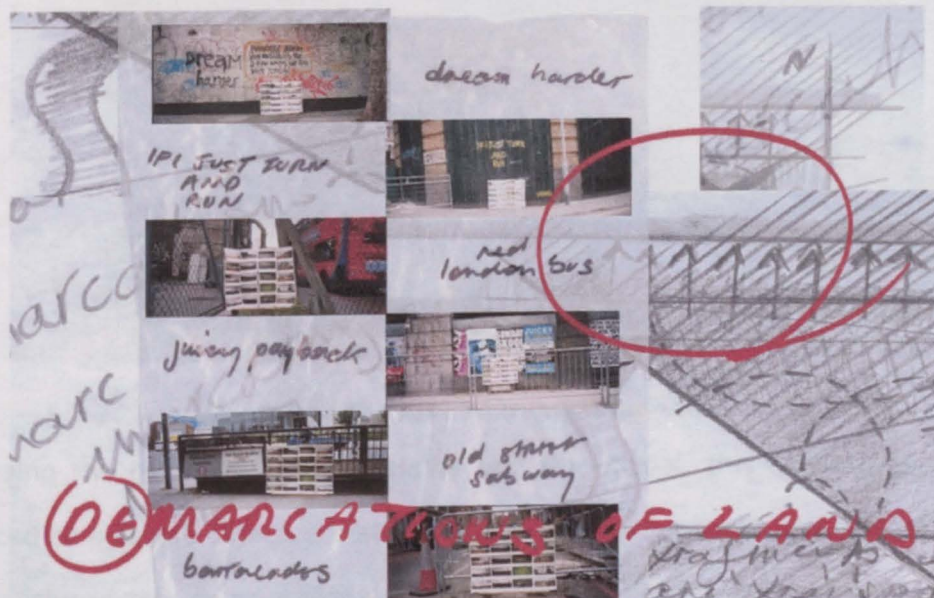
The front face is a computer photograph composed from a number of scanned photographs taken in Bethnal Green in East London to reposition

into the *DEMARCATIONS* artwork on exhibition in Malta at the time. This design was emailed for large-format (A1) output and exhibition in Korea. Digital space extends the physical studio in practices that erase the distance barrier through adding the dimension of this virtual plane that opens new methods for exhibiting

or publishing work in a distant country.⁷⁴ The title of this bookwork was appropriated from a found graffiti on a garage door in Bethnal Green. The digital intervention with an existing graffiti conceptualises an "erasure of walls". Graffiti itself is a subversive form of street politics; (a)political territorial markings whose power emerges inversely by the fact that they violate, erase and "draw down walls". (See also Brixton Walls, *EXterritorio* photograph on page 9).



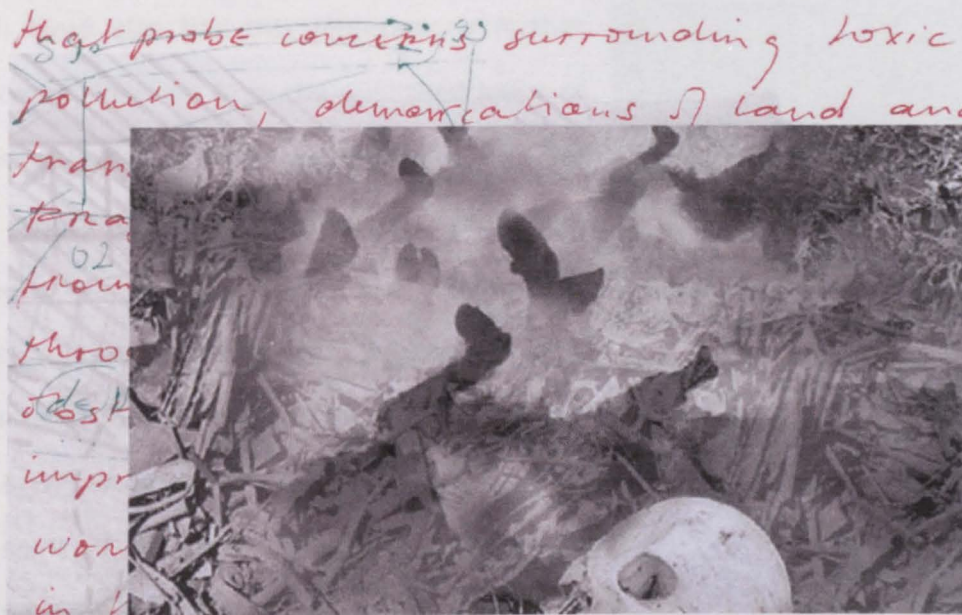
IF I JUST TURN AND RUN is a digitally produced sketch-book that mixes photography, drawings, notes and graphics. It hybridizes documentation within



the shape of a hand-stitched limited edition compilation designed and produced

⁷⁴ Cover exhibited in CDAK (*International Art & Design Exhibition*), Seoul, Korea 2002.

on a system of home machines: cameras, computer, digital programmes, scanner and printers. The studio in this sense is a self-publishing space where the artist operates liberally on personal choices as maker of one's own editions and publications and does away with dependency or control of the formal press, the publisher or the editor. Through the means of this network, artistic documentation becomes a recycled language seeking to retain the memories of the record whilst transforming this into an artistic gesture in its own right - the art document erased and recast. This binds inherently an aesthetic of *record* and *erasure*. In this conceptual sense it is a palimpsest; a creative parchment written over, images and data machined and relayed but incompletely erased and the earlier traces still visible.



Insert from **IF I JUST TURN AND RUN** - 2002

Traversing the gap between materiality and the virtual, this artwork has been produced as a tactile object, a material mixture of card, papers, threads, textures and translucencies; or as a digital version that can be relayed at distance. Like the CD or DVD (the video or projection artwork that conflates volume) new formats facilitate electronic mobility. Limitations of transportation and distance

can often hinder and cause constraints and I have felt the need to find ways of breaking the isolation barrier in order to network across a platform of wider audiences and connected space. I was therefore thinking in terms of transportability through an extension of practice reinvented as a collectable item. Significantly, my intention in designing this bookwork arose from the need to travel and find a way as an artist to document and communicate my work in different parts of the world and also in the hope of leaving samples of this work in permanent collections.⁷⁵ This artwork has been important to me in reflecting on communicative ways of working. My focus concerns this shift in thinking about practice from the isolated to the network.

Red Alert also has this intention; a further bookwork, inspired from the published letter of a young British wren on [red alert](#), writing her last words to her grandmother after being called to war in Afghanistan following the 9.11 attack. This work also recasts artistic documentation, triggered from the *WALL_OF_PRAYER*. In this sense it springs in the spirit of the haecceity and a [rhizomatic](#) "falling back" in that it is created from the photography of photography; the open-shutter



⁷⁵ *IF I JUST TURN AND RUN* has been acquired in the collections of the Tate, London, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and the Royal College in London. This bookwork was exhibited with the *WorldSNAPS* triptych in *Traverses* at the Kent Institute of Art & Design, Canterbury, England in September 2002. Exhibited also in EU inauguration exhibitions: *Breakthrough* in the Grote Kerk Den Haag in July/August 2004, and in *Nieuwe EU Landen*, Regentenkamer Kunstcentrum in The Hague, Holland in November 2004.

prints of a staged vigil-site of newspapers, stone and red church-candles in the *WALL_OF_PRAYER*'s first installation. **Red**

Alert also combines the territorial transitions between human, machinic and tactile passages through connective actants: artist, computer,

printer, sewing machine, materials, Internet and recipients.



The opportunity to exhibit these bookworks actually came with an invitation to reposition the *WALL_OF_PRAYER* in the Grote Kerk Den Haag in *Breakthrough*, an inaugurating exhibition for the work of a selection of artists coming from the ten new accessing member states into the European Union in May 2004.⁷⁶

The *WALL_OF_PRAYER*, an open-ended ongoing work that grows as newly connected issues are incorporated into the piece, had eight new images that brought it up to date.⁷⁷

The work was repositioned in a gated side-

chapel in the Grote Kerk, a specially selected site with pale lighting permeating the space from a huge Gothic stained-glass window. The images were placed on

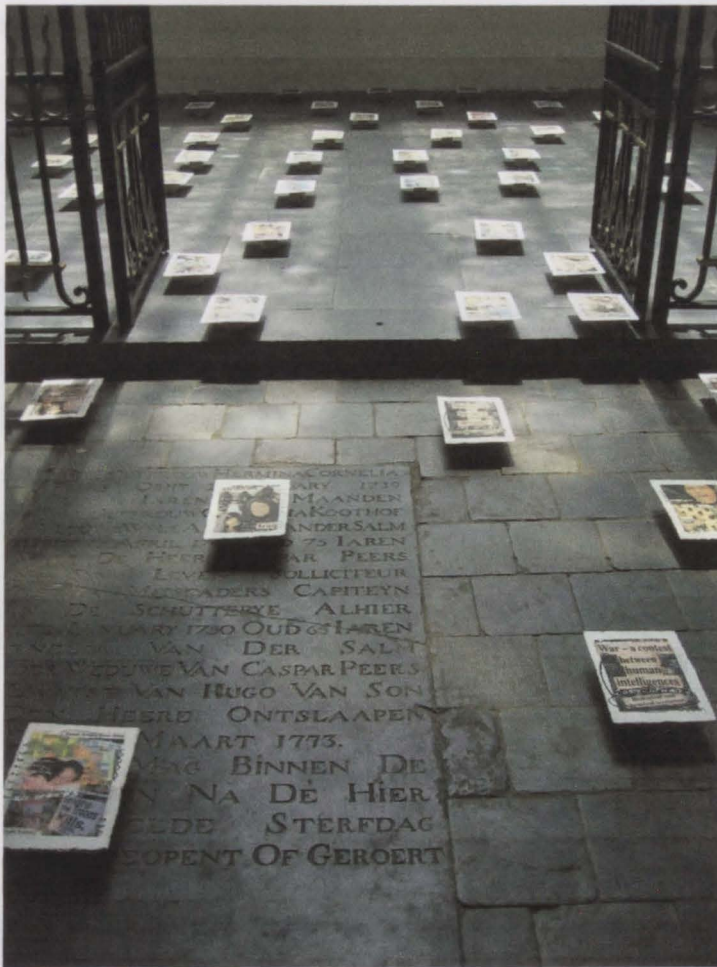


⁷⁶ *Breakthrough*, 1st July-29th August 2004, Grote Kerk, The Hague, Netherlands: http://www.grotekerkdenhaag.nl/source_nl/agenda/index_BT.html (last accessed 25.05.05)

⁷⁷ Refer to presentation of *Wall_of_Prayer* in Pinto Wharf, Malta.

the floor spilling beyond the gate onto the passageway and the inlaid tombs, where viewers could interact through walking within the composition.

The sanctuary of the church created conceptual tensions with this work dealing in essence with world **insecurity**, breakdown through war, and people forced across borders. This situational aesthetic and the Wall's placement on the floor also cross tensions with the politics associated with this particular occasion. This



exhibition, after all, celebrates European enlargement implying an "expansion of territory" and an erasure of barriers consolidated through bonds for more peace, security and greater economic and cultural mobility between Western Europe, the former Eastern Bloc and the Mediterranean.⁷⁸

The *WALL_OF_PRAYER* is conceptualised in the

wider context of the world as a whole. These social and political connotations have been fused into the conceptual and practical making of the *WALL_OF_PRAYER* as an unfixed history painting, easily transported in a suitcase

⁷⁸ European enlargement, May 2004; accessing countries: Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Malta and Cyprus.

containing eighty-two wooden three-inch plinths and a pack of prints. This installation will have another repositioning and placing in the Canterbury Cathedral.

DOUBLETAKE is an audio-video work made for the *WALL_OF_PRAYER*'s re-siting and was incorporated within its relocation in the Grote Kerk completing a fusion of bookworks, floor-work and video. This five-minute looped film is created from a montage of fragments of running CNN documentary news-streams and sound-clips edited from the spontaneous footage captured off TV sets on **11 September** 2001. A diary entrant created at that time of research reads: "...and then the plane plunged into the tall buildings again and I saw people run".



Video-stills from **DOUBLETAKE**

The frame-rate, playback speed, and colour layers were disrupted in editing. The finished re-make shows a slow-motion plane circling in a red landscape and plunging into the Twin Tower buildings. The image then swings into a chaotic vortex of people in the immediate aftermath. The accompanying audio is a collage of sounds and people's reactions during that moment. The video work was then transferred to DVD and was displayed on a 27-inch monitor placed on the floor amongst the print works during the exhibition in the Grote Kerk. *DOUBLETAKE* was designed within the ideas of "the unavoidable accident"

drawing a conceptual parallel with the creative and violent *lines of flight* and *lines of destruction*, thereby drawing a theoretical fusion between Virilio and Deleuze. The significance of this work is conceived on the coming together of the literal, political and symbolic erasures during that particular event; incipient ideas in the development of Ground Erasure as a concept. *DOUBLETAKE* attempts to push the limits of documentary as an art form. Like the *WALL_OF_PRAYER* this work plays on the notion of ongoingness in that nothing is finite. These works are neither completed nor unfinished; you only experience finality temporarily (haecceity). The collection of material continues to emerge from spontaneous news media and world issues as they happen that relate to transboundary movements. The work engages a situational aesthetic that combines different ground erasures conceived within ideas of the insecure art-object as an unfixed and unclosed ongoing-work. This is paralleled in the present political realities chronicling a world of insecurity, situation and history that shifts and moves on.

The dynamics binding artistic and political deterritorialisations in the artworks I describe in this documentation fuse with other practical arguments in Ground Erasure that address the impact on the visual arts of communication media in relation to the erosion of distance. Artists today, more than ever before, are afforded a territorial expansion and mobility through the new meanings of a reconfigured space through the possibilities of working within the language of IT that within itself encourages the breakdown of boundaries and frontiers, as Gordon Graham confirms in his philosophical enquiry: "...the Internet is wholly indifferent to international boundaries... [and] has the potential to be politically subversive".⁷⁹ Indeed, notwithstanding the fact that globalisation in recent years has had a rapid effect on the internationalisation of culture through the

⁷⁹ GORDON GRAHAM, *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Routledge, London 1999, 86.

intensification of communication media, artists throughout history have always sought to pull down, break or surpass the territorial confines of both their practice and space. It is through the movement of people (transboundary deterritorialisation) that new flows of expression or shifts have evolved in art.⁸⁰ Arguing on the essential exchange liberated through globalisation in the arts, Todoli states: "Art has always been moved by individuals. Before businessmen, artists were the precursors in breaking down frontiers".⁸¹

The new forms of political mobility and the new resources available to contemporary visual artists now mean that they can continue to develop ways of transcending fixed geographies. Telematic, Internet and Web technologies supplement physical travel and transboundary movement with virtual presences and new forms of communication. These additional platforms promote new encounters, which also mean that artists can approach challenging practices, work in less isolated environments, and broach themes that are divergent and universal in the context of a wider connected world. *Ground Erasure* is focused around the changing landscape of art-practice.

⁸⁰ This fact was reiterated by the Dutch State Secretary of Culture, Mrs MEDY C. VAN DER LAAN during *Breakthrough's* inauguration when she stated that great shifts in art history have always been marked by the interaction of artists coming from different locations and moving across others:

Artists never allow themselves to be confined by geographical borders: they cross these by definition...anyone expecting a sample of typically Latvian, Estonian, Slovenian or Maltese art will come away disappointed. These artists presenting themselves here in the Grote Kerk represent the European cultural tradition: they operate at the international level.

MC VAN DER LAAN, Opening Speech, *Breakthrough*, Grote Kerk Den Haag, 1st July 2004.

⁸¹ VICENTE TODOLI, inauguration speech as Director of Tate Modern, London 2002; *The Art Newspaper.com*, International Edition:

<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=10177> (last accessed 25.05.05).

SPEED_JOURNEYS are streams of videos captured at speed and conceived in relationship to the theme of Ground Erasure. This video work combines three superimposed journeys from footage drawn by air, land and sea. The air clip captures a sunrise during a 5.30 am flight; the land clip captures walls, boundaries, fields and tunnels from a car window; and the water clip is a sea journey by speed-boat. The three clips were combined in Premiere and a practical deterritorialisation was initiated through rubber-band techniques in parallel channels. The *stretch* and *pull* disruptions *bend* the timeline effecting visual differences in an uninterrupted line of communication in new wave-lengths of connections; a looped terrain of no borders and no checkpoints ranging across climate-scapes from sun to snow, from mechanical barriers to natural fields. This work consciously puts deterritorialisation and erasure practices into effect and



also consciously embodies notions of *site and light* conceived in the earlier stages of this research. The accident of speed becomes a line of flight depicting a non-classified territory that could be anywhere.

The work draws together a relativity of distances; that which is far away like the sun captured from a plane at speed, appears slow, and that captured at lower speed but from closer range like the wall from a car, appears fast. A conflation of sound from the relative machines (the airplane, car engine and motor boat) are compiled and altered in Goldwave to create a deterritorialised speed audio-mix.



This artwork is framed by the deeper contextual meanings underpinning this research. In *Crepuscular Dawn*, Virilio continues to talk of dromological acceleration in terms of an ubiquitous militancy eventually conquering land, sea and air – speed shrinking territoriality. To Virilio speed is not just a question of time. “Speed is a milieu”; it is a social delirium that has turned “reflection” into “reflex” action.⁸² To Deleuze, on the other hand, intensities are the connective flows or flux of a rhizomorphous journey whereby speed and slowness are experienced in terms of differential modes of temporality or relations of movement. Nomadological deterritorialisation creates a shifted perception of the paradigm of time from sequential to “becoming” and a “tearing out of context” to reformat new connections – intensities expanding territoriality. The divergences of Virilio and Deleuze meet in a machinic vision where the lines of flight and the lines of destruction intersect interdependently in intensities that motivate creativity. These concepts reiterate my earlier statement that significantly for me the *accident* is equal to the *line of flight*. In this creative sense, “erasure” does not imply “erosion” but “erasure of erosion” through creative productions. And, Ground Erasure is a plane for this artistic productivity. This visual line of communication connects with other contextual intensities and meanings. The philosophical and the political, for instance, meet in undercurrents of social change driven through the dramatic intensifications and accelerations of global change provoking a receding in the importance of geographical boundaries and

⁸² PAUL VIRILIO - SYLVERE LOTRINGER, *Crepuscular Dawn*, Semiotext(e), NY 2002, 151.

distances. This fosters a deeper consciousness of interconnectedness in human exchange whereby the tensions between "particularism" and "universalism" cross in a *spatial continuum*.⁸³

SPEED JOURNEYS



transformation of the subject

These ideas converge in **SPEED JOURNEYS** which is a visual interrogation of the notion of "territory" as emerging out of a previous century, which had a history of bunkers and closed "walls" such as the Berlin Wall, into the paradox of the 21st century which breaks down frontiers while forming other barriers, such as the Israel/Palestine Separation Wall. Indeed, **walls** have become indelible *signifiers* for human divide, reach, or demarcation. Consider, for instance, that the Great Wall of China is the only human artifact visible on the face of the Earth from outer Space. Deleuze talks of the "white wall/black hole" (*visageite*) as the axes of significance and subjectification, like the face is the gestural signifier for the subject. He calls this the "abstract machine of faciality".⁸⁴ He also maintains that territorial expansion occurs not through the hierarchical powers of *walls* but through the trajectory forces of **rhizome-departures**. Virilio, from another angle, talks of walls in terms of speed limits which have accelerated to the point of zero: we have reached the "wall of light" he states. But this may not be quite so finite in the light of a recent "speed bump" in scientific research suggesting that the speed of light may not be constant. Paul Davies states that "the theory of relativity may not be the last word". The discovery that "motion slows down

⁸³ STEGER, (G), 11.

⁸⁴ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (ATP), 167.

time" means that faster-than-light-travel, prohibited by the law of relativity, may one day be possible.⁸⁵

SPEED_JOURNEYS maps a deterritorialised terrain formed out of a compounded accumulation of these thoughts and feelings. The work is emergent upon the tensions between erosion as begetting a "loss", a pollution of distance or dematerialization of territory, and erasure as cancellation of that loss through transmutation of the *accident* into *flight* - a dawning of connections and expansion. *SPEED_JOURNEYS* conceptualises deterritorialised space, polysemic and open to difference and affects. This fluidity calls to mind the haecceity and a quotation from *A Thousand Plateaus* that seems to illustrate the essentially fleeting flux of time as:

*A floating line that knows only speeds and continually divides that which transpires into an already-there that is at the same time not-yet-here, a simultaneous too-late and too-early, a something that is both going to happen and has just happened.*⁸⁶



These looped journeys, dashing across miles of terrain, moments and climatic ranges, are an emotive

visualisation of a paradoxical world that appears at once **constant and random**.

They are an artistic encapsulation of a world sensed through displacement and territorial unfixtiture and yet intuited through perpetual renewal and creative connectedness.

⁸⁵ THE AGE: *Einstein's Relativity Theory Hits a Speed Bump*, Aug 8 2002. Registration: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/08/07/1028157961167.html?oneclick=true> (last accessed 16.05.05)

⁸⁶ DELEUZE - GUATTARI, (*ATP*), 262.

Ground Erasure continues to invoke this plane of artistic, political and philosophical convergences. Here, the artistic journey conceptualises a nomadic practice; a way of working from one project to another in waves of reterritorialisation that occurs on completion and presentation of the artwork. This then recoils, destabilizes and deterritorialises, and feeds forward to other processes. The flows connect, overlap and align in a machinic assemblage in ways that map an ongoing mobile-territory. In theory this plane of energy kindles the conceptual body without organs in that it is not defined by hierarchical points but by mobile lines (art processes) travelling between layers, from centres to peripheries and then "falling back"; and henceforth from old centres "launching forth to the new". My artworks created in this machinic space have been approached through a descriptive connectivity. In interrogating my research question concerning the deterritorialising notion of territory this position focuses on re-conceptualising singular, isolated viewpoints into distributed, network strategies of perception. This reterritorialising connectivity is important in view of the present cultural crises poised as it is between contradictory tensions of sameness and difference; it is a re-stabilising response to the observation that as the old structures of modernity gradually give way to postmodern frameworks, we experience a less stable sense of territory, belonging and knowledge.

CONCLUSION

My engagement with machinic space in this research entered a new phase with the development and completion of *Speed_Journeys* and the creation of a further video work called *Tunnel Vision*.¹ Between the 1st and 11th March 2005 my PhD exhibition collectively titled *Ground Erasure* comprising an installation of the two video works took place in the Herbert Read Gallery, KIAD, England, with parallel screening of these works in Waikato University, New Zealand.²

Speed_Journeys transmutes the accident of speed into a communication line in superimposed streams of film shot from different machines, a speeding car, a speedboat, and an aeroplane; a geographical erasure conflating land, sea and sky into an eternal rush of disappearing and reappearing terrain. An audio erasure is conceptualised through a sound mix of superimposed machines and engines: that of the car, the motorboat, and the plane including a human element in the pilot's voice. *Tunnel Vision*, on the other hand, represents a historical erasure that intertwines the coming together of different machines: the political machine, the architectural machine, and the technological machine in a particular place. The erasure of race and identity becomes perceptually linked to the erasure of time and territory in the duration of a slow journey with a video camera in a historic extermination site; a tunnel which, like a wound in the earth, punctuates points between life on one end and death on the other. The tunnel runs under Terezienstadt, a concentration camp outside Prague used by the Third Reich during the Second World War. An audio erasure is effected through the erasure of my footsteps, the same sounds being modulated into high strung

¹ See Diagram 1, Appendix A, 99.

² Refer to *Ground Erasure* Exhibition: PhD Submission, Appendix B, 103-113.

notes to analogise the angst of a human being's final journey in the tunnel. The tunnel becomes metonymy for time-lap as the instance between two points: origin and destination, the surface of the earth and its inside, actuality and recollection. The immersion of other time is implied in the duration of the artwork that begs the viewer to watch the video for the same length of time it takes to make the walk.³ The erasure of what Virilio calls the "time interval" – that is, the elimination of the *time-lap* or *distance* – explored in the two works, binds them together. Technological speed he warns, analysing territorial disappearance through a militarised control, is similar to other extermination models (e.g. the annihilating political machines of Fascism and Communism). The *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision* video works are a montage informed by such "accidents" (historical and technological) and expanded into flights of moving image. In the art space they brought together a conceptual network of machines, physically and conceptually constructed in a system of machinic connections.

As outlined in my introduction, the original aim of this thesis was to interrogate some of the meanings of territory through my own practice from the perspective of an artist working with computer mediated technologies on themes related to global issues and transboundary movements. My engagement with machinic spaces has been aimed at seeking connective ways of responding to some of the conflicting issues of deterritorialisation and disappearing territoriality and arguments of a growing displacement arising from the effects of globalisation, speed and erasure. Exploring these questions and problems has been very important given how communication media produce twofold tensions - a sense of

³ JESSICA MORGAN, "Time After Time" in *Time Zones*, edited by the Tate, Tate Publishing, London, 2004, 15.

space expanding or shrinking in ways that are vastly influencing how we are being informed and practising as artists. My response of a connective way of looking and perceiving art has come out of researching these questions. The landscape of art fits in the broader framework of territory and its ambivalent meanings where, politically speaking, territoriality seems to lose definition on a global scale through the shedding of borders, whilst observing tighter, more constrained meanings on the local, regional scale. The erasures taking place between local and global contexts frequently give rise to contentious questions which result in both positive and negative effects, as my research has revealed. But it is such ambivalent phenomena that characterise boundaries and the sense of satellite landscapes and technological fields of speed that have driven me to question the meaning of territory from a combined political and artistic perspective. And, it is the implications of these issues on me as an artist and on understanding how new parameters shape new meanings in art practice that have motivated me to delve, question and learn from this research. The theorisation of my practice through Virilio and Deleuze and other postmodern and postcolonial references has served to broaden this understanding first, through seeking a philosophical context and strengthening my political argument concerning issues of territoriality; and second, in helping to articulate a position as an artist that embraces technological change not without caution but with a questioning awareness of how we can be in control of bettering human destiny in harmony with other things. In this respect, the selection of Virilio and Deleuze has proved key in two major respects: Virilio through providing a profound and historical critical perspective on technified territorialities, though arguably in so doing he implements art in an over-militarised aesthetic of disappearance; and Deleuze through providing a connective philosophy for an invigorative expansion of territoriality through artistic exploration in the unknown. Though Deleuze's

destratification theories must be seen in the post-structural context that were influenced by communism, his theories on seeking balance through resisting new totalities can still be applied on the opposite pole of present day politics and capitalist excesses. Towards these conclusions, Ground Erasure has activated an effective machinery through which to shed light and a new understanding of a connective vision of art practice arrived at through the combined processes of my artistic practice, the theoretical research, and the communicative methodologies of this project, and pursued through the three-phase strategy outlined in my research methodologies.⁴

My approach has essentially analysed deterritorialisation through drawing a parallel between politics and art through Ground Erasure as a framework concerned with the relationship and distribution of a spectrum of heterogeneous perspectives. The application of Actor-Network Theory has involved a method of observing the interaction of these elements as consequence.⁵ Indeed, my project has conceptualised space and emerged out of a relationship of distances. This has been an important standpoint in the observation of the production of space, and in looking at art as relational and social production rather than as an isolated form of expression, autonomous and representational. The examination of art as a process of cultural production, viewing changes in expression in relation to other social changes, has proved imperative in my research in understanding contemporary art practice in terms of hybridity, temporality and loss of sitedness as some of the chief deterritorialising elements characterising both my own practice and that of other artists working with technology and machinic concepts. This understanding became a determining factor in the connective approach

⁴ See Diagram 1, Appendix A, 99.

⁵ See Diagrams 2 and 3, Appendix A, 100 and 101.

underpinning my research and practice, which also influenced other elements such as the shape and design of the text comprising two interactive books as examples of fusion, interaction, and stabilisation. My prime concern in forming such responses, related to Virilio's arguments that the dislocating and delocalising effects of global change are creating a new "non-place" in art, implying art's virtual disappearance, and that contemporary artists can choose to liberate or collaborate in this dilemma of a lost presence through their practice. Such statements suggested that my proposal and objective of a connective and network framework was worthwhile, an approach I found particularly viable and applicable through the vocabulary of Actor-Network Theory. This interdisciplinary approach to understanding the multiple interacting parts in a system began in the 1980's in Paris as an exploration of "actor-networks" and is current through to *Society and Space* published in 2003. It is driven by a perspective founded on a "principle of generalised symmetry" that what is human and non-human should be integrated into the same conceptual framework.⁶ My research methodology gives a detailed breakdown of the purpose and function of ANT in my research through Bruno Latour's proposal of actor-strategies that create inscriptions and flows not only by acting, but by being acted upon. This scheme provided an interesting visual way for me to talk about my artworks as "actors" structuring a network of developmental processes and artworks acting towards the final works. These "actors" and "actants" converged in a laboratory of practice targeted towards resolving the best way forward for Ground Erasure. Conclusively, ANT's main contribution in my research has proved insightful first, as a reterritorialising strategy to balance out and respond to the deterritorialising issues that break down boundaries and space which I explore through the key thinkers Virilio and

⁶ International Society for Complexity, Information, and Design Encyclopedia, *Actor-Network Theory*: http://www.iscid.org/encyclopedia/Actor-Network_Theory (last accessed 25.05.05).

Deleuze; second, in its different way of looking on "structure" not as a hierarchical scaffolding but more as a builder's open work site, a plateau of different work nodes contributing to one another; and third, in its relational and distributive conceptual materiality of space, an idea I have found invaluable for two prime reasons: one, in conceptualising a materiality constructed from the abstract connections interacting in machinic spaces; and two, in exploring this idea creatively in the art site of my Ground Erasure exhibition of submitted works (*Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision*).⁷

My research methodology also details how these interactive strategies have been integrated into the text as productive process. Using the text as a kind of active passage allowed a machinic flexibility corresponding with my theme and led to crucial discoveries emerging in the form of a conceptual position for practice. This I can best explain as a position that resisted totality at the same time as it gravitated towards it. I have also expressed this at various points in my text through the conceptual position of the "haecceity" as a bi-polar situation between different modes of temporality resisting origin and destination. This Deleuzian translation into my practice helped me to apply and sustain the essential role of conceptualising and testing the notion of territory through the double-motions of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. These dual processes take place interactively in the creative development of my labwork - that is, reaching moments of reterritorialisation in finished works which then deterritorialise and move forward to new productions. It has been therefore, through the catalytic process of my text and theory, combined with making art, that I have been able to leap forward and develop the final evaluation that distinguishes my labwork (in Book 2) from my last submissions in the Ground Erasure exhibits. This approach

⁷ See Artist's Statements, Appendix B, 106-109.

has a significant connection to some of those main findings embedded in the theoretical part of my work which conclusively relate to the ambivalent tensions that position art between stratification and destratification; between the tensions of political, economic and cultural global changes; between different forms of resistance, liberal or collaborative; between the tensions of a disappearing territoriality and an expanding, experimental new one.⁸ Findings that made me come to the conclusion that the role of art is a constant balance between loss and gain (stability and instability), since art (like philosophy) has the power of slowing the unavoidable pull towards limit and the desire production machine, through eternal newness and difference. The opposing tensions of my findings which emerged chiefly from my analyses of Virilio and Deleuze at first seemed to pose contradictions. But alternatively, this ambivalence actually formed the foundational argument of my concept of Ground Erasure as the experimental creative space for my practice through which to resolve issues of deterritorialisation and dislocation. Most importantly, the ambivalence of my findings led me to my own intellectual "escape" formed at the juncture of these thinkers' intersection, leading me to my own development of an equation between "accidents" and "lines of flight".⁹

These concepts and tensions reached a visual culmination in their translation into a machinic art site of conceptual erasures. Ground Erasure conjures a relationship between machines: in *Speed_Journeys*, a geographical erasure, and *Tunnel Vision*, a historical erasure. My Artist's Statements describe how the concepts of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation find articulation in this Ground Erasure exhibition, contextualising the transitions of segmentarity and

⁸ Diagram 3, Appendix A, 101.

⁹ See Diagram 4, Appendix A, 102.

machinic movement into the visual statements of these two video works.¹⁰ The political and artistic layers of deterritorialisation in the work suffused within them an additional perspective, that of the relief of time. This became clear to me after visiting the *Time Zones* exhibition of video-works (Tate Modern: October 2004-January 2005) whose subject was essentially "time" itself, during the same time I was working on my own video works. Stimulated by this show, I could see that Ground Erasure now embodied not only meanings of political and artistic erasures but "time erasure" as well.¹¹ This element had very important implications in helping me to make the defining leap from my developmental labworks to my final submissions. The speed and frame-rate technical modulations of duration, image and sound in the *Premiere* and *Goldwave* timelines (speeded up in *Speed_Journeys* and slowed down in *Tunnel Vision*) permitted values of time erasure which were visually and conceptually incorporated into these two different journeys. The question of territory and equivocal boundaries I set out to interrogate at the beginning of my research ultimately found resolution in the context of Ground Erasure in these visual statements. Whilst *Speed_Journeys* represents a somewhat objective statement, an immersion into time, speed and territorial erasure, *Tunnel Vision* also harbours within its conceptual erasure a subjective, emotional expression. Now this aesthetic difference was a vital point in that these two works, placed together, observed dedifferentiations (shared boundaries) and yet were quite different at the same time. The relationship between these two works was finally consummated in a series of other technical and aesthetic decisions in the art site of the Herbert Read Gallery. The placement of each element in the site was carefully sketched and measured in relation to the space available. The way the

¹⁰ Refer to Artist's Statements, Appendix B, 106-109.

¹¹ MORGAN, (*Time Zones*), 14-27.

Herbert Read was divided provided an ideal space to explore and apply the concepts of the two videos comprising a networked relationship of machines in a connected installation. It was therefore, by design that *Speed_Journeys* was placed upon entrance in the larger space while *Tunnel Vision* was placed in the tunnel-like elongated inner part of the gallery. It was important that the specially constructed screen for *Speed_Journeys* was large and away from the wall for optimum visual impact and an erasure effect which required a floating borderless surface to express its full meaning. These decisions were determined upon careful considerations of scale in relation to viewer and object in the site. The screen, for this powerful rush of speed, demanded a free-standing wall-like construction placed deliberately at a specific angle that would encourage the viewer to walk freely in the space in a dynamic line between this and the computer screen at the opposite angle.¹² The relationship between the computer screen, the suspended projector, and the projected screen drew a dynamic, intentionally designed relationship between machines. This interaction was expanded to the concentrated lineal view of the TV screen selected for *Tunnel Vision* in the inner space of the gallery which was painted black for this purpose. These judgements were made in a way that would create a contrast between the open wall-erasure screen in the outer space and the narrowed singular vision of the TV screen in the dark, inner tunnel space. A further decision was taken to have speakers and open sound in the outer space and headphones in the inner space in order to control the level of sound intervention of one work on the other. All these aesthetic and technical decisions were predominantly directed at making the best use of space while maintaining an alignment between presentation and the concepts permeating each piece. In this way, site became an important catalyst of workable tensions across information flows and space conceived in a

¹² See Herbert Read site plan, Appendix B, 111.

user/viewer interaction between audience and machine. The overall objective was to construct a materiality in the art site created out of a machinic distribution of spatial relationships. This matched the same objectives I sought to achieve in the theoretical analysis and in my research project as a whole.

The culmination of my research in the Ground Erasure exhibition was arrived at through the second aspect of my findings, the practical findings embedded in the developmental artworks created over the years of this research. These findings were constructed within the myriad processes and evaluative decisions that took place as I progressed from one artwork to the next. I describe in my research methodology some of the testing methods observed in a series of rigorous experiments taking place in a studio laboratory intentionally set up to determine the best way for Ground Erasure to advance. Book 2 of my text fulfils the purpose of outlining many of the stages pursued in my practice through a list of works selected from a large body of material created over the time of research. This selection was necessary because at the early stage research was kept very open and the hub of my thinking centring on *transboundary movements* became an immensely exciting and intriguing experience of traversing different meanings transposed within political issues and territories. This I sought to translate into an art language which had to be collage since this method allowed me to provoke debate in the juxtaposition of elements as disparate as burning funerary piers in India, culling fields in England, or genocide in Bosnia, into combined ecological statements. It was therefore decidedly transboundedness and difference that became the focus of my labwork linking my works to one another and ultimately to my final submissions in my Ground Erasure show. Transboundedness involved the travelling over diverse political territories combining with the artistic surface territories of paper or dissolved digital data space. Through my theoretical

research I was later able to translate what I was doing into issues of *detritorialisation* and *dislocation* arising from my contact with Virilio and Deleuze's theorisation of diminishing and/or expanding territorialities. The provocation of conflictual issues of political, social and philosophical debate informed and infused my practical analysis, articulating an interrogation which profoundly directed a rationale for my aesthetic decisions in relation to hybrid arguments, temporal notions of time and space, and the physicality or dematerialisation of my choice of materials within a transforming understanding of sitedness, mobile and unfixed. It was hence the combination of these technical and conceptual forms of dedifferentiation and effectively, the manipulative skills of superimposed data in computer software, the transportability and accessibility in data space, and the ability to pull dispersed bytes of information into new powerful juxtapositions that led to the final works, *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision*.

To this end, the artworks listed in my developmental processes were realised in different formats and in parallel to my developing the concept of a Ground Erasure framework that was still in pursuit of some analytical refinement. In this respect the *WorldSNAPS*, created in 2001, formed a crucial set of decisions that conceptualised my first thoughts about Ground Erasure within the erasure of image borders and practical dedifferentiation. Though these works were a serious attempt at dealing with a number of important issues, for instance, the accessibility of the Internet for an artist working on world issues or the ready availability of online material tested through digital image-grabbing and archiving, the *WorldSNAPS* were significant for my development mainly as ambitious manipulations in Photoshop. Without underestimating their value, they became too much about technique, too literal and graphically oppressive, focused

around an ecological statement that started to recede as my concepts concerning speed and erasure came to the forefront. They reached their moment of territorialisation upon presentation when, examined within the context of a physical site, I felt their printed format represented a restriction of scale. I could not print these works very large without losing quality. And the frozen format of printed surfaces and separate units was inhibiting and limiting without the engaging perspectives of movement and sound essential to signify the erasure qualities of a globalised terrain. Furthermore, the restriction of the printed perspective hid and buried the machinic connective network inside a still image as opposed to the more democratic installation enacting the user/viewer spatial relationship that later became an important signifier. Within the context of the evolution of Ground Erasure therefore, the *WorldSNAPS* failed to describe the territorial erasure or the vibrant flux of locations merged and disappearing in an ephemerally temporal ambient field of light, which eventually I felt could only find poignant eloquence in the large dissolving surface of an audio video environment as in *Speed_Journeys*.

Beyond the *WorldSNAPS* I proceeded to test the collage aesthetic fused in other languages and mixed materials in installations such as *Demarcations* and the *Wall_of_Prayer*. *Demarcations* concentrated on issues of the obstruction and intrusion of land signifying the politicisation of bordered space through red tape. But the key discovery of this work was mainly achieved through the idea of the metamorphosing art object developed through working between parallel sites and distances. However, at this point this idea remained quite unresolved and inefficient due to the constraints of mounted print works and a physical art object that I had to transport myself by air from Malta to England. I was able to resolve this idea and the problems of mobility more appropriately in my final exhibition

within the flexible format of digital video and DVDs used to construct simultaneous screenings between New Zealand and England. The way Ground Erasure now embodied time and space and the metamorphosing art object in this conceptual arc between two lands may not have happened without the earlier experiments of *Demarcations* and the *Wall_of_Prayer*, which took the ideas exploring boundary tape and the ongoing art object still further. The red and white barrier tape in these earlier site tests used to signify intrusion and delineate war zones that blow lands to bits and tear people apart transpired into miles of iron barricades filmed on high speed roads in *Speed_Journeys*. Plastic and paper were converted to celluloid. And walls on floors in the *Wall_of_Prayer* converted to erasures and a furtive political machine, perceived in the terror of a singular perspective of vision in *Tunnel Vision*. The moving image seemed a better language to articulate the erasure of time, land, history, people and identity than the fragmented passages of printed sheets of paper spread in the still, unmoving images of the *Wall_of_Prayer* floor-installation. True, the walk of the spectator amongst the propped printed images on the floor enacted a movement in the site that allowed time for an introspective relationship with the object and issues at hand. But the printworks, dispersed horizontally over a very large site upon exhibition, did not allow the viewer to capture the full picture with the same intensity encapsulated in the black tunnel space carrying the eye along a slow passage simulating that of a contractile war machine as in *Tunnel Vision*. My decisions to turn from print to video, therefore, were determined by the judgement that this material was a better language to articulate what Ground Erasure had come to mean: machinic spaces, ambivalent tensions and temporal erasures. These meanings embodied a politicised understanding of space where territory is demarcated by speed and movement; by a language of a boundary ephemeral and dissolved into an abstract machine that implicates history and

technology, time and erasure, loss and gain, and ultimately, terror and exaltation. These, my last works attempted to achieve. Moreover, this definition fitted my alignment of the accident with lines of flight – the conceptual passage, for me, through which to translate such issues into artistic practice and statement.

From another perspective I had already tested the medium of video in my *WeatherTALK* and *Doubletake* artworks. These were very important productions in testing the manipulation of secondary material through reportage in both sound and image at a time when I was still developing certain technical skills particularly those in Premiere. The testing of mixing reportage with primary film, of manipulating sound data, ordinary weather reports or people's interviews, and of overlaying and transforming raw news footage within new personal associations was challenging. I learnt from these experiences the dynamics of creating sound and image environments questioned through a wall projection (*WeatherTALK*) and TV aesthetic (*Doubletake*) that had to integrate with the problems of non-art sites, different machines and objects, atmosphere and audience in a unified concept. The placement of such objects as a set of speakers, the suspension of a projector from a ceiling, and the integration of a TV and DVD player in a floor work, were not just the mere deliberations of "vehicles" for the art. Particularly stimulated through ANT and the symbiotic relationships on a plateau between humans and machines, I began to think of these technological objects and decisions as raw machine statements in their natural selves for an artist operating with technology. These debates put me in good stead for the machinic connective site I was to attempt later in the final show. *WeatherTALK* and *Doubletake* served as valuable conduits for the final resolution of Ground Erasure but, in this context they remained crude or inappropriate

renditions. These works had in fact been created at a time when I was still deliberating concepts and technical issues moving back and forth, in and out of a machine, and between the printed object and the moving image as art languages. This inquiry had its roots in the issues of mobility central to my research. It was in part for this reason that at this indecisive stage I also turned to the bookform as a transportable, mobile object materialised in the *If I Just Turn and Run* and *Red Alert* bookworks. But, whilst fulfilling this objective and also offering a flexible format as a collectable item, these works proposed new enquiries, new uncertainties and limitations. This format and the content of these books were too abstractly remote to the question of territory as terrain or to the questions of disappearance and loss of presence which had become essential to my concepts on the machinic. And in this sense the book format, tangible, material and small, failed to answer the ambivalence of vision and conceptual territorial erasure embedded in my research question. The objective of scale and relational spatiality had become a profound issue in my aesthetic decisions in dealing with the philosophical dimensions of time and space. In this case I felt that the book's machinic connections were somewhat too contained, insular and introverted within the scale of a small paper object held in hand. Decidedly these static objects could not answer the movement and dynamism of a set of relationships and abstract flows translated into a connective materiality in the site of an audio-video installation; one also conceptualised through parallel screening traversing diametric time-zones and lands across the globe.

It is only through this heuristic approach of testing processes and production in an aligned development of the conceptual processes that through *Ground Erasure* I was able to reach an evaluative theorised conclusion realised through the exhibition site. My earlier experiences in the laboratory of practice were stepping

stones of value from which I learnt and which were necessary to advance and synthesise the theoretical analysis. Henceforth the decisions concerning the final site were dependent on earlier experimentation. A major development in my thinking for instance emerged as I was doing the final editing to *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision* in Premiere where the regular stratification of the video and audio time channels and the red flexible nodes of the opacity tools stimulated my concept of "rubberbanding". Rubberbanding intellectualised the connective form of thinking I was trying to express whereby the flexing or tightening of rubberband time allows us to peer into a world that we choose. This further extension to my thinking had emerged from the technical superimposition of sound and image streams facilitated by Premiere software. The different "worlds" are interpreted in the different visual dimensions of video streams, land, sea, or sky. The important discovery for me at this point was that the machine and the programme had had a role in inspiring concepts in the same way Deleuze had stated that Cinema, as a mechanisation of moving segments, had actually influenced new conceptual "crystals" of thought in philosophy. This parallel was further clarified by ANT in its challenging strategy of placing humans and machines on the same interactive plateau as a way of understanding stability through relational and distributive energies. This interrelationship found ultimate realisation in the interventions of computer, projectors, DVD players, TV, speakers, screens and the supportive contraptions in the Ground Erasure art site. This manifestation of spatial relations between human and non-human artefacts was essentially a leap forward from my developmental lab to my final site. The machinic concept of networked space was not only *implicit* in the internal machinery of the final video works and in their relationship to each other, but *explicit* in the site itself as a materialisation of machinic connectedness in installation. Conclusively, these territorial connectivities were conceptually

supported in the interactive text; in the relation between different countries and locations in *Speed_Journeys* and *Tunnel Vision* transpiring in geographical and historical erasures; in the expanded meaning of "site" through concurrent screening between different time-zones (UK and New Zealand); and in the connective spectrum of distances underpinning the pools of activities (communication method, art practice, and philosophical theory) in this research.

The additional practical discovery that transpired from my last work was the use of the computer interface as an art object with the Premiere programme running not as a functional representation but as an "actor" and art object in its own right; an actor which had been acted upon by me through producing the project being screened in the opposite direction, and an actor that had acted on me through inspiring my concepts of rubberband time. Further to this, because the computer on show was the original actor and the machine I had actually worked on in the DARC (Digital Arts Research Centre) studios in England, the set-up in New Zealand had to be a simulation of this by way of computer Wallpaper created out of a digital screen-print of the original running screen. These last experiments indicated important implications for ways forward in my research practice and thinking. To be sure, the use of computer screens in two locations - as a running programme (in the Herbert Read) and as a wallpaper screen (in Waikato) - point to other developments and transformed uses of computer on-screen data art. For example, in debating the future development of digital imaging and information media spaces, Brandon Taylor looks at collage transformations visualised in the split-second appearance of on-screen data flows. He argues that such temporal realities are "frozen" in the computer screen-print entitled *Riot* by Mark Napier (2001). Taylor goes on to ask if this still reproduction belongs to a modern art tradition, or points somewhere beyond

it: to ephemeral data-time expression perceived in "the flickering noticeboard of the screen...always in motion, never still – a collage effect in which words and images ceaselessly shift and flow".¹³ My interest lies in where this debate points to issues of the computer interface as cultural expression.

Whilst pointing to the potential future direction of this research the developments in my last works and exhibition, in an interesting way, also brought certain limitations to light. Throughout my research, for instance, my concern in developing *Ground Erasure* was focused upon the new connective territory that is forming particular ways of practising art and communicating across distance for artists and future research. This is an important facet of cultural communicative experience and expression. I theorised this as a set of abstract extelligent flows forming a web of inscriptions that could be interpreted as new connective expressions of materiality. This materiality provides an important connective intellectualisation of space needed to counter the arguments of the deterritorialisation of territoriality and the dematerialisation of the art object occurring through the intervention of new media technologies in art practice. However, the limitations of my research practice conversely may be seen at this very point where in my artwork I would have liked to push further the new artistic exploration made possible through interactive digital space, the Internet and the Web. My practice essentially, in dealing with issues of the metamorphosing art object and arguments of dematerialised presence, has intentionally explored working in and out of the machine in order to seek ways of constructing stabilising forms through the expressions of print, paper, and the digital video disc. It is hence here that I see *Ground Erasure* pointing forward,

¹³ BRANDON TAYLOR, *Collage. The Making of Modern Art*, Thames & Hudson, London 2004, 212.

into exploring the interface as cultural expression in new extended ways. As Lev Manovich expresses in the collection of essays entitled *Uncanny Networks*, artist-researchers using computers will use them it is hoped: "as a true medium for the cultural expression of the generation – but not simply to make videos, arrange music, or design clothes – but, rather, to design software and interfaces themselves".¹⁴ This implies, in other words, that artists might express themselves through software design the way other generations expressed themselves through books and movies. This gap in my research leaves open the territory of Ground Erasure for other artist researchers or indeed, for the direction of my own future research beyond the Virilio and Deleuze framework. This enquiry points beyond the physical order stored in cultural art objects be they celluloid, DVDs, smart chips, or websites used merely as vehicles for physical representations. Certainly, the physical order of cyberspace includes hardware, wires, transmitters, motherboards, monitors and other physical materials which are subject to the physical limitations of other cultural objects. But these objects mediate with electronic data spaces in ways that enable cultural interactive productions and transformations which transcend these limits and promote exploration of new spatial materialities in art.

These implications springing from my own exhibition also bear connections with the third aspect of my research findings, relating to methods and communication processes. Some of my practical art processes leading to the exploration of particular methods of Internet accessibility through digital resources possible for an artist working at distance on global subjects have already been pointed out. In addition to this kind of accessibility, this project has taken full advantage of

¹⁴ LEV MANOVICH, "Digital Constructivism: What is European Software" in *Uncanny Networks* edited by Geert Lovink, MIT, USA 2004, 92.

existing methods to support communication with a university at a distance for supervisory expertise. Communication and digital technologies have of course facilitated modes of working, researching, creating art, communicating, transporting material, and seeking opportunities in ways that will continue to advance far beyond the experience of this project in the future. In spite of this, working at distance is not easy. Without underestimating the values of information communication tools, distance approaches require motivation, enthusiasm and ever-increasing technical skills and upgrading, in addition to the possibility of having to communicate across different conventions of work ethics and different international time-zones erasing night or day, week-day or week-end modes of working. For the purposes of this research, as outlined in my research methods, I discovered a personal way of creating digital journal logs which took the form of data diaries to communicate research to supervisors. This strategy proved valuable in constructing a reflective process of researching, reading and writing, evidencing work, as well as initiating ideas for potential art projects. This method was supported by other electronic forms of communication utilising for instance web conference tools, voice over internet protocol and other ways of communicating at distance as these became increasingly available over the space of this research. However, the main implication of this experience is that the fine artist researcher does not need to be on-site and fixed to location as much as previously. And most importantly, telematics and distance technologies allow accessibility to information, communication and opportunities; a greater participative role for those artists living in particularly specific circumstances or in remote locations and places relatively isolated from the mainstreams of fine art activity.

The implied contributions to knowledge embedded in the Ground Erasure exhibition and in this research project as a whole, are inscribed in the machinic and compounded activities of this research. In summary, these provide a method of constructing an international practice project dealing with global issues in-situ as a response to countering the problematic of an artist working in a relatively isolated location; the application of ANT in fine art as a systems tool for artists operating in machinic spaces to explain a reterritorialising approach to the interaction between art and technology; the application of communication at distance in such aspects of research including viva examination through web-casting and conferencing, and the parallel screening of art as exhibition taking place at vast distances and in opposite parts of the world. The implications emerging through the way I constructed this project and the interweaving of a circle of constellated activities combining art practice, research and epistemology, were ultimately reflected in the conceptualisation of a machinic connective site in the final show through a developing relationship between practice and process. The tacit knowledge underpinning these processes contributes to a new way of looking at contemporary art practice through a connectionist mode of perception. This is seen as a way of conceiving materiality and a sense of sitedness through distributionist networks of production, connectivities, and interactions focusing on a shift away from representational, isolationist modes of perception as described in my introduction.

This connective experience, I have proposed, is a way of looking at art operating in contemporary machinic contexts. This is important because the fragmentation, dispersal and dissolution of space reflected in the postmodernist era points towards a need for new forms of reterritorialisation and stabilisation to counter the exacerbating forces of dislocation. A connective way of perceiving

how the conglomeration of elements work into each other interdependently towards achieving a goal or an end product, can help to make sense of all the relational, distributing factors that go into forming a system. My investigation has been vital in provoking a stream of difficult questions and arguments that delved into complex relationships such as those between art and politics and the kind of networks forming and feeding into each other in the social wheel. I have used Ground Erasure to interpret these paradoxes creatively; to find ways of dealing with aspects of a changing territory seen creatively as "erasure of erosion" through artistic production rather than representation. In using my own practice as examples, Ground Erasure offers to other artists a connective mode of perceiving art away from an isolated traditional vision that splinters and separates art operations from a spectrum of things, people, practices or dynamics as contributing functioning elements. From this perspective the artist and technology, for instance, are not two distinct entities but have connected (ontological) roots which make them "more like phases of the same essential action".¹⁵ I have already explained how the application of ANT has provided a useful tool to analyse the process by which reterritorialisation takes place. Created as an approach to the social sciences and technology studies, this method has been applied extensively to geographical systems and information systems offering key ideas for the discourses of Information and Complexity and Design. It seems however that this theory has not been explored for its potential for thinking about the interactivity between the artist and technology.

¹⁵ BRUNO LATOUR, *Technology is Society made Durable* quoted in FELIX STALDER *More on Bruno Latour*, Nettime, McLuhan Program on Science and Technology, 1997: <http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9709/msg00012.html> (last accessed 25.05.05)

Ground Erasure consciously embodies deterritorialisation and erasure practices in a connective process as a radical framework for reterritorialising productivity. Through my own practice therefore this research offers to other artists, particularly those like myself operating with the machinic, a perspective for looking at artistic processes with a different connective mode of perception that, in ANT terms, gives a sense of "durability" to spatiality. The aim of this objective has been to set off some of the disintegrating effects of globalisation that, as explained earlier, makes the territory within which we work and live as artists appear tenuous and increasingly undefined. The philosophic and practical implications of this connective approach hence points towards a new territory where creative productivity can synchronize deterritorialising and reterritorialising processes interactively and positively. I have arrived at this mediation in the recognition of art and philosophy as very particular dimensions of human practices; ones that have important destratifying and stratifying balancing roles within the consuming forces of the desire-production machine that pushes relentlessly towards the limits of capital values and exchange. In view of these findings and in pursuing this research, I have endeavoured to maintain a view of art as not detached and isolated from other realities (e.g. the geo-political, the economic and scientific). Indeed, in a post 9.11 politics, singular contexts are anachronistic at a time when stability and locatedness seem so difficult and so diffused. Ground Erasure, hence, attempts to offer an interdisciplinary response as an artist to the observation that the parameters of art are changing. But the value of this response does not lie in the security of a stable, fixed territoriality but in the security of an appropriately conceptualised approach towards it.

APPENDICES

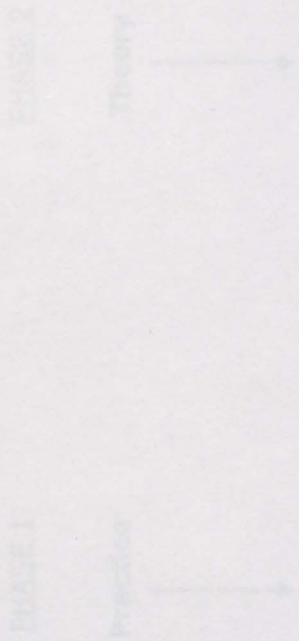
Appendix A

Research Diagrams 1-4:

- Diagram 1: 3-Phase Strategy
- Diagram 2: Method of Research
- Diagram 3: Research Methods and Findings
- Diagram 4: Trajectory of Practice & Theory

Appendix B

**PhD Submission - Ground Erasure Exhibition:
Artist's Statements, Installation Plans and Images**



TRAILING OFFSHOOT

Setting out to test hypothesis / Analyzing the signs surrounding hypothesis



Developmental work (in Craig Sussler Room)

Research trajectory (in Craig Sussler Room)

Artworld (in Herbert Gold Gallery & 192)

Diagram 1

3-PHASE STRATEGY

Research question: What is the meaning of territory for the contemporary artist?
 Hypothesis: The notion of "territory" has become increasingly ambiguous in meaning, entailing contradictory forces due to global change, capital expansionism and widespread communication technologies;
 - it seeks definition on the parochial, regional level (the local)
 - and dematerializes (loses definition) on the international level (the global).
 Blurring boundaries are formatting new territories for practice.

Research framework: This project engages machinic spaces within which the contemporary artist can operate and respond to some of the issues of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

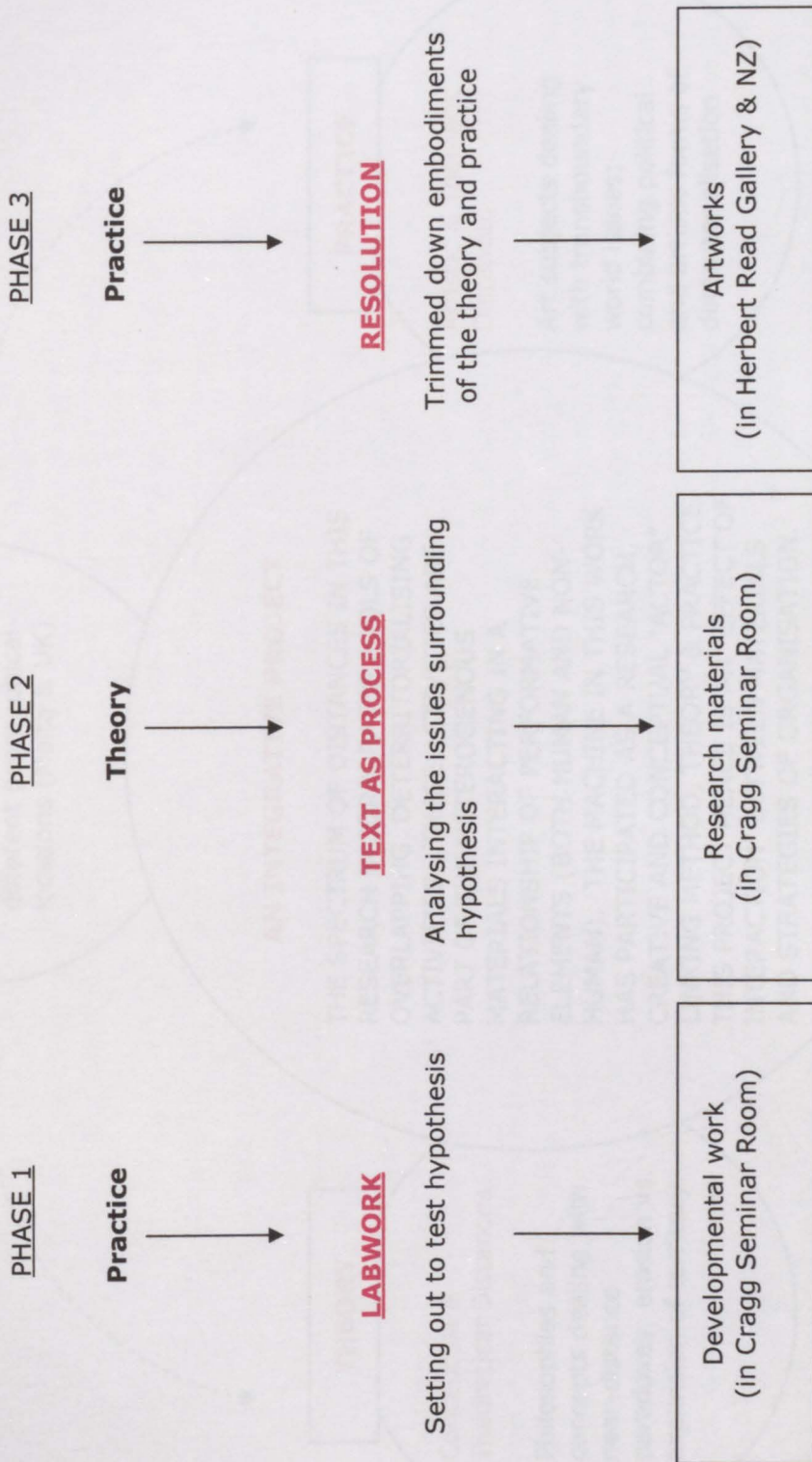


DIAGRAM 1

THE APPLICATION OF ANT AS A NETWORK APPROACH TO GIVE STRUCTURE TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF AGENCY IN THE MACHINIC INTERACTIONS IN THIS PROJECT DEALING WITH A SPECTRUM OF DISTANCES

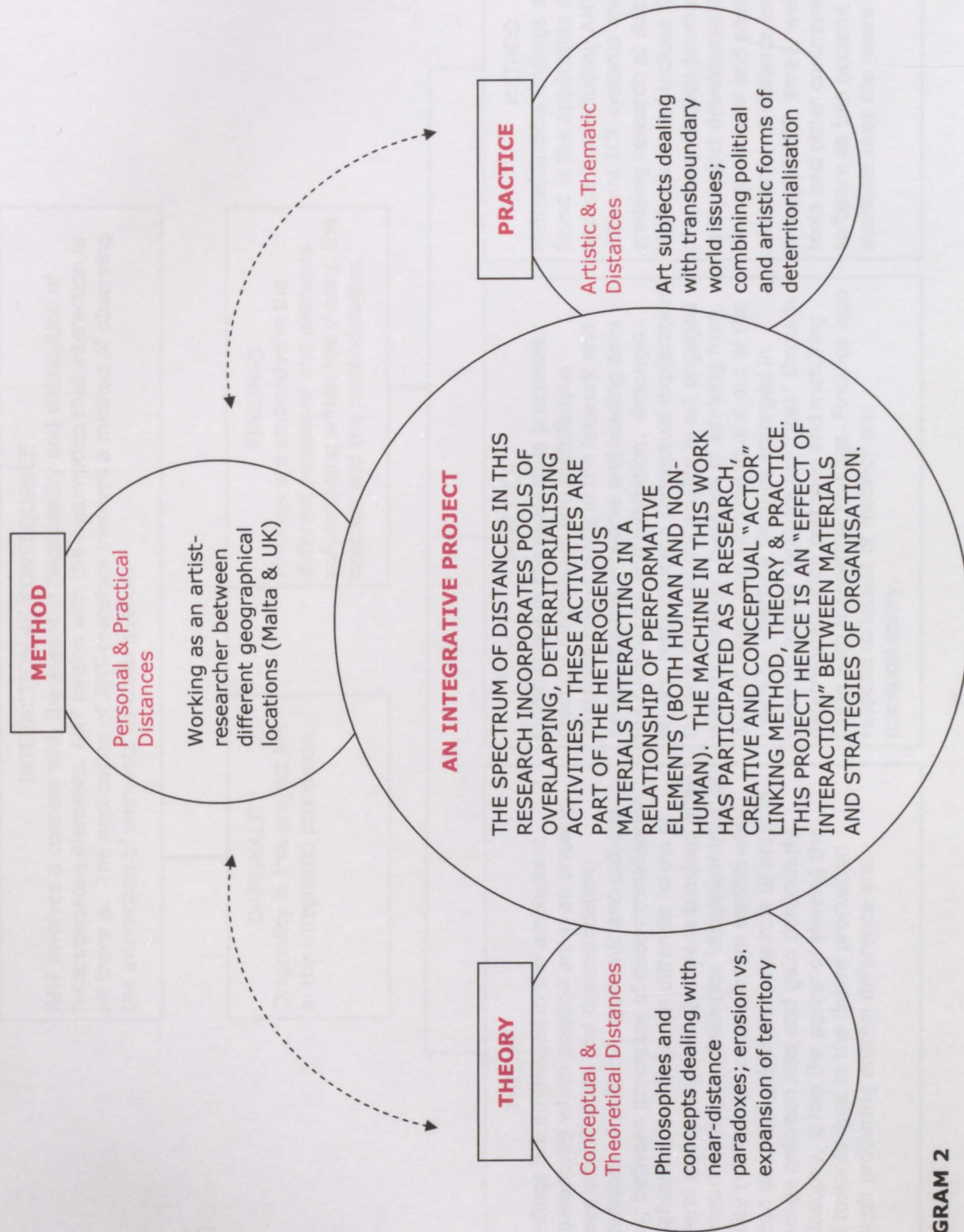


DIAGRAM 2

RESEARCH METHODS AND FINDINGS

INTERACTION AS CONSEQUENCE

ANT involves a concern with the essential relationality and distribution of heterogeneous elements. ANT begins with the assumption that interaction is all there is. The application of ANT therefore involves a method of observing the interaction of elements as consequence.

ORIGINALITY

Originality in this project lies in the integrated processes.

FINDINGS

Findings are embedded in the different processes and elements cofunctioning within the theory, the practice and the methodologies.

THEORY

Theoretical findings are embedded in the ambivalent tensions and paradoxes which position art in an ongoing balance between stratification and de-stratification; between the tensions of political, economic and cultural global changes; between processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation; and between different forms of resistance (liberal and collaborative). These tensions arise from the theories of Virilio and Deleuze: 'disappearance' of art's territoriality (Virilio) vs. 'expansion' of territoriality (Deleuze). Seen as social production, the role of art is in constant challenge between loss and gain particularly since, like philosophy, it has the power of slowing the inevitable pull towards limit in the desire production machine, through producing eternal difference and newness.

PRACTICE

Findings are in the evaluative processes, practical discoveries and multifarious decisions taking place in the labwork and developmental artworks and leading onto the final works and exhibition. Amongst others, tests concern conceptual exploration for new forms of materiality in art engaged with technology; methods of working from distant sites; and working in and out of the machine. Practical findings emerged in conceptualizing "erasure practices" through deterritorialisation methods and matching these with theoretical findings. Findings also respond to issues of mobility and transportability.

METHOD

Methodological findings are to be found in the application of various approaches including ANT, and different ICT systems and tools enabling research at distance. Methods tested include the creation of communication journal logues; and project development constructed through tutorial and advisory assistance at distance employed through VOIP, email, web-conference tools and other communication software as this became more available over the years of research.

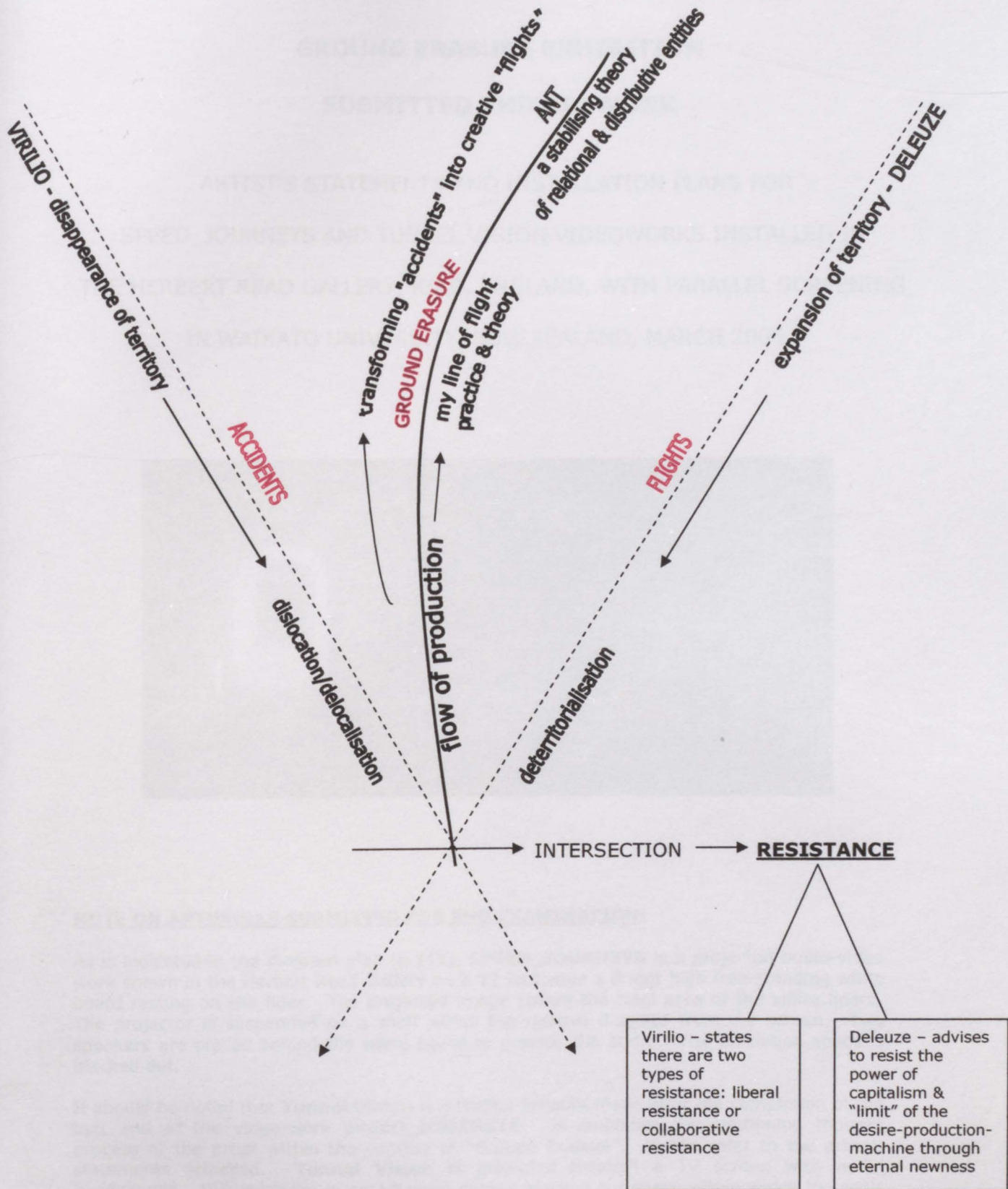
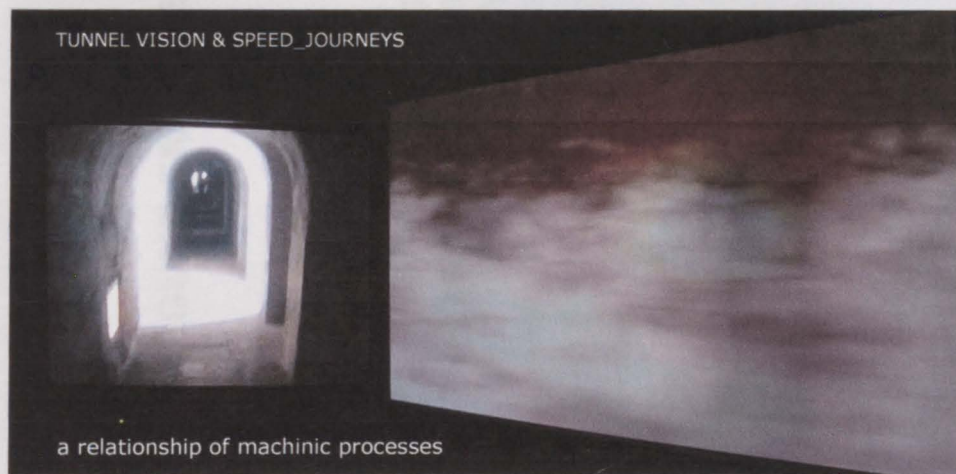


DIAGRAM 4

GROUND ERASURE EXHIBITION**SUBMITTED PHD ARTWORK**

ARTIST'S STATEMENTS AND INSTALLATION PLANS FOR
SPEED_JOURNEYS AND TUNNEL VISION VIDEOWORKS INSTALLED IN
THE HERBERT READ GALLERY, KIAD, ENGLAND, WITH PARALLEL SCREENING
IN WAIKATO UNIVERSITY, NEW ZEALAND, MARCH 2005

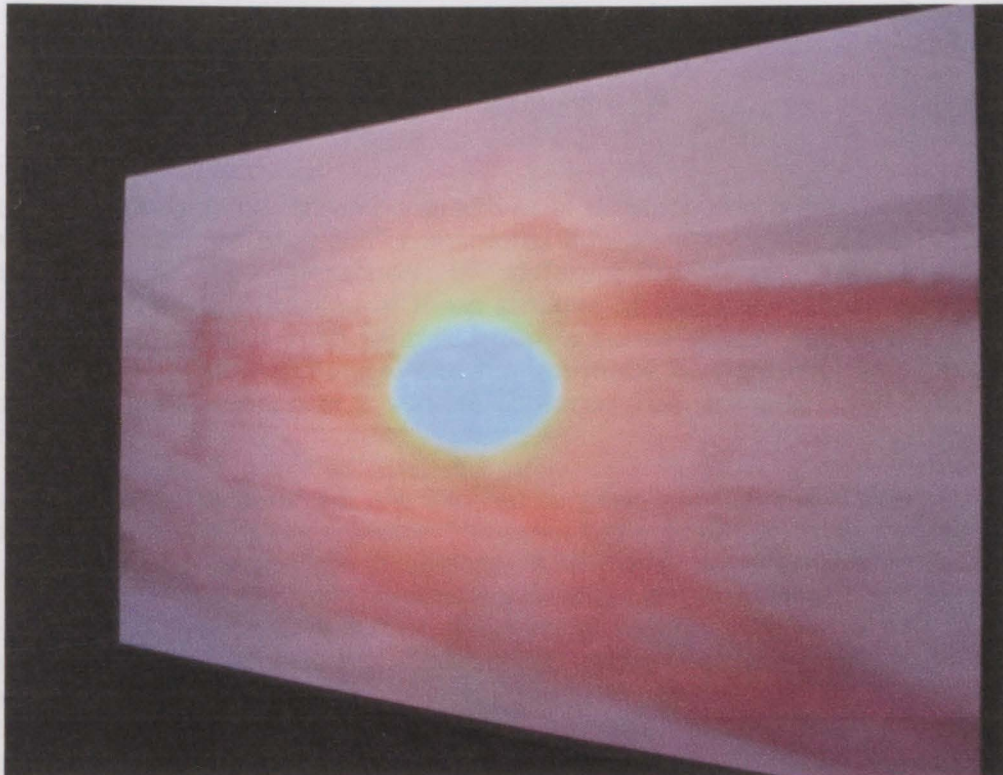
**NOTE ON ARTWORKS SUBMITTED FOR PHD EXAMINATION:**

As is indicated in the diagram plan (p.111), **SPEED_JOURNEYS** is a projected audio-video work shown in the Herbert Read Gallery on a 12 foot wide x 8 foot high free-standing white board resting on the floor. The projected image covers the total area of the white board. The projector is suspended on a shelf within the relative distance from the screen. Two speakers are placed behind the white board to provide the audio. The exhibition space is blacked out.

It should be noted that **Tunnel Vision** is a further artwork made after the completion of the text and of the video-work **SPEED_JOURNEYS**. It embodies the continuing thought process of the artist within the context of "Ground Erasure". Please refer to the artist's statements attached. **Tunnel Vision** is projected through a TV screen with audio headphones. This is placed in an adjacent narrow blacked out space within which the walls are painted black to enhance the nature and concept of this work.

GROUND ERASURE

GROUND ERASURE IS THE COLLECTIVE TITLE OF THIS PRACTICE-LED PHD RESEARCH PROJECT. THIS CONSISTS OF THE RESEARCH MATERIALS ON PRESENTATION IN THE CRAGG SEMINAR ROOM AND THE SUBMITTED ARTWORKS IN THE HERBERT READ GALLERY. A PARALLEL SCREENING OF THE SPEED_JOURNEYS AND TUNNEL VISION VIDEO INSTALLATION-WORKS IS TAKING PLACE IN WAIKATO UNIVERSITY IN NEW ZEALAND.



SPEED_JOURNEYS audio/video projection (2005)



TUNNEL VISION audio/video TV & headphones (2005)

SPEED_JOURNEYS

Speed_Journeys combines three perspectives of distance into a machinic erasure. In this work the "accident of speed" transmutes into an infinite line of communication created through the interaction of different machines and through the superimposition on the timeline of three streams of video shot from three different locations: a video of sea-rush captured from a speed-boat in the Mediterranean; a film of walls and other mechanical and human-made barriers shot from a speeding car in the UK; and a video of a sunrise captured from a plane on a 5.30am flight across Europe.

Through "rubberband time" we are allowed to peer into the world that we choose. The machine in this sense is an "actor" wherein the mechanism of its application and programme plays a role in the development of my work. Through stretching and flexing the rubberband across the streams of film on the channel-line, the machine allows time to be bent and reveal an elasticity of striations and erasures resonating in a circle of speed and affects. This production is not simply *my* vision, but the vision of a coming together of machines – myself in conjunction with the computer, the camera, the projector, the boat, the car and the airplane – a materiality constructed upon connectivity and spatiality. Hence, the blurring of land, sea and air, thrives paradoxically in a flow signifying a social space constituted by territorial and lineal segmentarity. These temporal relations are immersed in a concentricity of immanent planes, lines and crystals that fold into each other. This is visualized in the stratification of our land through power walls, borders and boundaries that come and go, that we erect through one time, dissolve through another and repeat and return through yet a new...like the Berlin Wall of the last century and the Palestine/Israel Separation Wall of this new one.

Speed_Journeys is a "geographical erasure" conveyed through moving, dissolving layers; a decomposition and recomposition of superimposed movements and intersections, that leaps forward into a pulsating crepuscular corona of heat and water, snow or shine through a dawn of delocalised terrain, seasons, climates and structures breaking into open fields. This machinic vision therefore, engages in a flow of exchange through complexes that cut across territories dealt through the constant and the variable, the fixed and the circulated, the striated and the smooth. Across the plateau, Deleuze says, there is always something like a "war machine" functioning on these lines between *flight* and *destruction*. Speed_Journeys conceptualizes a politicized space through rupture and restructure where segments of time rush connectively in parallel, where a perspective of the outside is substituted for a perspective of the inside. In this work again, I recall Deleuze in looking at how filmic segmentarity divides, intersects, erases, transforms our spatio-temporal perception whilst informing the philosophic aspects of our lives whereby time is synthesized through multiplicity as through the multifaceted reality of a non-human eye – 'a shimmering, sinuous, variable and contractile (perspective), like a hair of a hygrometer'.

Ruth Bianco
March 2005

Tunnel Vision

Tunnel Vision intertwines a relationship of "erasure" temporalities - the historical and the present. The duration of this video is constructed upon a walk from one end to the other of the tunnel running under the Terezienstadt Fortress. Terezin, situated about an hour's drive from the centre of Prague, operated as a "transition-camp". In the semblance of a village complex this concentration camp served as a temporary outpost for thousands of people waiting further transportation to Auschwitz - though many never made it to this final destination. The extermination machine of the Third Reich was camouflaged by propaganda movies shot using unaware "residents" in the camp to promote the Nazi ideology during the Second World War. My walk in this tunnel is the same walk many a Terezin-resident would have undertaken leading to a moat at the other end of the tunnel in which their fate was met.

Terezin invokes a conceptual "non-place" as an interim passage of bodily and territorial erasure. The walk in this tunnel, purveyed through the non-human eye of my video-camera, probes the psyche of this mental journey wherein the human, non-human and inhuman converge. The duration of the film has been altered and my footsteps modulated into high-strung notes to heighten the emotional tensions between actuality and recollection. Time is within us and stretches and shrinks according to the intensity of our experiences. The tunnel here stands as a paradoxical communication channel signifying the tenuous thresholds between life and death, between the surface of the earth and its inside, between origin and destination and between past and present. In this way this depiction of the Terezin tunnel transcends its locale, its sitedness, into a perspective of the universal. This "historical erasure" is here conceived as a "transition space"; an interception in the land lacerating into the stratification of both a representational physical territoriality and a belief system. This perhaps is when architecture is at its most political; when it projects itself as a radical power and yet harbours a furtive vulnerability to annihilation, to disqualification, to breakdown. The segmentarity vying between formal and machinic space is visually encapsulated inside the tunnel's structure where the slow progressive strata of the archways in my walk liquefy into pixels when I turn round the corners; where the sinuous fingerlike shadows of fortress walls break into the glimmer of yellow crystals of light; and where the lineal "gaze" of a contractile "war machine" is broken by pallid intervals of sunlight - a hopeful light that somewhat obscures the point of arrival or departure at the end of the tunnel. In this context Tunnel_Vision overlaps meanings of *dislocation* conceptualizing where time splits from one point to another, where it deterritorialises and passes from the actual to the virtual, and where duration and elimination of the time-interval are at tension with each other.

This work, I hope, may be seen as a contribution to the present commemoration of Auschwitz in its 60th year of liberation and the continuing debate on the prevailing acts of genocide in the world.

Ruth Bianco
March 2005



**INSTALLATION PROCESS OF
GROUND ERASURE EXHIBITION
IN THE
HERBERT READ GALLERY**

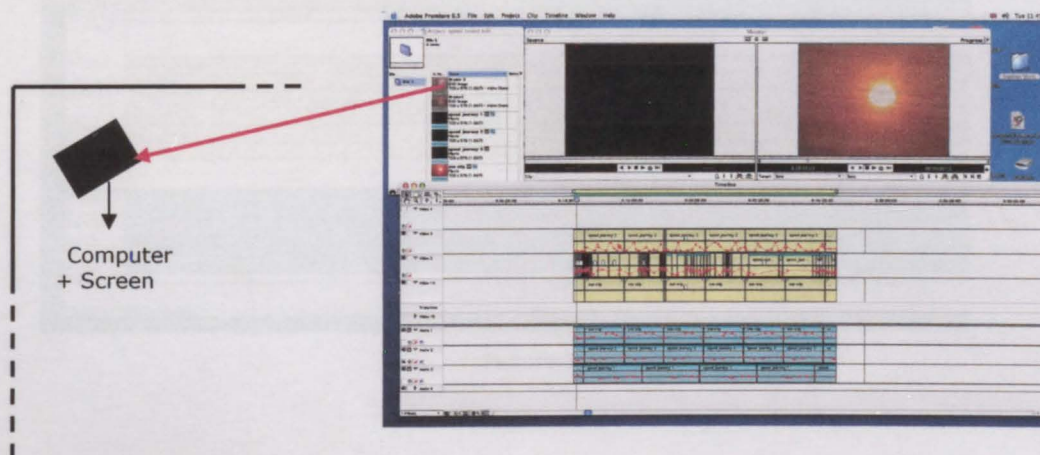
**IMAGES SHOW INSTALLATION
OF MACHINES, SCREENS & TV
IN PREPARATION FOR THE
SPEED_JOURNEYS AND
TUNNEL VISION VIDEOWORKS**



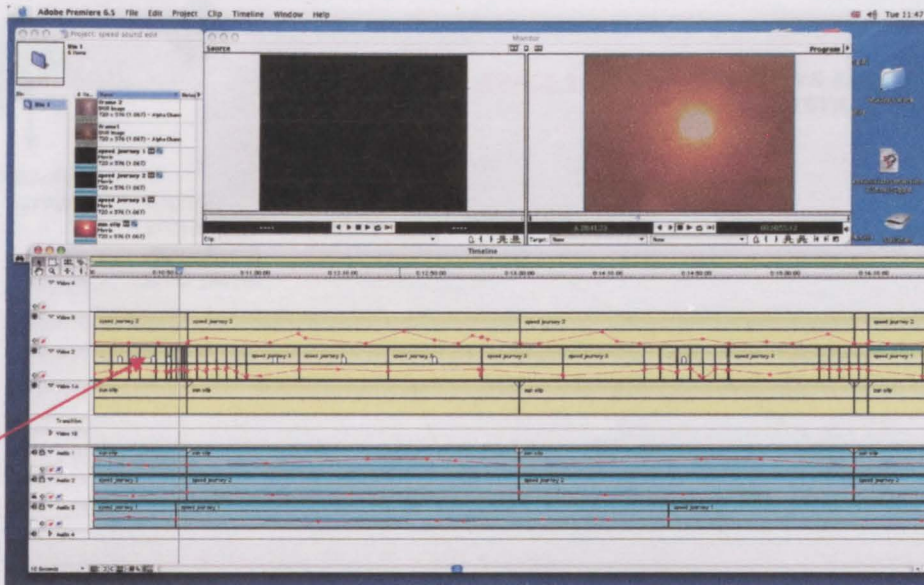
NOTE ON INSTALLATION OF COMPUTER IN SPEED_JOURNEYS

Speed_Journeys was created on the Mac (computer 2) in the DARC studios in KIAD. In the context of Ground Erasure this particular computer has been a vital "actor" in the machinic process of Speed_Journeys. This computer therefore, performs in the installation in the Herbert Read Gallery with the Premiere application open on the screen in order to enact the diagrammatic flows that contributed to my conceptualities of "rubberband time" in the creation of this artwork. Rubberbanding in reality involves the red zigzag-lines running along the video streams in the Premiere timeline. The opacity or translucency of superimposed streams can be modulated according to the flexing or tightening of the rubberband-tool in the video/audio timeline channels. The computer is not presented in this installation as a mere demonstration of its function but, more importantly, as a performative element – part of an actor-network plane of relationships in the machinic spatial assemblage. ANT (*Actor-Network Theory*) referred to in this PhD research project intrinsically embodies "actors as network effects" and is constructed upon an essential relationality as a method applied to creating stabilizing materiality to spatiality. This is conceptualized here as a means of giving "durability" to the effects of deterritorialisation and temporality in the process of forming elision and difference between "agency" and "structure" (machinic vs. strata - see Speed_Journeys and Tunnel Vision artist's statements). In this installation, the computer screen is positioned diagonally to the large projected screen in order to create a dynamic abstract relationship between these two elements as well as the other machinic elements in the gallery space; a relationship in the process of which *inscription* or *translation* is taking place, shaping a connective (*distance*)-topology vital to my research as a reterritorialising strategy.

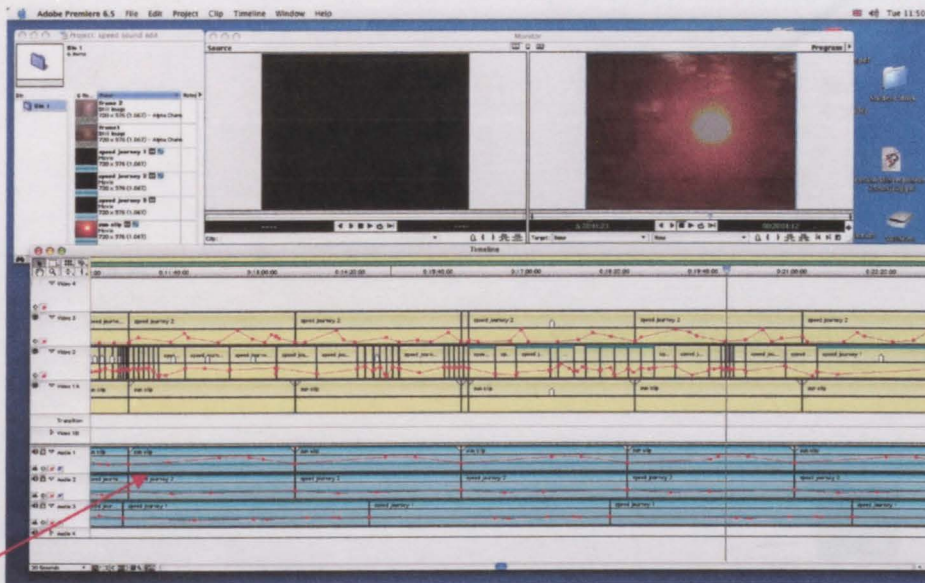
In the installation in the New Zealand space a simulation of the real "actor" in the Herbert Read is set up. The computer there performs with a wallpaper screen-grab of the Premier interface fitted to screen displaying one of the rubberband's resolutions of the Speed_Journeys project.



DEMONSTRATION OF RUBBERBANDING

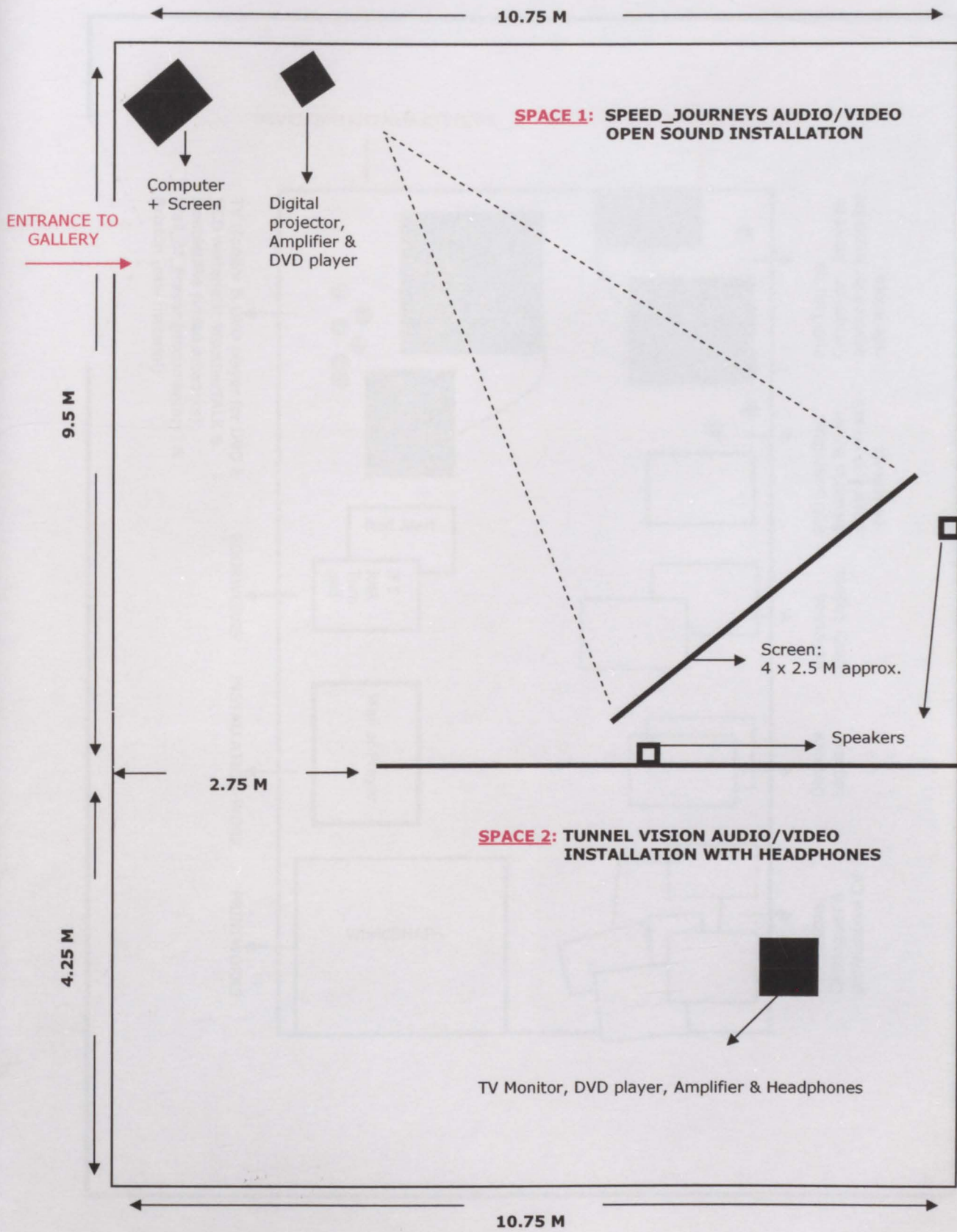


Picture 2

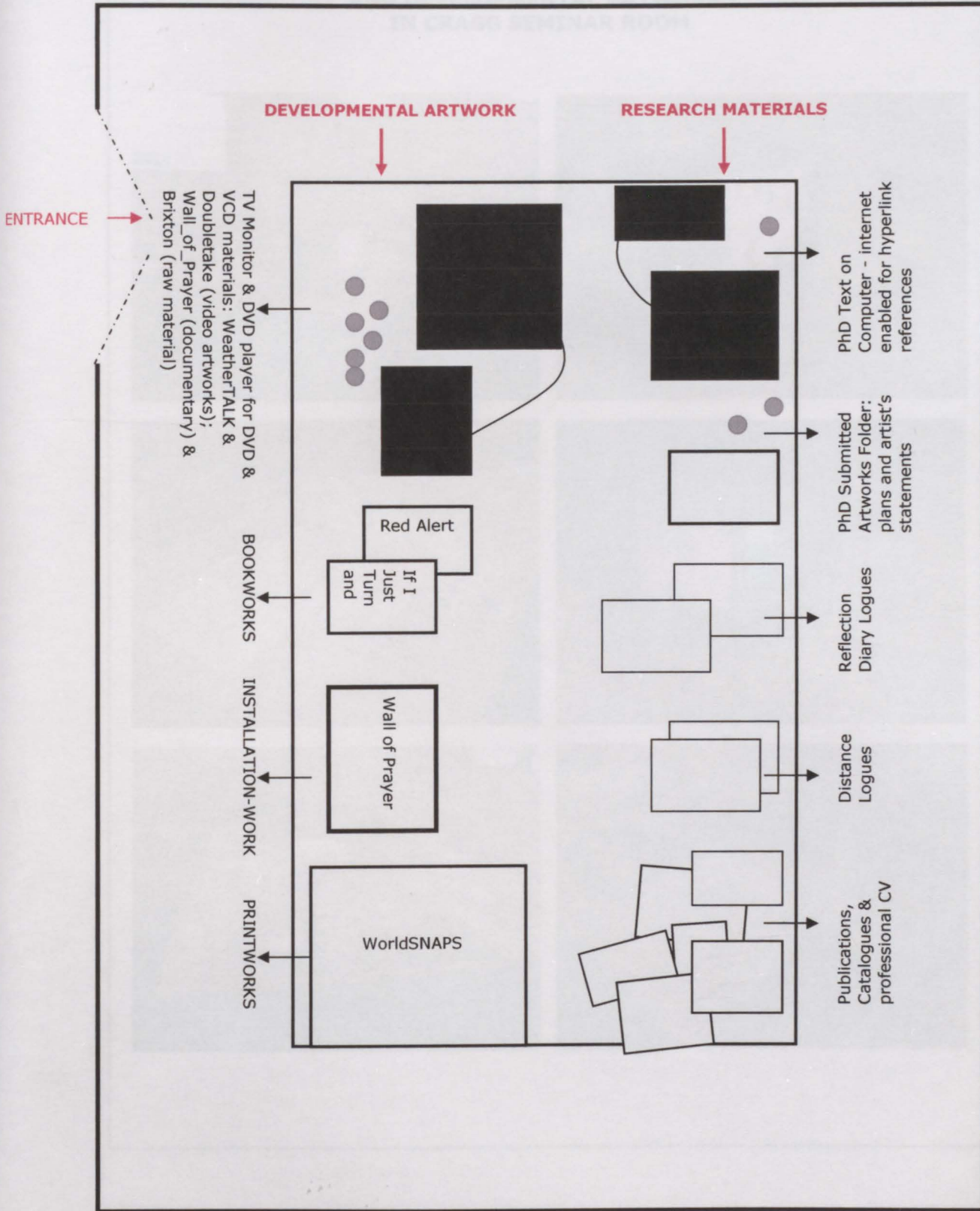


Picture 3

INSTALLATION PLAN FOR SPEED_JOURNEYS AND TUNNEL VISION IN THE HERBERT READ GALLERY, KIAD



**PRESENTATION OF PHD RESEARCH MATERIALS IN
Cragg Seminar Room, KIAD**



**INSTALLATION OF RESEARCH MATERIALS
AND DEVELOPMENTAL ARTWORKS
IN CRAGG SEMINAR ROOM**



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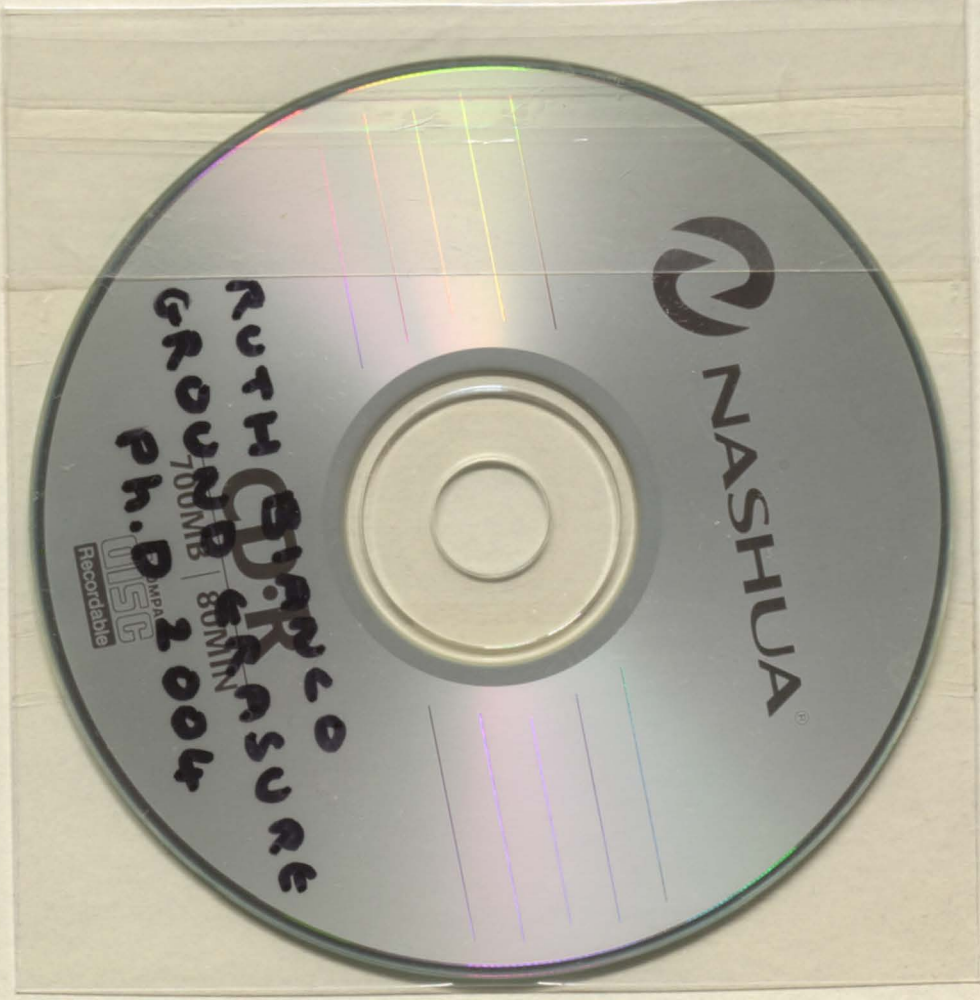
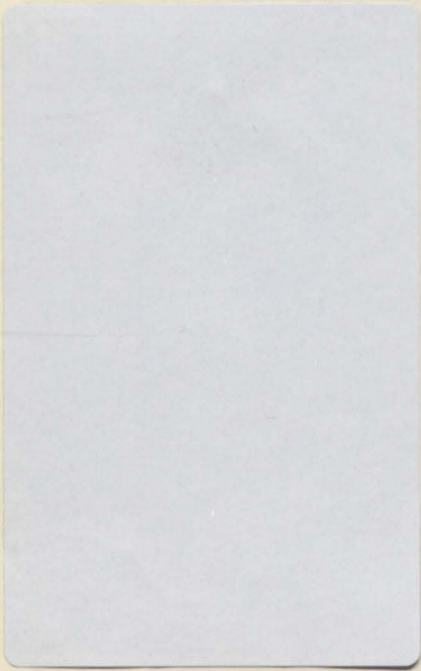
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