I Hear Voices In Everything!

Step by Step

ANDREAS GEDIN

ArtMonitor

I Hear Voices In Everything! – Step by Step is a collection of essays on artistic and curatorial practice, deriving primarily from the work of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) on dialogism. Seen in the light of Bakhtin's philosophy, might these activities perhaps not merely overlap with each other but be understood as one and the same? Taken together, the text plus a number of artworks and three exhibitions constitute a dissertation in Fine Arts. The art works and exhibitions are a blend of curatorial work, artistic creation and essayistic excursions. A wide range of issues are addressed, through assertions and philosophical speculations. But the work is grounded throughout in the writer's own artistic practice and that of others.

There are a number of different voices interspersed in the text. Quotations, oral commentaries, emails and fictional characters interrupt, add and delete. The intention is that the reader, too, should be drawn into this polyphonic chorus of voices.

However, the 'artistic' in its totality is not to be found in the thing, and not in the psyche of the creative artist or the psyche of the perceiver taken in isolation, for the 'artistic' embraces all three of these elements. It is a special form of interrelationship between creator and perceiver, which is fixed in the artistic work.

Mikhail Bakhtin

ArtMonitor

GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

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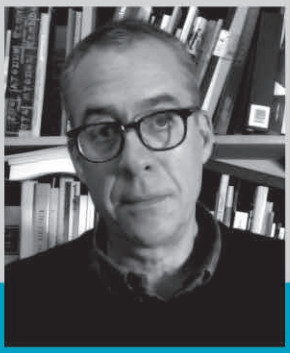
ISBN 978-91-978476-6-7



Andreas Gedin lives in Stockholm, works as an artist and has been involved in exhibitions and art projects in Sweden and abroad since the early 1990's. His artistic practice also encompasses curatorial work and writing. In 2011 he completed his PhD in Fine Art at The Valand Academy of Fine Arts, Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg.

It's incredibly fascinating to get so close to the art works and their context. It is particularly successful in the treatment of the video work Spin-off ... Here the text is situated on the border of the art work in a way that might not be possible in any other form, enriching the art work without expanding it .

Lars-Erik Hjertström Lappalainen, Konstperspektiv, 1/2012

He doesn't stand in the same place at all; if most dissertations are excavations, his is a journey of discovery, he moves in many different directions, making new discoveries all the time.

Ingrid Elam, Årsbok, Konstnärlig FoU, Årsbok 2012

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Andreas Gedin

Translation Sarah Death

Doctoral dissertation
in Fine Arts at The Valand Academy of Fine Arts
Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts
University of Gothenburg, 2011

Published in Swedish
by Art Monitor
(Art Monitor avhandling, nr 23)
University of Gothenburg, 2011
English translation by Sarah Death, 2014

This book is printed
with generous support from
Helge Ax:son Johnsons Stiftelse
and The Valand Academy

ISBN 978-91-978476-6-7 (printed)
978-91-978476-7-4 (digital)

Printed in Lithuania by Spindulys, 2014

The Cartographers' Guilds struck a Map of the Empire
whose size was that of the Empire, and which
coincided point for point with it.

Quote: J.L. Borges
Translated by Andrew Hurley

CONTENTS

Abstract

I Hear Voices in Everything – Step by Step, is a practice-based dissertation in Fine Arts. It includes three art exhibitions, several independent art works and an essay. It discusses the role of the artist and the making of art mainly through the ideas of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) but also by reflecting on similarities between the artist and the curator. As a dissertation in Fine Arts, its aim is not primarily to develop a specific philosophy but to use theory to discuss art, and vice versa.

In the first section, the methodological basis is articulated and contextualised. The relevance of artistic research as a means of developing artistic practice and increasing the understanding of artistic practice is also addressed, as is the feasibility of applying the philosophy of Bakhtin in this particular context. Bakhtin is usually referred to as a literary theorist; however, his dialogical philosophy concerns man's being as a whole, that is, the fact that man is constituted through dialogical relations. Here, man and also art in general are understood by Bakhtin as a series of temporary meeting places for art works, readers, artists, protagonists, history etc. The reflective text in itself also endeavours to be dialogical and polyphonic by incorporating different voices such as fictional characters, real-life comments, emails, letters and quotes.

In the second section the practice of making art is discussed in relation to Bakhtin and other writers. One of the main considerations is whether, by applying Bakhtin, one can also regard an art work as a meeting place for language (in its broadest sense) so as to include physical material, skill, and experience; and hence, whether one could, or should, regard the artist as a kind of curator, and vice versa. With this in mind, is there then any real difference between organising language into an artwork or into an exhibition?

The third section focuses on the artworks that are a part of the PhD project; these include an exhibition and two planned exhibitions. The central theme of, or the catalyst for, the works of art is repetition. Published as a single, unique copy, and also smuggled into the Lenin Library, *Sleeper* is a collection of essays on the ingredients of a tuna and tomato sauce, to be eaten with pasta or rice. *Thessaloniki Revisited* is a

video of a reading of a short story. *Spin-Off!* is a video in which a curse is read by an actor. *Sharing a Square* is a documentary-based video of a ritual drumming session in Calanda, Spain, while *Erich P.* is an artwork based on an embassy to Russia in 1673 and on contra-factual archaeology. As a final part of the dissertation project these artworks will be shown in a solo exhibition, and there will also be a curated exhibition featuring only other artists.

The second part of the dissertation title, Step by Step, refers to a larger art project called Taking Over, of which this dissertation is a part. Taking Over deals with different aspects of power relations in five separate projects. As an integral part of this larger and thematic art project, the dissertation also refers to various aspects of power, and even to the lack of power in relation to the artist's position in research contexts, within and beyond academia. It also underlines that artistic research is part of wider artistic practice.

Introduction

A dissertation in the field of fine arts research is in many respects a personal undertaking, since artistic work does not draw any clear distinction between the personal and the public. In my case, this is reflected in several returns, linked to one non-return. One of these returns was a trip to Russia in 2006. My stay at the summertime residential centre of the Russian Academy of Art outside Vishny Volochok proved the prelude to my doctoral studies and was part of a research project in the Fine Arts faculty to which I belonged. That was where I took the initiative for the first work of my dissertation, *Sleeper*. It was my first visit to Russia since 1989. Before that trip I had been to Russia and the Soviet Union several times. The first was when I was studying Russian at upper secondary school. The Russia to which I returned was both different and the same. In 2009 I was offered the chance to go back to the colony again, but this time I turned it down. This non-return is central to the final work in the dissertation, *Erich P*.

This dissertation is also a return and a non-return to philosophy. In my early twenties I read practical and theoretical philosophy at Stockholm University. It was instructive in its way, but I realised after a couple of years that the analytical philosophy practised there was ill suited for creative work. After that interlude, I avoided philosophy. Working on this dissertation has involved a return to philosophy. But it is also a non-return in that I have concentrated on a very different kind of philosophy from that I studied at Stockholm University. Instead, I return to the Continental philosophy that was being introduced and discussed in Sweden when I started working as an artist in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Even though I did not go into the work of those philosophers in any depth, I was indirectly influenced by the new alternative that they represented. Like many others I was looking for something different from current models of thought in philosophy and art. It has also struck me that this dissertation comes back to issues I explored in my final-year undergraduate project in Literary Studies. The subject of my essay was the view of art, creativity and the artist expressed in the poetry of Erik Johan Stagnelius.

This dissertation, however, is not a study of philosophy, art history or literature, and does not aim to be so. I have neither the wish nor the expertise to produce anything of that kind. This is, rather, my attempt to carry out artistic research on its own terms. The reflective text is an expression of my way of understanding, and talking about, my artistic work and its conditions in the format of an untamed essay.

There is a certain logic to making return visits the foundation of a dissertation in fine art research, as the research is based in practical experience. Its starting point is a deeper approach to my own practice that is also a jumping-off point for more general questions. Returns of this kind also reflect the theme of repetition that has been a catalyst for my own artistic and creative work.

As fine art research is a relatively new discipline, the tasks facing my colleagues and me include that of establishing its boundaries. We are test pilots and to some extent have to invent the forms our work will take. This is a responsibility but above all a pleasure, and a social adventure in the widest sense. Fine art research provides a meeting place for academic research and artistic practice. But despite these new forms of interaction, still not tried and tested, my work has not been free-floating; it has been anchored in my artistic practice. It is practice that that legitimises artistic research. Partly to underline this, I have incorporated the dissertation into a larger artistic project: *Taking Over*. This is indicated by the sub-title of the dissertation, *Step by Step*, which is one of the five projects that make up *Taking Over*.

So the dissertation stems from my artistic practices as such. But it is not a study of me, or of my work; it is made up of reflections on the practice that go beyond the individual. I ask whether artistic work, curatorship and writing can be considered a single practice. And this question opens the way for a consideration of more general issues, even if my own practice naturally forms part of that discussion. What may initially seem an innocuous enquiry leads to further, more important questions about the artist's position and work, and the status of the exhibition and the artwork. This in turn gives rise to philosophical questions about the linguistic nature of art which also shed light on the assignment of roles within artistic life. The aim is not to give a clear-cut answer but to give

add depth to the discussion.

The dissertation employs, and relates to, the essay as form and practice. This applies not only to the reflective text but also to the individual works, including the exhibitions. I refer not only to the testing, roaming nature of the essay but also to its preoccupation with the working process. The reflective text of the dissertation is a construction of a possible process of that kind. Part I discusses the basis for the dissertation in terms of both artistic research generally and my dissertation project specifically, including the theories employed. There I argue that it is preeminently feasible to apply the ideas of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) in the discussion of artistic work. I have avoided historicising Bakhtin's thinking because I lack the background knowledge required, but mainly because I am interested in how his ideas relate to my own work in the present. One could say that, on the whole, I treat Bakhtin as a contemporary figure. I have therefore not seen it as my task, either, to go into the history of art, artists or exhibitions to any great extent. In Part II I discuss art's relationship with theories, their linguistic nature and the work of the artist and curator. I do this by reflecting on who it is that carries out the work, what he or she does, what material is used, where this takes place and how it happens. Part III concentrates on the individual works and exhibitions included in the thesis. In this way, the text moves seamlessly from reflection into creative practice and actual art works. The fact that the thesis has assumed this form does not mean that the work followed this schematic structure. I do not in general use my artistic work as a way of expressing new-found philosophical knowledge. My first work within the framework of the dissertation – *Sleeper* – for example was produced before I read Bakhtin. Reading, writing, and working on the artwork can progress in parallel, all of them parts of the common whole. This is evident in the case of the last discrete work *Erich P.* There, the working process and the narrative about it are both important parts of the work.

The theoretical discussion is derived in large part from the ideas of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. His dialogical approach to literature, art and human existence are very useful, I think, for talking about art and artistic work. It has not, however, been possible for me to

incorporate this sympathy with Bakhtin scholarship into the writing as it is impossible to encompass within the scope of this project. (In this most active of fields, the term 'Bakhtin industry' is even used.) The spelling of Bakhtin's name follows the usual language conventions: Michail Bachtin in Swedish texts and references; Mikhael Bakhtin in English texts and translations.

My text is in part polyphonic. Real and fictitious voices break into my monologue. But the running text also accommodates a variety of pitches or voices. The intention was originally not to represent Bakhtin's idea of dialogue and polyphony but to represent one aspect of the working process. My work appears nonetheless, at least to me, as dialogic. When named voices speak in the text, they are identified by their forenames. In these instances the words have been noted down by me after conversations or have arrived in email exchanges. Where forenames, surnames and reference to a source are given, this indicates that they are taken from a printed source. The individuals who have in various ways been the originators of the comments marked with forenames have all given their approval. But they naturally cannot be held responsible for their comments, as the contexts here have been modified to varying degrees. And some of the – approved – comments were never actually made, but merely could or should have been expressed.

Andreas Gedin, Stockholm, March 2011

Register of Works

Sleeper, 2007
A sleeper is an agent planted in a hostile country who lives under cover as an ordinary, law-abiding citizen until he is activated. I used this concept as a title for a book I had made, a single copy, which was secretly planted in the Lenin Library, the largest library in Russia. The book is a set of essays on the ingredients of a tomato-based tuna fish sauce: white onion, garlic, tinned tomatoes, tuna fish, capers, curry powder and other seasonings. Instructions for making the sauce are accompanied by discussions of such topics as the colonial history of curry dishes, what gives garlic its distinctive aroma, the impoverishment of tomato growers, the basic physics of cookery, the significance of dolphin-friendly tuna, the history of canning technology, and the best way to avoid crying when peeling onions.

Thessaloniki Revisited, 2007
A video of an actor reading a short story about a man visiting Thessaloniki to make a business deal and visit a couple of friends. In the course of the narrative, traumatic stories from the individual's and the city's past gradually surface. The video is an hour and six minutes long. Script and direction: Andreas Gedin; camera: Henrik von Sydow; actor: Hans Sandquist; editing: Johan Edström.

Spin-Off!, 2008
A six-minute video of an actor reading out a curse. Script and direction: Andreas Gedin; camera: Henrik von Sydow; actor: Hans Sandquist; editing: Johan Edström.

Step by Step, a First Draft
A curated exhibition at the Gotland Museum of Art 30.6–16.9 2007. The theme of the exhibition was repetition and it comprised work by both me and other artists.

Works in the Exhibition:

Kajsa Dahlberg: *A Room of One's Own/ A Thousand Libraries*, 2006, a book project in which notes made by readers in different copies of the library edition of Virginia Woolf's book were brought together in a single book, which was then printed, in 1000 copies.

Juan Manuel Echevarría: *Mouths of Ashes*, 2003, seven videos in which poor peasants sing in traditional style about traumatic experiences they have had as victims of the ongoing civil war in Columbia.

Andreas Gedin: *Retake of an Old House*, 2004–2005, slides of the so-called 'Gotlandic House' and a recorded reading of an essay about repetition, identity and trauma.
On Retakes – Björn Runge. Documentation of a lecture by the director Runge at a curated lecture evening on the theme of retakes.
Thessaloniki Revisited, (2007), video, see above.
Elsagården Wallpaper, an installation of a length of wallpaper. The wallpaper was originally manufactured for the *Home Exhibition* at the gallery Liljevalchs Konsthall in 1917, and went into production again in the 1970s.
MIM, 2006, a grammatical form I invented. The text (in Swedish, in upper-case letters), blasted onto glass, can be read in mirror writing from the back, though its meaning is not always the same, as in ATOM/MOTA (literally: atom/obstruct).
Sleeper, 2007, see above.

Tehching Hsieh: Filmed documentation of a work within a larger performance project *One Year Performance, Art Documents 1978–1999*. Hsieh stamps a time card in a time clock once an hour for a year, 1980–1981.

Gertrude Stein: *An Early Portrait of Henri Matisse*, 1911/1934–1935. A recording of the text, read by the author, installed in a little hut with a chair, lamp, table and books about Matisse.

Sharing a Square, 2008
A sixteen-minute video of the populace drumming in the square in Calanda, Aragon, on Good Friday night in 2008. Direction: Andreas Gedin; camera: Stefan Kullänger; editing: Suzi Özel.

Erich P., 2009
In 1673, Erich Palmquist, Captain of Fortification, took part in Karl XI's expedition to Russia under the leadership of Gabriel Oxenstierna. Palmquist's role was to send back information about Russia's military status, and he was considered a spy by the Russians. One of his most important tasks was to document the strategically important river system and road network. The summertime residential centre of the Russian Academy of Art (see *Sleeper*, above) is beside a stream that is part of this system. This means Palmquist may well have visited the place. The work comprises a number of artefacts (including seventeenth-century coins, a seal belonging to Palmquist's brother's family, and several palm leaves) planted in the grounds of the centre by an individual I had commissioned for the purpose.

Sharing a Square (the exhibition), 2011
An exhibition of the individual works of art featured in this dissertation (see above), planned for the Stenasal Gallery at the Gothenburg Museum of Art, 6 April–5 June 2011.

Step by Step, 2011
An exhibition curated by me, planned for the F Room at Malmö Art Museum, 21 May–14 August 2011, comprising works by other artists. Works in the exhibition:

Kajsa Dahlberg: *A Room of One's Own/ A Thousand Libraries*, 2006. See above.

Alexander Roslin: *Self-Portrait*, 1790.
A rejoinder by the artist to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, replica of one he had done earlier the same year.

Gertrude Stein: *An Early Portrait of Henri Matisse*, 1911/1934–1935.
See above. In this exhibition, a more advanced structure is built to house the installation. It is to be a round, a sort of miniature version of the cannon tower of the sixteenth-century Malmöhus Fort, which is next to the art museum and serves as its face to the outside world.

Jan Olof Mallander: *Extended Play*, 1962.
This is a sound work in which Mallander recorded the counting of votes in the Finnish presidential election in 1962. Over six minutes and thirty-four seconds, three voices in succession read: Kekkonen, Kekkonen, Kekkonen, and so on.

Dan Graham: *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, 1975.
In this videodocumented performance (given for the first time in 1975), Graham stands between a mirror wall and an audience seated on the floor. For some five minutes, he describes the behaviour of the audience as he sees it in the mirror.

Zoë Sheehan Saldañas: *No Boundaries. Lace Trim Tank (White),* 2004.
Photographs of a piece of clothing in which the artist has replaced commercially manufactured clothing with hand-sewn copies.

I

The Various Methods and Their Relevance

Written Into a Context

Any philosophy that has the ambition of explaining the world also turns its gaze upon itself. Then it is faced with the great problem of self-reflection: how to experience oneself in the moment of experience?[1] How can one be simultaneously present in something and at a distance from it? This almost dizzying sense of impossibility has led philosophy to direct its attention to its primary tool: language. The question of truth is turned into the question of the concept of 'truth'. Many twentieth-century philosophers have devoted their attention to trying to break out of this stifling circularity. Some chose logic in the hope of finding purity there.[2] For his part, Jacques Derrida exclaims in one central text that we have lost our innocence and faith.[3] He takes the view that a rupture or break (Fr. *rupture*) occurred when it was realised that philosophy not only studies structures but is itself one: philosophy is a construction, one system among others.[4] It was an insight that dethroned philosophy from its position as the science of science. Derrida finds no stability, the fundamental quality of existence appears to be flux, which means there is no possibility of self-reflection in the classic sense: any kind of frozen moment in time is certainly not an option.[5] For Derrida, experience of one's own self is, rather, a kind of picture in the mind. These self-reflections, images, are linked as if in a chain through time, giving us an *illusion* of a stable identity. This loss of faith in philosophy, or what could perhaps be termed an awakening, has a parallel in art. The sort of art that stresses the linguistic aspect causes a similar rupture and challenges the pretence of the work as a stable object.

Even if we consider, with Derrida, that self-reflection in the classic philosophical sense seems impossible, we can talk about ourselves, to each other. And critical self-reflection is important for artistic research when it is one's own practice that is under the microscope.[6] One such attempt at objectification is Bourdieu's engagement with himself, his

activities and the age in which he lives in his sociology of sociology.[7] Here, theory and practice meet, which is of particular interest to anyone engaged in artistic research. And it is also the obviously testing element in the opening chapter of *Homo Academicus*, where Bourdieu sets out the lines along which he will work. At the same time, he hints that he would like some sort of unsullied, utopian science and objective judgement. He wishes for a society in which such things as the bonds of friendship and family relations are public. It is, initially, a dream of crystal-clear transparency. A utopia of that kind cannot be put into practice, of course, not least because the uncontrollable reader soils what is objective:

> It is the reader, reading between the lines, more or less consciously filling in the gap in the analysis, or quite simply 'putting himself in their shoes', as the saying goes, who transforms the sense and the value of the intentionally censored report of the scientific investigation.[8]

For Bourdieu, language, at least within sociology, is an expression of strategies, conscious or otherwise, that are tools for reinforcing still further the positions of the sender and the institution within the scientific field. Bourdieu is careful to maintain that style, vocabulary choice, technical terms etc. within science are often intended more to position the text/author than to push the scientific subject forward. There is no such thing as a pure sender or a pure message; there are no pure places. Instead there are habitus, symbolic and monetary capital and different fields. One risk in this argument is that we stop seeing ourselves as ethical subjects and make ourselves into irresponsible puppets merely expressing positions and structures within and between fields. But even if we are thus pawns caught in a social game, Bourdieu argues for individual responsibility. He is something of a reformer and believes, despite his critique of what it is possible for science to do, that *knowledge* of how social life functions increases our prospects of changing what *ought to be* changed.

Bourdieu argues forcefully against those who, despairing at the impure state of things, try to reach beyond the subjective by means of an allegedly neutral empiricism 'with the irreproachable appearance of an objective, transcendent subject'.[9] They make the mistake of thinking that

assertions about qualities, objectivity, truth etc. transform something into an objective fact. Instead, says Bourdieu, these assertions express a wish for, or confirmation of, an agreement. When applied to art, it can look like this:

> The art we call realist, in painting as in literature, is only ever that art which is able to produce an impression of reality, that is to say an impression of conforming to reality […] based on at least apparent conformity to the norms by which we recognise science.[10]

Artistic research establishes a new field which increases the actors' symbolic capital within the field. Capital in other parts of the art world potentially decreases; certain art critics and curators may for example become less interested since we are to some extent in competition with them for the privileges of formulation when we move into a position with new conditions. But we must hope that it is possible to avoid getting locked in our positions. Bourdieu's solution is for the researcher clearly to describe and declare his or her position and its various aspects, since:

> There is no escaping the work of constructing the object, and the responsibility that this entails. There is no object that does not imply a viewpoint, even if it is an object produced with the intention of abolishing one's viewpoint (that is, one's bias), the intention of overcoming the partial perspective that is associated with holding a position within the space being studied.[11]

Artistic Research

Bourdieu sets a good example, not just because he, like artistic researchers, studies his own area, but also because he develops the notion of *transparency*, namely that the assertions a researcher makes should be contextualised because they speak from different positions. By doing so, he adds a meta-level to his practice. I see this insistence on transparency, in which I include *deepening* and *reflection*, as central to artistic research. This does not chiefly involve with the social contextualisation stressed by

Bourdieu, but in this context has to do with mirroring a working process and contextualising the works by reflecting on them in relation to other art and to theory, and plainly arguing for one's point of view. In this way, the work can be written into larger contexts, not least the artistic and the academic. Reflection and theorising also seep into the working process and become part of the creative process. This relationship between reflection and creation can also be enjoyed by artistic work outside research, but has become essential within it. Transparency is also essential to give my dissertation its critical dimension; it must be open to criticism, which is the basis for all research. Mistakes, misunderstandings and pure lies, too, can be adequate or at least acceptable within artistic research. One example of this is Jacques Derrida's famous essay 'Plato's Pharmacy', which I use in the chapter about the art work *Erich P.* My opponent at the final seminar, Lennart Palmqvist, claimed that Derrida had in some places misunderstood Plato, for example the scapegoat idea of which he makes great play, accommodating it within the concept 'Pharmakeus'.[12] As Palmquist saw it, the rejection and sacrifice of the scapegoat was only symbolic, and did not actually take place. But this misapprehension on Derrida's part clearly proved productive, not only for him but also for his readers. It may also be the case, for example that my reading of Mikhael Bakhtin is open to question, but that the application can still be relevant and productive for the work of the dissertation. Criteria for what is fruitful are important in this context generally. But that does not mean anything goes; fruitfulness criteria have to be paired with some notion of what is reasonable.

Analysing failures and mistakes is certainly part of any kind of process-orientated research of an experimental kind – *trial and error* – but at least in art, and consequently in artistic research, *conscious* lies and fictions of various kinds, inaccuracies, failures and mistakes can also be useful and productive. An interesting and functioning work of art need not, for example, be right.[13] It can point things out without taking sides, but it can also make dubious statements.[14]

Q: Are you lying, or are you just wrong?

Andreas: No, what do you mean?

Q: Well, you wrote that lies can be part of artistic research.

Andreas: Yes, it does sound a bit drastic. I only meant that one can state things that are not true, about a work for example.

Q: But then what about this transparency that you are so keen on?

Andreas: Well, the lies are clad in an opaque covering. But I am not thinking of wild lies about facts, more of the way one might, for example, invent comments from made-up people, or real people as long as they agree to it. Perhaps one can also lie about the creation of a work, or modify the story of its genesis afterwards. That is not unusual, after all.

Q: But then what about this transparency that you are so keen on?

Andreas: It applies mainly to the reflexive elements, but also some of the accounts of how works were created.

Q: But then what about this transparency that you are so keen on?

Andreas: Er, well … maybe one can just make an exception … or rather, one has to be transparent in one's lies by stating openly that they are fiction! Colombus's egg!

Q: Yes, you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. But I wonder whether these exposed lies can really be called lies, and these successful failures really failures?

Andreas: Let me put it like this, then: the *prospect of allowing* mistakes, lies, misunderstandings, misreadings and failures become part of a dissertation is something that art can accommodate and bring into artistic research, which in its turn offers the prospect of transparency.

Q: … *offers an obligation to transparency.*

Andreas: Okay.

Accepting that one is to a certain extent part of an academic research tradition renders it preposterous to produce a dissertation text that is entirely fictional. This is for the reason that if assertions in the name of the researcher cannot be established as assertions by the researcher, it is difficult to reach the critical level which I believe should be part of the critical work. Even if one in artistic research prefers to show, rather than prove, one must still be permitted to be wrong in making an assertion, irrespective of whether it is empirically or theoretically based. The risk otherwise is that is of losing all meaning. It may be a matter of understanding theory in which a number of interpretations are absurd; it may also be a matter of empirical assertions about how artworks affect

observers and so on. Then the artistic researcher should not retire into an untouchable, romanticised artist position and make reference to liking and feeling. He or she should instead argue for his or her assertions as an expression of the transparency that is part of this research. Even so, a fictional literary text can function as a reflecting component of a dissertation if the researcher states and argues for his point of view and sources are acknowledged.

Ämne: Questions
Datum: måndag 19 februari 2007 13.57
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: Henk Borgdorff <h.borgdorff@ahk.nl>

Dear Henk Borgdorff,
I am a PhD student at Valand, Gothenburg and just read your paper on artistic research. I do think it is very well formulated. I like the calm analytical approach. But there is one thing I have problems with and that is the formulations around where the research starts. "It begins with questions that are pertinent to […]" or "begins by addressing questions […]". The question here for me is if the artistic research actually starts with questions. Maybe some times, maybe sometimes not. Personally my projects often start with an idea or an interest in a subject. I look into subjects. And this action does not to seem linked to questions, or answers. (Even though an answer not has to be the answer to a question, a potential answer is of course embedded in every question.) One could of course rephrase most initiatives into questions, but I believe this is not the intention here. […]
Best regards,
Andreas

Ämne Re: Questions?
Datum torsdag 1 mars 2007 21:02
Från Henk Borgdorff < h.borgdorff@ahk.nl >

Till: Andreas Gedin < a.gedin@telia.com >

Dear Andreas,
Thank you for your mail, and sorry it took so long before I could answer you. I agree with you. A lot of (if not most) artistic research does not commence with well-formulated questions, of which the relevance in the art world or the research environment is clear from the start. The AHRC definition mentions 'questions', 'problems' or 'issues', and I should have realized that the use of only the term 'question' does limit the case unnecessary [sic].[15] Much artistic research is not hypothesis-led research, but discovery- led research, in which the researcher starts his or her investigation following intuitions or hinges [sic], vague ideas etc-
So, thank you again for your remark. I am working now on a publication in which I will nuance the issue.
Best regards,
Henk

In his essay, Borgdorff describes artistic research as discovery-led, which I consider to be both a good description and an appropriate method. He presupposes a classification of the research areas of the academy: the natural sciences are empirically deductive, experimental and seek to explain phenomena; the social sciences are also empirical but not experimental and deal with quantitative and qualitative analyses (here one can note that anthropology and ethnography engage in observation in the course of participation in what is being observed); the humanities are more analytical and engage in interpretation.[16] Artistic research can be said to include components from all these fields: experiments, participation in practical work and interpretation of that practice. These imports from a variety of disciplines need not be subsumed in each other but can get along side by side within a delineated field, and arranged meeting place. And discovery-led research is more open in character. Rather than formulate a hypothesis, the researcher asks questions like: *What happens if one does that or that? Is it possible to …?* (But such research obviously embraces a batch of lesser hypothetical questions.) Or as artistic researcher Sarah Rubridge puts it:

> The first is what we might call 'hypothesis-led' research […] in which the research interrogates or tests pre-formulated questions and/or hypotheses. The second is 'discovery-led' research […] in which the researcher enters an initially inchoate field, at most having a barely formed speculative question or hypothesis, then using his or her professional experience insights and skills, embarks on a research journey in which initially even the research pathway may not be clearly defined. In this type of research, although apparently without direction at its commencement, as the research progresses underlying research questions make themselves known and the research gradually focuses its attention on those questions.[17]

In art, it is more a question of *showing* than *proving* (even though art can, of course, make evaluative assertions).[18] This is a view of artistic research, and other research, too, that sees it as more in the nature of a voyage of discovery than a Socratic riddle in which the answer is embedded in the question, to be discovered by the researcher. In this case it is not just the discoveries that are important, but also the discovery process itself. I understand artistic research as a ship on a voyage of discovery that is still under construction when the voyage is underway.[19] So discovery-led research means ambling along, nosing into things, acknowledging the important function of sudden insights. And the view of history taken by Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin is congenial to this way of thinking. For him, history is not a linear development but something that develops out of a given moment – I understand it as an increased differentiation, an expansion. I think of artistic research – or mine, at any rate – as similar in structure. This dissertation does not develop in a linear fashion with one thing leading to another, but grows by expansion. And that is exactly what the dialogic novel does, according to Bakhtin. This also seems to be precisely the view of history found in Bakhtin's work by Bakhtin scholar Michael Holquist:

> In dialogism, the course of history is also conceived as a history of greater or lesser awareness, *but it is a sequence that has no necessary telos built into it.* It is a narrative that has the appearance of being developmental only from a present point of view […] Bakhtin's historical masterplot opens with a deluded perception of unity and goes on to a growing knowledge of ever-increasing difference and variety that cannot be overcome in any uniting synthesis […][20]

The sort of freedom that artistic work offers is – at least so far – also found in artistic research. But one must simultaneously bear in mind that freedom, or possibilities, can seem limiting. For that reason it is no bad thing that experienced artists are accepted on this degree course, since artistic practice is an application of that relative freedom. Experience has taught me, at least, that one avoids the limiting or paralysing effect on artistic work by actively imposing one's own limits in the form of explicit choices.

Even if some academic research traditions are part of artistic research, there is no reason for the artistic researcher to try to shift identity and appear as a traditional academic. For one thing, it is practically impossible to acquire all the standard academic background within four or five years while also doing artistic research at postgraduate level. For another, it is not even desirable, because the task of the artistic researcher is, among other things, that of contributing his or her experience and not excluding it. It therefore goes without saying that at postgraduate level one studies the existing research tradition in art by reading what a variety of artists have written about their works. I am thinking here not only of obvious examples like the American conceptual artists who have explicitly added a metalevel to their practical work but also of artists, filmmakers and writers such as Hélio Oiticica, Allan Kaprow, Adrian Piper, Charles Bernstein, and Rainer Maria Fassbinder.[21] On the other hand, we should beware of the standard example in artistic research, Leonardo da Vinci. It may seem that in his case, science and art are perfectly combined. But this is to ignore the fact that Leonardo was *both* a scientist and an artist, which is not the hallmark of an artistic researcher.

But what I find most difficult to deal with in artistic research has nothing to do with methodological issues or degrees of scholarly rigour, or the threat to a certain kind of art or a change of the education system. No, it is the artistic quality of the works on which it has proved hard to take a stance. In the traditional art world (the critics, art history, the institutions,

the galleries) there are a variety of perceptions of artistic quality, albeit under constant renegotiation. Even those who believe in eternal aesthetic values have to make the argument for them. But I seem to have sensed that from within the university world there is an exaggerated respect for art and creativity that is not shared by the world of art beyond the academy. And in those presentations and doctoral disputations of artistic research projects I have attended, questions of artistic quality have largely been left the background. There is a great readiness to discuss the subjects of the works, and whether they function as claimed. But the issue of whether it is good or bad art seems harder to deal with. The risk is that the art works' significance for the research will be minimised if the focus shifts from the works to the reflective text. The solution to this problem is not entirely simple, but one must hope that the situation will improve when more participants from the world of art bring their knowledge into the sphere of artistic research. Not because their values must be duplicated but because there is a wealth of experience that is a component part of art and therefore also crucial to artistic research.

Over time, artistic research will establish its own canon. It is presumably unavoidable that the art produced within artistic research will be of a particular character. The opposite – that artistic work would not exhibit the influence of this specific context – seems highly implausible. For one thing, the grounds on which works are evaluated will be different from those in the art world generally, but there are also practical factors influencing the nature of the art. Video films, for example, are frequently used in artistic research, and I suspect this may be because it is easy to show them at seminars, to send them in advance to opponents in doctoral disputations, and so on. Text-based and conceptual projects usually have the same practical advantages. Large-scale painting or sculpture, say, is harder to handle in a purely physical sense. We have to be on our guard against letting these practical considerations define the research too much. Exhibition venues run by the universities could perhaps be one way of making suitable spaces available for a wider variety of creative art?

It is important for artistic research to be inclusive, but it may also be that some kinds of artistic *oeuvre* sit more appropriately within the university than others. It could provide a safe haven, for example, for

non-commercial art. (Assuming the universities have not already been bought up – metaphorically and literally – by the market.) The universities are not free from power play and hierarchies either, of course, but are more like a different set of players in the same kind of game. But it is important for the power to be diluted in this way. And I see it as central to artistic research that it should offer a space for artists to talk in their own right about art without being the object of critics, historians and markets.

The dissertation also approaches power issues by its inclusion in my artistic practice in another respect, already mentioned in my introduction: the sub-title *Step by Step* certainly expresses the toil of work on the dissertation in terms of both repetition and progress, but there is another important reason why it is there. It is a way for me to write the dissertation into a larger art project and thereby into my artistic *oeuvre* as a whole. Firstly, my aim in doing this is to show that artistic research and my dissertation are part of artistic practice at a wider level, and not vice versa. Secondly, the completion of this doctoral thesis has relevance for my project *Taking Over*, begun in 1998, because it deals in various ways with precisely the subject of aspects of power. The work consists of five pieces, 'texts on a walk' in a number of European capitals: taking over (London); bit by bit (Paris); more and more (Athens); piece by piece (Stockholm); step by step (Berlin). These phrases were then carefully transferred to maps drawn in white on semi-transparent architectural film mounted on coloured paper. The five parts of the work are also the titles of five individual art projects posing questions around the issue of power. The first part, *Taking Over*, was an exhibition at Bildmuseet in Umeå (2000) in which I mixed my own work with that of others, and provided the impetus for this dissertation. The second part was *More and More*: ten projects carried out at Liljevalchs konsthall (2002–2003). Part three was the text plantation *Bit by Bit* – literally planted, word for word, in Capetown, Tel Aviv and Umeå – accompanied by a book of the same name (2009) which collected together the documentation of the project and two email-based works about

power and plant life.[22] This dissertation *Step by Step* thus constitutes the fourth part of the larger project *Taking Over*.

The Essay Method

The discovery-led method of research not only embraces the reflective text but also provides an account of an artistic working process. The essay, it seems to me, is an appropriate, tailor-made form for this, and also a standard genre within artistic research. Its *trial and error* approach is congenial to artistic and reflective work. And this sort of examination process is also relatively forgiving to those researchers who cannot, or do not wish to, clothe themselves in academic prose. The *experimental* approach is productive in that it allows for the sort of failure that brings the work to a temporary halt and sets a mirror in front of the researcher, allowing a backward look at the path that led to the failure. Thus the process is highlighted and the account of the attempt can inform the subsequent work.[23]

But the way the essay relates to scholarship and art is not entirely uncomplicated. It can be said to be located between the knowledge requirements of scholarship and the creative capacity of the various branches of art.[24] (And perhaps the same is true of artistic research?) It displays a partiality for voyages of discovery, slips easily between fiction and non-fiction and applauds flashes of inspiration. In the preface to his collected essays, Aldous Huxley draws attention to three central aspects that can in any event be applied to my artistic research.[25] 1. The personal and autobiographical (the 'I' in my texts). 2. The objective, factual, concrete and individual (facts about the works including their contexts but also concrete assertions in the text). 3. The abstract and universal (theories and how the works relate to theory and/or art). Huxley takes the view that an essay need not incorporate all three aspects, but the more the better. He also stresses the quantitative aspect – an essay is, by nature, relatively short. This limits its capacity but, Huxley points out, a *collection* of essays can cover a good deal of ground. I would like to add that an essay collection may also take the form of an anthology, that is to say a collection of essays by a number of different authors. A collection of that kind seems to me rather similar to an exhibition comprising a *collection* of art works, which also reflects one aspect of my work. In my case the essays, taken together, also constitute a kind of themed exhibition on the topic of repetition and retakes. My point of departure is that both the works and the essays are parts of the same practice – that of artistic research. The essays have thus not been generated as answers to the works, and the works are not merely there to exemplify what is discussed in the texts, but both text and work have emerged together in the meeting place provided by artistic research.

Here, both editor and curator have the same function: they bring together a number of works and create a whole that operates as an individual work. The context will illuminate the essays/works in different ways but they can also speak for themselves, and to each other, and have explicit originators. I also consider the essay appropriate for my work because it is a form that occurs increasingly in my work – *Sleeper* could even be seen as an essay collection in which the whole, taken together, really is tangibly greater than the incremental parts. The essay is not only a form of art in itself but also a metapractice, a representation of art, of what is created:

> The basic didactic principle of the essay since Montaigne has been that the style is a form of self-training in the art of scrutinising the basis of what has already been learnt. That is also the starting point for Lukács – and Adorno: 'Gestaltung des Gestalteten', the creation of the created, the formation of what has already been formed. And herein lies the provocation: that the activity oversteps what our own time deems to be good taste. That is where we are: in a situation in which we risk overstepping what could be called 'good taste within scholarship'. The investigation and the critical potential have to follow different rules from those which apply for normal scholarly consensus, since the crucial criterion will reside in the linguistic formulation, the composition and the manner of reporting back. Can the subject tolerate the written word? Can the written word tolerate the subject? Will understanding survive verbal codification?[26]

I believe that interesting works of art do tolerate being talked about, that is, understanding survives verbal codification, not least in the congenial form of the essay. The discussion above touches on the idea that artists cannot, or ought not to, talk about their art, particularly not about work in progress, since the risk is that it will deflate like a burst balloon. This idea that magic evaporates if you bring it out into broad daylight is a problematic one. The claim is often made, but in the years I have spent on my dissertation, and participating in seminars, I have never been aware of any art project damaged by being talked about. Quite the reverse. Historically speaking, artists of many kinds have often worked in groups, criticised one another's work, read out accounts of work in progress, held studio discussions and so on. I would therefore claim that the seminar form in various guises is part of art history, too. I can certainly imagine that particular stages of the working process require concentration and one does not wish to be disturbed, but it is more a case of psychology than poetic theory. I suspect that there are two further reasons behind the fear of the magic evaporating in daylight, one sociological, the other logocentric. I believe that the fear is above all that the aura of mystique which is part of the artistic role is threatened if one talks or writes about an art project in progress. In addition, though the perception of the supremacy of the spoken and written language in our culture may be correct, this does not mean that one should adapt to it. Perhaps the alternative of discussing the issue critically could be one task for artistic research. And perhaps the perception of the vulnerability of an art project to words is based on an unspoken contempt for the capacity of art or the artist for self-defence. Any artist who feels that a work or a project in progress is the target of an ongoing verbal codification or contextualisation ought to be able to respond with a non-verbal codification, i.e. with his or her art. Alternatively, the artist can simply issue a verbal riposte.

One productive way of, as Gunnar D. Hansson puts it, 'overstepping […] "good taste within scholarship"' while somehow not ending up in a clinch with academic tradition is to accept artistic research not only as a hybrid or bridge but also as an *essayistic meeting place* where different traditions and forms of knowledge can come together without necessarily being subsumed into each other.[27] (The individual researcher, too,

can be such a meeting place.) This also avoids the problem intimated in Hansson's text by means of an inclusive notion of coexistence, a notion of artistic research as a kind of social forum. It can then, as does the essay, have a polyphonic element, rather like a round-table discussion. And this can bring about a situation in which everyone is a winner, rather than the miserable *lose-lose* chimera assembled from leftover bits of other things.

Working Strategy, the Aim and Subject of the Dissertation

Since artistic research is thought of as practice-based and the individual artist's way of working is personal, every researcher needs specific, individual research practices.[28] I think of artistic research as a whole as essayistic in nature. According to Arne Melberg, the first basic principle of the essay is that it 'rests on this constant fluctuation between contemplation and activity.'[29] This movement is not only within the texts and the works but is, for me, the movement of artistic research between reading and writing and the practical side: works and exhibitions. This prompted a decision on my part to embark immediately on an art project while setting about the reading and writing at a more measured pace. My motive was a strategic one: it was important to get started, and artistic work is the area in which I feel most comfortable. Once that was underway I could turn to the reading and writing element, of which I have less experience. This has proved a workable method, for me at least.

My adoption of a decidedly pragmatic approach has been fully underpinned by the basic methodology of my supervisor Mika Hannula, as expressed in supervisory sessions. The fundamental idea is to keep moving forward in order not to get stuck. As I understand Hannula, this idea has three important components, which I take as rules of thumb: *Honest dilemma*: this means bringing up and discussing the problems encountered rather than trying to circumvent or gloss over them. (I see this as linked to the *transparency* that I consider essential to research.) Secondly: to follow *the inner logic of the project* and link back to the practical art work: this means taking the demands of one's own project into account. And finally one has to ask the question *what is important to you?* A question that I understand as a development of following the inner logic of the

project and linking back to the practical art work. This means ensuring the research is constantly anchored in one's own artistic practice.

My subject when I applied for a place on the doctoral research course was *repetition and retakes* and the idea of working with micro-essays in both the artistic and the reflective components. Both the subject and the essay method were taken directly from my practical work (which is an important point, since artistic research is practice-based and relies on a notion of formulating unformulated knowledge). The work took its starting point in one particular artwork: *Retake of an Old House*, (2004–2005), called 'lantern lectures', that is to say a slide-based work with a soundtrack. It has its origins in my discovery some years previously that the 'Gotlandic House' – considered to be the original house type on Gotland – is distributed across the island, most of the houses having been built in recent decades. I asked myself in what sense they could then be considered original. When I looked into the issue, it emerged that Gotland's Municipal Architect and Buildings Commission developed this house in the early 1970s as an alternative to prefabricated houses ordered from catalogues, which were not in keeping with the landscape. They bent the rules by imposing conditions on the granting of planning applications and stipulating an architectural style that conformed to one of several approved, as they saw it, traditional house types: the Gotlandic House and the Bole House. They also made plans available for modernised variants of these houses. I asked myself what it would be like to travel through a landscape and find that the same house design constantly recurred, was repeated. I travelled round the island taking pictures of the many examples of the Gotland house and filled a slide carousel. Both the similarities and the differences in the architecture were accentuated by the sheer number of varieties. The soundtrack text comprises micro-essays that revolve round repetition, copying, origins and identity and closely related themes, which are often anecdotal in nature. The text widens out the work by not referring directly to the house types but talking about fundamental human experiences of repetition and

retakes, and a set of basically existential and philosophical problems concerning identity and authenticity. The subjects of the essays include the nationality of plants and animals, autism, a Chinese, full-scale replica of Old Sigtuna and an encounter with a doppelgänger in Siberia.

But working on a dissertation is a constant process of negotiation. The way problems are posed shifts over time, methods change, the subject pitches about, forever showing new sides. Perhaps that is what is meant by research, the fact that the nature of the completed dissertation cannot be predicted but is in a state of flux right up until the final corrected manuscript is sent to the printer. And I soon realised that my subject, *repetition and retakes*, was altogether too wide ranging for me to deal with. So I rearranged my subject description and reshuffled my theme of repetition, making it function as a *catalyst* for my creative, artistic work while also featuring in my text. The works engage with the theme in a specific way – one could say in an applied sense – similar to that in *Retake of an Old House*.

My writing, meanwhile, has evolved to take its starting point in the concept of *intertextuality*. I imagined this would be appropriate for use in discussing both exhibitions and individual artworks, and decided to investigate further. It then transpired that this was Julia Kristeva's variation on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *dialogue*, which is an instance of what he terms *metalinguistics*.[30] I then made a deeper study of his philosophy and found much that would be of use to me. There were, for example, thoughts that related to ideas I had previously touched on in my practical work in two catalogues of exhibitions which I curated and in which I took part.[31] In this way I hope I have succeeded in absorbing my artistic practice into the dissertation and acquiring a language with which to talk about it.

Johan: In Bakhtin's novel theory, the world is not described; the novel is not an instrument of investigation; it is the world.

Andreas: Yes, and the worlds of my artworks are in dialogue with the reflective part of my dissertation. The works and the texts have to a large

extent developed in parallel, interacting with each other. One way of expressing it would actually be that the dissertation text is also a world, so it, too, is a part of, is written into the larger artistic project. As I mentioned, I claim among other things that the writing is a part of my artistic practice.

Johan: There are no rules for analysis; the relationships between the protagonists are above all undecided, incomplete. Is that an idealisation or, in truth, a rather alarming fact?

Andreas: The works live their lives … what I think is awful are the shortcomings of one's own language. We can talk about a great deal, we are standing in front of what we talk about, but language cannot – always – be everything it talks about. Even if one can view the world as language, one cannot master all the varieties of that language. So I am cautious when I talk about specific works and specific exhibitions. But these narratives of theory and practice also constitute a kind of case study: this is how an artist worked in Sweden in the early twenty-first century. By speaking subjectively of one's own activities, one offers information and becomes a potential object for another sort of research.

Generally when I refer in my text to thinkers I mean the extracts cited, rather than whole philosophies. So the text of the dissertation is an attempt to exploit a variety of theories, those of Bakhtin above all, pragmatically and without inflicting violence on them. The aim is to use Bakhtin's texts, for instance, in talking about artistic practice and curatorial work. I attempt to institute a dialogue from a position that is naturally coloured by entirely different assumptions from those that applied for Bakhtin, in terms of genre, aesthetics and politics. The work draws on the hope that today, too, it is possible to talk about artistic work in terms of Bakhtinian thinking, and likewise to reflect Bakhtin's own thoughts with the help of art. This intention to allow theory to develop in relation to creative practice is not in fact that alien to the stance of the inaccessible Bakhtin. I hope that the work will thus be a contribution not only to artistic research but also to Bakhtin scholarship.

Expressed simply: I discuss the role of the artist through both my practice and my theory, primarily with reference to the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, and in addition in my creative work I use the theme of repetition as a catalyst. The thesis also makes the argument for, and is an expression for, considering creative artistic work, curatorship and reflection as a single practice.[32]

My way of talking about art will undoubtedly not be appropriate for all artistic activity. And the concepts 'art', 'curator' and 'artist' are far too broad nowadays to function the same way in every context. As evident from my text and my work, my activity lies much closer to the work of many curators than, for example, that of artists like Julian Opie, Marlene Dumas or Bill Viola. What I mean to say by this is that artistic practices are so widely varying that the general division into curatorial and artistic creative work is no longer meaningful. In considering curatorial and artistic practices I start out from a critical discussion of a conventional view of the artist's role, but also include a discussion of the curator's role. Later on I also make the case for there being no need, in a more philosophical or conceptual sense, to keep these practices separate. Our reason for drawing such a clear distinction between curatorial and artistic practice is presumably sociological, economic and historical. The division of roles may be functional, but the opposite may also apply: the separation of curatorial and artistic practice may be a way of denying the artist's potential for taking part in a public conversation. If there is a greater degree of recognition that curatorial and artistic activity is, or can be, the same practice, then that may have consequences for the way the financing of projects are managed, the way the art, curator and artists are presented in press material and catalogues, who expresses their opinion on the art and how it is done, how the art critics discuss the project, and so on. In this respect, one aspect of the dissertation coincides with the status of artistic research in the field of art. Both are concerned with the positions of art and the artist.

Large numbers of quotations in texts can perhaps in some contexts

be seen as an attempt to prop up the texts on existing authorities. But a lack of quotations also restricts readers' opportunity for making up their minds about particular assertions and it is often difficult to distinguish between an author's own stance and a borrowed one if only a bare source reference is provided. It is my hope that the abundance of quotations will allow the reader to, as it were, read the original texts along with me. The generous quotations also signal my aspiration to reveal the collage-like nature of texts. My dissertation text is at times interrupted by dialogues between me and other people, by emails, letters, quotations and so on. The underlying idea was initially that this was a natural way of showing the character of the working process and acknowledging sources beyond references in books. This kind of writing seems to me to answer better to a real situation than a markedly monologic text. Without exception, the act of creating something comes about in dialogue with others, with oneself and with texts and art. And even though in this case I appear to be the one in control of those other voices, they are intended to indicate a critical level and constitute a kind of cracking or crazing that invites the reader to engage in dialogue or argument. The questions raised need not necessarily be answered, but they are discussed.

In the process of my work I found that the different voices in my text could also illustrate Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of a dialogic metalinguistics, which are central to the dissertation. Opposition is a difference which is the essential prerequisite for a dialogue. 'The basic scheme for dialogue in Dostoevsky is very simple: the opposition of one other person to another person as the opposition of "I" to "the other."'[33]

> **Ämne:** Re: Re:
> **Date:** tisdag 15 september 2009 19.59
> **Från:** Johan Öberg <Johan.Oberg@konst.gu.se>
> **Till:** Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
>
> Hi, aha … but …
> all of us living people, ghosts, dead words and ideas that are curated by you … we are going to get together and confront you one fine day, or night – Palmquist too, Gyllenstierna, Carl and all the others will be there. You make us into types, identities, clichés in your research, but we are individuals, subjects who are only located on the threshold of your works, but also existing in other works and worlds to which you have no access. We shall come down from Vita Bergen park in Stockholm. We shall set up an association, elect a committee and form opinion. Bakhtin will be secretary, and write, Derrida chairman, and speak, and the two of them will, by written and verbal agreement, swap roles at random. Leslie will be head of HR, with responsibility for deciding what is random. As for me, I shall write the rules and be the official checker of the minutes and in charge of contacts with the living – including you, Smiley and Le Carré, Epstein, Hannula etc.
>
> We shall get back to you. For now, we are working on the plan of activity which will be about how we, sleepers, will activate ourselves within your works and take them over from the inside, rename them all "Andreas, sleeper and artistic researcher" and then exhibit them all over the world, at seminars and conferences, as collective works …
> just you wait …
> Johan[34]

Q is an unspecified voice that breaks into the text and questions it for various reasons, some justifiable, some spurious. This character has several functions: it activates a critical level in a very tangible way by means of distancing interruptions; it creates a dialogic thought process; it – sometimes – pushes the text forward by demanding clarifications; it helps to bring the reader closer to the text. The interruptions also give the author a chance to pursue sudden flashes of inspiration: 'Free association artistically controlled – this is the paradoxical secret of Montaigne's best essays.'[35] *Q*'s interjections may also have some entertainment value for both the author and the reader. *Q* is a representative of a large family. Among their number is, of course, Plato's Socrates with his boobytrap-mined rhetoric; other family members include Astrid Lindgren's rumphobs with their mechanical refrain of 'Woffor did un do it'[36], as if from one of the circles of hell; we can also hear the echo from the boy who cried out that the Emperor had no clothes, and his cousin, the

psychotic truth junkie, longing for another fix, often in the form of the unpleasant truth. Not least, *Q*'s voice is coloured by a blitz from the superego (which sometimes has its origins in authentic commentary from other people around). But this extended family naturally also includes the honest questioner, the researcher prompted by curiosity and thirst for knowledge. The conversations with *Q* can also, going beyond the Freudian aspect, be seen as literature, as the outward expression of what Bakhtin calls inner speech, the speech that makes us into human beings, since according to Bakhtin we can only exist through language as we formulate and communicate our experiences in it.

The risk, of course, is that the dialogue, particularly the critical elements, rather than accentuating a critical level will in fact deny it, by anticipating the reader's viewpoints. The author then risks being consigned to a cellar. If that is the case, I hope the reader will pull me out of it:

> Because the dominant of representation in this literary work coincides maximally with the dominant of that which is represented, the formal task of the author can be very clearly expressed in the content. What the Underground Man thinks about most of all is what others think or might think about him; he tries to keep one step ahead of every other consciousness, every other thought about him, every other point of view on him. At all the critical moments of his confession he tries to anticipate the possible definition or evaluation others might make of him, to guess the sense and tone of that evaluation, and tries painstakingly to formulate these possible words about himself by others, interrupting his own speech with imagined rejoinders of others.[37]

Relevance

Q: I find it hard to see the immediate relevance of linking concepts like intertextuality to your artistic work, which seems to me to be basically about other, and more interesting things. The concept of intertextuality once had something to say about how text functions in general terms, but it says nothing concrete about the specific strategies, materials and objects that constitute your work in reality.

Andreas: It is unfortunate, something of a failure, if this text amounts to a reduction of my artistic work.

Q: As I see it, this concept in itself, which was pretty thoroughly threshed out in Swedish literary studies a few decades ago, does not infuse your work with any great energy, and in fact risks draining it of energy.

Andreas: The idea, of course, is not to spend time on a textual theory that has already been done to death, but to find a way of talking about the roles of the artist, the curator and the exhibition. Not a great deal has been said about these in purely theoretical terms, though they have been on the agenda for the past ten or fifteen years. My method has been to discuss the issue in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas about language and the world.

Q: For me, your work is forward-looking, whereas the discussion of text and the novel (which after all is a historically determined form of expression, based on a particular conception of narrative that is quite far removed from your work …) is backward-looking.

Andreas: Meaning that the discussion is at an end? Or the subject itself closed? Even if the discussion you refer to is associated with the Sweden of the 1980s and 90s, I do not consider the approach or the questions at issue to be at an end. When is an interesting idea exhausted? You also seem to share a common misconception of the concept of intertextuality. There is a risk that Julia Kristeva's somewhat limited understanding of Bakhtin's broader philosophical concept of metalinguistics incorporating a dialogic dimension will be taken as the only correct version. You wait and see!

Q: But then is there in fact any art that is *not* embraced by this theorising?

Andreas: No, not if all art is language, but …

Q: … so what are your works actually doing in this dissertation? What is artistic about this artistic research?

Andreas: What is artistic is that they are, specifically, my works and that the text relies to a large extent on my practical experience. Without it, the text would not be possible. The choice of Bakhtin in particular builds on the fact that I as a practitioner saw the possibility of talking theoretically about practice.

Q: So the specific works that feature in the dissertation could be replaced by others?

Andreas: Yes, in a sense, and why not?

Q: To be honest, Bakhtin's philosophy seems to be able to accommodate pretty much anything. Any theoretical structure as flexible as that risks ending up meaning nothing.

Andreas: Bakhtin's philosophy applauds openness and may appear easily accessible and eager to lend itself to analyses in numerous different disciplines.[38] This instrumentalism is in line with this philosophy's claims to be all encompassing. But the ease with which the philosophy can be applied to one thing after another also means it is apt to be misused as a result of superficial interpretation.

Q: Is this relevant?

Andreas: Yes, it may also be interesting to discuss what one should *not* do. The most obvious source for the application of Bakhtin's philosophy to art is his book about Rabelais.[39] It has been widely used – in the West – to discuss power politics. The carnival represents all that is lauded as collective, popular, 'low'; power examined in a distorting looking-glass; satire, the physical and bodily, and so on. It stands as a positive counterpart to the dead, dishonest surface politeness of power and the bourgeoisie. This is not an unreasonable interpretation per se, but there has been a tendency to impose limitations on Bakhtin's concept of carnival by reading it relatively superficially. Bakhtin's philosophy is based in ideas about language and sociability and extends beyond simple ideological standpoints. Michael Holquist points out among other things that in paying homage to the carnivalesque, we often forget Bakhtin's observation that the individual is *condemned* to dialogism.[40] One can also ask oneself if those who talk so enthusiastically about popular carnivalism realise that in Bakhtin's and Rabelais' town square we are all equally immortal and interchangeable. It is my intention later in the dissertation to give examples of the way a reading of Bakhtin can function in the understanding of art and in working with art, which I hope will make the dissertation more relevant for artistic research. Admittedly misreadings can be productive, but not as a matter of course.

Internet searches confirm that the combination of Bakhtin and carnival with contemporary art and art exhibitions is nothing new. One recent example is *Carnival Within. An Exhibition Made in America*. I only know the exhibition from its website, but the introductory text indicates

a carefully prepared project.[41] And of course the concept of carnival can be used this way, as an exponent of popular culture and in contrast to power. I take this example precisely because the project does not seem in any way lazy and because several of the artists are well known and I like their work. The political element of their manifesto is rooted in Barack Obama's talk of change:

> Carnival Within will take as its theme the belief in transformation—the very motto that helped Obama win the election: "Change. The change we need. Change we can believe in." At pivotal moments throughout its complex history, and against many odds, America has shown its capability to evolve and transform itself, never so much as right now, when what often seemed unlikely, even outrageously so, has come to pass: the election of the country's first African-American president, with his promise of sweeping ideational, ethical, and generational change. At the heart of the American aptitude for regeneration and renewal is an against-the-odds belief that a seemingly intractable norm can be waylaid and suspended, that grievous errors can be rectified, and that wondrous new potentials are possible. […] That is exactly what Carnival Within focuses on: an exhibition of American carnivalesque art at a time of profound transformation and catharsis. […] The exhibition will bring together recent works of art made in America which allude to carnivalesque realities: sculptures, installations, paintings, photographs and videos which access, but also seriously transform, carnivalesque showmanship, excess, and spectacle. Within that context the art works touch upon issues of utopianism, faith, racial, gender, and environmental concerns, consumerism, and violence, among many others.[42]

Obama's utopian talk of change is also linked to Bakhtin's idea of flux in the carnivalesque. It seems dubious to link an evolutionary idea with roots in the Enlightenment to Bakhtin's philosophy. The flux that Bakhtin talks about is a living, intertextual web, without direction. Carnival is more like a great, snorting, collective body and ongoing change is its indefinite and directionless life. This body moves within a space across a surface, not along a path. It does not evolve, but rather is characterised by repetition,

since birth and death complete the circle of existence. (I shall return to this later in my text.) I also have my doubts as I look at the pictures of the exhibition. Here, and in other examples I find on the internet, there seems to be a tendency to illustrate carnival with things that look 'carnivalesque'.[43] If there is any point in using carnival in this ideological fashion, I think one should avoid trying to recreate the town square and instead go back to Bakhtin's thinking: dialogism and intertextuality, distance and physicality, the obligation to answer and the freedom to read. If one follows this thread, it seems to me that carnival is rather to be found on the worldwide web than in exhibition halls. There we see precisely those unforeseeable, changing, shrinking linguistic networks and a mixture of virtual and real bodies.[44] More important still is that the carnivalesque lives on in such places as everyday speech and popular culture.[45]

I found another example of this sort of illustrative method in *Bakhtin and the Contemporary Visual Arts*[46], in which Miriam Jordan and Julian Jason Haladyn discuss Deborah J. Haynes' *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts*,[47] which in their view makes a mistake in excluding dialogue and carnival from its discussion. They argue this with reference to an exhibition they mounted: *The Carnivalesque: Videos of a World Inside Out.* The basic notion is a good one, but it gets problematic when they describe the works included in the exhibition. The videos that the authors/curators have chosen are said to be on the subject of the grotesque body in carnivalesque culture.[48] And the works do, literally, incorporate bodies: an artist installing himself in a museum; an artist having sex with an art dealer; an artist, plus attributes, videoed in her own bed; a couple of artists cooking and serving food with some other people. I have not seen the exhibition, but the curators'/authors' understanding of the works give the impression of unnecessary limitation as most of the works restrict themselves to the most obvious – the bodily in the most general sense. Even if Jordan and Jones do say: 'This relationship between artist and viewer is an integral part of all works of art, however, increasingly it is this bodily dialogic that *is* the basis of the entire project.' As I say, I am not at all sure that this is really the case. Making the human body and its activities central to an exhibition does not automatically render it carnivalesque or bodily dialogic. Of course the exhibition may be *about*

carnival, but that is not the same as *being* carnivalesque. What is more, as I will argue later, Bakhtin has a strong element of conceptualising art, which I find lacking here. The crucial thing about art is its linguistic nature, in the broadest sense, and that applies to human bodies, too. The authors also have difficulty distinguishing between art works and artists:

> An extreme example of this manifestation of the spectator's body can be seen in performative works that involve the consumption of food. An example of this is Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Pad Thai* (1990), which celebrates the everyday ritual of preparing food and eating it; in this work he prepares pad thai and serves it to the audience, whose bodily presence as consumers of the food creates and completes the work.[49]

I would argue that this – the spectators eating food prepared by an artist – is *not* an extreme example of the way the body can be involved dialogically and carnivalesquely in a work. There are many other interesting aspects to this work: the attitude to the art institution, the attitude to the work of art, to the artist and to the way food is used. But I have misgivings about the authors' claim that this is an extreme dialogic event. Nor is it plausible or even fruitful to link this performance only to a Bakhtinian dialogical concept and thereby bring relational art under Bakhtin's umbrella. The same set of problems surface in Ron Benner's *Maize Barbacoa* (2006):

> in which he acknowledges the shared and ongoing history of the corn plant in this performance installation, where he roasts corn and serves it to people lined up on a Toronto street.[50] One of the key components in a number of Ron Benner's installations is the eating of corn, which he has grown as part of his garden installations and then harvests and cooks for people as part of his performance; these corn roasts are highly carnivalesque, enacting a profound image of the grotesque body as all of the participants eat corn in a ritual reminiscent of folk culture carnival traditions based around the celebration of food and the harvest. This shared bodily experience highlights the *never finished, never completed* cyclical nature of the body that is always becoming. Through the shared act of

> eating spectators enact Bakhtin's notion of the 'encounter of man with the world, which takes place inside the open, biting, rending, chewing mouth, is one of the most ancient, and most important objects of human thought and imagery. Here man tastes the world, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself'. In this way the body of the spectator or participant becomes the site of artistic creation for Benner. Here we can witness the importance of the dialogic within Benner's art, specifically in terms of the relationship that is developed between artist and viewer or participant, whose interaction literally creates the artwork.[51]

Statements such as 'these corn roasts are highly carnivalesque' drain the energy from the concept of carnival. The curators appear quite simply to have forgotten one important aspect of Bakhtin's theories: the role of the reader. And just as the reader becomes author, so in Bakhtin's terms, the curator becomes artist.

Q: And what about you, then? Is your exhibition or text that much smarter?

Andreas: Modesty forbids me … well, maybe not … But be that as it may, curatorship, and artistic creation, always involve the risk of producing bad work. But I think that in their eagerness to state their case, Jordan and Haladyn have missed the goal. Their starting point was to show that the concepts threshed out here – carnival and dialogue – which they claim Haynes rejects in her book, really are interesting and productive. But I would maintain that their own use of these concepts exemplifies the superficial treatment the concepts sometimes suffer.

Q: And what about you, then?

Andreas: All thematic exhibitions are readings undertaken from a position of power and risk reducing individual works. All interpretation, even within the framework of an exhibition, inflicts some kind of violence on the works by steering them, by reading them. Bakhtin talks in the same way about how we render the Other consummate, we create wholes in order to get to grips with, to understand this incomplete thing that is a human being. And I would say that a good reading of a work does that work good. It can, as we will find Bakhtin and Borges saying later on in this text, enrich the work, improve it.

Q: Is there some special kind of magic involved here?

Andreas: The closest I can get to magic is to talk about intuition based on experience. But I think Jordan and Haladyn make a mistake – albeit a common one – by exhibiting works that all explicitly show bodily activities and then go on to claim the works express ideas about the body. If I found myself working on that kind of theme for some reason, I would immediately ask myself what absence of body would imply, what the opposite of body is, whether a dead and a living body are the same, whether artefacts are corporeal, what the relation is between space and body, between text and body and so on. I would reflect in my exhibition on the corporeal nature of the spectators, I would ask questions about mind and body, machine and body, about word and flesh and grass, about presence and absence/light and darkness and so on.

Q: Bodywork, perhaps?

Andreas: Perhaps not. I think that exhibitions, and individual works, that are good or exciting often build on particular readings – and not the most apparent ones. When that happens, unusual or unseen aspects of existence can be brought out. But as I say, I would not stage an exhibition on the theme of Bakhtin and the body. I simply wanted to point to some other, and in my view more interesting, possibilities …

Q: … more interesting …

Andreas: Yes! It is true that I make extremely instrumental use of Bakhtin, yet my aim is not primarily to discuss Bakhtin, but rather to shed light on art and curatorship. It is high time for the exhibition and the curator to be discussed at a more theoretical level, since the curator has become so important in contemporary art.

Q: And what has that got to do with relevance?

Andreas: As I say, I want to discuss art, the artist, the curator and the exhibition in Bakhtinian terms in a different and more thorough way than has been done before. I contend that my way of understanding of Bakhtin is both productive and plausible, and I argue for that in this text.

Q: Well, we shall see!

Bakhtin and the World Beyond Linguistics

Intertextuality

The philosophy of Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin can be condensed into the concept *metalinguistics*, which encompasses, among other things, the concept of *dialogue*. Psychoanalyst and philosopher Julia Kristeva's version of Bakhtin's concept of dialogue is *intertextuality*, a term she coined in a 1966 essay, in which she introduced him into the West.[52] Her term has the effect of imposing some restrictions on Bakhtin's concept, as it tends to exclude what is not text: the heroes of novels, reading, authorship, art, philosophy and human existence. The concepts are a kind of negative definition of language, trying to point to what happens *between texts* (intertextuality) and *beyond linguistics* (dialogue and metalinguistics). Bakhtin did not want to limit the study of language to linguistics but saw investigations of language as studies in the sociability that is a constant flow between individuals who are themselves in a state of change. In his book on Rabelais he talks, for example, about the carnivalesque town square of medieval times, in which movement is normalising and primary: 'Carnival celebrates the shift itself, the very process of replaceability, and not the precise item that is replaced.'[53] And this homage to Rabelaisian flux is for Bakhtin also an expression of his view of human existence in general.

Metalinguistics is a general concept that highlights the dialogic function of the novel, of other art and of other linguistic phenomena. Linguistics is not able to make the distinction that Bakhtin considers so crucial, between the dialogic and the monologic. Metalinguistics concerns itself with language as it works in dialogic relations, the social character of the word, one might say.[54] A human being can only become conscious with the aid of language, since experiences are formulated in language; Bakhtin's thinking therefore develops into a philosophy of man. That is what makes it a suitable starting point for studying the novel, to take one

example. For Bakhtin, the monologic is a one-way communication in which what is expressed is closed and finished. Like an order. And this includes form of government, relations between people, novels and so on. Bakhtin's ethics are based in not differentiating between theory of knowledge, aesthetics and ethics. A human being's existing is the same as his or her doing, he does not differentiate between action and existence. We come into being by utterances in social, dialogic events. What is morally reprehensible is the monologic, whether in terms of ideology, art or sociability. The novel is in this way not an isolated art form but a sophisticated expression for humanity's being in the world. But defining the world as dialogic exposes a weakness in Bakhtin's philosophy: it is doubtful whether there is really anything that is not dialogic. Bakhtin believes the dialogic and the monologic have differing ontological status. The dialogue is real, unlike the monologue. The monologue is an illusion, or possibly a construction for understanding the dialogue:

> But the monologic utterance is, after all, already an abstraction […] Any monologic utterance […] is an inseverable element of verbal communication. Any utterance – the finished, written utterance not excepted – makes response to something and is calculated to be responded to in turn. *It is but one link in a continuous chain of speech performances*.[55]

One can imagine, for instance, a monologic novel by Tolstoy, which (for reasons other than the fact that it is inhabited by dialogic protagonists) functions intertextually and can be placed into a larger dialogic context. It is therefore more appropriate to speak in terms of the *degree* to which a novel, say, is dialogic than to claim that there are only two alternatives, that it is either dialogic or not.

As I see it, Bakhtin's interest in art in general and literature in particular can be explained by the high degree of linguistic complexity in these art forms, and that for him, language in some sense constructs the world: without a language we cannot communicate and we come into being in dialogues with others. Then the world, too, or at any rate our possibility of understanding the world, takes shape through language. Art is for Bakhtin a kind of linguistic condensation that in a qualified version

might be called *novelness*, which is a quality, a potential for a dialogic event. Through art it is possible to perceive the world in a sophisticated way. 'The world of artistic vision' lies beyond the ordinary world.[56] Bakhtin's employment of the concepts primary (simple) and secondary (complex) *speech genres* is a way of expressing these kinds of difference in the communicating language. The former signifies everyday communication and the latter more qualified variants: artistic expressions, scientific publications and so on.[57]

Metalinguistics, then, was Bakhtin's reaction to linguistics. He was less interested in the more technical sides of language and more preoccupied with its social, communicative, dialogic aspects. By *the word*, Bakhtin means 'language in its concrete living totality, and not language as specific object of linguistics'[58]. The dialogic relations that interest him are extra-linguistic. Dialogue is Bakhtin's philosophical concept for talking about the unique individual's encounter with the Other, about a human being's encounter with the world. Michael Holquist summarises Bakhtin's philosophy as follows:

> dialogism assumes that every individual constitutes a particular place in the master dialogue of existence; he or she is compelled by the structure addressivity (the overwhelmingly social nature of communication) to be responsible for the activity of meaning in his or her local environment. Dialogism conceives that environment as a site of constant struggle between the chaos of events and the ordering ability of language. The effect of order which language achieves is produced by reducing the possible catalogue of happenings which at any moment is potentially endless, to a restricted number that perception can then process as occurring in understandable relations. What happens in an utterance, no matter how commonplace, is always more ordered than what happens outside an utterance. We discharge our responsibility by putting meaningless chaos into meaningful patterns through the authorial enterprise of translating 'life' outside language into the patterns afforded by words by sentences – and above all, by narratives of various kinds […] In other words, we see the world by authoring it, by making sense of it through the activity of turning it into a text, by translating it into finalizing schemes that can order its potential chaos – but only by passing the price of reducing the world's variety and endlessness: novelness is the body of utterances that is least reductive of variety.[59]

It is through dialogical language that we speak, and through linguistic exchange that we exist. Language is fundamental to our existence. Dialogue, actual or potential, is an exchange between the self and the other. We address ourselves to the Other, and we must receive what is addressed to us by ordering it, and limiting, *consummating*, 'authoring' it in language. This dialogic event rests on the third component, the relationship. It is in the spaces between and consequently the social sphere that human beings exist. But this is not entirely painless and there is good reason to note that Holquist takes up the battle between order and chaos that is part of the dialogic endeavour. There are also moral options and failures here.

Another way of expressing this is that the text of a novel has not been invented out of nothing by some free-floating author subject, but is a bearer, in even its smallest component parts, of a huge number of experiences; the reader of the text of a novel is not part of an isolated universe but finds him or herself in a cross-draught of other texts, other experiences.

> Yet, what appears as a lack of rigor is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations: any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double.[60]

Art works carry the potential for a reading, a constantly recreated (hi) story in the same way as words and sentences. And the interpretation, *the way* in which we perceive the world is an important aspect of metalinguistics. Bakhtin's concept of *consummation* is a sort of notion of interpretation. It creates an intelligible and temporary whole, which also means the exclusion of whatever is being deselected at that point. But this crucial aspect is lacking in Kristeva's concept of intertextuality.[61]

Fanny: But remember that for Kristeva, psychoanalysis and the

unconscious are very important. There is something unformulated that has not been captured directly, concretely in the intertextual analysis.

Andreas: Yes, art is not rebuses, not distorted images, like question marks that can be straightened out. Interesting art is often complex. Interpreting is not the same as cracking codes.

Fanny: Intertextuality ought to be seen as one – of many – tools. Kristeva also says, 'We see the problems of death, birth and sex appear'.[62] Even if this alludes primarily to reading, she does refer to existential life, which is the territory of psychoanalysis, among other things. For Kristeva, it generally deals with individuals and their unconscious in relation to the conscious.

Andreas: You are right, relations are a key concept. That is where it all happens, *between* positions. That is why the idea of intertextuality is so dynamic, so refreshing![63] The intertext is the absent text, it is another text which text that we are reading reaches out to. This lack creates energy in the reading act; the words, the sentences and the narrative, too, are like railway carriages trying to couple themselves to other carriages and engines. The presence, recognition and communication that take place in the reading act also create this kind of yearning or, at any rate, tangible absence.

David: Wonder if there is a difference of emphasis here. Kristeva has (or develops) an idea of 'undisciplined' *subjects*, while Bakhtin thinks more in terms of an 'undisciplined' world 'beyond' the order of speech.

Even if the intertextual understanding focuses primarily on the reception of a literary work, it can also be used to deepen our understanding of the author and the writing process and, I would claim, of artistic work in general; both of individual works of art and of exhibitions. The reading act can never be objective or static, but is always an event in time and space. This means that a text is understood in differing ways by reader and author, but also by different readers, or by the same reader at different times and in different contexts. The text of a novel carries an unlimited number of possibilities. In her essay on Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva describes words or sentences in a literary text as the intersection between a horizontal axis (the reader's and author's positions) and a vertical axis (the history of the word's use).[64] The reader, or literary scholar, can be said – temporarily – to fix the parts of the text in a crosshair: a spatial and

temporal position that Bakhtin terms *chronotope*. This is a concept he introduced as an instrument of literary study, inspired by another theory in vogue at the time, Einstein's theory of relativity.

> […] we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature […][65]

In his essay 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', Bakhtin analyses literary history with the aid of the heroes' positions in space and time.[66] The chronotope of the heroes/text constitutes genres in Bakhtin's analysis: the events of novels have different relations in time and space depending on which genre they belong to. In some historical genres, for example, events occur for no apparent reason, while in others there are clear causal relationships between the various events.[67] These chronotopes enter into a dialogue with both the author and the reader. In addition to this, the positions of both reader and author are unstable, in a state of flux. By this he means that the reader, the reading and the author are also chronotopic and that they are always perpetually shifting products of their own history and that of their surroundings. The same is also true of the text. The reader and the individual, on the other hand, are seen by Bakhtin as unique, occupying a unique place in time and space.[68] Bakhtin thus shares with Roland Barthes the notion of the text as a kind of meeting place:

> In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach,* they are indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination unless by throwing a dice) […][69]

The text, then, is a sort of central station with round-the-clock activity: people arrive alone or in groups, they are on their way home, or their way somewhere else, they are lost and cunning, hungry, unwell, big or small … To this we must add energy, the density that creates a (good, novelistic) work. Another image for this meeting place is a more violent event incorporating the struggle between order and chaos described by Holquist.[70] This could be the multiple pile-up that is the starting point for the British television series *Collision*, in which we follow the activities of the various car passengers up to the moment of the crash.[71] A number of disparate, individual narratives fuse into a single event, which then no longer seems random but appears to be a consequence of a large number of other acts. I do not think Bakhtin would sympathise with the random meaning of text that Barthes finds in the ideal text. He is not a relativist in that sense. But I can see that Barthes ends up where he does because he, unlike Bakhtin, is drawn to linguistic technicalities. Be that as it may, I see this flux as the nub of Bakhtin's view of the author, the reader and the novel, and take it as the starting point for my discussion of what an artist, author, curator, observer, reader and a work are. For me it is a mixture of uncertainty and lack of stability, and the opportunities generated by this irresolution. In Bakhtin, lack of stability is thus built on the conviction that there is a position, fixed over time and space, from which to perceive reality. But it is not a question of total flux for Bakhtin, more a tension between what is stable and unstable at that moment. Holquist's way of describing this is that everything is interwoven, everything has an effect on everything else: '[…] for everything will depend on how the relation between what happens and its situation in time/space is mediated. That is to say, not only are particular happenings subject to different interpretations – for instance, is a battle won or lost? The very question of whether an event has occurred at all is already an act of interpretation.'[72] The reader's interpretation writes a narrative and the author is then also a reader, since the words are not invented out of nothing in the course of writing. They already exist, and are organised during writing. Here, Bakhtin's and Barthes' thinking coincides. The reader is not a passive consumer; writing is a kind of creation, the production of a text: 'It [reading] is a form of work […]' (Barthes)[73], or […] 'the listener becomes the speaker' (Bakhtin).[74]

But the initial relaxed stability and absence of fixed points, as in the JAS GRIPEN military fighter, provides us with all the necessary requirements for acting, organising and constructing ourselves and the world. GRIPEN is designed not to be aerodynamic but to extract itself *from* the direction of movement. This is compensated for by a computerised steering mechanism that constructs an artificial stability. The advantage of this system is that it allows swift changes of course and very low air resistance. This combination of course stability and the possibility of improvisation also seems an ideal position for an artist, since the focus of artistic work is action (and formulating ideas is of course also action).

Stabilisation

For Bakhtin, the novel is a whole in which a kind of concentrated complexity is an important quality, and that is what he calls novelness. It is a potential, the precondition for, and the possibility of, realising aesthetic value. And the potential can be greater or smaller, depending on context. Exactly what this concentration comprises is hard to specify, as is aesthetic value in general. But I work on the assumption that Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, have greater aesthetic value than some simple cheerleader's chant. Even if one accepts such an assumption, fresh questions arise about the aesthetic value of a work if one joins Bakhtin in understanding the work as being in flux, dependent on such factors as the 'reader's' capacity. How is one to perceive different works of art as better or worse if they are in some sense created anew with every dialogic event? It is not possible for me to answer these fundamental questions. On the other hand I can, with Bakhtin, find parameters beyond the work-author-reader relationship which are greater than the individual work and which influence how it is understood and evaluated. The way I see it, they stabilise the individual works so they are not free floating and in need of an entire remaking at every 'reading'. And for me, this stabilisation can be both a general philosophical stance building on coherence, and an expression of the way individual works function in an exhibition context. (One such notion of coherence, for example, is that argued for by Mats Rosengren, which seems generally plausible, not least where artistic research is involved.[75] The idea of a doxa, a discourse or a context

is particularly appropriate for artistic research, not least for my project.) Bakhtin's dialogism enables me to discuss this sort of stabilisation.

If one visualises the different, individual chronotopes of the reader, author, and text as in flux, then they are stabilised in encounters with larger social and historical chronotopes. Holquist expresses Bakhtin's view as follows:

> dialogism does not assume that either the author or the reader is absolutely free to construct his or her own relation between a pattern and its distortion. It argues that the time/space relation of any particular text will always be perceived in the context of a larger set of time/space relations that obtain in the social and historical environment in which it is read. This emphasis on the text's groundedness in a social and historical context *at every point of existence* is one of dialogism's distinctive features.[76]

This is an idea akin to structuralism, where the component parts are seen through the structure, where the text is stabilised in a structure greater than itself. But Bakhtin's stance is more like what we know today as post-structuralist. He argued that the parts themselves can exert an influence on the whole, on the structure. One way he did this was by taking an interest in the child learning theories developed by Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), partly as a critique of Piaget's determinism, which is similar in structure to Ferdinand de Saussure's division into *langue* (linguistic structure/developmental schedule) and *parole* (individual speech/individual development). Parole is one instance of langue, but cannot change this greater whole. A child's learning and development were previously believed to be the same thing, or at any rate connected, in that *development* accelerates *learning*. 'Individual children were conceived as local instances of a general algorithm.'[77] Vygotsky's revolutionary idea was that learning could also accelerate development! This meant at least two important things: that the individual's (the instance's) own efforts will influence development (structure); and that this work is carried out in dialogue, usually with the mother. According to Vygotsky, the small child's inner chaos is ordered into a personality from the outside, through the authoritative speech of the mother (as the author's organises language into

a novel?!). This is not a case, however of the child as a passive recipient; the process is one of dialogic translation, in which complex, adult speech is interpreted by the relatively undeveloped child, thus unlocking potential. To speak with J.M. Lotman, this can of course be seen as an intertextual event![78] And I believe this dialogic event can also be understood as what happens in comprehending relations between a curatorial theme and the individual works in an exhibition. The theme and the curatorial input can then be likened to the author, or Vygotsky's authoritative mother in relation to the works. But the works harbour their own prospects of novelness. And the way the curator brings such a prospect to life can be said to stabilise the work; it exhorts the 'reader' to understand the work from a particular point of view.

As has been stated, Bakhtin was something of a post-structuralist *avant la lettre*, who turned things round and located the creation of structure and genre in Saussure's category of *parole*, at the micro level, in everyday speech, rather than in *langue*. Though he did think that there is also a mutual, dialogic influence between structure and instance.[79] His idea is that everyday language is freer and more variable, and is therefore prior to institutional languages. He calls the former *primary speech genres*. And genres, generally speaking, are structures or wholes that stabilise individual texts, as it were. They are norms, something general to which the individual text relates.[80] The text is written into the genre and the reader relates to the genre. The essential component in this context is that instance and structure operate dialogically and stabilise the text, though Bakhtin did, over time, slightly adjust his opinion on precisely which stable norms the individual text was in dialogue with: 'The pole of invariant norm assumes different guises throughout Bakhtin's career: among others, it sometimes appears as self, as story, or more to the point for our purpose, as generic chronotope.'[81] This sort of relationship between structure and instances of structure can be carried over to our understanding of an exhibition situation. It is a notion of coherence in which the parts are defined within the system in relation to each other and to the whole. 'The story', for example, could be a curatorial theme.

Bakhtin's dialogic philosophy of language and the critique of structuralism also found dialogic expression when he aimed his criticism directly at

Saussure's influence on the Soviet formalists. And Holquist adds that Soviet Marxism embraced Saussure's emphasis on impersonal, general structures because they fitted so well into its political system of state control.[82]

There was another interesting attempt to stabilise the intertextual flux, and that was made by Kristeva in her essay *'Nos deux', or a (Hi)story of Intertextuality*, dedicated to literary theorist Michael Riffaterre. There, Kristeva sets out her view of psychoanalysis and intertextuality, and outlines her own and Riffaterre's method of anchoring the interpretation of texts so they cannot be interpreted just anyhow.[83] She believes intertextuality as a method has a tendency to leave the way open for an unproductive relativism. How is it then possible for reading to be valuable and truthful:

> But since a mere competence does not guarantee a necessary appropriateness of the performance, leaving the way open to different uses and abusive exploitations of the text, by an external knowledge, something able to make the act of interpreting valid and truthful need to be found.[84]

Like Riffaterre, Kristeva sees the text's salvation from encroachment as lying in one unconscious element of the reading act. This is the reader's drive to find another text – the intertext – beyond the immediate text. This text is written into the immediate text as an absence. And this sense of loss, and longing for the absent intertext – frustrates the reader and generates drive.[85] Riffaterre formulated this drive in what he termed a doughnut theory, in which the hole in the middle represents the loss of meaning, what is absent. Interpretation then consists of eating round the hole, an absence that is thus encircled by means of negative definition, as it were. Intertextual relations thereby generate a compulsive searching process that Riffaterre describes as an attempt to fill the empty hole in the middle of the doughnut with a little round piece that has been missing: the missing text: the intertext. The reading act is in this way understood as an event in some kind of state of shortage, driving the reader on in the hunt for the intertext.

Bakhtin takes a sideways look at this absent presence in words, referring to '[…] the peculiar interruptions in speech […] The rejoinder is not actually present, but its shadows, its trace, falls on his speech, and that shadow, that trace is real.'[86] Kristeva transfers this image of the reader

and the text to the spirit of analysis. The neurotic and the text have a shared capacity for containing ambivalence, suppressed information and so on. The reader of the text, like the neurotic, seeks healing and integration, seeks to fill the hole in the middle of the doughnut![87] Interestingly enough, Bakhtin, too, finds that drive and sense of loss are propelling forces for the heroes of novels: 'The heroes themselves, it turns out, fervently dream of being embodied, they long to attach themselves to one of life's normal plots.'[88] That is thus the price the heroes have to pay for the dialogic qualities of the novel. (I imagine that a monologic novel, despite the lack of embodiment, would by contrast be able to offer them a stable, non-neurotic whole in which to rest, at the cost of the lack of freedom implied in being inserted into a single voice.)

Kristeva and Riffaterre's method of stabilising the text is a remarkable and amusing application of psychoanalysis in which neurosis is accorded the role of *primus motor*. The conclusion is that nothing can be changed beyond the text since what is missing cannot be changed as it then loses its fit and thus its function – the empty space in the middle of the doughnut. And this immutability, Kristeva refers to it as timelessness, can be said to stabilise the text and save it from being relativised. It is hard to take a view on how correct this argument is. But there is something plausible, or at any rate fruitful, in the model which ties in with ideas around intertextuality played out in relationships. And, crucially, I understand absence or lack, or negative definitions generally, as *temporary* demarcations, since every reading is in some sense unique. (If they are not unique, the empty space consists of a prefabricated mould, a template, which only allows for one exclusive, correct answer.)

These demarcations might arise, for example, in a temporary understanding of a work in an exhibition, but also of an exhibition as a whole. The neurotic energy generated by lack is inexhaustible (as long as the exhibition visitors or works are not cured!). Even though a work's intertext can be related to another work in the same exhibition, that is not enough to satisfy the drive or craving; neurotic longing will discover some other state of shortage and the web will continue to be spun. The works are attracted to each other as if magnetically, and also to works that are not present or to other phenomena in space and time, beyond the momentary exhibition context.

Temporarily organising the world in this way also points us back to Bakhtin's ideas of how the Self and the Other perceive each other by means of some kind of ordering and fixing, which he terms *consummation*. Bakhtin's expression for this is *the architectonical*. And as I understand it, this ordering happens unconsciously, automatically. There is no possibility of understanding the world, or perceiving one's own self, without this activity or function. For Bakhtin, this ordering is dependent on other subjects: '*to be* means *to communicate'*.[89] I see this as some sort of creative activity. As for Bakhtin, he elevates it to a higher level in art, particularly in good literature.[90] Art, or at any rate good art, is then a heightened form of being and of communication. It is dialogic. Naturally the creation of good art can in part be intuitively unformulated. But it can also be consciously reflective. And as I understand it, Bakhtin's dialogic metalinguistics also encompasses that notion of conscious creation. Architectonic ordering could thus, for example, include working on a piece of art or an exhibition.

A High Degree of Consciousness

My starting point, then, is that we can imagine it plausible for one to construct intertextual or dialogic relations consciously.

Q: I don't imagine for a moment that one can do that, so your whole project falls flat! Kaput! Intertextuality is a quality in texts but also a theory of reception and a method of analysis, a way of reading and interpreting, but not a manual for creativity. Intertextual relations are unintentional in character. Here it is, in black and white:

> Intertextuality is, in a sense, at this stage of its history, impossibly freighted with meanings and uses; the intertextual networks and chains of significance set going by the concept intertextuality are now almost impossible to contain, cover and summarize. It is therefore important to try to clarify what intertextuality is not: intertextuality should not be, but frequently is, used to refer to literary relations of *conscious influence* (between, for example, Samuel Beckett and James Joyce, or P. B. Shelley and William Wordsworth). Intertextuality should not be, but frequently is, used to refer to the *intentional allusion* (overt or covert) to, citation or quotation of previous texts in literary texts.[91]

Andreas: Yes, Allen wrote his doctoral thesis and a whole book on intertextuality, and seems sensible. But as you may know, there are also other opinions in this subject area.

Q: I still maintain that your project falls flat, because after all, you acknowledge Allen as an authority. Intertextuality cannot be created consciously. Cheerio!

Andreas: Well I shall ask him, and then we'll see.[92]

> **From:** Andreas Gedin [mailto:a.gedin@telia.com]
> **Sent:** 23 October 2007 13:49
> **To:** Allen, Graham
> **Subject:** Reflexivity in intertextuality?
>
> Dear Dr. Allen,
> I am a Swedish PhD student in Fine Arts at Valand School of Fine Arts, The University of Gothenburg, Sweden. At the moment I am studying intertextuality and have with great interest read your article on this subject. Especially this section: 'It is therefore important to try to clarify what intertextuality is not: intertextuality should not be, but frequently is, used to refer to literary relations of *conscious influence* (between, for example, Samuel Beckett and James Joyce, or P. B. Shelley and William Wordsworth). Intertextuality should not be, but frequently is, used to refer to the *intentional allusion* (overt or covert) to, citation or quotation of previous texts in literary texts.'
> If I understand you rightly, it means that intertextuality is not a tool for constructing literary texts but to analyse them. On the other hand I am reading 'Semiotics, the Basics' by Daniel Chandler. He is referring to Gérard Genette who lists intertextuality as a subtype of transtextuality and defines it as: *quotation, plagiarism, allusion*. Genette is obviously referring to conscious ways to use intertextuality. Chandler continues and adds different features of intertextuality and one of them is reflexivity: *reflexivity*: how reflexive (or self-conscious) the use of intertextuality seems to be (if reflexivity is important to what it means to be intertextual, then presumably an indistinguishable copy goes beyond being intertextual).[93] In my project I try to relate intertextuality to the act of curating contemporary art shows and the aspect of reflexivity is crucial. My

question to you is: do you think that it is possible to consciously create an intertextual artwork? And if so, is it a proper or reasonable way of using the notion of intertextuality?
I am looking forward to hear from you.
Best Regards,
Andreas Gedin

Ämne: RE: Reflexivity in intertextuality?
Datum: Tuesday 23 October 2007 15.50
Från: Allen, Graham <g.allen@ucc.ie>
Till: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>

Dear Andreas,
Thanks for your interesting email. My answer comes in the way I organise my book, *Intertextuality*, The New Critical Idiom, Routledge, 2000. Basically, that book is divided into: origins and the post-structuralist account of intertextuality (which would be fundamentally against notions of intentionality in its use of the term); 2. structuralist and other approaches (such as those of Harold Bloom) in which the term is used for more overtly intentional practices. The answer to your question is then it depends whether you follow a structuralist-inspired use of the term, such as the one used by Genette or whether you follow a more post-structuralist understanding of the term such as those to be found in Barthes and Kristeva. The word intertextuality, in other words, has been employed by different theoretical movements which are in themselves somewhat incompatible: as a consequence there are rather contradictory definitions and uses of the term, such as those to be found in Genette and Barthes (two uses of the term which cannot be reconciled, you have to choose between them). I'm not going to say what you should choose (and of course one chooses in subtle, non-totalising ways). I hope that helps.
Regards,
Graham

Ämne: Re: Reflexivity in intertextuality?
Datum: tisdag 23 oktober 2007 19.18
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: "Allen, Graham" <g.allen@ucc.ie>

Dear Graham,
Thanks a lot for a quick reply!
You have probably read Kristevas novel, 'The Samurai'. I am just finishing my reading and I believe it is obvious that she is eagerly trying to write a dialogical novel open for intertextual understanding. (And the Bakhtian dialogical approach must be able to be conscious) And at one point she meta-describes the novel (and the History) composed as the contours of a star. The story going back and forth from a centre, separating the arms of the star from each other.[94] So, when studying intertextuality it creates a consciousness about certain aspects, which are difficult to escape when you create art. […]
Best,
Andreas

(The concept of intertextuality is evidently subject to different modes of reading.)

From: Andreas Gedin [mailto:a.gedin@telia.com]
Sent: Fri 12/10/2010 11:06
To: Allen, Graham
Subject: Re: Reflexivity in intertextuality?

Dear Graham,
I am finishing my dissertation in artistic research and I am including comments, e-mails etc. Do you mind if I include your e-mail?
Best,
Andreas

From: Allen, Graham <g.allen@ucc.ie>
Sent: Fri 12/10/2010 17:06
To: Andreas Gedin
Subject: Re: Reflexivity in intertextuality?

Dear Andreas,
that's fine, you can use that, although I would perhaps temper my concluding statements about having to choose between Barthes and Genette, so you might need to include this email as well!
Good luck with it,
regards
Graham

I prefer Gérard Genette's definition, under the collective title of *transtextuality*, which includes intertextuality and various conscious ways of establishing intertextual connections:

> Intertextuality: quotation, plagiarism, allusion;
> Paratextuality: the relation between a text and its 'paratext' – that which surrounds the main body of the text – such as titles, headings, prefaces, epigraphs, dedications, acknowledgements, footnotes, illustrations, dust jackets, etc.;
> Architextuality: designation of a text as part of a genre or genres (Genette refers to designation by the text itself, but this could also be applied to its framings by readers);
> Metatextuality: explicit or implicit critical commentary of one text on another text (metatextuality can be hard to distinguish from the following category);
> Hypotextuality (Genette's term was hypertextuality): the relation between a text and a preceding 'hypotext' – a text or genre on which it is based but which it transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends (including parody, spoof, sequel, translation).[95]

In order not to limit myself unnecessarily, I include Genette's definition in mine. And readers and writers are not limited to readers and writers

of texts but are to be perceived, as I use the terms, in a wider sense, including not only artists and observers but also the general philosophy of a human employed by metalinguistics.

What is attractive about Genette's variants of the concept of intertextuality (quotation, plagiarism and allusion) in this context is that these three types of intertextuality are examples of *conscious* connections to other texts, something ruled out in Allen's definition above. This definition makes it possible to speak, for example, of intertextual, consciously calculated relations between the works in a curated exhibition. And this is not just a conceptual exercise, but important in the context. The umbrella concept of transtextuality makes it easier to understand a curated exhibition and individual works of art. So it is a matter of not losing the original force inherent in the term intertextuality. Chandler defines different qualities in his sub-category intertextuality. He does not really follow Genette, since he includes qualities that are *beyond* the writer's control:

> *structural unboundedness*: to what extent the text is presented (or understood) as part or tied to a larger structure (e.g. as part of a genre, of a series, of a serial, of a magazine, of an exhibition, etc) – factors which are often not under the control of the author of the text.[96]

David: I am having a bit of trouble understanding the conflict here. For me, the term intertextuality is a quality of (or in the nature of) the text. One can naturally then add references to be included in the intertextual relations that always arise/are an integral part. The whole discussion/distinction feels like a step back into 'the intentional fallacy'. Suddenly the writer's/artist's *intention* is important!? (And what do we know with any certainty about that, in most cases?)

Andreas: It is not my intention to rehabilitate the privilege of the artist subject to understand his or her works. On the other hand, it is important for me in the practice of artistic research to stress that I, as an artist, am also working consciously, like a curator does. So it is the *process* I am referring to, not the work. That means we avoid the intentional fallacy. The conflict, of course, arises from the fact that the artist is so often still viewed as the noble savage.

Chandler's term is also broader and includes both Genette's consciously constructed intertextuality and Allen's unconscious variety. Kristeva's – and Bakhtin's – view of reflexive intertextual works is harder to grasp.

Nils: Yes, because it is a question of conditions for all texts.

Andreas: Well yes, but it does not exclude the conscious construction of relations of this kind. One way of teasing it out is that they both take a moral view of aesthetics and reflexivity. Both Bakhtin and Kristeva say more or less directly that a dialogic novel not only can be created but *should* be: aesthetics and ethics coincide.[97] And to a direct question, through a mutual friend Fanny Söderbäck, she answers the question of the feasibility of consciously creating intertextual connections.[98]

> **Ämne:** intertextualitet
> **Datum:** torsdag 28 augusti 2008 14.05
> **Från:** Fanny Soderback <fannymatilda@yahoo.com>
> **Svara till:** fannymatilda@yahoo.com
> **Till:** Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
> **Konversation:** intertextualitet
>
> Andreas,
> back in New York again, after a few intensive days in France. unfortunately there was not much time to talk philosophy […] but I was able to ask her your first question, about the possibility of conscious intertextuality. she answered simply that it is possible – that a writer or an artist is always on an unconscious level creating and entering into intertextual connections, but that this can also be done consciously. She firmly maintained, though, that the former (the unconscious kind) is far more effective and important. The latter is possible but does not have such far-reaching consequences. Hope that helps!
> all best,
> Fanny

In Kristeva's novel *The Samurai*, too, I find an explicit expression of a consciously formulated will to create what Bakhtin calls a dialogic novel which consequently wants to be a suitable object for intertextual analyses. Olga is Kristeva's alter ego:

> The advantage of a life (or a story) in the shape of a star – in which things may move without necessarily intersecting and advance without necessarily meeting, and where every day (or chapter) is a different world pretending to forget the one before – is that it corresponds to what seems to be an essential tendency in the world itself: its tendency to expand, to dilate. […] So the life of Olga and her friends can only be recounted in a novel shaped like a star; too bad about the people who prefer the wheel to come full circle.[99]

Here, Kristeva is expressing her literary programme in a metareflection that appears to be a literised variant of Bakhtin's programme. The mass of text continuously grows and the right thing to do is to avoid the linear narrative of the monologic novel.

A further important aspect of the novel in the Kristeva quotation above is that she refers to it as expanding in space rather than developing over time. Even if time appears to dominate the chronotope, the concept of intertextuality and the dialogic very clearly informs and illuminates spatial aspects of literature. Nor do I think it a coincidence that Bakhtin employs the term architectonic, which is spatial, for talking about the dialogic organisation of wholes. Geographers Holloway and Kneale show the spatial aspect (topos) in Bakhtin's idea of dialogism.[100] They point to the importance of *law of placement* for Bakhtin, the fact that the dialogic subject is always located in a space, that the dialogic event is therefore spatial. And this space is linked to a simultaneity (kronos); it is an event in time. In this context I also want to stress that intertextuality is predicated on a notion of events playing out *between* reader and text, between author and hero and so on. For Bakhtin, these are a form of social event, and I cannot conceive of these without some kind of spatiality. Overall, then, I take the view that it is both possible and fruitful to talk of spatial events such as exhibitions in intertextual, dialogic terms.

II

The Originator

A Dead Discussion

Bakhtin took an interest in the Marburg school and its focus on process, on the genesis of the world. As a Neo-Kantian, he positions his early texts close to the idea of perception as ordering, and sees this, in turn, as an aesthetic operation: 'In those essays, the individual subject is conceived as similar to the artist who seeks to render brute matter, a thing that is not an art work in itself (independent of the artist's activity), into something that is the kind of conceptual whole we can recognise as a painting or a text.'[1] Bakhtin's view of artistic creation is thus intimately tied in with his general philosophy. His interest in the reader as a creator in the act of reading does not mean the author is considered dead. I see it rather as a case of the author and reader repeatedly changing places, or at any rate of their positions not being clearly separated, resembling each other and being permeable to each other, so they are interchangeable.

Q: But the author exists! I can read about authors every day; I organise them by surname in my bookshelf. And so on.

Roland Barthes: To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.[2]

Q: But wait a minute! There may be no author, but Barthes seems to be implying that there was, because *who* is dead otherwise?

Andreas: Perhaps we can say that the author concept we generally use does not work particularly well.

Q: He wrote about the 'death of the author'!

Andreas: Okay. I agree. No matter if one is an author or an artist, regardless of what Barthes actually intends, one has to accept that fact

of someone doing something. An author writes a text. Then one can, like Bakhtin, call its functions into question. His understanding of the artist's function was as a 'first artist' adopting an ethical position through his or her creative work – form with a content.[3]

Michel Foucault: If an individual were not an author, could we say that what he wrote, said, left behind in his papers, or what has been collected of his remarks, could be called 'work'?[4]

Andreas: I think one of the major problems in establishing what an originator of an artistic work is stems from the individual-centred cult of genius that inevitably adheres to such a figure. If we are talking about, say, an architect instead, it is much easier to see other perspectives. It is very obvious, for example, that an apartment block built in Stockholm in the 1880s would bear the stamp not only of an individual but also of a time and of the material chosen, the workmen who carried out the work and the preferences, tastes and budget of whoever commissioned the building. But one is naturally not limited to a choice between Barthes' clear provocation and a Romantic genius.

Q: Excuse me, but all that stuff about the dead author feels like a dead discussion, to put it mildly. I can't summon up the energy to go through all that again. Change track!

Andreas: Since I have been working as an artist for over twenty years, some of the issues still engaging me may feel somewhat passé to others. But it seems to me that Barthes' provocation, along with many of theories that dominated the 1980s and 90s, has met a strange fate. They have been in part assimilated, in part glossed over within an artistic and intellectual discourse orientated towards our own age. They have also become part of our understanding of art and literature beyond this discourse. The same is true of the approach to philosophy, in which there is a distinct, though smaller, group embracing a so-called Continental tradition, while the field is dominated by Anglo-Saxon attitudes.

Q: Ho ho, yes yes …

Andreas: And setting aside Barthes, it is Bakhtin who interests me most. And he has not killed off the author or originator.

Q: No, just disarmed him.

Andreas: … or her …

Q: And who are you, in that case? Regurgitating these dusty old assertions in writing?

Andreas I could just as well ask who *you* are, come to that. And anyway, the discussion of who the originator is has become increasingly pertinent in this world of downloads, uploads and copyright feuds.

Q: Well that's no problem for you, is it? After all, there are no authors in your world.

Andreas: For one thing, I never maintained anything like that. And for another, I see this as Barthes thinking of the author as one of the participants in a round dance, rather than a solitary creator in a pulpit. In any case Bakhtin, who I am following here, does not make a case for the reader/listener being identical with the author. The listener has an indispensible position all of his or her own.[5] Here Bakhtin argues, half a century *avant la lettre*, against Barthes' provocative declaration of 'the death of the author'.[6] Barthes' argument, which was also to be found among Bakhtin's contemporaries, is that literature consists of text, and nobody owns the words[7]: 'The text is a tissue of quotations […] His [the author's] only power is to mix writings'[8]. Consequently, words only become literature when they are activated by the reader at the moment of reading. The reader becomes for Barthes the author as Bakhtin has described him, the person organising existing material: '[The reader] is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.'[9] The situation Barthes describes appears to be limited to a great extent to things happening in the reader. For Bakhtin, reading is a further social event: 'A work of art, understood as *organized material*, as a thing, can have significance only as a physical stimulus of physiological or psychological states or it must assume some utilitarian, practical function.'[10] Kristeva, who of course is active as a psychoanalyst, expresses this in terms of Bakhtin's author function implying the institution of a place with potential for the reader:

> [The writer] becomes an anonymity, an absence, a blank space, thus permitting the structure to exist as such. At the very origin of narration, at the very moment when the writer appears, we experience emptiness. We see the problems of death, birth and sex appear when literature touches upon

> this strategic point that writing becomes when it exteriorizes linguistic systems through narrative structures (genres). On the basis of this anonymity, this zero where the author is situated, the *he/she* of the character is born.[11]

The author here is simultaneously a space, and one who leaves space.[12] It is in this space that the author organises his/her material, and then hands the stage over to the audience. This living duality is typical of Bakhtin's way of thinking and is reminiscent of deconstruction, to which I shall return. A creative event is an organisation in time: 'The author assumes an answerable position in the event of being, deals with the constituents of this event, and, hence, the work he produces is also a constituent of that event.'[13] Here I understand Bakhtin to mean that the author creates a moment in time, and consequently is part of that time. The readings then become creative because they take place in 'the event of being' on other occasions. The time aspect is important, and since every moment (and event) is by definition unique, then reading is, too. These creative dialogical courses of events thus unfold in both time and space, in a chronotope.

Kristeva's interest in the psychoanalytical and understanding of Bakhtin's author as a venue, a place where something is played out, evidently has its merits. But Bakhtin's formulations on the topic of the author as a being on the boundary[14] – simultaneously present and absent – is more fruitful still.

> Thus, life does not act upon the utterance from without, it permeates it from within as that unity and communality both of the being which surrounds the speaker, and, of the essential evaluations which grow out of the being, evaluations which are necessary to any meaningful utterance. Intonation lies at the border of life and the verbal part of utterance, as it were pumps the energy of the real-life situation of the discourse, it imparts active historical movement and uniqueness to everything that is linguistically stable. Finally, the utterance reflects in itself the social interaction between the speaker, the listener and the hero; it is the product and fixation in verbal material of their living intercourse.[15]

This speaker is a more active instance than Kristeva's desolate space and

can therefore house more of the artist's conscious construction. And it seems as if this more active author can also be placed more distinctly in space. It is a presence, by contrast with Kristeva's Bakhtinian author who acts through absence.

The Editor and the Curator

If we make the argument for the work of a curator as artistic work, this generates some interesting problems around social positions. The artist will, for example, often have to sacrifice his or her Romantic aura but will instead be treated as the curator's intellectual equal. The curator for his or her part may lose some element of control over both the privileges of formulation and authority over the project's means of production. I therefore believe that there are sociological and ideological reasons for wanting to keep the curator position intact by dividing it into an administrative exhibition-maker and an artistic, creative curator. It could initially seem wise to adopt French film director François Truffaut's separation of a director who carries out a piece of directorial workmanship on the basis of someone else's script (*metteur en scène*) and the autonomous creator (*auteur*) who writes the script, directs, edits and so on. Heinish and Pollak wrote about the new curator role back in 1989, defining it as the same as that of the auteur in film.[16] Their point of departure was an exhibition at the Centre Pompidou – *Vienne à Paris*, 1988. The auteur/curator as defined by them is very similar to the *freelance curator* who has played a dominant role in the western art scene since the 1990s. This is a thoroughly established position today.[17] And of course history can be written that way. Professional roles change over time. But the line of reasoning that I, with Bakhtin, have adopted puts the question in a different light. If one, like him, views art as language, and language as existing material organised by an author or a curator, then there is no essential distinction between a director directing his own script or someone else's. The essential thing is whether the director is good at directing or not, whether he breathes life into the project, as it were. The script is everyone's property by the time it sees the light of day. The actors make use of the language they are offered, in collaboration with director, colleagues, photographers and so on. The language they speak and the actions they

carry out take their places in a shared social space, regardless of who first put the script down on paper. The same could apply to an exhibition: once the works are in position in a specific context, they are actors in the film that the exhibition constitutes. That is also how I interpret Harald Szeemann's view of exhibiting. This perhaps goes back to the fact that he originally worked in the theatre and adopted a more of a directorial position than the admiring role of an exhibition keeper – even if he explicitly denied this:

> Does art need directors? The answer is a decisive 'No'. Directing clearly refers to the world of the theatre, not to fine arts. So let's forget about directors and talk about professional exhibition organizers, authors, or better yet, curators. After all, the word 'curator' already exists in the concept of care.
>
> In my own experience, I have come to believe that an exhibition should be arranged in a space as a nonverbal witness to the curator's understanding of an artwork, an oeuvre, an overall vision, or self-chosen topic.[18]

Admittedly Szeemann is right to say that art does not need directors, but the categorical rejection of the director's role in the context of art by arguing that it is exclusive to the theatrical tradition is not only unnecessary but also plainly wrong. The assertion seems to be made for reasons other than those stated here – it is like we find ourselves dropped into a dialogue already in progress, in which we have missed what the previous speaker said. There are very close similarities between what Szeeman describes here and the function of a director: someone who has a unifying concept (the theme) and sympathetically but firmly organises and takes charge of his actors, photographers, set designers, and so on (the works).

Curatorial practices can be summarised in polarised terms: on the one hand as a dictatorial selection process, and on the other as a collaborative effort with the focus on the process itself. I think very few curators today would describe themselves in Szeemann's terms as conceptually dictatorial ('an overall vision, or self-chosen topic'). Instead, cooperation is top of the agenda. Power play is not avoided, however, by the sort of labelling and simulated collaboration that leaves the hierarchies of power intact, though not formulated in those terms. All it does is to

conceal who wields the power, enabling participants to avoid taking responsibility for their positions. To put it in Bakhtin's terms, they do not live up to the existential and inevitable demand for an utterance – that is, the unavoidable necessity of answering (answerability, the requirement to react) from the situation in which we find ourselves. Passivity is of course also an answer.

By contrast, I think that if we leave aside the question of the variety of curatorial positions and highlight instead both the curator and the artist, as reader – in a broad sense – we have much to gain. This need not mean that the curator/artist undertakes an intertextual analysis at the micro-level. I think many curators and artists actually behave like most readers of novels: their reading is more or less consciously intertextual, working over the given material. Let us say for a moment that the curator is the author, and the works of art are the heroes. Interestingly enough, that is the sort of curator who leaves the artists – or rather their works – 'in peace' and does not get involved in the work, who is able to keep his or her distance so the positions remain clear, a curator who assumes the position of an author and populates his or her novel with monological heroes. One might think that the opposite would apply: that it is the curator who stands back in this way that lets the artist's voice be heard. But I understand this curatorial practice as monological, as considering the works to be self-sufficient, complete. This often stands out in exhibitions with general themes like ethnicity, gender, technology or a particular period of history. (But this mode of reading can of course occur in any type of curatorial context.) The works are then not read actively but ascribed a particular voice in advance and made to *represent* a theme, something greater, around which consensus has already formed. No new aspects are teased out; conventions are confirmed. The representative theme of the exhibition aims to bring out the similarities in a way that glosses over any differences in other respects. Viewed through Bakhtin's eyes, exhibitions of this kind are (though not invariably) concordant, homophonic. Thus the curator, the works and the artists become monological. The 'vision' is defined and pre-packaged, so the curator who unpacks it already knows what the package contains. The problematic aspect of this kind of curatorship is therefore that it risks imposing limitations on the

options open to the works and the audience, and locks the work instead of putting it in play in a dialogical event.

Perhaps it is easier for me in my capacity as an artist to take a less respectful attitude to the works of art. And I see the 'respectful attitude' sketched out above as a monologic, distanced canonisation, a manifestation of the disarming of art by means of its elevation. What we have here is not the good encounter between Dostoevsky and his heroes to which Bakhtin refers but extinguished works in golden cages. The equality, the relationship between heroes and authors that he finds in Dostoevsky's writing, is built on a dialogue on equal terms: 'We see not who [the hero] is, but *how* he is conscious of himself; our act of artistic visualization occurs not before the reality of the hero, but before a pure function of his awareness of that reality.'[19] Bakhtin calls it a small-scale Copernican revolution when the novel moves on from having an author who defines and characterises the hero, transferring the work to the hero through his self-consciousness (self-reflection, or reflexion). This is to be seen not as the authorial voice pushed into the background by the hero's voice, but as a dialogue between equal parties. The author has stepped down from his omniscient position and become the hero's peer. The same could apply to an exhibition situation. Respect for the works is promised through dialogue rather than by establishing a 'respectful' distance. And this dialogue or respect for the works is what I find in Lucy Lippard's somewhat provocative and dictatorial formulation of the curatorial position:

> As a writer, I equate curating with choosing the illustrations for a book. This won't please artists, but most exhibitions do in fact illustrate some curator's ideas. Books and shows both involve collaborations with artists, directly or indirectly, giving the writer/curator a chance to say something visually.[20]

So Bakhtin not only analyses Dostoevsky's work but also views it as better, in a normative sense.[21] Aesthetics and ethics coincide in the sense that the dialogic and polyphonic is better than the monologic. Bakhtin goes on to say that in the relationship between the author and the hero, 'In this case, the artistic event is actualized between two souls (almost within the

bounds of a single possible axiological consciousness) and not between a soul and spirit.'[22] This is thus a kind of almost-combination, despite the distinction. The author is filled with the hero, steps into the hero's consciousness, but remains someone else. The curator can relate to the works (not the artists!) in the same way. The curator appropriates the works and creates them in that sense, carries out tasks similar to those of the artist but is not identical to the latter. But I cannot see any difference in artistic quality between their works. The ideal I visualise brings out interesting aspects of the works without locking them. The exhibitions that form part of my doctoral studies are experiments in this direction.

Jacques Derrida's idea of a centre that is not a fixed place but a *function*[23] seems to me to fit both the artist's and the curator's positions, which are in turn close to Bakhtin's author.[24] Function embraces organisation, the establishment of a discourse, the administration of language.[25]

Q: So you mean the artist is a bureaucrat who sorts papers and puts them in files, so to speak?

Andreas: I try not to be prejudiced about bureaucrats. But of course it has an entirely different ring to it from *bricoleur* … Whatever professional designation we give the artist, I think of him or her as the centre Derrida talks about. As the – albeit illusionary – organising principle that provides the structure but is not part of it.[26] We are condemned to *bricolage*, Claude Lévi-Strauss's term for the fact that we construct reality from whatever we have to hand (just as we are condemned to Bakhtin's dialogic world).[27] The opposite of the bricoleur is the *ingénieur*, who is his own centre and his own cause. I see the engineer position Lévi-Strauss describes as to some extent identical with what has generally been called a modernist artistic role. The modern artist is not usually associated with the rationality of the engineer, but rather with a handyman, someone who patches things together. Imagine the myth of the artist's studio and the artist's life as a kind of jumbled stockpile of material for bricolage. But if we really stop and think about it, the modernist artist is actually the opposite of the bricoleur. The engineer-artist is a manifestation of the ultra-modernist notion of accommodating a nucleus, an essence, of carrying about one's own language, one's own syntax. Thus for example: 'I was looking for a language. I had got the idea that I had a language of

my own hidden inside me, and the day I found it, all my other difficulties would resolve themselves.'[28] But just as there is no purely monologic literature, so it is hard to visualise someone who is one hundred per cent an 'engineer'. And Derrida argues – naturally enough – that the engineer, too, is a myth.[29] He deconstructs the concept, dissolves Lévi-Struass's dichotomy – ingénieur / bricoleur – and maintains that the engineer is a mythical construction of the handyman. Once again, Derrida finds himself with a series of interlinked thoughts: if the bricoleur is not a centre, origin and so on, then he/she must be preceded by other functions. It seems to me that the artist-handyman-administrator-author is a sort of drag anchor who stabilises a structure and makes the game possible.

> What is consummated or formed into an integral whole is not the material [words], but the comprehensively lived and experienced makeup of being. The artistic task organizes the concrete world: the spatial world with its own axiological center – the living body, the temporal world with its own center – the soul, and, finally, the world of meaning–all in their concrete interpenetrating unity.[30]

Here, Bakhtin is expressing the central idea of the author as an individual, or a function, *organising* given material.[31] This aesthetic activity involves a sort of collection and concentration of the world.[32] This function (rather than position) demands a certain degree of distance for the material to be visible.[33] Distancing the text from the author to the extent that Barthes does is more problematic. Michel Foucault observes that a text which, as it were, lacks origins (author) appears more mysterious than an author figure. It possesses a transcendental, not to say theological character.[34] (One's thoughts go spontaneously to the Immaculate Conception.) Of course there is an artist/ author/ curator who does something. Foucault raises this in his essay *What is an author?*, published in 1969, the year in which Anthony Robbin interviewed Robert Smithson. In the artist's studio they discuss the same issues of the relationship between the work and the artist.

Robert Smithson: People who defend the labels of painting and sculpture say what they do is timeless, created outside of time; therefore the object transcends the artist himself. But I think that the artist is important,

too, and what he does, the way he thinks, is valuable, whether or not there is any tangible result […].[35]

Anthony Robbin: It isn't so necessary for the artist to render this chaos into form so much as to expose the fact that …

Smithson: It's there.

Robbin: Yes. Not only that it's there, but that he is dealing with it, manipulating it, speculating about it.

Andreas: Couldn't have put it better myself. The way I see it, their perceptions of the artist encompass both Bakhtin's and Foucault's ideas of the author function as an organising principle.

Q: A-hah, so now the author is back in pride of place.

Andreas: No, I am just not following Barthes in throttling the artist, as he does in his famous assertion of the death of the author.[36] I cannot agree with historian Erich Gombrich when he maintains that all art is '"a manipulation of vocabulary" rather than a reflection of the world.'[37] The dialogic touch is missing here. Manipulation, administration, editing and organisation surely do not rule out mirroring the world? Nor do they in any way rule out an originator, an author, artist or curator, but they do allow us to talk about that originator in different terms.[38] The curator's position might be thought of as the opposite of that of the editor of an anthology, since the latter can edit texts, make deletions, shuffle material about and demand new versions if the author is available. In that case, two or more people are involved in a kind of dialogic relationship. I would maintain, however, that the curator, too, is performing major operations on the artwork by the interpretation of it that is manifested in its selection for use in a certain context, in how it is presented both in writing and in its physical installation in a space or room, the relationship created for it with other works, and so on. These are configurations that create the work to a high degree. And in this sense, I consider the curator to be carrying out artistic work. But it is only when the curator acknowledges this power that an interesting dialogue with the works, and the artists, can ensue.

If one transfers the concept of intertextuality to art in this way, the curator is not the only one structuring existing material; the same applies to the artist, who like the curator is also sitting in the intertextual author's seat. The curator arranges things in a macrocosmos artwork in which the

units consist of individual works of art, or rather aspects of works of art. If one accepts this argument, there is no essential difference between the curator and the artist; their roles run together; they both seem to be perched on the same seat in a game of musical chairs. This is what I have tried to dramatise in my exhibition project *Step by Step*, and before that in the exhibition *Taking Over*. The exhibition, as an art form, can then be seen growing both more distinct and more feasible as the end of the twentieth century approached:

> The exhibition as a way of communicating ideas beyond the specific work, as a way of creating assemblages of conflicting models, made it possible for the artist to emerge as a curator, and inversely the critic could appear as an artist.[39]

Andreas: The quotation above comes from an essay by Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olov Wallenstein in which they say it is possible for a philosopher to think through, by means of, an exhibition and argue for a '"curatorial turn" of radical thought.'[40] This notion of a space within a space could perhaps be docked to the spatial aspect of Bakhtin's thinking, to dialogic sociality. Birnbaum and Wallenstein share Lyotard's view that curating/philosophising achieves spatiality by sensory means. The way I am employing Bakhtin, ideas are linked to language, which in a sense is spatial, even chronotopic. But one can also see the order of an exhibition as a metaphor, at any rate, for an organised Kantian knowledge apparatus which includes both these ideas about thinking in, or through, the exhibition. I would like to add that this philosophising aspect of curatorship ought, when all is said and done, to confer some kind of philosophical status on the curator and the artist.

Q: But there can scarcely be room for two posteriors on the same seat. Isn't there a risk that you will fall between two stools?

Andreas: By combining the Artist and the Curator into an Editor, one not only wins new positions but is also obliged to relinquish something, to leave space.[41] Benjamin Buchloh observed at an early stage that '[The] aesthetics of Administration' in the 1960s and '70s had been turned into 'The administrator of aesthetics'.[42]

Miwon Kwon: Concurrent with, or because of, these methodological and procedural changes, there is a reemergence of the centrality of the artist as the progenitor of meaning. This is true even when authorship is deferred to others in collaborations, or when institutional framework is self-consciously integrated into the work, or when an artist problematizes his/her authorial role. On the one hand, this 'return of the author' results from the thematization of discursive sites, which engenders a misrecognition of them as natural extensions of the artist's identity, and the legitimacy of the work's critique is measured by the proximity of the artist's personal association (converted to expertise) with a particular place, history, discourse, identity, etc. (converted to content). On the other hand, because the signifying chain site-oriented art is constructed foremost by the movement and decision of the artist, the (critical) elaboration of the project inevitably unfolds around the artist. That is, the intricate orchestration of literal and discursive sites that make up nomadic narrative *requires* the artist as a narrator-protagonist. In some cases, this renewed focus on the artist in the name of authorial self-reflexivity leads to a hermetic implosion of (auto)biographical and subjective indulgences.[43]

Q: There, didn't I tell you that you were knocking at an open door?

Andreas: Yes, you did. And of course there is a lot in what Kwon says. To put it a little crudely, there have been elements of benevolent colonisation in certain artists working site-specifically. And this resurrected originator has, like all travellers, something to tell those he visits as well as those he left at home. But I do not entirely agree about the more symbolic 'return' of this figure. I think it is more that he or she has been there all the time, albeit lightly masked and simulating death. The artist never really died.

Q: So maybe you would be kind enough to delete the chapter 'The Originator', which is all about that death?

Andreas: No. As I understand Bakhtin, above all – but also Barthes – this is not a case of a death that actually happened. It is not a question of historical reflections but of philosophical assertions. I think the artist has been kept alive for more sociological reasons. If one were really to change places, the result would be a kind of barter economy. Cultural capital would, for example, be exchanged for ready money. And the Beret – Romantic freedom – would be sold in exchange for influence

over the exhibition situation, the budget and so on. The curator then loses some of his or her influence, but wins greater artistic freedom, an acknowledgment of the work of the curator.

Q: Those curators in their smart suits are not going to look all that good in a beret.

Andreas: With their newly won freedom, they can dispense with any item of clothing they care to.

Q: Be that as it may, you can't sit on two chairs at the same time.

Andreas: No, or at any rate, not at exactly the same moment. But as the game goes on, new options for sitting will arise. The analogy works well for the constant lack that can be expressed as the missing chair. It is this lack that generates the energy of the game.[44] A reduction of the number of places in the game, on the other hand, has no relevance in the analogy.

Q: Won't it be dull if all parties are subsumed into a grey mass of 'editors'? I take it the ordinary readers/exhibition visitors can also be seen as editors?

Andreas: Yes, that is a likely consequence. Of course there is a risk of insipidness in calling everybody editors. See it rather as expressing a particular function, an activity, a position it is possible to adopt. And there is some point to the levelling or collectivising element as a way of underlining that this is something less hierarchical.

Q: So 'the author' is dead again now?

Andreas: Not at all, as I told you. 'The author' is in fine fettle and thinking how nice it is to have a bit of company.

Q: So it is 'the curator' who is dead, or experiencing breathing difficulties at the very least.

Andreas: Possibly, but for other reasons, if so. One example is all those biennials, often curated by freelancers, where it is quite usual to adopt a perspective that is critical of power. That can lead to identity problems for the curator. How can you be one of the crowd yet at the same time some kind of CEO with both financial and curatorial power? I am starting to notice a tendency among some curators to try to mask their positions by collaboration and delegation. But if you do not acknowledge your power, you cannot relinquish it, either.

Q: And what has that got to do with editors?

Andreas: It is a way of trying to clarify the curator's position and function. If the artist has to renegotiate his or her position, then the curator has to leave some space, too.

Q: The music's starting … quick, round the chairs …

Andreas: … before the music stops …

For Bakhtin, the text of the novel is alive; we encounter the human voice in it, albeit through multiple layers of mediation.[45] Bakhtin is careful to distinguish between life and literature, but that does not necessarily imply that life and art are in watertight compartments. Michael Holquist came up with the analogy that being in different rooms does not mean we cannot both be in the same house: 'Both art and lived experience are aspects of the same phenomenon, the heteroglossia of words, values, and actions whose interaction makes dialogue the fundamental category of dialogism.'[46] Bakhtin distinguishes between the world that is *represented in the text* and the *text-creating* world. The former is in the work, the latter encompasses author, performer/reciter (if applicable), listener and reader. And, importantly, these two worlds, the one represented in the work and the one that represents (authors, readers …) must not be mixed up even if they are not completely kept apart. There are constant exchanges going on between them. They are inseparably united, bound to each other. Bakhtin draws the analogy with a living organism and the environment in which it lives:

> The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listener and readers. Of course this process of exchange is itself chronotopic: it occurs first and foremost in the historically developing social world, but might even speak of a special *creative* chronotope inside which constitutes the distinctive life of the work.[47]

The author is located outside the work, '[…] he is located outside the chronotopes represented in his work, he is as it were tangential to them.'[48] The author is on the boundary (here we can discern a more classical, Romantic outsider position, not just a function). The author is not *there*,

inside the work. He is, as previously stated, both present and absent when he is located on a boundary, balanced between the work and the world: 'The author must be situated on the boundary of the world he is bringing into being as the active creator of this world, for his intrusion into that world destroys its aesthetic stability.'[49] This centre is a sort of place or determination that can be said to be a potential perspective that can be adopted but also exchanged. Here we have the possibility of replacement or repetition also spoken of by Derrida.[50] There is no centre in a conventional sense, no origin or definite presence.[51] Derrida argues for this by means of a quasi-logical manoeuvre: a centre, which by definition gives a structure its character, is both inside and outside a structure. This is because a centre organises the structure and by dint of that is not a part of it. I understand the activity of the author and the artist as organisation of this kind.

Q: Stop right there and back this up with some proof! Earlier on, you referred to Bakhtin's idea of the author as precisely that, a centre. Which is it to be?

Andreas: Nice of you to bring this up to round things off. When Bakhtin talks, for example, about the author as a centre, it is not in the sense of a fixed, stable presence, as I have just indicated. This is apparent not least in Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic: there is no stable centre/absolute author because the language and the novel are dialogic, i.e. include several actors.[52]

Q: But one could say anyway that Derrida doesn't use the concept *centre* in the way it is normally used. Misuse of a concept, one might call it.

Andreas: Or one could say that the term *centre* is misused and that Derrida redefines it to fit our historical situation better.

Q: But statements like 'The centre is not the centre' are mumbo-jumbo! Or does he think the logic is false?

Andreas: If you are determined to misunderstand, then go ahead. Derrida is employing a rhetorical gesture. What he means, on due reflection, is that a centre is not what we believe it to be.

Q: All this relativity!

Andreas: More a case of all this historicity. After all, Derrida is pointing to an event that he places in history. You could say, in fact, that he is engaging in a conceptual study here. So there!

Q: So he's a conceptual analyst?

Andreas: In this case, conceptual analysis would probably lead to the insight that the concept *centre* means lot of different things, which are not always compatible. And you're left with an unusable concept. Derrida, for his part, starts from the assumption that *centre* means something significant, and that this can be talked about. He studies the way the concept works – deconstructs it – and then applies it to his discoveries; he philosophises. One important point he makes is that it has a history. The idea is the same for an intertextual understanding of a literary text where the history of the usage of a term or concept is part of its meaning.

For Derrida, what then happens in the structure is a game. And it is up to the user – in this case the originator of a work – to play the game well.[53] So these are relative phenomena, but that is not the same thing as a general relativism.[54] Bakhtin's author assumes these relative positions on his or her tangential line. And the artist and the curator do the same as they view the works, step into them, among them, in the mesh of dialogues, spend time with the heroes, and then step back and view the performance from a distance.

The Creator?

1.

Mats Rosengren: I believe […] that in a certain sense I can create something hitherto unseen – perhaps not original, certainly not unique (in the Romantic sense) but still something specific, discrete. And not just in a combinatory sense – i.e. that I have happened to make some previously unrealised connections between concepts, words and thoughts – but also in a more 'absolute' sense. As a human being, I have the capacity to create by visualising, imagining, fantasising.[55]

Andreas: To my ears, that still sounds like the artist as a Romantic Creator. But it is easy, at least for me, to confuse concepts.

Mats Rosengren: Cornelius Castoriadis, who devoted a good deal of his work to this multifaceted question, would answer: *L'imagination radicale* (radical imagination) enables the individual to create […]. *L'imagination secondaire*, which Castoriadis defines as derived and

combinatory, works not with creation in the genuine sense but with reproduction and imitation.[56]

Andreas: It would be elegant here to let the artist stand for *L'imagination radicale*, and the curator for *L'imagination secondaire*. But it seems to be the same distinction as that between the combinatorialist *metteur en scène* and the autonomous *auteur*, and as I say, I am not sure about this qualitative distinction.[57] Why must we separate these activities? I suspect that Castoriadis' argument, at least – if we apply this to the creating of new art rather than to ontological problems – conceals a view of art that is tradition, as if taken as read.

Aristotle's concept of 'qualitative change' sheds some light on the question. He took the view that at some point, a qualitative transformation of changes in quantity can occur. The simple example given is that you take a single grain of sand and put it on the ground in front of you. Then you add another and so on. After a while you have what could be called 'some' grains of sand, i.e. a collection of a number of single examples. If you carry on adding grains of sand you eventually reach a quantitative leap: suddenly it is a *pile* of sand. Any proponent of order, an analytical philosopher for example, would maintain that this is merely a linguistic problem, a question of a stipulative definition, of deciding when a number of grains of sand together are to be referred to as a pile of sand. But to me it also seems reasonable to talk about different levels and functions. If we reject Castoriadis' distinction, we can speak instead of levels of complexity. And it seems to me that what Castoriadis calls imagination is in fact an extremely complex combinatorial level which can reasonably be clearly distinguished from a simpler level. It is a question of a difference of degree, a variation of concentration – novelness – to which Bakhtin refers. An individual's unique combining, ordering, structuring and so on maybe precisely what is unique.

The question is also why it is so important for humans to be endowed with the ability to create something new: 'It thus seems that Fleck, too, at least reserves this possibility for us as individual human beings – that with luck and the right conditions we will be able to *create something new*.'[58] I want to avoid getting caught up in philosophical hairsplitting, but I must ask a crucial question here: if a human being creates something, it

is created out of a material (physical matter, language or ideas) that already exists. If that is not the case, if one creates out of nothing, then this appears, to me at least, to be an expression of some kind of religious conception.

Mats: Yes, that is precisely the question: if everything already exists, innovation is impossible – the only possibility is new combinations. But that presupposes a world without flux, and that seems to be what you, with Bakhtin, are arguing against?

Andreas: You are right about that, of course. Actually, I think the term 'new' is problematic. It means lots of different things in different contexts. For me, it seems both more sensible and more practical to talk about differences of degree than about differences in quality in the same way as Bakhtin talks about literature as a kind of condensed reality/ linguality.

Of course we can take the alternative view, with Kierkegaard, that what is new is the repetition, because the very fact of something being repeated is new: 'The dialectic of repetition is easy, because that which is repeated has once been, otherwise it could not be repeated; but precisely this, the fact that it *has* been, makes repetition something new.'[59] So then it is the difference itself that recurs, since time can be understood as difference.[60] But the concept of repetition becomes unusable if it is understood in this way. There is a fundamental difference between me saying, 'We are going now, we are going now,' and, 'We are going now, it is getting late.' In the first case there is a repetition, even if the second part of the sentence does not mean exactly the same as the first. Its position in the context is a different one. But on the other hand, this is an example of how this kind of repetition can reinforce an utterance. A wish or statement can by repetition turn into an exhortation or even nagging. One way of talking about repetitions might then be to use a kind of deconstruction: one aspect of the utterance is a repetition, but another is not. Yet these differing aspects are accommodated within the same utterance simultaneously. This means that part of the utterance is stable, the other variable. And that is precisely the way Bakhtin understands language and the individual. What occurs is a contextualisation, not creation out of nothing.

2.

As has already been stated, there is often a slippage between *is* and *should be* in Bakhtin, between the given qualities of the work of art and the ethical assertion that it should be dialogic, polyphonic and social. The quality of the work and its morality seem to coincide here.[61] These seem to be qualities that are found in the text regardless of the reader. So the novel appears to have some kind of objective, albeit potential, character independent of the reader. It is clear that Bakhtin is not trying to subjectivise the text and does not believe in private languages – they are by definition impossible, since the social is an aspect of language. The reader's private experiences represent *one* of several contexts. Even if the reading is anchored in a personal context, there is a need for *distance* from what one is trying to assimilate. Bakhtin provides an example: 'There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must take up residence in it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture.'[62] One quite simply cannot see oneself as one comes into existence in the dialogue in a specific position; distance is required in order to be able to see it/the other. This occurs at about the same time as a concept of God crops up in Bakhtin's theories. Creation happens from some kind of outsider position '[…] in partaking of the supreme outsideness'.[63] Here we discern a God-like position, but it is also part of '[…] the event of being'.[64] 'Finding an essential way of drawing close to life from outside – that is the task of the artist.'[65] In his later life, after the death of Stalin, Bakhtin linked his idea of intertextuality more closely to an image of God. Per-Arne Bodin refers to two relatively new studies of Bakhtin in a newspaper article.[66] There it is claimed that Bakhtin's dialogism not only encompasses central concepts borrowed from the Russian Orthodox Church but also that the very foundation of his ideas is the Christian faith. In a late interview, Bakhtin says:

> Objective idealism maintains that the Kingdom of God exists outside us, and Tolstoy, for example, insists [that] it is 'within us', but I believe the Kingdom of God is between us, between you and me, between me and God, between me and nature; that is where the Kingdom of God is.[67]

Christian love becomes an aesthetic category in Bakhtin, Coates goes on. The author as an authoritative narrative voice goes into exile in Bakhtin's conception of the good novel and is turned instead into a God figure, invisible yet still present in His creation.[68]

Naturally a philosophy and a conception of God can be different sides of the same world of ideas. But they should not be confused, as above. It is risky to introduce God figures as authors. It is also hazardous to let a Bakhtin of the 1970s decide what he really meant when he wrote *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* in the years following the Russian Revolution. Nor is it in line with Bakhtin's own thinking to adopt an approach that rates interpretation as primary and the text as secondary. Kristeva understands Bakhtin differently when in her text on him she employs the monotheistic concept of God as an expression for monologic and authoritarian power, in contrast to Bakhtin's multiplicity:

> With Bakhtin, who assimilates narrative discourse into epic discourse, narrative is a prohibition, a *monologism*, a subordination of the code to 1, to God. Hence, the epic is religious and theological; all 'realist' narrative obeying 1–0 logic is dogmatic. […] The only discourse integrally to achieve the 0–2 logic is that of the carnival. By adopting dream logic, it transgresses rules of linguistic code and social morality as well.[69]

Rather, I think we should understand the Bakhtin quotation above to mean that the divine is dialogic, non-hierarchical encounters.

3.

> The distinction between image and 'visual representation'. The latter – a mere shadow of a living sensation, which has no room for anything that has not already been sensed in the living sensation. But is poorer. In the picture there is always something qualitatively new, on principle impossible, viewed from the perspective of pure perception. It is the character of the image to be something created (or recreated). The 'created' includes the hand that creates as well as the intention and plan of the whole, the free certainty of purpose, and the creator him or herself. But creation also presupposes a *material*, which is never brought forth by the

> recreated thing. The artist (the individual human) is no god, and cannot create living beings of flesh and blood. Humans can only create dead things, which can be used (work), or living pictures of a material (artistic creation), but never of flesh and blood. A brilliant and rich imagination bears no fruit if it does not use a material, it is left among the visual representations of everyday life (the dreamer).
>
> The creator who is part of the image is not an image of the creator (the famed 'image of the author') simply 'the creator', but not *existence* (an already given, completed reality), rather a creative activity that cannot set into something given. *Here it is not a question of a human being as body, but of the human being in the body, changing his body and everything that exists of it into an instrument.* The creator who remains a creator can never become an image.[70]

Here, Bakhtin summarises the dynamic between the existing material of which art is made and the activity of the artist. The image can simply be 'recreated', and is thus not new, but living (I understand 'visual representation' to mean here a passive and unoriginal illustration or imitation). It is an alloy of the given material and the artist's intentions and ability. And for me, the point about a human not being like a god is an indication that the work of art is not new in the fundamental sense of the word.

The Construction

Bakhtin's general theory-of-knowledge concept for the ordering of the world in experience is *architectonic*. The dialogue that is played out in language in the encounter with others requires a structure, in Bakhtin's words an *architectonics*, an ordering of experience into a whole. This occurs temporarily from a unique position in space and time, from a chronotope. This is a dialogic meeting in a shared simultaneity, in a now. (In the Russian language, 'now' and 'reality' are both expressed by the same term). The ordering of these wholes is a series of interpretations creating meaning. And even if we create a whole of the other, we reach completion (and restriction), we still perceive ourselves as incomplete, unconsummated. Our lives only reach a kind of completeness once we no longer exist.

> architectonics is the general study of how entities relate to each other, whereas aesthetics concerns itself with the particular problem of *consummation*, or how specific parts are shaped into particular wholes. In dialogism wholeness, or consummation, is always to be understood as a relative term: in Bakhtin, consummation is almost literally in the eye of the beholder in so far as it is always a function of a particular point of view.[71]

Aesthetics, then, is a sub-category of the general concept of architectonics. Such sorting and ordering of experience should be grounded above all in Kant's various ways of thinking and categories of understanding. There is one important difference, however, and that is that whereas for Bakhtin, the chronotope is in the world, for Kant, space and time are ways of thinking within the apparatus of knowledge. [72] But this underlines the unique individual's act of creation in and by the world, a unique chronotope in an encounter with the chronotope(s) of his or her surroundings. This dialogic event generates not only an encounter but also, for example, a work of art by realising one of an infinite number of potentials.

For Holquist, Bakhtin's originality lies not in the concept of architectonics, which is basically Kantian, but in the way it is applied. He gives us an example: in an individual poem, the parts relate to the whole, which comprises a completed text; the individual text relates in its turn to a genre; and a variety of genres relate to a general concept of literature, which is placed within a general concept of language.[73] So Holquist's interpretation of architectonics is a variation on the Russian doll idea, with the larger structures encapsulating the smaller ones. I do not see why this interpretation of architectonics cannot be applied to a work of art or an exhibition situation: in an individual work, the parts can relate to a unit, as do the various parts in my work 'Erich P.' (the coins, the seal, the stones, and so on); the work relates to the other works in my final exhibition; the exhibition relates to a number of different genres (contemporary art, conceptual art, artistic research, etc.): these genres relate to a general concept of art which in turn is part of a wider concept of culture. It is simply a question of structuralist thinking in which the parts are understood through larger structures. But one of the interesting and, for my context, productive aspects of Bakhtin's theory of knowledge is that it is

post-structuralist in nature, since the parts are not passively written into the whole but can actively influence it. Holquist's understanding of architectonics is, then, slightly limiting and creates a gratuitously hierarchical impression. I see a network-like, rhizomatic structure as more relevant. Literary texts and art in general have many different intertextual relations at the same time, with genres, history, individual works, events, other art forms and so on. A novel such as Imre Kertész' *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*, for example, can find a place in a variety of genres: as a kind of semi-documentary novel, but also belonging to a Holocaust genre, to a post-modernist genre with a conscious borrowing of style from another writer (in this case Thomas Bernhard), to the genre of first-person novels, and so on. None of these genres/dolls seems to me to be manifestly bigger than any of the others. And Holquist formulates the dynamic, dialogic relation between the unique and the general in Bakhtin:

> What holds such fundamental figures as genre and chronotope together in the historical poetics that dialogism proposes is the same emphasis in each on a particular relation in them all: a constant dialogue between uniqueness and generality, that which is unrepeatable, and that which can be repeated. It is a relation that obsesses Bakhtin both early and late: the non-psychologistic interdependence that obtains between the self and the other.[74]

The generality is provided by the genre, the uniqueness by the chronotope, and they define one another in this dynamic between the unique and the repeatable. Since Bakhtin's literary theory is actually a general dialogic philosophy, he turned to developmental psychology to discuss theory of knowledge. As I have already mentioned, he subscribed to Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky's view of child development.[75] Vygotsky believed inner experience could only be formulated with the aid of signs. These signs, language, are what shape experience, not the other way round. Since language is social in nature, experiences are always shared.[76] It is a question of intertextuality! The analogy with writing is apparent here. Through language, the author orders language into a novel. And – this is the essence of Bakhtin's view of literature as a

central part of human being and coming into being – it not only depicts but also contributes to the reader's development:

> On this account, literary texts do not merely reflect changes in development, but also serve to bring them about. Literary texts are tools; they serve as a prosthesis of the mind. As such, they have a tutoring capacity that materially effects change by getting from one stage of development to another.[77]

So the individual also exerts an influence on the whole; the component is part of the process of forming the whole. The displacement from a generally established stairway of development to individual opportunities seems to be the same as between structuralism and post-structuralism.

Mika: And how does that apply to you?

Andreas: Vygotsky's displacement of the sources of development from the structure to the individual can be applied to an exhibition situation. My idea is that a thematic, curated exhibition in the spirit of Bakhtin, a dialogic exhibition, functions in such a way that aspects of the work are activated, just as the development of the child is activated by the speech of the mother, and that these aspects reflect the theme so that these potentials are realised. So it is something that is emphasised in the individual works, but they also have an effect on understanding of the theme (structure). There is of course a dialogic relationship between theme and work. Vygotsky's basic idea is that the individual, the child, can influence the structure and is not merely a function of it. The monologic variant of the exhibition is, of course, one that shoehorns the individual works into a theme, with the result that they lose their complexity. In such cases, the works are lined up in formation ready to serve the theme.

Q: At attention!

Andreas: Yes, but I think projects like that can be interesting, too, monographic or unreflectingly historical exhibitions for example. Of course one can imagine an exhibition that robustly reduces the works but is nonetheless intriguing in its entirety. Another question is how the works, or the exhibition as a whole, just like an individual human being, is able to be unique, but at the same time open to an unlimited number of

alternative readings. If, say, we think of the curatorial theme as the fixed structure, then I see the relationship between theme and individual work as analogous to that between the self and the Other in Bakhtin. Initially, the work occupies a unique space in the room, a position or starting point. This creates a kind of stability but does not in itself rule out a monologic droning. In the encounter with the works, or in the works' encounter with the theme, negotiation ensues because it is not possible for everything to be accommodated at the same time in understanding of another person, an object or an event. Bakhtin's idea of consummation is thus one of interpretation which is, by definition, limited. This would then function in the same way as the dialogic encounter between two individuals where they, temporarily, *consummate* the other, that is, create a whole in order to render the other comprehensible. This consummation occurs in negotiation since not everything can be included in such a meeting, in contemporaneity. And the general (the structure, the genre, the exhibition context etc.) must be included in the meeting in order for it to be comprehensible, and the unique must also be part of this, in order to chisel out the individual element. 'The question (and it is a political question involving the mediation of authority) always must be: how much uniqueness can be smuggled into a formula without becoming unrecognizable to others?'[78] The political in Bakhtin is expressed by Holquist as the tension between collective and individual, and this is both Bakhtin's underlying philosophical question and applicable to an exhibition situation: how does the tension manifest itself between the individual works and other works and the exhibition as collective, as theme, as genre and so on.

Even if the works are not alive, active, I think that they, as people, function the same way as literature in the quotation above, as prostheses of the mind.[79] This implies that, for me, we think or experience the world and its dialogic relations through the works. Through the power of our imagination we assume the dialogical position of the works, or a theme, and read the others through this. It is a stance that could be called one of empathy or identification: we imagine that we are the Other as a person, or the Other as an object, but think of ourselves as stepping into their unique place.[80]

Mika: And how does that apply to *your* project?

Andreas: Well, as I said, the tension between the parts and the whole and the architectonic are the core, it is simply a question of '[…] how something is put together'[81] That is just what artists and curators do.

Q: Or take apart, dissect, deconstruct, do an autopsy on …

Andreas: Hm … the exhibition and the work as letting off an explosive charge, as a frozen explosion … why not! The process of intertextual joining together presupposes that there are parts. I suppose that is the symbiotic foundation on which that deconstruction rests on. There we have the fundamental question about Bakhtin's view of how the parts relate to the whole. And I think that can also be applied to artistic and curatorial work. The raw material for the work is already in place, but the fact that there are different ways of seeing it, you could talk in terms of *angles of approach* here. This is how Bakhtin was able to talk of both a constant world and the possibility of the new as a kind of experience – or at any rate a different experience – of what already exists. Works of art are not the world but they constitute equivalents of a kind:

> Aesthetic activity collects the world scattered in meaning and condenses it into a finished and self-contained image. Aesthetic activity finds […] an emotional equivalent that gives life to this transient being and safeguards it, that is, it finds an axiological position from which the transient in the world acquire the axiological weight of an event acquires validity and stable determinateness.[82]

The phrase 'gives life to' in the quotation above can perhaps be understood in two different ways. On the one hand it means bringing someone or something to life, as God blew life into Adam. But on the other it could also have the more profane connotation of enlivening an otherwise dull event. And this two-headed injection of life is fun when it is linked to the laughter that Bakhtin finds in Rabelais' medieval town square:

> But the most important – one could say, the decisive – expression of reduced laughter is to be found in the ultimate position of the author. This position excludes all one-sided or dogmatic seriousness and does

> not permit any single point of view, any single polar extreme of life or of thought, to be absolutized. All one-sided seriousness (of life and thought), all one-sided pathos is handed over to the heroes, but the author, who causes them all to collide in the 'great dialogue' of the novel, leaves that dialogue open and puts no finalizing period at the end.[83]

The dynamic between the parts and the whole (the individuals and the collective in the town square, the works and the theme and so on) cannot be and is not absolute. Both architectonics and construction are momentary, they are possibilities and suggestions brought to life. In the distances and dancelike position changes this creates, the laughter that resists all authoritarian hierarchies keeps bubbling out.

The Material

Identification

Chandler makes a very valid point when he says that there are degrees of reflexivity in a work:

> reflexivity: how reflexive (or self-conscious) the use of intertextuality seems to be (if reflexivity is important to what it means to be intertextual, then presumably an indistinguishable copy goes beyond being intertextual)[84]

It initially seems like common sense not to view an exact copy of a text as an independent work with an intertextual relationship to the text it is copying. One and the same text can, after all, exist in a variety of guises: in magazines, as a book in different editions, digitally, as a printout and so on. But the identity of a text in that sense is not at all as self-evident as Chandler appears to believe. Translation to another language, for example, is an advanced form of reading and contextualistion which very clearly begs the question of what constitutes the identity of a text. A national language harbours a vast amount of general and private experience which shapes the reading. In a review of Gunnel Vallquist's translation of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, author Claes Hylinger voiced a thought which neatly illuminates the 'work' of the reader in the act of reading:

> I would go so far as to say that a Swede is well advised to read Proust in Swedish, even if he has mastery of French. A book that is largely constructed of descriptions and analyses of sensory impressions needs to be read in our childhood tongue. Seeing the words 'blackcurrant cordial', for example, if we take our time, we experience the taste and smell of the cordial and recall

> some of the glasses of cordial we have drunk over the years. We read 'apple tree' and see a particular apple tree in front of us, perhaps a whole orchard. But if we read 'cassis' or 'pommier', we feel nothing, however good we are at French; we have to translate them and silently say them to ourselves in Swedish. At worst, the French words conjure up the image of our dictionary or our French teacher in a dusty classroom one afternoon long ago. No, it is a great advantage for us to be able to read Proust in Swedish.[85]

This work of Proust, building on ideas around, and ways of expressing, recollections, finds a congenial interpreter in Hylinger, who shows how access to a language fixed in our own consciousness and our own history is a prerequisite both for reading generally, and specifically for reading a text in which the function of memory is central. We cannot be at all sure, however, that the text will be better if we read it in our mother tongue. But it will be different.

Hylinger's description of reading as a kind of creative writing is close to Kristeva, who links reading to the unconscious. In this reading there is motion in which the reading act individualises the text and brings it down to a more or less conscious level which is both personal and general (Roland Barthes' analysis in *S/Z* is angled linguistically-historically-socially and this more technical approach risks overlooking the significance for the reading of personal points of reference.) The text is the material the reader has to work with and it harbours potentials that can be realised. But the reading also arouses the reader's individual personal experiences, which are married to the possibilities offered by the text. I see an analogy between the dependence of the reading on the reader's various contexts and artistic and curatorial work which (like creative writing) is also an expression for the contexts that are to hand, but are also a creation of a context: the work or the exhibition. The works are hard to identify in that their identities are in many respects unstable.

The readymade further complicates Chandler's assertion that there can be no intertextual relations between the same version of a text occurring in different contexts. A classic counter-example of such a text, or at any rate an idea of such a text, is the fictionalised essay *'Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote'* (1939) by Jorge Luis Borges. He saw the opportunities in

what I would like to call text as readymade. Borges describes the author Menard setting about writing Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.[86] It is not a matter of a mechanical copy from the original text that the author has in front of him. Rather, it is a reconstruction from memory, word for word, of Cervantes' text. Menard does not have time to complete his work before his death and leaves behind him only two substantial but disparate chapters. One of Borges interesting central ideas here is that the text is contextualised by the fact that it now has a modern-day author and is published and read as new in an age several centuries later.

> It is a revelation to compare the *Don Quixote* of Menard with that of Cervantes. The latter, for instance, wrote (*Don Quixote*, Part One, Chapter Nine):
>
> […] truth, whose mother is history, who is the rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, example and lesson to the present, and warning to the future.
>
> Written in the seventeenth century, written by the 'ingenious layman' Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical eulogy of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes:
>
> […] truth, whose mother is history, who is the rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, example and lesson to the present, and warning to the future.
>
> History, *mother* of truth; the idea is astounding. Menard, a contemporary of William James, does not define history as an investigation of reality, but as its origin. Historical truth. For him, is not what took place; it is what we think took place. The final clauses – *example and lesson to the present, and warning to the future* – are shamelessly pragmatic.[87]

There is, of course, extra piquancy to the fact that Borges is simultaneously carrying out what he is talking about: historical truth 'is what we think took place'. One could even say 'the reading' of history. If we transfer the

argument to art it becomes even clearer that art works are also, so to speak, not identical with themselves; modern and postmodern art are still indebted to Marcel Duchamp's urinal, *Fountain*, to his readymade and his notions of contextualisation. And the urinal was not even a copy but a genuine, original, well-used urinal.[88] And it was signed R. Mutt, not M. Duchamp.

Q: But it could not be used! It is an impotent urinal but a potent artwork.

Andreas: That's right. But that was not the important thing. Let us take Duchamp's bottle drying rack as an example instead. It is still fully functioning. Anyway, Bakhtin's version of a text readymade featured Shakespeare:

> Shakespeare took advantage of and included in his works immense treasures of potential meaning that could not be fully revealed or recognized in his epoch […]. The author is captive of his epoch, of his own present. Subsequent times liberate him from captivity, and literary scholarship is called upon to assist in this liberation.[89]

But it is not a question of an increase in the amount of knowledge. It is potentially all there, in the text and the genre.[90] So reading turns into a kind of archaeology, and whatever is discovered has been buried alive! And as I see it, this liberation need not encompass only historical works but can also apply to contemporary ones. A well-curated exhibition can be such an act of liberation: 'Maybe one could start a liberation movement for art works and save them from their authors, their pasts […]'[91]

There are other latter-day examples of more schematic encouragements to discover the possibilities of re-readings as new works: in the 1980s, the American artist Sherry Levine photographs famous historic paintings (by artists including Vincent van Gogh, Walter Evans and Fernand Leger) and exhibits them as her own work. Another American, Elaine Sturtevant, has since the 1960s been copying works by male artists such as Joseph Beuys, Marcel Duchamp, Felix Gonzales-Torres, Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns.[92]

So it is not only the contextualisation per se, and with it the change or even identity shift that Borges and Bakhtin are drawing attention to. They are still more radical, not to say brazen, than that, for they go so far as to claim that the reconstructed versions are better than the original

ones. And seems even more plausible to me when it is applied to curated exhibitions. A curator's conscious reading of a work – which already exists – and the context provided by an exhibition can make a work more interesting than it would be if exhibited individually or in a less good context. Works of art often gain from participating in a well-made exhibition. In such a setting, both the individual works and the common theme emphasize interesting aspects of those works without obliterating them as individual pieces.[93] In that sense, the exhibition is a work of art which brings out the possibilities within the works, in the same way as Bakhtin describes the reading of Shakespeare above. One way of making this more comprehensible is to consider the individual works as readymades in the sense that they constitute a given material that the curator organises in the same sense as an artist organises his or her material.

The Substance

Nils: What happens to the material aspects of the work of art when you apply the concept of intertextuality or the polyphonic or the dialogic to them? I mean, there is still something *there*!

Fredrik: Exactly, what happens then?

Andreas: The simple answer should be that all things are structures and as such they can relate to each other. Not least in dialogicity, but …

Q: Scaredy-cat!

Andreas: … but I do not think that will do as an answer either. On the other hand, I do think there is a good deal to be learned from Bakhtin's idea that works, readers, authors are engaged in social relations of some sort. Then there are various arguments to be made, of course, for and against art as conceptual phenomena. With Bakhtin's help I would like to propose a way of understanding physical works of art as concepts and thus as social, since that makes it reasonable to talk about and work with physical artworks as concepts, too. That way, curator and artist roles, for example, will overlap each other, as will the boundary between an exhibition and an individual work. That is why I am more interested in the conceptual aspects of artworks and materials than the reverse.

Q: Talk about knocking on open doors! There's nothing new under the sun.

Andreas: As I have already said several times, I know very well that

this is not new.

Q: All this tilting at nothing makes me think of Don Quixote. What is it you are actually arguing against?

Andreas: In that case I think more of Cervantes. And his book is by no means a bad one.

Q: In that case, *I* think more of Paul Menard.

Andreas: Touché![94]

But I would still claim that it is unusual and fruitful to use Bakhtin this way. I am going to a source. And I think your confidence that these ideas are so widely known is a result of your living in too narrow a world. There is a further point in conceptuality being linked to art as a social activity. Bakhtin argues in *Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry* against theoreticians of his time, against those who make art into nothing but technique, material or ideology. His main point, as I said, is that aesthetics is a variant of the social: 'Consequently, the theory of art can be only the *sociology of art*.'[95] What has to be proved is that art is social events (not potential social, causal functions) where both creating and understanding are concerned. And – and this is one of the main points for Bakhtin (and for me) – there is no clear boundary between literature (and art) and so-called reality.

Q: Really!

Andreas: Yes. One way of formulating this is to explore into how Bakhtin viewed the relationship between the conceptual and the material, the substance.

Q: From that I conclude that I am real, and you seem increasingly unreal.

Andreas: Agreed. You seem unpleasantly, tangibly real. One of the keys to understanding this conflation of literature (and art) and so-called reality is Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. The chronotope is social, dialogic in character and therefore always includes a kind of encounter between different chronotopes. The same thing applies to literary texts (and art) as well. Holquist is explicit on this point: 'Dialogism does not envision an absolute separation between existence free of conventions outside texts, and a world comprising only conventions within texts. There is no purely chronological sequence inside or outside the text.'[96]

Q: So there is no fiction! Or alternatively, there is no reality! This whole thing is starting to get uncomfortable.

Andreas: I would like to echo Bakhtin, and Holquist, in saying that the boundaries between those two things are unclear. But I have already said that countless times already! This is precisely the foggy landscape in which Bakhtin's author dwells.

Sculpture as concept

Formalism, for Bakhtin in his own time, expressed a fetishisation of art that presupposed the work to be a definitively limited and completed object which could be thoroughly understood or explained. One might well imagine Bakhtin's critique of a single, hidden truth to be built on personal experience and to constitute a veiled criticism of Communist dictatorship. This would make his semiotics and his view of art both ideological and political. Pre-interpreted, imposed art loses all the social possibilities advocated by Bakhtin, becoming undynamic, rigid. His criticism of formalism is grounded in its reduction to material qualities and the fact that it is impossible to locate in these, however carefully they are analysed, the *aesthetic* qualities of the work. The physical material, for example the marble from which *David* is sculpted, cannot be distinguished from any other marble, such as one might find in a staircase. The aesthetic exists in *how* the form of the marble relates to the appearance of the human body, to the skill and personality of the sculptor, to the myth of David and so on. This can be seen even more plainly in poetry, where formal qualities such as rhyme and metre are a clear expression of the content. The form should be bound to the content, it should be a 'convincing evaluation' of it. And if it is not linked to content it remains – only – a technical experiment, not art. In this, Bakhtin can be said to advocate a conceptual understanding of art:

> Form *should* (my emphasis) be studied in these two directions – in relation to content, as the ideological evaluation of it, and in relation to the material, as the technical realization of evaluation.[97]

This imperative stance reflects, for Bakhtin, one of the most important aspects of aesthetics: content and form are intimately interdependent but form is not identical to content and lacks its own, inherent aesthetic

value.[98] The selection of form and content brings different qualities into focus within one and the same action, since they cannot be separated. (Even if Bakhtin and others talk about them using different designations.) Furthermore, the work, or rather the value and function of the work, is conceptual in the sense that it is based in content and that it operates in dialogue. This also applies explicitly to three-dimensional work of art (the marble statue). It seems reasonable, then, with Bakhtin, to be able to talk about the material, non-discursive work of art in terms of intertextuality or dialogicity.

Mats: But can one think of content without form?

Andreas: It would be a thought, seen as a thought.

Mats: Is a formless thought a thought? Can it be thought?

Andreas: No, well, not formless, I was really thinking of a thought that does not take physical shape. Someone like Joseph Kosuth, for example, who counts his idea as the work itself, and dates the works to the moment of their birth. And for Lawrence Weiner, a short, concise instruction can constitute a work. But the question is not really relevant to my project. I am going in the opposite direction here, from the substance to the concept, and part of what I am trying to get at is the conceptual content of a work in relation to other works. What I am trying to do is naturally not to wipe out, but to minimise the physical aspect of the work. One cannot magic it completely out of existence. On the other hand, Bakhtin's argument provides the answer, surely, to how one works conceptually with art. The fact that all the material, the expression and so on, is always related to the concept-content, that it is considered part of it. In artistic work, one always has to ask oneself, for example, why one is choosing a particular material or why one has installed a work in a particular way. Call it visual art, by all means, but note that it does not mean that an idea takes a specific form, but that the form is in fact part of the concept. My doctoral work *Sleeper* exemplifies this. The design of the book, the choice of cardboard for the cover, etc, all constitute part of the content of the work. But are the action, the placing of the work in the Lenin Library, and the fact that the book is there, also constituent parts of the content? Do the *action* and the *placing* count as form and/or content? Or is it the case that the *narrative* of this, which is an important part of the work, is pure content? The

answer to the question, as I see it, is that it is wrongly formulated. The act of placing, the situating and the narrative are important components of the work and unite form and content in the way that conceptual art in particular can do. Perhaps the main point of a work like this is not that it lacks form, but that it so clearly unites form and content in its desire to escape art as substance/fetish in analogy with Bakhtin's critique of formalism.

Bakhtin clearly sees that the structure of the form exerts an influence over the value of the content. He believes that this is the very reason form and content should be on an equal footing in a kind of hierarchical system. I see this as similar to an awareness that one should not write hymns in slang, for example, or have the man who delivers the firewood talking with an academic turn of phrase. Unless one happens to want to create a comic effect by means of a mismatch between form and content. For example by having a young lady at court talking chimney-sweep slang or a sweep conversing in a high-flown literary idiom.

Mats: Decorum!

Andreas: Yes, breaches of style. But I would still prefer to express it in terms of form and content admittedly being mutually dependent, but that unexpected encounters between them can of course be of artistic value. Bakhtin must also have realised this and wanted to point to the evident dependence between content and form. Breach of style is the foundation of parody, which is an essential phenomenon in the town square carnival, and greatly prized by Bakhtin. Perhaps one can therefore link its ambiguity to the genre which in the late twentieth century used 'base' materials for 'elevated' subjects and vice versa. Just think of pop art, especially Warhol, and postmodern artists' orgies of kitsch with Jeff Koons leading the way. And this encounter was surely what Duchamp was engaging in with his readymades. And in *Sleeper*, for example, I have made a point of a stylistic breach in which the simple, almost shabby-looking cover conceals careful graphic design. The content was masked.[99]

Q: But there is the statue standing there, despite what you say. You can't be rid of the material, however hard you try.

Andreas: No, and nor did I claim that I would. But I am ready to give it a run for its money, and you too, by the way. To express it cautiously, one could at any rate say that by tying the form and material to the content,

Bakhtin is detaching the art work to some degree from its physical manifestation. In *Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry*, he makes no fundamental distinction between sculpture and poetry in his examples. That makes the case for using Bakhtin's theories to talk about a variety of art genres as conceptual discourses.

Q: At the risk of being a bore: what happened to the marble in the marble statue? No marble, no *David*!

Andreas: Of course, but without Michelangelo's *sculpting*, no *David*, just a block of stone. And as he sculpts, he is not only telling us the story of his skill, of his understanding of the nature of the human body, but he is also incorporating all the earlier stories about David, and the collection of sculpture through human history, and so on. I insist, with Bakhtin, that a work of art is dialogic, a meeting place. The marble is that meeting place, a theatrical stage, and thus necessary. But those who come to the meeting (through readings) are on the move and their very mobility means they can hurry on to other meetings, free from marble's fixed position in time and space.

If the form of works is not their essence, one might imagine it reasonable to *psychologise* art by focusing on our personal experience of it. Doing that would mean one could go on to speak of intertextual or linguistic relationships between these experiences, regardless of the physical nature of the artefacts. But Bakhtin thinks that this limits art to being enacted in isolated subjects. For Bakhtin, art is always social, dynamic events.

> However, the 'artistic' in its totality is not to be found in the thing, and not in the psyche of the creative artist or the psyche of the perceiver taken in isolation, for the 'artistic' embraces all three of these elements. It is a special form of interrelationship between creator and perceiver, which is fixed in the artistic work.[100]

Here, the work of art is a process, making a distinction between form and content irrelevant. Note that 'fixed' should not be the same as 'static', but is rather a fixing in the crosshairs of the chronotope which takes place within a temporary event and its dynamic. This is a way for us to assemble impressions into a comprehensible picture (as in a photograph, with

all the limitations that implies). But this is a process and it is social and cannot be separated from the rest of existence. So then it is reasonable, if one follows Bakhtin, to speak of all aesthetic events as social events. Thus 'the reading' of a work is to a great extent tied to a situation, even though the work has a physical shape. Art as an event takes place outside an individual psyche, in a discourse: 'Discourse is a skeleton which is fleshed out only in the process of creative perception, consequently, only in the process of real social interaction.'[101] So the discourse here is a kind of structure, and the art work a discursive event. And I cannot but understand Bakhtin as considering discourse intimately linked to content, in the same way as form.[102]

Concept as sculpture

In 1968, Lawrence Weiner formulated this famous recipe – *Statement of Intent* – for his conceptual art:

> (1) The artist may construct the piece. (2) The piece may be fabricated. (3) The piece may not be built. (Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.)[103]

Since the work is not initially a unique object, it can be reproduced without failing to fulfil its purpose in a physical sense. But it is an important point that the artist's intention is part of this meta-instruction, even if the recipient does not get the last word, for natural reasons.

The utterance (including art) is a living event in a social space, not a completed report. This does not apply to all verbal utterances, to be sure, but Bakhtin's point is that this social orientation is most apparent in intonation, the way in which something is said.[104] It is allowed to be a pedagogical example. And perhaps that is what Lawrence Weiner is trying to get at when he ends his meta-instruction by trying to keep control of the work since the way the instruction is carried out is part of its (social) content. In that case it would be found in what Genette terms *paratextuality*: choice of typeface, type size, colour, layout, the character of the formulation and so on, since his main working material is text that

is mounted on walls, set into floors etc.[105] His tools are both the content of the text and its graphic form. The references and intertexts in understanding become more or less conscious, the kind of thing that is found for example in poetry, graffiti, advertising catchphrases, philosophy, inscriptions of classical antiquity and political slogans.

> In the old days when trying to find a typeface that was not authoritarian, that was still elegant and I prefer sans serifs, and everybody was using Helvetica it is one of the a typefaces I absolutely detest […] It is totally authoritative it in fact does not adapt itself to things and all information that comes out of […] it is telling you exactly the same thing. It is telling you that this is culture, that it is intellectual and that it is intelligent. I am rather afraid that words don't start off being cultural, intellectual or intelligent. So I found a typeface that I like which was Franklin Gothic condensed. It reminded me of the working class Dutch letters that I am intrigued by.[106]

Here, Weiner is expressing something typical of artistic practice: a blend of aesthetics, politics and personal taste. The choice of typeface is fundamental, of course. It gives the text its intonation. But his opinion of the Helvetica typeface certainly feels a little outdated. Perhaps the implied snobbery of the typeface is to do with the fact that it is a European one, designed in the late 1950s (Franklin Gothic is American, launched in 1903, and can in its turn be considered part of a well-established tradition). Today, Helvetica is one of the standard, default fonts of the digital world.[107] So the snobbery and authoritarianism perceived by Weiner in the 1960s have been replaced by their opposites.

Weiner's instructions correspond well with Bakhtin's view of the author and the reader. The instruction can be seen as the way in which the language is organised in the text of a novel, but the reader's assumptions also determine his or her understanding of the work. The relationship between the artist's intention and understanding of the instruction is indefinite, and perhaps has to be so. A few years after its first publication, Weiner clarifies or adjusts his meta-instruction. Perhaps he had realised that it is not feasible to control use of the instructions and that this was not necessarily desirable, either. The ethics of liberation he was

propounding, so typical of its time, appeared to require him to step back from it. The original wording was: 'Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.'[108] But then he adds: 'As to construction […] there is no correct way to construct the piece as there is no incorrect way to construct it. If the piece is built it constitutes not how the piece looks but only how it could look.'[109] This puts Weiner even more clearly in the role of an originator creating assumptions and potential, and preparing the ground for future reading. Weiner's wording makes him very similar to Bakhtin's author balancing on the tangent line between work and world. This is also where the dividing line runs between producing the work and experiencing it as something indistinct. In both cases, it is a question of a kind of reconstruction (or a set of proposals or possibilities?). For his own part, he considers his work in combining words simply as an organising of words without metaphorical meaning. Here we have a clear kinship with concrete texts, collage and others.

If one accepts Bakhtin's emphasis on the social, and in a broad sense conceptual, nature of art works, including physical works, at the expense of their material aspects, then it is possible to understand them as participants in non-physical, conceptual relationships. One way of constructing a meeting place for language, intertextuality and physical artefacts is to discuss the relationship between sculpture and text from the opposite direction with the help of Lawrence Weiner's argument (in theory and practice) that textual works can be considered as sculptures.[110] He quite simply omits to draw a distinction between the signifier and the signified. Weiner's text works make reference to mass, spatiality, colour etc. This work is from 1968:

> ONE QUART GREEN EXTERIOR INDUSTRIAL ENAMEL THROWN ON A BRICK WALL[111]

But Weiner's *wish* for his works to be considered sculptures is of course not the same as their actually *being* sculptures:

> Weiner's work thus signals a moment when decentering had come about, when the centered art object had driven from its locus as the primary point

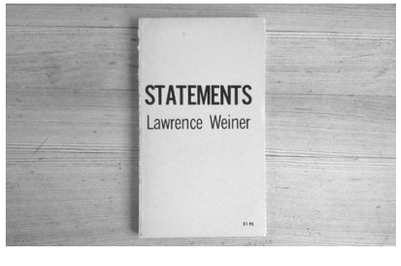
of reference. The result is a work that is strictly about *materials* (my emphasis), about the material quality of the text, the brute facticity of the signifier, its actual fits and starts, rather than any ideal meaning. Moreover, it is clear that for Weiner it does not matter if the work lacks 'meaning'. What is important is that it allows the beholder to track its material process, to chart its making systematically, but not by way of interpretative decoding. The aesthetic object, in other words, functions in manner that Roland Barthes once described as a 'construction of skins (of layers, of levels, of systems), whose volume contains, finally, no heart, no core, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing but the very infinity of its envelopes – which envelope nothing other than the totality of its surfaces'.[112]

This description, while apposite in many ways, and possibly entirely consistent with Weiner's own ideas, is uncritical in its use of the term 'material'. Art historian Benjamin Buchloh admires Weiner's radical departures but finds it hard to accept his idea that text installations and instructions are sculpture:

Buchloh: There seems to be a peculiar contradiction: on the one hand, you insist that sculpture is the primary field within which your work should be read, yet at the same time you have also substituted language as a model for sculpture. Thus you dismantled the traditional preoccupation with sculpture as an artisanal practice and material production, as a process of modelling, carving, cutting and producing objects in the world.
Weiner: If you can just walk away from Aristotelian thinking, my introduction of language as another sculptural material does not in fact require the negational displacement of other practices within the use of sculpture.
Buchloh: But why would it even have been discussed in terms of sculpture, rather than in terms of qualitatively different projects altogether?
Weiner: What would I call it? I call them 'works', I call them 'pieces', I called them whatever anybody else was coming up with that sounded like it was not sculpture. Then I realized that I was working with the materials that people called 'sculptors' work with. I was working with mass, I was working with all of the processes of taking out and putting in […] we were all talking about the ideas generated by placing a sculpture in the world. Therefore I did not think I was doing anything different from somebody putting out fourteen tons of steel out.[113]

It is not difficult to agree with Buchloh. Presumably the term 'concrete' would work better than sculpture if used in the same sense as in concrete poetry. I have every understanding for this usage, which can be traced back to Dada, among others. Even so, Weiner's text works are not what is normally meant by sculptures. But there is an obvious element of Weiner wanting to fit himself into a classic modernist artist's role even though it appears to undermine his radical project, which breaks with the view of the work of art as unique, as a commodity, as an object and so on. And his wish to attire himself in this role evidently rubs off on his view of how his art works are to be regarded. He therefore risks undermining his own project, even though I, at any rate, consider it more interesting than he gives himself credit for. I think it is more sensible simply to *broaden* the concept of sculpture instead of trying to squeeze the works into an existing, conventional definition. Not least because one, with Bakhtin, can view the material (like the marble in the statue of David) as a raw material, albeit with specific qualities. It is experience, expertise, the historic situation etc. that shapes the raw material into a work.

In Weiner's view, the works are spatial because they are *dependent* on the spatial context in which they are installed.[114] But since his works can also be pure instructions that are not even put into practice, on a wall for example, or set into a street, or in a book, the context can also be the moment of reading (as in Bakhtin).[115] I agree with Buchloh in understanding Weiner's work as – initially – a clear break with a tradition that has its roots in the activities of Duchamp. But Weiner goes back on his conceptual radicality by his assertion that the text works are to be seen as sculptures. It is plain that the reason for his insistence on this is that he seeks to write his *oeuvre* into a tradition. Weiner also often refers to large-scale physical works by contemporary artists like Jackson Pollock, Sol Lewitt, Robert Smithson and Donald Judd.[116]



Perhaps it is a desire to join this company that makes Weiner opt for such large text installations. This lends his works a paradoxically authoritarian element, with associations both to advertisements in public spaces and to the language of political power as found today in China and North Korea and previously in the former Soviet Union.

It may be interesting to develop the thought of the work as instruction by inverting it and returning in a slightly different way to the Bakhtinian notion of physical works of art as conceptual. Then one could view physical artefacts as text put into practice, or as instructions! The physical form then appears transient; it can be destroyed, after all. But as instruction, as thought, it can live on in the form of memories, as practical knowledge, like a cooking recipe. By that token, the statue of David, for example, is also an instruction in how to make a statue. Art in a broad sense would then be understood, as Bakhtin does, as *potentiality*.[117]

Appendix: The Fetish

When I went to view a Weiner retrospective in Düsseldorf in January 2009, there was a print on sale that had been produced for the occasion.[118] This is rather at odds with the anti-commercial aspect of conceptual art, and I imagine it may have been a way of helping to finance the catalogue. But I suddenly found myself yearning to own a fetish, despite this inconsistency in the attitude to the market. This desire was prompted by an urge to write my project into art history in this purely physical way, as an offshoot of the tradition Weiner had played a part in creating. But my indecision, together with the fact that the print cost an eye-watering €1500, luckily led me to refrain. I also found the exhibition slightly disappointing and did not want to be associated with it.

Mika: Write about that as well!

Andreas: But is it relevant?

Mika: Oh yes.

Andreas: How, exactly?

Mika: First you make the case for the conceptual aspects of art and then immediately fall for art as object and commodity!

Andreas: Eh …

Mika: Eat humble pie!

Andreas: Oh, all right. For me, there were two problematic aspects to the exhibition – *AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE* – as a whole: the aestheticisation of the works and an authoritarian element. The texts on the walls did not come across as sculpture at all, nor primarily as conceptual statements, but mainly as design, as graphic form, some kind of embellishment or ornamentation. But I was also aware of a surprisingly authoritarian streak to the exhibition. As a visitor I was enlisted as a miniature in relation to those monumental decorations. And if they were sculptures, as Weiner claims, they would scarcely be reminiscent of Richard Serra's or Chris Burden's macho monumentality, and maybe that was the intention, bearing in mind Weiner's references to them and his desire to be a monumental sculptor. But this is something quite different from the ascetic *Statement*, which is a far more all-encompassing in its radicality than the reduction of the project that I felt the Düsseldorf exhibition to be.[119]

A yearning to own, a fetishistic desire came over me, albeit a mild one. Since I was writing about Weiner, I felt I ought to own one of his works. This desire, and even the print in itself, was really not in tune with the view of art espoused by Weiner and his peers. It was perhaps a reasonable compromise in human terms, but aesthetically and ethically it did not succeed.

So the price of the print and my other reservations made me decide not to buy it, after all. But the unpurchased print and my disappointment in the exhibition were still gnawing away at me when I got back home. After a few days of brooding I realised that what interested me in Weiner's work was, of course, *Statements*, which was where the essence of what was significant in his work was to be found. If I could get hold of a copy of that book, my acquisitive urge would be stilled without the need for me really to renounce my, and Weiner's initial, view of art. The contents of this book are what I find interesting in Weiner's work. Anyway, a careful internet search revealed that one of the 1025 copies was printed in 1968 was for sale. I bought it for £320.[120]

And of course I am struck by the fact that Weiner's book has turned into something resembling an art object, a rare book. It is a fetish and I did not get past the art object despite its notably conceptual stance. Perhaps aesthetic ideology should prompt him to commission a mass print-run of facsimiles of the first edition.

The Space

At a Distance

By means of distancing and structuring, the text is separated from the author (who has left an impression through his or her style or intonation) and becomes objectified, according to Paul Ricoeur.[121] For him, text itself is a form of distancing:

> In my view, the text is much more than a particular case of intersubjective communication: it is the paradigm of distanciation in communication. As such, it displays a fundamental characteristic of the very historicity of human experience, namely, that it is communication in and through distance.[122]

As I understand it, distancing liberates the text from the author and the writing process, hence making them more accessible to interpretation and understanding. He goes further, separating out the discursive event – which is temporal – from its significance, which extends through time. Translated to an exhibition context, this would mean that the works are wrenched free from their creator (distanced), assembled into an exhibition (the discourse) that can be experienced by visitors (the discursive event) who can interpret the exhibition, which in turn can generate meaning such as, for example, some form of insight in the visitor that persists even after he or she has left the exhibition.

By means of this distancing, a sort of inevitable abandonment, the author or artist themselves become potential readers. The author relinquishes his position and can be absorbed into a collective of potential

readers. But, Ricoeur concludes, if there is no author to try to understand in the text, what is the work then for? His answer is that it can generate self-understanding.[123] Thus the paradox dissolves and the circle closes: distancing creates the opportunity for a kind of proximity that can be termed understanding. To put it in Bakhtinian terms, it creates an opportunity for dialogue for the reader. A dialogic relation must first be created between author and hero, otherwise the novel will be monologic. And this is achieved precisely by some sort of distance:

> What these authorial ideas, whatever function they fulfill, they are *not represented*: they either represent and internally govern a representation, or they shed light on some other represented thing, or, finally, they accompany the representation as a detachable semantic ornament. *They expressed directly, without distance.* And within the bounds of that monologic world shaped by them, someone else's idea cannot be represented. It is either assimilated, or polemically repudiated, or ceases to be an idea.[124]

In the monologic novel, everything is already complete, the hero and the events are instruments of a completed authorial idea which is simply taking a predetermined detour through a novel. The lack of distance stems from the control exercised by the author over his or her material. Nothing unpredicted is allowed to happen: any loopholes or lacunae that might let the reader step in are plugged. The dialogic novel, on the other hand, is open to the reader's participation, a sort of ethical moment of retelling that not only allows the reader to be creative but also gives the hero more freedom of action.[125] It seems to me that works in an exhibition can be viewed in the same way, with the curator then in the role of Dostoevsky:

> Dostoevsky was capable of representing *someone else's idea*, preserving its full capacity to signify as an idea, while at the same time also preserving a distance, neither confirming the idea, nor merging it with his own expressed ideology.[126]

The idea is thus to let other people, other things, speak, not only the author. This can be understood as the author creating a stage on which the

actors can act without being mouthpieces. It seems to me that Bakhtin's philosophy can be applied as well to spatially located exhibitions and art as to text. But it is clear that Bakhtin is more interested in temporal aspects of the chronotope than spatial ones. The reason for time being 'the dominant principle in the chronotope'[127] is, I suspect, that even if actions – including those in novels – take place in time and space, they are depicted in text. And text takes place in time but is not dependent on taking a unique spatial form. It can exist simultaneously in different places, unlike a human being, who occupies a unique place in space and time. But by contrast with texts, art is often both three-dimensional and dependent on a display space. (Perhaps digital, internet-based art is closer to text in this respect. As is the kind of conceptual art not reliant on material form.) One way of emphasising the significance of space in the concept of chronotope is to be mindful of the social aspect of Bakhtin's dialogism: that a state of being can only happen through communication with, and understanding of, the Other. And this can only occur if we keep our distance and do not become absorbed in one another. There is no symbiotic aim of that kind in Bakhtin. Such an aim would make understanding other people impossible. He provides an example of understanding another person's suffering:

> But in any event my projection of myself into him must be followed by a *return* into myself, a *return* to my own place outside the suffering person, for only from this place can the material derived from my projecting myself into the other be rendered meaningful ethically, cognitively, or aesthetically. If this return into myself did not actually take place, the pathological phenomenon of experiencing another's suffering as one's own would result – an infection with another's suffering, and nothing more.[128]

It is not my intention to claim that an art object or an exhibition is in all vital respects conceptually the same as a text, though they are united in being chronotopic. I would, however, like to add my voice to those of Bakhtin and others who seek to blur and break down the boundaries between art object and text, between author and reader, and between world and art. On the one hand I want to point to the spatial nature of texts,

on the other the conceptual nature of physical (art) objects. In this way, the boundaries come under attack from both sides. And this *attempt* to dissolve boundaries can be made, I believe, in part with reference to the dialogic in Bakhtin. Since dialogue is situated in space, this is also a theory of language as dialogic, that is to say, by definition spatial and social.[129] And, as Bakhtin is at pains to stress, intonation and gesture are intentional. This presupposes a certain distance or an element of spatiality since intentionality demands distance.

Mats: But how? Why?

Andreas: The directional aspect that is an essential part of intentionality, together with the idea of an utterance as a social event, seem to me to incorporate some kind of spatial dimension. I find it hard to imagine the opposite. And the way I see it, spatial dimension is capable of housing those artworks/utterances that take physical form. But *space* is not an unambiguous concept, of course. In *Den framställande gesten* (The Representational Gesture), for example, Maria Hirvi-Ijäs discusses the concept of space in relation to art exhibitions with reference to Lefebvre, among others.[130] She employs Lefebvre's division into 'perceived space' (where we maintain continuous social, everyday practice), 'conceived space' (linked to an underlying notion of exposure) and 'lived space' (a conceptualised world built on notation), which Hirvi-Ijäs allows to stand for the visitor's interplay with art in the exhibition space. The division seems fruitful, but my own perception is that Bakhtin's dialogic concepts do not draw these distinctions. The dialogic wants to encompass the human state of being in its entirety, and art is an expression of that. And the central concept of chronotope does not embrace this notion of different kinds of spatiality.

Bakhtin is not analytical in that sort of way, and it is, after all, his philosophy that forms the basis and starting point for my research (though of course it is not comprehensive). There are, for example, important distinctions between time and space, and between a text and an object, which are not really clarified. A text is not bound to a specific physical object: it may, for example be in the form of a manuscript, on the internet, in paperback format, and so on. And this is fundamental to the concept (of intertextuality) discussed by Bakhtin. But some works of art

are not as mobile as that: Michelangelo's statue of David, for example, is a single statue, one of a kind. And this gives it a physical, spatial presence reminiscent of the space occupied by a single person, often lacking in the case of a text. The question is whether art objects and texts can be discussed, referencing Bakhtin, in the same spatial terms.

Mats: First and foremost, a text is always in a space, even if it has only been thought. There is scarcely anything that is not spatial. In discussing the unique qualities of works of art, one can make use of Goodman and Elgin's distinction between those works that are autographic, dependent on how they came into existence (like the statue of David), and works that are allographic, and only dependent on syntax or semantics – such as the fact that a sequence of words recurs in the same order as before (in a novel by Cervantes, for example.)[131]

Andreas: That sounds reasonable (though I wonder what would happen if someone succeeded in making an exact copy of the statue of David). One could say, with Bakhtin, that a human being is autographic, but a story about her is allographic. But what interests me in this section is having a discussion of the spatial aspects of art and of concepts, and showing that Bakhtin can be helpful here.

Johan: The poem 'At the Top of My Voice' by Vladimir Mayakovsky, recorded by [the Swedish prog band] Nynningen in the 1970s, includes the lines: 'In parade deploying / the armies of my pages / I shall inspect / the regiments in line'.[132]

Andreas: So the text is *there*, in space, with the poet standing in front of it.

Johan: The poet is inspecting; he isn't in full control of the way the lines behave. Mayakovsky's lines were at the front. A war is being fought. The way I see it, editorial art is produced in a place, in an editorial office …

Andreas: … yes, the spatiality is important!

Johan: And here, of course, there are specific individuals or wishes.

Andreas: … it is a position and a function … a hypothalamus … a switchboard operator … yes, exactly, spatiality is important! It is one of the reasons why intertextuality as a concept is so applicable to exhibitions and curatorship. Bakhtin – and Kristeva – talk about literature, the novel, as a place, not as a chain of events.

> The fundamental category in Dostoevsky's mode of artistic visualizing was not evolution, but *coexistence* and *interaction*. He saw and conceived his world primarily in terms of space, not time. Hence his deep affinity for the dramatic form. Dostoevsky strives to organize all available meaningful material, all material of reality, in one time-frame, in the form of a dramatic juxtaposition, and he strives to develop it extensively.[133]

It is plainly important to note how Bakhtin avoids anything linear, unambiguous, monologic or developable. Events occur not only at junctures but also at places. The texts become spatially orientated; and understanding of the text then occurs between spaces. And these spatially orientated events speak for a view of the text as performative, as utterances and language in a general sense. That is Bakhtin's position, too (it was Kristeva who locked the dialogic element into the concept of intertextuality).

The spatial connotations of utterance are to be preferred to the two dimensions of text because the complex web of connections between works, and aspects of works, can be more comprehensibly formulated in three dimensions. Intertext, for example, is located between two texts. It is, for Bakhtin, dialogic communication. It is social. And even if this social stage is an imprecise space between, it is still hard to imagine without using spatial terms. And this is consistent with the physical law stating that all bodies occupy a unique place in space, and that one must therefore be somewhere, experiencing the world from a particular point; one must be situated in time and space.[134] For Bakhtin, the slightly paradoxical conclusion is that human beings' quality of being unique and separate is also what unites us.[135] This appears to be inspired by Kant's notion that the ability of human beings to communicate with each other is built on intersubjectivity: the fact that we all possess the same knowledge apparatus.

Bodies In a Town Square

For Bakhtin, consciousness is a part of, or a consequence of, the body's existence, and thus a state of being, in time and space.[136] Dialogic relations are found from the micro-level, as a biological response to stimuli, through to linguistic, dialogic relations with other people, heroes etc.

I think of these places or relations or structures or networks as microworlds that manifest themselves as elastic nebulae.

One of Bakhtin's key concepts – that of carnival – locates language in space, in the town square, which essentially underlines the applicability of the concept to art and exhibitions. One can basically, with Holquist, think of intertextual relations as purely physical, as *intercorporeal relations*: 'The body is, if you will, *intercorporeal* in much the same way as the novel is intertextual. Like the novel, the body cannot be conceived outside a web of interrelations of which it is a living part.'[137] Mikhail Bakhtin's interest in Rabelais and folk carnival, the grotesque body and the town square as scene of action is simply also one possible way of talking about an exhibition space and relations between works.[138] Here I am referring to interrelations in a broad sense, as for the novel, that is to say relations that can also extend through time and space, that are not merely limited by an exhibition's often defined territory.

In his book about Rabelais, Bakhtin talks of how our way of understanding and describing change in the body has altered. In history he finds examples of the grotesque body going right back to antiquity, and believes it is only since the seventeenth century that a distinction has been drawn between private and official languages: 'There is a sharp line of division between familiar speech and "correct" language.'[139] In official discourses the body is smooth, solid, flattened out and respectable. The grotesque body is its opposite: it has large organs and outgrowths (noses, genitals, warts …) that protrude from the body and, as it were, transcend its boundaries. This body also has numerous orifices (anus, mouth, vagina …) which discharge fluids (nasal secretions, phlegm, urine, excrement …). It is the body as nature in permanent flux.

> The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world (…) Eating, drinking, defecation, and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all of these acts are performed on the confines of the body and outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and the end of life are closely linked and interwoven.[140]

Bakhtin speaks of a collective where there are no clear boundaries between bodies; body is born of body, life goes on, and we are a long way from the individualised, finite lives of our age.[141] It seems to me that these physical relations, too, can be applied to our understanding of an exhibition situation. Artworks can be purely conceptual, tangibly physical or a mixture of the two. One could then speak of art and exhibitions as both intertextual and intercorporeal.[142] Bakhtin not only talks of bodies but also says 'that an object [in the grotesque] can transgress not only its quantitative but also its qualitative limits, that it can outgrow itself and be fused with other objects.'[143]

Just as the novel is a meeting place for texts, a kind of organised quotation exercise, the body is for Rabelais a similar sort of microcosm. Even though Rabelais, or so Bakhtin claims, was not attracted by contemporary magical thinking about the body, he could still view the body in a materialist spirit, saying it was 'the most nearly perfect form of the organization of matter and was therefore the key to all matter. The material components of the universe disclose in the human body their true nature and highest potentialities'.[144] In a transferred sense, one can think of the exhibition as consisting of bodies.

Daniel Birnbaum: [Your idea of the works in an exhibition] as a microcosm reminds me of the reflections in Borges' short stories or in Leibniz's *Monadology*. This notion of every part of an artwork (and perhaps even the cosmos) reflecting every other part is an idea we find in thinkers of the Baroque period. But some mirrors are so warped that the reflection is completely distorted. That is what I meant by misinterpretations: that kind of deliberate distortion.[145]

Andreas: Yes, then the body is a sort of microcosm, which in its perfection gives us the opportunity of understanding the universe, and this seems to coincide with the *novelistic*, with what occurs in the novel. It is this quality that is not only found in a good novel but is also the *form of knowledge*, in a wider sense, that can most persuasively impose order on diverse kinds of experience and make them engage in dialogue with

each other. This is a quality Bakhtin sees in Dostoevsky and Rabelais, but it can also be found in other linguistic, dialogic contexts. The way I see it, the grotesque body in its openness, its receptiveness and extrovert activity is a place where this novelistic element can play out.

By viewing Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus* through Bakhtin's eyes, Holquist is able to speak of the body as novelistic, and physically 'intertextual', as a condensed and organised structure: 'as a parable about relations between otherness, bodies and intertextuality.'[146] And this offers me, in turn, the possibility of thinking of physical objects, art objects, as intertextual. The artistic and curatorial works can then, in this sense, be seen as analogous.

Holquist points out at the start that the very title of the novel has a duality to it: 'Frankenstein' is the name of both the creator and the monster. And the subtitle, *Or, The Modern Prometheus*, adds an – intertextual – reference to a classical myth beyond both the covers of the book and the physical monster.[147] He is not born out of nothing, nor is he alone. Holquist wants to understand the monster as a kind of bridge, as both text and body:

> Frankenstein's monster springs from the library as much as he does from the charnel house and laboratory: he is made up not only from other bodies from the past, but like Mary Shelley's novel, from other books from the past.[148]

Holquist notes that Frankenstein's monster is born without language and is therefore inhuman, as Bakhtin sees it. But Shelley the author offers the material – the language – and the conditions Frankenstein needs in order to succeed in the life-giving experiment, which he in turn offers to his monster.[149] Holquist makes an error here, or is at any rate unclear on one central point.[150] He switches seamlessly and without comment between the textual monster, the one written about on the pages of the book, and a potential, physically living monster. Is he talking about accumulations of words on the pages of a book, or a *bricolage* of body parts joined together to make a monstrous (grotesque!) body that walks the streets of the town? (Interestingly enough, Montaigne at the start of his career as an essayist

writes of the essay as a grotesque body assembled out of disparate details: 'What are these essays but grotesque bodies pieced together of different members?'[151]) In the passage quoted above Holquist does draw a distinction between the library and the charnel house, forgetting in his haste that the charnel house visited by Frankenstein is actually *within* this library rather than beyond it. And the library is hardly in the charnel house. Holquist allows slippage, in the same way as Lawrence Weiner, between the signifier and the signified, between the word 'monster' and a monster.

Q: And you are evidently back in the chapter 'Concept as Material'. Where are the bodies?

Andreas: Yes, you are right. I got sidetracked because I was following in Holquist's footsteps. He apparently does not distinguish between a body in a text and a physical body. But it is clearly an easy trap to fall into, with the author's position on the boundary between text and the reality that is not text. The author as some kind of medium, or bridge …

Q: But then why take the trouble to speak with Holquist's monster at all?

Andreas: Holquists' text is an analogy that provides a useful tool for discussion. It is the analogy, or the metaphor, that is the main point.

Q: Body and text taken to the point of mix-up and confusion.

Andreas: Why not? A glorious frenzy of vivisection and deconstruction!

Q: The operation was successful but the patient died… You are losing the thread again now. Are you trying to hint again at some kind of replacement-fest in which the author, Frankenstein and the monster of the latter change places and body then becomes text, or utterance, and utterance body? You're stumbling into a pit of your own making! Or is it Holquist wavering here?

Andreas: I am well aware, as I said, that the boundary between text and body is not abolished or obscured simply because one ignores it, as Holquist does. Frankenstein's monster is not one of the snorting, stinking, guzzling bodies in a carnival. But I agree with Holquist and his interpretation of Bakhtin that bodies have interrelational connections. The important thing for me is to show that it is reasonable to apply Bakhtin's ideas to both the linguistic and the conceptual aspects. I would claim that artworks in an exhibition setting can have precisely the same range of interrelations with each other, both physically and conceptually. And it was

the physical relations, specifically, that Holquist attributed to Bakhtin's grotesque bodies in the carnival. The artworks perhaps have, in precisely that sense, a grotesque side, even in purely conceptual terms. These orifices, protuberances, leakages … they are interwoven with each other and with the world, including observers and artist.

Q: Fair enough!

Andreas: To summarise: I understand Bakhtin to be saying that text and concept are admittedly not identical to one another, but they are dependent on each other. The bodies' *meaning* is conceptual, dependent on language. Nor do they exist without each other; they come into existence in intercorporeal relations, just as texts do in intertextual relations. 'Even the human body is not given, according to Bakhtin: it is produced through interaction with others.'[152] The body could be understood as concrete concepts, by contrast with the abstract concepts of language. Art can perhaps be described as a meeting place for the physical and the conceptual, as a sort of virtual world. There, the reader and hero come together in a shared desire for union: 'The heroes themselves, it turns out, fervently dream of being embodied, they long to attach themselves to one of life's normal plots.'[153]

The Language of the Institution

Exhibition spaces are scarcely confined only to galleries, museums or private homes. We must not forget land art, virtual art, site-specific art at other sites, print material, instructions, events, absence, sound and voices and so on. But to make things simpler for myself, I am including all these options within the terms 'exhibition', 'exhibition space' and 'work of art.'

If a curated exhibition can be seen as an intertextual game or drama, then in addition to the participants already named, the place in which the exhibition is held must also be added to the ensemble. Most art is spatially orientated.[154] This may seem self-evident, but it is not, despite the fact that the term 'context' has been in common use for the past twenty years or more.[155] Reference is sometimes made in this context to a 'sender', but that is not an entirely appropriate term because it implies a homogenous subject. An institution should, rather, be viewed as a complex context, like a structure.

Curator Bruce W. Ferguson points in an article to the difficulty that art institutions have in seeing themselves as products of their history, the architecture of the building, their staff, signage and so on, and how this finds expression in an exhibition as a whole, through its various parts.[156] Institutions should spend more time on self-reflection. Despite his dislike of talking about exhibitions as texts, Ferguson allows himself the liberty of referring to an exhibition as an *utterance*.[157]

> If an exhibition of art is like an utterance or a set of utterances, in a chain of signification, it can be considered to be the speech act of the institution. And, like a speech act the exhibition finds itself in the center of an environment of signifying noises. Less like a text then, more like a sound.[158]

One point Ferguson makes in talking about the exhibition as an utterance is that a verbal utterance, at least, is a sound and that, like much in art, it is often spatial. Furthermore, intertextuality is often discussed in terms of space and the complex weave of connections seems more easily understood as three-dimensional. The intertext (dialogue) is located between two texts. Even if the place where this *space between* operates is imprecise, it is hard to visualise it without using spatial terms. I see these places or relations or structures or networks as microworlds that manifest themselves as elastic nebulae. Within these structures, the component parts can be discussed without getting caught up in a relativism or nihilism that destroys their value.[159] But they are floating in a greater space that is harder to define. As Barthes writes in the introduction to *S/Z*: 'the one text is […] [an] entrance into a network with a thousand entrances'.[160] Furthermore:

> The text, in its mass, is comparable to a sky, at once flat and smooth, deep, without edges and without landmarks […] The lexia [the part of the text that B. analyses. Author's note] is only the wrapping of a semantic volume, the crest line of the plural text, arranged like a berm of possible […] meanings under the flux of discourse: the lexia and its units will thereby form a kind of polyhedron faceted by the word […].[161]

In his textual interpretation, Barthes does not dwell on the graphic form of the text, the publisher's identity etc – the paratextuality – in a way that allows its transference to a discussion of the temporary elements. For him, the text is disengaged from such transient contexts – in that sense it is timeless – and is linked instead to other, linguistic discourses.

In the case of an exhibition, its design and its 'publisher' are inevitably the big names. Bruce W. Ferguson is right that every art institution is a complex structure that more or less unconsciously expresses itself through exhibitions. One way of examining such structures is to emphasize the specific exhibition space and its various paratextual concepts: installation, signage, catalogue, press releases, information sheets and so on. This has the advantage of uncoupling the exhibition to some extent from the curator as a constructor in sole control and also from the content of the works, and is contextualised by the particular exhibition space. An exhibition is of course neither natural nor a purely mechanically fabricated product but a concentrated expression of all manner of decisions and preconditions. An utterance, like an exhibition, is not uttered by a single subject but is the result of various participants' contributions and a whole host of circumstances (historical, social, economic and so on.)[162] One way of discussing these issues is to debate the role of the museum education officer. The relationship between the art institutions, the artist, the art work and the public is highly dependent on art education.

The art educator is a clear exponent of an art institution. The art educator is a phenomenon with historic roots in the pulpit as an interpreter and mediator of power, both worldly and divine. The gallery's art educator stands between the artwork and the public, explains, narrates, evaluates and interprets. In the classic – and outdated – model that persists in some institutions, museum curators and directors and certain reviewers constitute a Mount Olympus. The art educator is then the messenger from Olympus to the ordinary exhibition visitor.

There has been no proper debate of the art educator's role, no attempt to put it into context and to look not only at pedagogical methods but also at who sets the art educator's agenda. Is he or she merely a hollow tube through which other actors send messages? Where do the art educator's loyalties lie? The exhibition curator represents the institution

and by exhibiting a work has also given it a tacit seal of approval. Does that mean the art educator has to be appreciative of the work as well? Does he or she promote the official view from the pulpit or are personal opinions allowed? Is the art educator loyal to the artist's intentions? Does the art educator step into the shoes of the artist who has left the stage? Is it in actual fact the public that is the art educator's employer? Can the art educator put across an idea about a work that runs entirely counter to the artist's own? These are questions the institutions must answer and I therefore add my voice to Ferguson's exhortation to the institutions to understand and contextualise their activities.

In my experience of working with institutions, relatively little consideration is given to the utterances of the place, their temporary and permanent dialects, emphases, advantages and failings. There is an awareness, admittedly, that the way an exhibition is installed will influence the impression it gives. The white cube, in particular, developed great sensitivity to the importance of 'hanging' for artists and curators. But there is a whole series of factors that influences the character of an exhibition. There is generally nothing that can be done about the permanent architecture.[163] There is a lack of both money and time for interventions of that kind. The construction of exhibition elements, painting and the installation of technical equipment are often dependent on the options available to the technical staff, their personal attitude to the work of the institution overall, and to a particular exhibition and the curator in charge of it.

The graphic profile of an exhibition is in principle a part of an institution's general profile. There are financial reasons for this, but I think it is as least as important to the institution for the exhibition to slot into the language that is the institution's brand. Any individual exhibition is an utterance made by the institution, not by the art works or the artist.

Freedom and Coercion

> By taking aesthetic responsibility in a very explicit way for the design of the installation space, the artist reveals the hidden sovereign dimension of the contemporary democratic order that politics, for the most part, tries to

> conceal. The installation space is where we are immediately confronted with the ambiguous character of the contemporary notion of freedom that functions in our democracies in parallel with sovereign and institutional freedom.[164]

This is one of the conclusions reached by philosopher and art critic Boris Groys in his essay *The Politics of Installation*. Its message is that there are fundamental differences between an artist's and a curator's installation. This essay forms the background to my own argument, allowing me to discuss relations between artist, curator and art institution. In the quotation above, Groys points out how the pecking order in an exhibition situation mirrors the contradictory structures within a democratic society. He sees this as an example of, and a metaphor for, the way the private sphere (the artist, the non-democratic, sovereign individual) acts within the public sphere (the democratic art institution).

Groys' observation could broaden out the meaning of my curatorial project *Step by Step,* which is based on the exhibition *Taking Over* and dealt even more explicitly with power relations within exhibition spaces. One of the tasks I had set myself was to bring greater visibility to relations between the curator, the artist, the visitor and the works. And one crucial element in this was the issue of my own position, since I was both artist *and* curator in this context.

Andreas: Couldn't you think about these changes in positions as in the game Musical Chairs?[165]

Boris Groys: Yes, that is the way the whole contemporary art system functions. There are certain roles, like the critic, the collector, the curator, the intellectual and so on. And people actually change these roles all of the time. We don't have a system with pure artists, pure curators et cetera. Everybody moves.

Groys' argument about the exhibition space as a structure which in itself mirrors the structure of a democratic society is interesting. This makes the exhibition space into a stage on which a democratic social

drama is portrayed. But I think some further discussion is required here. One question is the extent to which an art work can be separated from its originator. If it is reasonable to *talk about* the art work independently of the artist, which I believe and argue for, then Groys' arguments are problematic. I think there are obvious and important points of overlap between curatorial and artistic practices in both theoretical and practical terms, but in his essay, Groys seeks to draw a distinct line between them. There are differences between the two positions, of course, but I would claim that they are constructed, that there is good reason to question them and that one way of achieving this is to blur the lines between the various roles.

Boris Groys: But it is only in the moment when it is clear who is the artist and who is the curator, that you can shift positions. To mix something or to shift something you first of all have to differentiate it. If everything is the same, you cannot mix it […] If everything is changing the change disappears. We don't feel that something changes if everything is in change. We have to have some kind of framework, which remains stable and gives us some possibility to measure change. If everything changes it is the same. It is like in the supermarket: it is always the same because it always has different objects in it. The museum is also like a supermarket, but a supermarket that keeps the previous commodities. So we can really see how this kind of supermarket changes over time. If you for instance talk about documentation, take for example Walid Raad, the Lebanese artist also working under the concept of The Atlas Group. He said that his documentation – *The Atlas Group Archive* – was the result of his research in Lebanon. But it was of course fictive. They were pseudo documents, but the public received them as real documents, being fictional art works. So at the moment, when documentation enters the museum, it starts to play with the situation. And this is possible because the museum as an institution has not changed! So I don't think that the museum should change, but be a place of change.

Museums and art galleries today are in a state of constant redefinition and one of the ways this change is evidenced is through what is shown and how it is shown within these institutions. It is no longer possible to

separate them out as stable frameworks around content in flux. Naturally the institution constitutes some kind of boundary line, but it is a boundary line that is always being renegotiated. To take one example: in Sweden, the boundary between market and state institution has undergone a marked shift over the last ten years.[166] Commercial sponsorship, initially viewed with suspicion, is now demanded by the proprietors. The hiring out of venues and services, and the selling of books, souvenirs and refreshments has also burgeoned.

Be that as it may, Boris Groys' main point is that the curator has a public duty, that she or he is a mediator, by contrast with the artist who is private and free.[167]

Mats: There's something a bit dubious about 'freedom' as a concept – see Sartre, for example … – I would definitely start calling it autonomy here, instead – then one can be more specific and situated, without losing the point.

Andreas: Yes, it is right of course that the artist is – sometimes – free in the sense of being his or her own employer, but that freedom comes at the price of having no guarantee at all of economic or symbolic remuneration. So the freedom is embedded in a whole range of obligations to adapt to the prevailing economic and symbolic market. Groys notes this yet still asserts that the artist has freedom. Now of course there are some basic elements of freedom in the artist's work, but they are no greater than for, say, independent intellectual writers or, I would argue, freelance curators.[168]

Boris Groys: Under specific conditions you are free. I do not speak about concepts of freedom like those of Heidegger or Shelling. But talking in terms of the supermarket again: under the specific conditions of the supermarket you are free to buy this or that. There are certain kinds of areas of freedom, and there are certain kinds of conventions that allow you to use it. So, there is a certain freedom given to the artist that is not given to the curator. Inside the system, under the specific conditions of the system, there are different criteria of freedom, and hence different conditions of freedom for the artist and the curator. That is what I am trying to say.

> the exhibition space is understood here to be an empty, neutral, public space – a symbolic property of the public. The only function of such a space is to make the art objects that are placed within it easily accessible to the gaze of the visitors. The curator administers this exhibition space in the name of the public – as a representative of the public. Accordingly, the curator's role is to safeguard its public character, while bringing the individual artworks into this public space, making them accessible to the public, publicizing them.[169]

[…] We have some kind of framework, which remains stable and gives us some possibility to measure change. (*Groys)*

But the exhibition space is not neutral. It is, for example, burdened with history's and contemporary society's view of art. Just think of the weighty institutional baggage that comes with any museum. An art gallery is positioned in direct relation to the former by not being a museum, and so on. Groys goes on to place the curator in a public institution or, alternatively, promotes the freelance curator to the status of an institution.[170] But the question is: to what degree must he or she be subordinated to a public task, that is, not be free in terms of the freedom Groys believes an artist to have. One can draw a parallel with the academic world, where people work on publicly commissioned projects, but within these will have the task of carrying out independent research. So I am trying to argue that the artist and the curator share both freedom and lack of it, and should not be distinguished from each other on those grounds.

Mats: I agree – that is a good point; but the concept of freedom is muddled here, too; think of the Swedish Research Council's various decrees …

Andreas: I shall watch my step. We all want grants, after all.

Mats: I agree with your critique of Groys – but I think you may be falling into the liberal/Sartrian trap of buying precisely the concept of freedom that liberals generally go along with – there is a big difference between talking about 'the space of an exhibition' in terms of autonomy and in terms of freedom.

Andreas: Okay then, autonomy.

Mats: Autonomy implies that one can create norms for, say, one's own work. And that it is a question of negotiation, in any case. It rules out freedom in a prison, for example.

Andreas: All right. The artist has that kind of autonomy. In our case, it implies that we can more easily step across boundaries between different practices, that we can follow our flashes of inspiration in the midst of a process and use our intuition in the sense of likes and tastes, with all that it implies. But an art project is generally dependent on what is possible in terms of potential exhibition options and of financing, and then becomes dependent on 'lack of freedom'. The studio is a typical example of a Romantic attempt to establish a parallel and free world.[171] Perhaps it can function as a metaphor for freedom, a life-giving simulation. Bakhtin/Voloshinov argue, for example, that the creating can take place in relation to a 'you' but not to a general public. It is the idea of a dialogic practice beyond the public sphere.[172] The question is whether that is ever really possible. I don't know.

As regards the artist's freedom vis-à-vis the curator's lack of it, I think Groys pushes it too far. Like any other employee of a state-run art institution, national or local, the institutional curator will also not have undivided loyalties, even if this is seldom reflected on. For Groys, the curator is a mediator, the one who cures the sick work, who gives it life: 'the work of art is sick […]. Curating cures the powerlessness of the image'. (*Curator* is etymologically derived from *curare*: to cure or heal.) The artist, on the other hand, is a free party coming from outside the institution:

> [The installation] is based exclusively [sic! Author's note] on personal sovereign decisions that are not in need of any further explanation or justification [sic! Author's note] The artistic installation is a way to expand the domain of the sovereign rights of the artist from the individual art object to that of the exhibition space itself.[173]

The 'Romantic' aura, it seems, remains firmly riveted to the Artist. I would claim that most artists who have collaborated with institutions know that this is based to a large extent on negotiation and to a much lesser extent on sovereignty. And that applies to the budget for the work, as well.[174] Installing art in an institution can best be described as an interesting combination of battle and cooperation. My experience of working with curators at institutions tells me that they are caught up in a web of

loyalties. They naturally have to fulfil their institutional duty, but they also want to be loyal to the artist, to the works and so on. And they want to be loyal to their own, private conception of what is essential art. Even if Groys is right that a publicly employed person has a public duty, it is a simplification to speak of the curator as only loyal to her or his employer.

Furthermore, the idea of the sick work that is cured by the curator risks expressing a desire to maintain the artist's role as someone who *does*, but does not *know*. I agree, of course, that through the work the artist offers a kind of raw material (but not just anything!) but I also want to include the artist among those with the potential to ennoble – cure – the work. Artistic research, specifically, is a manifestation of that stance, which I of course share: the artist's freedom to talk about her or his own art work and activities. On the other hand, the notion of the work being cured, which comes from classical antiquity, is interesting in the sense that it implies the work comes to life in the encounter with all potential viewers of it. Curating can then be seen as a variant of 'the reader' who essentially creates the work, as Bakhtin, for example, describes it.

Groys is of the opinion that the curator must be able to discuss and put the case for an exhibition, something which the artist has no obligation to do. But surely a curator can curate an exhibition that is not completely explainable? Exhibitions sometimes actually benefit from allowing the interplay of the works without interpreting them to death. I try to show this by means of the theme of *repetition* in my curatorial project. Its indistinct and general nature in some places is counterbalanced by specific and sometimes unexpected ways into the works and the relationships between them. Thinking can occur in the exhibition as well as through a work and not before the work is created. But note that this does not preclude intentions on the part of both curators and artists. They define the play, set boundaries, highlight things, invite us in, and so on.

Q: I am always suspicious of artists who have lots of opaque motivations and justifications.

Andreas: Yes, we're people of action, or you might even say children of nature.

Q: But aren't you, of all people, arguing that it is the *works that speak*, not the Artist?

Andreas: Yes, but again, the artist still has a thing or two to do with it. The artist often knows things about the work that other people cannot always be aware of. But this does not imply that the artist has a monopoly on the understanding of it. One very clear instance of this would be works that set mechanisms in motion beyond the exhibition context. If an artistic project, for example, turns out to have an unintentionally negative effect on people, then the artist has an obligation to make a case for the work. It sometimes falls to art to test the boundaries, but that is of course not an argument for it necessarily being good or morally irreproachable.

Q: I'm afraid I've got to be a bore and pull you up there: weren't you arguing that works of art live their own lives? So why should the Artist suddenly be resurrected?

Andreas: Hmmm yes, that is the question. Is this yet another encounter between ethics and aesthetics? Is it an assertion that one ought (!) to embrace morality within art. Let me put it this way: if the artist or curator or anyone else uses or interprets a work of art in such a way as to give it moral implications, then the person who does this is responsible, as with any other action. Art is not a free zone in terms of morality. Quite the reverse: morally dubious art projects are often based in moralism.[175] But this ought not to influence the ability of the works to function intertextually and to speak beyond the expressed intentions of the artist.

Groys further distinguishes between the individual work of art and the exhibition, maintaining that a work of art, unlike an exhibition, can only be accepted or rejected in its entirety. In my experience, one normally discusses and evaluates aspects of art works in the same way as one discusses the various sides of an exhibition. Instances of works with both a good and a bad side must be more the rule than the exception. Nor is there any reason here to differentiate between an installation and an individual work. This is even more obvious if we apply the argument to literature or music. Read any review in a national daily paper and you will be treated to both positive and negative opinions of an individual work. I cannot see that it is any different for installed works of art.

Despite the wide variety of contemporary relational practices, Groys does not think the sovereignty of the installation has been undermined:

> By entering this space, the visitor leaves the public territory of democratic legitimacy and enters the space of sovereign, authoritarian control. The visitor is here, so to speak, on foreign ground, in exile. The visitor becomes an expatriate who must submit to a foreign law – one given to him or her by the artist.[176]

Setting aside for a moment the fact that I, for one, do not recognise the situation of the exhibition visitor as he describes it, Groys does not draw any distinction here between artist and art work. The artist's intention with regard to the work and the installation is only one part of the context within which the project is having its effect. And the power struggle being played out around which of the various actors – artist, curator, work, institution, and so on – takes priority in how it is interpreted has been replaced here by an unrealistic notion of a public rendered passive. Groys transposes the power struggle to an earlier stage, to the establishment of order/the installation. He takes as his metaphor a brand of democracy imposed by non-democratic means – force – since the situation is by definition undemocratic. And he makes the case for the need to respect individual power even if there are structural hierarchies. But this is no criticism of the installation per se. On the contrary, he thinks that this individual, non-democratic power (that of the artist) concealed within the democratic and public institution reflects an important aspect of democracy. Beneath Groys' discussion of the artist's relationship with the democratic public sphere I can identify liberal democracy's fundamental question of the rights of the individual in relation to society. And when this question is applied to an installation in a public institution the artist will again be the one who is to test the boundaries of (individual) freedom.

Boris Groys: These problems concern democracy and universality. The contemporary art world wants to be universal and democratic. This means that it is a minority! Because we are not living in a democracy or in universality. We are living in a system of national states and of economical inequality. So, the art world is a playground for the concept of equality and the concept of democracy.

Andreas: Do you think that this playground is elitistic?

Boris Groys: No, no. It is in fact more democratic! But we are living

in a very strange society where to be more democratic and more universal you become an elitist. This happens because people are more accustomed to a non-democratic society than a democratic one. The majority do not think in a democratic or universalistic way. So, being democratic and universal you are always under the accusation of being elitistic.

There are several basic problems with Boris Groys' argument in favour of drawing a distinction between an art installation by an artist and a curator's curating of one: he does distinguish not between the artist's position, the artist's intention and the artist's installation; he does not distinguish between a conventionally established perception of given roles, how they work in practice and how they could potentially work; he has romantic notions of the freedom of the artist and the practical work involved in exhibitions. Lastly, there is a normative aspect to his arguments, cementing the distinctions between artistic and curatorial practice and thereby also a hierarchy in which the artist is non-intellectual, the exhibition visitor passive and the work dependent on the life-giving interpretation of the curator.

Mats: In short – your criticism is irrefutable, but at the same time somehow a little predictable – it never strays outside the framework constructed by Groys – and that will naturally be the case, in this first step. But I think the really interesting thing will be what might emerge when you/the curator-artist/ assert your conditional autonomy in relation to the demands and provisions you have indicated in the text – what does it mean to distinguish art works and projects from artists and curators, for example?

Andreas: See further the chapter where I have Mikhail Bakhtin argue for the autonomy of the text (or in my case, the art work). The relationship between work and author/curator can be seen as the same as that between the hero and the author in Bakhtin.

I Hear Voices In Everything[177]

Nils: The idea of dialogism allows Bakhtin to investigate the novel … I wonder whether the terms dialogics and intertextuality, in the way you are using them, really answer your case.

Andreas: Well I feel they have helped me to fish out a fair amount so far.

Gunnar: Gedin, polyphony is the solution you need![178]

> Thus the new artistic position of the author with regard to the hero in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is a *fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position*, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero. For the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou', that is, another and other autonomous 'I' ('thou art'). The hero is the subject of a deeply serious, *real* dialogic mode of address, not the subject of a rhetorically *performed* or *conventionally* literary one. And this dialogue – the 'great dialogue' of the novel as a whole – takes place not in the past, but right now, that is, in the *real present* of the creative process. This is no stenographer's report of a *finished* dialogue, from which the author has already withdrawn and *over* which he is now located as if in some higher decision-making position: that would have turned an authentic and unfinished dialogue into an objectivized and finalized *image of a dialogue*, of the sort usual for every monologic novel. The great dialogue in Dostoevsky is organized as an *unclosed whole* of life itself, life poised *on the threshold*.[179]

This is a kind of existential liberation aesthetic in which the characters of the novel are released from the straitjacket of earlier structures. The term 'unfinalizability' or rather 'finalizability' is central. Bakhtin's problem is

to solve the conflict between that which is finalised, fully interpreted, and a living event that is unique. His solution has us finalising the Others by making them into wholes. Otherwise they cannot be grasped. This is a limitation, albeit a transient one, implicit in all interpretations. The potential for other readings remains in both individuals and in works of art. In art, and particularly in Dostoevsky, Bakhtin believes he finds examples of such a solution because the heroes are set free and cannot be read in a single interpretation. He goes so far as to maintain that in the polyphonic novel, Dostoevsky creates a new genre of novel: 'Dostoevsky is the creator of *authentic polyphony* […]'[180]. In it, the hero(es) is/are to some extent the equal(s) of the author. The hegemony of the authorial monologue is broken, giving way to some sort of democratic situation, some kind of interaction between equals in the town square. Bakhtin writes:

> In his [Dostoevsky's] works a hero appears whose voice is constructed exactly like the voice of the author himself in a novel of the usual type. A character's word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is; it is not subordinated to the character's objectified image as merely one of his characteristics, nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice. It possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, *alongside* the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters.[181]

So according to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's heroes are not tools or instruments for the author's world view, nor an extension of the author's ideas, but are '*free* people, capable of standing *alongside* their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him. */ A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels*.'[182] If one, with Bakhtin, accepts the description of the heroes who thus live independent lives within the novel, it is not such a dramatic leap to view individual works in an exhibition as independent, too. They are all heroes, they are all subjects, they express themselves in their own right within the framework, the 'big dialogue', comprised by the exhibition.

And the art works are there, ready for use; they are pre-existing material for both visitors and curators, it is not a question of 'making it up':

> The characters' freedom we speak of here exists within the limits of the artistic design, and in that sense is just as much a created thing as is the unfreedom of the objectivized hero. But to create does not mean to invent. Every creative act is bound by its own special laws, as well as by laws of the material with which it works.[183]

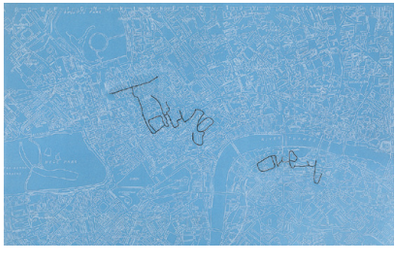
Bakhtin writes that Dostoevsky employs specific artistic resources to furnish his heroes with 'astonishing internal independence'.[184] The heroes' freedom vis-à-vis the author is a freedom from the author's 'summarising', that is, from a sort of monologising, monopolisation and reduction. And there is no third-person perspective, i.e. no external observer. Everyone is taking part. 'By this means a new authorial position is won and conquered, one located above the monological position.'[185] This view of the novel is fundamental for polyphony. Bakhtin resolves the tension between the freedom of the hero and the power of the author by the assertion that '[…] this independence and freedom of a character is precisely what is incorporated into the author's design.'[186] This intention or design applies to the formal options open to the author, such as dividing the work into sections, genres etc. So it is a question of relative freedom, as Bakhtin realises. 'This relative freedom of a hero does not violate the strict specificity of the construction, just as the specificity of a mathematical formula is not violated by the presence of irrational or transfinite quantities.'[187] This is an interesting analogy: the construction of the novel, or exhibition, is directed by very definite principles. But within the structure, it is free.

That freedom for heroes and art works which exists within the structure-novel-exhibition is established not only in relations between heroes/works and author/curator. The reader/viewer must be taken into account as well, since they, too, form part of the chronotope of the work and the interaction taking place between the represented and the representing world.

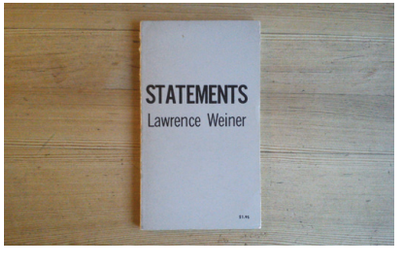
> We might put it as follows: before us are two events – the event that is narrated in the work and the event of narration itself (we ourselves

> participate in the latter, as listeners or readers); these events take place in different times (which are marked by different durations as well) and in different places, but at the same time these two events are indissolubly united in a singe but complex event that we might call the work in the totality of all its events, including the external material givenness of the work, and its text, and the world represented in the text, and the author-creator and the listener or reader; thus we perceive the fullness of the work in all its wholeness and indivisibility, but at the same time we understand the diversity of the elements that constitute it.[188]

The individual works in an exhibition seem at least as free (and unfree) as heroes of a novel. Bakhtin's idea of polyphony is that the author does not even need to be in agreement with his heroes.[189] In fact, they can even be found 'rebelling against him'.[190] The same applies to the curator's relationship with individual works, as well as to an artist's relationship to his or her work. I need not necessarily chime in, for example, with the curse uttered by the actor in *Spin-Off!* – though I *can do*, of course.[191] The relative freedom of the heroes generates opportunities for antagonism and I can well imagine that polyphonic exhibitions have antagonistic elements. But if one thus understands a novel or exhibition as polyphonic and antagonistic, it is crucial not to get the dialogic and the dialectic confused with each other. Dostoevsky's heroes are admittedly dialectic and full of contradictions, but this occurs *within* them, in their consciousness. And this activates their driving force. 'Each novel presents an opposition, which is never cancelled out dialectically, of many consciousnesses, and they do not merge in the unity of an evolving spirit […].'[192] Of course there is a syntheticising element to a curated and polyphonic exhibition, residing in the fact that the theme brings out what the individual works have in common with each other. But in parallel with this harmonisation, a sort of battle can be played out between the individual works. They do battle for the privilege of formulation by offering different and possibly competing alternatives to understanding the theme. And there is also competition for the places in the physical space: which work will be placed in the most central position? How loud is the soundtrack of a video permitted to be? This rivalry can also apply to the relationship



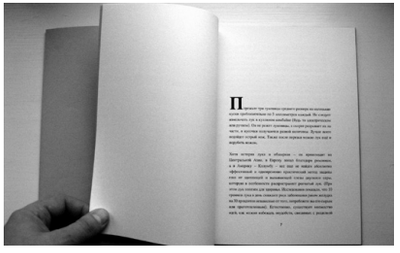
More and More – the text plantation; from *More and More*, Liljevalchs konsthall, 2002–03
Taking Over, documented 'text on a walk' from *Taking Over*, 1998–2000.
Retake of an Old House, 2004–2005, four pictures from a slide-based work with a soundtrack.

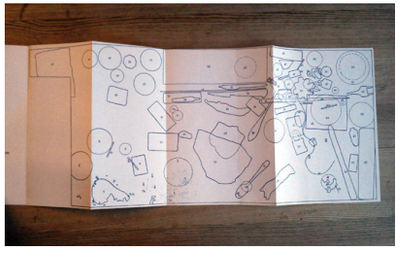


Statements – Lawrence Weiner, 1968

Pictures from a stay at the artists' summer residential centre outside Vishny Volochok, Russia, 2006.

Sleeper, 2007, in the hands of the agent.





Sleeper, 2007, the start of a chapter.

Recipe for a meal at the artists' centre outside Vishny Volochok, Russia.

Statue of Dostoevsky outside the Lenin Library, Moscow.

Fold-out plan from Daniel Spoerri's *Topographie Anécdotée du Hasard*, 1962.

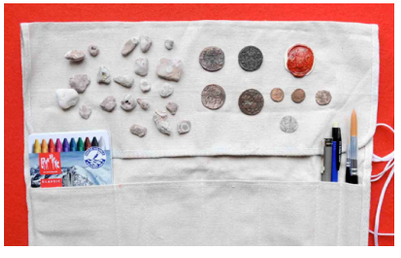
Still from the video *Thessaloniki Revisited*, 2007.

Jews being deported from Thessaloniki by Nazis during the Second World War.

Interior from a museum railway carriage in Thessaloniki.
Restaurant, Thessaloniki.
Riots during the EU summit in Thessaloniki, 2003.
Still from the video *Spin-Off*, 2008.
Emma Corkhill performs the text *Spin-Off* at the ArtText seminar, Gothenburg, 2009.
La Rompida, the Thursday before Easter, on the town square in Calanda, 2008.

Easter religious processions in Calanda, 2009.
Images from *Sharing a Square*, on Good Friday night, Calanda, 2007.
Step by Step – A First Version, Gotland Art Museum, Room 1, 2007:
Time Piece, 1980–1981, by Tehching Hsieh and *MIM*, by Andreas Gedin.

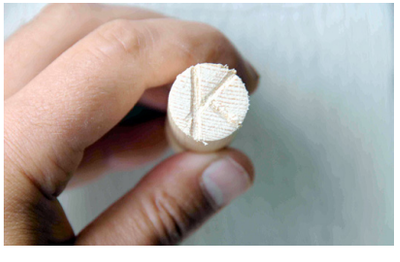


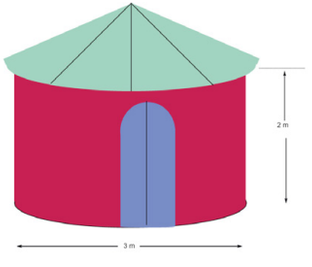
Step by Step – A First Version, Gotland Art Museum, 2007, installation images: Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Mouths of Ashes,* 2003; Gertrude Stein, *An Early Portrait of Henri Matisse*, 1911/1934–1935; Andreas Gedin, *Thessaloniki Revisited*, 2007. *Erich P.* 2009: *The Agent's Kit*; map showing Vishny Volochok, from *Någre vidh sidste kongl. ambassaden till tsaren i Muskou gjorde observationer öfver Rysslandh, des vägar, pass medh fästningar och grantzer sammandragne*, (Some observations made during the last royal embassy to the Tsar in Moscow on Russia, its roads, passes with forts and borders in summary) 1674; *The Agent's Kit*, folded and tied.








Erich P. 2009: *Rubbing* of seventeenth-century coin that was part of the agent's equipment; *The Trowel*; *Seal* of the family line descending from Erich Palmquist's brother Baron Magnus Palmquist; *The Agent's Instructions*; *Seal-stamping device.* The Japanese amateur archaeologist *Shinichi Fujimura* secretly filmed at an excavation site in 2000, planting archeological finds.



The lake by the artists' summer residential centre outside Vishny Volochok.

Erich P. 2009: *Palm Leaves*.

Step by Step – A First Version, Gotland Art Museum, 2007, installation of Gertrude Stein, *An Early Portrait of Henri Matisse*, 1911/1934–1935.

Malmöhus Fort, gun turret next to Malmö Art Museum

Sketch for installation in Malmö Art Museum of Gertrude Stein, *An Early Portrait of Henri Matisse.*

between different genres: a modernist painting and a video work can compete to formulate what it is that ought to be the fundamental nature of art. It seems to me that the works which take up the most 'room' are those that most readily attract visitors and thereby come to constitute the entry point to a reading or exhibition. But these competing forces that may be at work in an exhibition lend it a dynamic and a variability as they do not lock down understanding but rather activate the visitor and create the opportunity for a dialogic situation: 'Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive […] Any understanding is imbued with response […].'[193] A monologic exhibition that is ready-digested, so to speak, and lacks that kind of energy seems monotonous to me.

The reader is not served any answers, but only events. 'But what unfolds on the level of his novels is not a polyphony of reconciled voices but a polyphony of battling and internally divided voices.'[194] Bakhtin cites Leonid Grossman: '"The form of a conversation or quarrel," he says here, "where various points of view can dominate in turn and reflect the diverse nuances of contradictory creeds, is especially appropriate for embodying this philosophy, forever being shaped and yet never congealing […]".'[195] And I hope that the voice of *Q* will work in a similar way in this text, and that my critique of Boris Groys' essay will do the same. Antagonism is also a feature of the competing drum rhythms on the town square in Calanda, to which I will return later on in the chapter about the video *Sharing a Square*.

This implacability in many of the heroes of novels may be more than just the driving force of the drama. It can also be understood as an expression of power relations which language – in a broad sense – can generate.[196] Writing about the work of Samuel Beckett, Horace Engdahl observes that the urge to speak appears connected to *'the compulsion to be held responsible* […]. All speech contains a concealed examination or interrogation setting.'[197] In this pessimistic version of speaking (and being) the power struggle, or the avoidance of it, is the primary task of the voices. It is in this same situation that Bakhtin finds the person in the cellar in the quotation above: '[…] he squints his eyes to the side, toward the listener, the witness, the judge.'[198] It is the very critical gaze that is also cast on a work in an exhibition, asking whether it lives up to the demands being made of it and whether it can compete with the other works.[199]

The Intonation

For Bakhtin, it is in the dynamic between static and mobile and between individual and general that the conditions of language, and thus the individual, are expressed. Holquist summarises it as follows:

> The site to which language assigns us as subjects is unique, but never ours alone. The subject determined by language is never singular: like language itself, it is divided between dynamic and static aspects of its activity. Language has a canonical *langue* aspect that is the more comprehensive expression of the individual sign's formal properties. Simultaneously it has a freer, performative or *parole* aspect, that globally manifests the individual sign's semantic tendencies. In much the same way, the individual subject is organized by both an abstract, normative category – the other – and a specific, more open category – the self.[200]

As has been indicated, dialogic events are not only linguistic events but also social ones. This means, among other things, that the communication will include non-linguistic communication such as normative attitudes. Another crucial aspect, not least for artistic work, is *how* something is said. Bakhtin argues in an early essay for the importance of the non-verbal elements of spoken language.[201] His intention here, as I see it, is to show that the contents of language – and art – are not isolated linguistic phenomena contained in the words but are specifically social, contextual. On the other hand, Bakhtin is very clear here that this is not a question of psychology, of individuals' psychological constitution. It is between individuals, in the social dimension, that the essence of existence is played out.

Bakhtin provides a humorous example of the way language can function socially: two people are sitting together in a room. One of them says, 'Well'.[202] The other person says nothing. The scene, because it is just that, a scene on a stage, is for me reminiscent of plays dating from long after Bakhtin wrote this. The figures could be the two main protagonists in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, or a married couple in one of Lars Norén's dramas of middle-class conflict. It is the situation itself that Bakhtin is striving to illuminate. One can analyse the word's phonetics, etymology, semantics and so on, yet still not extract much meaning from it. Bakhtin draws attention to the *intonation* of this 'Well', which was delivered in a tone both indignant and slightly amused.[203] But even that is not enough for us to comprehend the utterance in its entirety. Too much of the non-verbal context is missing. Intonation is a considerable part of a functioning language. This is not news to anyone who has listened to a voice without intonation, like the synthesised speech of a computer or individuals who have lost their vocal chords and speak using a voice amplifier pressed to their larynx. The mechanical churning out of words and information seems restricted and dead.

Q: Now hang on a minute! Saying that the context, social codes and so on influence human interaction, including language, is just rehashing stuff we already know. It's common post-structuralist knowledge.

Andreas: Yes, some bits of it. But Bakhtin was a pioneer, long before Barthes and all the rest. I decided to go to a primary source. (And as I mentioned before, it is unusual for Bakhtin to be used in art contexts in this way.) The text I am discussing dates from 1926. But I am no professional philosopher, of course.

Q: Amateur!

Andreas: Yes, where linguistics, philosophy and semantics are concerned I am an amateur. But that does not stop me finding things of interest to extract from Bakhtin's writing, for my own purposes as an artistic researcher. You must realise, for example, that Bakhtin's theories are more far-reaching than the issue of textual and social codes. And he always anchors them in literature, and art in a general sense. That is why I use his texts, but I try not to do so uncritically, of course.

Q: Well …

Andreas: Ah yes. This is how it went: Two people are sitting beside each other in a room. They see that it is snowing outside. One of them says, 'Well'. It is a statement that has no intrinsic sense, but acquires its meaning through non-verbal aspects. Bakhtin points to the setting, the circumstances and the characters' evaluation of the utterance. The nub of this particular case is that each knows the other is tired of winter and longing for spring. The situation does not cause the utterance but is part of it. And in Bakhtin there is always a 'we' on whom the utterance rests. This is important to him, since it is in dialogue that the world is created, not through mechanical causality.[204] 'Individual emotions can only accompany the fundamental tone of the social evaluations as overtones – the "I" can realize itself in discourse, only when dependent on the "we".'[205] So there is prior understanding in the situation, an implicit interlocution.[206] It is not just the context or situation that fills this 'Well' with content, but also the way in which it is uttered: the intonation. For Bakhtin, intonation lies on the borderline between the verbal and the non-verbal.[207] And intonation is very social in nature, so it has to be based on a shared value system, a social 'supporting chorus', in order to work. Art and heroes can also work this way, in that a number of listeners are embraced. Bakhtin writes of the person in the cellar: 'But while speaking with himself, with another, with the world, he simultaneously addresses a third party as well: he squints his eyes to the side, toward the listener, the witness, the judge.'[208]

In this case, the person uttering the word 'Well' knows that he shares his opinion on the tedium of winter with his listener. It is a kind of wink or acknowledgment, the confirmation of a consensus. Intonation is the common language of the initiated. Bakhtin analyses the function of intonation like this:

> Creatively productive, assured and rich intonation is possible only when a 'supporting chorus' is assumed. Where this is absent, the voice breaks off and its wealth of intonation is reduced, as happens to the joker when he realizes that he alone is laughing. The laughter ceases or dies away, becomes strained, loses assurances and clarity and is unable to produce any funny or jovial words. The identity of implied basic evaluations is the canvas on which living, human speech embroiders its intonation design.[209]

Here, Bakhtin puts his finger on what lies at the core of a good deal of humour. Surely he is describing to a tee what the great comics of the silent film era were doing? Speaking for myself, I find this conjures up images of Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy, and their brand of comedy based on social failures, on a kind of autism: they have not mastered the appropriate social language and imitate or caricature it in ways that backfire.[210]

The communication act that Bakhtin presents to us has, as we have seen, a plainly dramatic element of its own. I think it is possible to understand installation art and curated exhibitions by viewing them as varieties of drama. I therefore suspect it is no coincidence that two of the forefathers of the curator, Pontus Hultén and Harald Szeemann, had backgrounds in film-making and the theatre respectively.[211] The dramatic touch also indicates that there is an author with a plan somewhere around. And the three main protagonists have now been joined on the stage by a choir: 'The supporting chorus'.

From: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com
To: Johan Öberg <Johan.Oberg@konst.gu.se
Subject: In a chorus?

Hi,
Just a thought: Bakhtin (Voloshinov) writes fascinatingly about intonation and its dependence on a 'supporting chorus', i.e. a kind of goodwill or a sharing of the value judgment that the intonation embraces and expresses. 'Chorus', of course, can also mean refrain in English. In this case I picture a choir that bounces back the value judgement like an echo, as an affirmation. In this there is an element of repetition, a mirroring, that would fit well into my project. But is this interpretation borne out in the Russian?
Bye/Andreas

Från: Johan Öberg <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>
Datum: Mon, 01 Dec 2008 20:44:48 +0100
Till: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Subject: Re: In a chorus?

hi
this can only refer to the chorus/ i.e. 'the people'/ in Greek drama – I'm pretty sure of that!
Johan

(*Mats*: But the chorus is part of the play, on the stage.)

Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Datum: Mon, 01 Dec 2008 21:58:29 +0100
Till: <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>
Ämne: Re: In a chorus?

Hi,
That's an interesting and slightly unexpected alternative. But why not. If what is meant by the Greek chorus is actually some kind of general public. Maybe the public watching the play … the corpses on the town square of democracy.
Andreas

Från: Johan Öberg <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>
Datum: Mon, 01 Dec 2008 23:41:00 +0100
Till: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Ämne: Re: In a chorus?

Yes, exactly that the people / the public / and the attempt of some works to be rid of them.
Johan

And I can add that if the sympathy in a 'supporting chorus' is familiar to me, then so is its negation, a kind of 'dispatching chorus'. At the

opening of *Step by Step, A First Draft*, for example, I found myself by chance standing beside some visitors who had just devoted a few minutes to *Retakes of an Old House*. An elderly lady in the party snorted: 'pretto' (Swedish slang for 'pretentious')! Her utterance had the same ingredients as those described by Bakhtin in the snowing situation, even if 'pretto' comes complete with negative connotations, unlike 'Well'. But the intonation was crystal clear and the listeners were in agreement with each other in their response to the third party (the subject = my work). They took their role of 'supporting chorus' to the utterance as a matter of course. My role as eavesdropper, however, is a new ingredient. The utterance was not directed at me, after all, but leaked out beyond the trinity. I could be said to have acted as a concealed 'dispatching chorus' in the next stage, when I dismissed the unknown lady's utterance inside myself. The kind of backdrop constituted by a 'supporting chorus' provides interesting ideas about how intonation works. It acts as the public that breaks the intimacy between the person making the utterance and the listener. So in the intonation there lies an element that addresses itself to an imaginary public of sorts. There is a great deal to be gained from this sympathetic concept of 'supporting chorus'. In the art world there are some clear and interesting variations on this theme. An artist's oeuvre can be encumbered by a positive value that is more or less independent of the individual utterance (work). This applies to both the symbolic and the financial market place.

The way Bakhtin talks about *David* above is a prime example of the way intonation is used to talk about art. But the issue of intonation becomes simpler, of course, or more conventional, when an art work includes verbal utterances. These can then be understood, on one level, as literature, even though other aspects of a work can also be characterised by intonation. In the video *Thessaloniki Revisited*, I gave the actor clear directorial instructions: he was to read, not interpret the text. So he was not to play a role with the help of the text but to put it across clearly. I therefore chose an actor who also reads literature professionally for recording purposes. But I also chose him because his acting is in the classically trained tradition. As director, my instructions were that he was to mute this style, because I calculated that a fair amount of drama would

leak through even so, creating a theatrical effect that would inject the requisite amount of distance from a realistic performance. This way of performing the text depended on intonation to a high degree.

Q: I thought it sounded like a hammy radio play, or old-fashioned melodramatic peepshow acting. The Rrroyal Drramatic Theeeatre!

Andreas: That last bit was an excellent example of intonation! Anyway, you evidently share my understanding of the context, but not my estimation of its worth. There is no 'supporting chorus' from your side, which is not entirely surprising. As has been said:

> not only intonation but also the whole formal structure of speech depends to a significant degree upon what sort of relationship the utterance is in to the implied identity of evaluations of that social milieu to which the utterance is directed.[212]

Bakhtin has yet more to say about intonation. It is directed not only at the listener but also at an elusive *third* participant. In the instance he cites, it could be directed at the snow, the natural world or fate. Bakhtin calls this mysterious third participant the hero of the verbal act, who is the object of the utterance, its subject (*topic*). The Other, the listener, becomes an ally, a witness to how the person who is talking addresses him or herself to this third participant. Bakhtin remains a little unclear, however, on the relationships between the three participants in the game. Perhaps they can all say things about each other, to each other?

Q: The Trinity, perhaps? The Holy Ghost? An included third party?

Andreas: What do I know? When it comes to Bakhtin, there are often religious implications. But there is so much more to it. And it is the linguistic and social event that interests me. But you have a point when you say that Bakhtin also thinks intonation has a tendency to personify this third participant. I understand this hero in the same way as the table that the little child bumps into and addresses as 'Stupid table!' For Bakhtin there is a mythopoetic soul living in the intonation. It is an intentional metaphor: within it 'slumbers' a semantic metaphor. In this example it could be: 'What a long winter!'[213]

Q: Or like when Albert Engström's cartoon tramp Kolingen shouts: Are you flowering then, you damn bird cherry!

Andreas: Yes, you could say so.

Johan: As you no doubt know, Bakhtin takes a personalist view of language and the world. The world is unthinkable without a concrete voice, without intentionality. And the logosphere embraces the whole world. The 'hero', therefore, is a concrete manifestation, 'the other, 'the human being', 'the thing or person that is created', and 'created language'. That is what I believe, at any rate.

Andreas: Thanks for that! At the risk of going on about this: surely the very term 'hero' is quite unusual here? It has to do with heroic deeds. And is that really what this third player is engaged in? It has such a positive emotional charge, unlike 'author' and 'reader'. Those are designations that simply refer to functions. Could it not be the Trinity, that is to say the Holy Ghost, as Bakhtin intimates?

Johan: Hm, it's more likely to have to do with the Max Scheler allusion he makes in another context: No one is loved because they are good; they are good because they are loved. There we have the hero … So maybe.

Andreas: Thanks! Unto him that hath shall be given … it is hard doing business in the economy of love. But surely there is something very particular about the choice of the epithet Hero, regardless of the gospel of love? On the other hand, it does not really affect my speculations. But goodwill seems to be central here: 'The supporting chorus', he calls it in the essay.

Johan: I actually think hero is a fairly neutral term in literary studies, synonymous with protagonist, though in B. the default setting is generally to make Jesus the protagonist.

Andreas: A hero … I think this elusive concept, this hero, this third party, constitutes one aspect of art and that this aspect is often mistaken specifically for immanent spiritual dimensions that – and I agree with Bakhtin on this – are there, but are attributed to the work, in the artistic event, by the two other participants – the one speaking and the one listening. The hero is not bedded down in the snow, but manifested in the address, in the event in which the utterance is directed at the snow/hero and the listener. The utterance establishes a flat, triangular playing field, a discourse, in which that event can be played out.[214] And if this

attribution does not exist in the physical material of the art work, then it can function well in dialogical relations with other works and phenomena across space and time.

Intonation can also, I would assert, place an utterance on the borderline between repetition and variation. In my work *On Retakes*, a video documentation of an evening of lectures, director Björn Runge related an episode that took place on a film set. Actor Stellan Skarsgård was talking about when he acted in a film with Robert de Niro. As Runge told it, De Niro was to act a supplementary scene, in which he was to say, 'I don't know.' He duly did so, and Skarsgård thought that was that, but De Niro went on to deliver the line about ten times in all: in a mumble, angrily, with surprise and so on. Why, wondered Skarsgård. Well, so they had a number of options to choose from in the cutting room, De Niro replied.

This episode not only underlines the importance of intonation but also sheds light on its function in artistic work. De Niro's use of intonation exemplifies it as an artistic instrument, but also the way this increases the range of choices for the film editor and director by increasing the amount of material available to work on. The editor and the director can in turn select intonation and gesture both in the actors' use of these tools and in their own manner of directing, filming and cutting. The author, or the party that utters, say, a 'Well', must take that decision in advance. Other variants remain dormant. What De Niro does is to postpone the choice of intonation, thereby transferring the decision from himself to the director and editor. Yet De Niro's artistry as an actor is still intact, the variant that is chosen is also one that he chose, and he is the one performing it. Seeing film in this light, the actor is an active subject who through his creation produces language that is material for the director and the film editor. This does not reduce the importance of the actor. The actor, or the character he is playing, is the hero of the narrative who in Bakhtin's world is one the same level as the author (and reader). And comprehension of this occurs for Bakhtin through the fact that the event is reproduced: one 'must as it were play it through again'.[215] This does not, of course, imply interpretation in the usual sense. But precisely where and how does this creative act occur, or where and how does this event take place? Is it in the imagination or as a memory?

What happens to De Niro's variations in the cutting room is that the editor is initially standing in for the listener, and then shifts to the position of the speaker: the editor makes an utterance in his or her choice of take, of linguistic material. The question remains of who the listener then is in this instance, and what personifies the third position. In this example, the discourse is made up of the scene that is being filmed. But who is De Niro addressing himself to? Is it to the director on the spot, to the film cameraman, to the editor or to an imagined cinema audience? Is his utterance directed to the third position, the 'topic', the film script or theme? Or is his line directed to the work as a whole? Perhaps the answers lie in Bakhtin's somewhat surprising definition of discourse in the example of the comment 'Well'.[216] The discourse is the '*scenario*' (my emphasis) of the event and in order to gain a live understanding of the discourse, the person studying the event places her or himself in the same position as the listener, but must at the same time be conscious of the exact position of the speaker.[217] According to Bakhtin, understanding thus occurs when the event is reproduced, played through again, or one might even say repeated.

For Bakhtin, the listener/reader is not someone to whom the author directs him or herself beyond the act of creation; the listener/reader is present in the act of creation itself, while it is going on in an internal dialogue.[218] But Bakhtin turns against the notion of an external audience as present during the act of creation. It is unworkable because there is no way of incorporating external speech into internal speech. And any writer writing for an audience is obliged, incidentally, to make allowances that are irrelevant to the work. (In this assertion, as so often in Bakhtin, there is a normalising element. I imagine that the people making the film with De Niro were at any rate trying to address themselves to cinema ticket buyers en masse.) The good listener, on the other hand, is always present:

> The point is that no act of consciousness can take place without internal speech, without words and intonation – without evaluation, and it follows, that it is already a social act, an act of intercourse. Even the most intimate self-consciousness is already an attempt to translate the self into a common language, to take into account the point of view of another,

> and consequently, contains within itself an orientation towards the potential listener. This listener may only be the bearer of the evaluations of that social group to which the conscious agent belongs. In this regard consciousness, so long as we are not distracted from its content, is not merely a psychological phenomenon, but first and foremost, ideological, the product of social interaction. This constant co-participant in all acts of our consciousness determines not only its content, but, and this is the most important to us, the very choice of content, the choice of what we are conscious of, and what also determines those evaluations, which permeate consciousness and which psychology usually calls 'emotional tone' of consciousness. The listener, who determines artistic form, develops in just this way from this constant participant in all acts of our consciousness.[219]

It is admittedly true, Bakhtin thinks, that utterances in literature and real life are not the same. The place and the circumstances, of course, are different. But – and this is a fixed point in Bakhtin's argument – 'The poetic work is a powerful condensor of unspoken social evaluations. Every word is saturated with them. These social evaluations indeed organize artistic form as their direct expression.'[220] This is because the author's choice of words has its origin in reality, not dictionaries.[221] And with these come the evaluations that are linked to them. Language equals use of language. The evaluations are then related to the reader's experiences of the words. But the third player, the hero ('the topic') is also the recipient of those epithets and metaphors the author selects. There are simply no pure occurrences, unsullied by life. Kaspar Hauser goes under because he is not socialised. He does not exist because existence itself is dialogic in nature. The individual becomes an 'I' in an event in which she or he acquires contours, appears in a relationship, as it were. Being is a dialogic becoming that is to be understood as an utterance.[222]

The intentional metaphor is, for Bakhtin, closely connected to 'the metaphor of gesticulation'. In a parenthesis he even implies that the word stems from a physically performed metaphor. It functions in a similar way to intonation. So once again it is non-verbal language being played out in a social space. This time, the listener is someone who *sees* a gesture. As I understand it, the role of gesture/intonation is not primarily to

reinforce the verbal utterance but to enter into a kind of union with it. Gesture/intonation shifts the emphasis, points outwards in various directions and so on. And this is only made possible by the participation of the benevolent listener:

> Only in an atmosphere of social sympathy is a free and confident gesture possible. On the other hand, gesture, like intonation, throws open the situation and introduces a third participant, a hero. Gesture contains the slumbering embryo of attack or defence, of menace, or tenderness, which sets the observer or listener into the role of ally or witness.[223]

One could also say that in order for an utterance to be understood, those taking part must want to understand. Different forms of art require this kind of sympathy as well, but often also some basic knowledge on the part of the 'witness'.

Intonation is thus located on the borderline between utterance and work, and appears to occupy a position similar to that occupied by Bakhtin's author in relation to life and to the text of the novel. And as with intonation, it is the author who though organising and filtering the material injects life into the mass of text. So the author can be seen here as one who intones and gesticulates. Author and intonation assume the function of passageways between utterance/work and life that 'infect' the utterance with something unique: personality, historic situation and so on. The person uttering *charges* the utterance with life by activating its content, according to Bakhtin. The person uttering can then be seen as an individual who in a specific context charges the utterance with possibilities for social interaction, generating the work. The exhibition situation, and individual works, too, could be viewed as powerful special cases of this. They are charged with possibilities, both consciously and unconsciously, and invite social/artistic events of this kind.[224]

III

The Works

Sleeper

My programme of doctoral study included participation in a project called *Education Annex*.[1] This meant that I began my doctoral work with a visit to Russia in the autumn of 2006. I spent a fortnight with some colleagues and art school students from Gothenburg, Moscow and Frankfurt out in the Russian countryside, halfway between Moscow and St Petersburg. Our accommodation was in a Soviet-style artists' colony: the summer residential centre of the Academy of Art. Artists in the former Soviet Union are still sometimes given grants entitling them to free food and lodging and the use of a studio. The food in particular caught my interest. Prepared and served in a separate building, it made the Russian students feel a little nostalgic for the pioneer camps of their childhood. For those of us who had not shared that experience, this cuisine was harder to appreciate. I decided to make a closer study of it and interviewed the two women who did the cooking. It emerged that the cooking adhered rigidly to schematic recipes in Russian, with all the measurements in grams. Food shortages have had a great impact on Russian history and I assume that is why both food and drink were weighed out in grams. Poverty was also evident in the village nearby. This historical situation seems to me to combine the worst of capitalism with remnants of the worst of Soviet Communism. The market has taken over from ideology and some people do not fit into it. Those at the very bottom of the social scale in Russia seem to be in free fall. The houses in the area were dilapidated and the residents were drinking too much. But every tenth house was brand new. Those were summer cottages for successful city dwellers.

I had not really intended to embark on an art project based on my stay at the artists' colony. But I found I could not get the village, the colony and the catering out of my head, and this led me to develop the work I called *Sleeper*. I asked myself two questions. One question was about the actual cooking: is it possible to prepare tasty food on a budget so limited that even the artists' colony could afford it? The other question was a wider one to do with the economic and political conditions that had given rise to the general misery in and around the artists' colony, which was the woeful result of the Soviet regime's historic mismanagement combined with the brutal market economy that had replaced it. It struck me that there was one point these two systems had in common: assertion of the right of ownership, and protection against theft, whether of private or state property. The question was whether it was possible to get round these two political and economic systems. I looked for an alternative to protection against theft.

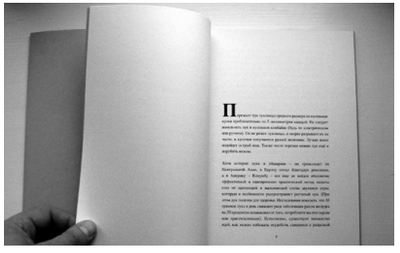
The answer to the first question was a tuna sauce that can be served with either pasta or rice. Initially I thought of a simple tomato sauce as an even cheaper alternative, but that was a bit too basic and not nutritious enough. It had to be a dish that was a proper substitute for a lunch or dinner.

The answer to the second question was initially *a gift*, because that stands apart from ownership. But it is still part of a sophisticated economy, so that option had to be discounted.[2] My alternative answer was to *add* something in a clandestine fashion, a kind of inverted burglary. (I had already experimented with this in *More and More*, another of the component projects of *Taking Over*. Two common, wild flowers were pressed and taped to the last page of Voltaire's novel *Candide*, which famously ends with the phrase: 'Mais il faut cultiver notre jardin' (But let us cultivate our garden). The book with the flowers in it was then planted in a deliberately selected section of Stockholm City Library.[3] (I used the same method in a more recent work, *Återköp* [Repurchase], 2010, in which I bought a single item, the very same blouse, from Hennes & Mauritz ten times.[4])

These two answers were then channelled into an art project in which I wrote an essay about every ingredient in a tuna sauce. I had a single copy of the collection of essays printed and it was then smuggled onto a particular shelf, selected by me, in the largest library in Russia, the Lenin Library in Moscow. I entitled the work *Sleeper*. A sleeper is an agent secretly planted in hostile territory who lives an ordinary life but can be activated at any time by his or her employer. The book in the Lenin Library is a sleeper. What characterises a sleeping agent of this kind is potential, which is a central concept in Bakhtin.[5] In the case of *Sleeper*, there are a number of embedded potentialities: the book could be found, it could be read, the dish could be cooked and eaten. The essay collection is thus an unambiguous expression of the way language is organised to create an intelligible and communicable order, just as a recipe by means of choice of raw ingredients and quantities and then preparation results in a cooked dish:

> The effect of order which language achieves is produced by reducing the possible catalogue of happenings which at any moment is potentially endless, to a restricted number that perception can then process as occurring in understandable relations. What happens in an utterance, no matter how commonplace, is always more ordered than what happens outside an utterance.[6]

There are elements of the essays that can also be seen as potentialities – ingredients to which I have drawn attention. I read up on the subjects and then wrote essays about onion, garlic, curry and herbs, tinned tomatoes, capers and tuna. My texts



include cultural history, environmental aspects, tips and so on. The instructions for making the sauce are also integrated into the text at various points, but it takes careful reading to discover them. The idea was that the reader would have to devote the same amount of care to the text as ought to be shown to the ingredients during cooking. This was to make the point that a recipe is a perfect example of a conceptual art work in which the instructions constitute the work. A cookery book is thus a perfect conceptual art work. Instruction as work of art is an important genre within conceptual art.[7]

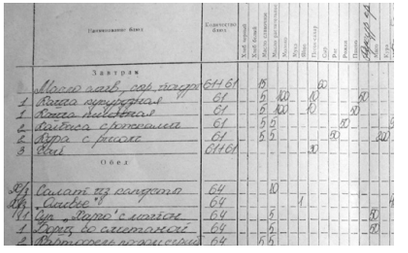
As the author, I collected up a number of narratives, which I then turned into short essays. My function was to put existing information into a particular order, to arrange and interpret it so as to create a new whole. I was the ordering principle that assembles short narratives into one larger narrative. The tuna sauce was – and is – the larger narrative. Thus the dish and the recipe work in both a concrete and a metaphorical way. The ingredients are both specific and alloyed with something else.

The design of the book was an important part of this project. For the dust jacket I chose a grey paper and for the typeface a simple grotesque in black and red. It gives a basic, functional impression. The paper cover inside the dust jacket was also of simple card. But anyone opening the book will find elegant green endpapers. And the rest of the book is carefully designed, with a half title and title page for every section and an initial letter at the start of each chapter. I was insistent that as much thought be put into the graphic design as into the other parts of the project.

Niklas: This secret aspect applies to stealing as well. A successful theft must, on principle, be anonymous.

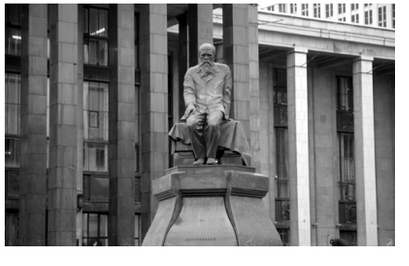
Andreas: Exactly! What is more, the book has no defined sender or recipient, which sets it free from any form of economy.

Q: Hm … Doesn't it say 'A. Gedin' in Cyrillic lettering on the cover? That's a sender, isn't it?

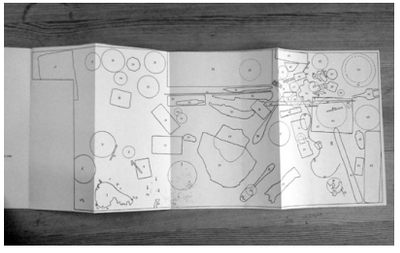


Andreas: Not really. That is the author's name, not the sender of the project. It is not the same thing, nor necessarily the same person. And who is it, in fact? Anyway, I had three possible options: a fictitious author name, no author name or my own name. In the first case a fictive person, a kind of character in a novel, would add a level of fiction that I did not want to give to the project, which is based entirely on non-fictive events. In the second case, the anonymity is a strong statement that would arouse curiosity. There is a clear intention underlying that choice. In the third case there are a number of people called 'Gedin' with forenames beginning with 'A'. There is a possible person and an honesty, but still a kind of anonymity.

I have subsequently discovered the existence of a tactic not dissimilar to mine: so-called *shopdropping*.[8] This is a sub-genre of 'hacktivism', interventions of a more or less subversive nature revolving round goods in the market place. This can take the form of exchanging or modifying them. It resembles my work *Sleeper* in that something is added rather than stolen. The activity of *shopdropping* is the opposite of *shoplifting*, i.e. petty theft from shops. But it can also take the form of modifying commodities, for example changing the voices of Barbie dolls.[9] My project has more in common with Zoë Sheehan Saldaña's shopdropping, which involves replacing mass-produced garments in clothes shops with hand-sewn copies.[10] There are some essential differences between this and *Sleeper*, of course. For one thing, *Sleeper* has nothing to do with the economic market place; it does not replace anything but generates an unexpected surplus; the content of the book is crucial and new, and based on a back story of some significance.



Another important aspect of an artistic work is that it often requires planning and administration. *Sleeper* called for a sub-agent or avatar with the opportunity to plant the book. This proved complicated. My contact, a



doctoral student in psychology at the University of Moscow, declared after a lengthy email exchange that the mission would be impossible because the books in the Lenin Library were all shelved in glass-fronted cabinets to which only library staff had direct access. I then realised that I would have to lower my expectations, not least because the Moscow Biennale was fast approaching and the project was to be presented there. I finally managed to make contact with a Russian doctoral student researching the churches of Gotland, who was prepared to help me plant the book in a less academic library in Moscow. But when I met her to hand over the book a few days before the opening of my exhibition, she asked whether I might not prefer a larger library, like the Lenin Library. I said I would. But wasn't it too difficult, I asked. I rang a few days later to find out how things had gone. Fine, she replied. But how did you manage to put the book on the right shelf, I asked. It wasn't very complicated, she said. I just put it there.

In my second term of doctoral studies, after I completed *Sleeper* but before I started reading Bakhtin, our research cluster went to a doctoral seminar to the School of Fine Art at the University of Leeds. During one of the breaks I told Professor Roger Palmer about *Sleeper*, and he advised me to take a closer look at Daniel Spoerri's artist's book *Topographie Anécdotée du Hasard* (*An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*).[11] This volume has proved a very fruitful source for my work. Spoerri's book builds on a simple idea. He makes a schematic sketch of a table in the place where he was living, including the objects that happened to be lying on it. He then briefly outlines the story behind each object: where he acquired or bought it, and so on (unlike *Sleeper*, where I give the general history of each ingredient). The book thus includes commentaries, dialogues, details of the project and more. When it was translated into English, commentaries and metacommentaries were inserted by the translator and by Spoerri. The reader is also urged to submit contributions for inclusion in future editions. This book seemed like a response to

my own doctoral work: *Sleeper*, the microessays and the dialogic writing on which I had embarked were confirmed. When I subsequently began reading Bakhtin, it was possible to fit both Spoerri's book and my work into his dialogic thinking around the novel and the notion of potential and actualisation. The writing of the short story *Thessaloniki Revisited* which I had begun before I started my doctorate and the planned exhibitions wrote themselves into the project along with Spoerri's book. As I see it, Spoerri's table and the objects on it also furnish an image of a polyphonic novel, a populated town square and a picture of an exhibition, just like my collection of essays about recipe ingredients and the collection of narratives that rises to the surface in the short story set in Thessaloniki.

Thessaloniki Revisited

This video is a little over an hour long and comprises a male actor reading a short story from a script written by me. The text is about a man spending a few days in Thessaloniki on a business trip and also going out with a few friends one evening. The actor reads in a clear, conventionally dramatic manner, straight to camera. Together with the manner adopted, this emphasises the mediation, that is, the fact that the text is being read and interpreted: emphasises the fact that the text, which to some extent remains the same throughout the various stages of the mediation (it is the same sequence of words), also changes when it is repeated, first by being written down, then by being read, then by being expressed, heard and interpreted by whoever sees the film. The slightly dramatic tone was used to accentuate a certain conscious distance between the various stages of mediation or interpretation.[12] These transitional stages through which the text passes can of course also be understood with Bakhtin as a variety of chronotopes ending with the temporary encounter between the chronotopes of the video film and the person watching it.

The text as a whole moves from the general to the personal, from essays to stories about traumatising events, from reflection to eruption.[13]

One could say that the narrative is funnel-shaped, that the stories or events are collected up and concentrated into a now. The narrative is constructed in a way that makes it slip at the beginning and this is then repeated in a series of variations. An initial visit to a business contact is described in three similar ways, though it only occurs once. My idea is that it should take as much effort to get into the text as it does for the hero to embark on his mission.

Niklas: I see rehearsals, repetitions, copying and representation as recurring features in the story. And I assume that is intentional on your part.

Andreas: Yes, it is the point of entry to the story and to some extent also one of its themes.

Niklas: I like the way you simultaneously render yourself invisible as an artist and yet clearly shine through the whole production, in the text, in the narrator and in the video. The three cuts, too, can be read as part of the interplay between the form and content of the work.

Andreas: You have an interesting way of seeing the role or function of the main protagonist. He is like Bakhtin's author (someone located on the boundary), that is, someone who organises a body of material and who therefore needs a certain distance from it.[14] This is a metafunction in the story: it is also about its own genesis. The main protagonist functions as a kind of central station, an interchange for all the stories that surround him. He is more of a catalyst than a Creator.

When I started writing the story I found that traumatic events were cropping up in the work one after another and when I tied these microstories into the main narrative I realised that trauma itself was an important theme that also linked into the major theme of repetition. I number of unhealed, unresolved things that had happened to individuals or to the city rise to the surface in a series of lesser stories. They keep reminding us of their existence until they are dealt

with by being retold, repeated. Here we have a continuing business deal that appears to fall through, links to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Greek regime's links with war criminals from the former Yugoslavia, the Occupation and collaboration with the Nazis, anti-EU street demonstrations, personal experiences and more.[15] The idea of looking at trauma in relation to repetition already existed in the work that provided the original impetus for my theme, *Retake of an Old House*, in connection with which I organised a lecture evening – *On Retakes* – on the theme of repetition as an extension of the work. It was also a continuation of the curated lectures with which I had been working for some time. One of the lecturers was the trauma therapist Anna Gerge.[16] The idea behind this was that trauma is a wound that remains unhealed, an injury that is a recurring and repeated now.

> But people who have experienced things that are simply too tough [….] [in] what is known as the limbic system there will always be a high-power transmitter sending out the danger message. If there is a sound [knocks on the table] then we may think aha, she's touching that, it seems difficult. For a person who has perhaps heard gunfire in connection with mock executions, a sound like this [knocks] can make them very, very scared. Then it becomes enormously hard to distinguish between what has happened, what is happening now and what will happen in the future […]. [The brain cannot] distinguish between then, now and the future […] It is possible to lie in a bed and memorise a slalom descent and then perform better [on the slalom course].[17]

Here is an example from the end of the text that is read in the video. Klaus is talking about his experiences during the riots at the EU summit meeting in Thessaloniki in 2003. The text slips from the third to the first person and Klaus slips from imperfect to the present that is the tense of post-traumatic experience:

> Klaus looks pale in the warm evening and Eleni turns to me and asks whether I have noticed that Klaus is totally absorbed by his narrative and that he does not hear what she says. I do not answer her and Klaus continues his story, seemingly oblivious of his surroundings. He tells us about how panic developed in the demonstration with people screaming and the police making another attack. People scream, the police scream. A few yards away I can see a policeman recklessly beating a man lying on the ground, an anarchist, with his baton. There is blood running down his face. I take numerous photographs as the blows strike the man lying curled up on the pavement. They pull him towards a wall. They kick him with their boots. Then they pull his rucksack from his back. Another policeman comes up to them carrying two black bags full of bottles containing petrol. They hang the bags on the bleeding man and take him away with them.[18]

The microessays and microstories that are collected in the main narrative are intended as elements in the same way as the words in a text or the works in an exhibition. They also relate to each other, starting with more historical essays that tie into the theme of repetition and then moving on to more traumatically charged narratives culminating in a long discharge. One aspect of this is the artist's task in collecting and ordering, in this case the narratives with which the world provides us. Willingly or unwillingly, we are constantly beset by these stories. The narrative whole provides a structure (as a genre does). It stabilises the short story by slotting the microstories into a larger context, architecturally as it were. And this is exactly what happens in a thematically curated exhibition. In the video, curating thus functions in two different ways simultaneously; it heals the disparate stories in terms of form, making them whole, but it also heals the wounds:

> And for me, [therapy] has an aesthetic dimension because it is about creating a kind of meeting in which something like a traumatic repetition has the opportunity to be transformed into something that can be remembered […] becomes something that can be narrated, one can make it into a story and then put it behind one. And then the individual can regain his or her energy […].[19]

In Bakhtin's historic survey of chronotopes in literature, the relationship between the main protagonist or hero and the events of the novel plays an important role for our understanding of the chronotope of the novel.[20] In what he calls the Greek age of adventure, the hero is caught up in sudden events. They are expected, but not interwoven in clear causal connections. The romance of chivalry also works with the age of adventure, yet establishes a new chronotope. When the Greek hero suffered an unexpected blow from fate, he wanted to extricate himself from the chronotope. The knight of chivalry, on the other hand, anticipates and expects the unexpected, seeks out fate, challenges it, 'this "suddenly" is normalized'.[21] But they do not find themselves afflicted by Greek catastrophes; instead, wonderful adventures take place. Even if the knights are stereotypes, they are all different; an individualisation process has begun. The text that forms the basis for *Thessaloniki Revisited* contains elements of the Greek age of adventure. The main character is a piece of blotting paper, soaking up historical events. He is a defined hero, but largely interchangeable with others, a function or a meeting place rather than a distinctive individual.

Dante's *Divina Commedia* serves as Bakhtin's most important example of a chronotope expressing the internal contradictions of the late medieval period. It has a verticality derived from medieval visions that are not time-bound but are, rather, like an extension in space.[22] It is a contemporaneity outside time, an eternity that is portrayed. Dante thus succeeds in showing various aspects of earthly life outside time; he undertakes a kind of descent into a time and space that form a static unit, down into the verticality constituted by the circles of Hell: '[…] everything must be perceived as being within a *single time* […].'[23] But growing on this vertical extension as protuberances, as buds, there are stories endeavouring to blossom horizontally:

> Now and then these temporal possibilities are realized in separate stories, which are completed and rounded-off like novellas. It is as if such

> stories […] are horizontal, time-saturated branches at right angles to the extratemporal vertical of the Dantesque world.[24]

This horizontal endeavour also moves out into historical time and is, for Bakhtin, Dante's way of trying to get beyond the norms of his own, medieval age.[25] So the development we identify on a daily basis as vertical is in Bakhtin/Dante horizontal; it does not move upwards but spreads out in different directions. In this, Bakhtin finds that human progress spreads 'in real time and space'.[26] (This could be a distinct, if implicit, dig at the Marxist notion of progress.) The meeting place of the verticality and horizontality of the story is a specific chronotope, an intersection similar to the one occupied by the reader in the act of reading. In the example of Dante, Bakhtin finds expression for a struggle between the vertical and the horizontal in which 'The form of the whole wins out'.[27] And this form ought to be the finished – in a technical sense – work of art.

Thessaloniki Revisited has a similar structure, but it has been turned through ninety degrees.[28] Rather than descending vertically like Dante's narrator through the circles of Hell, my hero moves along a horizontal timeline as he walks through the city and gathers stories that, by contrast, come up vertically out of history. (The stories attach themselves to him – whether he wants them to or not – like the metal objects which Belgian artist Francis Alÿs accumulated when he took a walk through Havana in a pair of magnetic shoes.[29]) The whole length of the story becomes encrusted with charms, time potentials as Bakhtin puts it, which take us off into microstories. It is these that move vertically, up from the depths in different places. (But they naturally have a horizontal range in historical time.) And these stories, by dint of depicting events in historic time, become part of an unmoving simultaneity that appears to be the same as eternity.

This dynamic between the immobility of the eternal and the temporality of narration reminds me of the relationship between image and narrative. And trauma bears the hallmarks of the immobility of the image in relation to a life story:

> I remembered the images from PET scans of PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] patients and the colored highlights showing increased blood flow to the right brain in evolutionary terms, and decreased flow to the left cortical areas, the language sites. Trauma doesn't appear in words, but in a roar of terror, sometimes with images. Words create the anatomy of a story, but within that story there are openings that can't be closed.[30]

The individual stories within my short story live on because of the trauma they have generated. They are not only re-experienced but live on unhealed in a mechanical repetition that corresponds to the closed simultaneity of Dante's circles of Hell, around the verticality like knots on a rope lowered into the well of Hell. And Dante, at any rate, succeeds in this way in creating a powerful tension '[…] of a struggle between living historical time and the extratemporal, other-wordly ideal.'[31]

Spin-Off!

The starting point for *Thessaloniki Revisited* was to tie the repetition theme to the curse genre, in which both *repetition* and its counterpart *variation* are central. One can curse a person or a life by telling him, her or it to go to hell. Formulating a longer curse involves trying to vary the language while leaving the content unchanged. But the quantity, the number of variations and their qualities, the imagination that goes into the curses, naturally has an effect on the whole. It is an ancient genre and I drew on several sources of literary inspiration. One of them is Imre Kertész' book, *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*, where he explains to his former wife in monologue form (the monologue is the natural habitat of the curse) why he did not want to have any children when they were living together.[32] There is in this book an unspoken rage, a harping, cursing, chewing the subject over and over, that only becomes comprehensible when one has read to the end. A Kaddish is a Jewish prayer, mourning fort the dead and praising a deity. The prayer is the reverse side of the curse, a counter-supplication: the same intoned repetitions and counting of beads. As a boy, Kertész was a prisoner in a concentration camp, and it is this experience that is the key to the question of why he did not want children; he has already survived his own death. In his Nobel Prize lecture he writes: 'In short, I died once, so I could live. Perhaps that is my real story […] born of a child's death […]'.[33] The writing of *Kaddish*

is said to have been based on his reading of the work of raging Austrian author Thomas Bernhard.[34] The fact that Kertész' combines stylistic borrowings from other authors with his own deeply personal and emotionally powerful approach appeals to me because he is clearly does not flinch from an explicit choice of form. This is not, as one might think, a way of expressing a clear distinction between what is termed content and what is termed form, but demonstrates instead that form and content together constitute the work. The imitation is not ironic but a declaration of solidarity with Bernhard's text. In Kertész' text, the monologue has the same sort of *repetitious* character – both as imitation and as curse – which thus also comes to reflect an aesthetic attitude. And, I would claim, one's own texts or works can provide material for artistic/linguistic tasks.

Like those of Kertész, Bernhard's curses have their origins in the Second World War and received further impetus from the contemporary political situation in Austria. Bernhard would not allow his plays to be performed in Austria. Kertész also mentions Bernhardt by name in his text, which borrows its style directly from the latter.

> and now, as I reflect on my stories from afar, meditatively, as on the smoke curling up from my cigarette, I see the eyes of a woman glued on me as if she wanted to burst open a well within me, and in light of those eyes I suddenly understand, fully understand, and almost see how the skein of stories gradually turns into woven yarn, and from colorful yarn into soft slings, which I wave around the soft, shiny hair, waist, breast, and neck of my (then future, now former) wife, before that, lover, lying in my bed with her head resting on my chest. I am entangling her, tying her to myself, turning, swirling like two brightly colored, agile circus performers, who, in the end, take their bows, deathly pale and empty-handed before a malicious spectator – before failure. But, yes, indeed, *one has to, at least, strive for failure*, says that scientist in Thomas Bernhard, because failure and failure alone remains as the one single accomplishable experience, say I. Thus, I, too, am striving for failure […] [writing] retells life, repeats life as if it were life as well, even though it is not, quite fundamentally, quite incomparably it is not, and as such its failure is fundamentally assured as soon as we begin to write and write of life.[35]

Here, writing is a failed repetition of life, and failure is the only possible life. It is an equation in which failure succeeds. Failure constitutes a kind of security here, something on which to rely, which is also found in Bernard. But it is also an expression of the conflict between thinking and the world, which has its basis in, among other things, a sceptical attitude to language and in having experienced how philosophical theories of correspondence are not possible.[36] For me, this is an idea about the inability of language to reproduce the world and as a consequence of this language, including art, becomes a life form of its own.

> We dispose our childhood as if it were inexhaustible, I thought, but it isn't. It's very soon exhausted, and in the end there's nothing left but the notorious *gaping void*. Yet this doesn't happen just to me I thought; it happens to everyone. For a moment this thought consoled me. No one was spared the knowledge that revisiting our childhood meant staring into this uniquely sickening void.[37]

Bernhard's existential pessimism links this void to the lack of correspondence with one's own past. It generates an experience of loss in which time and memories are used up, spent, which tallies with Kertész' text about failure and the death he experienced in the camp as a child. As Kierkegaard says, it is in the nature of repetition for it to be impossible. What is done is done.

Niklas: So your film's genealogy extends as far as Thomas Bernhard?

Andreas: You could say so … but that was not the way my mind was working, even though it seems an interesting link *now*. It was a formal aspect of Kertész that first attracted me: his attempts to vary the emotional state without losing the energy supporting the text. The text expresses a controlled mix of fury and desperation. It is not an expressive work in the classic sense; what manifests itself here is not a full venting of emotions, but an overt, obstinate will.

Niklas: So you tried to do the same thing?

Andreas: No, but there was something, not least in the length, energy and mix and in the supervising dramaturgy that drew me in; I was inspired by the alloy of variation and repetition. And then the subject

matter, of course, a wound, a trauma that the 'author' expresses in his monologue, is also important.

The Book of Job was another inspiration. But that is decidedly dialogic in character, in the sense that it has clear addressees. The curse in *Spin-Off!*, on the other hand, is characterised by an evident lack of direction, which is a quality to which I will return. It has its basis in the fact that the video was initially not intended to constitute an individual work but was to be the finale to the video *Thessaloniki Revisited*, which of course has repetition and specific trauma as its themes. The curse was intended to be the post-traumatic credo in which the past and the present turn into an unbroken now, a chronotope if you will. When I finished editing *Thessaloniki Revisited*, I asked a few well-informed friends what they thought.

Niklas: There is something about the ending, about the curse, I don't really know … this is where I start having a bit of a problem with the story. That whole long litany. The sheer length of the eruption meant that I eventually lost some of the interest I had felt up to that point. And then you just drop it. The result was that the wrong things stayed in my mind.

Andreas: There may be something in what you say. The idea was for it not just to be the main protagonist finding an outlet after everything he has been subjected to, but for all the stories in the film, traumatic to a greater or lesser extent, to be manifested in this curse of almost Biblical proportions.

Niklas: Its style is different to the rest of the text.

Andreas: A mixture of styles is not necessarily a problem.

Niklas: No, but it is here. How long does the outburst last?

Andreas: About six minutes. And I had already cut the original script by a third. I also thought that the knack of varying invective and curses without repeating yourself is a grand old tradition.

Niklas: That may well be, but it didn't stop me losing interest.

(Later)

Andreas: Okay. You're right. It doesn't work, the story loses momentum. Kill your darlings. I'll take my medicine, despite the fact that the curse is what really provided the impetus for the whole story.

Niklas: So you are going to delete your *Book of Job*, your cursing monologue?

Andreas: Yes, it has served its purpose, namely to act as a point of reference and above all as a *catalyst*, during both the writing process and the actor's reading. He was geared to that finale as he rehearsed and performed the text, as I was when I wrote it. But we don't need it any longer. The upshot of this is that I find myself with an extra work, *Spin-Off!*, which is an unexpected outcome of the project, albeit one that has been consciously created in itself. When this section was lifted out of the longer video, a kind of decontextualisation occurred, as if it were a kind of home-produced readymade. Perhaps that is one reason why the origins, addressees and audience of the curse seem remarkably diffuse. It is markedly monologic in several respects: above all because it is a classic monologue, but it also lacks internal dialogicity. It has an element of linguistic gymnastics. But I do not think it belongs to the genres of nagging, grumbling and whining, elegantly turned into entertainment by the likes of Dostoevsky's person in the cellar.

Anders: Something happens in the middle of the film; it changes character, turns into something more theatrical.

Andreas: Yes, it is as if the actor starts positively revelling in the dramatic possibilities of the text. And his director's instructions, as I said, were that he should present the text, not interpret it.[38]

Anders: The section of text that became *Spin-Off!* came at the end of the script, didn't it? Maybe the actor was tired and lost concentration.

Andreas: Yes, that could be it. By then he is conveying the text less clearly, and the theatrical element seems to be directed inwards; he becomes his own audience. My idea was to realise formally and visually the repetition theme in *Thessaloniki Revisited* and consequently also in *Spin-Off!*, by making the agency, the repetition of the text in various stages, more overt: there is a script (which can also be seen in the shot) being read by an actor who looks into a camera that we, the audience, can see on a monitor. The idea was also that it be the same text at every different

stage, but that it is read anew at each stage. The actor's task was to read the text but not interpret it too much. But what happens is that the performance suddenly takes over from the straightforward reading of a script.

Anders: The text itself also changes character partway through.

Andreas: Yes, combined with the fact that the actor, despite my directorial instruction about restraint, can't keep suppress his own sense of enjoyment after a take of almost an hour without a break. The result is that the acting suffers quite a substantial leakage, in which the actor gets a taste for the text and revels in his own abilities. This sense of enjoyment sits awkwardly alongside the coarseness of the invective. This sabotages the text and the performance, and lack of direction turns into something directed back to the person speaking. A kind of mirror effect occurs, congenial to the repetition of the litany. There is an element of doubleness, which Bakhtin would have termed the ambivalent language of the town square. As in Dostoevsky's hero in the cramped cellar, a double mirror effect is generated when the monologic speech is directed to oneself, which in turn reflects the voice out into the world: 'But while speaking with himself, with another, with the world, he simultaneously addresses a third party as well: he squints his eyes to the side, toward the listener, the witness, the judge.'[39] I think that is exactly what happens: as observers we so obviously get drawn in, as if included in the performance. We cannot get away from it. The curse that is initially filled with rage becomes somehow humorous, the actor lets the text see itself; a kind of distance arises that has to do with satire and irony. This is not an effect I planned, but it is still deeply felt by the actor and by us as viewers. He wallows in the detail of all the torments that are to be visited on the victim, while also seeming to ridicule and belittle the whole thing. It is as if he suddenly switches his audience or supporting chorus. It is as if a different set of witnesses and judges takes over in the second half of the film. The text and the person reading it sometimes go together, but there seems to be a struggle going on between them in which the text tries to assume control of the reader, while the actor for his part attempts to assimilate, incorporate the text. In this dynamic, neither the text nor the actor becomes identical with themselves; the event is not consummated. And the Third, the observer, wavers between the two. What happens is

that the narrator's stage coincides with the stage of what is narrated, generating the illusion that what is being narrated is also taking place.[40] For me, this coincidence also reveals the fracture between the narrative and the event when it is retold. The narrator and the audience bring the stages together in the moment. In the case of *Spin-Off!* this would imply that the actor is reproducing the curse *at the same time* as actually cursing somebody. And this does occur, incidentally, but there are more stage settings than that; there is a whole revolving stage, accommodating the text, the curse, the performance to oneself and the performance with a furtive eye to an imagined audience.

Q: So you are interpreting your own work?

Andreas: Er, well … more like providing a narrative of the work. Anyway, the point I am making is that my text was appropriated, specifically by the actor, so I do not have control over it. That is what makes me able to assess the video with some sense of distance. The result of our collaboration falls between the two of us and is then accessible to others. It is apparent that this text is unfaithful and willing to hitch itself temporarily to a variety of different voices. Michel Foucault supplies a quote from Samuel Beckett's *What is an Author?* In its *Texts for Nothing*, Beckett gives the floor to an anonymous voice: 'What does it matter who's speaking, someone said what matter who is speaking.'[41] Foucault's point is that Beckett asserts that it makes no difference who the author is. That is assuredly the case, but what catches my attention is something else about what the anonymous voice does to the author. It moves easily from one event to another and from one authorial voice to another. In the first part of the sentence, it seems to the reader or listener that it is *this* voice at *this* precise moment that is generally questioning the significance of who is speaking and simultaneously questioning his own speaking as it is in progress. But after the comma it becomes apparent that this voice is quoting *another* voice from *another* occasion. The interesting thing about this for me is not who the originator is but the fact that the language is disloyal to the voice (the author, the actor/reader/listener). And it is this lack of locked-in copyright that means we can share language: it is on the run, but can be fleetingly captured and put to use. In *Spin-Off!* it happens to be manifestly obscure who is speaking, who is

being spoken about and who is being addressed. As Bakhtin has pointed out, the litany has no clear direction and this kind of ambivalent vagueness makes it universal.[42] Both carnivalesque thinking and the word itself are duplicitous: 'Praise implicitly contains abuse, it is pregnant with abuse, and vice versa abuse is pregnant with praise.'[43]

And perhaps this is exactly what happens when the actor in *Spin-Off!* appropriates my text, when he partakes of it: he comes to embody the ambivalence, duplicity and pleasurable lexicality.[44]

Sharing a Square

On the town square in Calanda

Nine villages in the Aragon region of northern Spain have developed a special Easter tradition comprising a variety of collective drumming rituals. Drumming does of course occur in other places, too, but not in such a pronounced way or carried through to the same extent. I read about the tradition in film director Luis Buñuel's autobiography *My Last Breath*.[45] He describes the inhabitants of his hometown Calanda drumming for twenty-four hours at a stretch over the Easter weekend and – something that interested me particularly – the phenomenon of drumming duels. Various groups of drummers walked round the town and whenever they came across another group, both sides stopped and began a duel. The two groups each played their own special rhythms, and eventually one group inadvertently fell in with their rivals' rhythm, took it up and joined the victors. So in the course of the day, many small groups were gradually incorporated into one big, winning rhythm. This story has been quietly growing inside me for a long time, and it came to me that a film on the subject would fit well into my dissertation project.[46] The drumming rhythm is in the same spirit as my theme of repetition.[47]

Q: So here you are, fetching moth-eaten old ideas out of the wardrobe to pad out your dissertation.

Andreas: I wouldn't exactly say moth-eaten …

Q: Silly me, there I was thinking a doctoral dissertation meant doing *new* work.

Andreas: Well it *is* new.

Q: It just happens to strike me that one of the founders of conceptual art, Joseph Kosuth, always dates his works with the time at which the idea popped up in the studio that is his head.

Andreas: That may well be. But this is a film, and builds on an idea. That idea can in turn generate a variety of works. But apart from its complaining tone, your question is a relevant one: do the works in an artistic dissertation have to be new? I think it is an important starting point, though there will probably be exceptions. There a various reasons: why take up a doctoral place when the job is already done? Isn't the idea for artistic research to be process-orientated? Though of course as an artist one might well bring existing works with one onto the doctoral course and then devote all one's time to writing. I can't see any problem at all with bringing ideas with us into doctoral work. Quite the opposite. We apply for places on the course with our professional experience as something to recommend us. It cannot and should not be left out of the equation. We are each our own context. It is one of the duties of artistic research to give the doctoral students the opportunity of going deeper. And part of this deepening is linked to each person's whole *oeuvre*.

Little has been written about the drumming traditions of Aragon, but they have been traced back as far as the sixteenth century, if not further.[48] The event traditionally starts at midnight on the Thursday before Easter with a sombre drumming procession weighed down by the suffering and death of Jesus, which makes its way out of the town and up to shining neon cross on a hill, then back down again. But the big public festival, *La Rompida*, does not begin until twelve o'clock on Good Friday when the town square of Calanda is packed with people wearing purple cassocks. When I was in Calanda for the Easter celebrations in 2008, the square was so full of people that one could hardly move. They all had drums. On the stroke of twelve, a celebrity who was there to open proceedings began to beat a special rhythm on a giant drum, and then the mass drumming began, so ear-splittingly loud that even the church wall vibrated. And I

imagine the rituals have roots that stretch back further than the Christian tradition. Drumming has long been central to a great many cultures.

It was not the Catholic mystique of suffering I was looking for, but it transpired that the street-corner duels I had read about did not really exist any longer. I found, however, that the town inhabitants still gathered in the square on the evening of Good Friday to play their drums together without any religious element. And around eleven, small groups of drummers started to turn up. You could hear them coming along the narrow streets from a long way off. Now they were dressed in their everyday clothes and everybody was involved: children, young people, adults and old people. They socialised in the square on the eve of the religious festival, but they drummed in place of talking.

What happens in Calanda's triangular square on that Friday night sheds light, with the help of Bakhtin's analyses of the history of the novel seen through chronotopes, on the way we perceive ourselves as citizens but also specifically as artists, given the parameters of my project.[49] In Bakhtin's view, 'In ancient times the autobiographical and biographical self-consciousness of an individual and his life was first laid bare and shaped in the public square.'[50] This public square is identical to the state, containing everything from the highest instances such as courts to the truth and the citizens themselves.[51] 'The real-life chronotope is constituted by the public square [the agora].'[52] The people in the market place of classical antiquity are not filled vessels but entirely solid.[53] They are to a very great extent synonymous with their outward selves, their public personas:

> It […] could not in any principle be any difference between the approach one took to another's life and to one's own, that is, between the biographical and autobiographical points of view.[54]

They therefore did not always make any distinction between praising others and exalting themselves. As a consequence of this, the biographical and the autobiographical converge.[55] There is an extreme democracy about

this. And this is how I think an exhibition in which one (I) mixes ones own work with that of others could work, or at least be reflected. (A time came, Bakhtin writes, in which the question of whether it was fitting to praise oneself was posed, and all the philosophers of the period answered that it was. But, as Bakhtin observes, the very fact that the question was asked opened a chink between the self and the public arena.[56]) Bakhtin defines two types of biography in antiquity, one of them built on an Aristotelian concept of energy: it is through action and motion that human life is moulded.[57] The other biographical variant points up the holistic aspect of the human character.[58] It seems to me that these two chronotopes embody the tension between linear development and development by expansion. The first focuses on time, the other emphasises the importance of space. This tension is also evident in *Sharing a Square*, where the prolonged repetition within the framework of the square is written into a linear narrative that starts with some teenage girls strolling towards the square, drumming as they go, reaches its climax in an intensively drumming crowd led by a wiry and tirelessly energetic little man and concludes with a couple of individuals, drumming as they meander apparently aimlessly through the streets late at night.

The question is, of course, whether these biographical forms identified by Bakhtin are really an expression of historical veracity. I naturally cannot know whether the people on the square in Calanda find themselves in a state even vaguely resembling the one experienced by the ancient Greeks in the agora. Whether the rite makes them magically leave several thousand years of the individualisation process behind them. But it does seem to me that my film constructed round an event – *Sharing a Square* – formulates a situation in which the people are, at any rate, oscillating between the

collective and the individual, the internal and the external. So the film can perhaps function, among other things, as a formulation of an idea of a collective memory of the unity and whole that Bakhtin, in a somewhat idealised fashion, finds in the biographical literature of antiquity.

In the film it is my artistic will that creates the structure within which the individuals in the video live their lives. But it is also present in the rhythms that have been carried through time and are shared in the moment in the square by everyone taking part; they spread horizontally between the participants and are simultaneously recreated out of the past, rising vertically through history.

In my curatorial project, too, Bakhtin's understanding of agora and the absence of a boundary between biography and autobiography in antiquity can serve as examples. Despite post-modernism's and post-structuralism's critique of the view of the subject and the artist's role in our culture, I would say (it is almost a truism) that we still live in a perception of the self in art that was cemented in Romanticism. It implies – among other things – that the artistic self is somehow expressed in the work and thus is a part of it. I maintain that art in our time is still viewed as veiled autobiography; as a kind of encrypted subject or rebus.

We cannot, of course, unconditionally identify the market square of antiquity with an exhibition, but beyond the rhetoric of the metaphor, what we have here is an example of another opportunity for understanding what the subject is, as applied to my project. The film *Sharing a Square* can then be understood as a story about the structure or architecture of an exhibition and the way it reflects a notion of democracy taken from antiquity, and vice versa. The metaphor deepens when we bear in mind the exclusion that is also inherent in democracy. The original democracy of the town square of antiquity was limited by the fact that neither slaves nor women had the right to vote. A contemporary exhibition space – even if it is run by a local council or the state – still has manifest democratic limitations (gender, class, ethnicity, education etc.).

The democratic square is thus the place where the power is apportioned, distributed and regulated. Here, for example, the majority prevails over the minority. And this is exactly how the works in an exhibition operate, between coercion and freedom, in the tension between the individual and the collective. For me, the – ideal – exhibition is mounted in an agora very like the town square in Calanda. The various works of art taking part in it constitute the enfranchised citizens. The works are then all of equal value, regardless of whether they are mine or other artists', in the same way as the people in the agora made no distinction between biography and autobiography. The works are handed over to the agora where they are everybody's and nobody's, just as a completed novel is handed over to readings that are yet to come.

Q: So once again you're trying to justify your personal advertising campaign by brandishing ancient democracy.

Andreas: I thought we had finished with all that tiresome nagging. But please note that even in classical antiquity they discussed the issue of self-glorification and came to the conclusion that it was entirely legitimate.

Q: Exactly, *self-glorification* …

Andreas: Bakhtin draws our attention to a very interesting point that is also important not just for my project but also in any general discussion of art, subjectivity and the public sphere. This idea, alien to us, of being our exterior, of not thinking silently or bearing with us some inner sorrow, is put forward as typical: '[…] every aspect of existence could be *seen* and *heard*'.[59] That is why, as Bakhtin saw it, there was no difference in principle for Plato, either, between thinking, and speaking to someone else. Plato perceived thought as a conversation carried on with oneself.[60] And I see the thinking in this text in the same way. Here, too, there is no difference in principle between 'internal' and 'external' conversation partners. (The concept of an internal monologue seems to me intuitively wrong. One is always at least two.)

This distinct and solid citizen of classical antiquity in the market square was not just public but a manifestation of the public sphere

itself. As a consequence of this, works of art, too – according to Bakhtin – were public in nature, not private. Bakhtin gives as an example of the persistence of this perception the fact that it was considered important for the *Confessions of St Augustine* (354–430) to be read aloud in order that it form part of public discourse. But the division into private and public in literature started right back in the age of classical antiquity, when the private content of text is exposed to the public gaze.[61] St Augustine can *also* serve as an example here, in the concept of *Soliloquia*, solitary conversations with oneself.[62] There, the author addresses himself to philosophy and tries to exclude a third voice. He wants to liberate himself from the Other's encroaching opinions.

Q: Ugh! But what about me, then?

Andreas: I for my part am trying to break open the solitariness of this dissertation by bringing in other voices. Let St Augustine's attempts to exclude the Other stand as an example of what Bakhtin means by monologic literature that has one voice, one truth. With the dominance of the subject, personal death and the transitory nature of all things become essential. This answers in turn to the widespread perception that art makes the artist immortal, that the work lifts its originator out of time's ever-rolling stream.

So subjectivisation, the individual crawling into his or her mute and solitary interior, began as early as the Hellenistic and Roman periods. What happens subsequently is that the popular and collective, whatever is common to all, is pulled down, falls apart, and self-consciousness becomes abstract and ideal. This could be understood as the birth of the modern individual, as the start of the development of the *ego*, which reached its climax in the twentieth century in Sigmund Freud's model of human psychology, before philosophy turned its gaze inwards and questioned itself. The agora, the collective square, the popular chronotope drifts down into oblivion.

Boredom

Lars: I found the film boring.

There a lot of interesting aspects to this sudden pronouncement on the supposedly boring nature of a work, my work, which was made, rose to the surface as it were, during a public discussion of this particular work and the part of this text that was already written, not least because

the pronouncement now becomes part of the whole, of this dissertation, which it so insidiously attacked, disguised as an observer's emotional reaction to what he had just experienced, when it was really, in purely formal terms, a classic provocation disguised as honesty and in fact decked out in the kind of naivety that can have a certain comic effect but above all emphasises the truthful nature of what might be called the personal, not to say private, progress report and this truth has, by its honesty, a tendency to rub off on the object of the comment in such a way that the assertion claims not only to describe the informant's entirely honest and involuntary reaction to the experience of viewing this particular film, but also that this experience corresponded to some substantial extent to something that mars the work itself, in this case an allegedly annoying degree of boringness.

Lars: I think the film is too long. It is boring.

Andreas: Funnily enough, I don't think it is boring at all. In fact my problem was the opposite: not to let it get too entertaining. It would have been easy to make the material into a music video that offered the viewer a seamless switchback ride. But then one misses the dynamic of the detail, the mistakes, the endeavours, the individuals and so on.

Lars: Why should that be a problem? I think the boringness is a problem.

Andreas: The art of entertainment is not the focus of my work.

Q: So you admit it's boring?

Andreas: No, but there are some boring or less exciting elements.

Q: Yawn!

Lawrence Weiner: I remember seeing them (Stella's 'black paintings') when Frank Stella had a first one-person show at the Museum of Modern Art. I thought they were absolutely fabulous. I remember a PBS broadcast of Henry Geldzahler interviewing Frank Stella in the early 1960s. Stella looked plaintively at the camera and said: 'My god, if you think these are boring to look at, can you imagine how boring they are to paint?' […][63]

Andreas: What Weiner seems to be trying to express is Stella's interest in the process and that it was not the intention of these paintings to entertain. If we take the question a little further, boredom can also be a method, albeit a minimalist one. But it seems that Weiner (and others, too) remembers wrongly:

Irving Sandler: In the most vicious review I ever wrote, published in *Art International* at the end of 1960, I compared Frank to Ad Reinhardt, commenting that both use 'geometry and monochromatic colour' but where Reinhardt is engrossed with purity in art and paints monotonous pictures because he feels that art should be difficult, aloof, for the museums and hence, dead, Stella seems interested in monotony for its own sake, as an attitude to life and art. Frank did not hold my hostile critique against me, and when I asked to interview him on the radio in 1962, he agreed ...

Frank said that he wanted to make direct paintings, paintings you could see all at once, whereas Reinhardt wanted the opposite ... I then asked Frank whether he thought his work was boring. He replied that it was boring to make but shouldn't be boring to look at. He then quoted John Cage that if something looks boring after two minutes, look at it for four; if it's still boring, try it for eight, then sixteen. At one point it will become very interesting.[64]

Q: I thought the film lost momentum somewhere in the middle, the concentration was not the same.

Andreas: Yes, that is a conscious choice. I deliberately avoided making a music video. It would not have been difficult to make that kind of unresisting film, like a rhythmic journey, like a sixteen-and-a half-minute ride down a water chute. For me, too, there are two ways of showing the film: it can be played to a seated audience and then the story is clear, or it can be played in an exhibition setting where you can opt in and out of the story as you want. People who lack patience and require a more instant sort of gratification can go elsewhere for it. So before the film was cut I wrote to the editor about the structure:

> Stockholm 17 June 2008
> Hi,
> Here are the tapes. Check the material and get back to me as soon as you can.
>
> *Background*
> Photographer Stefan Kullänger and I filmed this at Easter in the small town of Calanda in Aragon, in Spain. During the Easter weekend, drumming ceremonies with ancient roots are held at five villages/small towns in the region. The local people dress up in costumes rather like those worn by the Klu Klux Klan and take part in drumming processions that last for hours. I did film that, but it is not the main focus of my interest here. On these tapes we have the people of Calanda going down to the main square in the evening in their ordinary clothes, after dinner on Good Friday. What makes it different from any other festival evenings is that they all interact by drumming, young and old. They beat out specific rhythms with two kinds of drum, a snare drum and a bass drum.
>
> *The Film*
> I am thinking of something lasting about 15 minutes. The tapes contain about 3 and a half hours' material and there were two cameras filming in parallel. The basic structure should follow the chronology: people come ambling along the narrow streets. The square fills up, the whole thing intensifies, then gradually it all dies down again, and we finish with the walk home, stopping off at a bar where one group is still playing. The dramatic curve is not entirely regular, of course. The playing in the square is punctuated by calmer interludes as more people trickle in, a band of girls sits to one side, playing, and so on.
>
> *The Cut*
> The film needs cutting to the same rhythm as the drums, of course. But it's important not to fall into music video or advertising language with quick, dramatic cutting between scenes. This is supposed to be a narrative film.
>
> *The Tapes*
> Camera A is Stefan, Camera B is mine. I'm afraid the sound on Camera A is a bit of a mess and I managed to get the date code on Camera B permanently stuck.
> … That's something we'll have to deal with as we go along, I suppose. I am also sending my notes on the tapes. […]

The film came out at just under 17 minutes long, the cutting basically followed my outline and editor Suzi Özel did a very good job. As I said, I

could have produced a drum orgy, a rhythmic journey on which one could simply float along. But I opted for narrative rather than pure experience.

Q: Sure, boredom rather than flow.

Andreas: Aha, now I understand; so the epithet 'boring' was not just a description but also a value judgement.

Q: That art should be, ought to be! difficult … is a typical argument to let people like you shut out ordinary folk. Boringness is the same as difficulty is the same as a high and encircling wall for preserving your elevated privileges. Elitist!

Andreas: Populist!

Q: Pippilotti Rist!

Andreas: Specialist! I don't understand why one should be seen as an elitist in a negative sense just because one works with art that is not accessible to absolutely everybody. I would not dream, for example, of accusing a glider pilot or a medal-winning folk musician of elitism even though these are art forms I have no familiarity with. We can only assimilate certain things, and certain art, as a result of a great deal of effort. And in any case, I would assert that *Sharing a Square* and my work in general is often – relatively – easily accessible. I make a real effort not to complicate things unnecessarily. But I also try not to simplify them.

Lars: And I, for one, do not like being bored. You didn't actually answer my question, either!

Andreas: Okay. There are different ways of talking about boredom and art. Or boredom in art, or as art. In general terms we can say that there has been a streak of tedium running through, say, modernism. Think for example of Andy Warhol's notorious, eight-hour film *Empire* (1964) in which he filmed a skyscraper with a fixed camera from top to bottom. The result was an incomprehensibly dull film, of course. But to claim it is crashingly boring is entirely uninteresting. There is also a tradition of boredom within the Fluxus movement. We can assume that consciously boring works incorporate at least one of these two aspects: being an expression of an extreme, formal aesthetic like minimalism; and being part of an opposition that is a reaction against the notion of art as merely absorptive: easily digested and all-engrossing. In the latter case it is a tool, a technique. Here we can talk about the general sense of boredom Lars

thinks he can detect in certain slumps in momentum, expressing a particular, calculated resistance in the film. These are part of a conscious artistic strategy, an aesthetic. The poet Charles Bernstein refers to a conceptual pairing: absorption and artefaction.[65] He takes pains not to adopt any kind of evaluative attitude but builds his text, and his authorship, on the meaning of artefaction. It is a resistance, an impenetrable surface, language that admits to being language and not the mediator of a different reality:

> *Impermeability* suggests artifice, boredom, exaggeration, attention scattering, distraction, digression, interruptive, transgressive, undecorous, anticonventional, unintegrated, fractured, fragmented, fanciful, ornately stylized, rococo, baroque, structural, mannered, fanciful ironic, […].[66]

Author Magnus William-Olsson understands the concept as follows:

> Jesper Olsson's two basic concepts are 'artefaction' and 'materiality'. The first of these, which Olsson has borrowed primarily from the American critic Marjorie Perloff, refers to whatever it is in language that does not allow itself to be translated, interpreted, have comparisons drawn with it, or be used. In Perloff it is antithetically linked to an analysis of the mass media as characterised by a language that conveys information via the route of least resistance. What Olsson calls the materiality of language is, one could also say, a special case of artefaction: letters and words as images, printing ink and sound waves. But it is also, it seems to me, a metaphor for the poet's subject in a certain anti-Romantic tradition. 'Material' in his sense is simply the starting point for the poet's 'craftsmanship' – a kind of verbal 'clay', 'stone', 'cement' or 'oil paint'.[67]

This characterisation of artefaction is reminiscent of the early days of modernism, of Futurists and Dadaists.[68] The concept is not to be confused with modernist breaches of norms but is an aesthetic opposition with a different set of aims.[69] Meaning is transferred to a kind of linguistic effect (typographically, too) which, as it were, speaks a different language from that of convention. This language can be said to be solid; it is concrete by dint of not being the bearer of any meaning beyond

itself (this is surely the dream of minimalism?). There are good examples of artefaction in text collage and texts produced according to a set of rules, as in the case of Oulipo. Naturally Bernstein is aware that this can become a convention in itself, but it does not alter the fundamental aesthetic of the technique. Absorption, on the other hand, slides into the reader and encounters no resistance:

> By *absorption* I mean engrossing, engulfing completely, engaging, arresting attention, reverie, attention intensification, rhapsodic, spellbinding, mesmerizing, hypnotic, total, riveting, enthralling: belief, conviction, silence.[70]

His evaluation of the concepts of absorption and artefaction differs from that attributed to Perloff. In the extract cited, at least, descriptive terms replace normative ones; they turn into formulations of tools, techniques that the author – and the artist in general – can use. Sometimes, for example, artists and curators talk about beauty as instrumental, as a means of catching the observer's attention in order to go on to talk about something other than beauty. This characterisation of absorption makes me think of a sort of symbiotic entering into a work, of an emotional acceptance of a work as reality, of works that make the reader or viewer laugh or cry. The function of such works could be described as a kind of seduction.[71] From the outset, if we are to believe William-Olsson, the concept incorporates the language of commercialism (advertising, television, film etc.). This is language that avoids being at all 'chewy' or problematic.

But one must of course realise that a work of art is not constructed on this simple dichotomy and can employ the same technique with a variety of goals. Bernstein, for example, talks of using antiabsorptive methods with absorptive intent.

> Unfamiliarization
> is a well-tried
> antiabsorptive
> method; Brecht's
> *verfrem*dumdum*den* effect
> explicitly sets
> this as its
> goal. But
> unfamiliarization
> is significantly
> distinguishable
> from impermeability.[72]

Bernstein's point here is that Brecht employs the technique to lift the observer out of an absorptive situation in order to place him/her on a metalevel that is in itself absorptive as well.

> In effect, Brecht doubles
> the attention
> of the spectator
> in his hyperabsorptive
> theater […].[73]

I understand Bernstein to mean that Brecht's alienation technique, *Verfremdung*, does not constitute resistance but opens up a (potentially) surprising route into a theatrical performance by a simulated artefaction, by an engineered, rigged dialogue between the stage and the auditorium which is really the conniving wink of an accomplice, the establishment of a 'we'. What Bernstein is trying to achieve is more formal and definitive in nature, more of a 'me-you', 'text-reader'. (Perhaps the technique I used in *Sharing a Square*, though conventional in itself, is more Brecht than Bernstein.)

We might also ask how Brecht's technique and the concept of artefaction relate to the origins of this alienation effect. Brecht came across the idea in the work of the Russian futurist Viktor Shklovsky.[74] He refers to Aristotle's assertion that poetic language has to be alien, and to instances of texts deliberately being made more difficult in the course of history.[75] But it is evident that this notion of aesthetic resistance and infringement belongs in a modernist tradition. (Bernstein, for example, seems to delight in a kind of modernist vocabulary – 'technological/arsenal' – which

I associate with the sort of confidence in technological progress found in early modernism.) These three artists, however, use the method in slightly different ways. Avoiding the expression 'ingrained way of thinking', Shklovsky instead came up with the term (at least in translation) *automatism*. He thought that habit means we only perceive the surface of things, and that alienation could 'return sensation to our limbs'.[76] His example of this method is not in the nature of the fractures found in *Verfremdung* or artefaction but descriptions of events as if being seen for the first time, without a history. The classic example of the automatisation process is the use of suggestive phrases or even formulae, algebra, for which one automatically supplies meanings.[77]

I sympathise with the idea of breaking the absorption to grab the attention of the viewer. This shows an urge to start a dialogue between the artist/author/work and the reader/viewer. Resistance in general and artefaction in particular define boundaries to which one can then relate: 'Absorption can be broken by any direct address to the reader […].'[78] Film offers the option of this direct address when, for example, the subject looks straight into the camera. This also applies to *Sharing a Square*. There are some barely visible breaks in which the camera slips from being subjective, without any cutting, into adopting an objective position. But the absorptive enchantment is, I hope, also broken by the fact that the suggestive drumming, the flow of the movement and the cutting in the rhythm are cut against pictures in which the camera/observer is positioned outside what is happening, beyond the square. Either the group in the square is seen from a distance, or places and events are shown with the square not in shot, though with drumming in the background. Even here we have a rhythm, of course, and perhaps potential seduction, too. But I hope the film manages to balance, or to oscillate as Bernstein puts it, between seduction and resistance. Without other comparisons I recognise my work on the film when Bernstein's poem, having initially adopted a disparaging attitude towards absorption, somewhat unexpectedly gets more and more excited about its absorbing nature and relation to artefaction. The question is whether the various resistance techniques all in fact have the aim of steering the reading, thereby making the author's intentions more effective:

> Such considerations as these
> do not resolve my fascination with absorption
> & impenetrability, which seem to cut to the heart
> of my most intimate relations with language.
> I find I
> enact in my work an oscillating pull
> in both directions, cutting into & out of–
> en(w)rapment/resistance, enactment/delay, surfeit/
> lack, but my suspicion of such polarized terms
> introduces a third element of scepticism
> about these binary divisions.[79]

It is interesting that the dichotomy generates a third element here, that of scepticism. As I see it, this as only achievable through artefaction, resistance, and the scepticism is not destructive but productive. This is how I often try, for example, to use the voices that find expression in this text. The scepticism triggers a wish to defend oneself, so the match starts all over again. Surely Lars's opening claim that *Sharing a Square* is boring is an example of precisely that resistance in this text?

Q: Maybe so, maybe so. But it isn't the same as artefaction. You are counting too much on this concept, or misconstruing it. Artefaction is more a technique, a poetics if you like. Aren't you in fact groping for a theory that happens to answer your need to defend your film's shortcomings? Trying to aestheticise complications, in fact?

Andreas: Kill your darlings … certainly … artefaction and absorption are geared particularly to the formal functions of language. The provocation above is more to do with the meaning behind the content, with *what* Lars says, not *how* he says it. So you are right. On the other hand, the oscillation Bernstein refers to above is also applicable to content. This movement can be applied to more aspects of craftsmanship than artefaction-absorption. But in your negativity you are overlooking the fact that what I referred to above was this *text*, not Lars's *comment* in the text. Not the film.

Q: Are we talking about ourselves, the text or the film?

Andreas: None of them. We are talking about craftsmanship, about the way material can be organised. About the aims of the work.

Q: Distinguish between intention and result! Or did you deliberately produce a boring piece of work?

Andreas: We-ell, in this case I did consciously include breaks, transfers, steps back, reloadings and pauses in the rhythmic flow and the stylish panning shots. The photographer, Stefan Kullänger, is a very skilful film cameraman. He works rhythmically and is particularly mobile and bold, never hesitating to get up close, go right into a crowd and so on. That creates life and presence. (To maximise his options, his invisibility, he dressed entirely in black.) He also has a weakness for beautiful pictures of the kind that are not on my agenda. It could be a question of specific angles or lighting. In this context you could say he has a highly developed absorptive method. My more static and distanced (and more amateurish) shots provide just the material for an excellent counterpoint to Stefan's film sequences.

Q: Don't you mean *your* 'artefactual film sequences'?

Andreas: I obviously need to make myself extremely clear here: what I am aiming for is the resistance one can make use of as an artist. So the dual concepts of absorption/artefaction are a good starting point for a discussion. But in this context, let's swap the technical term artefaction for *opposition*, then perhaps you'll be satisfied! That concept links artefaction to a purely political possibility of opposition.

> Seen from this perspective, poetic artefaction is synonymous both with aesthetic challenges and with
> political opposition. By moving away from a 'natural' and 'authentic' appearance
> (and content), certain forms of poetry can introduce a measure of friction and reflection in
> relation to the discursive and media technology networks.[80]

Q: What a bore you are!

Andreas: Wait a minute, it isn't entertainment that I'm opposed to. I said that at the very start, but as we know, your memory is as short as the distance between truth and lies. I have nothing against art that is seductive, but it does become, perhaps not immoral, but at any rate

uninteresting if it is *only* seductive, *only* absorption.

Q: Go on about it as much as you like, but you won't make it any more *fun*.

Andreas: Shut up!

Lars: I found the film boring.

Step by Step, A First Draft

Q: Retakes and repetition, your theme for the exhibition on Gotland, is general and vague to say the least, and clashes with your argument for the curator as active and compelling.[81]

Andreas: Yes, the compulsion involved in the inevitable choice, what Bakhtin means by ability and the duty to answer.

Q: My question was not primarily about 'compulsion' but about your vague, general, one might go so far as to say vapid theme, which seems to cover pretty much anything. In your section on the curator, you referred specifically to general themes in which the works have to be 'representative' are monologic and closed. Isn't that exactly what *you* are doing?

Andreas: It might seem that way. The theme may be impossibly huge, the way it finds expression in the works is not at all like that; every repetition is unique. I would say that in quite a few cases, light is cast on hidden aspects. They are specific, not general. It is precisely here, I think, in the dynamic between the specific and the general, that exhibitions and works can be outstanding. The idea with the Gotland show was to produce a thematic exhibition highlighting less obvious aspects of the works. This was especially successful in the case of Rosvall.

Q: Violence!

Andreas: Instrumentalisation!

Q: Assault!

Andreas: Curatorship!

> Because they all [voices] sound within a single consciousness, they become, as it were, reciprocally permeable. They are brought close to one another, made to overlap; they partially intersect one another, creating the corresponding interruptions in areas of intersection.[82]

Bakhtin talks about the novel, but I think that one can apply what he says equally to the different voices in an exhibition. As I have already said, in 2007 I put together an exhibition at the Gotland Museum of Art – *Step By Step, A First Draft* – on much the same premise as *Taking Over*. This time, the theme of the exhibition was *repetition*, which was also the catalyst for what I was doing with the individual works in my dissertation. The underlying idea is thus that the works, my own and other people's, are forced into this theme, by my reading and by the prevailing practical conditions and that this generates a mixture of freedom and coercion which sets boundaries, stresses certain aspects and so on. The component parts mirror each other, not in a mimetic sense but in such a way that we perceive them in the light of each other. This naturally does not exclude intertexts in other places or another time. My hope is that reading the works in this way, the boundaries between them will become blurred, in the same way as between curator and artist, for example. The hope is that the positions of the various parties involved will be able to shift and change. (The cast list comprises: curator, artwork, artist, audience and exhibition context.) I would claim that I – in my capacity as an artist – have in some sense handed over my works, so they are participating in the exhibition on the same terms as the others. This is a kind of economy, giving up one position to gain another.

This was my thinking, for example, with regard to one of the works, Manuel Echavarría's *Bocas de ceniza*/*Mouths of Ash*, 2003 (video projection). Poor Colombian peasants sing their own songs straight to camera, giving their account of all the injustices they have suffered at the hands of the state and paramilitaries. Their faces are in extreme close-up, the screen cutting across their heads at forehead and chin level to create the most documentary effect possible. The lined faces, the sorrow in their eyes as they look straight at

the viewer intensifies the sensation of witness testimonials.[83] Repetition is an important element of the songs as such, notably in the choruses or refrains. The theme leads me as a viewer in a specific direction, though I do not lose contact with the individual fates, nor do the political issues lose their clarity. The music and lyrics of one of the songs were written by Vicente Mosquera after he witnessed a massacre in Bojayá, Chocó in Colombia:

> It was approximately six o' clock in the morning
> in the town shots were heard://
> The people awoke startled and they asked each other
> what was going on://
> And they asked each other
> if their lives would end there://
> An old lady, a neighbour, asked me
> 'Son, what is going on here? Why is everyone running out
> of their houses?':://

The song is a retelling of an event and of an experience. The repetition theme emphasises the song and the music supports the retelling: rhythm, verse, melody build on a structure of repetition that helps the memory to remember. At the same time, the repetition theme links to traumatic and post-traumatic experiences: in a sense, the events that are being narrated happen again. The singers are deeply moved by their accounts; some of them cry as they both relive and attempt to process events. I believe that this function of singing must go back hundreds, if not thousands, of years in our civilisation. This is exactly how important experiences have been handed on down the centuries. The video film itself sends on and retells the narratives,

as a modern addition to the traditional handing on. Rather than listening to a storyteller in the town square or gathered round the fire, we sit in a darkened room and watch a video film. What we have lost in intimacy, we have gained in dissemination. This video work, like the other works in the exhibition, was devised to function both as a disco glitterball, mirroring the other works, and as an instance or position through which the other works can be read. Its composition, for example, comprising a number of singers singing, is an image of the exhibition as a whole (in the spirit of Bakhtin, we could call it polyphonic). It has to do, then, not only with the voices of a collection of individuals but also with the people whose stories are told in the songs. Furthermore, they are written into a traditional genre. Examples of intertextual relations with the other works in the exhibition include the likeness-difference dynamic explored both in *MIM* and in Rosvall's painting. The latter grows out of an idea about realism, namely that it depicts the colour and formal relations of reality in a correct, one might even say true, manner. This speaks to the claims to documentary truth in Echavarría's film. But the theme naturally does not lock the works. So this notion of truth puts the film into the documentary category. But in the exhibition itself, a dialogue is generated with my video *Thessaloniki Revisited*. Here we have contemporary history, trauma and so on. But if we take Kajsa Dahlberg's work as our starting point, our reading of the exhibition shifts.[84] In gathering up the other voices, the text becomes yet more polyphonic. The voices talk over each other; the emphases increase the force of particular statements and so on. The reader places him or herself alongside Woolf's text, as a body might lie down beside another body. The others' readings invite the rest of us in, to take part. But we also read the readers, and are read by them, as it were, as we are obliged to make up our own minds about the commentaries that surface in the book. Satisfied?

Q: Well it's a start, at least.

A well-curated exhibition can also liberate unanticipated meanings. The thinking behind it is for the macro- and microlevels of the exhibition to be in harmony, for the exhibition theme and aspects of the individual works to coincide. The whole referred to by Bakhtin as *consummation* of the other in the dialogue is an act of creation that is also a limitation.

Dostoevsky's novels are constructed so that the whole is a '*great dialogue'*, accommodating within it a '*microdialogue*'.[85] And these microdialogues work their way into even the tiniest component parts, in a facial expression, 'into every word of the novel, making it double-voiced'.[85] Here, Bakhtin is describing a kind of descent into something, an entry, a movement from macro to micro, a zooming in with the parts mirroring the whole and vice versa. Note that 'great dialogue' does not have any kind of metarelationship with 'microdialogue' here. In a dialogic sense there is no qualitative difference between them in the sense that a plot or a genre is also dialogic in the same sense as the voice of a hero. Similarly, the theme of an exhibition – repetition, for example – can be dialogic both as plot and in the way it appears in individual works.

Johan: The *syuzhet* (plot) = The abstract plan that determines the way the narrative goes. The *fabula* (fable) = What happens/what is shown.

Andreas: If 'plot', the usual English translation from the Russian *syuzhet*, sounds too much like plot in the sense of intrigue, and if 'theme' or 'subject' are too narrow as concepts, perhaps 'frame story' (Swe: ramhandling) might serve the purpose? I am also thinking of Bakhtinian terms like 'visual field' and 'tangent line', i.e. the fact that Bakhtin often defines the scope. He delineates, establishes boundaries (which he then transgresses). When he describes and analyses Dostoevsky's texts it is often small, defined scenes that are evoked. So the *fabula* is what 'happens' or 'takes place'. The *syuzhet* has more to do with 'the place' or 'the space'.

Johan: The *syuzhet*, however, is also ideological/meaningful and so on, it is not knowledge, but a feature of a poetics, it is meaningful. It is the curator's thought process. Plot/fable can also be read as Significant/Significate, the plane of the narrative, the plan of what is narrated. Both levels have their own distinctive intertextuality.

Andreas: And since Bakhtin thinks that the essence of things is played out in the dialogical event – it is neither metaphorical nor fuel for an intrigue – then one could think of the action as constituting the framework – the 'plot' – which has the actual task of creating the conditions for these events.

Johan: Yes, though one runs the risk of being idealistic. Because of course the dialogic also exists between the linguistically ideological platforms, the descriptions of cities, the social themes, and the dialogic

events, between the 'topsoil' (Russ: potjva) and 'the individual with the individual' – the dialogic. What is important here is also handed over to the recipient by Dostoevsky.

Andreas: I ask because it seems to me that one can also work this way as a curator.

Johan: Yes, definitely!

Andreas: In my case then, the plot is 'repetition'. This could also be a way of talking about art/exhibiting.

Johan: Yes – because a structure is, after all, nothing but a repetition, and the plot is of course structurally a theme that creates the preconditions both for individual works and for a whole exhibition.

Andreas: You think my interpretation of 'plot' works, then?

Johan: Yes! At an artistic level, as an artistic idea it certainly does work.

Andreas: And as I understand it, we should be wary of thinking that the plot in Dostoevsky is a form that gathers the dialogic events, or heroes, into a whole. Bakhtin argues against this way of understanding the plot in Dostoevsky as a kind of monologising of these incompatible dialogic events.[86] He is very careful to defend the hero's integrity and independence against this sort of coercive collectivisation. This is what Bakhtin has to say about the relation of dialogue to plot in Dostoevsky's work. Dialogue is never plot-dependent,

> […] for a plot-dependent dialogue strives toward conclusion just as inevitably as does the plot of which it is in fact a component. Therefore dialogue in Dostoevsky is, as we have said, always external to the plot, that is internally independent of the plot-related interrelationships of the speakers – although, of course, dialogue is prepared for by the plot.[87]

Mika: And how does that apply to *your* project?

Andreas: If this is consistent with my curatorship, the integrity of the work is respected in that the theme/plot awakens a potentiality but the limitation/summation that this implies is evidently only temporary. But working on exhibitions can also be done in the way Bakhtin considers Dostoevsky did in his novels. The works are my heroes. But this stance, this kind of dialogicity and plot naturally do not cover all curatorial or

artistic practice. And the concepts are fruitful; they are useful tools for talking about artistic and curatorial practices. Bakhtin's defence of the heroes' integrity, for example, can be used as a defence of individual works of art. In Dostoevsky's case, plots and heroes can find themselves on the same level and it seems to me that Bakhtin also maintains that the hero can rise above the plot since the hero can bypass the author. Similarly, a work in an exhibition can move beyond its theme or plot, and beyond its curator. (Here, of course, we also have an interesting embryonic conflict.) So what happens is what we more generally refer to as contextualisation. An exhibition about painting naturally spotlights that technique. An exhibition related to a particular period naturally does the same thing, and so on. But contemporary curatorial practices often want an exhibition to talk about ideas. They are conceptual. In a successful, curated exhibition that is ideas-based, they function like a novel by Dostoevsky: theme, thought and plot all work together with the independent art works without establishing stable hierarchies. An author who adheres to Bakhtin's idea of a dialogic novel and participates in this unstable work then has a status and function such as a curator might also adopt. This curator then, by renouncing a monologic position, has for me a position that is close to, or identical to, that of the artist.

Spies, Pharmacists, Erich P. and Mr Fujimura

ERICH P.

I was really supposed to go back for another course at the summer residential centre of the Academy of Art in the summer of 2009.[88] The mornings were to be devoted to lectures on Moscow conceptualism, a Russian variant of conceptual art with its roots in the Soviet Union of the 1970s.[89] I was offered the chance to participate in my own right, but was unable to attend.

Students from the Valand School of Fine Arts and ICA in Moscow would be taking part. The dacha, which comprises accommodation and studios for the artists in residence, stands by a stream that connects to the system of rivers linking the Volga to the Baltic. This system of waterways was of great economic and militarily strategic importance when it was built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The trip was arranged

by Johan Öberg, Research Secretary in the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts at the University of Gothenburg. Prior to that, he had proposed that I work on an art project based on Erich Palmquist, Captain of Fortification (1650–1676), and his participation in the expedition sent to Russia by Karl XI in 1673 under the leadership of Gabriel Oxenstierna.[90] Erich Palmquist's mission was to send back information about Russia's military status and he has come to be viewed, particularly by the Russians, as nothing short of a spy. One of his most crucial tasks was to document the waterway system. In 1674, Palmquist delivered an illustrated espionage report to King Karl: *Någre vidh sidste kongl. ambassaden till tsaren i Muskou gjorde observationer öfver Rysslandh, des vägar, pass medh fästningar och grantzer sammandragne* (Observations made on the final Royal Embassy to the Tsar in Moscow on the subject of Russia, its roads, passes with fortresses and borders in summary).[91] It was rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century and a small number of facsimiles were printed. Today it is considered a classic travelogue of Russia in this period and of major importance.

Johan: You are allying yourself with an established picture of Russia in your reaction to the food at the Dacha in 2006, the starting point for *Sleeper*, which is reminiscent of a couple of lines by another traveller writing about Russia, Aleksander Radishchev: 'Chudishche oblo, ozorno, stozevno i layay': 'A monstrosity – obese, insolent, with a hundred maws and barking.'[92]

Andreas: Attius Sohlman thinks that Palmquist, too, is borrowing from earlier, rather prejudiced accounts of Russia when he writes: 'that there is nothing that better corresponds to Russian *genio* than haggling, bartering and duping, for the honesty of a Russian can rarely hold out against money, and he is so greedy and villainous that he holds all profit to be honourable.'[93]

Johan: Knowledge of Russia is still relatively limited in the West. Prejudices, on the other hand, are legion. Including yours.[94]

Andreas: The cancelled trip to the Dacha gave me the idea of linking Palmquist's journey and my own work *Sleeper*. I planned to enlist the support of an Erich Palmquist (while I, as the person commissioning the work, would consequently be King Karl). The underlying idea of the project was to generate a type of instability reminiscent of the one created in the work *Stockholm-Beijing*.[95] In that instance, I felt that if I turned text into body then the body, that is, the Stockholm-Beijing route, would be turned into text. In the Dacha project, I thought I would rewrite history by planting clues, supposed traces of, among other things, a fictitious visit by Palmquist in 1673. Just as Borges writes in 'Pierre Menard – author of *Don Quixote'*: 'Historical truth, for him, is not what took place; it is what we think took place.'[96] Or rather what should have, or could have, taken place. I embarked on the operation by preparing a kit for my 'Erich' to use *in situ*. The story was to be lent fictitious verification by planting in the grounds of the dacha four Swedish coins – ¼ öre coins dating from the reign of Queen Kristina, 1632–1654, and thus in circulation in Erich Palmquist's lifetime.[97] If they are found, it might be assumed that someone Swedish visited the spot and that this person could have been Palmquist. The number of Swedish coins of this period in Russia is relatively small, and they are assumed to have come mainly from customs payments.[98] And a seal from that part of the ennobled branch of the Palmquist family, originating from Erich Palmquist's brother, which was also to be buried as a hint that Erich, while he was there, had opened a letter from his brother. The same thinking lay behind the plan to plant three Roman coins. They could indicate earlier, unknown visits made by Romans (or at any rate traces of other traders, contemporaries of the Romans, who had been paid in Roman coinage). In addition, fossils from Gotland would be scattered along the water's edge to undermine the theory of the movement of continental plates. These fossils, like the limestone of which Gotland consists, come

originally from animals and plants which 400 million years ago were located near the equator, in what is now Africa. Finally, the idea was that the accompanying palm leaves, taken from the family coat of arms, would serve both as a marker of Palmquists's visit and a further deformation of history, since it is now too cold for palms to grow in that region.

The agent was to be given three envelopes containing information, tools and objects. One of the envelopes had in it a list of the contents of the other two envelopes, and some instructions.[99]

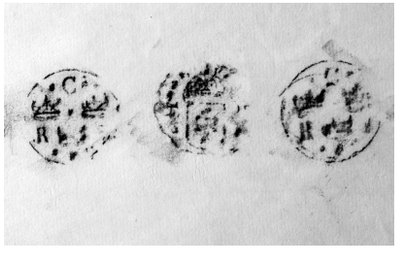
List
1 green trowel with wooden handle
1 sketchbook, Daler-Rowney
2 palm leaves
1 pencil case containing:
1 tin water-soluble pastels Caran D'Ache, Neocolor II
A handful of Gotland fossils
4 Swedish coins, 17th century, all pre-1673
1 Swedish 2-öre silver coin of 1667
3 Roman coins
1 seal of the baronial Palmquist family
2 watercolour brushes KreatorStudio, series 7451, sizes 2 and 16
1 waterproof felt-tip pen Artline, 0.3
1 pencil, Zebra Pencil, 0.5

Instructions
The operation will be put into practice on 31 July–8 August, 2009, mainly at the so called Academia Dacha (the summer residential centre of the Russian Academy of Art), in Russia, outside the town of Vishny Volochok and adjoining the canal and river system in Russia, linking the Volga to the Baltic. The operative agent on the ground is 'Erich', who receives instructions direct from 'Karl'. The mission must naturally not be revealed to anyone and all activities are to be carried out clandestinely, or in a disguised manner.

By way of remuneration for this work, 'Erich' will receive payment in advance in the form of a two-öre silver coin of the year 1667, to use as he sees fit (enclosed).

Tools and material for completion of the task are attached.

1. 'Erich' will begin the first day of the visit by carrying out the following task: a rectangle as large as possible is to be established within the grounds of the dacha, its four corners touching the outer edge of the area. Two or three corners will probably touch the waterline. In each corner, one of the four enclosed Swedish coins, all dating from before 1673, is to be buried.
2. An accurate map of the rectangle/area, with buildings marked on it, is to be made in the sketchbook. Sketch the surrounding area, houses etc. The sketches are to be marked with the relevant date and other information, with either the waterproof felt tip or the pencil. The plans, drawings sketches etc. are to be coloured using the enclosed water-soluble pastels. Any water required in this process is to be taken from the nearby stream. All drafts etc. are to be kept in the sketchbook! (The water-soluble pastels are to be used initially as ordinary coloured crayons, then water is to be applied using the brushes.)
3. Other crucial observations of events (meetings, conversations, contact networks, personal characteristics etc.) and buildings etc. during the visit are to be noted in pictures or captions in the sketchbook. Particularly those related to water in all its forms.
4. A line is to be drawn from the top-right coin/corner of the rectangle to the bottom-left corner/coin. Where the two intersect, the following enclosed objects are to be planted: two crossed palm leaves and three Roman coins.
5. The enclosed Gotland fossils are to be scattered randomly along the waterline.
6. The enclosed seal of the baronial Palmquist family it to be planted at will within the established area.
7. Before leaving, pen, pencil, pastels, boxes, trowel are to be wrapped up in the pencil case along with a sinker, such as a stone. The packet is to be sunk into the stream.
8. The sketchbook is to be retained and sent by registered post to 'Karl' immediately on return to Sweden.



I also made a simple seal-stamping device so the envelope could be sealed with a seal bearing the initial 'K' for Karl.

Q:… for Konstnären [the Swedish word for 'artist']!

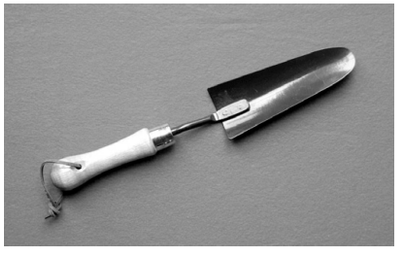
Andreas: …!?

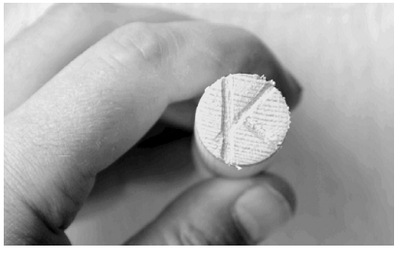
David: Well, in such cases it ought of course to have been CR for Carolus Rex.

I documented the kit in the usual way, that is, following artistic practice. The documentation is also part of the transparency required by a dissertation. The concrete objects and events are what distinguish this narrative from literature. I documented the coins and seal in accordance with an archeological method: rubbing. In archaeology this is the method used to document and archive such things as rock carvings. I thought it relevant for this inverted archaeology in that the method depends on physical contact with the find, indicating a truth to a greater degree than, say, a photograph, even though this is not necessarily the case. Rubbing is also by its nature shadow-like, not to say ghostly, which appeals to me in this context. In this there is also an aspect of representation or image which is relevant.[100] And again, as in *Sleeper*, it is a question of adding something, secretly.

Fujimura in flagrante

This method, laying a trail left by something that did not happen, sending people down historically false tracks, is not entirely original of course. I discover quite by chance, for example, that a book by the French-American author Antoine Bello, *Les falsificateurs*, uses a similar idea but in the form of a novel; with my project already realised, I am inspired by this book that I have never read.[101] And almost a year later, in April 2010 after I had been working on *Erich P.*, I saw a report that Daniel Spoerri – who incorporated food into much of his art – had also been involved in inverted archaeology.[102] I was very pleased to read that an archeological dig had just started on the remains of 'a lavish party' in the Paris area, thrown by Spoerri in 1983 and subsequently buried in the garden where it took place. The work is entitled *Lunch Under the Grass*, referencing the Manet painting *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*. According to the report, finds included remains of pigs' ears, calves' lungs and smoked udder.[103]





As I mentioned, the *Erich P.* project is also influenced by my *Sleeper*, where the act of surreptitious placing is an important ingredient, even if this is an inverted theft rather than a deception, perhaps even in a legal sense. This inverted actualisation also relates to the activities of the spy and the secret agent. They hit upon things, bring them to life, but they are also concealing, because normality is their abnormal state. (One could also think of the archaeologist as someone who, as it were, spies on history.) Or that the origin of the idea lies in Bakhtin's notion of constructions of worlds, of art. But as so often in this research project, it is hard to say what is cause and what is effect. The working process itself is dialogic. In actual fact, the work itself was originally inspired by Japanese amateur archaeologist Shinichi Fujimura.[104] Along with his team, Fujimura had been enjoying great success since a series of major finds in the early 1980s that made experts fundamentally revise the dating of the Paleolithic period (the later Stone Age, hundreds of thousands of years back in time when the first humanlike creatures appeared) in Japan. He went by the affectionate nickname *God's Hand*. However, Fujimura was caught on film by a press photographer at an excavation site in the year 2000, planting archeological finds from his collections along with finds from earlier expeditions to other places. This revelation led to his expulsion from archaeological societies and he was admitted to a mental hospital.[105]

Fujimura's case is clearly one of deliberate deception. But it is still

associated with the comprehensive misreadings that are part of the writing of history. There is naturally no fixed point from which history can be observed from the outside. One's thoughts go for example to Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941) and his heavy-handed restoration of the palace of Knossos on Crete. Context and dating methods are also vital in the interpretation of history and this was something Fujimura was expert enough to exploit. Where finds from periods later than the Paleolithic, the later Stone Age, are concerned, the dating of objects is primary and that of stratification is secondary. This means that if the dating of an object does not match the dating of the layer of soil in which it was found, the place is dated *according to the object*. But in the case of the Paleolithic period, the opposite applies: found objects are dated *according to previous dating of the soil layer*. The rationale for this is that handmade stone objects are hard to date because the stone came into existence far longer ago than the point at which it was worked by human beings. By contrast, objects of a material made by human beings, such as clay pots, can be dated.[106] This meant that by placing objects in a stratum that had already been dated, Fujimura instantly and magically made them infinitely older. The 'finds' hitched a ride, so to speak, with finds made earlier, and Fujimura's career hitched a ride along with them. The exposé of Fujimura's planting of finds led people to question earlier finds in other places. The find sites may thus need to have their histories revised again. You could say that Fujimura successfully achieved what *Sleeper* is attempting to do.

The roots of Fujimura's deception lie in the huge interest in archaeology in Japan. This interest is all bound up with a desire to establish a clear Japanese national identity. There is some tension between popular amateur archaeology, with its focus on empiricism and digging, and the academic archaeological establishment.[107]

Mika: And how does that apply to *your* project?

Andreas: Well, I am treading in Fujimura's footsteps, as it were, so we have a repetition of sorts. And the theme of repetition is there at a number of levels: in the instruction – the relationship between the King and Erich – in the recreation or restoration that is the business of archaeology, Erich's fictional return to Russia and my return, at a distance, to the Dacha.

Q: You could simply say that in the text, you are interpreting your work.

Andreas: No. Above all, I think that in interpreting a work in practice, one often finds that the work is in fact claimed to express something quite different from what one might initially believe. This work is also what it is, and that is what I am talking about. This text is the story of the work. (My colleague Magnus Bärtås coined the phrase 'work story' as an umbrella term for the drafting and redrafting that always occurs when pronouncing on a work.[108]) This text was not written after I made the work, but took shape gradually, before, as and after the work came into being. To err on the cautious side, we could say that the work is discussed and contextualised. This entails my talking about the work, and doing so from within the work. The work is a story, too. It could naturally also be merely a story about a project that has allegedly been carried out, a fiction with no object. Art is then similar to literature, and that does not in itself matter, of course. Personally, I think it is interesting to exploit the capacity of art for combining events, objects and stories.[109] These performed events and produced objects seem to intensify the story in the same way a travelogue differs from the story of an imaginary journey (one can be duped, of course, but that is another story.)

When engaged in producing stories about works, or as a part of a work, one has to be particularly vigilant about the relationship between documentation and story. They can of course coincide if one so wishes, but one has to be alert to this relationship, not least because many works are temporary events or site-specific installations. But I believe that, since one thing about art is that it is traditionally part of an object-orientated market and tinged with fetishism, it is difficult to leave its events undocumented by contrast with, say, a dance or theatrical performance. Instead, one often integrates the documentation with the work.[110] I have noticed that the documentations of art are sometimes more interesting than the art works or art events themselves. (This finds expression particularly in the PowerPoint culture where many artists nowadays feel very much at home.) So then it is a matter of paying close attention and not mistaking the documentation, a story about the work or the reflection, for the work itself. Or one can elect to let the story form an explicit part of the work, as is the case in this text.[111]

The story of Fujimura's deception is a fascinating one, despite its tragic aspects. The constructivist position he occupies is godlike, reminding

us of an artist who has forgotten what art is and confused it with something that is not art. I see Fujimura in my mind's eye, winding a film backwards as it were; he travels back in time as the artefacts are buried rather than dug up. He is a back-to-front god condemned to fall when a press photographer secretly videos him and with that, Fujimura's roll of film stops and its directional rotation is reversed.

The agents

Ämne: The East
Datum: fredag 12 juni 2009 14.49
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: Johan Öberg <Johan.Oberg@konst.gu.se>
Konversation: The East

[…] As you noticed, we hit on something there, in passing. I have spent several hours with Erich P. today. The idea is for me to send you some instructions and stuff before you set off.
When do you leave?
What email address are you using until you go?
Will you have email there?
Will you be using your mobile phone/texting?
/Andreas

Ämne: Re: The East
Datum: måndag 15 juni 2009 07.24
Från: Johan Öberg <Johan.Oberg@konst.gu.se>
Till: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Konversation: The East

[…] Maybe I could take a few samples from the beds of the canals and document them.
Johan

Långmyre 10 juli, 2009

Hi Johan,
At the beginning of next week you'll receive a registered parcel. Inside there are three envelopes and a trowel. Don't open the envelopes. They are not to be opened until you get to the Dacha. You had better pack the trowel in the luggage you are checking in. I doubt it would be allowed on board the plane. You should carry the big envelope containing the three smaller envelopes I, II & III, in your hand luggage since there's much less risk of that going astray.
Contacts can be by email or text message.
Best wishes,
Andreas

Ämne: Re:
Datum: lördag 18 juli 2009 12.09
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: Johan Öberg <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>

[…] Another thing struck me. In one of the envelopes, which only contain harmless objects that pose no threat to security, there is a tin with contents that may catch the eye of the person scanning the hand baggage. If so, all you have to do is break open the seal and pretend you know what's inside … Or should I tell you now? It's more fun and more consistent if you don't open it until you get to the dacha.
Bye
Andreas

Ämne: Re: Re:
Datum: lördag 18 juli 2009 14.02
Från: Johan Öberg <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>
Till: Andreas Gedin a.gedin@telia.com

I'd like to know… […]

Ämne: Re:
Datum: lördag 18 juli 2009 14.29
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: Johan Öberg johan.oberg@konst.gu.se

Okay. In the brown envelope with the rectangular package there are some pastels in a tin that might get mistaken for plastic explosives on an x-ray screen, by someone with a bit of imagination […]

Andreas

Ämne: <inget ämne>
Datum: lördag 25 juli 2009 07.48
Från: Johan Öberg <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>
Till: Andreas Gedin a.gedin@telia.com

Hello Andreas!
I've been mulling over this nice envelope you sent me! I don't feel entirely happy about my role in this. Can I send the package back?
Very best wishes,
Johan

Ämne: Re:
Datum: lördag 25 juli 2009 10.35
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: Johan Öberg johan.oberg@konst.gu.se

Hi Johan,
You haven't opened all the envelopes, have you? That isn't supposed to happen until you get there.
Is it something about the project that is worrying you? There's nothing that will reflect badly on you. If you want to be anonymous that's fine, of course. There's no turning back I'm afraid. Too late. It would wreck the whole thing! And my preparations have been pretty extensive. And I'm already writing about it, reading various sources and so on.

And let's not forget that the whole project grew out of your good suggestion that I do some work on Erich P. It will all be fine! Keep in touch!
Andreas

Ämne: Re: Re:
Datum: lördag 25 juli 2009 20.33
Från: Johan Öberg <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>
Till: Andreas Gedin a.gedin@telia.com

Andreas: Sorry to have to say it, but we hadn't agreed anything in advance about this sort of gig.
Johan

Andreas: No, not exactly, I got carried away by my own enthusiasm.

Johan: Here I am, looking at this envelope

Andreas: Have you opened any of the envelopes inside?

Johan: No.

Andreas: Is there anything I can do to persuade you to take part?

Johan: I don't like the objectification.

Andreas: What do you mean?

Johan: The instructions, the ones I am anticipating, objectify the person who is to carry them out. I do not want to be part of an art project, I do not want to be curated.

Andreas: That is not really how I visualise the whole thing. I see it as a collaboration.

Johan: I realise that. But I don't like it.

Andreas: But the person who carries out the tasks takes the initiative. Of course there is some kind of instrumentalisation built into the idea of *Instructions*. In art terms as well as in espionage. It's inevitable. I have thought a great deal about this aspect of art. The whole *Taking Over* project starts out from ideas about power and power struggles. *Tolkningsföreträde* (Preferential Right of Interpretation), for example, is an arena for a test of strength. And I am interested in Bakhtin for the very reason that there is a dislocation as regards power around reading and writing (transferred to art in my case). The metaphor of the game

of musical chairs works well in this context. What's more, the instruction as a conceptual method is more complex than purely giving orders.

Johan: But what you have sent me is surely precisely that, an order?

Andreas: There is an element of that, of course. But the project, including the instructions, has to be seen as art. Even though the instructions are naturally instrumentalising in tone. Without them, the project would be on seriously rocky ground. Games only work if you take them seriously.[112] So these 'orders' function concretely, directly and metaphorically. They are actions to be carried out to the letter, yet they have also sprung from a conceptual tradition and will ultimately assume artwork status by being part of a completed work.

Q: But is there actually going to be a work?

Andreas: I hope so. And it will – then – inevitably be some kind of collaboration.

Johan: Certainly …

Q: You are only trying to persuade Johan so he will undertake the mission for you.

Andreas: 'Only'?

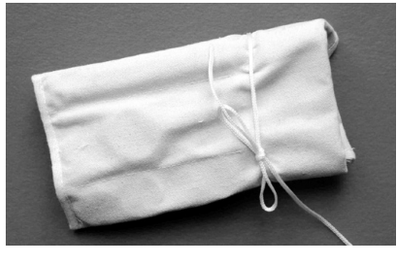
Q: Manipulation!

Andreas: Obviously I'm trying to persuade him. But I'm not manipulating him. He is in any case not the sort of person to let himself be manipulated that easily. That, after all, is precisely what triggered the discussion we're having now.

Johan: Let's give it twenty-four hours and sleep on it.

Andreas: Yes. But time is running out, we leave in three days. It also occurs to me that the question of who is giving and who is taking instructions, of who wields the power, is more complicated than it appears at first sight. My project, *Erich P.*, is a task originally assigned to me by you! We talked, albeit only briefly,

about some sort of collaboration in which you would carry out a task, and I took it from there. And of course it expanded as I went along, as art projects often do. And of course I should have checked I still had your support. I naively assumed you would think it was good fun. And as for power relations, I realise that for now I am completely in your hands. Not the other way round.



Johan: Hah! You have a point there, of course. We'll speak tomorrow.

Plan B: If I cannot get help to carry out the operation at the Dacha, does that wreck the whole work? Does an instruction-based work have to be carried through to count as a work? The underlying idea in Lawrence Weiner's *Statements*, for example, is not that the works only come into being once the instruction has been followed. The instruction and its potential are what constitute the work and then, it seems to me, possible realisations can be included in the potential of the work. And that could be a pedagogically clear example of Bakhtin's idea of the potential of an artwork. It is exactly the same as with a recipe: the recipe as potential constitutes the work. The various actual meals it gives rise to can be seen as expressions of the recipe, but the instructions are the important part. Consequently I already have a work, *Erich P.*, regardless of whether Johan Öberg wants to participate or not. On the other hand, the loss of control involved in the instruction is interesting, and very relevant for the relationship between the agent and the person assigning the task. The control or 'objectivisation' implied in an instruction is balanced by the option of departing from the instructions – by choice or from necessity – like the agent in the field or anybody at all trying to carry out the instructions in an artwork. And not least, what happens when an artwork becomes public, in the sense of meeting viewers, listeners etc., is that the artist has to accept a loss of control.

Q: Smart way of trying to salvage or disguise the shipwreck you are expecting and make it look like a success.

Andreas: Hmm, well ... I am also trying to imagine myself in a situation in which the package of envelopes, instructions and tools is sent back. Then I am left with something, after all. I have a number of objects, a kit, and a complex set of ideas.

Q: And a shipwreck.

Andreas: Yes, a shipwreck in the sense that it did not turn out the way I intended. But that is often the way with art, particularly mine. If I engage an actor, for example, I can only direct him so far. There was one occasion when an actor lost patience and went home before the recording was finished.

Q: So you're *glad* Johan didn't want to take part? Maybe even *grateful* for his unexpected contribution? *Congratulations!*

Andreas: No, definitely not. But as an artist I have to make use of the situation I find myself in. What else am I to do? It's also the case that many of my works, as I said, have a tendency to turn into stories, stories about the works.

But the question of the realisation of the work is of course fundamental to idea-based art. Perhaps we should say that a story about a work that has not taken place belongs in the category of literature? But one can also think of art projects that have been implemented, but no one knows about it. Is that art? There is a potential in the work, to continue in Bakhtinian terms, and that is surely enough to make it a work? But if one lies about a work having been carried through, the potential is displaced into a story, and that can then be called literature.

Q: Or deception!

Andreas: Yes, the lie is not particularly transparent. On the other hand, I think that in this case, where the agent does not want to undertake the task, this counts as a failure and I can tell the story of that, which can be a part of a work. It is an event.

Q: Or a non-event!!

Andreas: I also think that failure fits very well into artistic research because it is so process-driven. The actual accomplishment of a work is sometimes only a small part of a project. Planning and reflection are the main attraction.[113]

Johan: I'm going to email you a suggestion this evening.

Q: Ah, just look at him seizing the initiative!

Ämne: <inget ämne>
Datum: tisdag 28 juli 2009 07.12
Från: Johan Öberg <johan.oberg@konst.gu.se>
Till: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Kopia: Kajsa Oberg Lindsten mjw254a@tninet.se

Hi Andreas,

[…] As for V. Volochok and so on, I'm afraid I have to say no. Since you have been generous enough to face me with a pretty taxing problem, I'd like to fill you in on what I got out of it – even if I can make no claim to have solved it.

I saw some of your films before the seminar, as you know, and was very taken with the conceptual exactitude, the balance and control, the precipices hinted at etc. Presumably what you have devised is also going to be bloody good and an interesting development of 'Sleeper', something important.

But I still think this kind of action has got to be preceded by a dialogue, a 'human use of human beings'. There is an element of high-handedness here that I can't accept, something to do with my old-fashioned view of the distinction between aesthetics and ethics (and research ethics …).

You have a point when you say that I am the one who pulled you in the direction of Palmquist, the canals, and that whole point leads onto an interesting Bakhtin track, of course. One person's irresponsibility with words (mine, that is …) manifests itself in a good, well thought through visual commentary/answer, in a dialogue that might possibly have been there, but that I did not notice … There is a very good bit about that in the Dostoevsky book, incidentally. But I think the artistic realisation of the point in the given project is ethically unsatisfactory. Just as the way I talked about Palmquist presumably was: I could have written a book about him myself if I thought he was so bloody interesting.

The whole thing is made more difficult – and apparent – by the 'border' that has to be crossed. I hope you believe me when I say that I have in the

past taken letters, medicines and other things over that border, which is still pretty well guarded, to coin a phrase. Things that have helped people, money and so on. But I feel that your ‘package’ is both too lightweight and too heavy to be transported that way. I could perhaps imagine someone transporting an ‘artistic idea’ that could travel in an unsealed state.
So then: thanks again for the instructive problem you posed for me! I do appreciate that it stemmed partly from me, but to go on from there to accepting the resulting effects in the form you suggest is a step too far for me!
Enjoy the rest of the summer!
Johan
PS Tell me where to send the package and I’ll do it! […]

Ämne: Re:
Datum: tisdag 28 juli 2009 09.26
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: Johan Öberg johan.oberg@konst.gu.se

Hi,
Well if you really don’t want to, you don’t want to. Though there’s plenty one could debate, as we’ve been saying. Anyway, it leaves me in a real fix. It’s very hard for me to get the things sent off to someone else with just a day’s notice. But presumably you could hand the stuff over, since we’ve run out of time for sending it on by post? Either at Arlanda airport or when you get to the other end. There’s nothing dangerous. That set of problems is a chimera. The seal is a gesture, part of the set design and the care that’s gone into the project. I’m not putting anyone in danger, just making people think about danger. I’ll ring you later about this. Who else is flying out from Stockholm with you the day after tomorrow? Can you send me a list? Maybe Leslie would help me out. Is she in Italy? How can I get hold of her?[114]
Bye,
Andreas

Ämne: Re:
Datum: tisdag 28 juli 2009 11.05
Från: Andreas Gedin <a.gedin@telia.com>
Till: Johan Öberg johan.oberg@konst.gu.se

Hi Johan,
just spoke to Leslie, who thought it would be fun to carry out the mission. We agreed that a mission is what we’re all looking for. So she’s prepared for you to hand over the big envelope and for the trowel to be in the checked-in baggage. She’ll take the envelopes in her hand luggage. Presumably you’ll meet at Landvetter airport, and that seems the right sort of place for a discreet handover. This is all strictly secret for now, so don’t tell her about the prelude to the mission she’s taken on. […]
Andreas

Text messages:
to Leslie
28-jul-2009 10:17
[…] Send an sms when the mission is completed!
Thanks a lot!

to Andreas
30-jul-2009 07:50
OK, so far, so good!

to Leslie
30-jul-2009 10:17
Fine!
Stay cool.

to Andreas
30-jul-2009 11:40
Mission underway. Erich.

to Leslie
30-jul-2009 20:50
Great. Carry on!
K

to Andreas
30-jul-2009 20:56
Remember to unpack the items before placed.
K

to Andreas
30-jul-2009 21:02
OK

to Leslie
07-aug-2009 14:59
Everything under control?

to Andreas
08-aug-2009 19:15
Yes

The pharmacist and the quack doctor

My 'Erich' received a two-öre silver coin of Palmquist's time for 'his' contribution. This more or less symbolic remuneration relates to the pieces of silver given to Judas, of course. The spy and agent is by definition always, for someone, a traitor, a non-authentic-person, an exception to the rule, a copy of a citizen, a malingerer and a commander of normality using ordinariness as a disguise.

> Smiley himself was one of those solitaries who seem to have come into the world fully educated at the age of eighteen. Obscurity was his nature, as well as his profession. The byways of espionage are not populated by the brash and colourful adventures of fiction. A man, who like Smiley, has lived and worked for years among his country's enemies learns only one prayer: that he may never, never be noticed. Assimilation is his highest aim, he learns to love the crowds who pass him in the street without a glance; he clings to them for his anonymity and his safety. His fear makes him servile – he could embrace the shoppers who jostle him in their impatience, and force him from the pavement. He could adore the officials, the police, the bus conductors, for the terse indifference of their attitudes.[115]

One ought, of course, to draw a distinction between the terms *secret agent* and *spy*. As I understand it, the spy is engaged in spying, that is, secretly gathering information. The agent is not just an observer like the spy, but also an active player. As well as spying if required to, the agent is busy analysing, constructing and interpreting codes, disinformation and so on. A *sleeper* is in that sense not a spy but a non-activated, potential agent, *a sleeping agent.* The fiction created by the secret agent is a constructed normality that is perhaps the hardest test of credible creation. The construction has to be all embracing, leakproof and invisible. To his or her employers, on the other hand, the agent has to be authentic, wholly seen through and wholly read. John le Carré emphasises this doubleness in his *The Little Drummer Girl*, presenting the secret agent as not just torn between two personalities but verging on the schizoid.[116] An American actress is recruited by the Israeli secret service Mossad to infiltrate a Palestinian opposition movement/terrorist group. She is given a new identity and enters into it so utterly that she splits in two and finds herself sympathising with *both* sides, the Israelis and the Palestinians. For le Carré this is a way of portraying the political conflict, but it is also an image of a split identity embracing both healing, medicinal power and poison: a *pharmakon*. In his essay 'Plato's Pharmacy', Jacques Derrida uses this term to discuss the distinction in value between written and spoken language. Writing is for Plato, according to Derrida, a construction, an instrument, a non-authentic messenger that can lend itself to this or to that. For me this conveys the idea of writing as a hired mercenary. Derrida talks about the pharmakos/pharmakeus of classical antiquity as a 'wizard, magician, poisoner', which also meant a scapegoat – that is to say, an individual who puts one in mind of the agents of later eras.[117]

Admittedly the agent, unlike the scapegoat, is secret by nature, but the agent has a similar function not only in poisoning but also in being a representative. The scapegoat is in essence a replacement, someone who has to bear the blame for the actions of others or for events beyond their own control, someone to represent evil, just as the agent represents his/her employer and writing replaces live speech.

This duality reminds me of the ambivalence described by Bakhtin when he, with Rabelais, talks about life in the medieval town square.[118] High and low, gold and excrement, truth and parody not only rub along together but express different sides of the same phenomenon, or are expressed by a single individual, existing in parallel within one and the same person or function (I understand this is a form of dialogic relation). Rabelais has an ideological agenda here; he wants to undermine the power hierarchies of the Middle Ages by putting the high in the place of the low. And vice versa. The technique is 'the traditional folklore method of contrast, the "inside out," the "positive negation".'[119]

> The billingsgate idiom is a two-faced Janus. The praise, as we have said, is ironic and ambivalent. It is on the brink of abuse; the one leads to the other, and it is impossible to draw the line between them.[120]

It is interesting that doubleness is linked to *ambivalence* by both Bakhtin and Derrida.[121] This ambivalence does not express a wavering between an *either* and an *or* but signals a simultaneous doubleness. 'This *pharmakon*, this "medicin," this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence,' is the way Derrida puts it.[122] And Bakhtin writes: 'We must consider again in more detail the ambivalent nature of carnival images. All the images of carnival are dualistic; they unite within themselves both poles of change and crisis […] Very characteristic for carnival thinking is paired images, chosen for their contrast […]'[123] And this living duality can even be accommodated within a single word. Bakhtin's example is a famous litany in Rabelais' *Panurgue*, in which the expletive *couillon* occurs three hundred and three times.[124] The expression is a common one that means 'testicle' but also functions as both an insult and an intensifier,

in a positive sense. Bakhtin finds the same duality in the grotesque body of which Rabelais speaks. It is a 'tendency to duality' before the individualisation of human beings began.[125]

Bakhtin's example of this duality and ambivalence is the medicine seller, who is crying his wares one moment and in the next instant mounts a stage and is a fairground jester, parodying himself, the medicine seller, like a quack doctor by crying out the very same phrases he had shouted from his medicine stall.[126] And it is no coincidence that Bakhtin uses this Janus-like medicine seller as an example of the unreliable figurants of the town square.[127] *'There was an ancient connection between the forms of medicine and folk art* […]. '[128] There is thus a link between the excesses of the common people in the agora, pharmakon and a particular conception of writing. But the disdain for the unreliable ambivalence of the written text that Derrida reveals in the elitist Plato is countered in Bakhtin, by contrast, with an affirmation of duality which is, in a good sense, both democratic and dynamic, changeable and in constant genesis.[129] The measured subtleties, rhetorical niceties and condescending feints of Plato/Socrates find their antithesis in the carnivalesque medieval laughter that Bakhtin finds in Rabelais. It is democratic in terms both of who is laughing and who is being laughed at, and it is ambivalent:

> Let us say a few initial words about the complex nature of carnival laughter. It is, first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated 'comic' event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival.[130]

This impure and popular laughter and the pharmacist's parodies belong to the games and play of the town square. *Erich P.* is also a playful staging of a fiction. The aim was to make people think that Erich Palmquist was once actually in the grounds of the Dacha, leaving behind him the coins and a seal; that traders in antiquity dropped a few Roman coins

there and that limestone had in the course of 400 million years by some natural but as yet unknown means had made its way to the riverbanks at the Dacha. But all this is fiction, phantoms, sleeping agents, planted mementoes and false memories.

Archaeology can be viewed as a way of trying to remember. But this stage-managed disinformation could also be considered a superimposed, concealing entirely different stories. It seems to me that there is something ambivalent hidden in these narratives. *Erich P.* tells the story of something that could have occurred: it is a fantasy, a possible contrafactual history and a kind of inverted potential.

Appendix: Palmqvist

An archaeologist, also head of the programme of courses in curatorship at the University of Stockholm, was the opponent at a seminar at which one of my colleagues was giving a paper. We chatted at the social event afterwards and he promised to help me with an archaeological question and to give me a copy of his book on the history of curatorship. We met at a café in Stockholm and the book was handed over.[131] A bit later, looking at the cover of the book on the café table in front of me, I suddenly noticed something I had initially overlooked, and gave a start: the author's name is Lennart Palmqvist. I asked if he was related to Erich Palmquist. He told me that Erich had no children, but that his brother did, and that he, Lennart, is descended from him. The thin membrane between art works and the world around them is stretched as taut as it can possibly be. Though they yearn to, the heroes cannot break out of their novel, nor can the author climb into it. Their breath steams up the boundary that keeps them apart. In the film *Solaris* by Alexander Tarkovsky we see a party of research scientists travelling out into space.[132] As time passes, their thoughts start to assume concrete form. One of them meets and spends time with his dead wife, and there is a lot of noise from the laboratory. When the other scientists knock on the door, a colleague slips out quickly; before he shuts the door they just have time to glimpse strange figures rampaging inside. The scientist denies that they are there at all, but stands with his back firmly wedged against the door in a desperate effort to keep at bay the figments of his imagination that are trying to smash it down.

Envoi

Sharing a Square (the exhibition)

A planned exhibition in the Stenasal Gallery at the Gothenburg Museum of Art (6 April–5 June 2011). Works: Sleeper*, 2007;* Thessaloniki Revisited*, 2007;* Spin-Off! *2008;* Sharing a Square*, 2008;* Erich P. *2009.*

In *Sharing a Square (The Exhibition)* the idea is for the video *Sharing a Square* to act as a commentary on the exhibition as a whole, in quite an overt way. The video is designed to be the metawork of the exhibition, housing a sort of exhibition of its own: the drumming people and groups of locals being woven together and then repelled again by the various rhythms. *Sharing a Square* is also designed in part to be about how individuals relate to a collective. All of this taken together is, for me, analogous to the way individual works function in an exhibition. The title of the work refers in addition to the analogies between Rabelais' town square, as Bakhtin describes it, and the exhibition I have previously discussed.

The exhibition can thus also be seen as a single, discrete work. Eva Löfdahl's retrospective exhibition, *The Whirling Box or From Foot to Toe* at the Stockholm Museum of Modern Art (2011), shows very successfully how an exhibition can cohere into a single work. The exhibition is a retrospective but the installation of the works combines with an architectural element to create a distinct whole. She is also bold enough to leave large empty spaces in the 1000 square-metre gallery which, paradoxically enough, hold the exhibition together and lend it the character of a town square. The visitors seem to stroll across the empty spaces and are, as it were, written into the exhibition as mobile participants.

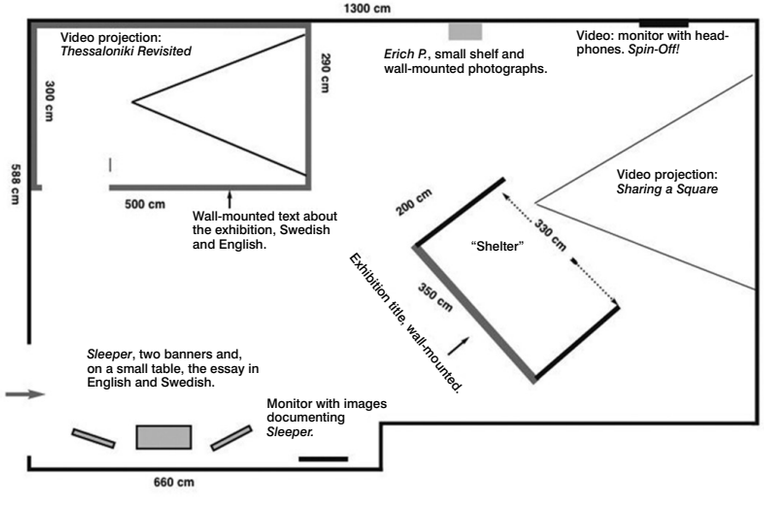
Q: Aha, so you mean there are 'installations' done by artists that are works in their own right.

Andreas: Yes …

Q: Isn't that just a banality you've thrown in at the last minute? If that flimsy theme is the best you can do for this dissertation, you're going to have to start all over again, anyway.

Andreas: Let me put it like this. You are not – in fact – entirely wrong there. The installation as a genre is an important background to the dissertation and to my artistic work. When I made my debut in 1992, the installation as an exhibition form was still the subject of quite heated debate, and that had an influence my work. But you are not right that it is the theme of the dissertation, even though the term installation can be used in relation to it. What someone like Eva Löfdahl does, for example, is to draw attention to the presuppositions on the basis of which her work has come about. You can turn it round the other way and say: is it possible to put together an exhibition without it being an installation or a kind of macro-artwork? I don't think so. And the knowledge of those presuppositions means artists are able to work more consciously on the exhibition/work. And that is one of the things I am trying to pin down in this dissertation.

But even though the planned *Sharing a Square (The Exhibition)* may appear to be a typically thematic exhibition, designed to be appreciated as a single work if the visitor wishes, it is still a special case because it is a component of my dissertation, so it is in the nature of a report back. While it is true that I chose to make these particular works, I was not in a position to select them for an exhibition in the way one usually does. Showing the works that are part of the dissertation is part of the transparency that I consider crucial to artistic research.



The planning of the installation of this exhibition was largely determined by sound. Though the works are disparate, there are a number of videos with sound and the exhibition space is relatively small. Even though I want muttering to dominate the room – I want voices to be heard in everything – the visitor must be able to take in the works undisturbed. That is why the soundtrack of one of the works – *Spin-Off!* – can only be accessed via headphones. The monitor is a wall-mounted but the video is only six-minutes long so it is not a problem for the visitor to watch it standing up. The two other video films with sound are kept as far away from each other in the room as possible. A mini-cinema that screens off some of the sound is constructed for *Thessaloniki Revisited*, which lasts about an hour. *Sharing a Square*, which has to be played at fairly high volume, is the most difficult work to install in the exhibition. To address this I have designed a kind of shelter, a small, shut-off area with built-in loudspeakers, facing the wall on which the film is projected. I shall also try to borrow so-called shower speakers that are more directional, to concentrate the sound even further.

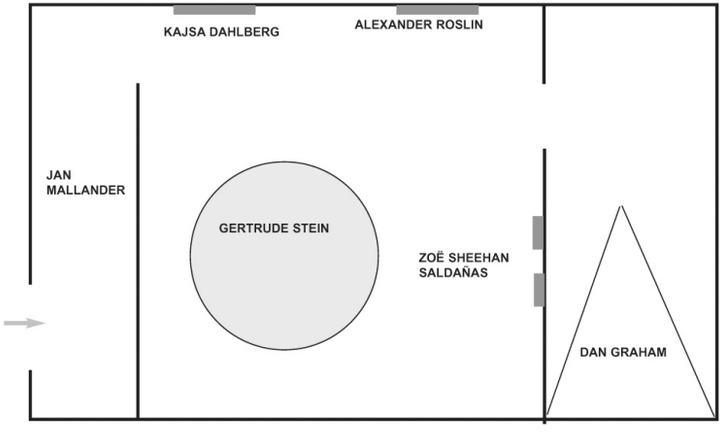
While trying to optimise the sound environment, I have also found my planning influenced by the architecture of this space in other ways. The Stenasal Gallery opens invitingly onto the entrance hall but unfortunately looks rather like a storeroom or garage inside. My solution to this is to try to arrest the visitor's gaze just beyond the doorway to create a more varied architectural impression. The 'shelter' will fulfil the same function and be situated at a slight angle to the walls so the room does not get fixed into ninety-degree angles. The title of the exhibition will be displayed on the back of the 'shelter' in letters large enough for the reader to be given a key, even from a distance, to the exhibition as a whole. The back of the 'shelter' will be painted the same shade of red as the 'Stein House' at Malmö Art Museum. At the far end of the room on the left there will be a wall-mounted monitor for the video *Spin-Off!* It will be relatively dark over in that corner since *Sharing a Square* will be projected right alongside, which means this monitor will be very visible from a distance and will catch the visitor's eye diagonally across the room between the two built-in video works.

Once these three works are in place, there are not many options left so it will just be a question of installing the other two works – *Erich P.* and *Sleeper* – where there is still space.

Step by Step

An exhibition planned for the F Room at Malmö Art Museum (21 May–14 August 2011). Works: Kajsa Dahlberg: A Room of One's Own/ A Thousand Libraries*, 2006; Dan Graham:* Performer/Audience/Mirror*, video, 1975: Jan Olof Mallander:* Extended Play*, 1962; Alexander Roslin:* Self-Portrait*, 1790; Zoë Sheehan Saldañas:* No Boundaries. Lace Trim Tank (White)*, 2004: Gertrude Stein:* An Early Portrait of Henri Matisse*, 1911/1934–1935.*

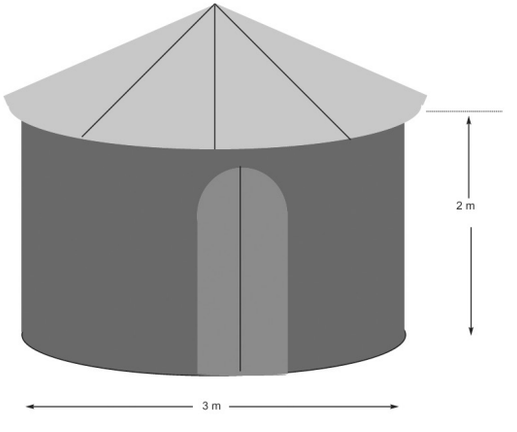
The exhibition at Malmö Art Museum, by contrast, will be curated and takes as its starting point the museum's 1790 self-portrait by Alexander Roslin, a replica of one the artist had painted earlier the same year. I passed by the portrait a number of times during the coffee breaks at a curatorship seminar and it caught my interest. When I read about the painting on the art museum's website I found confirmation of what had seemed to me an unsettling ambivalence in the artist's self-satisfied representation of himself. The website text says of the picture: 'This 1790 self-portrait amounts to a résumé of Roslin's time as a painter. The French Revolution has robbed him of his customers from the French court and he is growing



old and ill. Roslin shows off his earlier successes here by means of his clothing, commissions and the Royal Order of Vasa awarded to him by King Gustaf III for his achievements. In the background is a work in progress: Gustav III, Patron of the Arts, himself wearing the Order of Vasa, though shown in less detail.'

The ambivalent touch in the self-portrait led on to questions about identity and mirroring. I perceived the portrait as a kind of repetition, linked to identity. Questions of likeness and difference are brought into focus with regard not only to the limitations of the copy but also to the depiction of the King and Roslin. The other works I have selected for the exhibition have similar aspects to them. I have brought two of the works, those by Gertrude Stein and Kajsa Dahlberg, with me from the earlier *Step by Step – A First Draft* to the new exhibition, where they fit equally well into the modified theme.

The plan for installing the exhibition revolves – as with the planning for the Stenasal Gallery – round the two works requiring the most space: the Dan Graham video *Performer/Audience/Mirror* and Gertrude Stein's *An Early Portrait of Henri Matisse*. I plan to project Graham's work on



a scale that will make the people in the video appear life-sized. The idea is that the visitors to the exhibition will then identify more easily with Graham and his audience, thus helping the video to make a more powerful impact and drawing even more attention to the theme of the exhibition.

At the Gotland Museum of Art I had a small, free-standing room made for Stein's sound-based art work, furnished with an armchair, a reading lamp and a table on which there were books with pictures of Matisse's works. It was a kind of exhibition within the exhibition. But the cube-shaped room looked a bit knocked together. At Malmö Art Museum thanks to a grant from my faculty, I get the opportunity to develop the installation and create a little building modelled on the cannon tower of Malmöhus Castle. The art museum is hidden away inside the castle and the copy, or replica, of the cannon tower inside the exhibition accentuates the fact that this is an exhibition within the exhibition. It is thus my hope that the curatorship itself will join up with the repetition theme and that the boundary between the work and the curatorship of a work will become even more blurred.

Mika: Doesn't your text end rather abruptly here?

Andreas: Yes, but this text has to go to print before the exhibitions open, so the dissertation as a whole still remains to be completed.

Thanks!

Having the opportunity to be one of the first doctoral students in Fine Art in Sweden has been a great advantage to me. I have been able to engross myself in my practical artistic work and be part of developing a new field in the company of a rare group of gifted and likable colleagues, friends and others with whom I have worked. Above all I have been fortunate enough to be blessed with really knowledgeable and enthusiastic supervisors: my senior supervisor Mika Hannula, assistant supervisor Mats Rosengren, and Johan Öberg who has acted as informal supervisor.

Many thanks also to: Henric Benesch, Mike Bode, Otto von Busch, Magnus Bärtås, Tina Carlsson, David Crawford (sadly no longer with us), Kajsa G. Ericsson, Cecilia Grönberg, Annica Karlsson Rixon, Staffan Schmidt, Peter Ullmark, Lars Wallsten, Elisabet Yanagisawa Avén, Niclas Östlind, Martin Avila, Anna Viola Hallberg, Kim Hedås, Helga Krook, Mara Lee Gerdén, Fredrik Nyberg, Sten Sandell, Åsa Stjerna, Gunnar D Hansson, Ole Lützow-Holm, Emma Corkhill, Hans Hedberg, Sverker Jullander, Johannes Landgren, Anna Lindal, Johan Norback, Anna Frisk, Leslie Johnson, Dag Lövberg, Mats Olsson, Arne Kjell Vikhagen, Anna Holgén, Ann-Caroline Bergström, Lasse Lindkvist, Eva Nässén, Royner Norén, Kristoffer Arvidsson, David Gedin, Nils Olsson, Lennart Palmqvist, Jan Kaila, Roger Palmer, Mick Wilson; art students of the Staedelschule, Frankfurt; ICA, Moscow; Valand School of Fine Arts, Gothenburg: Fredrik Svensk, Sinziana Ravini, Renee Padt, Johan Edström, Stefan Gurt, Stefan Kullänger, Henrik von Sydow, Hans Sandquist, Svetlana, Suzi Özel, Angelica Blomhage, Karen

Diamond, Johan Sjöström, Isabella Nilsson, Göran Christenson, Marika Reuterswärd, Anders Smith, Kajsa Dahlberg, Dan Graham, Tehching Hsieh, Jan Olof Mallander, Juan Manuel Echavarría, Fredrik Liew, Lisa Rosendahl, Gertrud Sandquist, Jo Widoff, Birgitta Gedin, Per I Gedin, Marika Gedin, Ulrika Milles, Ann Katrin Pihl Atmer, Annika Lyth and Karl Enequist.

The three exhibitions are important components of the dissertation and I am therefore extremely grateful to the Gotland Museum of Art, Malmö Museum of Art and Gothenburg Museum of Art. I would also like to thank the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, which showed the dissertation in progress at its Moderna Exhibition in 2010. The Lisson Gallery generously lent Dan Graham's work *Performer/Audience/Mirror*. The Daros Collection lent Juan Manuel Echavarría's *Mouths of Ashes*. I gratefully acknowledge grants for work on the dissertation from Stiftelsen Lars Hiertas minne and for contribution to cover the printing costs of this English edition from Helge Ax:son Johnsons stiftelse.

Special thanks are due to those generous individuals who have allowed me to use their voices – comments, emails and text messages – in my own way and plant them in the text of my dissertation: Graham (Allen), Henk (Borgdorff), David (Gedin), Gunnar (D Hansson), Mika (Hannula), Leslie (Johnson), Anders (Krüger), Lars (Nilsson), Nils (Olsson), Mats (Rosengren), Fredrik (Svensk), Fanny (Söderbäck), Johan (Öberg) and Niklas (Östholm).

And my dear family of course, thanks for everything Ulrika, Ivan and Leo!

Notes part I

[1] Sigmund Freud's self-analysis could be seen as emblematic of this possible impossibility in the twentieth century.
[2] One symptomatic example of this dream of a new and definitive truth is Swedish philosopher Ander Wedberg's *Filosofins historia* (The History of Philosophy) in three parts, Stockholm 1958–66. Wedberg's main approach is to break down philosophical statements into logical propositions. He then examines whether the conclusions follow logically from the premises, which they seldom do.
[3] Here I follow Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Writing and Difference*, Routledge, London, 1997, first edn. 1978, French original 1967.
[4] It is not entirely clear whether Derrida thinks this was the discovery of something that has always been the case, or whether the rupture occurred in a specific new understanding of philosophy. If it is a linguistic, discursive event, one could imagine the innocence being reinstated at some other point in history! See Derrida, 1997 (1967).
[5] These frozen moments in time seem to me reminiscent of the set of problems facing documentary photography, the issue of indexicality. But even if we know that photographs do not provide objectively true information about a particular reality, they do often function as references to a common, shared reality.
[6] Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta and Tere Vadén, *Artistic Research*, Konsthögskolan Helsingfors (Helsinki School of Fine Arts), 2005, p. 42.
[7] Bourdieu even 'sees a sociology of sociology as an essential connecting link in sociology research.' From introduction by Bengt Gasser to Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, Symposion, Stockholm/Stehag, 1996 (French original 1984), p. 15.
[8] Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus,* transl. by Peter Collier, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1988 (orig. 1984), p. 2.
[9] Bourdieu, 1988 (1984), p. 6.
[10] Bourdieu, 1988 (1984), p. 29.
[11] Bourdieu, 1988 (1984), p. 6.
[12] Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination*, transl. by Barbara Johnson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981 (orig. 1972), footnote 59, p. 180.
[13] Though it is of course better if it is also a reasonable interpretation of Bakhtin since the application becomes more general and can also contribute to Bakhtin research.
[14] The classic example is the novel *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Journey to the End of Night) by Louis-Ferdinand Céline, which has a number of morally unpleasant sides to its explicit misanthropy. It has a high level of artistry, but the moral-philosophical arguments seem dubious.
[15] 'Established in April 2005, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has an annual budget of more than £9million. The Council evolved from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which was founded in 1998. We have a range of UK-wide programmes supporting the highest quality research and postgraduate training in the arts and humanities', http://www.ahrc.ac.uk.
[16] Henk Borgdorff, *The Debate on Research in the Arts*.

http//www.ahk.nl/lectoraten/onderzoek/ahkL.htm.
[17] Sarah Rubridge, 'Artists in the Academy: Reflections on Artistic Practice as Research', conference paper at: *Dance Rebooted: Initializing the Grid Conference Proceedings*, Deakin University, Australia, 1–4 July, 2004, p. 8,
http://www.ausdance.org.au/resources/publications/conference-papers.html
[18] Cf. *Maria Hirvi-Ijäs, Den framställande gesten – om konstverkets presentation I den moderna konstutställningen*, Raster förlag, Stockholm, 2007, p. 42–43. This is akin to the view of art Maria Hirvi-Ijäs finds in art theoretician Thierry de Duve, who is inspired in his turn by Foucault. The work of art is *shown*, to use Hirvi-Ijäs' expression this display is a *representational gesture* that involves pointing something out and has no value as truth. It is pointless to claim that a work is true or false in this sense, and the quality of a work is not linked to a value as truth.
[19] Cf. 'We are like sailors who have to rebuild their ship on open sea, without ever being able to dismantle it in dry dock and reconstruct it from the best components'. Otto Neurath, 'Protocol sentences', (Ger. Original 1932/33), transl. George Schick, in A.J. Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism*, Free Press, 1959, p. 201.
20 Michael Holquist, *Bakhtin and his World*, Routldege, London, 1991 (orig. 1990), p. 75–76.
[21] See for example Gunnar D. Hansson, 'Behövs poetik? Finns det regler? Är essäer konst?' ArtMonitor nr. 1, 2007, p. 62, Gothenburg University, 2007, and the use of painter Ragnar Sandberg's diaries. In my own case, Charles Bernstein's poem 'Artifice in Absorption', from *Poetics*, Harvard University Press, London, England, 1992, in the essay about *Sharing a Square* is an example of this. Other examples are taken from the postgraduate seminars of the research cluster.
[22] Andreas Gedin, *BIT BY BIT*, Encyklopedia, Stockholm, 2009.
[23] See for example the essay on the work *Erich P.* below.
[24] Hansson, 2007, p. 62.
[25] Aldous Huxley, *Collected Essays*, New York, 1958.
[26] Hansson, 2007, p. 62. (Original in Swedish. Translated by Sarah Death.)
[27] Hannula, Soranta and Vadén, 2005, p. 58.
[28] See Jan Ling, 'Visionen om handen och hjärnan i samspel', *Art Monitor* no. 1, 2007, University of Gothenburg, p. 25; Michael Biggs, 'Lära av erfarenhet: Sätt att närma sig erfarenhetsdelen i praktikbaserad forskning', *Art Monitor*, University of Gothenburg no. 1, 2007, p. 96 ('Learning from Experience: approaches to the experiential component of practice-based research' in: Karlsson, H. (ed) *Forskning-Reflektion-Utveckling*. 6–21. Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet, 2004). Interview with Hans Hedberg in Andreas Fredriksson: 'Framtidens forskning formas i Göteborg – reportage om Konstnärlig fakultet vid Göteborgs universitet'; *Metod och Praktik – Årsbok 2005 om Konstnärlig FoU*, Vetenskapsrådet, 2005, p. 61, Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, 2005 p. 67.
[29] Arne Melberg, 'Essäns tre principer (med en uppmärksam blick på Hanna Arendt)', Dick Claésson, Christer Ekholm, Lotta Lotass, Staffan Söderblom, (ed), *GDH*, Autor, Gothenburg, 2010, p. 429. (Original in Swedish. Translated by Sarah Death.)
[30] I sometimes employ Michael Holquist's understanding of Bakhtin as a direct example of, and corroboration of, Bakhtin's argument. This is because Holquists's analysis

appears to me to be right.
[31] Andreas Gedin, *Som om man menar vad man säger* (*As if you mean what you say*), Stockholm, 1999 and Daniel Birnbaum, Andreas Gedin and Jan-Erik Lundström, *Taking Over*, BildMuseet, Umeå, 2000.
[32] This is deliberately worded as an assertion rather than a question, even though the latter would be possible, because I take the view that within artistic research one is working on subject areas and not on a research question within a simple, hypothesis-formulated model.
[33] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and transl. Caryl Emerson, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2009 (Ru. orig. 1929), pp. 252–53.
[34] Johan Öberg is Research Secretary at the Faculty of Fine Arts and also a translator and an introducer of Mikhail Bakhtin's work. He has acted as my informal supervisor.
[35] Huxley, 1958 (1923), p. vii.
[36] English translations from *Ronia, The Robber's Daughter,* transl. Patricia Crampton, Viking Penguin, 1983. Swedish orig.: 'rumpnissar' and 'Voffor gör di på detta viset?'
[37] Bakhtin, 2009, p.52.
[38] Although Bakhtin's texts were not translated until the latter decades of the twentieth century, his philosophy has been widely used. A search under 'Bakhtin' in the database JSTOR via Gothenburg University Library yields 8947 results. A search on Amazon.com for Bakhtin-related books produces 14,364 results.
[39] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, transl. by Helene Iswolsky, 1984 (Ru. orig. 1965).
[40] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 181. Cf. existentialism's notion of the individual as condemned to freedom.
[41] Curated by Uta Grundmann, Sabine Russ and Gregory Volk at the Uferhalle in Berlin, 2009. See http://www.discover-us.org/discover_en/ausstellung.php
[42] http://www.discover-us.org/discover_en/ausstellung.php
[43] I am in sympathy with Holquists's critical comments on the use of Bakhtin's concept of carnival. See Holquist, 1991 (1990), pp. 26, 37, 38, 89, 108, 181.
[44] A link is drawn between politics, the internet and carnival in David M. Boje, 'Carnivalesque Resistance to Global Spectacle: a Critical Postmodern Theory of Public Administration', *Administrative Theory & Praxis* Vol. 23, no. 3, 2001, pp. 431–458.
[45] See Julian Holloway and James Kneale, 'Michail Bakhtin, Dialogics of Space', *Thinking Space*, ed. Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, Routledge, London, 2007, orig. 2000, sp 81.
[46] Julian Jason Haladyn och Miriam Jordan *Bakhtin and the Contemporary Visual Arts*, www.uwo.ca/french/bakhtin/bakhtin_conference/Bakhtin%20Papers/Haladyn.doc. Paper presented at 13th International Mikhail Bakhtin Conference 28 July-1 August, 2008 at University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. The authors curated an exhibition at the same time: Miriam Jordan and Julian Jason Haladyn, curators, *The Carnivalesque: Videos of a World Inside Out*, London, Canada, 2008.
[47] Deborah J. Haynes, *Bakhtin and the Visula Arts*, Cambridge University Press, 2008 (orig. 1995).
[48] The works discussed in the text are James Luna: *The Artifact Piece* (video), 1987; Rebecca Nelmore: *Wild* (performance installation), 2001; Andrea Frazer, *Untitled* (video installation), 2003; Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled* (installation with living horses), 1969; Rirkrit Tiravanija *Pad Thai*, 1990.
[49] At the Paula Allen Gallery, New York, 1990. Haladyn and Jordan, 2008.
[50] Part of Fern Bayer, Peggy Gale, Chrysanne Stathacos, curators, *Pasts Re-framed, Nuit Blanche*, exhibition in Toronto, 2006.
[51] Haladyn and Jordan, 2008.
[52] Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art,* Oxford, New York 1980, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, transl. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardin and Leon S. Roudiez. (Fr. orig. 1966.) pp. 64–92.
[53] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p.125.
[54] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), pp. 193–194.
[55] Michail Bakhtin, *Marxism and the Philosophy of language*, p 72. Cited from Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 59.
[56] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' (Ru. orig 1920–1923) in *Art and Answerability, Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Michel Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1990, p. 187.
[57] Haettner, 1997, pp. 205–206.
[58] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 181.
[59] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 84.
[60] Kristeva 1980 (1966), p. 66.
[61] See David Chandler, *Semiotics, The Basics,* Routledge, London, 2007, orig. 2002, pp. 207–208.
[62] Kristeva 1980 (1966), pp. 74–75.
[63] When all is said and done, it is individuals who interest Kristeva. For that reason, she declines to call herself a feminist even though she has been a dominant figure within feminism. He unwillingness to ally herself with movements may be to do with the fact that she grew up under a dictatorship in Bulgaria. In her roman-à-clef *The Samurai* (transl. Barbara Bray, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992 Fr. orig. *Les sammurai,* Gallimard, Paris, 1990) we find a possible explanation for Kristeva's reluctance to term herself a feminist. Like one of the female protagonists in novel, Kristeva visited China and wrote a book about the women of the country: *About Chinese Women* (transl. Anita Barrows. Marion Boyars, London, 1977. Fr orig. *Des Chinoises,* Éditions des femmes, Paris, 1970). In the novel, the feminist group of which she is a member insists she give the book a politically correct foreword, which does not match the main text, and she leaves the group in protest.
[64] Kristeva, 1980 (1966), p. 66.
[65] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' (Ru. orig. 1924, publ. 1975) in *The Dialogic Imagination, four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Ed. and transl. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 2008, p. 84.
[66] 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' in Bakhtin, 2008.
[67] For further discussion of the chronotope, see the chapter *Thessaloniki Revisited*, below.
[68] See Holloway and Kneale, 2007, s. 74. As regards the reader's unique place in space, this was defined by Ulf Linde in a famous altercation with Lars O Ericsson: 'Here I sit

writing this, and I know it is my backside and nobody else's weighing down the chair. My backside is unique in that sense. I have never maintained anything beyond this one trivial thing.' *Dagens Nyheter*, 24.10.1987. Quoted from Kristoffer Arvidsson, *Den romantiska postmodernismen*, University of Gothenburg, 2008. Linde bases his remarks on the philosophy of G. H. Mead, which is similar in many respects to Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope and the social nature of language. See for example Ulf Linde, *Från kart till fallfrukt*, Stockholm 2008, p. 102.

[69] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux/ Hill and Wang, 1990 (Fr. orig. 1970). Preface by Richard Howard. Translated by Richard Miller, pp. 5–6.

[70] In the quotation above: Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 84.

[71] Marc Evans, director, *Collision* (TV series); written by Anthony Horowitz and Michael A. Walker, BBC, 2009.

[72] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 116.

[73] Barthes, 1990, p. 10.

[74] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986, p. 68.

[75] Mats Rosengren, 'En kommentar till Michael Biggs', *ArtMonitor* nr. 1, 2007, p. 109.

[76] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 141.

[77] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 80.

[78] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 81.

[79] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 71.

[80] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 145.

[81] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 146.

[82] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 43.

[83] Julia Kristeva, '"Nos deux" or a (Hi)story of Intertextuality', *Romanic Review*, no. 1, 1/1, 202.

[84] Kristeva, 2002.

[85] Is this a question of some sort of phantom pain? Cf. Derrida's notion of the centre of a structure as both present and absent, and also Bakhtin's author subject who is a liminal being, between world and text, both here and there, yet neither.

[86] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 208.

[87] Drive, coupled with the metaphor of filling a hole, the middle of the doughnut, has associations, for me, at any rate, with Freud's notion of young girls' penis envy. But that is presumably not the – conscious – intention of either Kristeva or Riffaterre.

[88] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 101.

[89] Bakhtin, quoted from Holloway, Kneale, 2000, p. 73.

[90] I sometimes get a sense that Bakhtin is not only slipping from the descriptive to the normative but that the good is also presented as something natural, e.g. life in the town square, or the lives of Dostoevsky's heroes.

[91] Graham Allen, 'Intertextuality', The Literary Dictionary Company
http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1229

[92] Email correspondence, 23 October 2007.

[93] Chandler 2007 (2002), p. 207.

[94] Julia Kristeva, *The Samurai*, translated by Barbara Bray. Columbia University Press, 1992 (Fr. orig. 1990).

[95] Chandler 2007 (2002), p. 206.

[96] Chandler 2007 (2002), p. 207.

[97] There is in Bakhtin a critique of his age and its literature, in which he finds 'only a small and polished portion […]' of the living language of the ordinary people, considered too coarse to take its place in a world and a literature split by the drawing up of borders. Bakhtin 1984 (1929), p. 421.

[98] Fanny Söderbäck worked as Julia Kristeva's assistant.

99 Julia Kristeva, *The Samurai*, translated by Barbara Bray. Columbia University Press, 1992 (Fr. orig. 1990), p. 214–215.

[100] See Holloway, Kneale, 2000.

Notes part II

[1] Holquist 1991 (1990), p. 7.
[2] Roland Barthes,'The Death of the Author', *Image, Music, Text*. Fontana Press, London, 1977 (Fr. orig. 1968), p. 147.
[3] Haynes, 1995, p. 104–105. Cf. the Aristotelian concept (of a deity) as a *Primus motor*.
[4] Michel Foucault, 'What is an author?' (Fr. orig. 1969) in *Aesthetics, Method, And Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault*, 1954–1984, The New Press, New York, 1998, p. 207.
[5] Valentin Voloshinov, 'Discourse in life and discourse in poetry: questions of sociological poetics', 1926, ed. Ann Shukman, *Bakhtin School Papers*, RTP Publications, Oxford 1988, (first published.1983), transl. John Richmond, p. 24. The essay is signed by Voloshinov but usually attributed to Bakhtin. Further references to this text will therefore read: Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988. Bakhtin is also said to have written a number of other texts ostensibly by members of the group known as 'Bakhtin's Circle'. The reasons for this are both political and more personal. Sergei Bocharov, one of those who rehabilitated Bakhtin and came to know him well, says that the text quoted above was one of those signed by others to which Bakhtin expressly claimed authorship from beginning to end. Interestingly enough, Bakhtin said that the texts he wrote under other names were slightly different in character from those he signed with his own. See: Sergei Bocharov and Vadim Liapunov, 'Conversations with Bakhtin', *PMLA*, vol. 109, no. 5, Modern Language Association, New York, 1994, pp. 1009–1024.
[6] Barthes, 1977 (1968), pp. 142–148.
[7] Bakhtin refers in his argument to: 'There is an opinion which is very widespread that one ought to regard the listener as the author's equal […] treated as a simple reproduction of the author's position.' Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988, p. 24.
[8] Barthes 1977 (1968), p. 146.
[9] Barthes 1977 (1968), p. 148.
[10] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 264.
[11] Kristeva, 1980 (1966), pp. 74–75.
[12] Cf. the discussion above of intertext as an absence in Riffaterre.
[13] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 190.
[14] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 191.
[15] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 18.
[16] Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, 'Museum curator to exhibition *Auteur*: inventing a singular position', in R. Greenberg, B. W Ferguson and S. Nairne, eds, *Thinking About Exhibitions*, 2007, (1996) p. 231.
[17] Curator Jens Hoffman reaches the same conclusion in his analysis as Heinich and Pollak: Jens Hoffman, *A Certain Tendency of Curating* in Paul O' Neill, ed. *Curating Subjects,* Occasional Table, London 2007, p. 138.
[18] Harald Szeeman, 'Does Art Need Directors?' in Carin Cuoni, ed. *Curating: Words of Wisdom, A Curator's Vade Mecum on Contemporary Art*, Independent Curators International, New York, 2001, p. 167.
[19] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 49.

[20] Lucy Lippard, 'Other Walls', in Cuoni, 2001, p. 102.
[21] 'All of European utopianism was likewise built on this monologic principle. Here too belongs utopian socialism, with its faith in the omnipotence of the conviction.' Bakhtin, 2009, p. 82. This is one of the rare instances in which Bakhtin adopts an overtly political stance. He argues that the Enlightenment was a particularly tangible expression and basis of this monologism. This should in turn be understood as an argument for democracy. But the question is if Bakhtin's ideal can be detected in what he calls a carnival culture. And whether that can be termed democratic or not, I do not know.
[22] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 189.
[23] Derrida, 1997 (1967), p. 280.
[24] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 189.
[25] Here, 'language' includes art objects, exhibition venue, and so on.
[26] Derrida, 1997 (1967), p. 285.
[27] Chandler, 2007 (2002), pp. 205–206.
[28] Ivar-Lo Johansson's *Pubertet*, 1978 (Puberty), accessed at http://goto.glocalnet/ivarlo/formen.htm. Translated by Sarah Death.
[29] Derrida, 1997 (1967), p. 285.
[30] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 190.
[31] Note that Bakhtin's view of the author on this is at any rate reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp's idea of 'readymade', that is to say, that art is whatever is designated as art.
[32] Bakhtin, 1990, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', p. 191.
[33] Cf. Paul Ricoeur who talks about the traces the author leaves in his text after it has been distanced as style. See Paul Ricoeur, 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation' in *From Text to Action, Essays in Hermeneutics*, II, North Western University Press, Illinois, 1991 (Fr. orig. 1973), translated by Kathleen Blamely and John B. Thompson, pp. 75–89.
[34] Foucault, 1998, p. 208.
[35] Anthony Robbin, interview with Robert Smithson, 'Smithson's Non-Site Sights', 1969, in *The Collected Writings,* ed. Jack Flam, University of California Press, 1996, p. 175.
[36] Barthes, 1977 (1968), p. 142.
[37] Chandler, 2007 (2002), pp. 205–206.
[38] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 19.
[39] Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, 'Thinking Philosophy, Spatially: Jean-François Lyotard's *Les Immatéraux* and the philosophy of the Exhibition', Joseph Backstein, Daniel Birnbaum, Sven-Olov Wallenstein (eds.) *Thinking Worlds*, The Moscow Conference on Philosophy, Politics, and Art, Sternberg Press, New York, NY, 2008, pp. 124–125.
[40] Birnbaum and Wallenstein, 2008, p. 144.
[41] See *OEI*, no. 37–38, Gothenburg, 2008, in which the term 'editorial art' is coined and discussed. Being invited to submit a text to this issue of the journal proved extremely inspiring for my doctoral work. One of the starting points for this issue was that of the editor as artist. My contribution was more about the artist as editor.
[42] Quotation from Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another, Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, MIT Press London, 2004 (orig. 2002), p. 51.

[43] Kwon, 2004, p. 51.
[44] See further the section *Stabilisation* above, particularly with reference to doughnut theory.
[45] Bakhtin, 2008 (1925), p. 253.
[46] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Estetika*, p. 5, quoted from Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 111.
[47] Bakhtin, 2008 (1925), p. 254.
[48] Bakhtin, 2008, p. 254.
[49] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 191.
[50] Derrida, 1997 (1967), p. 279.
[51] Roland Barthes would presumably maintain here that there is no template. Barthes, 1990, p. 3.
[52] See also Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 18.
[53] The idea of the game suggests that it can be played better or worse, implying a qualitative aspect. In my context, this would distinguish a bad exhibition from a good one.
[54] '[E]verything became discourse', Derrida 1997 (1967), p. 280.
[55] Mats Rosengren, *Doxologi – en essä om kunskap*, Retorikförlaget, Åstorp, 2002, p. 43. This and the two following Rosengren quotations (notes 56 and 58) translated from the Swedish by Sarah Death.
[56] Rosengren, 2002, p. 43.
[57] See the discussion of *metteur en scène* and *auteur* in the chapter "The Editor and the Curator" above.
[58] Rosengren, 2002, p. 43.
[59] Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, translated by M.G. Piety with an introduction by Edward F. Mooney, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009 (Dan. orig. 1843).
[60] Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology*, Lukas & Stenberg, New York, 2005, p. 17. Birnbaum refers here to Giles Deleuze's thinking about difference. He also emphasises the aspect of a creative audience and particularly the art of Stan Douglas.
[61] This could presumably be derived from religious ideas in which high quality is equated with goodness. It also strikes me that the Russian Orthodox icon played a role in Bakhtin's view of literature. It has several aspects simultaneously: it is illustrative and narrative, it is in itself religious matter and it is also a 'window' in the sense that the observer can see into the divine by looking at an icon. For Bakhtin, good literature comprises various aspects simultaneously: it is narrative, it is a social event and it is also form.
[62] Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 6–7.
[63] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 190.
[64] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 190.
[65] Per-Arne Bodin, 'Dialogen är gudomlig – Michail Bachtin och det kristna ordet', Dagens Nyheter, 17.11.2000 (Quotation translated by Sarah Death.) The books he reviews are *Corporeal Words. Mikhail Bakhtin's Theology of Discourse*, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, 1997 and Ruth Coate, *Christianity in Bakhtin. God and the Exiled Author*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999.
[66] Bodin, 2000.
[67] Quoted from Bodin, 2000.

[68] And the word that Bakhtin talks about becomes for these scholars 'closely linked to the 'logos' of St John's gospel, the word of God in the incarnation of Christ.' (Bodin 2000). Kristeva talks of a different concept, *dynamic gram*, defined by Jacques Derrida as the irreducible element of the written (Kristeva, 1980 (1966), p. 64). Are these concepts the same?
[69] Kristeva, 1980 (1966), p. 70.
[70] Quotation from the essay 'Spiritualerna' (The Spirituals) published for the first time in Bakhtin, MM, *Sobranie Sotjinenij* T. 6, Moskva 2002. According to the accompanying commentary, it was written on nine pages in a lined notebook. It forms part of Bakhtin's renewed work on his Dostoevsky book in the early 1960s. Here it is translated by Sarah Death from the Swedish, which is a translation of the Russian original by Johan Öberg (Bachtin, 2010, p. 333).
[71] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 150. 'Consummation' is the same as 'finalization', the term used in some English translations of Bakhtin's books.
[72] See Haynes, 1995, p. 37.
[73] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 150.
[74] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 146.
[75] Holquist, 1991 (1990), pp. 79–85.
[76] See Staffan Westerlund, *Monologism – En Dialog med Bachtin om Maktens Poetik* (Monologism – a dialogue with Bakhtin on the poetics of power), 2000, C-level essay in sociology, University of Uppsala.
[77] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 83.
[78] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 135.
[79] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 83.
[80] It is of course important to note that Bakhtin's theory of knowledge was not created out of nothing but is dependent on Kant and other thinkers who were more or less his contemporaries. The emphasis on history as important for understanding was particularly in fashion (Marx and others), and the notion of understanding others by empathising with them is clearly influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey's ideas about somehow re-experiencing (repeating) others' experience.
[81] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 149.
[82] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 191.
[83] Bakhtin, 1990 (1979), p. 165.
[84] Chandler, 2007 (2002), p. 207.
[85] Claes Hylinger, *Dagens Nyheter*, 19.3.1982. Translated by Sarah Death.
[86] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Paul Menard, author of *Don Quixote*', (Sp. orig. 1939), in *Ficciones*, Grove Press, New York, 1956 (Sp. orig. 1941–2, 1944, 1956).
[87] Borges, 1956, pp. 52–53. There has been some discussion of whether the author Pierre Menard, written about by Borges, actually existed. The following conversation can be found on Wikipedia: Interview between José Ermides Cantillo Prada and Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda, *El Heraldo* (Barranquilla), 14 November 1999. Accessed online 13 November 2006. 'I read the biography of Rodríguez Monegal and Menard actually existed as a minor symbolist poet, but who had made a book, which had a thesis about time and Borges had found that book. Then people were went to look for Pierre Menard

and they found a Pierre Menard, but a doubled Pierre Menard, who was the one that Borges had invented.'
One can note further that there are, or have been, a number of different Pierre Menards. Here is a small selection of them: Pierre Menard (1766–1844), successful Canadian businessman;
(http://www.illinoishistory.gov/hs/pierre_menard.htm)
French artist and librarian Pierre Ménard
http://www.blogger.com/profile/12332364540756403510; doctoral student Pierre Ménard in the Faculty of Computer Science at Columbia University
http://www.cs.columbia.edu/people/alumni/ms

[88] My colleague Dr Glyn Thompson maintains in *Baroness Elsa's Barrenness*, Leeds, 2009 that Marcel Duchamps' readymade urinal (*Fountain*, 1917) was not actually his own idea. We must thus assume that this idea for a readymade was itself readymade.

[89] 'Response to a Question from Novy Mir' in Bakhtin, 1986, p. 5.

[90] In Bakhtin's thinking here there is an interesting link to Socratic maieutics and the view that knowledge cannot be created but only set free.

[91] Daniel Birnbaum, Andreas Gedin and Jan-Erik Lundström *Taking Over*, BildMuseet, Värnamo, 2000, p. 9.

[92] In 2004 the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt was emptied of its contents and filled with Sturtevant's ripostes under the exhibition title *The Brutal Truth.* See the catalogue, *The Brutal Truth*, ed. Udo Kittelman and Mario Kramer, Museum Für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, 2004.

[93] A more risky variant of this can occur when less ambitious artists hope that a reading, or a context, will bring much-needed extra content to the work. There are works which, as it were, cast a line in the form of titles, references to other contexts and so on in the hope that a gifted reader will swallow the hook and do the job, so to speak. This may work, of course, but I find it hard to see the point of working on projects like that, unless it is a question of some kind of conscious Rorschach test.

[94] In that case, I think of Borges.

[95] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 7.

[96] Holquist, 1991 (1990), pp. 15–16.

[97] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 20. Here, evaluation means 'agreement or disagreement with it'. p. 17.

[98] See also Haynes, 1995, pp. 108–112.

[99] My desire to make the book externally unassuming produced unintended but not entirely uninteresting consequences. I discovered later that it is very similar to famous works by two conceptual artists, *Statements* (1968) by Lawrence Weiner and Daniel Spoerri's *Topographie Anécdotée du Hasard* (1962).

[100] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 9.

[101] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 21.

[102] The concept of relational aesthetics makes its presence felt here, when art and sociality are under discussion. The term, coined by Nicolas Bourriaud in the late 1990s, refers to art in which the social event of the public's encounter with the work is in focus. Bakhtin is talking about something else, namely that the work in itself is also a social event, regardless of its social ambitions.

[103] Alexander Alberro, Alice Zimmerman, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and David Batchelor, *Lawrence Weiner*, Phaidon Press, New York, 2007 (1998), p. 50. Initially formulated by Weiner in an exhibition catalogue: *January 5–31, 1969,* New York, 1969.

[104] See further the section *Intonation*.

[105] Chandler, 2007 (2002), p. 207.

[106] Transcribed from a video interview:
http://www.hillmancurtis.com/index.php?/film/watch/lawrence_weiner/

[107] Gary Hustwit's film *Helvetica*, 2007 takes a wider-ranging look its history and status. See www.helveticafilm.com

[108] Alberro and others 2007, p. 50.

[109] Quoted from Alberro and others 2007, p. 50.

[110] In an interview with Weiner, Benjamin D.H. Buchloh tries in vain to make him argue for his project in terms of philosophy of language. Weiner slips evasively into the artist's classical freedom to define his own preconditions. Alberro and others, 2007, pp. 6–34.

[111] In this new context the question could again be asked: is the text I reproduce a work or not? The instruction is a work. The process of carrying it out is an aspect of the work, it is embedded in its potential as a cooking recipe. But the repetition of the instruction, what status does that actually have?

[112] Alberro and others, 2007, p. 50. (The quotation from Roland Barthes is from: 'Style and its Image' (1969), *The Rustle of Language*, Los Angeles 1989, p. 99.)

[113] Alberro and others, 2007, p. 12.

[114] The idea of transfer between text and world is interestingly expressed in Albert Speer's *Spandau, the Secret Diaries*, in which he writes about setting out to walk round the world by covering the same distance in the prison garden that he tended during his captivity. Between 1954 and his release in 1966 he walks from Spandau in Germany through Asia, across to Alaska and down to northern Mexico. During this walk, he reads books about the places he is 'passing through'. In the text, he ultimately makes no distinction between being in a place physically or in his reading and in the schedule of his conceptual walk. He even takes a detour on one occasion: 'January 12, 1958. Weeks ago I crossed the Ganges. Now my walk is taking me over a high, wild mountain range. There are still four hundred kilometres to Mandalay in Burma and one thousand one hundred kilometres to Kunming in China. I am planning a side-trip to Pagan, a small village with more than two thousand pagodas and stupas of considerably size. The town served exclusively for the veneration of the Buddha; it was built between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.' Albert Speer, *Spandau, the Secret Diaries*. Transl. Richard and Clara Winston, foreword Sam Sloan, Bronx NY, 2010 (Ger. orig. 1975), p. 322. See further my work based on this walk, *Go, Went. Gone* (2003).

[115] Weiner's reputation as one of the founders of conceptual art rests on the book *Statements* (Louis Kellner Foundation, New York, 1968) in which he sets out the basis of his artistic *oeuvre* and, it turns out, the foundations of a variant of conceptual art.

[116] See for example Alberro and others, 2007, pp. 6–33.

[117] Cf. Oulipo, Ouvroir de littérature potentielle, roughly translated 'Workshop of Potential Literature', Paris, 1960, which latched onto the potential of limitation for creativity, for

example by writing a novel without using the letter 'e'. This aesthetic of limitation is closely related to conceptual art's fondness for commissions with limitations.

[118] Lawrence Weiner, *AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE*, 2008–2009, K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen Düsseldorf, Germany. The exhibition was first shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in the winter of 2007–2008.

[119] In *Statements*, 1968 there is a tension between the ascetic and the grandiose in what is conceptual, something I recognise, and incorporated when working on projects of mine like *Taking Over*, 1998-, *Chinese Whispers,* 1997–1998, *Stockholm Beijing*, 1987.

[120] In September 2009, I find a further two copies are for sale, for £500 and £450 respectively. In January 2010 I see there are three copies available, priced at $950, $1179 and $1500 respectively. The dearest copy is signed by Weiner. In October 2010, the price is $1762.

[121] There is a serious misunderstanding of this issue on the part of some art critics. They think the artist's own narrative of his or her work, background, intention etc. is the same as an interpretation of the work. And they shrink from that, because it leaves them unemployed. They hence fail to see the difference between information and interpretation, and this is reflected in their writing about art.

[122] Ricoeur, *From Text to Action, Essays in Hermeneutics*, II, North Western University Press, 1991 (Fr. orig.1986), translated by Kathleen Blamely and John B. Thompson, p. 76.

[123] Ibid. p. 87.

[124] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), pp. 84–85.

[125] See Haynes, 1995, p.106.

[126] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 85.

[127] Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 2008 (1981), Texas, p. 86.

[128] Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero' in *Aesthetic Activity, Art and Answerability. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1990, translated by Vadim Liapunov and Kenneth Brostrom. (Russian original 179, 1986), p. 26.

[129] Holloway and Kneale, 2007, p. 75–76.

[130] Hirvi-Ijäs, 2007, pp.104–106.

[131] Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy*, Hackett, USA, 1988, p. 65.

[132] Vladimir Mayakovsky, 'At the Top of My Voice, First Prelude to the Poem', 1930. *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry,* translated by Max Hayward and George Reavey. Meridian Books, New York, 1960. http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/literature/mayakovsky/1930/at-top-my-voice.htm, (Russian original 1929–1930).

[133] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 28.

[134] Comedian Jerry Seinfeld expressed the same philosophical insight in the Australian talk show *Enough Rope*, when he related one of his father's favourite stories: '[…] like this joke about this guy who comes home and his wife is in the bathroom and he suspects that there is some hanky-panky going on. And he pulls back the shower curtain and there is another man behind the shower curtain. And he says to the man: What are you doing here? And the guy goes: Well everybody's got to be someplace.' Jerry Seinfeld, *Enough Rope*, Talk show with Andrew Denton, 26 Nov. 2007. Viewable on YouTube at: http://www.yourtube.com/watch?v+HzwlxqkAPmA (part 1, 08:10).

[135] See Holloway and Kneale, 2007, p. 74.

[136] See Holquist, 1991 (1990), pp. 164–165.

[137] Ibid. pp. 89–90.

[138] On spatiality in Bakhtin, see Holloway and Kneale, 2000.

[139] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965) p. 320.

[140] Bakhtin, 1984 (1929), p 317

[141] Cf. Merleau-Ponty's notion that the body, as it were, appropriates objects: a hat or a car, for example, becomes in phenomenological terms part of our bodies; we experience their location in space. In one sense, the individual body then expands.

[142] I am thinking of Dostoevsky's person in the cellar, whose inner speech leaks out through his mouth in a purely physical way, as though it were some bodily fluid. This is what is generally referred to as verbal diarrhoea.

[143] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 308.

[144] Ibid. p. 366.

[145] Birnbaum, Gedin and Lundström, 2000, p. 29. Dialogue from the exhibition publication *Taking Over* (Bildmuseet).

[146] Holquist 1991 (1990), p. 90.

[147] The discussion of Holquist and Frankenstein's Monster is based on Holquist, 1991 (1990), pp. 90–106.

[148] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 97.

[149] The idea of constructing creatures by joining together disparate fragments (bricolage?) is older than Frankenstein's monster and comes from folk mythology. The Danish-Greenlandic artist Pia Arke (1958–2007), for example, made use of the Inuit equivalent Tupilak – a kind of voodoo doll – in her art.

[150] On the subject of authors, I note that Holquist has omitted Mary Shelley from the names index of his book.

[151] Quoted from Aldous Huxley, Collected Essays, New York, 1923, p. vii. Note that Rabelais (1494–1553) and Montaigne (1533–1592) were contemporaries.

[152] Haynes, 1995, p. 38.

[153] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 101.

[154] By this I mean not only pictures or objects but also sounds, performance etc. which is represented in the exhibition space.

[155] Since the 1980s, this term has been widely used in artistic contexts to refer to the context in which art is shown. This includes such contexts as the artistic, the social, the political, the geographical and the economic.

[156] Bruce W. Ferguson, 'Exhibitions Rhetorics, Material Speech and Utter Sense,' in Greenberg and others, eds, 2007 (orig. 1996). The date it was originally written is significant because the term 'context' was by no means as prevalent then as it is now.

[157] Greenberg and others, eds, 2007, p. 176.

[158] Greenberg and others, eds, 2007, p. 183. Oddly enough, in an earlier part of his article, Ferguson objects to talking about art in semiotic or linguistic terms, as he claims these

have a reductive effect on the art. He may be referring to specific texts, but does not name them.

[159] Here I concur with Mats Rosengren in his discussion of artistic research in particular and scholarship in general. Rosengren's doxic concept of truth is built on coherence, not correspondence, Rosengren, 2007, p. 109. This implies that 'knowledge is altogether relational. It consists of networks of complex relationships between the knowledge-creating subject, the object of knowledge and the knowledge that already exists […]', p. 108. Translated by Sarah Death.

[160] Barthes, 1990, p. 12.

[161] Barthes, 1990, p. 14.

[162] In architecture and town planning there is a new concept/method that is linguistic and has relevance for an exhibition in an institution: space syntax. The concept and the method were developed by Bill Hillier, Julienne Hanson and colleagues at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London in the late 1970s and early 1980s. An attempt to apply the concept in an exhibition context can be found in the C-level essay *Människans rörelsemönster i utställningsrummet – en fördjupad studie i Falk Simon-utställningen* (Patterns of visitor movement in the exhibition space – an in-depth study of the Falk Simon exhibition), Maria Kahlman Lindberg, Art History and Visual Studies, University of Gothenburg, 2007: hum.gu.se/institutioner/konstochbildvetenskap/publikationer/uppsatser0607-/maria_kahlman_lindberg.pdf

[163] There are artists, of course, who have had the opportunity to rebuild the exhibition space entirely, but this is more the exception than the rule. See for example Michael Elmgren and Ingar Dragset's 'Powerless Structures, fig 111', http://www.portikus.de/ArchiveA0105.html.
See also the discussion around fixed and flexible architecture in
Henric Benesch, *Kroppar under träd – en miljö för konstnärlig forskning* (Bodies under trees – a setting for artistic research), University of Gothenburg, 2010.

[164] Boris Groys, 'Politics of Installation', *e-flux journal*, no. 2, 2009, http://www.eflux.com/journal/view/31, which is a revised version of a lecture given at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, on 2 October 2, 2008.

[165] I interviewed Boris Groys in Rome on 4 April, 2009. The whole interview – 'Being democratic and universal, you are always under the accusation of being elitist …' – is reproduced in *ArtMonitor*, University of Gothenburg, no. 6, 2009, pp. 183–188. The dialogue with Groys is cited from this unless otherwise indicated.

[166] One telling example is the IKEA exhibition at Liljevalchs, the art venue run by the city of Stockholm, in the summer of 2009. This was funded by IKEA, leading to a few protests in reviews but little more. When a few Sony products were placed in the exhibition galleries eight years earlier, the protests were much more vociferous.

[167] I have noticed that it is seldom the artists we find arguing for their freedom. It tends to be critics, curators and theoreticians who do this. The philosopher Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback worries, for example, that artists would relinquish their freedom by entering the academy and artistic research. Postgraduate seminar, 22 January, 2008, University of Gothenburg.

[168] As one example of artistic freedom the artist, unlike many other practitioners, is able to transcend genres and professional spheres. In addition, the artist's position is protected in democracies by comprehensive freedom of expression.

[169] Groys, London, 2009.

[170] Groys attempts to incorporate the freelance curator into his argument as an institution in her or his own right, but I am not convinced that he succeeds. The freelance curator often works on entirely different financial terms, but has greater freedom in not making concessions to the general public.

[171] See for example Bruce Nauman's early video works in which the studio appears to be both freedom and obligation, e.g. *Bouncing Two Balls Between the Floor and Ceiling with Changing Rhythms* (1967–1968, 10 minutes), in which the artist performs this act in his studio, and Håkan Rehnberg's *The Sealed Studio*, 1999–2000, in which the studio is a sculptural work, labyrinthine and complex, closed yet transparent.

[172] See further the section *I Hear Voices in Everything* below.

[173] Groys, London, 2009.

[174] I would happily sell some of that chimeric freedom described by Groys in return for greater power over the institution's budget, planning etc.

[175] It is hard not to see projects by such artists as Santiago Serra and Pål Hollender, which exploit the weak members of society, as deeply moral projects in that the artists' immorality supposedly mirrors the immorality of the world about them.

[176] Groys, London, 2009.

[177] 'But I hear *voices* in everything and the dialogical relationships between them', Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988. s. 4. The quotation is taken from *Kmetodologiii gumanitarnykh nauk*, in M. M. Bakhtin *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva*. Moskva, 1979, p. 372. (Shukman, 1988, s.4.) Bakhtin writes this as a commentary to the sort of structuralism he perceives as mechanical in a negative sense. My Swedish translation was not the most brilliant ever, but it served well as a heading for my work. The 1988 English translation is by John Richmond.

[178] The musical concept of polyphony is not to be confused here with Bakhtin's auxiliary term polyphony, which he applies to the novels of Dostoevsky. Bakhtin uses the term as a metaphor.

[179] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p.63.

[180] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p.178.

[181] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 7.

[182] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 6.

[183] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 64–65.

[184] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p.13.

[185] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p.18.

[186] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p.13.

[187] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 13.

[188] Bakhtin, 2008 (1925), p. 255.

[189] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 26.

[190] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 6.

[191] Bakhtin concurs with Otto Klaus that the polyphonic novel invented by Dostoevsky is also an expression of a historical situation. Its breeding ground was the individual-based

capitalism that was breaking into collective Russian society. 'In this way the objective preconditions were created for the multi-leveledness and multi-voicedness of the polyphonic novel.' Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 20.
[192] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 26.
[193] Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68.
[194] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 249–250.
[195] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 16.
[196] The exhibition *Taking Over*, 2003, at Bildmuseet in Umeå engaged particularly with this set of problems.
[197] Horace Engdahl, 'Flämtningar', *Beröringens ABC* ('Gasps', *The ABC of Touch*), Stockholm 1995, p. 160. Quotation translated by Sarah Death. Engdahl goes on to write of a 'permanent pronominal crisis in Beckett. Mixing the origin of voices into a literary text in this way could be discussed within the framework of the ideas of Bakhtin. There are traces of this compulsion to defend oneself in my dialogues, but even more so in Ordinov's dialogic monologue *Letters from the Underworld*. There is something of the apologia about his merciless tirades.
[198] Bakhtin, 2009, p. 237.
[199] Thinking of the stage that Dostoevsky sets, according to Bakhtin, and the dialogical dramas played out there, it seems that drama is a very close relation. But he actually makes the case *against* 'the dramatic dialogue in drama and the dramatized dialogue in the narrative forms'. They are rendered monologic by the drama's insistence on unity. 'In drama the world must be made from a single piece.' Bakhtin p. 17. I suspect that the modern, and postmodern, drama would manage to fulfil Bakhtin's desire for dialogicity.
[200] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 169.
[201] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926).
[202] I did not attempt a translation of this multi-purpose and often vague word in the Swedish version of my thesis. In Russian it is said to be even more open to interpretation.
[203] What is meant by intonation its broader and sometimes figurative sense is the way a thing is said, that is, how a person influences the content of what is said by means of phrasing, voice strength, and the signalling of attitudes and motions. This paraphrases in English the definition in the reference work *Nationalencyklopedin*, Bra Böcker AB, Höganäs, 1992.
[204] Here we can perhaps detect an implicit critique of Marxism's faith in historical determinism.
[205] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 12.
[206] An implied, silent dialogue.
[207] Yet another boundary-line phenomenon in Bakhtin. His Author is also located on a tangent line.
[208] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 232.
[209] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 14–15.
[210] The term 'supporting chorus' could be developed further and linked to Pierre Bourdieu's system of sociological concepts. This would enable one to talk not only of social situations but also of wider contexts in which individuals within a filed can act together. And individuals who share habitus and social position in other ways can embrace a consensus that provides a backdrop to common understanding through intonation.
[211] Cf. Hirvi-Ijäs, 2007, pp. 85–89.
[212] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 14.
[213] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 15.
[214] Yet another game-playing metaphor creeps in. In breakdance we find the term circle in a circle. It has to do with simultaneity, with the three interacting as equals and at the same time, or perhaps at a given moment taking over or alternatively, stepping back. The alternative to interaction would be the metaphorical, triangular town square in the video.
[215] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 18.
[216] What is understood by discourse here, according to the editor of the English edition, is 'language in its uttered, outward form'. (Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 154.)
[217] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 18.
[218] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 27.
[219] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 27.
[220] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 19.
[221] Roland Barthes claims for his part that dictionaries are precisely what an author bears inside us and it is from them that he or she collects the words for the constructions of the text. Barthes, 1977 (1968), p. 147.
[222] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 27.
[223] Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1988 (1926), p. 16.
[224] This notion of potential in the work may appear the same as the curatorship carried out by a curator. But there is a considerable difference between seeing the professional curator as a healing force and more generally understanding spectator/listener/onlooker as people.

Notes part III

[1]This is part of the research project *Passion for the Real*, linked to the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg.
[2] See for example the survey and argument presented in Alf Rehn, *Gåvan i dag* (The gift today*),* www.pinkmachine.com/PMP/pmb3.pdf, Stockholm, 2006.
[3] *More and More: Candide*, 2003.
[4] *Återköp*, (Repurchase) 2010.
[5] See for example Voloshinov/Bakhtin 1988 (1926), p. 27.
[6] Holquist, 1991 (1990), p. 84.
[7] See the section 'Concept as Sculpture' above.
[8] Otto von Busch, *FASHION.able, hacktivism and engaged fashion design*, Gothenburg, 2008, p. 76.
9 von Busch, 2008, p. 77.
[10] See for example Zoë Sheehan Saldaña, *Faded Glory Ruched Shoulder Tank (China Red),* 2003,http://www.zoesheehan.com This has some affinity with my work *En mulen dag, perfekt promenadväder* (A grey day, perfect weather for a walk), 1995, in which I had hand-sewn, slightly reduced-size versions made of the mass-produced garments worn by three people on a trip to Ephesus in an invented, early-twentieth-century photograph. Zoë Sheehan Saldaña is now to exhibit a work in my doctoral exhibition at Malmö Art Museum.
[11] Daniel Spoerri, *Topographie Anécdotée du Hasard*, Galeri Lawrence, Paris, 1962.
[12] For more detail on the directing of the video, see the section 'Intonation' above.
[13] Eruption will be discussed in the section 'Spin-Off!' below.
[14] Cf. the term distanciation above.
[15] I also subsequently discovered a reference to the exhibition *Sår* (*Wounds*) at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm when it reopened in 1988: 'As its title suggests, *Wounds* focuses on art which has been made at either personal or social points of friction, fragmentation or pain and which cuts through the smooth but also comforting surface of conventional culture.'
http://www.modernamuseet.se/en/Stockholm/Exhibitions/1998/Wounds-/
[16] The work was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm and the lecture evening *On Retakes* took place at the Museum of Modern Art on 16.8.2006. The programme featured not only Gerge but also a film director and an elite-level sports trainer.
[17] Gerge 16.8.2006. (Transl. Sarah Death.)
[18] From the script of *Thessaloniki Revisited*. (Transl. William Jewson.)
[19] Gerge 16.8.2006. (Transl. Sarah Death.)
[20] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990).
[21] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p. 152.
[22] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p. 362–363.
[23] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p. 157.
[24] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p. 157–158.
[25] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p. 403.
[26] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), s, 407.
[27] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p. 158.

[28] Generally speaking, the art video is an interesting case of chronotope, as it is often non-linear and looped. This circular movement, repetition, is in exhibition contexts often in a formal sense like the time potentials threaded on the horizontality constituted by the visitor's walking route around the works in an exhibition space. This is a fundamental chronotope in such contexts.
[29] On Francis Alÿs see for example Carlos Basualdo, 'Head to toes: Francis Alÿs's paths of resistance', *ArtForum*, April 1999.
[30] Siri Hustvedt, *The Sorrows of an American: A Novel*, Picador, New York, 2009, (2008), p. 80.
[31] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p. 158.
[32] *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*. Translated by Christopher C. Wilson and Katharina M. Wilson, Hydra Books, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1997. (orig. 1990.)
33 Imre Kertész, *Heureka!* Nobel Lecture, 2002, http://www.svenskaakademien.se/nobelpriset_i_litteratur/pristagarna/3072f060-2dcd-45ca-8592-73b238d906f3/1489037f-d2f7-4e33-877e-a03c01e758ca/543e8363-157e-454e-82bf-f5eb65461231
[34] Madeleine Gustafsson describes Kertész' volume as follows: 'It is a thin little book, a single long, droning distraught monologue that never lets go, a little like the books of Thomas Bernhard. The meandering but, in all its complexity, completely clear prose, has a suggestiveness that also pulls the most reluctant reader into its argumentation.'
http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/articles/gustafsson/index.html
[35] Kertész, 1997 (1990), pp. 34–35. Cf. Kertész' description of his narratives as woven from colourful yarn – as component stories, with the later discussion of microstories and Bakhtin's analysis of Dante's *Inferno* in the previous section.
[36] Anders Olsson, 'Existensen är alltid extrem', afterword to Thomas Bernhard, *Helt enkelt komplicerat och andra texter*, Norstedts, Stockholm, 1991, pp. 176–177. This Swedish edition is a collection of Bernhard's texts 'Drei Tage', 'Gehen' and 'Einfach kompliziert'.
[37] Thomas Bernhard, *Extinction: A Novel*, translated by David McLintock, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1995 (Ger. orig. 1986), pp. 301–302.
[38] Emma Corkhill performed the *Spin-Off!* text at the 2009 Gothenburg seminar *The Art and Text.* Somebody spoke. That was significant, of course. Not in the sense that the text now acquired a distinct sender, but because its nature underwent a change. It became less acted, because she is not a professional actor, and hence more personal in the way her relative reticence combined with the power of the content.
[39] Bakhtin, 2009, pp. 236–237.
[40] See Lars Lönnroth, 'Nid som talakt och performance' (Malice as speech act and performance), in Claésson and others (eds), 2010, pp. 407–414. Here, Lars Lönnroth employs his term 'the double scene', the coinciding of the narrative's and the narrator's scenes.
[41] *The Complete Short Prose of Samuel Beckett*, 1929–1989, Grove Press, New York, 1995, *Textes for Nothing*, originally written in French, 1945–1950, translation into English by the author, p.109.
[42] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p. 419.
[43] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p. 415.
[44] In my video work *Christophe & Christophe*, 1998, two people, each in a video of their own, are given the task of saying a series of words, one per second for eighty seconds.

The films are installed in parallel and bring out such things as resemblance, difference, failure, victory, linguistic competitiveness, control and lack of control. Panurge carries out a similar exercise in Rabelais when he repeats *couillon* (testicle) a hundred and fifty-three times, each time accompanied by a different epithet. Bakhtin, 1984, p. 415.

[45] Luis Buñuel, *My Last Breath*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1984 (Span. orig. 1982). (Told to Jean-Claude Carrière.)

[46] Rereading the chapter about the drumming in Calanda, I find that my memory has played a trick on me. Everything that was so central for me is dealt with in just two and a half pages. The drum duels that played on my mind for so long are described as follows: 'When two groups beating two different tempi meet on one of the village streets, they engage in a veritable duel which may last as long as an hour – or at least until the weaker group relents and takes up the victors' rhythm.' Buñuel, 1984, p. 21.

[47] Luis Buñuel used the drumming as a background sound in several of his films. His son Juan Luis Buñuel made a documentary about the drumming, *Calanda*, 1966. It is hard to get hold of but I tracked down a VHS copy of it at the Buñuel Institute in Calanda. It shows that the civilian drumming scenes we filmed could also be seen in the 1960s. In 2010 I discover Juan Luis Buñuel followed up his film with a new documentary (which has been shown at several film festivals): *Calanda: 40 years Later*, 2007. So it was filmed the Easter before I was there filming. It would have been a real stroke of luck if I had happened to get there a year earlier (this was the initial plan) and find myself standing with Juan Luis Buñuel in the town square of Calanda. Then my film would have been about him, too.

[48] http://www.maestrazgo.org/rutadeltambor/a/eng/calanda1.html

[49] The sides of the town square triangle are made up of the church, the bars and the shops.

[50] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p.131.

[51] I consult an English-speaking friend by email about the title of my Calanda video. My suggestion is *Sharing the Square*. The response comes: 'it seems that the concept of a town square is a little odd in America, as we have a different kind of community topography – instead of centers, we have walkways – sidewalks – so we would often speak of sharing the sidewalk'. This points up the differences between European and American history, not least in terms of democracy and city dwelling. Another acquaintance who lives in one old European capital, Dublin, has no problems with the title. But for the sake of clarity I change it to *Sharing a Square*, distinguishing the last word from a quadrilateral shape by using the capital 'S'.

[52] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p.131.

[53] The Council of Trent convened by the Church in 1545–1563 took the decision that confession was to apply to thoughts and feelings as well. It has been claimed that this decision gave birth to the modern European subject with a defined inner being. In fact it is more a case of this notion of a person's inner life developing over the course of several centuries and finally being affirmed in this decision.

[54] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p.132.

[55] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p.132.

[56] There is an interesting historical background to this in that Bakhtin is writing this in the Stalin era when – at least officially – a kind of public culture prevailed, a culture of bugging, informing etc.

[57] Perhaps it is this concept of energy Lefebvre is alluding to in his discussion of rhythm and music. He takes the view that music, sound is not just time, but must also manifest itself in space. But *space-time* requires a third component, *energy*: These three terms are necessary for describing and analysing cosmological reality.' Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life,* transl. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore, Continuum, New York, 2004, French orig. 1992, p. 60.

[58] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), s.141–142.

[59] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p. 134.

[60] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p.133–134. Plato indulged to some extent in the confession of the lips. His dialogues are rather like rigged monologues in which Socrates' opposite number functions as a kind of sacrifice on the way to a predetermined conclusion. Bakhtin considers the early dialogues to be genuinely dialogic in nature, and the later dialogues are more monologic. Bakhtin, 2009, p. 110.

[61] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), p. 122–123.

[62] Bakhtin, 2008 (1990), s 144.

[63] Alberro et al, eds, 2007, p. 9. Henry Geldzahler (1935–1994), famous curator and writer whose workplaces included the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

[64] http://www.warholstars.org/chron/edie66n21.html Irving Sandler, American art critic.

[65] Charles Bernstein, 'Artifice in Absorption', in *Poetics*, Harvard University Press, London, England, 1992.

[66] Bernstein, 1992, p. 29.

[67] Magnus William-Olsson (transl. by Sarah Death), 'Fel, fel – och ändå så rätt' (Wrong, wrong, and yet so right), *Aftonbladet*, 19.7.2005, in a review of Jesper Olsson's dissertation: *ALFABETETS ANVÄNDNING, Konkret poesi och poetisk artefaktion i svenskt 1960-tal* (The use of the alphabet, concrete poetry and poetic artefaction in the 1960s in Sweden), University of Stockholm, 2005.

[68] Bernstein (1992, pp. 49–50) however categorises surrealism as absorptive, as the unveiling of a reality and not constructed.

[69] Anna Hellman Vold, *Adaption och subversion - Återbruk, mening och nonsens i Block av Ulf Karl Olov Nilsson*, (Adaption and subversion – meaning and nonsense in *Block* by Ulf Karl Olov Nilsson), C-level essay, Södertörns högskola, 2007.

[70] Bernstein, 1992, p. 29.

[71] In this there is a Romantic, symbiotic yearning that has lived on in modernism, not least in Erik Lindegren's classic lines: 'somewhere inside us we are always here and now, we are always you to the point of chaos and confusion […]' (transl. Sarah Death) from the poem 'Arioso', in *Sviter*, Bonniers, Stockholm, 1947. This could be interpreted as the text and the reader yearning to be united.

[72] Bernstein, 1992, p. 66.

[73] Bernstein, 1992, p. 67.

[74] Magnus Ljunggren, 'Språklig futurist ville bryta vårt vaneseende' (Language futurist hopes to change our ingrained way of seeing), *Svenska dagbladet*, 'Under strecket' comment, 5.5, 2007.

[75] Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, transl. Benjamin Sher, intro. Gerald L. Bruns, Dalkey Archive Press, Illinois, 1990 (Ru. orig. 1925), p. 13.

[76] Shklovsky, 1990, p. 6.
[77] This reminds me of a funny story that seems to be about the automatisation process getting out of hand. Some people are eating together in a restaurant and one of the men says 34! Everyone except John bursts out laughing. Why are you laughing, he asks. Well, the person sitting next to him explains, it's a funny story, one of those numbered stories you find in Chinese fortune cookies. A few minutes later a lady in the party exclaims 22! Everyone except John doubles up with laughter. John, feeling left out, takes a deep breath and says out loud: 15! The others look at him, but nobody laughs. Why aren't you laughing at my story, he asks. It's not a suitable story to tell at the dinner table, he is told. Later, over the coffee, one of the party asks the other guests for a moment's quiet, and declares 32! This provokes uncontrollable mirth. All the guests except John are splitting their sides with laughter and the tears are running down their cheeks. When things finally subside, John makes so bold as to ask what was so amazing about that particular story. They tell him that it was not only incredibly funny but also that none of them had heard it before.
[78] Bernstein, 1992, p. 32.
[79] Bernstein, 1992, p. 71.
[80] Jesper Olsson, *ALFABETETS ANVÄNDNING, Konkret poesi och poetisk artefaktion i svenskt 1960-tal*, University of Stockholm, 2005, p. 22. Quoted from Hellman Vold, 2007. (Transl. Sarah Death).
[81] *Step by Step, A First Draft*, exhibition at the Gotland Museum of Art 30.6–16.9 2007.
[82] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 239.
[83] Cf. the term 'Witness Literature', introduced into Sweden by Horace Engdahl in a speech to the Swedish Academy, *Jag var där, jag såg, jag kan berätta!* (I was there, I saw it, I can tell people!) published in *Dagens Nyheter*, 29.12.2001. (Revised English version at http://www.worldscientific.com/worldscibooks/10.1142/5103, accessed 1.9.12) This is literature that reproduces events witnessed by the author. It is something different from pure fiction, though they are sometimes indistinguishable: 'It is also evident that testimony can be mimicked as can every other way of using language. The novel in particular, as Bakhtin demonstrates, is primarily a portrayal of discourses and not of immediate reality. By simulating the position of the eyewitness, the artful writer can lend unwarranted authenticity to his text.'
[84] This is a work that I not only like very much but also feel such an affinity with that I wish I had made it myself.
[85] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 40.
[86] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), pp. 20–21.
[87] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 252.
[88] See the section 'Sleeper', above.
[89] Ilya Kabakov is its big star and his Moscow studio now houses the ICA art school under the leadership of Joseph Backstein, who was an important writer for the Moscow conceptualists. Among his other initiatives is the Moscow Bienniale.
[90] Margareta Attius Sohlman, 'Kunskapare och observatörer i 1600-talets Ryssland och Sverige: Petrus Petrejus, Grigorij Kotosjichin och Erich Palmquist' in *Bröd och salt, svenska kulturkontakter med öst*, ed. Roger Gyllin, Ingvar Svanberg and Ingrid Söhrman, Department of Slavic Studies, University of Uppsala, 1998, pp. 9–28.

[91] Erich Palmquist, *Någre vidh sidste kongl. ambassaden till tsaren i Muskou gjorde-observationer öfver Rysslandh, des vägar, pass medh fästningar och grantzer sammandragne: Aff Erich Palmquist.* Anno 1674, Stockholm, 1898. Seventy-five copies were printed of this edited compilation of Palmquist's report. Palmquist had been taught to draw by Erik Dahlberg.
[92] Aleksander Nikolayevich Radishchev, *Puteshestvie iz Peterburg v Moskvu*, 1790. Quotation transl. by Grigory Pasko. Originally a quotation from Trediakovsky's *The Telemachiade* (1766) – itself a translation of Fenelon's *Les aventures de Telemaque* (1699).
[93] Attius Sohlman, 1998, p. 24. (Trs. Sarah Death.)
[94] On preconceived ideas about Russia and the Russians, see also Gennadij Kovalenko, 'Sverige och Ryssland under 1600-talet. Några episoder ur det politiska och kulturella livet.' *Scriptum* nr. 40, University of Umeå, Umeå, 1995. Swedish summary p. 9.
[95] In 1987 I made a pair of three-dimensional quotation marks, left one of them at home, then transported the other to Beijing and deposited it there.
[96] Borges, 1956, p. 53.
[97] ¼ öre was not a large amount in Queen Christina's and Palmquist's time. In 1645 it apparently equated to about twenty-five kronor in today's values. Depending on condition, the price of one of these coins on the collectors' market is between 100 and 650 kronor. I paid a significantly lower price, however, because there was a closing-down sale at the shop.
[98] Nils Ludvig Rasmusson, 'Ryska mynt i Sverige och svenska mynt i Ryssland under 1600-talet', *Fornvännen 1940*, Stockholm, 1940, p. 221.
[99] The spy's mission is reminiscent of the instruction in conceptual art, and of the recipe, too, of course.
[100] See further the discussion of repetition, and Derrida's term 'supplement', below.
[101] Antoine Bello, *Les falsificateurs*, Paris, 2007.
[102] 'Nergrävda festligheter till heders igen (Buried festivities back in favour), *Dagens Nyheter*, arts pages, 9.6.2010.
[103] Claire Rosemberg (AFP), 'Excavation throws up 1980s lunch', 2.6.2010, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hW_ZmpEPdtpiexcGmo4jTmbmfDmQ
[104] My sources are Kristin M. Romey, 'God's Hands Did the Devil's Work'. *Archaeology*, 00038113, Jan/Feb 2001, vol. 54, no. 1 and Yoko Taku-Drobin, 'Arkeologen som planterade sina fynd' (The archeologist who planted his finds), *Svenska Dagbladet*, 'Under strecket' comment, 30 October 2001.
[105] I had planned to make a short film about Fujimura within the framework of my dissertation, but the story has found a place here, instead.
[106] Taku-Drobin, 2001, and telephone conversation with Yoko Taku-Drobin, 12 September, 2009.
[107] Telephone conversation with Yoko Taku-Drobin, 12 September, 2009.
[108] Magnus Bärtås, *You Told Me, Work Stories and Video Essays*, ArtMonitor, Gothenburg, 2010, pp. 45–64.
[109] The author can approach art from his or her own angle. W. G. Sebald, for example, used documentary photographs to create stories that were works of fiction.
[110] See further Boris Groys, 'The Retechnization of Art', *Parkett* no. 72, Zurich, 2004,

special pages, p. 5. He goes so far as to say 'the process of documentation is not an external record of artistic decisions, it is intrinsic to the decision-making process itself: no decision without documentation'.
[111] Benjamin Buchloh was quick to see how '[The] aesthetics of administration' in the 1960s and 70s had turned into 'The administrator of aesthetics'. Quoted from Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another, Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, MIT Press London, 2004 (orig. 2002), p. 51.
[112] Though this does not mean that the games played have to be the serious, restrained and controlled ones recommended by Plato. Jacques Derrida, 1981, pp. 154–155.
[113] Cf. my two email-based works *Smart Plants* (2004) and *The Golden Everlasting* (2003) which both 'failed' as such. They were however carried out before artistic research really took off. Works of this type are closely allied to literature and journalism. There are risks, of course, that art projects within the academy will turn into texts about non-realised projects. One then loses contact with current artistic life and closes in on oneself.
[114] Leslie Johnson was at the time the Head of the Valand School of Fine Arts, Gothenburg.
[115] John Le Carré, *A Murder of Quality*, Pocket Books, New York 2002 (orig. 1962), p. 76. This is le Carré's first Smiley novel, by no means as successful as the 'mole' trilogy he wrote some years later, after his breakthrough with *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*.
[116] John Le Carré, *The Little Drummer Girl, Scribner*, New York, 2004 (orig. 1983).
[117] Derrida, 1981, p. 133. For the etymology of pharmakeus see note 59 p. 180.
[118] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965).
[119] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p. 403.
[120] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p.165.
[121] Ambivalence is the same word in Russian and French.
[122] Derrida, 1981, p. 75.
[123] Bakhtin, 2009 (1929), p. 126.
[124] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), pp. 417–420.
[125] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p.323.
[126] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), pp.158–159.
[127] Cf. *Sharing a Square*.
[128] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), p.159.
[129] It is strange that Derrida never refers to Bakhtin in this text, because as I see it they have a good deal in common. For other points of similarity between these philosophers see for example J. F. MacCannel, 'The Temporality of Textuality: Bakhtin and Derrida', *MLN,* vol. 100, no. 5, Comparative Literature, Dec. 1985, pp. 968–988.
[130] Bakhtin, 1984 (1965), pp.11–12.
[131] Lennart Palmqvist, *Utställningsrum* (Exhibition Spaces), Akantus bokförlag, 2005.
[132] The film, made in 1972, is based on Stanisław Lem's novel of the same name (1961).

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