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The *Graying* State of Site-Specific Art and Practice:

Globalization, Biennialization and the Curatorial Turn

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis argues that there exists a *graying* state of site specificity. A range of gradients of site-specific art and practice that reflect the convoluted, muddled and simultaneously fluid state that has resulted due to the upsurge of biennials and large-scale exhibitions in the past 15 years. This *graying* has resulted due to and cyclically affects notions of place and the relationship of the artist and curator. With the theory of site paradigms by Miwon Kwon and the differentiation of 'literal' and 'functional' site by James Meyer as a basis of the theoretical framework, the *graying* of site specificity is unpacked with the application of these theories in conjunction with theories of place and the discussion on the shifting role of the curator and curatorial agenda. This framework is then applied in the analysis of a novel and multifaceted set of examples. The intention of the examination of these biennials is to activate what this thesis argues to be a crucial conversation that must be continued, one with the current and future *graying* state of site-specific art and practice as its focal point.

INTRODUCTION:

In the past decade and a half the term site-specific or as Miwon Kwon notes, the terms "site-determined, site-oriented, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive, site-related" have been utilized to describe an overabundance of different types of artworks, exhibitions and practices (Kwon 2004, p.1). Site-specific no longer defines the work equivalent to that created in the 1960s and 1970s. Site is no longer a rigid, determined place; the artwork is no longer just a mechanism for institutional critique, phenomenological experience or discursive tendencies. In a sense, site specificity has become *gray,* a blurry, fuzzy, noncommittal, vague term [and practice] that is overused and misunderstood. This thesis argues that the state of site-specific practice is, in fact, *graying,* and that the different factors of the definition of site and place, the upsurge of biennials, the curator/artist power relationship shifts, and the overall practices associated with current site-specific projects, such as terminology and agenda, are the combined catalysts and causes in this *graying* of site-specific practice. The *graying* of site specificity is cause for conversation and the diverse selection of examples in this thesis illustrate these gradients, from a fluidity and greater application of the concept of site and other advantageous results that may occur, to a blurring, a vagueness of sorts, which reflects that there is a certain issue with the current practice, a state in many shades, reflective of just how dynamic the situation is – and alluded to by the terminology referenced above. This thesis, with the argument of the *graying* of site specificity, debates the negative and positive outcomes that derive from this current state, utilizing a dynamic range of examples to form the argument of *graying* and as a means for debating and better understanding the current and future state of site-specific art practice and production, all in relation to the practice of both artist and curator.

The arguments and discussion posed in this thesis will be conducted with the history of site-specific art practice as a basis for the current state of site specificity. The theoretical framework in terms of site-specific art practice will be comprised of the work of Miwon Kwon and James Meyer, who respectively establish subcategories of site-specific work and the site to better define each, successful in their missions, but perhaps no longer viable for the current state of site-specific art practice. Two umbrella

conversations are unpacked as further theoretical framework as they contain many of the causal factors of the *graying* of site specificity. The first is the conversation concerning the current upsurge of biennials: the theory of place in reference to city identity and locality, globalization and biennialization will be outlined in terms of Michael de Certau's theory of 'space as practised place' in conjunction with Doreen Massey's posit of expanding this relationship to a network of moments. The second conversation is that of the role of the curator and what is discussed as the 'curatorial turn': the history of the profession will be utilized to unpack the elements of curator/artist roles and relationships, curatorial power and agenda, and the curatorial prerogative associated with the biennialization of site specificity. This framework will then be applied to the many different manifestations and projects that currently comprise site-specific art practice.

Many scholars have discussed the issues and aspects of site-specific art and practice. Miwon Kwon, in *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004) will act as a reference point throughout this thesis. Other books and articles have been written on the subject. Nick Kaye, in *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (2000), is concerned with practices which, in one way or another, "articulate exchanges between the work of art and the places in which its meanings are defined" (p.1). Judith Rugg's *Exploring Site-Specific Art: Issues of Space and Internationalism* (2010), focuses "on the relationships between site-specific art and space in the context of the international and considers how an interdisciplinary spatial theory can inform the making, theorization, commissioning, display and reception of contemporary art" (Rugg 2010, p.1). In 'Space as Practised Place' (2006), Jane Rendell examines site-specific art "in relation to de Certeau's notion of 'space as practised place'." and argues, "that in 'practicising' specific places certain artworks produce critical spaces" (p.57). Erika Suderburg, in her anthology text*, Space, site, intervention: situating installation art* (2000), examines "the definitions and legacies of site specificity and installation while articulating a broad range of theoretical, material and conceptual practices" contesting the definition and paradigms that existed previously (p.2). These publications are evidence that the subject matter of site specificity is a popular one, especially in the past two decades – an interesting parallel, to the upsurge of biennials and the *graying* of site specificity.

This oversaturation of site-specific theorization and discussion indicates, what Miwon Kwon believes to be " an attempt to rehabilitate" the aspects associated with the site-specific practice of the 1960s and 1970s whilst simultaneously signifying "a desire to *distinguish* current practices" from past ones that now seem overdone, both in terms of aesthetics and ideology (Kwon 2004, p.1). Perhaps though, these scholars noticed the beginnings of the *graying* of the practice, and their respective publications act as a preemptive attempt to define what was quickly becoming difficult to classify. The term 'site-specific' often signifies a certain 'criticality' or a progressive nature to the artwork or curatorial practice. This not only further problematizes the oversaturation of the works that are defined as such, but is a reason for the oversaturation. However much 'criticality' the term may bring, the attempts, a decade ago, to securely define the relationship between site and art, were "inspired by a recognition that if site-specific art seems no longer viable – because its critical edges have dulled, its pressure been absorbed – [it was] partly due to the conceptual limitations of existing models of site specificity itself" (ibid, p.2). As a result, many within the art field, from artists to curators to critics, have and continue to develop different terms and formulas to better define their work and projects. These terms at the beginning of the current millennium "signal[ed] an attempt to forge more complex and fluid possibilities" for the relationship of art and site, whilst, concurrently, "registering the extent to which the very concept of the site has become destabilized", a *graying* that has become only more so in the past decade since Kwon's publication.

The research methods for this thesis consist of a heavy reliance on discourse analysis with the addition of a few site visits and interviews. The discourse analysis is comprised of literature reviews, newspaper and journal articles, interviews, exhibition catalogues and museum texts. The data collection acts as the primary resource which was then analyzed via the theoretical lens of this thesis. Due to the limitation of time in addition to financial and geographic restraints there is a reliance on multiple art critic, curatorial and journalistic accounts for each of the different exhibitions and biennials utilized as examples to ensure well-rounded account of the events. It is with this practical and scholarly background and research methods that this thesis is written and will be organized as such:

The first chapter will establish the history of site-specific art and practice and will briefly introduce the current biennialization and 'graying' of site specificity. The second chapter will then construct the theoretical framework. Kwon's three paradigms of site-specific art and James Meyer's categories of site will be utilized to try and define the current diverse manifestations of site-specific practice. These theories are not meant to strictly define the examples, as in some cases, it will be argued, these definitions are no longer viable, but will act as tools to begin the conversation, one that will look at each site in terms of these theories and then more closely in terms of each site in relation the role of the curator and the definitions of place. As a result, the complex and versatile products of site-specific practice within the *graying* state of site specificity will be discussed. Both Kwon and Meyer published their work at the beginning of the 2000s. A decade later, with the continual influx of biennials and globalization and the resulting shifts of the role of the curator and place, do they still hold, especially in the situations of 'near' site specificity, or works produced under the, at times, overbearing constructs of the curator?

The chapter continues with the discussion of place theory in terms of biennialization and the role of the curator in terms of site-specific practice and the artist. Both conversations, constantly in flux, define key causal factors in the argument of the *graying* of site-specific art and practice and in the multifaceted, negative, positive or otherwise that result. With the development of technologies, the very notion of place continues to be challenged. Biennials, in a sense, confront this challenge, as a way to define a city and to bring people to a place whilst simultaneously feed the growing globalization of the world. de Certeau's notion of 'space as practised place' is an interesting link to the roles of the artist and curator – their power, their agenda. The identity of the curator has changed significantly in the past century, with what has been termed the 'curatorial turn' – and as a result, so too have relationships and roles of both curator and artist. Artists are now regularly 'called to install' works throughout the festival cities, works that range in site-specificity depending on the nature of the biennial. Thus an array of intentions, definitions and terminologies now plague site-specific practice resulting in, what this thesis argues, to be the *graying* of site specificity. Whilst the curatorial agenda may a times overpower the initiatives of the artist, these situations

may also result in pushing the artist to create works s/he may not have otherwise had the opportunity to realize. This conversation is a complex one, and this thesis, whilst arguing that the state of site specificity is *gray* (and continues to *gray* further) also questions these different concepts in an attempt to further generate enquiries on the state of site-specific practice and in hopes of continuing the conversation further.

The second half of the thesis will be a full analysis of the different manifestations of site-specific projects that currently exist internationally – all of which, with the examination of the casual factors of place and curatorial, will be evidence to support the argument for the *graying* of site specificity and illustrate the many different projects that are produced as a result of this current state. Each example will be highlighted and discussed, first with a background of the site or biennial/exhibition, followed by an in-depth analysis of the practice at the site in terms of the theoretical framework of Kwon and Meyer and the casual factors of curatorial role, artistic role, definition of place, terminology of site specificity, the city agenda, etc.

Chapter 3 will look at the Biennial, first with the examination of the 9th installment (2005) of the Istanbul Biennial. This will be followed by an analysis of the 3rd Liverpool Biennial and the 3rd Berlin Biennial, both in 2004. The former, heralded as a great success, the latter, criticized as coming up short, these place-based biennials exemplify the complexity of the *graying* of site specificity, both in their achievements and downfalls.

Chapter 4 examines the different formats of the exhibition, first with the recent exhibition, *Sturtevant: Image over Image* (2012) at the Moderna museet in Stockholm. This solo-artist show was described by the museum as 'nearly site-specific'. With terms such as 'nearly', 'almost', and 'somewhat' to describe the site specificity of an exhibition or artwork, this example illustrates that whilst terminology may help to define the artwork or practice, it may also further complicate the situation whilst simultaneously constructing a certain fluidity, resulting in objects that are described as neither here nor there. The multi-site, solo-artist exhibition *Terramare* (2010) in Avignon, of Majorcan artist Miquel Barceló will then be discussed. The works at each site range (gradient) in site specificity and in the role of the artist and curator, resulting in a discussion on the debate between muddled and fluidity. Additionally, the exhibition illustrates the

interesting parallels between biennial and blockbuster exhibition practice. *Contemporary Art in Historic Places* (2005) will be analyzed as an example of a (multi) site-specific exhibition where artists Imogen Stidworthy, Richard Wentworth and Louise K Wilson were commissioned to create different site-specific projects "inspired by the unique character, culture, heritage and environment of three different locations in the East of England" (commissioneast.org). This project will be looked at to understand why this trend of contemporary site-specific practice in historic places is still so prevalent, both with private organizations and in museums and biennials, and how the roles of the curator and institution are linked to the practice. Finally, the last example focuses on the manifestation of site-specific practice where the site remains constant, but the artists do not. Tate Modern's Turbine Hall Unilever series was the first program to annually commission different artists to create site-specific works in a unique space – one site, multiple responses – which can lead to the realization of de Certeau's theory of 'space as practised place', as well as to the further analysis of the role of the curator/institution and the ever popular trend of inviting artists into a space to respond to the institutional or historic site.

The intention of these analyses and this thesis as a whole is to examine the phenomena that has been (for the last 15 years or so) and continues to be, the state of site-specific art and practice. It argues that certain causal factors have led to this *graying* and that certain practices have affected where within this gradient the project and artwork result. Furthermore, the previous definitions and paradigms, whilst generally successful in their classification of earlier site-specific practice, do not compensate for the upsurge of biennials and multifaceted exhibitions and the resulting complex manifestations of site-specific art and practice that now exist, and therefore, at many points, are no longer viable in the defining of the practice. In the analysis of these different examples, specifically, each in relation to the curatorial, different results produced in the wake of this uncertain state are debated to promote a further conversation on the subject – not one that seeks to lead to any clarification on the state of site specificity, but that will keep curator, artist, city official, museum director and art viewer conscious of the *gray*, complex, state of site specificity and in dialogue on the future of the practice.

CHAPTER 1: THE HISTORY OF ART AND SITE

The history of site-specific artwork is generally referenced to have begun in the 1960s, linked to the art of minimalism, which had a determined, defined notion of 'site.' The relationship between site and art, however, predates the artists of the 1960s. Site and art have a long if not heavy history. Before the existence of public museums, of salons and galleries, site and art were inextricably linked with the church altarpiece and the patron-commissioned murals. To discuss the current *graying* state of site specificity and its many manifestations of practice, this thesis argues that this older history of the relationship between site and art must be considered. This chapter will outline the historical basis for the examination of this 'graying' of site-specific art. Beginning with the Christian altarpieces of the 11th century, the history of site-specific art shows to be an unbalanced one, where roles of site, art, artist and curator, producer, patron and viewer are constantly shifting.

Religion aside, there is an uncanny similarity between the commissioned altarpieces produced for churches beginning in the 11th century and the site-specific works created today for biennials and art fairs. In need of a work, whether sculptural, which began in the 11th century, or painting, which became popular in Northern Europe in the 15th century, churches, or rather, the powerful entities behind them, would choose artists (or at the time, artisans) to create a work that would deliver the hand of God, the power of religion, to the congregation. Exchange the church for the city, the religious and royal leaders for heads of state and curators, and the altarpiece for works commissioned for biennials and the intention to deliver a curatorial or government agenda, and the parallels between site-and-art and between artist-and-commissioner are too clear to be ignored.

Erica Suderburg notes the commonalities between the site-specific work of today and that displayed in the cabinets of curiosity and the *Kunstkammer* of the 17th and 18th centuries, stating that "located in the intersection of the collection, the monument, the garden, and the domestic interior, works of installation and site-specific practices can be posited in several locations that predate modernist genres and labels" (Suderburg 2000, p.7). In these rooms, precursors to the modern museum, objects were chosen due to their

personal value to the collector. Rather than being created for the site, these works demonstrate the altered status of the objects once placed into the *Kunstkammer*. The power of placement on art quickly developed – to be placed in a sanctioned art space signified the worthiness of the piece as an artwork. There were some individuals, such as Antoine C. Quatremére de Quince, a sculptor and theoretician, who voiced the importance of context in the display of artwork early on. As Victoria Newhouse describes, in *Art and the Power of Placement,* "For Quatremére it was essential not only to see Rome's art objects and architecture in relation to each other but to experience them with an awareness of other influences of their creation. By questioning the validity of displaying what are now called site-specific artworks in museums, the Frenchman posed a problem that remains controversial to this day" (Newhouse 2005, p.42). It is this intuition that brought Marcel Duchamp to question the institution and the definition of art when he turned a urinal on its side and signed the piece 'R. Mutt.' Although rejected by the committee when submitted to the Society of Independent Artists in 1917, *Fountain* sparked the question of what art, in its many forms, actually was, and *who,* in fact, determined this definition. Such institutional critique would become the cornerstone of the conceptual site-specific work, which first began with the minimalists.

Minimalism and the 1960s

The 'genealogy' of modern site-specific art has been researched and recorded in length by Miwon Kwon. This research acts as reference point for almost any literature written about the subject since Kwon's publication. Modern site specificity began in the late 1960s where the artists held a phenomenological understanding of site, site as a physical, literal place, the architecture of the gallery acted as a starting point to the minimalist practice. As Douglas Crimp notes, another entity also became important: "minimal sculpture launched an attack on the prestige of the artist and the artwork, granting that prestige instead to the situated spectator, whose self-conscious perception of the Minimal object in relation to the site of its installation produced the works meaning" (Crimp, 1993 p.16). Thus site and artwork became irremovable from the other and necessitated that the viewer be physically present for the mission of the work to be

achieved. As artist Robert Morris explains: "The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light and the viewer's field of vision" (Morris 1966, p.25). This reflexive experience of the viewer were aspects that clearly defined this new aesthetic turn that came out of the wake of Clement Greenberg and the aesthetic autonomy of art, an ideology that asserted that the only required components in the viewing of an artwork were those that contributed to its 'formal significance' and thus the viewer had to be knowledgeable of these properties. The work of the minimalists created inextricable links between the internal formal aspects of the works and those of the site, breaking the barrier that the disinterest theory had created between the artwork and its surroundings as well as the notion of the necessity of a preconceived understanding of the formal properties of an artwork.

In 1969 artist Robert Barry proclaimed that his wire installations were "made to suit the place in which [they were] installed. They cannot be moved without being destroyed" (Kwon 1997, p.86). Barry's statement announced "a new radicality in vanguard sculptural practice" which marked the early stage of 'aesthetic experimentations' that were to continue in the 1970s (ibid).

Institutional Critique – Land Art and Conceptual Art

While the site, for minimalist art, was a solid, tangible entity, "through the materialist investigations of institutional critique, the site was reconfigured as a relay or network of interrelated spaces and economies, which together frame and sustain art's ideological system…"(Kwon 2004, p.3). Conceptual artists such as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Mierle Ukeles shifted from the physical condition of the gallery to the system of socioeconomic relations whilst land artist such as Robert Smithson and Robert Morris moved from the interior space and into the earthly terrain. Whereas minimalists worked *within* the gallery, these new 'nascent forms of institutional critique' utilized the physical site of the exhibition as a reference point (Kwon 1997; Kaye 2000). Artists such as Haacke, Bochner and Buren focused their institutional critique on highlighting the hidden elements that the gallery may 'obscure,' with the gallery walls seen as 'framing' devices which the artists combated with their site-specific practice, working *with* the architecture of the institution to make their points, utilizing the

space within which art was traditionally displayed to refocus the space onto the issues of institutional critique. In this way, this model of site specificity contested the 'innocence' of space that existed with the minimalist, developing their work within a site that was part of a larger set of political and social economies, where the artists intended to reveal *all* of the institutions' 'hidden' meanings in an attempt to destabilize the misleading agenda of these 'sites' (Kwon 2004, p.14).

Land art rid itself of the gallery altogether, critiquing the institution and the commodification of art with the creation of art in the land outside of the institution (Rendell 2008, p.46). Rendell notes, however, that although the artists produced their works outside of the physical boundaries of the institution, they could not cut themselves off from the gallery completely as funding for such works came from patrons that were only accessible to the artist through the gallery. Land art also abandoned the visitor as a necessary element for the completion of the work. Generally isolated and difficult to visit, the majority of the audience could only experience land art in reproductions through photographs – which too were difficult to access, due to the artists' strictness about the reproduction of their work. Land artists continued to discuss the concept of site, but did so with the juxtaposition of their work to the minimalist practice within the gallery. Artists such as Robert Morris situated that the gallery and museum spaces were anti-spatial for "they are as holistic and as immediately perceived as the objects they house…the relationship of such objects to the room nearly always having an "axial alignment to the confines of the walls" (Morris 1978, p.27). Robert Smithson also made this differentiation between the interior of the gallery and the exterior space with his *dialectic* of 'site' (nongallery) and 'non-site' (gallery). Interestingly, art institutions today utilize the concept of 'non-site' or *off-site* but attribute the term in a reversal of Smithson's objectives – where the *off-site* becomes the site outside the gallery and the *site* becomes the physical gallery space (Rendell 2008, p.46).

Richard Serra – *Tilted Arc*

Robert Barry's sentiment is later reconfirmed by Richard Serra in 1989, but, 20 years later, Serra's statement acted as an 'indignant defense' which indicated a 'crisis point' for

site-specific practice that still inextricably linked the physical site to the completion of the artwork (Kwon 1997, p.87). Serra's work, *Tilted Arc* [Figure 1], was created with the intention that it not be moved. Thus, in 1989, when the decision by a public hearing to remove the work was made, Serra stated that "The work was conceived for the site, built on the site, had become an integral part of the site, altered the very nature of the site. Remove it, and the work would simply cease to exist" (Crimp 1993, p.128). *Tilted Arc,* built in 1981, a commission by the United States General Services Administration's Arts-in-Architecture program for the Federal Plaza in New York City was made of 120 feet of unfinished steel which ran 12 feet high. The work was meant to shift with the viewers movement, an experience that didn't resonate – many New Yorkers thought the work to be an eyesore, a magnet for graffiti, rats, drunks and other unwanted urban entities. Crimp (1993) argues that this reaction added another element to the piece: "when the radical aesthetics of site-specific sculpture are reinterpreted as the site of political action, public sculpture can be credited with a new level of achievement" (p.131). Thus, due the general population's unawareness of this inseparability between the artwork and site a further political manifestation of site-specificity was enacted with the removal of the piece. The ignorance, however, was perhaps two-fold, for although the general population did not understand the historic weight of the decision to remove *Tilted Arc*, many defenders of the work, even individuals who were representatives of the art community, "argued for a notion of site specificity that reduced it to a purely aesthetic category" (Suderburg 2000, p.5).

Figure 1: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc, 1981,* photo taken before 1989

The Community and Social Issues Outside of Art

In the past few decades site-specific art, and the artists who produce it, have expanded both site and subject matter. Site-related art finds itself in abandoned buildings, parking lots, parks, hotel rooms, private homes and back in the art institutions. Simultaneously, the context within which art is created is now influenced by a range of disciplines, from anthropology to literature, psychology to architecture, political theory to social politics and pop culture. For "project-based art by artists such as Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, Renée Green, Christian Philipp Müller, and Fred Wilson…site of art is again redefined," distributed amongst a range of cultural and discursive fields, across the globe, as artists travel from site to site (Kwon 2004, p.3). Hal Foster, in *Artist as Ethnographer* (1996), remarks that new site-specific work is "now made *with* the institution, which itself '*imports'* critique, and thus, site-specific projects, in order to remap the museum or to reconfigure its audience, must operate inside it" (p.75). This is evident in the project *Mining the Museum* (1992) [Figure 2], by artist Fred Wilson at the Maryland Historical Society. Through a curatorial intervention the artist displayed silverwork produced by slaves with the shackles worn by the fine-silver makers – highlighting the *entire* story of the works and the history of slavery within the collection.

Figure 2: Installation image of Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum, 1992*

Now inside and outside the museum, working *with* the institution to critique not just art practice and display, but issues of culture and society, "the distinguishing characteristic of today's site-oriented art is the way in which the artwork's relationship to the actuality of location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a *discursively* determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate" (Kwon 2004, p.26). Furthermore,

unlike previous practice, this site is not defined as a "*pre*condition, rather, it is generated by the work (often as 'context'), and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation" (ibid). This notion of 'discursive formation' will be further unpacked in the overview of Kwon's theoretical ideology.

Rather than the utilization of site-specificity to critique the institution and its stronghold on the presentation of art and culture, the focus of many site-specific artists has shifted to "the pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life – a critique of culture that is inclusive of nonart spaces, nonart institutions, and nonart issues (blurring the division between art and nonart, in fact)" (ibid p.24). This *blurring*, is further manifested with the questions of what is and is not 'a site', what is or is not site-specific. For example, Mark Dion, in his 1991 project *On Tropical Nature* [Figure 3], concurrently realized multiple different definitions of the site: First was the unpopulated section of the rainforest in Venezuela where the artist lived for three weeks and collected specimens. These specimens were then crated off to the second site, Sala Mendoza gallery in Caracas where the objects were displayed as artworks – 'contextualized' in the third site: the curatorial framework of the group exhibition. The fourth site, again non-physical, is what Kwon identifies as "the *discourse* concerning cultural representations of nature and the global environmental crisis," which is although the "least material…was the site to which Dion intended a lasting relationship" (ibid p.28). Kwon's concept of the discursivity of site, a reflection itself of the increased interest and research on the 'intangible', compounds the already complex and confusing notion of site presented by artists a such as Dion – exemplifying that site is not only in flux between one artist and another, but also within one project.

Figure 3: Instillation image of Mark Dion, *On Tropical Nature,* 1991

Kwon continues her genealogy of site-specific art with the discussion of 1990s public art, charting "the changes in the conceptualization of site specificity within the mainstream public art arena, examining the ways in which an "artwork's public relevance

and its sociopolitical ambitions have been measured in terms of the art-site relationship over the past three decades" and with this the "shift from site specificity to community in 'new genre public art' " (Kwon 2004, p.6). She argues that the dissipation of the site in site specificity is due to the prioritizing of its discursively and its displacement by the community (ibid p.8). She utilizes the 1993 Chicago 'culture in action' movement as an example – where she critically approaches the movement as "a renewed mode of social and political activism, or a new strategy of urban reform and revitalization" (ibid p.107). She also discusses two 'failed' attempts of public artworks.

This thesis, however, doesn't looked at failed events, but rather, events that have both successful elements and abortive ones as to best understand the complicated, dynamic and complex *graying* state of site specificity. Kwon's public art projects, whilst an important aspect of one direction of site-specific art, in terms of the community and activism, is only one of the directions in which the practice of site specificity has gone.

With the publication of her book in 2004, the timeline of this thesis (in 2012) looks towards the site-specific work that is created for exhibitions and biennials, museum halls and commissioned sites – the *biennialization* of site-specific practice. While Kwon, in the past eight years since the publication of *One Place After Another*, may perhaps still continue her genealogy with the investigation of the displacement of site by community, this thesis examines another avenue. The point of the divergence from Kwon in this timeline is to focus not only on the definition of place and space within city and institution in this modern time, but also to have the opportunity to investigate the roles of curator and artist within site-specificity – not that this cannot be done with the examination of public art and community based site-specific work, but rather, as this thesis argues, the upsurge of biennials and the different formats of exhibitions since the beginning of the millennium have resulted in more and more site-specific projects (that too, are at times, based in the community) which have resulted in and are evidence of what this thesis argues as the *graying* of site specificity and what will be made evident in the forthcoming chapters.

Recent Years: The *Biennialization* of Site-Specific art

Site-specific art today, with the increase of biennials in the past decade, is produced both as an initiative of the artist *and* the curators, directors, museums, galleries, city officials and art fairs - with the decisions of site, theme and ideology constructed by different entities at different times. Biennials are nothing new, the Venice Biennale began in 1895 and the São Paulo Biennial is in its 30th installment this year. What has changed is the *amount*, the *saturation* of biennials and large art fairs – and the curatorial and site-specific practice that has developed with the upsurge of these events. Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s 'peripheral' biennials began to emerge in cities looking to reconstruct their identity within the global sphere. As the years continued, more and more cities developed art events, from biennials to art fairs, exhibitions and new museum wings that have resulted in hundreds of biennials, installments of which occur perennially, biennially, triennially and in some cases every 5 or 10 years. These events have greatly shifted (heightened) the role of the curator and furthermore, museums, biennials, art fairs and off-site exhibitions, have become elements that contribute to the defining factors of a city, of a place. The next chapter will further unpack these aspects of the current state of site specificity with the discussion of the definition of place and the role of these art events on the identity of city, as well as the role of the curator and artist within site-specific practice.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY ON SITE-SPECIFIC ART

This chapter will overview the theoretical and conversational framework of this thesis. First, the theories of Miwon Kwon and James Meyer will be summarized. These theories will function as a starting point and will be utilized in defining different forms of site specificity and then ultimately in the argument of the *graying* of the practice. Kwon's three paradigms of site-specific art tie in with the genealogy of the history of the practice discussed earlier and act as a precursor to the recent state of site-specific art (in the past 15 years). Furthermore, Kwon's notion of the nomadic artist and the 'unhinging' of site act as defining factors in the argument of the *graying* of site specific art. James Meyer, with his definition of 'literal' versus 'functional' site, too, works to define the site within which site-specific art is created. Kwon and Meyer both "investigate theoretical and conceptual issues surrounding the very definition of installation and site-specific art… [and] bring the debates about installation and site specificity full circle and examine their impact on 1990s art discourse" (Suderburg 2000, p.14). Suderburg's succinct description of the two theorists is perceptive: both Kwon and Meyer published their work in the early 2000s, looking back at the decade beforehand. Now over 10 years later, these theories will be used as a framework to unpack each of the different site-specific manifestations, but in many cases, will not suitably define the artworks and projects of the past decade. After these theories are successfully summarized, the umbrella conversations, that of the definition of place/city and that of the role/relationship of curator/artist will be discussed. These issues are not only catalysts in the *graying* of site specificity but cyclically act as frameworks within which this state and the resulting artwork produced can be discussed. With these frameworks in place, the latter half of the thesis will give an in-depth analysis of the many manifestation of current site-specific practice, illustrating the *graying* of site specificity, developing a well-rounded and dynamic context for the continued debate and conversation of the works and practices that result from and continue to further the *graying* state of site-specific art and practice.

Miwon Kwon – 3 Paradigms of Site

Miwon Kwon, in her 2004 book *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* investigates site specificity, not just as an art practice but as what she calls a 'problem-idea', a "peculiar cipher of art and spatial politics" (Kwon 2004, p.2). She suggests three paradigms for site-specific art – phenomenological, institutional, and discursive site. Kwon stresses that these three paradigms are 'competing definitions' and whilst they do develop along a chronology with a shift from the literal to the conceptual concept of site, they overlap with one another, both in past and present, and even in the artwork of a single artist (ibid p.30). Kwon's reasoning for the reexamination of site-specific art is in large part due to what she believes is the 'uncritical' way that the term 'site-specific' has become commonplace both in the art field and in other mainstream discourse. This 'uncritical' borrowing of the term and its resulting oversaturation are definite factors in why site specificity finds itself in the *gray* area it does today. Kwon argues that the dulling of site-specific art is due to the weak and misdirected utilization by 'market forces' – what this thesis argues is evident in the biennialization of the past 15 years, as biennials (and their financially driven sibling, the art fair) overuse not only the term, but the practice of site-specific art to at times push a certain agenda and produce a 'novelty' affect. Whilst Kwon's three paradigms help to define the shifting site-specific art practices from the 1960s to the late 1990s, the work produced today that result from the *graying* of site specificity, do not necessarily fall into the paradigms she developed. They are, however, a crucial starting point in examining the different manifestations of site-specific practice and the resulting works produced in the current state of site specificity.

Kwon also posits the notions of the 'itinerant artist' and the 'unhinging' of site, both of which she relates to the 'unrecognized' and 'unanalyzed' "ways in which the very term 'site specificity' has itself become a *site of struggle*, where competing positions concerning the nature of the site, as well as the 'proper' relationship of art and artists to it, are being contested" (Kwon 2004, p.2). It seems evident then that Kwon and others of her time really did understand that a *struggle* existed, and in an attempt to define the 'nature of site' and the relationships surrounding it, her three paradigms were realized.

The first paradigm, as constructed by the minimalists, based site-specific art in the "phenomenological or experiential understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location, with architecture serving as a foil for the art work in many instances" (Kwon 2004, p.3). The site, in direct association with the artwork, acts as a definitive piece of the whole – the two are inextricably linked, the site is an experienced, physical entity.

The second paradigm is traced in the 1970s and 1980s and is based in the concept of the institutional site. Rather than a literal understand of site, it became one of a 'conception' – a "*cultural* framework defined by the institutions of art" (ibid p.13). No longer focused on a phenomenological experience, the emergence of this second paradigm is defined by the artists' meditation on the political, cultural and social meanings of the site, also concerned with "the social matrix of the class, race, gender, and sexuality of the viewing subject" (ibid). The physical existence of site and viewer is no longer necessary. In turn, "concurrent with this move toward the dematerialization of the site is the ongoing de-aestheticization and dematerialization of the artwork" (ibid**)**. Art within this paradigm opposes the commodification of artworks, utilizing tactics that are "either aggressively antivisual-informational, textual, expositional, didactic-or immaterial altogether-gestures, events, or performances bracketed by temporal boundaries" (Kwon 1997, p.91). The site is then identified, not with a literal space but through the framework developed by the institution in terms of the display and commodification of artworks.

The 'distinguishing characteristic' of the third paradigm is the way in which the artwork's relationship to the "actuality of location (as site) [first paradigm] and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) [second paradigm] are both subordinate to a *discursively* determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate" (Kwon 2004, p.26). Unlike the other paradigms, the *discursive* site is "not defined as a *pre*condition…rather, it is generated by the work (often as 'context'), and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation" (ibid). Kwon clarifies that this does not completely dispose of the previous conditions of a certain site or institution, but rather that "the *primary* site addressed by the current manifestations of site specificity is not necessarily bound to, or determined by, these contingencies in the long run" (ibid 29). As a result, "although the site of action or

intervention (physical) and the site of effects/reception (discursive) are conceived to be continuous, they are nonetheless pulled apart" (ibid). In this way nonart issues and nonart spaces are aspects of the work. As the first paradigm was developed through the critique of minimalism, and the second paradigm with the discussion of institutional critique, Kwon forms the third paradigm in terms of artists such as Fred Wilson, Andrea Fraser and the 'New Genre Public Art' of the 1990s. With what Kwon calls "semantic slippage between content and site" artists work with different *types* of site, and as a result, they find the " 'locational' anchor in the discursive realm" where site may change from project to project, but the core issue of their work stays consistent – as the discursive site (ibid 28).

The 'itinerant' artist and 'unhinging' of site

Kwon's notion of the 'itinerant' artist is one that exists within the conversation of the fluid and changing roles of the artist (and curator). The travelling artist is based in the theoretical ideology of nomadism and deterritorialization developed by Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattaris and Kwon argues that the artist, no longer confined to his or her studio, travels the world to produce work, *in situ*. This push to travel and produce work for institutions is due to the increase of biennials and international art events – *biennialization* - "as more artists try to accommodate the increase in demand for singular on-site projects in various cities across the globalized art network" (Kwon 2004, p.31).

Kwon posits that as these artists travel to fulfill these calls from curators and institutions – again another factor in the *graying*, the curator as producer – "this mobilization of the *artist* redefines the commodity status of the artwork, the nature of artistic authorship, and the art-site relationship" (ibid). Furthermore, with "increased pressure to conceive of projects which engage locally but speak globally, comes a tendency to essentialize potential 'communities' and confine art to a set agenda" (Doherty 2004). It can be argued, however, that this travel from one place to another may act as inspiration, and the regularly commissioning of works may result in conditions that allow for new exploration.

Kwon, wary of the heightened discussion of site specificity at the time of her publication cautions that this enthusiasm must be "checked by a serious critical

examination of the problems and contradictions that attend all forms of site-specific and site-oriented art today," which she asserts, are now visible in as the work becomes continually more 'unhinged' both in a literal and physical "separation of the art work from the location of its initial installation, and in a metaphorical sense as performed in the discursive mobilization of the site in emergent forms of site-oriented art" (Kwon 2004, p.30). She argues that this 'unhinging' "indicates new pressures upon its practice today – pressures engendered by both aesthetic imperatives and external historical determinates, which are not exactly comparable to those of thirty years ago" (ibid). These pressures, and the 'unhinging' are similar to the notion of the *graying* of site-specificity in this thesis, however her term 'unhinging' connotes a certain negative unbalance, which in some cases is true – but with the utilization of the term *graying* there is an opportunity to discuss the multifaceted state of site-specific art and practice.

Kwon unpacks the notion of 'unhinging' in reference to three types of practice: that of the reproduction of site-specific works that no longer exist, that of the mobilization of original works from their *site* to a different location altogether, and that of the works within the third paradigm. She laments that "it seems inevitable that we should leave behind the nostalgic notions of a site as being essentially bound to the physical and empirical realities of a place" whilst she also argues that even with the increase of discursively the ideology of site as a physical place remains, with the human attachment to place as an identity marker (ibid p.109).

It is this dichotomy, this push and pull of the physical site that is so evident in the framework of the *graying* of site specificity. Kwon concludes that "today's site-oriented practices inherit the task of demarcating the relational specificity that can hold in tension the distant poles of spatial experiences" through attending to the "differences of adjacencies and distances between one thing, one person, one place, one thought, one fragment *next* to another…so that the sequence of sites that we inhabit in our life's traversal does not become genericized into an undifferentiated serialization, one place after another" (ibid 110). Eva Rodriguez-Riestra (2009) suggests an alternative approach to finding significant site-specific practices with a focus on artists who "have returned to the site: not to a discursive, functional site, nor to a nostalgic or a phenomenological reading of place, and not exclusively in the search for identity; but to an engagement with

the particularities of a location and to the creation of different types of relationships between people and between people and places," a notion which this thesis takes into serious consideration in the examination of the examples to follow.

Critique of Kwon

Most critique of Kwon's work is in reference to her third paradigm of discursive site. For example, in *Dismantling the Frame: Site-Specific Art and Aesthetic Autonomy* (2009), Jason Gaiger argues that the third paradigm is the "most problematic…as it involves a conception of the site that is no longer bound to a particular environment", with the site now a *"discourse* of knowledge and ideas" (Gaiger 2009, p.48). His main argument is that this paradigm does not identify with a genre or movement of artworks, and that *discursivity* could allegedly be an element of all art, site-specific or otherwise, and therefore is too weak to serve as the paradigm's identifier (ibid). Gaiger further argues that the artwork which Kwon allocates as within the third paradigm is a 'phenomena' that "resists categorization under any one designation", and that moreover, the "construction of a third paradigm of site-specific art around the amorphous notion of 'discourse' threatens to render the concept of a site redundant and to lose the locational anchor that characterizes the other two paradigms (ibid)." He continues that the discursive formulas of theory, debate and social economies functioning as 'sites' is "tenuous at best" and disregards the role of the institution in the production of these works (ibid p.51).

This thesis agrees with Gaiger's sentiments which indicate that there is more at play in the practice of site specificity than the discursive site – which, with the examples that will be discussed, is quite clear. Furthermore Kwon's notion of the nomadic artist and the 'unhinging' of site, are now evident in most if not all of site-specific practice today, whether the work is based in the discursive or not – due, to what this thesis argues is the *graying* of site specificity.

James Meyer – 'Literal' and 'Functional' Site

Similar to Kwon, James Meyer notes that with the 1990s fascination with the art of the 1960s and 1970s, which, in turn, revived practices of that time, the "languages and strategies of now historical activities are *hybridized* and *displaced*" or, what this thesis distinguishes as *graying* (Meyer 2000, p.23) [emphasis added]. He argues that, in discussing this new work, (circa 2000), artists such as Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, Tom Burr, Renée Green, Christian Philipp Müller, and Ursula Biemann etc., artists in Kwon's third paradigm of discursive site, have "transformed the notions of site specificity as it emerged during the early years of institutional critique and earthworks, revising the assumptions implicit in this model to reflect upon the globalized, multicultural ambience of the present day" (ibid 24). It is thus his mission to find a way to assess this work "within a broader field of activity that explores institutional frameworks and locations" (ibid). He does so with a distinction between two types of site – that of the 'literal site' and of the 'functional site' – "as processes that are rearticulated and reconfigured via contemporary artists' nomadic narratives" and have a clear connection to Kwon's first and second/third paradigms, with the former being that of the physical phenomenological, and the latter two the further 'discursivity' of site (Suderburg 2000 p.13).

Meyer defines 'literal site' as being 'in situ', a site with " an actual location, a singular place" where the intervention of the artist "conforms to the physical constraints of this situation" even if the intention of the artist is to critique the site (Meyer 2000, p.25). As a result, the physical location of the work forms the formal completion of the piece, where the place is 'actual', a notion quite similar to Kwon's first paradigm of phenomenological site. Meyer develops the 'literal site' in reference to Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (discussed earlier), noting that the intention of the piece was to stand in Federal Plaza permanently, physically, created *in situ.*

Meyer classifies 'functional site' as that which is found with recent site-oriented practices, which "may or may not incorporate a physical place" where place is not made the primary concern, but rather, "instead, it is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and bodies that move between them (the artist's above all)" (Meyer 2000 p.25). He continues that this site is one of

information, of text, videos, photographs, allegories, things, and physical places (ibid). There is a temporal element to the 'functional site' where it is a "temporary thing, a movement, a chain of meanings and imbricated histories: a place marked and swiftly abandoned," mobile and not limited to the permanence of a certain physical site (ibid). This intended temporality of this work is important. Kwon describes Meyer's 'functional site' as "now structured (inter)textually rather than spatially, and its model is not a map but an itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions *through* spaces, that is, a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist" where "this transformation of the site textualizes spaces and spatializes discourses" – resonating with Kwon's third paradigm of discursivity (Kwon 1997, p.95). (Kwon's second paradigm of institution falls in both 'functional' and 'literal' site, depending on the ideologies of the artist and the artwork).

Both minimalists and conceptual artists that worked within institutional critique were bound by site, where with minimalists the site was neutral, but with the later artists, it was not. Meyer argues that decades after this work, "we might begin to question the efficacy of such claims…to what extent site specificity accomplished the desired disruption of the commodity system…and moreover whether a practice grounded in a materialist analysis alone remains practicable or even desirable today" (Meyer 2000, p.26). He continues to discuss the history of site-specific art, distinguishing between the importance of Presence imbued by the minimalists and then sates that "the functional work explores an 'expanded' site: the 'art world', in this activity, has become a site within a network of sites, an institution among institutions" again, a notion also iterated by Kwon with her third paradigm of discursive site (ibid p.27).

Both Meyer and Kwon discuss similar examples in their work and come to analogous conclusions – at one point the site was based in a physical manifestation, and then it moved on to a less literal one. Meyer states that "much current work explores a mobile notion of site and nomadic subjectivity" and that "the most convincing site-related work not only represents, or enacts, this mobility, but also reflects on these new parameters [democratization of travel, globalization etc…]" (ibid). But again, this work was written in reference to the 1995 exhibition *Platxwechsel,* organized by the Zurich Kunsthalle which occurred in a number of locations throughout the city – and the

nomadic tendencies and globalization of the art world, as well as the conversation of artist and curator have continued in the past 15 years in hand with the hasty increase of city-based art events such as biennials. Thus Meyer's distinction of 'functional site' and Kwon's concept of the discursive third paradigm, while acting as a basis for the state of site specific art today, do not fully clarify the multifaceted aspects of the *graying* of site specificity where work is no longer site-specific or not site-specific – whether the site be literal, discursive or otherwise.

Theory of Place

It is argued that the definition of place and the distinction of city in relation to identity are diminishing. This notion of the shifting entity of place is one that has been and continues to be associated with site-specific work. This thesis argues that this flux of place is a crucial factor in the development of the *graying* of site specificity – as is the notion of relationships and actions within a place in the definition of said site. That city-based art events, such as biennials, have become so fervent in the past two decades is perhaps a way to combat the globalization and generalization of place and city identity, defining place, as will be discussed, with de Certeau's 'space as practised place' whilst simultaneously enforcing globalization and the mobility of the artist - a vicious cycle, with the biennial combating these so-called diminishing entities through the creation of place, concurrently acting as breeding grounds for site-specific work that may be muddled, undefined, vague…*gray*.

With globalization and the leaps in travel and technology "the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication" (Harvey 1991 p.43). Cultural geographers, such as Harvey, realizing this shift, began to argue "for the importance of space in producing social relationships" and looked to French philosopher Henri Lefebvre to do so (Rendell 2008, p.34). In his work *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre asserts that rather than the relationship between spatial practice and the social be one-way, where spatial practice is a " 'projection' of the social onto the spatial field", that it is "two-way" where Space and the political organization of space express

social relationships but also react back upon them' " (Rendell 2008, p.34). 'Space,' therefore, becomes a more open concept, one that is affected and can effect what occurs within it.

Anthropologist Michel de Certeau's theory of place and space connects to linguistic practice – with 'space is a practised place' – where, similar to what Lefebvre later argues, the relationships existing within the space define it, space is socially produced. He gives the example of the city street, where "the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into space by walkers" (de Certeau 1980, p.119). de Certeau's work has been adopted by Jane Rendell in her 2008 work *Space, Place, and Site in Critical Spatial Arts Practice* where she argues that in " 'practicing' specific places, certain artworks produce critical spaces" adding value to both the site and work which is produced for/within it (Rendell 2008, p.36). de Certeau will be specifically utilized in this thesis as his notion of action as transforming place into space is one that will be analyzed in reference to the *graying* of site-specific practice.

This ideology of space and place as anything but static, altered by the artwork and artist acting within it, together with the globalization of the world, creates a place that is in flux. In what Massey (1994) calls the "speeding up and spreading out" of the world – the Marxist notion of 'time-space compression' –globalization has resulted in an escalating doubt about the definition of 'place' and how as humans, individuals and groups relate to site. Questioning how, with all that is in flux, there could be any retention of a feeling of locality and its distinctiveness, Massey, in *A Global Sense of Place* (1994), muses whether "it [is] not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking…a sense of place which is adequate to this era of time-space compression" (ibid). With relations stretching over space to an extent that has never been before, the geography of social relations is changing, and it is with this in mind that Massey develops an alternative interpretation, where what "gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the face that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (ibid). Rather than a focus on boundaries, place "can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" but where many of these moments are now developed on a much larger scale than just within the 'place' which the

moment occurs – the sense of place is extroverted. Massey argues for an understanding of place as 'unfixed, contested, and multiple,' with each moment existing in a network where "each point of view is contingent and subject to change" (Rendell 2008, p.51). In this way, Massey places the ideologies of the singular place developed by Lefebvre and de Certeau into a larger network of places, with each project and artwork present in a network of exhibitions, biennials, art fairs and programs. The moments created in these events not only 'trigger space into practised place' but are part of a much larger network, two-way, always in flux due to interactions of relationships and moments.

Kwon discusses this ideology in terms of the 'dynamics of deterritorialization" where she argues that with growing capitalism in the wake of globalization, "the intensifying conditions of spatial indifferentiation and departicularization exacerbate the effects of alienation and fragmentation in contemporary life" (Kwon 1997, p.107). Modern tendencies then, created through relationships of a homogenized globalized world, produce spaces (cities) that may no longer be a particular place that they once were. In respect to this Lefebvre has remarked: "[I]nasmuch as abstract space [of modernism and capital] tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences" (ibid). Thus, maintaining and creating these differences, these unique experiences and authentic moments are an effort to preserve place, where these aspects exist as *differential functions* of places, as will be seen with the exhibition *Contemporary Art in Historic Places*. Kwon argues, as does this thesis, that "it is this differential function associated with places, which earlier forms of site-specific art tried to exploit and the current incarnations of site-oriented works seek to re-imagine, that is the hidden attractor in the term site specificity" (ibid 108). In this way, whilst the nomadic tendencies of artists today, in conjunction with the discursive site and the movement and recreation of site-specific work, can be seen as symptoms of deterritorialization, this thesis argues that site-specific projects can also be unique factors which aim to bring 'distinctiveness' back to place, and thus retain the importance of place, of city, within this globalized world of diminishing particular space – each a moment in a network of spatial relations.

In the redefinition of the city, David Hickey goes as far as to assert that

international biennials have now become "quintessential cosmopolitan occasions perversely devoted to marketing ideas of regional identity and local exceptionality in the normative global language of post-minimalist artistic practice" (Hickey 2007 p.93). Having 'cultural and geopolitical ambitions' the biennials "seek to be national and even international by putting forward particular and supposedly incomparable local characteristics" what Hanru (2006) defines as 'locality' (Doherty 2007, p.103)

Claire Doherty (2007), however, remains "somewhat suspicious about whether the international scattered site exhibition is the most appropriate context in which to consider place through the commissioning of new artworks". She continues with the discussion of the recent emphasis on the city as "research subject, interlocutor, social context and physical site" by curators and that this practice may result in "exhibitions which are too interpretative, too quasi-anthropological in character" and as this thesis argues, may also result in artwork that is overtly commissioned and not in line with the artists' ideology or oeuvre – an issue that will be discussed in the next section.

Finally, it is important to note that much in the same way as biennials and exhibitions, the institutions, which hold these artworks and events, are part of this network of re-identifying locality. As Gail Dexter Lord in *The Importance of Place and Space* (2005) attests, museum space itself matters because it is "emphatically three-dimensional, punctuated by three-dimensional objects" (p.23). A 'kinesthetic experience', a persons' visit to a museum (or even, a biennial), alters the space, the movement of the individual acting as a second 'space as practised place' (the first being the production of the artwork), where not just the place is changed, but the person is as well, thus continuously creating a new identity, for both space and visitor, putting into practice Lefebvre's two-way notion of space.

The Curatorial Turn: curator as caretaker → curator as producer

In *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating* (2007), Kate Fowle, the current head of Independent Curators International, states: "The curator is having an identity crisis. Curating is now an industry, constructing its own histories as it evolves. At the same

time, it is an increasingly multifaceted practice that gives rise to much speculation as to how it functions and what it entails" (Fowle 2007 p.26). The question of the role of the curator is not new; the conversation on 'the curatorial turn' has been shared in lectures, discussion panels, and anthologies for decades. The term itself was used under the Roman Empire as an official title of 'caretaker' for those in charge of different departments within the city, and by the Middle Ages it transferred to the church, to define the clergy, someone with a 'spiritual cure or charge' (Levi Strauss 2007, p.15). Thus, with this 'split' between management and godliness, "curators have always been a curious mixture of bureaucrat and priest" (ibid).

Generally seen as a caretaker of collections until the 1950s this decade saw two changes: the beginning of independent curators, no longer bound to a certain collection or institution and, a shift in the power relations of artists and curators due to the increase in artist initiatives developed outside the traditional institution where the curatorial role was taken on by artists and committees, balancing the "leveling the hierarchical model of exhibition-making" that had been in place (Fowle 2007, p.29). These 'democratic' initiatives continued into the 1960s making the role of the curator more vulnerable and flexible as these new 'radical' forms destabilized this institution of art as a whole (Kapur 2007, p.57). The following decades saw the rise of site-specific projects in the forms of architectural-scale installations and interactive community programs, all part of a network of both artists and curators who developed work outside of the traditional infrastructure and into different social spaces. However unstable the role of the curator had become, the insecurity did not last long, and by the late 1960s the curatorial role became that of the creative direction of exhibitions.

Developed as such by individuals who combined the academic and artistic concerns of the time in a reactionary motion to the new art movements, recognizing that these new artistic practices necessitated a corresponding curatorial plan, these 'curatorial innovations' executed their practice in distinct reference to the work. For example, the phenomenological elements of the minimalist movement and its focus on the spectator, translated to a corresponding curatorial practice that "required an astute positioning of the artwork in the spatial discourse of the exhibition" and also necessitated for the curator to "find ways to restrain the exhibition process at the very point where the controlled

theatre of the encounter turns into spectacle" (ibid). The question of the role of curator and artist continued, and with it, the concept of the author or *auteur* manifested into the comparison of curators to film directors (Heinrich and Pollak 1989; Storr 2006) As the role of curator continued to heighten, the curator has become a certain celebrity, a producer, and with the "individual creativity as well as [the] integration of intellectual and theoretical models" by curators such as "Hans Ulrich Obrist, Maria Lind, Eric Troncy, Sabine Breitweiser, Ute Meta Bauer, Thelma Golden and Hou Hanru…" both in the museum and in the curatorial-centric biennials, the past 15 years have seen a paradigm shift take place (Hoffmann 2007, p.138).

This shift of the curator from caretaker to producer (the 'turn') and the development of curatorial practice, further indicated by the appearance of the verb 'to curate', is associated with the upsurge of biennials and larger-scale exhibitions, prevalent in the curatorial agendas of such events, corresponding to the role of the curator in site-specific practice (O'Neill 2007, p.15). Artist Anton Vidokle in his presentation at the 'Cultures of the Curatorial' conference and his subsequent article for e-flux titled 'Art without Artists?' discusses the role of the curator as producer in relation to that of the artist. The conference which he attended "portrayed the figure of the curator as a knowledgeable and transparent agent moving between cultures and disciplines—a cultural producer par excellence" suggesting that "art has become a subgenre of 'the Curatorial' " (Vidokle 2010). The conference further posited the curatorial as going 'beyond the making of exhibitions' – a remark that Vidolke argues cannot become "a justification for the work of curators to supersede the work of artists, nor a reinforcement of authorial claims that render artists and artworks merely actors and props for illustrating curatorial concepts" which may result in a "serious risk of diminishing the space of art by undermining the agency of its producers: artists" (ibid). He continues in the depiction of the relationship between curator and artist, one which he compares to that between management and workforce – with the workforce (artists) feeling that the management (curator) does not fully comprehend the art, and are "controlling, egocentric, and ignorant", where both established and unknown artists feel that "curatorial power and arrogance are out of control" (ibid). His discussion then turns to the curatorial role in the production of site-specific work. He quotes curator Michelle White's comments to fellow

curator Nato Thompson: that the term 'cultural producer' is a 'healthier' and 'more honest' way to describe the current role of the curator for it recognizes the complexities of the development of an exhibition in terms of collaboration, which she notes is "certainly beyond the simple curator/artist dichotomy" (ibid). White continues that in her work with site-specific exhibitions and projects with living artists, where "collaboration is essential to produce meaning" she has begun to question the 'boundaries' of her "involvement in the aesthetic and conceptual production" (ibid). This uncertainty causes risks for the artists which Vidokle describes in full - how does an artist say no to the curator who invited the artist to participate in the exhibition or biennial when the curator wants to credit themselves as collaborator, when the risk of saying no may result in not being invited in the future?

This issue of the agenda and power of the curator as producer is not as recent as one may expect and began, as artist Andrea Fraser explains, in the 1980s with a new 'demand' for project work from curators that led to "a number of important and troubling implications" and a state within which artists undertook "projects not only for specific sites and situations, but also within specific relations to organizations and their representatives, curators and other arts professionals (Fraser 1997, p.204, 205)." As a result, the 'specificity of these relations' became what distinguished these projects more than "the physical or temporal specificity of the works themselves" (ibid). This issue links now to the *graying* of site specificity as a result of the continued (and upsurge of) commissioning of site-specific projects for biennials and exhibitions which may lead to two very different outcomes. The first outcome being that of the artwork produced under a strict curatorial framework, a framework, that in terms of discursive site, may in itself become a site of its own, which resonates with Michelle White's concern over the 'collaboration' of the curator. Such a situation, at time a consequence of the contrived, convoluted notion of site specificity, may result in projects that reflect more on the curatorial agenda than on the artist's personal intentions, as alluded to by Andrea Fraser. The second outcome is produced within a situation that allows for an artist to push themselves intrinsically to produce a work that they may not have otherwise had the opportunity to create, one that not only fits within the oeuvre of the artist, but helps to develop their practice. This notion is posited by artist Anri Sala, where he believes

projects such as *Utopia Station* at the 50th Venice Biennial, may act as an inspirational platform for some artists – where the now *fluid* nature of site specificity may result in a more diverse range of works and practices, relationships and outcomes (Sala 2009). In this sense, the role of the curator, and the curatorial agenda or framework with site-specific projects is all the more complex and delicate.

The role of the curator-as-producer in terms of site-specific projects begins, however, before the artist is even invited; the relationship with site now not just between artist and site but between curator and site as well. As Claire Doherty states: "in contrast to the responsibilities of the curator-producer of the artist/concept-led solo project, the curator of the context-specific international exhibition has to engage with a progressive notion of place prior to the selection of artists" (Doherty 2007, p.104). Thus the commissioning model and the curator come to the forefront, as a 'call to arms' a certain agenda is produced by the celebrity/producer curator - this differentiation from former curatorial methods and models is what, in relation to the artist, causes for a flux nature of the artist/curator role with site-specific projects. Doherty bluntly iterates: the curator creates a project, an ideology, a mission, and then chooses the artist to fulfill these notions with the production of an artwork.

As mentioned by Michelle White, the term 'collaboration' is often seen in reference to the site-specific process. However, some curators are not as hesitant about their 'collaborative' role. Michael Brenson, in *The Curator's Moment* (1998) states that after the "focus on Catherine David throughout the one hundred days of her 1997 Documenta X… for the foreseeable future, the ambitions, methodologies, and personal styles of the curators responsible for major international contemporary art exhibitions will be as essential to their content as any artist's work" (Brenson 1998). Since 1998 however, some curators have grown weary of the power of the curatorial prerogative as indicated by Jens Hoffman's 2003 letter to e-flux where he resounds: 'The Next Documenta should be Curated By an Artist'. How then does this complicated role of the curator and the relationship between curator and artist affect the current state of site specificity? This thesis argues that this flux of power and 'collaboration' has led to the *graying* of site-specific practice and is a key factor discussed in the following chapters – in reference to exhibition or biennial as a whole, and to individual projects.

To make the situation all the more complex, it must be discussed that the responsibility of the curator, especially when working with site-specific projects, is not just to the artist nor the institution nor the biennial itself – but also to the place, to the site, to the city. As curators work to empower the city within which they produce the international exhibition or biennial, how does 'place' factor in – do the "ambitious, complex and sophisticated methodologies and structures" of these curatorial aims to relay the importance and value of place and the city as a site of inspiration, as a response to locality, actually result in anything noteworthy, or even respond to place at all (ibid)?

It is clear, with the upsurge of city-centric exhibitions, and the curators who run them, that "the rhetoric of 'place' has become the rallying cry for the curator of the international scattered-site exhibition or biennial" (Doherty 2007, p.101). How then, does the curator affect the current state of site-specific artwork? Site-specific practice is very much related to the responsibilities and aims of the curator, as their agendas set the ideology and infrastructure of biennials and many exhibitions. As commissioner and not simply caretaker, the discussion of the curatorial role in the current state of site specificity helps to understand the dynamics of the results. On the one hand, the curatorial agenda of biennials may enforce a feeling of necessity of site-specific works, and the resulting artworks may seem disingenuous. On the other hand, these initiatives and projects may help inspire artists in ways they did not think possible. Furthermore, the curator himself/herself may act in the *graying* of site specificity with the choice to describe exhibitions as 'nearly' site-specific or by recreated and moving site-specific work from the past for a new exhibition. The curatorial role is a complex one, and will be unpacked in the discussion of each of the examples to follow.

CHAPTER 3: THE BIENNIAL

The upsurge of biennials, referred to as 'biennialization', has resulted in what Hon Hanru attests to be now 300 place-based globally minded art events around the world (Luke, 2011). This proliferation of biennials has created a significant shift in the contemporary art circuit where biennials act as platforms responsible for the shaping of contemporary art. This swell of biennials has led to a further increase in the amount and formats, manifestations and practices, of site-specific art, and in turn, has altered the artist/curator role as described in the previous chapter. The question of the role of site-specific art in the biennial, and its effect on the *graying* state of the practice as a whole, speaks to Claire Doherty's concern in her 2004 article 'Location, Location' written within the similar timeframe of the biennials that will analyzed in this thesis: The 9th Istanbul Biennial (2005), the 3rd Liverpool Biennial (2004) and the 3rd Berlin Biennial (2004). Doherty states: "it seems that the infrastructure and critical language is in place to support the commissioning of context-specific or responsive projects within a biennial framework" but her abundance of questions seem to negate this claim in one fell swoop, leading to an uncertainty on whether the biennial is, in fact, the right space to "encounter the results of the artist's engagement with place" (Doherty 2004). Whether it is or is not, the production of site-specific projects within the biennial are numerous with no end in sight. The issues, then, that surround the production of site-specific art for biennials within the *graying* of site specificity must be discussed with the question of how the roles of the curator and the curatorial conceptual framework of site and place affect the production of site-specific artwork and site-specific curatorial practice within the biennial format. The three biennials will be unpacked, the 9th Istanbul Biennial which was proclaimed a success will be looked at in relation to biennials which were not responded to with such positivity: The 3rd Liverpool Biennial, where the artwork was seen as weak and the 3rd Berlin Biennale where the curatorial agenda was described as suffocating. All three are examples of place-based biennials and will be discussed within the concept of the *graying* state of site specificity through the roles of the curators and their relationship with the production of the works as well as the ways in which the theories of Kwon, Meyer and de Certeau may be applicable.

The 9th Istanbul Biennial

The 9th Istanbul Biennial in 2005 was seen as a turning point for the Istanbul Biennial itself and for the biennial format as a whole. Founded in 1987 by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts to bolster the positive characteristics of Turkey, the Istanbul Biennial is an example of the 'Third World' art biennials that sprang up in the late 1980s and early 1990s, 'peripheral' biennials that were founded as a means to confront and transpose of their then recent political problems, acting as platforms for non-Western artists to introduce their work to the international circuit "by forcing the art world to change its traditional trajectories" (Enwezor 1997). The curatorial frameworks of the first installments, in line with the trend of politicizing art that was so prominent in the 1990s, connected directly to the geographic and historic entity of Istanbul in attempts to showcase the creativity that was emerging from the country and its surroundings after the collapse of communism. The 1997 biennial, curated by Rosa Martinez, paralleled a common shift found in art practice worldwide, as the curatorial framework became more prominent with an "emphasis on the curators' personal preferences and choices" (ibid). As a result, a certain detachment from the location occurred and the city of Istanbul was depicted "in an isolated, even narcissistic way, romanticized and aestheticized as a site of passion, beauty and otherness", which played into the desire of the local officials to promote Istanbul as a 'major tourist attraction' in response to the significant economic growth of Turkey (ibid). Rather than taking the opportunity to explore the cultural and social effects of a newly booming metropolis, the biennial focused on the long-existing clichés such as the city's architectural minarets and domes. This mindset persisted until 2003, when Dan Cameron was appointed curator of the 8th biennial. In an attempt to "correct this romanticized image by injecting a set of documentary-style video works that dealt directly with political issues" he titled the biennial 'Poetic Justice', indicating an effort towards a more balanced approach between decorative work and socially charged art (ibid). However, the choice to utilize the Hagia Sophia as one of the exhibition venues signified that the balance was not fully realized (ibid).

It is with this historical framework that the 9th Istanbul Biennial was produced. Charles Esche, when appointed curator, quickly stated he would only partake with Vasif Kortun as co-curator. Both curators had a solid background in producing biennials.

Esche, the director of the van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Netherlands had co-curated the Gwangju Biennale in Korea with Hou Hanru and Song Wang in 2002. Vasif Kortun, a native of Istanbul and founding director of both the Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center and the Projec4L Istanbul of Contemporary Art, first appeared as curator of the Istanbul Biennial in 1992. Inviting Charles Esche and Vasif Kortun to curate the 9th Biennial was seen as "heralding a more sober approach" as "Esche has been a leading figure in the re-politicization of contemporary art practice in Europe, and Kortun had already produced a wide-ranging criticism of the previous biennials" (Kosova 2005). Their major structural changes resulted in a conceptual framework that hoped to be a shift, a great change in the biennial format and this chance for change was realized in many different manners. Simply titled 'Istanbul' the 9th iteration of the biennial no longer found its home in the sites of the historic monuments. The use of old buildings cliché and kitsch, Esche and Kortun reflected the constant process of Istanbul remaking itself with the utilization of 'vernacular' architecture that echoed this flux of identity. They chose "relatively recent buildings and sites that [were] either domestic or associated with contemporary trade and production;" sites utilized by the locals, rather than ones generally filled with tourists: apartment blocks, old storehouses, a former tobacco depository, a shop, a gallery, an office building, a theater. The simple title in combination with these every-day sites emphasized the curators' reference to the urban location – 'the real streets, the real buildings and – the imaginative charge that this city represents for the world', which together promised "a distinctive approach to the burgeoning phenomenon of international biennials, one that is rooted in the place it is shown while always looking out at what is relevant for the rest of the world" (Esche and Kortun, 2005). Fifty-three artists were invited, fewer than in past years as to focus more on each individual. Artists who the curators 'believed in', many of whom came from the regions around Istanbul, such as the Middle East, Balkans and Central Asia, and, as a result, had already established their own personal connection with the city (Esche and Kortun, 2005c).

Half of the artists were then invited for 2-6 month long residencies in Istanbul to create new work that would "address the sensibility of the city itself" (Esche 2005b). In this way the "exhibition inevitably buil[t] up along a process of research that shape[d] itself as scattered parts of a puzzle that [came] together as a biennial" where the

geography came second to the 'intimate relationships' that were built with the city through the residency format that would hopefully also be experienced by the visitor (Esche and Kortun, 2005c). As a countervailing force, and to avoid the risk of essentialism, the other half showed work that contrasted "with the environment and the condition of Istanbul, telling other stories or experiences from other parts of the international imagination" (Kortun 2005b). As a result, the 'Istanbul' and 'Not-Istanbul' created a 'deliberate contrast', and "a way to stimulate thoughts about one city through representations of another" (Esche and Kortun, 2005a). The biennial was then a means to "emphasise the specific and singular within a work of art by relating it to the time and place where the work is done" the curators aware that some works may be difficult to 'consume' because they "emerg[ed] following a residency and therefore out of a specific set of conditions," personal, geographic and economic (Esche 2005c).

The residency program and focus on site-specific response projects were joined by another new concept: Istanbul Positionings. Noted as a 'crucial component', the intention was to "highlight specific local and international constellations within and beyond the city (Esche and Kortun, 2005). The Hospitality Zone, which showed artist initiatives, became the location of a magazine office, international student workshops, group discussion and an archive of contemporary art books. The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven displayed existing works from the collection in dialogue with the history of the Biennial. The intention of the curators was to "disappear the exhibition into the city fabric" which "came as a result of the transformation where spaces of scale that we first selected were absorbed into privatization and such" (Esche and Kortun 2005c). Realigning the pace of the exhibition so that it slowed to the speed of the city itself, the curators connected the various sites with different passages, hoping that the biennial would find itself outside of the different locations and result in a longer-term effect.

Not 'indexed' to the pervious biennial models, the biennial was seen as a major success by most of the art circuit. Claire Doherty (2004), went so far as to state that with the 9th Istanbul Biennial the "biennial may just have come of age." The different curatorial approach of Esche and Kortun was noted in relation to the success of the biennial: "…their curatorial gambit was marked by a cautious and considered methodology…" their "proposition signals a retort to the accusation that biennials operate

merely as stopovers on the international circuit for the frequent-flyer tribe of artists and art cognoscenti and that they have little or no lasting impact on the inhabitants or on the cultural life of their host cities" (Doherty, 2004). She refers this strategy to a "long line of scattered-site international exhibitions over the past two decades" that preceded the upsurge of biennials and which were "governed by the organising principle of place" (ibid). Events such as 'Sculpture Projects in Münster' which occurs every 10 years – what Hans Ulich Obrist noted at the Bergen conference, 'To Biennial or Not to Biennial', as the 'right' type of event for site-specificity.

The residences follow this mindset; longer-term engagement may be a constructive way to work within the *graying* of site specificity, where the fluidity of practice is anchored in a built relationship between artist and site. What furthermore allowed for this built relationship was the distinct open and relaxed curatorial agenda that Carroll and Williams (2006) describe as "obvious but not overbearing" and Jan Verwoert goes as far a to express as "clearly anti-monumentalist", which resulted in what the co-editor of Frieze magazine, Jörg Heiser (2005) depicts as an event "low-key, free-range and full of potential." This is not to say that the curatorial framework was flawless, as T.J Demos (2005) notes: "the curatorial strategy ran into trouble" due to "its dependence on the legibility of the disjunctions set up between exhibition venues and the spaces of everyday life" where visitors "encountered a culture shock" upon exiting the venues resulting in an experience of the "sometimes-gaping cultural divisions between genteel art-viewing and the drudgery of manual labor in a developing city, which hopefully prompt[ed] introspection and self-estrangement" but which, Demos notes, curiously lacked "mediation between the two irreconcilable zones" which "highlighted the rather conventional object-based appearance of the majority of artworks, nearly all of which were safely contained behind walls."

As open and relaxed as the curatorial agenda sought to be, enacting the possible fluidity with the *graying* of site specificity, curator Berin Golonu (2005) states: "the curatorial theme that pervaded the exhibition imposed a utopian promise that seemed to constrain the creative process" calling the residency program a "predictable prescription to yield favorable results" that "failed because many of the pieces came across as hastened attempts to comprehend and comment on the trials and rewards of life in

Istanbul." A reflection that posits the exact opposite reaction that the longer-term residencies hoped would be produced. With the disjunction of sites and the still-noticeable impact of the curatorial agenda (no matter how open), the 9th Biennial, in all its successes still falls pray to both the positive and negative implications of the *graying* state of site-specific art and practice.

Whilst the curators attested to supporting "the response of the artists in whichever direction they went" the 'site-sensitive directive' was still part of the 'curatorial level' and these residences were a means to advance the curatorial agenda, or as Carroll and Williams (2006) bluntly state: "The curatorial premise was the site." The curatorial then also established a sense of 'site' or place, before the artists even produced their works – an issue that was noted in the previous chapter. The curators presented Istanbul "first as a physical place: Third World, Islamic, bridging southern Europe and 'Asia', and as a contrast to northern Europe" secondly the city was represented as 'central to a region' with the invitation to artists from the surrounding areas, responded to by artists through the contradiction to this presentation or by standing with it. Finally, the third representation, a " focus on the political, social and (built) environment of such a place" was "made very relevant, fresh and immediate by the number of site-specific pieces by artists coming to make work especially for the biennial" many of which were made by young artists, who were "willing and able to spend the time and focus on a project like this" (ibid). This multifaceted approach to site further emphasizes the 'unhinging' of site posited by Kwon and the *graying* state of site specificity.

Although Demos reflects on the space between sites as jarring in contrast to the exhibitions, the sites existed in such close geographic proximity that the visitor was able to walk from site-to-site. Aided by the commission of what was deemed needed "visual devices" to "signal the locations of the exhibit", Gruppo A12 created a "simple system of signage" by painting certain parts of the façade of each exhibition building in one color (Esche 2005)**.** Differentiating these structures from the rest of the urban landscape, these sites became 'space as practised place' by both Gruppo A12, the artists work inside, and the visitors, who were not only able to act within the sites of the artwork, but between each site, bringing to mind the theorist's initial example of the street and its pedestrians and Massey's concept of a network of moments. Michael Oren, notes, however, that there

was no reference to these theorists or others in the Biennial's critical reader, "nor did the curators seem interested in the history of site-specific art projects where the site had been an urban complex" which he speculates could be an illustration of their theoretical stance on the matter (Oren, 2005). Their disconnect, so to speak, from the history of site-specific practice, or rather, their undefined stance on site specificity illustrates both the fluid nature and the muddling of site specificity in its current *graying* state. The muddling existing in the lack of definition, the fluidity found with their "diversifying its conception of its site," to "posit Istanbul as a relay between locality and globality, where globalization was encountered as a lived process mediating between a real place and the forces that move through it, between one's actual location and the discourses that determine or are inflected by it" where 'space is practised place' in a network of discourse and moments (Demos 2005).

This framework, as a whole, led to a diverse range of works and "site-specific installations [that] varied from the lightest of often humorous interventions to highly elaborate and slick (and expensive) presentations" many presented in the form of a video, the abundance of which the curators were not necessarily aiming for, Esche stating in an interview with the New York Times: "…people wanted to articulate something, and video tends to facilitate that" (Smith 2005). Mario Rizzi's video *Murat and Ismail* (2005) [Figure 4] "grew out of Rizzi's three month residency in Istanbul" and received mixed reviews (Esche 2005). The 80-minute film portrayed a father-son run cobbler shop. Recording the daily lives of father Ismail and his son Murat at the shop, the artist's interest in the filming of this family "came from his observation of the different value systems" that the father and son represented (ibid). Golonu (2005) describes the work as coming across as a "hastened attempts to comprehend and comment on the trials and rewards of life in Istanbul," a result of a "predictable prescription" which had failed. Ten minutes into the film, he felt he would rather be outside on the streets engaging with the people of Istanbul, rather than watching the mundane rituals documented in the film

Figure 4: Freeze-frame of Mario Rizzi, *Murat and Ismail,* 2005

(ibid). Sabine Vogel (2005), however, felt that the film, of all the works in the biennial, most convincingly portrayed these 'other realities', and that the video, "somewhere between fact and fiction…reveals the key feature of present-day Istanbul: how rapid changes in society provoke uncertainty about values, the present, and the future". This focus, this importance on 'realities' is issued by the curators (cited in their aim earlier), the artist, and the art critic and beckons the question – what is 'reality' and how does the production of site specificity, with its influence on 'locational' identities affect 'reality', is a query that ties in with the notion of the film, a window into two lives, presenting a 'space as practised place', not so much by the artist, although the filming of these lives could be seen as practice, but by the people themselves.

As representative of Rizzi's discursive concerns, the film is an example of just how site-specific a video response can be and what the result of a generally fluid manifestation of site-specific curatorial practice may result in, and finds itself, however significant, somewhat in Kwon's third paradigm and Meyer's notion of 'functional' site. The question then becomes, what truly makes this work site-specific? Under the guise of the 'documentary' what differentiates this film from others that record the lives of real people? It is thus that the biennial itself is an indicator of site specificity, where the works produced within its framework are almost automatically considered site-specific, and in this case, site specificity is further emphasized due to residency of the artist in Istanbul and the representation of a certain 'reality'. The question that must be raised is: was the situation of the biennial an *artificial* format within which the work was created, resonating with the reflections made by Gonolu, or did the residency and biennial act as an inspiration-point for the artist? Thus the commissioned, invited, aspect of the biennial becomes so intriguing, but perhaps the opportunity to create a site-specific work without the imperious curatorial agenda looming, may in fact produce work that is 'space as practised place' and utilize the fluidity of the flux state of site specificity to its advantages.

The 3rd Liverpool Biennial

Whilst the 9th Istanbul was deemed a success, critics hailing it as an "articulation of pleasure and politics, a confident world view and unpretentious sense of local place," the 3rd installment of the Liverpool Biennial in 2004 was "tempered by the alleged degree of "parochialism and a repetitive riffing (or even an unreflective capitalization) on certain politically or culturally charged episodes from the city's history" and the 3rd Berlin Biennale of the same year was criticized as falling flat, "the effort to embrace life in all its facets quite often resulted in metaphorical kitsch" as the curator's "didactic approach left one wishing for more than just a bigger budget" (Eller 2004; Allen 2004).

The Liverpool Biennial was founded in 1998 by James Moores as a program of projects and exhibitions meant to "lead to a rediscovery of the city…the cultural organisations in Liverpool work together in partnership to create an unparalleled context for the presentation of contemporary art and culture" commissioning and presenting "art of international quality that enriches the lives of people in our communities" (Liverpool Biennial 1999). The largest festival of international art in the United Kingdom, the site of the city is deemed to be at the core of its mission, "with the principle of the exhibition being composed primarily of commissioned new work" shown in a range of art an non-art spaces which in combination with the new work "ensures the exhibition is embedded in the city, and remains unique among Biennials globally" (ibid). The biennial's first two installments were received with mixed reviews, the first retorted by Jonathan Jones (2000) as "an attempt to blast Liverpool to the forefront of international art," but "instead, it made international art look provincial… the whole presence of art in the city felt like pretentious window dressing, compared to the city's deeper need for cultural and social renewal." With the second installment, "two years later the town still has its troubles" but "seemed a bit more tuned to the city's history" (Morton, 2002). The third round of the biennial was formatted as sets of fours, 4 sections: the exhibition *International 04* with the commissioning of '100%' of the works, *Independent* which consisted of multiple exhibitions throughout the city as a counterpoint to the *International*, a show of student work titled *Bloomburg New Contemporaries 2004,* and the John Moores painting prize; and four 'research' curators: Sabine Breitwieser, Yu Yeon Kim, Cuauhtémoc Medina and Apinan Poshyanand who invited the artists who were then "supported to produce new

artworks by a home team of curators at Tate Liverpool, FACT, Bluecoat and Open Eye Galle" (Doherty 2004).

As the residencies of the 9th Istanbul Biennial acted as a distinctive format, the *International* at the Liverpool biennial is seen as the unique place-bound agency of the event where artists were "invited to explore the city as a context for the show, and then developed their works through dynamic relationships with the organisations and communities in which they were set" (Liverpool Biennial 2004). As a means to differentiate itself from other biennials, *International 04* was developed by local curators with international artists commissioned to create new, site-specific artwork, and as the director of the biennial states "rather than the curator being totally in control of the exhibition, we placed artists at the centre of it, and allowed them to create their new comment in the context in which they are being asked to exhibit" (Luke 2011).

For the third biennial, however, the 48 artists invited to create these biennial-specific projects were chosen "on the basis of their practices' 'affinity for […] the culture of Liverpool'" which led to the criticism of the biennial, and the characterization of the work as parochial and 'repetitive riffing (Morton 2004). There is little discussion otherwise of the curatorial framework, leading one to believe that the 'researchers' were unable to attune themselves with the city if Liverpool. A notion iterated in the review of the site-specific works produced, which when unsuccessful were pretexts for exploitation, and when more impressive were successful due to their lack of relationship with the site itself – an oxymoron for work commissioned as 100% site-specific. Morton recalls that "more impressive were the works in the *International* that drew not on Liverpool's particularity but on the idea that it's an any-place, replete with the same systems of social and cultural coercion as every other city in the developed world" and that the "Biennial was at its best when it wore Liverpool either lightly…or not at all" (ibid). Searle (2004) contributes to this notion, stating "that the artists who appear in biennials nowadays often produce work in response to the social conditions of the location, work that makes some attempt to engage the specifics of place and history, the dynamics of context" but that, in the case of the case of the 3rd Liverpool Biennial, "social engagement doesn't necessarily mean engaging art: it can mean boring art" with the work of the invited artists resulting in 'attempts to be relevant' in the forms of interviews, films, works referencing the city's

history of slave trade, and jarring projected images. In the end, although *International 04* professed to "address and empower place as having value" Seale (2004a) motions that "all the hand-wringing about social relevance and context stands for little when you are faced with the giant, garish inflatable flowers hanging over the concourse in Lime Street Station and Peter Johansson's prefabricated flat-pack kit house at Pier Head, which is painted red, inside and out, and blares Abba's Dancing Queen at full volume." And then there were the crude Yoko Ono photographs of women's crotches and breasts, a tribute to her mother which caused controversy and which Yoko Ono considered a site-specific contribution by deciding to present it in Liverpool when she suddenly "remembered how John loved his mother, and it choked me up. So this one in Liverpool will be my tribute to John" (Ward 2004).

The Liverpool Biennial embodies the unsuccessful results of a non-existent curatorial framework when four 'researchers' were appointed as developers of the biennial – and the disjointed results that came from the choosing of artists by the four researchers and then the production of the works as a process of the artist and local curators. Unlike with Istanbul, Liverpool had no framework for the artists to work within to create their site-specific projects, and although the residency program of the former biennial was a curatorial tool, situated into the environment of a relaxed overarching curatorial agenda, the fluidity of the *graying* of site specificity was revealed by the works produced. The projects that resulted in the *International 04* of the Liverpool Biennial were most successful when they were the least site-specific, or rather, least relevant to the site of the city and culture of Liverpool. This poses a distinct issue – as the works were disjointed from the site both in terms of the physical place and the discursively of subject matter. What generally allows for a powerful and substantial site-specific project, whether it be the intangible link between site and artwork, or the discursive economies within the work and artist agenda, or some form in-between, is that these entities exist. For the representation of successful projects to be those that did not exhibit these notions, puts these works outside of the paradigms and definitions of Kwon and Meyer (no matter what their leanings may be, whether phenomenological, institutional or discursive), because the site is not just 'unhinged', but excused.

This is not to say that all works were failed attempts. As 'space as practised place' in a set of network moments, the work of New York based artist Jill Magid, in which she worked with the Liverpool police surveillance department to place cameras around the city, created "a compelling piece that work[ed] not only as a personal diary of her experience, but also as a portrait of the city" (Moore 2004). With *Evidence Locker* (2004) [Figure 5], the artist, over a 31 day period, wore a bright red trench and high boots around the city, eyes closed, guided by "the radio-relayed voice of an avuncular policeman ('left a bit, love, now right a bit') watching her every move on CCTV" (ibid). The resulting footage was screened during the biennial in a gallery with 5 chairs, representing the 5 officers who worked with her, and a series of diaries – compiled paperwork filled out by individuals who had been assaulted or mugged used by the police force as they watch the camera footage for evidence of the crimes. Moss asserts: "Magid's work slots neatly into place at a moment when many new pairs of eyes are focusing in on the city" (ibid). This example is one of "quiet gestures and imperceptible interventions, remedial actions and shifts in the status quo, which resist the representative tendency of much biennial-specific art," illustrating that even in a biennial that was criticized for its overall shortcomings in the wake of the *graying* of site specificity, strong artworks were still produced as the result of the multifaceted, fluid derivations of the practice (Doherty, 2004).

Figure 5: Freeze-frame of Jill Magid, *Evidence Locker*. 2004

The 3rd Berlin Biennale

The 3rd Berlin Biennale had a its own indications of the *graying* of site-specificity. With Ute Meta Bauer as its artistic director, the biennial showed 50 artists at the KW Institute of Contemporary Art and Martin-Gropius-Bau. With financial difficulties in the past resulting in the biennial occurring triennially, the 'central concern' of the third biennial "aimed for the creation of a temporal space of discourse by fostering connections between local players of art and knowledge production" with Berlin as the "frame of

reference in which to present a broad international spectrum of visual art, architecture, film, performance, sound art and urban interventions, reflecting on issues of site-specificity, particularly in terms of comparing Berlin's idiosyncratic topography to similar conditions in other European metropoles" (Bauer 2004). Bauer, who had recently acted as co-curator for Documenta II, "single-handedly managed to epitomize--and to extinguish--the curatorial style that blossomed [there]…Any lingering doubts about the documenta(ry) approach…were not only confirmed in Berlin but also written so large that the artworks in the show ended up creating a monument to this curatorial model while simultaneously announcing its obsolescence" (Allen 2004). And this seems to be the general criticism shared by most of the third Berlin Biennial – with Bauer's (arguably) overly academic approach, the "trouble with this biennial is not just that is it at times wretchedly installed, and frequently baffling when it isn't merely inconsequential; the good stuff gets drowned, and a lot seems dragged in under the guise of relevance," the curatorial hand is just too stifling, the works 'wretchedly installed', a curatorial manipulation to be discussed in a moment (Searle 2004b).

The biennial was developed around five of what Bauer terms 'hubs': Urban Locations, Migration. Fashions and Scenes, Sonic Scapes and Other Cinemas, which were "supposed to work like relay stations between the artists' contributions…installed at irregular intervals within the course of the exhibition" (Eller 2004). What Verwoert (2007a) terms "conceptually a very intriguing idea" he furthers, "did not quite become clear to the unsuspecting visitor, however. An installation is an installation, after all." Allen adds "the real hub was Berlin, whose history was connected in an often unconvincing way with the histories of other points on the globe" (Allen 2004). The work of 50 artists, many of whom had spent time or lived in Berlin were intended "to represent the heterogeneity of the German capital, a thriving city with a huge influx of immigrant artists" however what resulted was the biennial "educating Berlin about its multiculturalism by creating an almost uniform surface…taking hardly any individual positions that would disrupt the curatorial system" (Eller 2004). It is Bauer's curatorial system that illustrates the role of the curatorial in the negative aspects of the *graying* of site-specific practice and art production. Allen, lamenting that Bauer's "didactic approach" was a "a twofold selection criterion" that seemed "to hang over every work

like a death sentence" argues that the first 'criterion' that "art must teach something, ideally about Berlin, …reduced art to information," while the second criterion "art must deal with the 'other'…risked reducing politics to cliché" and "led to an appearance of political engagement without any actual context" (Allen 2004).

Whilst this biennial was as place-bound as Istanbul and Liverpool, there was not a similar push to commission site-specific artworks. The lack of site-specific commissions illustrates the curatorial hand in the creation of site-specific works: placing artwork made years earlier in different contexts as site-specific within the format of the Berlin Biennale. Verwoert describes the Biennial as 'simply too controlled' and that the 'show' 'simply never catches fire' - mainly because the dynamic energy of the individual works is never unleashed. With this discursive approach, which the hubs emphasized, many critics argued that the individual works became mere ciphers for the particular discourse they were filed under, where "the exhibition deal[t] in topics but [made] no statements", statements one would assume would result from the didactic approach Allen so vehemently objects to – illustrating that Bauer's curatorial framework was criticized from all angles, so much so that her didactic approach made 'no statements' – elements one would think would be mutually exclusive, a didactic approach should, for all intents and purposes, *make* statements (Verwoert 2007). But perhaps the 'wretchedly installed' (read manipulated into site specificity) works resulted in a disjointed product where the didactic notions of the curator made no statements but presented themselves solely as topics, where the objects had little room to breathe independently.

Perhaps the works themselves would have made more of an impact had they not been under the strict curatorial agenda of Bauer. However they were, and thus the works fall into one of the newer constructs of site specificity, having been *placed* by the curator to be *presented* as site-specific, as a reference to the city of Berlin, and not necessarily created by the artist with that intention. Thus, it is difficult to discuss these works in terms of Meyer and Kwon because the works are site-specific as a result of the action of the curator– an example of how these theories may no longer be viable in these certain manifestations of site specificity which result from the curatorial turn, a notion which will be discussed further in the next chapter with the exhibition *Sturtevant: Image over Image* (2012) at the Moderna museet in Stockholm, Sweden.

CHAPTER 4: THE EXHIBITION

As the number of biennials has risen, the sheer size of the exhibition has as well, as have the formats within which the exhibition is produced. The following examples are different in format and site specificity allowing for a dynamic discussion of the *graying* of site-specific artwork and practices that have resulted within the exhibition in terms of the multifaceted, at times fluid and at other time complicated and muddled, state of site specificity. With the exhibition *Sturtevant: Image over Image* (2012) at the Moderna museet in Stockholm, Sweden the affects of language about and due to the *graying* of site-specificity will be discussed. *Terramare,* the 2010 multi-site exhibition in Avignon of Miquel Barceló's work is a example of the 'range' of site-specific artwork and practice that the language in the *Sturtevant* exhibition introduces, and exemplifies the multifaceted nature of the contemporary artist commissioned to produce site-specific work. Furthermore, the exhibition format draws clear parallels to that of the biennial and brings together the *graying* of site specificity present in both formats. The multi-site, multi-artist, commissioned site-specific project *Contemporary Art in Historic Places* produced in the UK will be analyzed to better understand the trend of the commissioning of artists to regenerate historic sites – a practice that has only become more popular with the *graying* state of site specificity and that is present both in exhibitions and biennials. Lastly the practice of installation as exhibition will be examined – specifically the trend of the static site and itinerant, rotating artist which will be discussed with the Unilever series at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, where invited artists create a site-specific installation work in relation to the large hall – another manifestation of the commission of the artist into an allocated space, and an interesting analysis given the diversity of artists that have been chosen.

Sturtevant: Image over Image

The language of an exhibition in catalogs and websites is an important mode of communication for curators and institutions. No longer simply utilized for the wall text or the printed catalog, the language of an exhibition, written by the curator, has become all

the more crucial in the experience economy. Thus, when language is undefined in the utilization of the term 'site-specific' a *graying* occurs both in the presentation and in the exhibition itself. This was exemplified in the 2012 exhibition *Sturtevant*: *Image over Image* at the Moderna museet in Sweden. A collection of 30 of Sturtevant's works, an American artist known for her keen and precise replications of other artists' work, the exhibition is described: "The presence of Sturtevant's works becomes *nearly site-specific* in six of the 18 rooms that are usually dedicated to the permanent collection" (modernamuseet.org 2012). How, by any means, is a work *nearly* site-specific and what does it mean?

To understand this notion of works that are not entirely site-specific but *nearly,* one must first recognize the relationship between the museum and the works Sturtevant replicates. Sturtevant replicated first paintings, and now primarily videos, generally before the originator becomes famous. She is not, nor has been defined as a site-specific artist in practice or oeuvre. Artists Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg appreciated Sturtevant's work before most others did – Rauschenberg asking her to paint a work of his after it was stolen, Andy Warhol exclaiming "Ask Sturtevant" when interviewed about the process of his work. Moderna museet then, was the first to have a retrospective of Andy Warhol, for which the institution reproduced a selection of Warhol's *Brillo* boxes that were later sold at auction. Made specifically for this exhibition, Sturtevant created Duchamp's *Fresh Widows* [Figure 6], mounted by the curators next to an original from Moderna museet's collection, which, "befitting the exhibition's theme, is actually a copy made by art critic and museum director Ulf Linde in 1963 but signed by Duchamp in 1964" (Lindblad 2012). These works then, and the other pieces the artist made specifically for the exhibition, are presented by the museum as 'nearly' site-specific.

Figure 6: installation image of Sturtevant, *Duchamp's Fresh Widows*, 2012; Ulf Linde, *Duchamp's Fresh Windows,* 1963

To say that these works are 'nearly' site-specific is to assert that any artist shown in an institution that has particular ties to the artists' oeuvre or history could be, in turn, site-specific. Or, that, any work made specifically for a certain exhibit, could be, 'nearly' site-specific as well. Not only is the work now defined in ambiguous terms, but the decision to package these works as 'nearly' site-specific then presents an issue for the practice of site specificity as a whole. The phrase however, and ones similar to it, indicate that the practice of site specificity, and the works created today, whether within or outside of the traditional practice, do not fall into Kwon's defined paradigms – works may not be fully site-specific. To define a work as having a certain site specificity when the work is in fact, not fully defined as site-specific, is difficult. In this way the work may seem more site-responsive or collection-responsive than anything, terms that Kwon iterates, have developed due to the oversaturation and abundance of site-specific works and practice. These phrases, however, were not what the curator decided to use – site-specific, whether it be fully or nearly, still carries a certain weight, a 'criticality' that is desirable, and curator Fredrik Liew is not alone in his decision to do utilize it.

In 2009, The Bridge Progressive Arts Initiative in Charlottesville, Virginia, described the collaborative installation 'Empty Nest' by Sebastijan Jemec and Jocelyn Spaar – a work consisting of "projections and light and sound that explores the objectification and spatialization of memory and human presence" as "somewhat-site specific…constantly being redefined" (thebridgepai.com 2009). In the discussion of Javier Téllez's work, ArtNexus describes the topics within Téllez's works as having "somewhat site-specific variables", and in describing Pete Goldlust's 2005 'Polyponesian Tuberofil Mangrove' installation, Gallery Revisited states that "it was *somewhat site specific* in that it was inspired by a futuristic Chinatown (where the gallery was located) & included various ephemera found in the neighborhood shops" (Ramos 2011; galleryrevisited 2005). *Almost* site-specific is also used by art critic David Ulrichs. In describing the work of Welsh artist Bethan Huws, he states: "The in-depth research into the various words, objects and materials that she employs often incorporates the space in which they are shown, making them *almost site-specific"* (Ulrchis 2011). Kimberly Bradley for the New York Times, described the Berlin Biennale in terms that reflect the issues presented in the previous chapter: "eight percent of the art was specially

commissioned; the other 20 percent is *as site-specific as possible"* (Bradley 2008). In these examples the practice of the curator enacts these works as 'somewhat' site-specific. Curators and art critics, however, are not the sole prescribers to this type of language. Artist Barry Le Va, in his 1993 interview with Nike Kaye, is asked if his work could be described as site-specific. Le Va answers:

> Some of the work definitely was. With certain specific pieces – the felt pieces – I would say they were *almost* site-specific in the sense that they were done just there, they weren't in the studio then brought to the space. The boundaries are set up by the space. There are certain kinds of logical or illogical decisions I have to make up for the space. But in terms of activating or existing in a space – they probably do both… in some cases there definitely was a symbolic relationship between the space and the work. That would not exist unless the space was like this or that (Kaye 1996, p.50).

For Le Va then, the determining factors of the site specificity of his work is in the action of creating the pieces *within* the space, the 'boundaries' of the works a result of the space itself – a very different notion of site specific determinants than with the work in *Sturtevant*.

It could be debated that these terms, 'nearly', 'somewhat', 'almost' in reference to *how* site-specific a work is, could be understood as manifestation of the *fluidity* that results in the *graying* of site specificity, the gradients, so to speak, that allow for a more open concept of what being site-specific entails, highlighting that the work created today, in this *graying* state, is in fact no longer black or white, no longer site-specific or not, the artist no longer working solely within the practice or outside of it, and that, furthermore, the site-specific, whether fully or 'nearly', still carries a certain 'criticality' – that the work was done with purpose, that it somehow heightens the curatorial agenda and the exhibition design – even if the work is just 'nearly' site-specific – generally at the designation of the curator. In fact, the entire concept of 'nearly' or 'almost' site-specific seems very curatorial in its core, a reflection of curatorial versus artistic practice, raising again, the question of the role of the curator in the current production of the different manifestations of site-specific work. This thesis doesn't argue that art shouldn't be described as 'almost' or 'nearly' site-specific, just that, the utilization of these terms is a clear indication of the argument that the state of site specificity is, in fact, *graying*.

Terramare

The 2010 multi-site exhibition *Terramare* in Avignon, France of Majorcan artist Miquel Barceló is a unique example of the parallels between the 'blockbuster' or 'mega'-exhibition and the biennial. The exhibition, developed, by the city, with the artist chosen after the sites were determined, consists of a solo-show of Barceló's work in three distinctive locations across Avignon. *Terramare* is additionally intriguing in that each site of the exhibition presents examples of what one might call a 'range' of site-specificity and curatorial/artist governance now found with the *graying* of site specificity. Additionally, Barceló is an example of a contemporary artist whose oeuvre is not based in site-specific practice, but who illustrates the nomadic tendencies of the present-day artist and has been invited to multiple biennials and commissioned to create two very significant and permanent site-specific installations. Furthermore, the term site-specific is not used in the literature related to the exhibition. So, whilst site specificity certainly exists in the core mission of the exhibition, it is not relayed as so to the audience in such certain terms. Unlike in the previous discussion of the decision of the curator to use the phrase *nearly site-specific* to describe some of Sturtevant's work, the term here is nonexistent. *Terramare* then allows this thesis to look at the process and multifaceted aspects of the exhibition format in terms of the *graying* of site-specific art and practice.

Just as so many biennials come to fruition with the help of a city entity, *Terramare* was the 'experiment' or the brainchild, of Marie-Josée Roig, the mayor of Avignon. In the opening section of the very large exhibition catalog, Roig states: "Up until today, no single artist has ever been asked to span his work across the entire city, in three such prestigious venues as the Palais des Papes, the Musée du Petit Palais and the Collection Lambert", Three sites that not only have a strong history themselves, but display a range of Barceló's work, both site-specific and not (Roig 2010). The work at the Palais des Papes allows for a look at installations that were both made specifically for the space, and those, created earlier, that fit in with the aesthetic of the large hall. At Collection Lambert, the works range in media and are displayed in the more traditional manner. The Museum du Petit Palais then, acts as example of artist as curator – and the three together link the different variables of the event to the *graying* of site specificity. Displaying 'quasi-promotional agendas' with the "appropriation of site-specific art for

the valorization of urban identities' in this case, Avignon, even Mézil offers: "She [Roig] made every effort so that this utopia would become a reality" (Kwon 2004, p.54; Mézil 2010, p.25). Roig felt, that to "launch such a enterprise", there needed to be an artist "who was attracted to Avignon's landmarks and also wanted to dream there" (ibid). The artist chosen: Miquel Barceló, not only has a history with Avignon, but has a personal relationship with the Lambert Collection, as Yvon Lambert was the first gallerist to represent the artist. With this understanding of the initial processes of the exhibition in place, the three sites will now be unpacked to discuss the range of, and *graying* of site specificity within and across each location with the examination of each exhibition in terms of the theories of Kwon, Meyer and de Certeau and the roles of Barceló and the curators.

Chief Curator and Director of the Lambert Collection, Eric Mézil, is quick to state the pragmatic nature of the organization of *Terramare*, deterring against the idea that, "the dividing of the exhibitions into three sites could have a poetic genesis for the future exegesis of our future histories" (ibid p.26). The initial decisions then, for what works would be presented in which space were determined by the conditions of the locations – the Great Chapel at the Palais des Papes could not adequately house paintings because it lacked the necessary museum conditions. Therefore, the work at the Palais des Papes consisted of terracotta and plaster. Palais des Papes is *the* historical focal point of Avignon, and therefore, is also the biggest tourist attraction. Construction for the building began in 1252 CE and in 1309 it became the residence of the Popes, it is one of the most important medieval gothic representations of architecture in Europe (Palais-des-papes.com). Holding relics, tombs and many wall paintings from centuries past, the palace is also known for its "tradition of displaying major, internationally-renowned art exhibitions" (ibid).

Barceló's work for *Terramare* at the Palais des Papes was displayed in the Great Chapel and throughout the surrounding rooms. The works within the Great Chapel were installed with large clay canvases on the walls, and platforms of sculpture at different heights across the vast floor. Although the works were chosen pragmatically, since canvas and paint could not be conserved in such an environment, the works seemed at home in the space, the colors and materials feeling as if they belonged in the

overwhelmingly cavernous stone hall. Still though, *Artforum* writer Julia Langbein (2010) has a point – "the humility of the Spanish artist's material in this context translates as merely trivial." The presentation, in fact, was not solely pragmatic, as the holes left from Picasso's last exhibition that still punctured the walls were reused by Barceló to hang his works. It is the installation work in the other rooms, the masks particularly, that raise the question of site specificity – and the *grayness* that is so frequently seen in similar exhibitions. In Mézil's description of the work: "the ceramic masks melt into the stone, stick to the recumbent statues like cockles on the rocks at low tide: unconscious imitation, osmosis or camouflage, you have the impression that they have been there forever" (Mézil 2010, p.26). Barceló covered the popes and cardinals with fish, a symbol long used to represent Christ, and for one pope in particular, who exclaimed, 'You have elected a donkey!' after his nomination, Barceló covered his face with a long eared mask. And still other tombs are covered with masks that feel skeletal, rotting, very much melting into the faces of these stone tombs [Figure 7] as Mézil depicts, and in a corner there a skull shaped sculpture nestled into the crevice above a doorway. The issue is that although these masks are presented as site-specific, they were not all produced with this exhibition in mind – some in fact, are years old.

Figure 7: Miquel Barceló, Left - *Masque moi tres jeune,* 1999; Right - *Masque nez pointu* 1999, installation at the Popes Palace, 2005

The exhibition language never utilizes the term 'site-specific' in its work, but the initial reaction of the visitor is that these works had to be made for this space – an 'assumed' site specificity', they just fit so well – only to walk over to the object label and realize the piece was fired in 2007. Whilst with Sturtevant the term was utilized

questionably, here it is not at all – and the visitor becomes confused, was this mask made specifically for this pope, this face? The work then becomes difficult to analyze with the theories of Kwon and Meyer, furthering the notion of how they have become untenable. It would seem that the underlying ideology of this installation, whilst speaking to the history of Avignon and the building itself, is mostly a phenomenological experience, a visual relationship between the visitor, the installation and the space. Although the site is a physical one – 'literal' in the terms of Meyer – the work was not necessarily made for this literal site. As far as 'space as a practised place' is concerned, the installation very much alters the space and becomes a practised space, the curatorial input of Barceló in the installation of this work all the more evident.

Collection Lambert, housed in an 18th century mansion shows some of the most prominent modern and contemporary artists. *Terramare* celebrated the museums 10-year anniversary showcasing Barceló's work from the past decade. Most of the works in this part of the exhibition although produced in the 1990s had never been shown before, and a few series were created entirely for the exhibition, for the space of Collection Lambert – not described by the curator or artist as 'nearly site-specific' the works showcase the artist's oeuvre, his nomadic tendencies, influences from Africa, Paris and his home Majorca – each room displaying a different aesthetic, theme, vision of the artist, large abstract paintings, sculpture, works on paper, and a video of his infamous 2006 *Paso-Doble* performance with Josef Nadj. How then do the works created for the Lambert Collection exhibition differ from those made for the Popes Palace? Even if the former works are not installations, they were created, much like Sturtevant's work at Moderna Museet, for this specific exhibition, for this specific site. The curatorial, however, with this exhibition, is very much in the hands of Eric Mézil. In the forms of Kwon's three paradigms and Meyer's defintion of 'literal' versus 'functional' site, these works can barely be discussed, there is no formulaic process, no distinction between works made seven years ago and those made specifically for the site of the Lambert Collection. Whilst the exhibition as a whole emphasizes the collaborative nature of this endeavor between Mézil and Barceló, this gradient of *graying* site specific practice simply seems to stay, well, gray, and very much situated in the traditional practice of exhibition making. However, it could be argued that Barceló with his connection to Avignon 'belongs' and

can lend his site-specificity to his creations such that they seem 'at home' in both the Popes Palace and Collection Lambert, even though they may not have been made for the literal sites respectively.

The *musée du petit palai*s, however, was not originally intended as a site for *Terramare*. When director of the museum Domonique Vingtain heard of the exhibition she was interested in joining in on the 'adventure'. Barceló responded to this interest with a curatorial intervention…convincing the Prime Minister of Spain to agree to the transportation of gothic works from the closed-for-construction Museum of Palma to the *musée du petit palai*s, where Barceló then paired the Gothic Majorcan works with the 14th century Avignon collection adding to this relation his works of termite-eaten paper. This then shows yet another curatorial/artist role shift within the three sites, where Barceló takes the role of artist as curator in its entirety. It is also a case of juxtaposing works, similar to that at the Popes Palace, with the placement of works acting to create their site-specific nature. The site itself becomes a 'practised place' with the artist's curatorial hand. The exhibition *Terramare* and its three distinctive sites shed light on just how difficult it is to define what is and what is not site-specific art, installation or practice and how these gradients, cyclically, are due to and result in, a flux of the concepts of site and the roles of curator and artist.

Kwon notes that the contemporary artists' task is to attend to the "differences of adjacencies and distances between one thing, one person, one place, one thought, one fragment *next* to another…" and with *Terrramare* Barceló seems to do just that (Kwon 109). Kwon also posits that with the ever discursive nature of art practice as a whole, the work of an itinerant artist, such as Barceló is best analyzed as a whole, with consideration of their

Figure 8: Miquel Barceló, installation at Palma Cathedral, 2006

past work. In the case of Barceló, the artist has been invited to participate in most of the major biennials – the 16th São Paulo International Biennale in 1981, Documenta in 1982, Venice Biennial in 1984 and again in 2009. The new millennium also saw two significant installations – after six years of work, Barceló inaugurated his work in the Palma Cathedral [Figure 8] – where his 'intervention', begun in 2001, is comprised of a 3000 square meter "ceramic polychromatic mural" a "ceramic skin" that depicts the miracle of the multiplication of
the bread and fishes from the Gospel of Saint John (Ferguson 2007). The piece, site-specific in both theme and physicality, "has an important contemporary precedent: that carried out between 1903 and 1914 by the modernist architect, Antoni Gaudi, and his collaborators Joseph Maria Jujol and Joan Rubió" and speaks to the church altarpieces of centuries past (ibid). The Cathedral in his home of Palma represented to Barceló his culture, and the project placated his desire for something of his "to remain in a place not likely to become a hotel or parking lot" (ibid).

With his success of the Palma Cathedral Barceló was invited to install a work in the Palais des Nations in Geneva of the United Nations – with a fire hose Barceló blasted the ceiling with 35 tons of paint, "stalactites in a primitive temple of the "civilized" world" (Jakubowicz 2010). Although the price to produce such an installation caused controversy the composition of the work is, unquestionably breathtaking, some claiming the installation to be Barceló's own 'Sistine chapel' " (Artinfo 2008). With these two works in mind and his previous biennial experience, it is no great leap to identify the site specificities of the work in *Terramare* – a practice that is not just found in this exhibition, but throughout the exhibition format, which begs for the further discussion of the current and future state of site-specific art and practice.

Contemporary Art in Historic Places

Contemporary Art in Historic Places (2005) developed as a collaboration between Commissions East, the National Trust and English Heritage. Both English Heritage and the National Trust are entities which 'protect and promote' historic sites throughout England, whilst Commissions East, founded in 1993, has helped to develop around 200

public art projects, both permanent and temporary, and has worked with dozens of commissioners from both the private and public sectors. The aim of the organization is to "make it possible for public and private sector commissioners to capture the potential of art to invigorate the public realm", and for the research and development of their own projects for the 'public realm' such as *Contemporary Art in Historic Places* (CAHP), which enables the organization to "work with artists whose work is particularly pioneering, forge partnerships with other organisations, seek out significant locations or test new approaches to public art" (Commissions East 2012).

CAHP consists of three sites with one artist commissioned to respond, in reference to a 'brief', to the site in his or her own manner. This tradition, or trend, of placing artists into historic sites is not new but has seen a prevalent rise in the past 20 years, especially after the very successful *Places with a Past: New Site-Specific Art in Charleston,* curated by Mary Jane Jacob as part of the 1991 Spoleto Festival, an event which signaled a new turn for site exhibitions and demonstrated "the maturation of a new kind of art" but "also reflect[ed] a new attitude toward history" where both the artist and site have many histories, many stories (Brenson 1991). Since 1991 the placement of artists into historic sites has continued tenfold as was demonstrated in the recent article 'Artistic merits' by Simon Stephens, for the UK *Museums Journal* (Stephens 2012) and in the 2008 Prospect.1 in New Orleans, where the 1991 exhibition is still a 'template' for site-specific programs of this kind (Ligon 2009). Whilst with *Places with a Past* and Prospect New Orleans artists chose their own sites, the commissioning of works for CAHP was a process of the organizations that commissioned artists for the certain spaces with the aim of attracting "new visitors to heritage sites or to engage existing visitors in new ways" (Commissions East 2005).

The different site-specific projects will be analyzed in terms of Kwon, Meyer and de Certeau and in the role of the organization (commissioner) in relation to the production of the work – as an interesting addition, a discussion panel about the exhibition was held in November of 2005. Hosted by English Heritage and monitored by artist and historian James Madison it asked the artists and invited guests to "review the commissions, their successes and failures" and discuss key issues such as whether the projects added value to the visitor experiences and engaged these visitors in new ways, if

the projects attracted new visitors, how the contemporary art 'sat' within the historical environment and finally, what input the property's curator or owner had in the process of the production of these works and what approaches may be viable for the future – all intriguing questions that are relevant to the discussion of the *graying* of site specificity and in how these projects relay back to this state and to the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Located in Bedfordshire, artist Imogen Stidworthy had the sites of Dunstable Downs and De Grey Mausoleum. The brief for the project was to create a site-specific installation in relation to De Grey Mausoleum and Dunstable Downs and required that the project work with the ethnic minorities of the area. The artist initially questioned the relationship between the ethnic communities and the two sites 'related to English History' but "despite these doubts, the social/political dimensions that was required was compensated by the open brief," which allowed the artist to explore different avenues for the production of her work – evidence that a curatorial or organization agenda may indeed be twofold and go in two directions: that of the stifling of the artist process and that of the environment which breeds inspiration – a dynamic that is seen more and more with the increase of commissioned site-specific initiatives. Stidworthy's work, titled 'Audio Cab' derived from the constraint that she could not produce work at the sites themselves due to the conservation measures needed, and that taxicabs were the only means of transportation to the two locations. In her rides in taxicabs, Stidworthy came to realize that most of the drivers were from the Indian sub-continent and that 90% were Muslims from Pakistan. She found these drivers to be interesting, defined by their role rather than their ethnicity – it isn't difficult to start a conversation with a cab driver.

The site-specific piece took the form of audio – listened to in the cab, the audio felt somewhat like a radio show, "invoking real and imaginary spaces, interspersed with snatches of genuine radio broadcastings" which the visitor or audience may come upon randomly or call to reserve. In the discussion of the work, John Maddison notes that Stidworthy's connection to current events is unexpected in this type of project – a notion that has become all the more prevalent with the bombings that were tied to the town shortly after the exhibition. It was also a project that could only be experienced by a certain amount of people in a very specific context. However, the 'legacy of the project'

in the form of a CD and the relationships built between the artist and cab drivers is noted as being 'permanent'. With the aim of bringing new people to the site, the project was seen as successful, as there was an increase of Asian visitors to Dunstable Downs.

In terms of the paradigms of Miwon Kwon the work sits steadily in the third paradigm of discursivity, with James Mayer's notion of 'functional' site. Stidworthy felt that there were 'four sites': Dunstable Downs, De Grey Mausoleum, herself and the ethnic community. She wanted to "marry all four in some way, and because of the issues of affixing things to the sites, as well as my interest in global telecommunications and broadest media an audio work seemed to fit" (Stidworthy 2005). For Stidworthy the brief, although a momentary concern, perhaps presented an opportunity for the artist they she may not have otherwise found herself in, and as John Maddison states, in terms of the project: "If you want an artist to do something significant, then just let them go with it. Public art, if done well, can open up for the artist, commissioner and viewer other possibilities and opportunities" (Maddison 2005). Whilst the 'space as practised place' is that of a discursive practice, the artist yet again finds herself in a flux role of power over her own work – having to take into consideration not just the funding organizations but the officials at the sites as well. It is an example of Kwon's paradigm working within the *graying* of site specificity, a viability that is also seen in the other two works of the project which reflects that Kwon and Meyer, although not applicable to all recent and current site-specific practices are still relevant in the overall conversation.

With the Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk as his site, Richard Wentworth created the installation *14 Rooms Upended* [Figure 9]. With a series of purposefully positioned mirrors that 'reflect and distort' the interior of the building, ' a fine country house near the North Norfolk coast' his installation "created a series of tableaux that required the viewer to look at the public and private rooms and spaces within the house from a different perspective" (Commissions East 2005). Described as a 'complicated building' Felbrigg Hall was donated to the Nation in 1969 and holds works ranging from artifacts to modern pieces made in the 1960s and many stories about "land ownership, the Empire and the public good" (ibid). With this Wentworth "felt like an impertinence and the restrictions of space and what could be done with the building and the objects within it meant that the brief presented lots of challenges" (ibid). He concluded that the room's

meaning was only present when the person came into the space and *experienced* it, which brought him to the importance of light in this viewing experience. He realized this 'theatrical intervention' into the space by placing "mirrors in each space at different heights, angles and with different reflective surfaces helped visitors to experience the rooms playfully" (ibid). The process was not without issues and required "careful diplomacy regarding the placement of the mirrors; from health and safety issues through to what people thought was an acceptable intervention in an historic setting" (ibid). Thus the artist was not just limited by the brief but by the people at the site as well. In the discussion about the project it is mentioned: "in the end, some of the mirrors were moved without anyone consulting Wentworth, even though their placement had been agreed" (ibid). It is however, not mentioned again by any of the panel – which seems a bit surprising as generally such an action is not deemed appropriate - the remnants of Richard Serra's 'Tilted Arc' in the back of one's mind. As a result of the installation staff and visitors became more observant and open to taking risks in thinking about the possibilities for the historic site. Described as a 'device', the work itself was phenomenological in nature, requiring the site and the viewer for completion. In this way, the installation tends to form towards Kwon's first paradigm in terms of the phenomenological, but also dips into the discursive realm. This 'device' of the mirrors, however, did not end with the site of CAHP. Rather, the artist has utilized the mirrors at Lisson Gallery and the Great Earn Hotel, both in London. In reference to this reuse Wentworth states: "I only invent good things relatively infrequently. I think the mirrors are incredibly interesting, though I don't want them to become a trademark" (Wentworth 2005). The issue is not about whether the work becomes his trademark but that in the reutilization of the 'device' first developed for a site-specific project the question of the first installment of the works for CAHP may come into question – how

Figure 9: Richard Wentworth, detail installation image of *14 Rooms Upended* installation, 2005

site-specific can a work be if it can be reimagined in another space?

The third commissioned project for CAHP was located in Orford Ness, Suffolk, the site of a former top-secret military complex that has now become a nature preserve. With one of the most "remote and secret places in Britain" artist Louise K. Wilson produced sound and video works titled *A Record of Fear*. The installation consisted of two video works, one screened at the visitor center of the site, the other at Wolsley Art Gallery at St Marys-at-the-Quay, Ipswich – both films depicted a choir performing in the former nuclear test laboratories of Orford Ness. With what she calls 'sound pieces' Wilson produced "an audio work of manipulated sounds recorded on site [that] could be heard in the viewing gallery of the Black Beacon Receiver via custom-made ear-pieces" which "tried to expose and highlight the invisible at Orford Ness" (Wilson 2005). The audio for Black Beacon was barely audible, with sounds of shingles, the lighthouse, insects and the gull, illustrating the changed soundscape of the site from its original purpose to its current state. The second sound piece only occurred for one day – the recorded sound of the centrifuge once housed at the military site, the recording "edited and played at a very high level of decibels in the laboratory…the sound of the centrifuge slowly speeding up to two full revolutions per second was very deep and resonant, and could be felt to vibrate through the body. The sound was very visceral and was in some ways an audio representation of the latent power of the site" (Commissions East 2005).

Wilson's project then, more so than the others, links the history of the site with the current state of the space through contemporary artistic means. Given the very open (perhaps the loosest) brief of responding to the site's military or natural history, Wilson chose to respond to both – creating an auditory phenomenological experience to the current and past site. Asked if the work could be adapted elsewhere, Wilson states: "The CD will have excepts on it and there will be a publication" but with how distinctively site-specific this piece is, the audio would seem out of place in other sites – although the format itself could be reimagined. Wilson's project then also fits into the paradigms and definitions of Kwon and Meyer respectively – with the site-responsive audio acting as both phenomenological and discursive in its implications of the differences between the military and natural identity of the site. The space too is an example of de Certeau's

notion of ‘space as practised place’, the audio enacting the sense of hearing into the sensibility of ‘practised ’.

CAHP was pronounced successful in adding “enormous value [to each of the sites] by changing the way people see the sites and by enriching their history” with the introduction of ‘artists of stature’ into the site “something different and exciting occurs between the people and the place” where the “brief therefore is valuable, but it should not be too prescriptive – as the artists and the ensuing projects need freedom to interact constructively” (Maddison 2005). The conclusions Maddison comes too are similar to those of this thesis – the discussion about briefs and curatorial agendas are very much still part of the dialogue and something that must continue to be considered as more and more sites, whether historic or institutional, continue to commission contemporary artists to create work as a means of bringing new meaning to the sites, unearthing histories, interacting audiences and creating new perspectives – all aims that when produced with a certain balance of artist initiative and curatorial agenda can result in products that speak to the fluidity and dynamic manifestations resulting from the *graying* of site specificity and the still relevant definitions that exist in some practices.

The Unilever Series – Turbine Hall, Tate Modern

In some cases of commissioned installations or exhibitions the site itself becomes a space for rotating site-specific work. As is the case with the Unilever Series at Turbine Hall, Tate Modern where the ongoing project finds different artists to conceive site-specific works for the space annually. The Unilever Series at Tate Modern, since its inaugural installation in 2000, “has become the most significant long-term project instigated by any museum in the early 21st century”, prompting similar projects in New York and Paris (Searle 2010). Other museums have also taken on this practice, such as the New Orleans Museum of Art where each summer “the museum plans to work *with* an artist to create a project for this dramatic space [the Great Hall]” or the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston with The Art Wall, a single wall at the entrance of the museum that is dedicated to rotating site-specific installations, or the Grand Palais in Paris with its ‘Monumenta’ series (New Orleans Museum of Art 2012).

Since 2000 each artist invited to participate in the Unilever Series has created a very unique work in line with their oeuvre and the static site - a practice that will be best utilized in the theory of de Certeau's 'space as practised place'. The works illustrate the different manifestations which the *graying* of site-specificity allows for and emphasizes that when the curatorial agenda is at a minimum, the artistic tendency produces a site-specific project that initiates a certain type of relationship with the site – whether it be literal, functional, phenomenological, institutional, discursive or any mix of the definitions given to the site-specific practice by Kwon and Meyer. What this program underlines is de Certeau's notion of 'space as practised place' – with each artist envisioning a unique installation within the same walls, year after year. These installations are not going to be analyzed in terms of the theoretical framework of Meyer and Kwon – for rather, this initiative is not about the definition of the type of work produced, but the range, the gradients of what site specificity has become - a *graying* state is not an 'unhinged' state, it is a state of complex understanding, some muddled, some fluid, that with programs such as the Unilever Series allows for a joining of the phenomenological experience of the audience with the aesthetic, physical and discursive elements of each work – where the commission becomes not a 'call to arms' to produce a work within the framework of a curatorial agenda, but an opportunity for the fluidity of site specificity to result in a multitude of site-specific responses.

The series, funded by Unilever, "enables an internationally-renowned artist to create a new, inspirational work of art for the gallery's massive Turbine Hall," which is free of charge to visitors (Tate Modern, 2002). As Searle notes in a review of the first 10 years of the program in 2010, "invitations to participate are increasingly daunting for artists. The Turbine Hall presents an enormous opportunity, but also a huge career risk. One doesn't want overblown monstrosities, or for artists just to make grandiose versions of the kind of things they have done elsewhere" (Searle 2010). The list of artists that have installed their work in the hall is impressive, but what is all the more impressive is that whilst some of these artists had already established international notoriety, others received the status after their Turbine installation, illustrating how one site, due to its sheer size and placement within a top contemporary art museum can alter the career and status of an artist. The first artist to install her work in the space was the French Louise Borgeois

whose "twisted steel legs of her giant spider Maman, alongside a sequence of fabulous, hellish towers, gave the brand-new Tate Modern an instant visual signature" and elevated the artist to a house-hold name, a status shift which did not surprise the artist: "The space is so beautiful – anything placed inside it would cause a strong reaction" (Jones 2010).

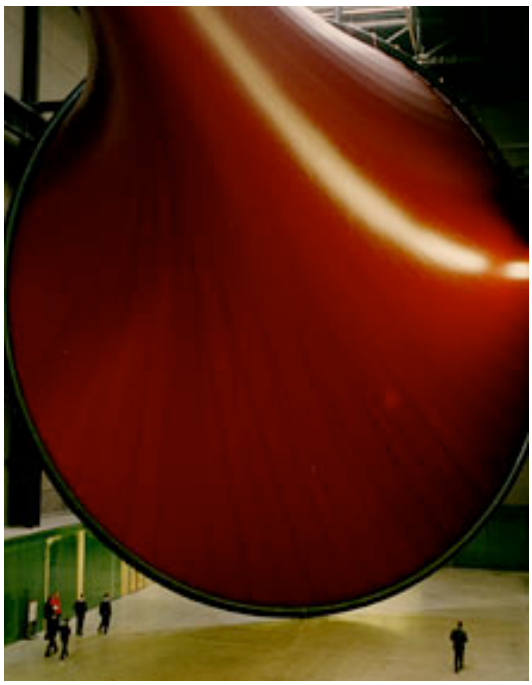

Figure 10: Anish Kapoor, detail installation image of *Marsyas,* 2002

As vast as the Turbine Hall is in sheer size, it is anything but a blank canvas, something verbalized by the second artist to install in the space, Juan Muñoz. Extremely "aware of the potential this space offered, but also the risk" the artist called the space 'a killer' – with the artist having problems with both the technical and artistic aspects of installation. In the end the artist created the work *Double Blind* with small groups of figures placed in the cavities between the false ceiling he had created and the floor – which, even with the crowds, "induced feelings of solitude and wonderment" (Seale 2010).

With Anish Kapoor the third installation saw the utilization of the entire length of Turbine Hall – all 550 feat of it, titled *Marysas* (2002) [Figure 10], three steel rings joined by a PVC membrane. Kapoor, known for his large-scale sculpture, took the commission as a means to create something enormous, wanting to "occupy a space that hadn't been imagined." After Kapoor, Olafur Eliasson created *The Weather Project* (2003) a "gigantic wintry sun" installed at the far end of the space, which illuminated its orange glow as the audience saw themselves reflected in the mirror ceiling installed near the roof, creating both an individual and a group experience. The artist felt that his project "brought the city spilling in" collapsing the assumed etiquette of behavior within a museum which was again seen with the work of Carsten Höller three years later, with his installation of large slides in the hall – a larger realization of slides which he had been working with before the commission. Both instillations however, enacted a very different, whilst active, behavior in visitors, an interaction with the space that could only be realized with the production of

such artworks that truly performed de Certeau's notion of 'space as practised place'. Bruce Nauman brought to the Turbine Hall its first audio installation. *Raw Materials* (2004) was a succession of human voices, "revisiting 22 of the texts and soundtracks of earlier works" bringing the artists past oeuvre in the space of the hall, intertwined with the 'incessant hum' found in the gallery. The next year the hall was again installed with sculpture. *Embankment* (2005) by Rachel Whiteread was an installation of white boxes arranged as mountainous forms, with the intention of being "really gargantuan and breathtaking" (Whiteread 2010). The next year the space was overtaken by the usable-sculpture of slides by Höller followed by the anti-architectural work of Colombian artist Doris Salcedo with *Shibboleth* (2007) [Figure 11] where she became the first artist to work with the actual material of the hall, creating a deep crack on the floor of the space. In 2008 Dominique Gonzalez-Foester created *TH.2058* a vision of London 50 years into the future where urbanites had to take shelter in the Turbine Hall from constant rainstorms. She created 200 bunk beds "scattered with books under giant animal sculptures and a massive film screen showing extracts from science fiction films" (Sherwin 2010).

Whilst many of the past installations had produced some sort of audience interaction, within a month of *TH.2058* almost all of the 1,000 books had been taken. 2009 brought literal darkness to Turbine Hall with the work of *How It Is* by artist Miroslaw Balka. The work, "a giant grey steel structure with a vast dark chamber, which in construction reflects the surrounding architecture – almost as if the interior space of the Turbine Hall has been turned inside out" (Tate Modern). After darkness came thousands of hand sculpted and painted porcelain sunflower seeds on the floor of the hall by Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei – and the first instance of a necessary change in visitor interaction during an installation due to the dust produced by walking through the

Figure 11: Doris Salcedo, detail installation image of *Shibboleth*. 2007

porcelain pieces, which resulted in having to view the work from the bridge rather than walk within it. The latest work for Turbine Hall is in the form of an "11-minute silent 35mm film projected onto a gigantic white monolith standing 13 metres tall at the end of a darkened Turbine Hall" (Tate Modern 2012). Aptly titled *FILM* the work by Tacita Dean is the first of the Unilever series to be devoted completely to the 'moving image'.

The brief overview of these works is intended to illustrate the unique developments that can occur with the static site and the commissioning of artists when the curatorial agenda is at a minimum and when the concept of place is based in the notion of de Certeau's 'space as practised place.' The works, however, do not exist with themselves as singular identities. The responses that came before each installation shaped the later responses to the commission, the hall then not just a 'blank slate' due to its physicality but to its past. The works then exist as a series of moments within a network, different practices that have shaped the space into place, and which reflect that the *graying* of site specificity is one that has allowed for such a dynamic line of responses to occur. That this format is now seen in other cities owes itself to the fluidity of the *graying* state of site specificity and its subsistence within the biennialization, globalization and curatorial framework that exists today.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is a starting point in the further conversation of the state of site-specific art and practice, arguing that the current state of site specificity finds itself to be *graying* – gradient and ranging, multifaceted and dynamic, muddled, fluid and seemingly indefinable. The examples analyzed illustrate these points and the crucial element of the role of the curatorial agenda and framework in the current production of site-specific art and practice. Whist the theories of Miwon Kwon and James Meyer helped to establish the different states of site specificity before the real turn of globalization and biennializaiton seen over the past 15 years, their work is still relevant in that it acts as a reference point – still applicable to certain practices of site specificity. What now occurs, however, with this *graying,* as was unpacked by the examination of the diverse examples of biennials and exhibitions, is that there is a gradient to site specificity – a range – where works may or may not be fully site-specific, whether in terms of discursively or literal site, and that the relationship with site, again either conceptual or physical, is one that no longer solely belongs to the artists but now to the curator as well. The 9th Istanbul Biennial indicated that no matter how successful a place-based biennial may be, it is still affected by and becomes vulnerable to the multifaceted aspects of the *graying* of site specificity. The Berlin and Liverpool Biennials then acted as examples of the negative effects, the muddled, curatorially manifested issues that arise within a biennial due to this *graying* state. The exhibitions unpacked depict the various formats for which site-specific art and practice are now placed. *Sturtevant: Image over Image* introduced the concept of the gradient, the 'nearly' site-specific artwork and the role of the curator in the definition of artworks. *Terramare* then went further to show these different delineations of site specificity in a blockbuster exhibition that paralleled many of the similar idiosyncrasies found in the biennial. *Contemporary Art in Historic Places* brought in the practice of public art and the continued trend of commissioning contemporary artists to create work in historic places, which follows in suite to the trend of inviting artists into the museums space to work within the collection. Finally, the Unilever Series of Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern exemplifies the growing practice of the static site and rotating commissioned artists, realizing that de Certeau's notion of 'space as practised place' may

be more prolific now than ever. With the establishment of the *graying* of site specificity in the analysis of these novel examples the question then becomes: what does this *graying* of site specificity, with the continued upsurge of biennials and globalization and the steady position of the curatorial agenda, mean for the future of site-specific art and practice? This is where the premise of this thesis as a debate, as a start to a conversation that must be continued, becomes important. With a focal point on the role and responsibilities of the curator in relation to the commission, production and realizations of site-specific works, the dialogue about the *graying* of site specificity and the future of the state of the practice must be had – one which involves *all* of the entities that have become part of the production of site-specific art, but which must be driven by both the artist and curator, in an attempts to keep the *graying* of site specificity from becoming a state of overall confusion, oversaturation, misguided notions and keeping with the artist prerogative and intuition and away from the potentially stifling and controlling hand of the curatorial agenda – a network of moments, projects, dialogues and relationships on the state of site-specific art and practice.

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