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Between Echoes
An Experiment in Creative Collaboration

2010-2011

By

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Between Echoes
An Experiment in Creative Collaboration

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Fine Arts, Faculty of the Humanities, University of Cape Town.

[2011]

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date:
‘We would hold that wherever we go, whatever environment or space or climate we’re in is speaking, all the time, at every minute, at every level.’

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PREFACE

I had been living in South Africa for almost a year by the end of 2010, when I instigated a series of creative collaborations with seven individuals, symbolically understood to represent the heterogeneous assortment of relationships that make up real-life social worlds. The people I began working with comprised those closest to me, those I live with, friends living in distant parts of the world and others that I have never met, but whose work or labour I have so greatly admired that I considered them to be an integral part of my world. I extended seven invitations to join me in a dialogue from which we could produce a visual artefact together. I asked that this dialogue address experiences and thoughts on the relationship between the individual and another; what makes us feel intimate and what causes us to feel estranged.

The core aim of this project has been to develop a methodology/process that will produce art from dialogue. I centralised the need for the process to be sensitive to the identity and values of all those involved and capable of a deep engagement with the particularities of that encounter. Through this, a space between individuals is activated from which genuinely new ideas/social meanings are formed, and art produced. I regard this process of formation rather than affirmation as an approach that can redistribute agency in the production of meaning. Communication theorist Sara Diamond notes a distinction between collaboration that is ‘simply working together, creating in a context where there is an intention to either make that relationship on-going or create a product of that labour’, and the kind of collaboration that is ‘the process which combines the knowledge, experience and previous understandings or methodologies that are substantively different from that which the participants or even the partners entered the relationship with’ (Diamond 2003). Her distinction points towards a need to balance inter-subjective dialogue with the preservation of individual identities. Diamond’s later definition of collaboration implies that participants actively engage with difference, and resist conflating the initial diversity that made collaboration an appealing prospect in the first place. In
this model, however, there must be an awareness of the limits of communication to represent an external reality as a shared reference. This is potentially a paralysing limitation: if communication of any kind can fail, where does this leave us? Shedding the security of relativism (of subjective expression) in exchange for the perilous task of cumulative, inter-subjective engagement has been key to the development of these eight experiments. The artist in this framework is a provider of ‘context’ rather than ‘content’, entering into collaborative encounters and communicative exchange (Dunn, cited in Kester 2004: 1).

This document outlines the complexities of collaborative works, so as to do away with an easy reading. It contextualises the subtleties that define the collaborative approach in which I am interested. Much of what I understand about the work we have made, and the process that produced it, has only come about upon reflection and as a result of countless exchanges and conversations with the seven individuals I have worked with. As such I present the following document as both a retrospective of the collaborative experience, as well as a condensed cluster of ideas that help anchor this project’s core meaning. To structure this ‘research’ document, I have divided my work into nine chapters. The first describes my methodology in a wider context of collaborative practice from an ontological and genealogical perspective, before refining the key concerns that inform my making. These are: the space collaborative art occupies; a pluralistic sensibility towards multiple perspectives; and, finally, the role of dialogue in collaborative projects. The subsequent seven chapters are the visual and textual documents of the process of each collaboration. They illuminate aspects of the process specific to the seven working partnerships. Through separating each partnership my aim has been to preserve their authorship and prevent each collaboration from collapsing under the weight of my own agency. However, the process that unfolds in each of the chapters is only the process thus far, and many of these projects continue to evolve and form a part of my ongoing practice. I regard this research and the practical work it supports to be the generation of a specific collaborative methodology.
PART I
AN INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE COLLABORATION

The most inspiring texts I have read recently – Isaiah Berlin’s *The Roots of Romanticism* (1999), Francis Alÿs’ *In a Given Situation* (2010), Robin Van Den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen’s *Notes on Metamodernism* (2010), for example – begin by stating how difficult it is to define fairly and precisely the topic at hand. Nonetheless, they continue to write after their introductions and their words end up in print. Without any intention of undermining their claims, I speculate that theirs is an anxiety towards the discreet and singular nature of definition. Moreover, in creative disciplines the topic is frequently one that is intangible, contradictory and ambiguous with a deliberate intent by artists to thwart any ‘easy’ definition or interpretation. I share these difficulties in my need to define ‘creative collaboration’ and, as such, the following introduction is in recognition of these concerns. I will extract the particularities that characterise my collaborative methodology from a broad ontological and genealogical context. This breadth of collaborative styles is mimicked in the diversity of approaches to my eight collaborative experiments. In some instances I worked intensively over a short period of time with another person, in the same location (Niklas Zimmer and I worked together on a photography shoot), and in others our engagement has been slow and lengthy and from a distance (Harro Falkenreck and I emailed drawings back and forth between Germany and South Africa). My collaboration with Nick Jones was envisioned and produced together, whereas with Willem Boshoff the art production was realised by myself following on from intense and in-depth communication. The ontological and genealogical discussions that follow examine these subtleties in a wider context of collaborative art, focusing on issues of authorship, activism and agenda.
An Ontology of Creative Collaboration

The linguistic definition of collaboration is the act or process of working with another or others on a joint project or toward some mutual endeavour, from which something may be created. Its roots lie in the Latin word *collabōrātus* (the past participle of *collabōrāre*), which literally means ‘to work with’ (com ‘with’ and labore ‘to work’). There is no indication in this definition that there is a particular relationship between those who ‘collaborate’, whether the participating parties should be equal in ownership and authorship, or equal recipients of the benefits of collaboration. However we might distinguish it from working for another in terms of the power each party has over their contribution to the collaborative endeavour. I consider this to be indicative of all involved parties enjoying equal agency. It emphasises co-operation and implies a willingness to participate.

Questions of ‘equality’ frequently concern art that involves more than one person, and rightfully so. We should be suspicious of a work of art that claims to give voice to ‘another’ when it is not clear to what degree that ‘other’ has been framed or has invested him/herself. I do not believe, however, that the potential of a project to be considered ‘collaborative’ should be disregarded simply because the contribution of each individual appears unequal or even difficult to ascertain. Take, for example, the Slovenian collective IRWIN (they later went on to form the umbrella group Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) with the musical group Laiback and the theatrical group The Scipion Nasice Sisters). Their works, which incorporate a variety of media – books, tar and paint, amongst others – are not traditionally *made* by collective labour. Instead they are instigated by group discussion in a shared space and then realised by various individuals. Finally, they are ‘presented’ to the collective for approval and it is only then that the works receive the group’s signature, with no indication offered to the viewer as to the ways in which each collaborator contributed.

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A further difficulty in identifying equal authorship in collaborative practice is that this requires one to measure the value of different individuals’ contributions against each other. A crude example would be to compare the value of an idea in the work of art against the value of the material production. Traditionally, the art value rests more heavily in the idea than the labour of making. Consider, for example, the art studios of Rembrant or Peter Paul Rubens, where research shows that many of the supposedly personal strokes of the master’s brush are in fact not his own (Even 2001). A more modern instant would be Andy Warhol’s factory formulae from the 1960s in which a singular author manages the collective work of many. Another example is the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay, whose work could not have been realised were it not for the labour of countless others. The artworks produced as a result of each of these ‘collaborations’ are accredited entirely or primarily to one artist, regardless of the degree to which others were involved in their materialization. I posit that this acknowledgement of authorship is dubiously simplified and argue that all contributions to a work’s manifestation – the skills, discussions, ideas and materials – are heavily intertwined. In the words of South African artist William Kentridge, ‘In the process of making, a meaning will emerge’ (Kentridge, cited in Swartz-Turfle 2010: online).

It is possible to take a radically open approach and deem all works ‘collaborative’ by the socialised nature of creating art. In the process of making an artwork, artists appropriate the prefabricated materials made by others: the papers and paints, drawing instruments, tools and technology, etc. Ideas, extracted from history or voiced by contemporaries, catalyse new thoughts and concepts. Institutions and agencies are negotiated in the production of work and curators organise and appropriate art, shaping the way it will be seen and perceived. Curators Susan Sollins and Nina Casteli Sundell argue that creative collaboration should stretch to encompass artists who modify works from the past, even if this is without the ‘authors’” input. They declare: ‘all stylistic innovation is a collaboration with the past: without the old, the new cannot be born’ (Sollins et al. 1990: online). In her essay Collaboration and Originality (2005), art historian Nancy Roth advocates that one
recognises in all art the lack of distinction between the viewer, the drawer and what is drawn. Roth suggests that ‘the moment of creation involves not only a human being and material stuff but also other human beings, not necessarily present at the time’.

Furthermore, supposedly autonomously authored works made *alongside* each other can contribute to them being defined by their collaborative outcome. An example of this is Cubism, where its creation as a movement is accredited to both the work of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Theorist Walter Benjamin posited another consideration for a broad interpretation of collaborative art. He argued that a work of art should actively allow the viewers to participate in the process of production. The ‘participatory’ position he proposes is for the viewer to be at a critical distance so as to discern his/her perspective toward the ‘art’. Benjamin (2003: 777) writes, ‘this apparatus is better, the more consumers it is able to turn into producers – that is, the more readers or spectators into collaborators’. In particular, Benjamin celebrates the theatrical devices theorised by Bertolt Brecht, which breaks with a complex or deep narrative to encourage the audience to feel estranged from what they perceive. Brecht named this the *Verfremdungseffekt*, (translated as either the alienation, distancing or estrangement effect)\(^2\) which, as he describes

\[
\text{…prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, and which consequently leads the audience to be a consciously critical observer.}
\]

(Willett 1964: 91)

Brecht draws heavily on the theory of *Priem Ostranenie* (the defamiliarization effect) identified by

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2. There are many different translations of this term, and of other connecting terms. In relatively equal measure the following terminology has been used: estrangement, alienation, distancing, distanciation, distanciation, and defamiliarization alongside Brecht and Shklovsky it is also associated with French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. As such, I propose this explanation of the word estrangement tentatively. However, such extensive variation suggests the complexity of the phenomena they refer to and give weight to my own arguments.
Viktor Shklovsky in 1917 and used widely used across artistic disciplines. The defamiliarization effect presents the commonplace as unfamiliar and strange to the audience to draw attention to what might otherwise be taken for granted (Shklovsky 1917). The act of portraying the ‘everyday’ as significant frequently appears in Romantic literature and Magic Realism. For example, in the first line of One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel García Márquez replaces the present with the future, and the future with the present:

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.

(Márquez 1967: 1)

In the reader’s ‘present’ moment in the course of the story, the character’s future becomes the present and his present moment becomes the past, creating an unfamiliar relationship between past, present and future. This ‘defamiliarization’ aims to keep the reader distant enough to critically interpret the story’s events. Brecht, Shklovsky and Benjamin would consider this role of critical interpreter closer to that of a collaborator than the traditionally considered, passive spectator. It shifts the site of meaning-making to the point of interaction between the artist and ‘reader/viewer’, rather than the meaning intrinsically existing in the work itself. These ideas of the audience as co-producer can be followed further in the key structuralist writings of Roland Barthes’ The Death of the Author (1967) and Umberto Eco’s The Open Work (1962). Finally, at the limits of expanding the definition of creative collaboration, Charles Green argues that we see artistic collaboration as part of a larger interrogation of artistic identity. He persuasively claims that from modernist notions of the identity of the artist, artists have, with increasing consciousness, both radically and conservatively rejected artistic autonomy. Green extends this to include artists – such as Joseph Kosuth – who deliberately

3. Though Shlovsky extends his thinking on defamiliarization across the arts, it was primarily conceived of as a literary device, specifically how language becomes literary.
conceal the hand of the author (Green 2001: 3-22). His definition could be expanded to include collaborative ‘hoaxes’; works created by individual artists that claim to be the work of more than one person – for example Narcisse Tordoir, or Patrick Brill’s brother-and-sister duo, Bob and Roberta Smith.

What I mean to point towards are the outer limits by which collaborative practice can be contextualised. It is plausible and indeed worthy of future research to consider the collaborative efforts of all art production. Within the imagined moment of creation, however seemingly autonomous, is the dissolved labour of many people. This extended understanding of creative collaboration has informed, and continues to inform, the nature of my project. It is through a search for a refined understanding of collaborative art that I have identified the subtleties that appeal to me and that will characterise my method of working in the future. I will discuss these specific characteristics, which refer to the art-space, pluralistic meaning and dialogue, in the following chapter, *The Particularities*. In order to focus the following genealogy of these particularities, I will concentrate on works of art that make the mind and hand of another or others explicitly known to an audience. This type of collaborative work shows the team at work, the antagonism and agreement of a discursive process and the sharing and exchange of ideas and skills. In a visible or audible way the audience is asked to hear or see more than one voice in an artwork. The examples outline some of the precursory movements and artists from the twentieth century that distinguish the small but vital field of artists amongst whom I contextualise my work.

**A Genealogy of Collaboration**

The most important precursors of collaborative art arguably took place in the early to mid-twentieth century. I have refined the selection of works to be discussed through a distinction made by Claire
Bishop in her introduction to *Participation* (a composite of essays that address participatory and collaborative art). She differentiates between the social dimension of participation and so-called interactive art or installation. The latter, she explains, activates the individual viewer through its responsive qualities, reacting to the viewer with the aid of mechanical and digital technology (Bishop 2006: 10). In these kinds of art or installations, the viewer’s presence stimulates a predefined set of responses that animate and ‘complete’ the work. In comparison, the ‘social dimension’ of collaborative or participatory art appropriates social processes that address the distance between artist and public, and between art and everyday life.

Two noteworthy exhibitions at the end of the twentieth century further support the need to distinguish between types of collaborative practices. Cynthia McCabe curated an exhibition called *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century* at the Hirshorn Museum, Washington, DC, in 1984. The exhibition catalogue argues that the ubiquity of collaborative practice demonstrates that it is an integral part of avant-garde advancement. Under such a grand and encompassing narrative the subtleties and complexities of many are somewhat dissolved. The exhibition covers artists such as Andy Warhol, Edward Kienholz, artistic couples such as the Poiriers, the Christos, the Bechers and the Oldenbergs, and collectives such as *Experiments in Art and Design* (EAT). It presents collaboration as a ‘simple’ process of individuals working together to create consensual creative solutions. The differences in approach, authorship, agency and process are generalised by their status as ‘collaborative art’.

In 1990, Sollins and Sundell curated *Team Spirit* at the Neuberger Museum. The exhibition hosted work from the 1970s onwards, favouring long-term collaborative identities that create little or no work outside of the partnership. The exhibition catalogue includes Irit Rogoff’s elegantly worded essay *Production Lines*, which argues for:
...a perception of collaboration, which emphasises a critical interrogation of the processes of production through artistic practice, the loss of the so-called autonomy of the work of art, and the subjugation of the heroic individual artist to the cultural embeddedness of the art work...

(Rogoff 1990: online)

Rogoff identifies the re-configuration of the artist’s identity as the connecting ideology of the artworks on the Team Spirit exhibition. The purposeful decision of these artists to dissolve the autonomy of their artistic production subsumes the traditional image of singular/lone artist. The artists included in the exhibition to which Rogoff refers include: Gilbert and George, Komar and Melamid, The Boyle Family, Tim Rollins and KOS, FASTWURMS and IRWIN. This move away from the popular image of an autonomous artist raises questions concerning the collaborative artists’ agenda. The following genealogy of collaborative art examines the nature and development of this agenda.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Europe was swept by national and international revolutions that challenged the existing political and social structures. The spirit of the revolutions was mirrored in the collaborative art making that emerged in the following years. One example of this is Gesamtkunstwerk (Total Artwork) described by Richard Wagner. It became widely acknowledged across Europe through his essays: Art and Revolution5 (1849a) and The Art-Work of The Future (1849b). They represented attempts to bring about political reforms that the revolutions had failed to achieve, through aesthetic means. The term Gesamtkunstwerk is a view of a great artwork created by actors, musicians, dancers, poets and artists working together to incite an audience towards collective action in the social sphere. The agenda of these public art events was replicated in the early part of the twentieth century under a similar climate of social upheaval. The Soviet mass spectacles decentralised the individual artist or creator in order to mobilise the public’s sense of

4. Referring to the 1848 revolutions that swept across Europe
community and collective identity. One such event was *The Storming of the Winter Palace* (1920), which saw 8,000 people re-enact the October revolution along with a crescendo of mechanical noises, music and theatrics. Artistic attempts to assimilate art into industrial manufacture were in line with the dissolution of creative production amongst the masses. Importantly, in Russia at this time industrial production was politically propagandized to be the very fabric of society. Artist such as Vladimir Tatlin, Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova gave the *objets d’art* a new cultural value of economic function, such as the design of furniture (ADD), clothes (Lyubov Popova and Varvara Stepanova, 1923) and even an economical stove (Vladimir Tatlin, 1919).

In contrast, the European developments in collaborative art were highly authored, such as the *Cabaret Voltaire* in Switzerland and later the neo-dada, situationist and surrealist movements in the 1960s. The symbolic diffusion of the artist amongst the people was replaced with the role of the artist to shock, provoke and disorientate the audience into political and social action. In these situations, the privileged, ‘knowledgeable’ perspective of the artist is seen as participating with an unknowing audience. The artist’s clarity of vision about the state of political and social affairs is bestowed upon the viewers. This collaboration between artist and viewer can be seen as a continuation of the Brechtian theatrical theory of defamiliarization, whereby the artwork compels the audience to take up a position of critical discernment. By the 1960s, participatory art was seeking out less confrontational ways of collaborating with audiences and, increasingly, artists like Lygia Clark and Helio Oiticica elicited audience participation to affirm a sense of social connectedness and validate art as an active experience. For example, Clark’s *Caminhando* (‘walking’), produced in 1964, invited the audience to take a strip of paper (40cm), tape the ends together and begin cutting down the centre. At the end of cutting one full rotation, the audience member could choose where to begin cutting again, to the right or to the left. Clark describes the agenda behind her work:

I give an absolute importance to the immanent act made by the participator. The ‘walking’ has all the
possibilities linked to action itself: it allows the choice, chance, the unpredictable, and a transformation of virtuality into a concrete undertake. (*sic*)

(Clark 1964: 3)

What these different approaches indicate is a deep questioning of the value of art. In different ways, the examples cited experiment with the perceived social importance of art – be this to affirm community responsibility, incite action against political injustices or to better connect with the audience. In each instance we are required to see art as a potential tool for positive social change. Bishop (2005) theorises that the overarching aim of much participatory art has been to restore a sense of community responsibility through social action. The socially engaged participatory art of the late twentieth century allies itself to this same agenda, notably the relational aesthetics identified by Nicolas Bourriaud in the work of artists Rikrit Tiravanija, Vanessa Beecroft, Liam Gillick, Gabriel Orozco and Dominique Gonzalez-Forester, amongst others. Similar to the work of Clark, relational art takes a step back from the radical precursors of participatory art in the early to mid twentieth century.

It seems more pressing to invent possible relations with our neighbours in the present than to bet on happier tomorrows.

(Bourriaud 1998: 45)

This sentiment is echoed in the work *Pad Thai* (1990) by Argentinian artist Tiravanija, shown at the Paula Allen Gallery in New York. The artist cooked and served Thai food for the gallery’s visitors, transforming the daily rituals of cooking and eating into art. For Tiravanija, the encounters and conversations that happen in everyday life (such as when people are eating or drinking together) are paramount to understanding cultures other than our own.

Though it spans over a century of art history, this overview marks a particular desire to form a
stronger relation between art and life, through activating a real life relationship with the artist(s). Grouping these separate events, movements and artists together to form part of a genealogy of collaborative, participatory practice has been discussed by an impressive number of authors under the umbrella of socially engaged/relational art: Claire Bishop in *Participation* (2006); Nikos Papastergiadis in *The Global Need for Collaboration* (2008); Boris Groys and Rudolf Friedling in *The Art of Participation: 1950s to Now* (2008); Soke Dinkla in *From Participation to Interaction* (1996), to name but a few. The common characteristics of the artworks discussed thus far still leave many questions hanging: does ‘activating’ the audience assume that the audience will then ‘act’ in a socio-political sphere? Who are the people that make up this ‘audience’ capable of social change, and what are the specific changes that this open dialogue aims to achieve? In the following section I will distinguish a subset of artists who address these concerns about participatory, collaborative art. The artists and collectives I will discuss in the following chapter are: Stephen Willats, Le Groupe Amos, Huit Facettes, Schleuser.net, Gabriel Acevedo Velarde, Phil Collins, Artur Zmijewski and Antonio Vega Macotela. These artists engage with art’s potential to engender positive social change, but also blur the lines between art and social activism more than my previously cited works. The aim of these artists is not to affirm the artist’s identity, or their work’s meaning through participation, but to formulate identity and meaning through collaboration. As such, their work is deeply embedded in the specific context – the people and places of each work’s situation. There are, of course, many more artists and collectives that could adequately exemplify this, but I have selected works that I have seen firsthand, and that demonstrate the international reach of this particular classification of collaborative art.

I want to put forward one final work by Tiravanija that helps clarify my interests, and distinguishes these from the traditional arc of participatory practice. His installation works like *Pad Thai* are used to blur the divisions between public and private spaces, simulating kitchens and cafés within gallery walls. They direct attention towards art’s potential to transcend social and disciplinary boundaries by
creating an opportunity to freely and openly exchange conversations and perspectives. Tiravanija’s highly controversial work *Tomorrow Is Another Day* was shown at the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne in 1996-1997. It was an exact replication of the artist’s living space in New York and was opened up to the ‘public’ to celebrate community: by cooking, eating, and even showering and sleeping in the space. At the same time, a local business group called City Marketing, with the support of the local police, were forcefully removing a settlement of homeless people living near the gallery. City Marketing was concerned about the affect the presence of so many homeless people was having in the area. The two processes occurring side by side – the supposed opening up of intercultural dialogue and community space alongside the eviction of people from the very same area, magnified the challenges facing artists who engage with social-participatory practice. In his book *Conversation Pieces* (2004), Grant Kester quotes Cologne-based artist Stephan Roemer’s response to this much-debated work: ‘...[I]t fits perfectly with the rhetoric of globalism, with its empty platitudes and its commitment to image over real change’ (Roemer 1997, cited in Kester 2004: 105). The explicit problem that this work illustrates is an often unintended ignorance of the specific context of a collaboratively produced work of art. The artists I discuss in the following chapter demonstrate a commitment to addressing the concerns illustrated by Tiravanija’s *Tomorrow Is Another Day*. 
THE PARTICULARITIES

Collaborative methodologies often appear vague, unpredictable, opaque and risky. These are, I believe, vital qualities of creative collaboration that do not necessarily impede purposeful prior objectives. Identifying these objectives in the methodologies and outputs of the artists amongst whom I have contextualised my own work has assisted me to refine the particularities of my methodology. I have divided the following discussion into three categories: *The Space in Which Collaborative Art Appears*, *A Pluralistic Sensibility* and *The Role of Dialogue*.

The Space in Which Collaborative Art Appears

It is no longer radical to think of the artist in spaces other than in galleries and museums. Since the 1960s artists have inundated public spaces, social events, political forums and daily lives. Gordon Matta-Clark’s ‘cuttings’, for example, which were placed in abandoned buildings, or the Guerilla Art Action Group (GAAG) protest-based projects, or Alan Kaprow’s happenings. Participatory projects often leave little or no trace due to their peripheral, ephemeral character, often neglected by mainstream discussion. Published documentation on the participatory and collaborative practice in South African art has been extremely difficult to find. In congruence with the participatory practice from other parts of the world cited in the previous chapter, it flourished in South Africa during times of social upheaval. The ‘public’ spaces throughout apartheid South Africa were monstrously shaped by the segregationist political structures. It was highly dangerous for artists to use these spaces as sites of resistance to the existing socio-political order. Sue Williamson notes that artist Gavin Younge was involved in a Wages Commission to ‘gather data’ and ‘disseminate information on working conditions’ at the University of Natal in Durban and as a result received security police ‘warnings’, had his tyres slashed and bricks thrown at his house (Williamson 2009: 53). More recent

It is significant that in South Africa the traditional exhibition space and the artist’s relationship to society is rethought in the 1960s and, explosively, from the late 1970s onward. Okwui Enwezor has noted that historically, times of political crisis and social upheaval force a re-evaluation of artistic production and the artist in relation to economic structures, political institutions and social beliefs (Enwezor 2004: online). It is from these same periods of instability that artists across the world increasingly challenge singular authorship, collectives emerge and collaborative endeavours gather momentum alongside other socio-political strategies in art. This type of collaborative art enters and works through existing social forms and their prevailing context. It is because of this attempt to elicit democratic, social activism that the *space* which collaborative art occupies is necessarily interrogated.

I turn first to the work of British artist Stephen Willats, who over the past thirty years has directed his work towards the inhabitants of public housing estates or tower blocks in England, Germany and Finland. His work is concerned with a desire to facilitate a critical consciousness and resistance towards the spatial and ideological regulations placed upon them by bureaucratic bodies. Willats explains that:

It is both an intention and an outcome that the development of my art practice encompasses the polemics and issues of our contemporary culture and society as a means of consciously examining the
function and meaning of art in society. This necessarily takes it beyond the norms and conventions of an object-based art world, rather seeing it as a function of my work to transform peoples’ perceptions of a deterministic culture of objects and monuments, into the possibilities inherent in the community between people, the richness of its complexity and self-organisation. The artwork having a dynamic, interactive social function.

(Willats)\(^5\)

Willats is shifting the emphasis from the phenomenological experience of the creator of such places – the governmental bodies and property owners – to his co-participants, the people who live there. A frequent strategy of Willats’ work involves him identifying sites within which his collaborators can employ their own agency. The projects are installed in the places that the collaborators live, thereby reformulating the cultural aesthetic of the site. These new ‘aesthetics’ come from intense dialogical exchange. The critical reflections of the participants directly challenge the presumptions of the artist and vice versa. Through such interaction, Willats and his collaborators are able to formulate a new consciousness of their environment that can be fed back into the housing estates or tower blocks through signboards, image and text. Part of Willats’ strategy is to pose a question or probing statement that can instigate critical consideration. Through reflecting on Willats’ questions (such as: ‘Describe the family pressures of living in housing estates,’ or ‘What route do you take from one location to another?’) new questions are formed which can be fed back into the dialectical conversation.

An example of this is Willats’ project *FreeZone* (1997), which invited people from London’s Oxford Street to take a symbolic walk together. Willats describes the progression of the work:

\(^5\) This citation is taken from Stephen Willat's website: http://stephenwillats.com/context/. There is no indication of the date it was written.
Participants are asked to respond to a sequence of questions, which explore how they each perceive a symbolic group of four people who are represented in the sort of everyday problem situations that might arise during a stroll down Oxford Street. The sequence of problem situations starts simply, with the individual’s relationship to themselves within the group, becoming progressively more complex and wide ranging to the point where the last questions concern the group’s relationship with society. (Willats 1997: online)

Willats uses a combination of display screens, prints and posters to display the responses and reflections alongside each other, so that the participants can view each other’s selections. The *use* value of Willats’ art allies that of the twentieth-century art previously discussed: to elicit positive social change, but the space and the specificity of the people he collaborates with marks a distinction. In answering an objective outside of traditional art discourse (i.e. challenging preconceptions about daily life in British housing estates), his work finds real-life value in the specific communities from which they arise. When considering Willats’ work it becomes increasingly difficult to say under what criteria this art should be assessed: as engendering a democratic, critical consciousness or for the significance of the aesthetic concept.

Two groups that especially interest me are Le Groupe Amos and Huit Facettes. The latter is a group of contemporary Senegalese artists that have been working in Dakar since 1995. Founder Amadou Kane-Sy describes its aims to ‘free itself of the more haphazard and vulgar aspects of artistic means of expression as they are defined from the traditional western perspective’ and consider instead, ‘forms of expression for artistic urges, including an exploration of interrelationships with other social fields’ (Kane-Sy 2003: online). One of their projects, *Les Ateliers d’Hamdallaye*, situated five hundred kilometres outside of Dakar, is aimed at developing craft skills (such as embroidery and the making of soap) into professional skills. The group professes a commitment to each participant’s autonomy by supporting their choice as to which craft or art they will learn. Above all else they emphasize creativity’s ability to insist upon the dignity of all human life (Kane-Sy 2003).
Le Groupe Amos is a collective of socio-political activists living and working in Kinshasa. It was founded in 1989 and its members currently include Flory Kayembe Shamba, José Mpundu, Thierry N’Landu Mayamba and Jos Das. Their aim is to address the repression of Congolese people’s subjective views by governments and institutions. To do this, Le Groupe Amos instigates ongoing strategies, such as the creation of networks to exchange skills and the utilisation of new media for self-education. Their past projects have drawn attention to violence towards women, local histories, cultural memory and have even intercepted aggression during times of civil unrest. They make use of essays, cartoons, theatre and radio broadcasts to target small and often remote communities. Crucially, their work is made accessible through local languages such as Kiswahili, Kikongo and Lingala, as illiteracy would otherwise be a barrier. The director of Documenta XI, Okwui Enwezor, included their work in the year 2002 and discusses Le Groupe Amos in his essay contribution to *Collectivism after Modernism* (2007). Enwezor notes that Le Groupe Amos do not necessarily identity themselves as artists, even though they appropriate the forms and expressions of creative mediums.

When an artist’s work has socially transformative potential, how important is it that they uphold aesthetic value such as originality and authenticity? Projects such as those of Le Groupe Amos and Huit Facettes are not bound by anxieties of being ‘original’ that would otherwise undermine their social values of, for example, self-expression, education and empowerment. The collaborators are liberated from a commitment to the prevailing art discourse and, as such, discussions of these works under the context of art must acknowledge the divergence of their value. I do feel that it is a positive characteristic of contemporary practice to present challenges to the discourse that supports it. Theorist James Elkins shared an anecdote during one of his lectures at UCT on the 22 August 2011 about an artist he knew who had recently been faced with a similar challenge; she had begun to engage with projects more closely aligned with environmental conservation than art, and it would only be identified as art upon its reception or in the future – and if not, that was also fine. To
categorise these types of projects as ‘artistic’ necessitates a shift in our consideration of the artist, from autonomous maker to an individual member of a collaborative process. We must also redefine the ‘context’ of these works, by the specificity of the project’s participants and location.

What I have found from my own experiments in collaboration is that the process must be able to grow within and beyond the scope of its initial framework, so as to occupy the particularities of the places and people involved. At the beginning of my project Between Echoes, I failed to realise where my ‘control’ needed to be relinquished and my initial expectations discarded to allow for this ‘organic’ formation to occur. It took some time for me to embrace, as part of the process, the spaces in which the work could exist outside of its preconceived trajectory. A clear example of this is discussed in the section entitled One of a Thousand Ways to Adore and Endure You.

A Pluralistic Sensibility

Pluralists emphasize that the different values espoused by mankind, not being variations on one super-value, are sometimes incommensurable – cannot be compared so that irresistible preferences between them can be established. When freedom conflicts with equality, truth with mercy, knowledge with happiness, there is no superior criterion to dictate an inevitable resolution.

(Berlin 2002: online)

In crude terms, pluralism refers to a messy view that there is more than one ‘correct’ way forward and that none of these variants are any less rational or valuable than the other. According to Berlin, the infinite open-endedness and irreducible complexity that this indicates is a result of incommensurable values. This is hardly a startling concept, but it does raise the question of how individuals and groups should relate to each other. Though perhaps tragic and comic, this project is best understood
in its sweetest and simplest way, as promoting conversation between individuals so as to encounter the plurality of meaning.

A pluralistic sensibility is not synonymous with relativism, which I would argue over-confines the meanings of different practices to ‘local perspectives’. Berlin offers the analogy that I like my coffee black and you like yours white, and we’ll have to agree to differ (Berlin 1998). Under a relativist reading, each party has values that cannot be changed nor integrated. Through a pluralistic understanding there are multiple values, and all of them can be understood and even pursued. Berlin (2002: online) identifies that to a pluralist ‘these values are objective -- that is to say, their nature, the pursuit of them, is part of what it is to be a human being, and this is an objective given’. Crucially, this allows for differences to be discussed and even challenged. A pluralistic sensibility makes it possible to situate local perspectives alongside cross-cultural, regional and international concepts. It offers a way forward from the paralysing anxieties of either making universal claims or limiting meaning to a local context. Creative collaboration that embraces pluralism is not simply a cross-fertilisation of ideas capable of eliciting an affect, but is also a meeting point between people, where difference and antagonism may actually bring forth new understandings.

Differences in experience and perspective, however, cannot easily be communicated through a single set of conventions. I will examine three artists whose work negotiates the problem of inter-subjectivity through what I identify as a pluralistic sensibility. The works of Schleuser.net, Gabriel Acevedo Velarde and Phil Collins experiment with the possibility that truths other than one’s own can be engaged with as ‘objective realities’. One of the ways their work does this is by accepting that collaboration will not lead to an instantaneous flash of shared understanding, but instead catalyses a decentring movement outside of a singular individual or group through extended dialogue. A pluralistic sensibility would ideally be fashioned in a feedback loop in which the participants become protagonists and the collaborative mode of production incorporates critical reflection.
Schleuser.net (short for Bundesverband Schleppen & Schleusen) is the Internet domain of The Federal Trade Association for Undocumented Travelling. It was founded in 1998 by a fluctuating group of activists and artists working together with the help of fine arts sponsoring. From their website, though, one has a hard time ascertaining that they are actually an art collective and not an NGO. They state that their objective is to improve the image of men and women who are affected by undocumented cross-border travel. Primarily they act as a lobby organisation for the rights of human transnational mobility. Whereas the state portrays them as a menace to social order, Schleuser.net actively promotes their ‘image improvement’. One could not simply describe Schleuser.net as an NGO, affecting change where governmental sectors cannot. Their work is primarily symbolic, challenging our preconceptions by formulating new social meaning. Neither can they be described as simply a collective of artists striving to procure art from the cultural capital of this project. They operate between these spheres, as much a part of art discourse as social activism. Their enterprise led them to the first International People Smugglers’ Convention in Graz, Austria. Schleuser.net contributed a team to question the public (including professionals) on their knowledge of human trafficking.

They create spaces where dialogue can develop, and distribute ‘merchandise’ that applies pressure to the cultural ‘language’ of undocumented border crossing. They challenge the audience’s subjective judgement by positioning their projects at sites where active dialogue can and does occur. From their website it is clear that they are very careful to use terminology that cannot easily be reduced to simple definitions of undocumented travellers. Their ‘About us’ section is similarly opaque – it is not clear whether they are speaking about the traffickers, the smugglers, so-called coyotes, liberal entrepreneurs, immigrants or stowaways on boats. They argue that we should not, based on prior assumptions, take groups of people to be either good or bad based on their legal status on entering a country. They canvas instead for:
…the peculiarities and needs of the undocumented travel market to be, free of any value, realized by a greater part of the public. The ideological justification of increased border security, and the administrative obstacles to free movement are, in our eyes, devoid of any good reasons based on facts; and, in normalizing the present conditions, they give way to a wide array of bad feelings.

(Schleuser.net)6

They propose a pluralistic perspective: that everybody can be good and bad and both together, but not ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ simply because of the supposed ‘normalcy’ of border regime.

Extractión by Gabriel Acevedo Velarde (2010) is similarly concerned with the relationship between people and national borders. The work is a response to the construction of a highway running from the Pacific to the Atlantic that connects Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. The construction is believed to have dramatic consequences on the towns resting on this ‘triple frontier’, until now almost inaccessible (Farias & dos Anjos 2010: 226). Velarde conducted fifty-five interviews with people from each of the towns as a means of mediating the contact between Brazilians, Bolivians and Peruvians. He directed the questions towards the interviewee’s perception of the neighbouring towns and about recent changes to the regions. For the final video piece, Velarde matched up the content of the interviews so that the responses, the accents, the sense of humour and the idiosyncrasies from each of the regions appear to mirror each other. In doing so, the composite footage gives form to a fourth identity comprised of these multiple perspectives. It promotes a possible Latin-American integration that can support regional differences. His strategy is attentive to both the local and cross-regional civic needs, honouring the voice of the individual whilst never revealing their origin.

6. This reference was taken from their Website: http://www.schleuser.net/en/p1_1.php and gives no mention of the individual author, or the date it was created.
I saw this work at the 29th Biennial in São Paulo in 2010. The work was understated in its presentation: a documentary-styled video (only 15 minutes long) was projected into a semi-closed-off darkened space. What I believe *Extraction* presents for us to recognise is the limits of its own means of communication. Velarde’s work shows that in this we can find commonality, and makes it a necessity that this is the point at which we must fearlessly enter into conversation. I believe it is at this juncture that Velarde’s work stopped being Velarde’s work and became an anonymous and temporal experience co-produced by all of the participants.

One final work that realises a pluralistic sensibility is the poignantly and beautifully executed work by British artist Phil Collins. Collins visited Kosovo in 2008 and began work on *Zasto Ne Govorim Srpski (Na Srpskom)* shortly after. The title is in Serbian and translates as *Why I don’t Speak Serbian (in Serbian)*. In a documentary video it recounts some of the little known after effects of the recent war in Kosovo, giving those caught up in its aftermath a medium for self-expression. The Serbian language was the ‘official’ language of the military oppression in Kosovo. It was the language of the police and the military and was thus perceived to be a language of repression; as a result it has been abandoned by the Albanian majority. For the video work, Collins interviewed Azem Vllasi, the former head of the Communist Party in Kosovo; Bujar Bukoshi, the ex-Prime Minister; and a former Serbian language teacher, about the reasons why people no longer spoke Serbian, in the Serbian language.

In the beginning, there is a moment when a contributor can’t remember the Serbian word for ‘memory’. I was particularly interested in these slippages – the way in which we try to find or recall language, or a position. I mean, in the boldest terms – and it’s something which I don’t like to use – this is ‘the language of the enemy’. What does it feel like to adopt this position for a short period, and to investigate its tenor, its palate?

(Collins 2010: online)
Collins’ work addresses that which is perhaps only accessible through a language that has since become taboo. What is most moving to me about the documentary is how the interviewees recall memories that seem only retrievable in Serbian. Collins explains, ‘If language describes experience, what happens when we repress this impulse?’ (Collins 2010: online). The work was originally intended to be screened in Kosovo, but was subsequently shown to an international audience at the Berlin Biennale in 2008. In an interview with Rosemary Heather (2010), Collins explains that the response to his work in Berlin epitomised the troubles with supposedly ‘global’ platforms such as this. The response was dominated by discussion of its style – documentary – rather than on the subtleties that contextualised its cultural significance. He argues that the mainstream art audience read the piece as something simpler than it would be ‘read’ inside Kosovo. As with Velarde’s work, Zasto ne Govorim Srpski (Na Srpskom), it points towards the way communication can fail us; there is not always a shared discourse. There is a moment in the documentary where one of Collins’ interviewees holds up a photograph of her son and explains that he was killed in the violent conflict. The photograph acts as a potential moment of transcendence, one in which a viewer may register the restrictions of locality, and in so doing find a commonality of specificity.

The Role of Dialogue

Dialogue plays an imperative part in the practice of all the artists I have discussed thus far. There is an abundance of writers that addresses issues of dialogue in art (Deleuze, Foucault and Lyotard, amongst others). For this dissertation I discuss the ideas of Villem Flusser, who defines dialogue as ‘an exchange of stored information that has the potential to create, that is, to generate genuinely new information’ (Flusser 2003, cited in Roth 2005: online). Flusser distinguishes this from discourse, which is concerned with the distribution of information. Discourse is what I imagine Marshall McLuhan would describe as the medium, for example, paintings, sculpture, speeches, televisions,
radio and print. Flusser believed that a severe imbalance between dialogue and discourse leads to a scenario in which people feel unable to communicate. In particular, he believed that the twentieth century saw an exponential increase in discourse and a decrease in dialogue. Flusser explains that:

> What people mean is obviously not that they suffer from a lack of communication. Never before in history has communication functioned so well, so intensively and extensively as it does today. What people mean is the difficulty in establishing a genuine dialogue, that is, in exchanging information in the interest of new information. And this difficulty can be traced back to just that communication that functions so perfectly today, namely the superb, omnipresent discourse that renders every dialogue at once impossible and unnecessary…

(Flusser 2003: 17-8)

*Discourse* manifests participation or collaboration as the sharing of skills and/or ideas through proximity of people (in person, or mediated through communication technologies), whereas *dialogue* engages with difference, actively seeking out challenges and resistance that have the potential to formulate new social meaning. It thus becomes necessary to maintain the boundaries of individuality, even as we acknowledge the social and cultural fabrication of individual identity, for it is at the site of interaction between the individual and ‘another’ that diversity through dialogue can bring forth new understandings. In a collaborative context, dialogue is challenged with balancing the specificities of place and perspective with broader concepts of human experience. The challenge facing dialogue in this collaborative context is in balancing the specificity of place and perspective with broader concepts of the human experience. Communicating our local encounters, shaped by *dialogue* to a wider audience through *discourse*, shapes the discussion of the two final artists.

In 2007, the Polish artist Artur Zmijewski showed his documentary video *Them* as part of *Double Agents*, a group exhibition at the BALTIC gallery in Newcastle. Zmijewski invited four teams (of
three people) from different ideological backgrounds (Christians, Jews, Young Socialists and Polish Nationalists) to take part in his art workshops. Everyone was equipped with drawing materials, paints, pens, etc. and each team had their own large sheet of paper. Zmijewski encouraged them to make visible their team’s ideological symbols and then respond to symbols of the other groups. Their illustrations strengthened their collective identities, and by the end of the first meeting they had each painted their t-shirts with an emblem of their team’s beliefs. The teams returned on day two armed with their new uniforms and began altering the painted symbols of other teams, removing or adding elements so that the message appeared in congruence with their own. The exchange of performance, paint, words and symbols took an explosive turn on the third and final day, as one group set fire to the other team’s banner and they then all followed suit. The art materials of Them literally embody their dialogue. It is through these exchanges between the individuals that the work’s meaning emerges.

Though it is never clear in the video what role Zmijewski plays in directing the ensemble, as a creator he fully employs what philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara (1990) calls ‘the other side of language’ in her book of the same name. Fiumara argues that Western philosophy in particular is dominated by the act of saying and pays little attention to ‘what it means to listen’ (Fiumara 1990: 107). Collaborative production places a great deal of emphasis on listening as a crucial component of exchange. This happens to such a great extent that the artist’s original conception or material structure may be subsumed by the exchange. This process of flow and exchange is the aesthetic, and the material ‘form’ of the work is the residue or documentation left in its wake. The documentary, evidence-like style is a feature of the works I have discussed thus far: Zmijewski’s documentary footage of Them, Velarde’s interviews, the educational videos by Le Groupe Amos and Collins’ full length documentary film. It is also the style adopted by the Mexican artist Antonio Vega Macotela. In his work Time Divisa (2010), artefacts from his exchanges are framed like documents in a museum, with accompanying explanatory texts.
Time Divisa is Macotela’s three and a half year collaborative project with inmates at the Santa Marta Acotila jail in Mexico City. Macotela established a series of exchanges, 365 in total, offering to carry out a request of the inmates on the ‘outside’. In return, they would produce an artwork using their bodies and any materials they had available to them in prison. For example, an inmate named Ismael scratched away at the pages of a copy of *El Conde De Monte Crito* (The Count of Monte Cristo) by Alexandre Dumas, creating a hole in the centre of the book from cover to cover. In return, Macotela went searching for Isamél’s lost love. In another exchange, Macotela went to the house of inmate El Batata and listened to one of his favourite songs whilst lying on his bed. In exchange, El Batata wrote down all his dreams on his prison bed sheets. Macotela posits that these exchanges offer an alternative to ‘the commercialisation of time and the way the economic system appropriates the individual and alienates human relationships’ (Farias & dos Anjos 2010: 170). Macotela’s exchanges are governed by the inter-subjective values of ‘desire, affection and liberty’, rather than by the universal objectivity of the monetary system.

In an interview with Gabriella Gómez-Mont for *Tóxico: Cultura Contemporánea*, Macotela describes at length his experiences of the individual exchanges. He tells Gómez-Mont about how intimidating it was to be in the prison with 3,500 inmates. After having developed an initial rapport with some the prisoners, he began living out his end of the deal. Macotela describes it thus:

You want me to go cook for your family, okay, then you will hold your hand to your neck for three hours and make a scribble on a paper for each heartbeat. You are going to give me all of your heartbeats for these three hours. […] They become me and I become them, for a specific amount of hours and at the same moment in the day. Our wills get exchanged.

(Macotela 2008: online)

As a result of these exchanges Macotela found himself in some of the most dangerous parts of Mexico
City, but describes that he felt somehow protected because of his association with the families of the inmates. He believes that what began as a symbolic exchange actually ended up affecting real life.

For example, once a prisoner asked me to go see his son’s grades and ask him how he was doing in school; his family had stopped visiting him for quite a few years – he was a really tough character and I couldn’t completely blame them. So I went, I visited them, saw the kid’s grades, talked to them for a few hours, and my visit seems to have touched some type of fiber because the next week his family started visiting him again.

(Macotela 2008: online)

The importance of dialogue is well emphasized in this work, as Macotela explains that the inmates he began exchanges with came up with the idea of using objects, instead of just drawings. The inmates modify the objects of their daily life for prison-life survival, such that the handle of a bucket can become a weapon, or a brick and a few loose wires becomes a stove. The transformed objects take on new meanings; they are ingenious, yet also forbidden property, and as such are re-signified. The individuals he worked with understood this to be equivalent to Macotela’s description of art as the modification of daily-life and its objects, so as to give them new meaning. I believe that the space Macotela created for dialogue in his work, with an emphasis on listening as well as saying, is what makes his work genuinely affective. It does not lay claim to a universal truth, but is instead based on the generation of a temporarily unifying local consensus through individual interaction.

The artists I discuss in this chapter concentrate on refining strategies for working with other people in the process of making art. I have given particular attention to their consideration of space, a pluralistic sensibility and dialogue as qualities that have greatly informed my own method of working. The following part of this book shows excerpts from the material residue of each of the collaborations. There are extracts from emails, recorded conversations, images, video stills and
much more. These ‘artefacts’ have been exchanged in the course of making an artwork together. So much of what was said and done has not been included here, some as a means of protecting the privacy of individuals – it is the nature of collaboration to draw people closely together and invest in the partnership. All the images and texts included here appear exactly as they were written or first exchanged. Each collaborator has had the chance to review the content and remove that which they didn’t want printed. I have done my best to be fair to the nature of events, in order to give a true impression of our process, but it is nevertheless my retelling of these stories, a different set of omissions and inclusions might reveal different interpretations.
PART II
One of a Thousand Ways to Adore and Endure You
A collaboration with Niklas Zimmer

Niklas and I know each other as peers, as we are both working towards a Masters degree at the University of Cape Town in the Fine Art department. Our friendship and the idea to collaborate came about on a field trip to São Paulo at the end of 2010. This is also the earliest we can trace our shared conversations around the topic of water-photography, but like all ideas this one has a never-ending trail of roots into the past.

Our idea was to photograph the body in a ‘strange’ or unfamiliar environment, to visualize an experience of the isolation of individuality. We chose to photograph the nude figure underwater, myself as the subject, Zimmer as the photographer. He had the power to ‘capture’ and I had the power to perform. On that day we were joined by a third contributor, Samantha Laura-Kaye, to add another dimension to the photographs – the interaction between two bodies. The eight months that followed the shoot were filled with conversations that circumnavigated the 750 photographs we captured that day. Different combinations, styles and edits were rapidly exchanged, discarded and then resurrected.

Each of us has had a particular ‘hold’ over the raw material. Mine is to fulfil my obligations for this MFA, Laura-Kaye has used some of the photographs online as part of her social marketing strategy and Zimmer has exhibited a selection of the works in a gallery in Cape Town. Attempting to re-align the works to these different contexts
raised issues of authorship, privacy, and conflicting interests. The entangled nature of collaborative works was heightened through our having to now untangle the roles we had both played and the creative direction the work would now take.

One could identify the relationship between the photographer and the subject as similar to my relationship with each of the collaborators. Whilst I have maintained a commitment to working in a true collaborative spirit (free discussion, both sharing of ideas and the freedom to make), circumstances and context have played a heavy hand in shaping the process.

Around eight months after I began collaborating with Niklas Zimmer, I attempted to summarise the development of our body of work. I revisited old email exchanges, text messages and recorded conversations. I extracted snippets here and there that I hoped would reveal the process we had been through together and the heated emotions that surrounded our project. I am indebted to Niklas for helping me become aware of the dangers of the task of retelling and speaking for another. The story that came about from my reconstruction constituted my narrative of events only. The inclusions, omissions, and interpretations were the tools of recreation. The following pages of this section show a stripped-bare document of the online communications that we exchanged. They are intended to be elusive, so that in reading this document it is possible to feel the creative agency that is held in interpreting our story. Above all else, I hope with this section to thwart any easy understanding of our creative collaboration, as that would be truest to its nature.
...uncontrived patterns, that are instigated by the self, yet fall away into different intensities, still affected by the slight displacement of water from the moving body, home in motion literally and imagined, there would be an energy afforded, of dynamic calibre, the relationship between the body and space, that is physically unified in pattern. Inevitably it will mean more to us than anyone...

Evidence, an excellently dark and flawed and human and wondrous expectation to place on the photograph.
indoor/outdoor? - indoor will give us controlled lighting, especially at night, its setting will be more ‘clean’, ‘modern’, ‘finished’, though I like the fake quality here, I like its isolation. Outdoor, will most probably need daylight?

underwater there is an inverse depth phenomenon to in air - the more water one looks through (i.e. sea), the darker it gets (i.e. light figure against dark / black background).

In a pool (or looking up towards the surface of the water) this can somewhat be inverted (i.e. dark figure against light background), because of closeby reflective surfaces.
I would have left the underneath of
the reflective surface intact,
without breaking through it with
the figure.
Also, without the face, there seems
to be less or no contact.

…but you cannot tell where she is,
she may be in water she may not.
All of the signs of being
underwater are removed, so are
the signs of being above water. Of
course there are the smallest of
traces, that indicate the figure is
removed, from above water, and
then removed from below water.
...Hypnic jerks, a type of myoclonus, or involuntary muscle twitch. The dreams that precurse the fall/twitch are very vivid and appear to have several ‘scenes’ that evolve into a narrative, yet are all constructed by the almost sleeping mind in a matter of seconds, stimulate by our preconscious perception of the jerk. A part of our brain is responding to loosing consciousness too quickly, reduced oxygen intake and complete relaxing of the muscles, we unconsciously think we are dying...

Feb 15, 2011 at 1:45 PM

- a secret tension already there.
- So tiredness, a toying with alterations in consciousness. I draw closer to my senses, at first, but then I can end up literally losing myself in a darker web of stimuli and reactions. Fighting windmills.

Feb 15, 2011 at 00:54 AM
You simply must be in the photographs, how can it be right if you are not.

Feb 15, 2011 at 2:59 PM

...I am silent, so still... That makes me think of the quiet restraint from breathing. To calmly suspend breath, what a spiritual path towards what we seek through creating these images...

Feb 15, 2011 at 4:20 PM
...we have put together an elaborate array of pixels, of dots on a canvas, it can now only ever fail artistically, what authority is this?

Feb 20, 2011 at 4:30 PM

...Fuck underwater lights, let’s get two big lights (reds or blonds) for shining down from above the pool.

Feb 20, 2011 at 5:45 PM
I received the email from Photohire, with the quote for the equipment at around 4 and half thousand. wow.

make him an offer of 1 large print (roughly A1), on Hahnemuehle cotton paper (or similar), signed by both of us. we can secure with a kind of clamp/bracket to the side of the pool (will look into that if/once we find them).
I’m also really dreaming up other bodies than yours and mine...

let me know where and when tomorrow.

Mar 2, 2011 at 9:28 AM

Mar 4, 2011 22:39
Yesterday was so special and amazing. Thank you so much for everything. You made this shoot into an incredible experience for everyone, and we got beautiful shots in amongst all the underwater-chaos!

Playing around while looking through...

...one of my favourites so far for a big print.
one of me against the mirror

...out + in / moments apart

and this one has a punch to it what with the photographer, the other, almost entirely obscured model etc,
somehow, there’s an enery here
Nothing can be salvaged, and perhaps none of the traces so carefully collected bear evidence of emotions, insights. Perhaps only of this: an (unconscious?) disconnection, a letting be, letting myself go, a becoming one with the most archetypal visual desires. Am I the male gaze, and no more? ... The blues has me. And maybe one or two of these photos will survive the culling, whatever ‘survival’ will mean.

Mar 7, 2011 at 5:56 PM

What a tightly clenched hand uniqueness has on the photograph. A longing for the new, the cheap little bitch wife of a creative soul. I don’t mean to seem as though I am dragging my tail, I wake up in a sweat of fear of disinterest. Where has the day gone. Down what plug hole, down what lens, down what drain, drain away the likeness. Time+Matter+space+me+you. I am so sure there is a cluster of pixels

Mar 8, 2011 at 8:09 AM
I like cassettes. More than vinyl, CDs or MP3s. I have so many that sit in the attic of my family home, a relic of audio interest.

way worthless, except as mnemonic devices to transport me back to a time of passionately and patiently creating mixed-tapes for friends and occasions. Hours spent on the marble step next to my parents’ hi-fi, listening, really listening to the music go from record needle to tape record head...
The three individuals involved in the shoot - my collaborator, our additional model and myself - met today to view the raws for the first time together today. It might be a little while until selecting, grading and printing is agreed on, planned, financed and performed. I’m venturing a guess of about three weeks? I’m so sorry to be vague about this right now - it’s not all in my own hands.

I have played a little with two formats: the long thin strip, and the square.

The female nude is now my nemesis.
Then, a third ‘conceptual installation’ series (edition of 3, maybe), which is: tiny prints & slides [can be any collection of whatever we play with]

The long thin strips work for me, the squares don’t really, I’d either stay with 3x2 or try 4x5.

Nemesis is the Greek goddess of divine retribution to those who succumb to arrogance, she is the goddess and the arrogant.

Mar 12, 2011 at 10:50 PM
Mar 12, 2011 at 11:24 PM
I’ll carry on editing with 2x3 until I’m through the five stars. Just to tick that box. Then I’ll edit my way through all the different stars trying out 10x3 and 4x5. Then we should have a significant amount of material to do frontier prints.

I guess I’m digging my way towards being your collaborator from the other side.
for now, i am sifting through and editing, in stages, in successive attempts, in orders, methodically, chaotically, intuitively, systematically, carefully, carelessly, hopefully, hopelessly...

so much the image cannot say. But even less I can say in the face of the image. Mute point. Peace of exhaustion.

days go by as quiet as lust, sober-eyed people wonder from room to room they linger and crave, linger and crave, linger a little while longer. We make people when we photograph them. We make new people. The crystal sharp edged guillotine lens cuts through the whole and leaves the aesthetic.
A friend recently told me about a realisation she had as a precocious teenager: that her love she felt for someone (we call them ‘MY love’) was what was inseparable from her. She has loved several times, and sometimes two people at the same time, and they have either accepted this or had to leave her. This strength is quite rare, but in her case un-forced, totally true to who she is.

This collaboration has been a trial, an experiment, one of a million ways to figure out some small truth. There is such a difference between truths found in relationships with others, and those found in isolation.
A few years ago I was in Portugal, I’d set out to walk the length of the country, North to South. I had been walking at my own pace, setting up my own camps, far away from anyone. I ate what I cooked on fires that I had built and soaked the blisters on my feet that I had made, in waters that I stopped at. I had for a while created my own world and was free to wonder in it as I chose.
Otherwise: the muse doesn’t feel like a collaborator, but like a muse, and the collaborator feels like a muse, not like a collaborator - and things are askance, awry. Which maybe makes this all a mind game.

We do not seriously express opinions, we TELL how things are in our worlds. And believe other worlds are filled with fools and the occasional wise man/woman. Echoes and muses are garbage, poetical bullshit concealing the inadequacy of plain-ness and the silence of solitude.
What I meant was so.. but what did I mean? 
Now all I have is as long as strong as I feel, and trust you are prepared to be.
How iterative this process is, how much I need to re-translate myself,

Après moi, le déluge

The phrase, which roughly means ‘after me, the flood’ has no verb, and could be read as either ‘after me COMES the flood’ (An assertion of ‘chaos follows me’) or ‘after me LET the flood COME’ (Let it flood once I’m gone, it’ll make no difference to me).

 (...) A photograph is a moral decision taken in one eighth of a second, or one sixteenth, or one one-hundred-and-twenty-eighth. Snap your fingers; a snapshot’s faster. Halfway between voyeur and witness, high artist and low scum, that’s where I’ve made my life, making my eye-blink choices (...

 Rushdie, Salman: The Ground Beneath Her Feet; 1999; Vintage (p.13)
More Rushdie
“The only people who see the whole picture,” he murmured, “are the ones who step out of the frame.” (ibid. p.43)

I actually love these 7 even more now much pretension and fear and self-consciousness washed away.
I’m looking at completely different images now. And I don’t give a damn about the colour for now. The expression of face and body are tantamount to call itself ‘fine’ art. But it is such a rare occurrence, and requires so much openness, fearlessness, thought and sensitivity.
I personally would like to take these at least to be graded and printed. I know there is more,

I’ll send through my favs in black and white...cropped barely tweaked --- just so they can act as an index, not a definite indicator of the crop, or favoring the black and white at all..

These are the four that I love In whatever way we decide to cut them or crop them....I think they should be in the final ten.
I like how you seem to be settling on the interaction-shots, I agree that the exact ones you chose hold the most interest, dare I say ‘mystery’.

May 1, 2011 at 5:20 PM

...something like video, photo, photo of photos... sonar, photograph, text or something like that. also this sounds...

...looking back, our work always seems to sit in a rift between the intensely personal and the incredibly arbitrary.

May 10, 2011 at 3:26 PM
I like how you seem to be settling on the interaction-shots, I agree that the exact ones you chose hold the most interest, dare I say ‘mystery’.

May 1, 2011 at 5:20 PM

...but these changes are very small, and not made flippantly, but with a lot of thought and conversations at the wall with friends popping by...

May 11, 2011 at 6:46 AM
There is a silence and peculiarity to these images where one can feel the tension between conflicting desires: the desire to maintain the ‘self’ and the desire to break free from it. In an underwater territory that is both

Who owns the artwork: client, director, photographer, collector, … who? What produces the image: the presence of the model, the cameraperson framing it, … what? Where does the photograph originate: in the thinking of the artist, the camera capturing the light, … where? When does collaboration become art: in the claiming of creative agency, the surrendering of control, … when? Why is authorship important: because the art world is constructed around hero worship, because we are all in-divisible, … why? How is meaning constructed in a photograph: in taking it, in talking it through, … how?
I’m just not happy with leaving the authorship un-qualified - that would seem false and contrived, with regard to either of us. I’m an artist, and you are an artist. Togetherness is not one-ness. It is two-ness.

http://www.africancolours.com/african-art-news/866/south%20africa/winter_show_mmxi_at_the_museum_photographic_art_gallery_cape_town.htm
I will be content with the role that you give me

May 16, 2011 at 7:09 PM

I am also prepared to share the creative claims over this body of images with you, but I wish it could be clearer how this sharing is to take place.

May 16, 2011 at 9:01 PM
THE photographs of Surface Tension look very Michelangelo meets Atlantis underwater with their ethereal marble white bodies which were shot in a shallow suburban pool in Plumstead.

This effect is the clever result of using free-standing, frameless mirrors suspended behind and/or between the models in the water, and half a million rand's worth of lighting above the water's surface.

"The images are not heavily treated at all," insists the photographer, Niklas Zimmer. "They were graded for consistency of colour (the light during this day-long shoot changed a lot), that's pretty much it. There is no constructing or layering at all, what you see is what was there in the water.

"The dreamlike effects are typical problems when shooting in water: tiny bubbles of air trapped on the dome of the underwater housing create veritable clouds of haze between photographer and model. The more we came up for air and dived back down again for new shots (we did this a couple of hundred times), the more the water became 'weird' like that.

This evocative collaborative work between Michaelis Master of Fine Art (MFA) student Bryony Purvis and Zimmer was conceived in São Paulo during a trip to the Biennale with a group of Master's students from Michaelis School of Fine Art.

"Bryony and I started having very interesting conversations on art and life. A little later she asked me if I’d like to be one of eight collaborators in her MFA project Enigments and I agreed, since it seemed to be a great platform to start developing some new work.

They started with the idea of a night swim and explored a sound recording, then Zimmer proposed shooting it and the ideas grew from there. "We researched the underwater made to death and there really seemed very little to add or subtract from this very cheesy photographic sub-genre. I thought mirrors could tip the balance in our favour and hired lots of lighting, too.

PLUMSTEAD NUDES: Surface Tension by Niklas Zimmer and Bryony Purvis is on show at the Museum Photographic Gallery.

Baring souls

It was incredibly taxing physically, as we shot for seven hours.

I shot the images, Bryony developed some of the work further."

The nude models are mostly friends, "beautiful women. I chose them, they chose themselves. They had to be there, they were right. One is a talented make-up artist, Samantha Laura Kays, but the other model prefers to remain anonymous," says Zimmer.

The title, Surface Tension, explains Zimmer. "It references water but also brings the flatness of photography together with aspects of psychology. We're both quite highly strung people in a way and tied our minds into knots trying to work together, and then the actual shoot was also incredibly taxing physically as we shot for about seven hours in the water.

"Somehow, trying to direct two models into some kind of relation to one another and then they are offering a range of options, then there is this sliver of a prop, the mirror; an anti-prec, really and the equipment is cumbersome."

Both artists agree this work is about relations and the choices we make, "whether we want to or not, whether we feel more active or passive in our positioning, and how our motivational energies shift all the time. It is impossible to stay in one place, hold on to anything, claim a position for any longer than a moment. These moments are constructed perspectives from within and without.

"Some are well-described and seem obvious, like the elephant in the room. In this instance for me the notion of the 'male gaze' – what am I doing as a man photographing two beautiful young naked ladies swimming underwater together?"

"And yet, as soon as you name it like that, and look at the work, there is a disconnect from the conceptual on both sides. Neither can this kind of work only be looked at in terms of formal abstractions, nor can my 'gaze' be sufficiently male to fulfill a feminist reading."

Zimmer admits, of course, that Barthes's pronouncements of the "realm of the dead" which we enter into with the photograph (camera lucida) haunts almost any photographic image, particularly if it puts itself under public scrutiny.

"With the stills camera, I still feel like I have to make choices. I can still convince myself of having created something myself in the end, even if everything has been said and done before; it's a bit like having sex, or fighting, or trying to explain how and why I do what I do, and what it all means," says Zimmer.

"I see these works as our form, contained and underwritten in space. There's something so comforting and so terrifying at the same time about that. We are thrown and then completely held, but then we are also lost, utterly alone, and then we cease to be there at all, nothing left, not a speck. There are a few shots... just of reflections of light on the side of the pool underwater. They somehow hold for me that brutally comforting feeling of being briefly held, and then disappearing."

MUSEUM Photographic Art Gallery's new WINTER SHOW MMXI showcases photographic art from emerging artists, including Niklas Zimmer, Les Goodman, Dylan Culhane, Dale Yudelson and Roger Horrocks. Upper East Side, 31 Brickfield Road, Woodstock. Call 081 801 504. For more photographs, see www.iszybell.tumblr.com. Follow Stay on Twitter @iszybell
...in this particular manifestation of our collaboration with each other / each other’s work [ie the MUSEUM show]...

It would be too arduous and eventually non-sensical to try and reconstruct it there. I think it’s a similar feeling to what you are having with the photos now. So much is omitted and changed. I think I can see your perception emerge as mine submerges from factual record into fragmentary fiction.
Just let the words be words, and give your feelings over to the realm of the visual, which is NOT a text.

It's so strange to see them up and 'about' when they have remained tucked away for so long, in a bottom draw somewhere.
I’ve been wondering when I’ll ever hear from you again. Good to hear all seems well. I’m at upper campus most of the time. Given a little advance warning, I can be there to meet you for coffee.
It's Cruel not to Talk to You in Person

A collaboration with Harro Falkenreck

I met Harro through an old friend I was visiting on Sylt, in the North of Germany. The three of us spent just a few days together on the island. Over the years our friendship was channelled through an infrequent exchange of words via email, before we began our collaboration at the end of last year. Our initial conversations centred on translating definitions in English and German. Our experiences in life have been immeasurably different, rendering context a conflictual point of reference. We each began by drawing pictures that could illustrate our thoughts on human relationships, from feelings of intimacy to feelings of distance. The process of drawing followed the sequence of a conversation, whereby one of us would draw a picture and send it to the other, who would then draw in response, incorporating their interpretation of the previous drawing, titling the work: Figure 1..., 2..., 3... to mark their order. Illustrating our conversations gave us a feeling of ‘seeing’ the other’s context, the other’s (t)here.

The pictures became a form of communication that could eschew formal translation. Even if I misunderstand the intended meaning of the drawer, the subject matter can still hold meaning for me. I can make sense of the image within my own knowledge system without the need for translation. The uniformity of the images – each of them grey-scale and ten centimetres high – emulates the structure of a language, yet one that cannot be formally translated, only recontextualised by each individual who sees them. In Gleaning, a TV screen balanced on a tree branch displays the limbless torso
of a woman, the woman’s form easily misconstrued as the features of a face. The next picture in the sequence, Da Lee personifies the tree with a face of its own. The agency of meaning-making has a discursive life in these pictorial responses. Regardless of the respondent’s interpretation, whether it departs from or continues with the penultimate discourse, it always becomes a part of the present discourse.

I believe our exchange of drawings occupies a ‘third’ space between the drawer and myself. Through the use of tropes of mysticism, ambiguity and alienation in our drawings we signify this ‘other’ place as a potential alternative from the here and now. It suggests an intermittent world where there are matters that reason cannot account for, where the ordinary is mysterious and the finite, infinite. These drawings signify the search for conflicting realities – an intimate connection without the loss of heightened awareness that comes with over-familiarity.
‘Estrangement shows itself precisely in the elimination of distance between people.’

As
  converse-
sensations fit two-
  gether like jigsaws and
  and building blocks a
molten rocks
  it seems only right that my
words
  should concave as
convex
so I share
  with you my latest project,
  that has become so important
to me
  to create 10 small creative
expressions,
  as a result of 10
collaborations,
  Dec 7, 2010 at 11:50 AM

did you think of single-work-follows-single-work-follows-single-work, kind of ping-pong dialogue?

another idea was/were that i drew
  on your scanned sheets, added my
  part, then you yours, and so get to
  a more and more complex work,
  that, hung in line, gets darker and
darker.

or could i contribute to your work
  by adding a drawn comment on
  each sheet you will send, mail it
  back, then you’d send a new one?

Am 8.12.2010 um 1:01 PM
the only thing that needs keeping consistent (i think, but not sure how it will work) is the paper, so that the drawings can sit, side by side or on top etc...

Do you have any ideas about paper?

I often use ordinary typewriter paper, putting a stack of it under the work sheet for good grip. I also like to draw on white cardboard. Haptic is important, I do not care for brands.

I can go and get me any format we need. Otherwise I’d suggest DIN A4, which is 21.0 x 29.7 mm, most commonly used here as typewriter/letter sheet and easy-to-scan (does South Africa measure in inches or centimeters?). Scanned with 300 dpi, you can enlarge up to 200% per cent almost without loss = makes 150 dpi for printout, which should be sufficient.)
...shoveling and rushing snow, feeding the birds with oat flakes and raisins: many blackbirds and tomtits, a robin, a wren, some pigeons and seagulls appear once in a while. solitude. too many cigarettes. strange but quickly forgotten dreams these nights. déja-vus, strange synchronicities. doubts -

the translate google tool brings up the word “Entfremdung”
1. To make hostile, unsympathetic, or indifferent; alienate. 2. To remove from an accustomed place or set of associations. From the Latin “extraneare”, to treat as a stranger, disown

my feeling is that there is a necessary context always needed with it, for it to make sense and that it is heavily bound to feelings of independence, to not be/feel estranged - would the opposite be complete unity, or belonging to something? being everything and nothing all at the same time?
I liked the idea that it was cheap sheets, fleeting thoughts.

just when you sent your first mail, the sun came out, what a lovely coincidence. we have about 2°C
Figure 1
THE JELLYFISH
Figure 2
MIRROR
Figure 3
THE CROW AND THE COMPASS
- living in hamburg, i once cared for a crow with a broken leg, and each morning she (? i guess) would sit on my window sill and crow for food.

later, on sylt, i had a young crow that had fallen out of her nest, which i named “dodo”. both were so intelligent. the hamburg crow checked my contact lenses and carefully, very softly inspected them with the beak. she liked my chromed corkscrew and liked to play with it, having an affinity for gleaming things, like a magpie.

I think the crow is to the raven like the compass is to the clock... Better to know where you are, than what time you got there ;) edgar allan poe’s raven? wonderful connection.

Sometimes I feel lost at sea, on dry land.
Lots of time has passed, lots of catching up to do. I sat on the end of the pier, out of sight, surrounded by birds, and heat.

I am still unsure/uncertain how to work on/at a project like “estrangements” when I’d rather like to find mutualities. You can quote that.
1986
seeing the above and looking into
the mirror = estrangement
(you can publish that ; ))

are the gallerie’s
walls painted
white? where
will you exhibit
our drawings?

we had a calm and sunny day
today,
it felt like the first one after weeks
felt temperature ‘bout +5°C
spring will be here soon
birth of mirth!

Jan 14, 2011 at 12:46 AM

I think you are right. I think
perhaps our project is actually
a project that tries to find the
familiar. I think maybe this is the
way the project should be, one
about mutualities, that points only
towards estrangement as a dialectic
“opposite”. (not sure if I believe in
opposites, rather something that is
not the same.)

Jan 16, 2011 at 9:29 AM
The World My Father Gave Me

24
The World My Father Gave Me
like “gleaning”, but I would like to see more detail, though they all look nice that small. Is that a judge’s head on the “gleaning” screen, or a bra and a cone...? I saw my father in the “climbing man”, with a joker’s hat, like the people in German “karneval” wear it.

Fine to see the detailed fine-stroked, heart-shaped branches. The knot nest is empty.

Empty knot-nests have potential...

...The roots were not easy, I drew them inside out, and upside down, then white on black, then black on white. They would have no detail in this state, cause there would be no light to illuminate them under all that soil.

What is it that is familiar about pictures?
I thought that at the same place where I was sitting, tribes and vikings had fought centuries ago, I thought about time and that all this fighting might happen simultaneously with my sitting there, in a parallel world where time does not exist, but is just a man-made measure...

...I wanted to give the root lady some scissors, so she can free herself from that awkward situation.

then I found out that “scissors” is a synonym for marihuana, so I gave the box a brand name.

I translated Welt Holter, and in keeping with opportunities that come from mistranslations - I missed the umlaut off the o in my first sketch, after realizing my mistake, I thought it might be worth looking up this new word holter, in english, Holter monitoring is the continuous monitoring of the electrical activity of the heart muscle.
Figure 10
SCISSORS
Figure 11
DORA
I showed some of our drawings to the lecturers at ‘our’ university.

They had some interesting questions, like...how will you know when to stop, and will you reveal whose is whose?

I said we would have to discuss it... right now I don’t know, i don’t want to stop any time soon, what do you think?

bud’dha was a shy attempt of an answer to dora--initially i wanted to answer with a male pose but got stuck in anatomy, trying to find a decent answer.i got stuck--am i a stuckist?

i love to go on and to see your project growing, and i found i have to take more time drawing the replies. i am too often putting myself in a hurry when calmness and contemplation would be required.
took ey woark en vizzitid zum frentz, wee hed hut shocklet wiz rum; now it’s a dry soave, -

Feb 19, 2011 at 8:52 PM

Wowee, gewgal duz not ofver ey translayshun on thiz kynda lange-waj en eeyt iz verree difekult 2 rite lyke thiz.

Feb 20, 2011 at 6:44 PM

hehehe, -- gewgal, brillyent! wee hed a feest yezturdae exibishun oapen ink atelier klint in teenham-- tinnum

Feb 21, 2011 at 1:22 PM
Figure 14
PÈRE UBU L'EMPEREUR
I’ve seen you’ve done some photoshopping and changed “the emperors advisors” -- are they “stereo types” now? ; )
yesterday i drew an emperor with uniform and epaulettes, today i found ghadaifi on the “welt” front page, this image very much reminds me of the emperor. who may be ghadaifi’s advisors?

Here is my gratitude towards the wholeness of things, and the small holes in things, and the looking from the other side.
Estrangement from the self, I wonder what the world would have thought of that 500 years ago? I don’t even really know what these words mean anymore.

But my new friend made today special. He has taken up residence in our kitchen. He spent the morning on the wall by our spices, and around lunchtime moved nearer to the door, resting on a little nail, that until then had no other purpose.

I like the one most on which he clings to the nail.

he will like insects, wiki says some are cannibals.
All the written mails I sent were meant for you and not for public.

I don’t want you to feel like there is no privacy with me, or like you have no control.

I hope you are well and happy, and that the sun is shining, it is your turn now in the North for the warmth and the sun and the green leaves. We have our turn with the winter, I can feel its chill.
i guess we got about the same temperature?

herzliche grüße nach kapstadt.
i got a clock. wish i got a compass...

Picture of Harro

but it works in eye-to-eye conversation only, groups can be awful.

Quantum mechanics ? ; ) I wonder if we could ever encircle the past. Does the end of the universe reflect what has been sent ? ;)
can everything be found in a wormhole? When gardening or mowing the lawn? Flying to Hong Kong in 1996, I thought the world might be enrolling below our plane like a carpet, instead of everything being already there...
I have some ideas for the exhibition; it would be nice to see the space you’ll have for displaying our/the entire work to see if my ideas are realistic.

i feel very connected with the english language, as if i had been living in anglo area earlier. i’d love to see the photos first, great, then let’s see if i can help to arrange. i guess nice would be heavy paper, “open-pored (?) , not shiny. excited, 

why not exhibit on Sylt, too? www.atelierklint.de = peter klint, almost a neighbour here in tinnum.

That would be marvellous, and would make me so happy to imagine them there, and also know the my work is over there feeling that you must have about your work over here...the sort of not knowing and lots of imagining?

They actually look nicer on the less textured paper, and the heaviness makes it look really nice. I had them hanging on wooden pegs in my studio for a while earlier this year, as we drew them I would print them out and hang them up, I liked them hanging, they looked sweet like that, I used little mini bulldog clips.

Am 12.06.2011 um 6:14 PM

Jun 21, 2011 at 9:15 PM
I’m picking up the test samples on Friday - so I’ll let you know how they go. :)  

Do you think we should publish any of the conversations? or should we let the pics do the talking?  

it’s merely a haptic thing, ain’t it? the more it’s over 300 gsm, the better.  

i could imagine our mail talks displayed as long vertical stripes of paper. i couldn’t explore clearly on the pics if there’s a “hanging system” (?), looks like there is one. is improvisation regarded as welcome by the examiners?  

...no iphone for hundred days
Peter www.peterklint.de said he’d like to exhibit estrangements in January 2012 if he could take part with his own interpretations. We’d have two walls then, peter would have one. I’m sure he’ll do his part well, what do you think?
It sounds like a wonderful idea, especially Peter doing his interpretations.

yes, I like the idea very much! besides planning is lovely, for the winter’s always hard.
i promise I’ll make it a nice exibishan. could you imagine our pics framed?

...the estrangement feeling that got me from time to time has given way to a more friendly, trusting feeling since a few days.
see Lowell George’s little feat from 1977. I was fourteen then, was just given an open reel tape recorder by generous mum Lieselotte, and I spent half the night listening to and recording “Rockpalast”.
When i looked outside early this morning, a yellow cat lay in front of my open cellar window, it was like she had protected my sleep, not a single mouse in sight.
...do we want to guillotine the images or tear them? the tearing leaves straight edges but with a little ‘ruffle’ and the guillotine obviously very clean cuts. I personally prefer the torn look...

We also need a title for our work, no rush though, I’m stumped for ideas, was thinking a play on words like the (t)here type thing...

...luv lee ping pong
snart (south north art)
snarties
smarties (s+m for it’s cruel not to talk to you in person)
snawings
drart
drawn apart – (‘bout 6,000 miles ; ) i like this one) + close to the topic
arotoons -- not too bad?
drewings
cartboard / s
articulation
articles
artmart...
eyelands
istrangements
virtuart /s ...

Jul 19, 2011 at 3:01 PM

Am 22.07.2011 um 8:35 PM
Andrea is helping me print the drawings with lithography says she should be able to find the time on Thursday -I’ll let you know what happens! :)
this morning, your carefully wrapped parcel arrived -- and made this grey day a
great day.
the prints are wonderful! well chosen paper, perfect and precious!
great to see the drawings as miniatures. some look
like copper plates, or etchings. well done.
parcel’s been traveling for 15 days --
perfect timing; it brightened
up this darkish day.

i’ll be thinking now about a good way to present the prints..
pegs would be nice, but i’d ike to frame a few. what do you think?
thank you so much. just called peter (klint), i’ll show him your great work this
afternoon.

-- i’m “not on schedule”... when will your work be shown in cape town?
the sun came out today for a while,
i played soccer with tede: peter’s and kathrin’s
5-year-old son, while peter showed his gallery to visitors
from hamburg. i’ll show him the prints tomorrow, he’ll sure be enchanted

Am 17.09.2011 um 11:56 AM
Thank you so much!
i think it
was a wednesday... i went bathing
once this year, and i cut the lawn quite frequently,
we had more rain than usual.
i’m hoping for a “golden
october”.

the frogs
and toads are invading my
window shaft
again!

peter klint
and me went drawing here in
tinnum one day, i modified a drawing of groenwoldt’s house,
see below.

Sep 21, 2011 at 09:06 AM
Figure 33
NIGHTLAND
**Methods of Teaching the Eyes and Mind to Move**

*A collaboration with Nick Jones*

A beauty of collaboration is that it offers the potential for escape for the collaborators. It enables participants to transcend disciplinary boundaries. Within many different public spaces, individuals are constantly required to speak in a definite manner, representative of their respective authorities. For example, attorneys represent the authority of the law in a courtroom, politicians speak within parliament under the authority of a nation’s legislation and teachers speak in a classroom under the authority of their subject’s discourse. Dialogue in these contexts prioritises the defence of one’s point of view from their authoritative position. Within the ‘context’ that collaborative art situations present, participants can transcend disciplinary boundaries, potentially bridging areas of knowledge.

I have worked with Nick Jones a number of times in the past on creative projects, and we are both advocates of creativity’s potential to develop through experimental and playful exchanges with other people. Under the context of art (whether it’s visual arts, music, etc.), the responsibility to individual ‘disciplinary divides’ is relinquished and there is instead a commitment to the objectives of that particular project – objectives that can be realised by the totality of the collaborators’ shared knowledge, skills and experience.

The work we created together was inspired by Aldous Huxley’s chapter *Methods*
of Teaching the Eyes and Mind to Move in The Art of Seeing (1943: 61-68). Huxley wrote the book in response to his own experiences of sight difficulty, fostering controversial practices and beliefs in the study of eye functionality. The chapter we concentrated on concerns methods for improving what he refers to as central fixation. Central fixation, he explains, is our ability to focus on particular points, allowing the surrounding field of vision to seemingly fall out of focus. Crucial to Huxley’s method is movement. When we move, the outer limits of what we are focusing on appear to move away from us, in the opposite direction. This ‘seeing’ of movement forms an intrinsic part of our sensory relation to the world around us.

The work we created consists of a kite filmed from two different perspectives. The first perspective is static, with the camera placed on the ground, filming directly up towards the flying kite. The movement in this video recording is seen from a fixed point far away, with the kite travelling gently and slowly around the stationary frame. The viewer’s attention is concentrated on the kite, as it stays almost entirely in focus and the background (the sky) shows little or no blurring that would otherwise indicate a moving perspective. The second perspective is constantly in motion; the camera is attached to a second kite that flies alongside the first. The recorded footage shows rapid changes of direction, subject to the force of the wind moving the kite and camera across the sky. The lens captures flittering moments of the surrounding scenery, as different horizons, objects and scenes come in and out of the camera’s field of vision. The videos hang side by side, each showing the same one minute of the kites in flight. The work symbolically points towards the ‘fixed’ nature of single positions
perspective, and the difference between perspectives on an external world. Together the videos create a dual perspective that is centred on a single point: the kite.
‘All art constantly aspires to the condition of music.’

Walter Pater, The Renaissance. 1873: online
Methods of Teaching the Eyes and Mind to Move

Central fixation can be taught directly, by methods which permit the pupil to experience the fact that he cannot see every part of a large area with equal clarity. Or it may be taught indirectly, by methods which build up habits of mobility—methods which compel the mind to shift its attention and the eye to shift its area of greatest sensitivity from point to point of the regarded object.

Use of the direct method entails a certain danger of increasing the strains from which the pupil already suffers. It seems best, therefore, to approach the goal indirectly. Just as, in the case of painting, the best way to see black is not to try to see it, but to remember pleasant scenes and events out of the past, so the best way to achieve central fixation is not to try to see one small area better than all others, but to cultivate the mobility which is the necessary condition for seeing successive small areas of an object with maximum clarity. Accordingly, I shall begin by describing a number of procedures for increasing the mobility of the eye and mind, and only when this has been done shall I give an account of methods aimed directly at making the pupil conscious of central fixation. Those whose sight is defective will be well advised to follow the same order in their educational practice: first learn to keep the eyes and the attention in constant easy movement; then, when movement has reactivated them, learn consciously to recognize the manifestations of central fixation and, by recognizing them, to increase their intensity.
...swinging from side to side, visualize the apparent movement of the window bars across the trees at the end of the garden or the house across the street. Then, open again and, during a few more swings, watch the real bars as they move back and forth. Close again and visualize. And so on, for perhaps an hour or longer.

This procedure has several advantages. It makes the mind aware of movement and so is very friendly to it. It helps to break the defective eye's bad habit of staring. It produces automatically a shifting of attention and of the force centrally. All these contribute directly to the dynamic relaxation of the organs of seeing. An indirect contribution to the same result comes from the rhythmic movement of swinging which acts upon mind and body in the same soothing way as do the movements of the body and the rocking-chair.

For these soothing effects of the Short Swing, the Long Swing adds direct and beneficial action upon the spine by sending and repeated twisting. When practicing this swing, one stands with the feet apart, as before, but instead of confining the movement of the body to a pendulum-like short swing, one swings in a wider arc, turning the trunk upon the hips and the head upon the shoulders as one does so. As one swings to the left, the weight is thrown on to the left feet, while the heel of the right is lifted. Conversely, the left heel is lifted as one turns to the right. The eyes, as they travel from one side to the other, cover an arc of some hundred and eighty degrees or even more, and the external world seems to oscillate back and forth in a wide sweep. No attempt should be made to pay attention to anything in the eyes, moving sense-field. The attitude of mind, while one is practising this swing, should be one of complete passivity and indifference. One just ‘lets the world go by’ without caring, without even making any effort to perceive what it is that is going by. The selecting and perceiving mind is out of action,
and one is down to pure sensing - a physiological organism taking a holiday from the conscious 'I'.

Such a holiday from the self is extremely restful. Moreover, since it is generally the conscious 'I' that is responsible for poor seeing (either through harbouring negative emotions, or through misdirecting its attention, or in some other way ignoring nature's rules for normal visual functioning), this temporary inhibition of self's activities is helpful in breaking the old habits of improper use and clearing the ground for the building up of new and better habits. In the Longer Swing, the sensing apparatus temporarily escapes from its bondage to a mind that misuses it by immobilizing it, or directing it, and learns to move about a field of vision in a condition of free and unrestrained mobility.

A variant of the Short Swing, which may be practised with standing or sitting, and which has been called the Pencil Swing. In this swing the near-by object is a pencil (or one's own forefinger will do just as well) held vertically about six inches in front of the nose. Swinging the head from side to side, one notes the apparent movement of the pencil across the more distant features of one's environment. The eyes should be closed at times. The apparent movement should be followed with the inner eye of the imagination. When the eyes are opened, they may be focused alternately on the pencil and on the more distant objects across which it seems to pass.

Swinging can and should be carried over from the period's special set and used for it into the activities of daily life. Perfect vision is impossible without continuous movement of the sensing apparatus and the attention, and it is by cultivating an awareness of the apparent movements of external objects that the staring eyes and immobilized mind can most easily and rapidly be educated out of their sight-impairing habits. Hence, for those with defective vision, the foundation of something the principle of

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The Eternal Departure

A collaboration with Margaret Herschel

Margaret Brodie Herschel set sail from Portsmouth to South Africa aboard the S.S. Mountstuart Elphinstone on the 13th of November 1833. Herschel and her husband arrived in Cape Town sixty-three days later, a journey that cost them £500. They journeyed to South Africa to complete a catalogue of the stars of the southern hemisphere (Warner 2006).

When Margaret arrived in Cape Town she was only twenty-four years old and had little experience of painting flowers. During her time in the Cape, Margaret completed over one hundred and twenty colour paintings. Her husband, John Herschel, used a camera lucida to accurately draw the outlines of the specimens and Margaret completed the details herself. Although it was initially intended as a personal record it became a valued contribution to floral records of the Cape in the nineteenth century. A collection of these drawings was published in 1996 in a book called Flora Herscheliana.

In order to experiment with the outer limits of collaboration I chose to work with Margaret, who passed away in 1884. To replicate the conversations one might have in the course of a collaborative dialogue and to reflect her participation in the collaborative process, I studied the lasting records of her life and activities in Cape Town. I relied on these records – diary entries, household inventories, letters and
drawings – to help direct my decisions within the making of the work.

To reflect the closeness and intimacy of a collaborative process (the shared hours and ideas, the openness and a deep investment in another’s perspective) I chose to work through the medium of clothes, specifically a dress. Clothes lie close to the skin and, through proximity, are intimately connected to us. When unworn, they are lifeless and inanimate and refer towards a missing presence: they mark the outline of a person that is not there. These two contradictive properties of clothes represent the paradox of working indirectly with a historical figure.

The point of interaction between Herschel and myself was consistently mediated through paper, the paper on which the stories and facts of her life lay written. I continued to explore the paper medium in the work, using it to reconstruct a dress in the style she would have worn whilst in the Cape. The paper itself, already soft, with long filaments, needed to be more malleable so that it would respond to the pattern in the same way fabric would. This required me to work the paper between my hands until it was soft enough to stretch, which in turn made the paper more fragile. This process impressed itself upon the ‘relationship’ I had with Margaret Herschel, whereby she appeared more present through the making: handling the paper, and working long hours on the details of the dress, yet her presence was always delicate and ever fragile.
'Herschel] has just unpacked his chemical cases, & fitted up a nice little laboratory in one of the cottages ... I suspect he will be as busy examining the chemical properties & juices of the extraordinary plants here, as looking at the stars-at least he wishes to do both, as well as bring home many sketches.'

(A letter from M. Herschel to E. C. Stewart, 30th May 1834. Ruskin 2004: 78)
'I am no Botanist as you will speedily see. I came to the Cape profoundly ignorant of that delightful science - though it seems to me that a man must be wanting in every feeling of admiration for the astonishing beauty and luxuriance of the vegetable creation who after spending 3 or 4 years at the Cape can quit it without having imbibed some tincture of botanical knowledge.'

(J.F.W. Herschel, letter to A. de Candolle, 1 November 1837. Ruskin 2004: 92)
Lingering between Places

A collaboration with Ilze Hugo

I met Ilze through the brother of her fiancé when I first arrived here in Cape Town. Ilze works as a freelance journalist in Cape Town and has an intimate knowledge of the city and we related over our intense connections with the city. For her it is a place entwined with her past, a site attached to memories and stories, and for me it is a place of the unfamiliar, a concentration of histories and peoples alien to me. These two types of experience of a place are often simultaneously felt within one person. At times our connection is magnified by submersion in the ever-alive, busy streets of the city. At other times, the scale and pace leaves us feeling isolated and estranged.

The faint murmur of a memory associated with a place, carried internally or channelled through photos, music, video or the spoken word, can catalyse a feeling of being both apart from and a part of a place. These memories can seem nostalgic and distant and remind us of the changes that have occurred that have moved us further away from our past, or they can linger in a place, reverberating with the faint murmur of a memory that connects us to it.

The material we worked with to transpose the dynamic relationship with ‘place’ was the musical movement. The musical movement is the device in a music box that produces the sound; it is made from a spool with protrusions that strike a soundboard in sequence to produce a melody. The musical movement symbolically conjures up
childhood memories and a sense of what has passed, or what we may be apart from. One-minute recordings were made on the streets of Cape Town, walking between seven pre-defined sites, each site corresponding to the first seven notes of *When You Wish upon a Star* placed on a map of Cape Town. These sound files were then converted into MIDI files to reveal the actual notes that were ‘struck’ by the sounds from each site. With the assistance of a music theorist, the dissonance was removed so that a core melody could be extracted.

These seven melodies became the music that would be played by the musical movements. The spool of the original music box that had played *When You Wish upon a Star* was replaced with a clay version. Small pieces of wire were embedded in the clay to pluck the soundboard in sequence to play the new melodies. The faint, nostalgic notes continue to vibrate from the musical movements, and in the listeners. The notional memory of a place lingers in the space where the musical movements are played. Installed in new locations away from their sites of origin, they trigger a sense of something lost to the past, to change or transformation, and simultaneously evoke a connection through history and sound to that place.
'Taking a walk is a haecceity... Haecceity, fog, glare. 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.'

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. 1988: 290
‘I could spend whole days at Cinecittà. There, I am the greatest director of all time. On the town side, I reshoot the close-ups for *Touch of Evil*. Down at the beach I rework the dolly shots for *Stagecoach*, and offshore I recreate the storm rocking the smugglers of *Moonfleet*. Or else I dissolve into the landscape and there is nothing more to connect me to the world than a friendly hand stroking my numb fingers.’

(Bauby 1997: 37)
The guide to getting lost is Jenny Savage's MP3 audio guide that invites people to explore any 'place' through the geographical and audible landscape of another place. The recordings are from East London, a Moroccan Souk, Indian Festival, Copenhagen High street, Drake Circus shopping centre, and are listened to on headphones as one walks around any other location. It requires the listener to navigate the place they are in, through the directions from another location, merging the experience of being in two different cities.

(Savage 2007)
In 1984 Calle was due to meet her lover in New Delhi at the end of a 92 day voyage to Japan. When she arrived there she received a message from him saying their relationship was over. Fifteen years later Calle expressed the hurt this caused her, recounting the sequence of events in an artwork called *Exquisite Pain*. The work narrates images and textual stories from her travels, regaling accounts of foreign lands, loss of love and catharsis of her art-making. Every photograph from her is branded by the imminence of her forthcoming break-up. A countdown to the day of exquisite pain.

Jan 19, 2011 at 08:36 PM
Can’t wait till this afternoon! see you soon! :)

Here are links to two companies that do cooking tours. There are a few more, but I can’t find the mag in which they’re listed now - will have a look again later:
http://www.andulela.com/english/malay_cooking_tours.html
www.coffeebeansroutes.com
Had a look and haven’t really found any reference to techniques except one – they used to walk through the streets with pet turtles on leashes! It was supposed to force them to slow down and take in their surroundings (probably not really helpful for us:); and even if it was, I can’t imagine where we’d get the turtle from!). Anyways... I did find a beautiful quote though:

The figure of the flâneur advances over the street of stone, with its double ground, as though driven by a clockwork mechanism. And within, where this mechanism is ensconced, a music box is palpitating like some toy of long ago. It plays a tune: “From days of youth/ from days of youth/ a song is with me still.” By this melody he recognizes what is around him; it’s not a past coming from his own youth, from a recent youth, but a childhood lived before then that speaks to him, and it is all the same to him whether it’s the childhood of an ancestor or his own.

(Benjamin 1999: 880)
I came across the turtle reference also, no other real techniques, more a philosophy, than definitive process. An interesting reoccurring feature of Benjamin’s development of the flâneur as a literary character is the combining of binary terms. Such as, “the casual eye of the stroller with the purposeful gaze of the detective” “landscape, lying either desolately or seductively open before the fictional characters”, and...as a room enclosing them whether protectively or oppressively”. For Benjamin the city is interior as well as exterior...‘knowable and known, and mysteriously alien and fantastic’ (Rignall 1989: 113-114).

It resonates with me that there is conflict in the position of the flâneur, that challenges the very nature of these binary terms. The flâneur does not have definable relationships with any specific individual, instead he establishes temporary relationships with all that he sees, that are nonetheless empathetic and intimate.
When we walk around the city together, I will be connected to each place through you, and disconnected/estranged from the place through myself. And you will be connected to the space through you, and disconnect to the space through me. All the while we will be familiarizing a new sense of connection through being together in that place at that moment.

The music boxes I have to play our recordings from walking through the city are all originally: when you wish upon a star. If we layer the musical notation for this on top of a map of Cape Town, placing the higher note at the top of the city bowl and the lowest near the sea, the notes mark locations that pass through the centre of cape town. These could be the sites that we make our recordings from, there are seven in total.
I’m really excited to actually go out and do it! Could we possibly do it either on Saturday or next week Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday?

No worries! this weekend has been hectic here also, how about we leave it till Tuesday next week?, or in fact any day next week, only time that I’m def busy is Tuesday morning till one. Only when you’re free, I’m actually really excited about finally being out on the streets, seeing what comes of flaneuring!
LOCATIONS OF AUDIO RECORDINGS

*Cape Town inner city*

I  (-33.930471, 18.400898) Albert Rd, Signal Hill
II (-33.930507, 18.407121) Corner of Eaton Rd & Kloof St
III (-33.930471, 18.400898) Company Gardens
IV (-33.923634, 18.421218) Flower Market, Adderley St
V  (-33.922067, 18.425596) Cape Town Railway Station
VI (-33.920037, 18.430188) Jan Smuts St
VII (-33.918079, 18.435016) On the edge of the harbour
My Gift to You
A collaboration with Willem Boshoff

I first heard Willem Boshoff speak at the Dada South symposium at the beginning of 2010. He discussed chaos, chance and the future, alongside André Zaaiman. His illumination of the topic, with the analogy of a duck, was overwhelmingly potent and inspiring. Boshoff’s artwork and writings have since become a constant source of creative encouragement and insight into the subjects he addresses, to such a great extent that Boshoff’s work became an ever-present voice in my experience of South Africa and South African art discourse. At the time I sent him an email with my proposition, I did not know him and he knew nothing of me. I had not imagined that he would respond to my request to collaborate. It was an act of chance, hopeful and willing on my part.

I believe the dynamic between us, with its uncertainties, distance and unknowns, created a certain freedom of expression, a chance to pour streams of thoughts and ideas into the cyber-abyss. In his last communication to me, Boshoff identified the enjoyment and aid that this kind of discussion can bring:

I haven’t yet met you or seen you and because I don’t know what you look like, I am at a disadvantage. Yet it is not fair to say that merely because I don’t have a face to talk to that I don’t know you or who you are. It’s a bit like talking to God – even if you don’t really know or believe in Him. Talking helps.

(Boshoff 2011)
The collaboration between Boshoff and myself has been an intense but slowly evolving one, and I can say for me, at least, incredibly rewarding. Inspired by Boshoff, it has also directed me to embrace ‘chance’ as part of the collaborative process, as releasing a tight expectation on outcomes and details can offer a clearer and bigger picture and can welcome new and unexpected rewards and meanings. Our time spent together thus far is only a beginning, and I hope to continue with this process into the future.

The exchanges between us have taken the form of small essays that discuss feelings of intimacy and detachment between individuals. These artefacts of collaboration develop from one to the next. The most recent ‘manifestation’ is a gift from me to Boshoff, to be understood in the same way that exchanging thoughts and ideas on a topic can be regarded as a gift. The ‘manifestation’ is a work constructed from two pages of a *Dictionary of Philosophy* from the 1960s. One page shows the entry for ‘individual’ and the other for ‘aggregate’. The words that make up the opening paragraph for both of these entries have been exchanged, one letter at a time. So for example the third letter of the entry for ‘individual’ is ‘f’, and the third letter of the entry for aggregate is ‘a’; these are both cut out and swapped over, filling the place of the opposite. The new positions for the letters are determined by the order of letters in the sentences belonging to the opposite entry. The first three words of the entry for individual are: ‘In formal logic…’ and for aggregate they are: ‘In a general…’. Due to the repositioning of the letters, the first three words of the entry for individual are now: ‘In agener alsen…’, and for aggregate they become: ‘In f ormallo…’.
The new words were formed by the sequence of letters from the opposite entry, mostly creating nonsense, with the exception of a few new words: in, sea, lit, us, with, in, a, it, risen. The painstaking process of extracting and replacing each letter utilised an element of chance to govern the creation of these new words. The configuration of new words is dependent on the order of letters from one entry fitting the spacing of letters in the opposite entry. The act of swapping the letters symbolizes the exchanges that occur between individuals and others, as something that shapes who we are. The influence of others is an integral contribution to the constitution of ‘self’.
This request may be bold, and completely inappropriate - I apologize in advance if this is so. I have begun an art project that explores the meaning and significance of the word estrangement, through ten creative expressions. These expressions, or singular pieces of work, are born out of collaborations between me and another. Those that have begun are proving to be so special and hopefully not entirely irrelevant to a wider audience. Though I have never met you before, I have seen you speak numerous times, and am quite sure my face has been a part of a crowd that you have seen.

I wish for this to be an entirely mutual commitment, with shared authorship and ownership and investment, both our names, as with all ten collaborations can remain secret, or be replaced with an alias or title, something which can be decided upon as the project develops. The works that are being created, can be in any form, any medium, any form of expression, and concern any aspect of estrangement we so choose to take.
I think I would enjoy working with you and your ideas on estrangement. I am not too sure of all the things you require and hopefully I won’t let you down or disappoint you - but, let’s give it a shot.
To begin with perhaps we can discuss ideas regarding estrangement here, and see where that leads, perhaps letting it meander and progress somewhat unplanned. I hope this does not seem to vague or abstract, I simply cannot resist 'the open-ended'. There is no rush, there is time in my hand.

Thank you so very much for welcoming this request, I am sure this will be a precious experience, one I look forward to very much.
I switched off my internet for the December holidays and when I got back home from my holiday at Nature’s Valley, I went down with an abominable bout of the flu. Please don’t be too angry with me for not getting back to you immediately. I am now, as forever, trying to catch up with my e-mails.

I have looked at the website ‘estrangement’ and I quite enjoy the things that I see there. I am now trying to formulate some of my own ideas about ‘estrangement’ in keeping with what I think you want and with what gets me going.

Dec 5, 2010 at 8:58 PM
...and rightly so that your internet was off for the jolly holidays, creating a little wiggle room for Nature, I hope you had a wonderful time, I become somewhat lost without a daily dose of it. I would never be angry over such a matter, so please think nothing of it. Though I can imagine there was somewhat of an overgrown inbox on your return, it can be a constant battle. getting under way....

*Filltir sgwar*

He was a man, as they say in Wales, of Y'Filltir Sgwar.

What I want+what gets you going, a tall order.

Imaginings of where our common, unfamiliar ground is.

Jan 20, 2011 at 9:44 PM
Rambling and Scrambling in an Endless Labyrinth of Clatter

By Willem Boshoff

The sense of estrangement reacts to its opposite, which is a sense of acknowledgement of common ground/consensus, homeboundness, a belonging somewhere in a place that provides the feeling that one is loved. In order for someone or –thing to become estranged, he/she or it has to be so rejected, dislocated or alienated from his/her/its familiar past/area of expertise/relatives/friends that returning seems unlikely or undesirable.

Itinerant minds venture away from ‘home’ and, like termites, may colonize and subject others, often to be obliterated themselves. The location of a new home base depends on how far our ‘wings’ can carry us. New arrivals might be received with hostility or kindness. Likewise, the new arrival might regard existing settlements with suspicions or expectations that can bring out the best or the worst. On the one hand one might stray philosophically to assert new values in the place of tried and tested ones and on the other, one might relocate, to become an adventitious stranger taking advantage of unsuspecting autochthons.

Adventitious is ‘appearing in an abnormal or unusual position’ or ‘growing from an unexpected place’. In Latin adventus is ‘arrival’. Adventitious roots can, for example, be seen to grow higher up on a stem or directly from a leaf, instead of being in the ground. Other meanings linked to adventitious are: ‘accidental’, ‘extraneous’, ‘supervenient’, ‘estranged’ and ‘casual’.

A degree of estrangement depends on the degree of loss and on advantages or disadvantages gained through that loss.

Having a place ‘one might call one’s own’ or ‘one’s own backyard’ the Y’Filltir Sgwêr of
Wales, the clichéd ‘home sweet home’ is of course inhibiting to the occasion of ‘estrangement.’ In cases where the ‘pull of home’ is too strong one finds little migration, little emigration and a sense of inbreeding. ‘Landlocked’ people do not only live in Wales, one also finds people regressing into, or malforming in, religious enclaves. Many countries have a naturally protective tendency against invasive strangers and aliens. In a small country like Belgium, in West Flanders, there are places like Avelgem and Zwevegem where many of the insular/endemic inhabitants have never even attempted the 200 kilometers to visit their own capital cities of Brussels and Antwerpen to the east. The massive size of Feniks, an institution for the handicapped and mentally challenged testify to the high incidence of autism, Downs syndrome and paraplegia. I embrace the incidence of mental and physical abnormality and their causes and I once volunteered a few weeks of my life to work with the hundreds people with disabilities resident in Feniks.

To me it is life-affirming to discover common ground with those who are blind, deaf or in any physical or mental way disabled. It is crude to compare inbreeding in dogs and cattle to the way people keep to themselves. Does one condemn those who refuse any engagement with estrangement? Animal-breeders maintain that, whilst it is possible to keep the various breeds intact, too much inbreeding results in anomalies and a high incidence of sickness, physical defects and a low immunity against disease.

- **polymely** A monstrous deviation of having too many limbs or body parts. Imagine having an extra arm, finger, tail or ear. The polymelian Myrtle Corbin (1868-1928) had four legs attached to two lower bodies – she bore three children with one and two with the other.

- **pygomelus** A person or animal with the deformity of an extra leg situated between the normal pair. Francesco Lentini (1889-1966) was a pygolian person. A pygopagous person or animal is deformed with an extra body and two extra legs from the pelvis down.
• **symmelia** A birth defect in which legs and feet are fused together, making for a grotesque, mermaid appearance. In Greek *melos* is ‘limb’.

• **teratogenic** Born with so-called monstrous deformations. In Greek *teras* is ‘monster’ and *generare* ‘to generate’. Teratoid people or animals have misshapen bodies.

• **tetraehrus** A human ‘monster’ with four hands. A **tetraehrius** is a person with four arms. (Billings Medical Dictionary, 1890).

• **syndactilism** The condition of having toes or fingers fused together. In ducks and geese the **syndactylous** condition of having united or webbed feet is a normal thing.

• **cyclocephalic** Having a monstrously deformed head with the eyes strangely merged into one round area.

• **symphyocephalus** A monstrous deformity of one head with two separate bodies. In Greek *symphyes* is ‘growing together’ and *kephale* ‘head’.

What is the opposite of inbreeding? There are indeed many cosmopolitan places that exist in contradistinction to the self-referential ideals of *Y’Filltir Sgwêr*. Palo Santo in California comprises the phenomenon known as the ‘Square Mile’ or Silicone Valley. Wikipedia defines Palo Alto as:

... a California charter city located in the northwest corner of Santa Clara County, in the San Francisco Bay Area. The city includes portions of Stanford University, is headquarters to a number of Silicon Valley high-technology companies, including Hewlett-Packard, VMware, Tesla Motors, IDEO, and Facebook, and has served as an incubator to several other high-technology companies, such as Google, Logitech, Intuit, Sun Microsystems, and PayPal. As of the 2000 census, the city had a total population of 58,598 residents.

Palo Santo/Silicone Valley is one of the most remarkable *Y’Filltir Sgwêr* successes on earth and its demographic history includes Native Americans, Spaniards and the rich consistency that the
relatively recent sprinkling of American bloodlines introduced. It provides a kind of industrial homogeneity with ultimate heterogeneity and divergence of thinking.

The fact that influx and freedom of association exists on ground level might have something to do with the freedom of exchange of information in cyberspace. If one calibrates one’s expectations too finely one might miss a larger reality affecting and shaping one’s life. Cyberspace provides the most awesome chance to rub shoulders with the rest of the world and to become both ensconced and estranged. One might think that hiding from contact will safeguard against impinging and encroaching disaster, but it is the fearless connecting of unrelated dots that shape an inform our headspace.

The ability to define a goal, a course, a place of being or a wish gives the mind a base to refer to. What do we do when we define? What is a definition? Are we pigeon-holing ourselves, imprisoning our lives to a single (or more?) item on a set menu? The dictionary says that the word ‘definition’ is from the Latin verb *definire* ‘to set bounds to’ – the *finere* part is from *finis* ‘end’. When we define, we literally put restraints on something, we draw a line or boundary around the thing. We exact beginnings and endings. We limit the thing. To become estranged is to break through that home boundary and to enter unfamiliar territory or to exchange that home territory for territories that are in opposition to it.
I deliberated and deliberated, unpacked your wealthy text, which I enjoyed immensely thank you.

Here is a return ramble, I couldn't resist copying and pasting a sample of Whitman's poetry, I have always adored his work, and was reminded of this one by your words, I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.
Poetry on the Periphery: The Escaping and Overlapping of Boundaries.

By Bryony Purvis

A noiseless, patient spider,
I mark’d, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated;
Mark’d how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
It launch’d forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself;
Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing—seeking the spheres, to connect them;
Till the bridge you will need, be formed—till the ductile anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul

(Poem by Walt Whitman 1855: 371)

I read somewhere, I don’t remember where, that meanings are never stable, disorderly, chaotic, tirelessly changing. As itinerant minds travel from place to place, so do meanings venture forth, colonize, obliterate or simply disappear. Yet unlike earthly bodies, they are not destined to travel as far as wings can fly nor suffer from the hindrance of death. They relocate, from one generation to the next, and like a successful DNA, adapt to the times and lips of new vessels. Here we find that new arrivals might also be met with hostility or kindness, friction or warmth, nevertheless they relocate, replace, return, re-establish, revive, rejuvenate, relinquish, re-evolve. In some instances meanings may grow and flourish, and in others, they may be rejected, removed, estranged.
Such is the transmutable nature of meanings; a state of chaos is created, of disorder. I recently spent some time with a friend visiting from Geneva; he originally trained as a forester and now works on proposals for innovative water sanitation projects with the UN. Whilst he was here we walked together through Cecelia Forest, in Cape Town along pathways that have become quite familiar to me now. He is somewhat of a keen photographer, and showed me his captured shots as we walked, noting how the trees formed near symmetrical patterns, and orderly compositions. The extremity of the order, he went on to explain renders the area of forest extremely susceptible to disorder, simply because one harmful bug could ravish the whole forest. If the forest were on the other hand, a multitude of different types of tree then there would be greater stability. Order and stability seem to be at odds; less order leads to greater stability, more order yields greater instability.

Your text engages at length with a sense of the ‘abnormal’, particularly that of genetic defects, deformities and anomalies in human reproduction. Inbreeding decreases the gene pool, subsequently increasing the occurrence of recessive genes, leading to many of the physical and health defects you mentioned, though I am sure I am stating what you already know, natural selection works to illuminate this; either from infertility, short-life spans or natural stresses, these inherited traits are removed, provided of course, they are a hindrance rather than helpful. With or without inbreeding, random genetic mutations see that this process potentially features in any living organism. Wikipedia gives the example of a butterfly:

… a butterfly may produce offspring with new mutations. The majority of these mutations will have no effect; but one might change the color of one of the butterfly’s offspring, making it harder (or easier) for predators to see. If this color change is advantageous, the chance of this butterfly surviving and producing its own offspring are a little better, and over time the number of butterflies with this mutation may form a larger percentage of the population.
Similar constraints occur with ‘outbreeding’. (for want of an opposite, if inbreeding is the reproduction from genetically related parents then might we refer to breeding from genetically unrelated parents the opposite? Whilst still allowing for the many shades of grey in between.) For example the mule, bred from a female horse and a male donkey, or hinny (male horse and female donkey) are rarely fertile, due to an incompatible number of chromosomes in each species: 64 for a horse and 62 for a donkey. The mule or hinny subsequently has 63, preventing the proper paring up of chromosomes and the successful creation of embryos.

Though such a statement may be naïve: ‘Nature’ seeks to adapt, survival is successful and the reward is survival, for which diversification seems integral, but within limits. Adaptation and mutation can be seen as having creative or destructive effects; this may entirely depend on our point of view. But if a question of ‘success’ were to arise, like the seemingly successful Palo Alto, (which reminds me of Price’s Patent Candle Company from the 19th century, though with 21st century updates) that could not be so quantifiably understood as survival then how does one measure or successfully balance, being ensconced and estranged?

I whole-heartedly concur with your sentiment that finding “common ground with those who are blind, deaf or in any physical or mental way disabled”, is life-affirming, it is also rewarding to find the world existing in ways one’s mind had been previously unaware of. I spent a number of years working in the UK as a care worker, for elderly and terminally ill clients and for those with autism, specifically Asperger’s. Pockets of common ground were frequently discovered, and could often lead me to being monstrously behind schedule, yet it was so often in moments of complete contradiction, where that space, and that time and us had to allow for the co-existence of vastly different points of view that (as you put it so beautifully I shall use your words) it truly shaped and informed my headspace. It was being estranged more than it was ‘being familiar’ that made it possible to connect intensely.
‘Does one condemn those who refuse any engagement with estrangement?’ (Boshoff 2011: personal communication) Is it possible to engage or even disengage with this slippery estrangement? Is it in such a fixed place or state, that one might be able to do so? Hiding from contact can just as well be hiding the familiar as it is from the ‘dis-familiar.’ Y Filltir Sgwâr, “He was a man, as they say in Wales, of Y Filltir Sgwâr – the familiar square mile of the local community. For all his travelling, he never left home.” As I came to understand Y Filltir Sgwâr from my time living in Aberystwyth, it is to have or hold, not necessarily a home nor a ‘fixed square mile’, but a sense of ‘home’. An estranged home in motion, can this indefinable home territory ever be estranged or unfamiliar? Is this home territory another notion of self?
I thought perhaps I needed a bigger imagination....

*In a Few Eternities*
By Bryony Purvis

There is a funny relationship that exists between experimental ideas, and their realizations in different levels of ‘reality’. Theories work well when their context fits them well. In 2007 Greta Lorge published an article called The best Thought Experiments: Schrodinger’s Cat and Borel’s Monkeys, in Issue 15.06 of wired magazine. Amongst them Schrodinger’s cat, Searle’s room and Einstein’s light beam, but perhaps the one most frequently expressed in popular culture, is Émile Borel’s infinite typing monkeys theorem.¹

The infinite Monkey theorem states that any text, such as the complete works of Shakespeare could be written by a monkey hitting at random the keys on a typewriter for an infinite length of time. The monkey is used as a metaphor for any device that produces random sequences of symbols. This event has such a tiny chance of occurring, that it is most improbable but importantly, not impossible. Jorge Luis Borges traced this concept as far back as Aristotle’s Metaphysics and a theory about the world evolving from random combinations of atoms, a much-contested point of view. Cicero, over 300 years later argued against the plausibility of this world view:

> He who believes this may as well believe that if a great quantity of the one-and-twenty letters, composed either of gold or any other matter, were thrown upon the ground, they would fall into such order as legibly to form the Annals of Ennius. I doubt whether fortune could make a single verse of them

(Cicero 2007 c.1877: 193).

If two events are statistically independent, the probably of them happening simultaneously is the

product of each of the events occurring independently. The greater the number of independent events required such as the letters that compose Hamlet, the smaller the product, and the more unlikely the chance of it occurring. Physicists’, Charles Kittel and Herbert Kroemer put it, “the probability of Hamlet is therefore zero in any operational sense.” (Charles et al. 1980: 53)

In 1941 Borges’s The Library of Babel takes this theorem to its ultimate extreme, with his concept of ‘The Total Library’. He conceives of an expansive universe that takes the form of a library, made up of interlocking hexagonal rooms. The endless shelves of books, though apparently random in order and content, contain every possible combination of just a few basic characters. As such, the library of Babel contains every possible piece of information, biographies of every person to have lived, or who will live and even somewhere a perfect catalogue of all the books in the library. Yet, because of the unimaginable wealth of information, the library and its books are rendered utterly useless.

I love to climb Lions head in Cape Town, but only ¾ of the way up, where there is a little ledge, inside an alcove on the side of its rocky face. I sit there with my dog Safi, who surveys the slopes with such intensity; we are like gremlins on the outskirts of the city. The wind picks up dirt that is settled on the flat outcrops of rock, and whips it into frenzy; each passing miniature hurricane lays down the dirt in the eye of the storm, and settles it momentarily. Then begins again.

I wonder how many times in the history of this dirt, has a word, or picture been formed, even perhaps a story been told. It is improbable, even less so that I would be sat there to see it. I shall not sit there and wait for it. But it is not impossible so when passing I will look, just in case. Perhaps it is as special to know that the exact formation that it does land in, is only moments before as improbable as it landing in the form of Shakespeare’s Hamlet.
How far removed are we from the extremities of our thoughts, from the far-flung corners of our concepts. How estranged are we from even the nearest shores of infinity and how can we know when we are closer than ever to the improbable. I very much like this theme for exploring a glimpse of estrangement in our collaboration. I am already imagining butterflies, sandstorms, the alphabet, a myriad of letters, wind, motion, and an experiment.
In a few eternities
by Willem Boshoff

It’s almost two-and-a-half months that I have tucked your e-mail into the corner of my must-do box, hoping to answer you very soon. I’ve been to Israel and back, the flu had me down for a month on end. I have also made a host of artworks and all this time your note stared me in the face. My dragging feet answer, partly because I want to contribute to your cause, and more importantly because my letter-writing gives me a chance to cope with my own steam, to offload or overload my head with it. I haven’t yet met you or seen you and because I don’t know what you look like, I am at a disadvantage. Yet it is not fair to say that merely because I don’t have a face to talk to that I don’t know you or who you are. It’s a bit like talking to God – even if you don’t really know or believe in Him. Talking helps.

And that is the aleatoric thing. So is your and Cicero’s 21 letters that might one day make sense or Borges’s repeated book trials until Hamlet comes. I am a Dadaist at heart and I have worked with casting things all my life. Walks are fascinating to me and in 1972 I tried to find my way on one such a Borges walk. I would study a piece of writing as it grabs me from ‘nowhere’, something I might have found to be interesting, something that somehow got to me. The finding of this piece (or its finding me) would be done as Dada poetry is written. I would open books in my library and put my finger on the text. The first secret is to do this in the firm belief that that particular accidental/incidental act will lead me to find a great pearl of wisdom, no matter what the text may say. The second secret is to give myself only one chance, one stab of the finger at an all-encompassing universal truth. Later on I read that Wittgenstein believed that such a linguistic frolic is in any case what happens in ‘all’ conversations and writings and that one will ‘always’ make sense from the incidental and co-incidental in a way that is profound.
Once I had my message to the world, I would go and look for the world. A message is not a message if it has no audience. I would meditate for some time and then venture into the street to deliver my message. My chosen method would always be to ‘trust’ the road and what it accidentally has to offer – accidentally being the operative word. I was later to see that distinctions made between serendipity (happy accidents) and thaumaturgical experiences (serious acts of God) are superficial. It’s all one and the same thing and any distinction should follow this because I manage my thoughts thus. The road offered me traffic lights. I would follow the green lights for as long as possible. I would walk across every green light opportunity and this would decide my path. I would, for example walk from Hillbrow (where I once lived) to somewhere in downtown Johannesburg. Once I ran out of traffic lights, I would look on the ground. The ground is as much an ‘open book’ with instructions to follow as any randomly opened book. I remember that the first bit of paper debris I spotted was a bus ticket with numbers on it. I would follow that number to a specific building in that street and follow the subsequent sequence in that number to a specific door where I knocked. Some people opened that door and I asked as nicely as I could whether I might tell them something important – and so my message was delivered.

In the early seventies, as a student I learnt about Jean Arp (1886-1966) and his experiments with the ‘Laws of Chance’ (1916-17). All my life I have experimented with these. Levi Strauss speaks the contingency of incidence and co-incidence. Cage speaks of aleatoric (throwing the dice) work when he ventures more into the co-incidental and Xenakis uses the term stochasitic (guessing/aiming) for his rationalising of irrational happenstance.

Jean Arp’s story is that he tried to make some compositional sense of a few torn pieces of paper on his desk. He tried to arrange these sensibly and with an expectation of well-resolved design – but failed. Then the wind blew the bits and pieces off the table and gave him a much more exciting composition on the floor. He claims that he then stuck the bits of paper down in the position that
they had landed and named this effort the ‘Arrangement according to the Laws of Chance’.

The term ‘Laws of Chance’ is a paradox. It seems contradictory that chance, a phenomenon that appears to function outside the law, should have laws. One can’t claim that it will always be lawless. Cicero and Borges were waiting for chance to deliver the ultimate answer to a specific expectation and they were prepared to wait forever – and who is to say they won’t be indulged.

My study of Jean Arp's composition made me come to the conclusion that he is a fraud. But I may be wrong. His compositions show a sense of vertical/horisonal formatting. There appears to be a fairly even space between his bits and pieces and they appear to fit relatively snugly onto his picture plane. I too experimented with similar bits and pieces of paper as he did, but regularity and regimentation has never been my fortune, but, who knows – perhaps Jean Arp knocked on that one single moment in the history of eternity where his pieces fell within the expected/unexpected Annals of Ennius.

I have devoted my life to live in a stochastic/aleatority manner and I have made rather large installations in which I study how randomly deployed objects and experiences may hold the truth. The correct word for such endeavours is ‘divination’ and the practice of divination is older than any record of human existence. I am now writing a book: “What every Druid Should Know”, in which I devote considerable time to how we might manage to decipher our Hamlet from chicken bones, bird droppings and a monkey playing with a typewriter.
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(individualism). The doctrine that emphasizes the reality of the individual and considers it a basic unit of political and social organization. Distinguished from materialism (pneumatics).—R.F.C.

Individualists: The doctrine that emphasizes the reality of the individual and considers it a basic unit of political and social organization. Distinguished from materialism (pneumatics).—R.F.C.

In political philosophy, the doctrine that the existence of the individual is the foundation of all social and political organization. Distinguished from materialism (pneumatics).—R.F.C.

Individualism: The doctrine that emphasizes the reality of the individual and considers it a basic unit of political and social organization. Distinguished from materialism (pneumatics).—R.F.C.

Individual: A unit of a population or society. In political philosophy, the term "individual" is often used to refer to the basic unit of social and political organization. Distinguished from materialism (pneumatics).—R.F.C.

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Individual: A unit of a population or society. In political philosophy, the term "individual" is often used to refer to the basic unit of social and political organization. Distinguished from materialism (pneumatics).—R.F.C.
Individual: it is not clear what the intended meaning of the word "individual" is. It could be either a proposition or a function. It is unnecessary, however, to give the word any such special significance, and for many purposes it is better (as is often done) to take the individuals to be an arbitrary—or an arbitrary infinite—domain; or any particular well-defined domain may be taken as the domain of individuals, according to the purpose in hand. When used in this way, the term domain
DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY

The generic character supposedly shared by pleasure, pain and the emotions as distinguished from the intellectual and volitional aspects of consciousness. See Aesthetic.—L.W.

Agam (chemical): A potential of chemical energy: driving force: attraction. The term should be defined rigorously to mean the rate of change of chemical energy with changes in chemical form. (A.M.)

Affirmation of the consequent: The fallacy of the consequent in the following syllogism: From B and A implies B, the law of the consequent: the consequent is the theorem of the propositional calculus: p = \( q \rightarrow p \).

A fortié: A phrase signifying all the more, applied to something which must be admitted for a still stronger reason.—J.B.R.

Agnam (Skr.): One of a number of Indic traditions composed since the 1st cent. A.D., which are outside the Vedic (q.v.) tradition, but are regarded authoritative by the followings of Vaishnavism, Shivism, and Shaktism. Amid mythology, epic, and ritualistic manner they contain much that is philosophical.—K.F.L.

Agathobates: A god of the good life. —C.A.B.

Agathotheia: (Gr.) The science of the good.

Agent: In ethics an agent is always a person who is acting, or has acted, or is contemplating action. Here it is usually held that to be an agent, i.e., an agent to whom moral qualities may be ascribed and who may be treated accordingly, one must be free and responsible, with a certain maturity, rationality, and sensibility—which normal adult human beings are taken to have. Ethics is thus concerned to determine whether an agent is morally good or evil, or, when morally bad or evil, or, alternatively, when he is acting rightly and when wrongly, when virtuously and when viciously. See Acl.—W.K.F.

Agglutination: (Latin, ad + glutinare, to past.) Philosophically, a method of formation in language whereby a modification of meaning or of relation is given to a word by difference or incorporation of distinct parts or elements.

Aggregates: (1) In logic and mathematics, a collection, a manifold, a plurality, a set, an ensemble, an assembly, a totality of elements or points satisfying a given condition or subject to definite operational laws. According to Cantor, an aggregate is any collection of separate objects of thought gathered into a whole, or again, any multiplicity which can be thought as one, or better, any totality of definite elements bound up into a whole by means of a law. Aggregates have several properties: for example, they have the "same power" when their respective elements can be brought into one-to-one correspondence; and they are "transmissible" when they have the same power as the aggregate of natural numbers. Aggregates may be finite or infinite; and the laws applying to each type are different and often incompatible, thus raising difficult philosophical problems. See One, One and One, Cardinal Number, Enumerability. Hence the practice to isolate the mathematical notion of the aggregate from its metaphysical implications and to consider such collections as symbols of a certain kind which are to facilitate mathematical calculations in much the same way as numbers. In spite of the controversial nature of infinite sets great progress has been made in mathematics by the introduction of the theory of Aggregates in arithmetic, geometry, and the theory of functions. (German, Mengenlehre, Mengen, Mengenlehre, Ensemblle.)

3. In logic, an "aggregate meaning" is a form of common or universal opinion or thought held by more than one person.

4. In the philosophy of nature, aggregate has various meanings: it is a mass formed into clusters (mass.), a composed or an organized mass of individuals (mass.), an aggregate (bot.), an assemblage of distinct minerals separable by mechanical means (geol.), or, in general, a composed mass in which the elements retain their essential individuality.—F.G.

(Chinese): The concept of an aggregate is now usually identified with that of a class (q.v.)—although as a historical matter this is not, perhaps, exactly correct until Cantor's notion. —F.C.

Agnoiology: (Gr. agnosos, le logos, the science of ignorance) J. F. Ferris (1858) coined both this term and the term epistemology as contrasting distinctive areas of philosophy. Agnoiology is the doctrine of ignorance which seeks to determine what we are necessarily ignorant of. It is a critique of agnosticism prior to the latter's appearance. Ignorance is defined in relation to knowledge since one cannot be ignorant of anything which cannot possibly be known.—H.R.

(Chinese): The theory of religious knowledge which asserts that it is impossible for man to attain knowledge of a certain subject-matter.

2. (Shen.) The theory of religious knowledge which asserts that it is impossible for man to attain knowledge of God. —A.G.

Agnosy: Ignorance, especially universal ignorance. —C.A.B.

Aham brahma asmi: (Skr.) "I am brahma", the formula of the Bhagavad Gita, 14.10, denoting the full coincidence of the human and divine, arrived at as much by a spontaneous mystic insight as by logical deduction from the nature of world and self.—K.F.L.

Ahamkara: (Skr.) Literally "I-maker", the prim-
Aggregate: 1. In formal logic, an individual formed into a set by the process of inclusion in a hierarchy of a series of terms with a heading and terms successively defined as elements, etc.

2. In Logic and Mathematics, a collection, a manifold, a multiplicity, a set, an ensemble, an assemblage, a totality of elements (usually numbers or points) satisfying a given condition or subjected to definite operational laws. According to Cantor, an aggregate is any collection of separate objects of thought gathered into a whole;
Recreated text for 'individual'
IN F ORMALLO GICTH E INDIVIDUAL SFORM THE F IRSTL O WESTT YP E OFRUS S ELL SH IERARCHYOFT Y PESINTH E PRIN CI PAMATH EM A TICAOFWH IT EHENDANDR USSE LLINDIV IDUALSAR EDEFINEDASWHATE VE RISEN E...

Recreated text for 'aggregate'
IN / SEA / LIT / US / WITH / IN / A / IT / RISEN

Complete words
A History of Belonging and Other Chapters
A collaboration with Jack Nazwisko

I wanted to collaborate with someone I didn’t know, or knew nothing about before the beginning of this project. I found Jack online using a random search on Facebook – I picked the first letter of a first name and surname, and took the first name that appeared on the list; I did this a number of times until I had a list of names. I contacted these individuals and, of them, Nazwisko seemed the most interested in being a part of this work.

We learnt very little about each other’s history in the course of the collaboration, attempting to maintain the distance between us as an experimental factor in collaboration, though in fact this was quite hard. The art-making filled in the space between the boundaries of our friendship, and the work grew in intensity as a means of sharing our respective perspectives and experiences. Jack is a mathematician, and this brought to the discussion degrees of scale, measurement, relativity and precision, amongst other things. I believe that the distance between us, literally (Jack is based in Poland) and emotionally, became a framework for our discussions and the subsequent structure of the piece. This distance was emulated in the decision to engage with broad ideas about how individuals and peoples develop a sense of ‘belonging’.

We started collecting information: small facts, articles, quotes on how mankind first started settling in places, homes, lifestyles and with other people. There was no sorting
criterion. They could be stories from anywhere in the world about any dimension of mankind’s experience of belonging. The information included a range, from accounts of Skara Brae, the remains of a Neolithic settlement in the Orkney Islands, to the stories of Edward Banfield, who left his life behind in England to live out the remainder of his days on an uninhabited island off the coast of Queensland, Australia. Our search represented a sense of longing for universal truths and total relativism, a desire to see patterns within a ‘bigger picture’. Alongside the development of this collection of ‘histories’ was a similar collective sharing of imagery that used or captured intricate, minute detail to build a larger pattern. These images, which range from the embroidery on a seventeenth century Turkish handkerchief to a satellite image of tectonic fracture patterns over the South Pole, mimicked the search for universal truths. The most common features of these patterns were circular forms and symmetry. These became the two key aesthetic features for the works we wished to create.

Eventually, the two collections were bridged and the material collection of ‘words’ (over 100,000) became the medium we used to draw our own circular, symmetrical patterns. Each of the patterns contain around 43,000 words, all of which are written around the circumference of small circles. We used 11,520 circles in each diagram to fit in all of the words. There were enough words to make three patterns, and with each of these we played with the scale and placement of these smaller circles, but maintained, through complex calculations, that the area covered by all the circles was the same in each diagram, to metaphorically represent the physical limits of life.
'Transition from turmoil to chaos where the periphery churns and a momentary truce opens up.'

Cuauhtémoc Medina, Spinning Dust In Spring. cited in Alýs 2010: pp.14-15
1975 The late Pleistocene settlement from 14,800 of Monte Verde was discovered in Chinchihuapi Creek, Southern Chile. 12 rows of wooden foundations from domestic structures were revealed. Resting on the floors and attached to the walls were animal skins that would have formed a tent over the structure with internally separated spaces. Two large cooking pits, wooden mortars and grinding stones were found on the floors, indicating a wide range of domestic tasks.

Feb 4, 2011 at 11:04 PM

1850 A great storm revealed the 5000 year old Neolithic village of Skara Brae in the Aukney Island. The homes were built into mounds of pre-existing rubbish called “midden”, and contained stone beds, a relatively sophisticated drainage system and shelved dressers that sat on the central back wall, and perhaps because of this placement indicated they displayed something of significance. In the center of each of the eight homes was a hearth, used for warmth, light, cooking and the disposal of combustible rubbish. The beds were stone pits on the side of the buildings.

Feb 21, 2011 at 10:49PM
‘One may have a blazing hearth in one’s soul and yet no one ever come to sit by it. Passersby see only a wisp of smoke from the chimney and continue on the way.’

(Vincent Van Gogh)

The Mesolithic Natufian culture from the Levant, in the Eastern Mediterranean, was semi-sedentary 2000 years before the introduction of agriculture. Settlements have been found in the woodland belt where oak and Pistacia species were found. The round superstructure of the home, most probably made of brushwood, rested upon a dry-stone foundation and were between 3 and 6 meters in diameter, containing a central fireplace. Pits were often created in abandoned homes for burials. Some of the larger settlements could cover as much as 1,000 square meters.

(Yosef 1990)
‘The level of advancement of a civilization is often measured by its progress in agriculture, long-distance trade, occupational specialization, and urbanism. Aside from these core elements, civilization is often marked by any combination of a number of secondary elements, including a developed transportation system, writing, standards of measurement [and] currency...’

(wikipedia contributors: 2011)

Our contemporary understanding of the word ‘civilisation’, has it roots in the Latin word *civilis*, which means civil, but is also related to the word *civis*, meaning citizen. Both origins of the word civilisation are closely related to the Latin word for city or city-state – *civitas*.

(wikipedia contributors: 2011)
In Northernmost Scandinavia there are several early sedentary sites, such as the Lillberget Stone Age Village, c. 3900 BC, which was excavated by Ove Halén whom noted that there were timber structures in hut depressions at the site. Similar constructions were discovered in the late 1990s at Korvala in Yli-Ii in Northern Finland. This style of house has a foundation of three courses of logs with upright posts placed to support the ridge beam of the roof and the covered entrances; there were porches at each end, and the roof would have been thatched.

Around 10,000 years ago the climate of East Asia was milder and moister, encouraging green vegetation grow all across the landscape. Modern humans began to settle around rivers and lakes and along coastlines, maximizing the natural resources. Between 2000-4000 years later in China, these early settlements became permanent-farming villages, such as Cishan-Peiligang and Laoguantai.
The simultaneous emergence of sedentism, pottery and agriculture in China was unique to Asia: elsewhere, such as Korea and Japan, sedentism and pottery long preceded agriculture - by about 5,000 years in the former and 10,000 years in the latter.

‘I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.’

(Banfield 2010 [1908]: online)
The time it takes place: 03
42,836 words, 48 rings of circles, 240 circles in each ring
11,520 circles total, total area of circles is 38.2268.16mm²
44,218 words, 48 rings of circles, 240 circles in each ring.
11,520 circles total, total area of circles is 38.2268.16mm²
CONCLUSION


Samuel Beckett, Worstward Ho. 1983: online

Although the exhibition of these seven collaboratively produced works marks an end to my MFA, most of the works and processes are ongoing. It is not a project that was intended to reveal, nor has revealed, any conclusions. These seven works are the expressions of eight people working on the site of interaction between individuals: its intimaey and its estrangement. The works represent only a tiny fragment of an engagement with ‘human relations’ as felt by a small number of people within their specific life experience and context. This is only the beginning of an investigation that I hope to continue in the future, with more people and through different mediums. What I have fully developed and refined from this experiment are the specific qualities of a collaborative method of working. These qualities reference space, multiplicity and dialogue and have helped me to refine and define collaboration, as distinct from interaction, participation and collective working. The ‘emergent collaboration’ that I am engaged with here builds on mutual learning rather than co-operative arrangements, which are more heavily controlled and hierarchical. This collaborative methodology actually designates others as co-producers, and the artist engages with this process by formulating meaning through the production of work together. Redistributing agency in the making of work through collaboration requires a shift in the mind of the artist, and of the definition of artist in relation to society. To reiterate this shift, in the words of Peter Dunn the artist in this collaborative process is not the traditional ‘content provider’, but instead is the ‘context provider’ (Dunn, cited in Kester 2004: 1). The social process through which understanding and meaning emerge is the same
process that this collaborative methodology adopts, potentially leading to consensual expressions of meaning.

For this methodology to have produced any work at all, for it to truly experiment with the diversity of ways and limits of creative collaborative making, it had to be willing to try, be willing to make mistakes, and be willing to fail. Frequently in the course of this work seemingly irresolvable situations arose and the way forward was only to invest more energy, time and belief in the partnership. As such, while these works speak of human relations in general, they voice ever more intensively the phenomenological experiences of the specific people involved.
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81. Purvis, B. and Hugo, I. 2011. *IV Flower Market, Adderley St. (-33.923634, 18.421218).* Diagram of the layout of pins on the musical movement spool, placement of the pins in these locations strikes the required notes on the soundboard.


86. Purvis, B. and Hugo, I. 2011. *VI Jan Smuts St. (-33.920037, 18.430188).* Musical notation with the dissonance removed.

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pattern.


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