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A publication of –empyre- soft-skinned space

Sydney, Australia

July 2006

A collaboration with documenta 12 magazine project

Featuring special guests

Michele White

Tina Gonsalves

GH Hovagimyan

Susana Mendes Silva

Conor McGarrigle

Jordan Crandall

And moderator Christina McPhee

On the topic

“what is bare life?”

edited linear pdf from the original hypertext archived at <https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2006-July>

Introduction by Christina McPhee, July 1, 2006

This month we are returning to the Documenta Magazine Project www.documenta12.de/english/magazines.html , in which we're collaborating with Documenta to generate a discussion around a theme Documenta calls "bare life".

Background: the editors of Documenta Magazine project approached us last year to integrate a series of three questions into this year's programming (2006), with an eye towards publishing some of our conversation in 2007 in connection with the launch of Documenta 12 , in Kassel, Germany. It's been a pleasure to already launch one such =

conversation, "Is Modernity our Antiquity?" in March 2006. <https://20.mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2006-March>

This month marks our second collaboration with Documenta.

Posts from readers, especially the quiet ones, are most welcome. If you want to post in a language other than English, please feel free to do so, if it's a language we can decode to some extent in Google! We hope to publish print versions of these conversations with Documenta, depending on the wishes and outlook of the Documenta Magazine editorial team.

The increased intensity of global communication and simultaneity makes the challenge of trying to 'be' an individual subject—whatever that is--- continually more complex and overwhelming. - empyre-, if not implicated in this process, is still in the midst of it and perhaps may be, as our founder Melinda Rackham has called it , our 'soft-skinned space', a space of resistance as well, in that we can hope to generate—on the fly--- a contemporary art and new media ethics in a public space we create for ourselves and others. In the March 2006 discussion, a lot of people were talking about an N space, past modernity and post modernity. Maybe that's where we're at now? In the N-space, bare life.

The second question or 'leitmotif' of Documenta 12 is described this way:

“ What is bare life? This second question underscores the sheer vulnerability and complete exposure of being. Bare life deals with that part of our existence from which no measure of security will ever protect us. But as in sexuality, absolute exposure is intricately connected with infinite pleasure. There is an apocalyptic and obviously political dimension to bare life (brought out by torture and the concentration camp). There is, however, also a lyrical or even ecstatic dimension to its freedom for new and unexpected possibilities (in human relations as well as in our relationship to nature or, more generally, the world in which we live). Here and there, art dissolves the radical separation between painful subjection and joyous liberation. But what does that mean for its audiences?”

A group of artists and theorists, from Australia, Ireland, the US, and Portugal, have conspired to join us and to think about this question of 'bare life'.

- empyre- will introduce them one at a time, as each have differing gifts and perspectives. Gradually over the coming days all their voices will make a polyphony with yours, if the -empyrean- space still works.

Our first guest is Michele White, of New Orleans, Louisiana, a witness to Katrina, and a noted scholar whose new book, *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*, is new with MIT Press <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?tid=10922>

Michele White is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Tulane University, New Orleans. She teaches Internet and new media studies, television and film theory, art history and contemporary visual culture, science fiction and technology literature, gender and queer theory, and critical race and postcolonial studies. She has a background in both visual production and theory. Her published articles include: "Where Do You Want to Sit Today? Computer Programmers' Static Bodies and Disability" *Information, Communication and Society* 9, 3 (2006); "My Queer eBay: 'Gay Interest' Photographic Images and the Visual Culture of Buying," in *Everyday eBay: Culture, Collecting, and Desire*, ed. Ken Hillis, Michael Petit, and Nathan Scott Epley. New York: Routledge Press, 2006; "Too Close to See: Men, Women, and Webcams," *New Media & Society* 5, 1 (2003); "The Aesthetic of Failure: Net Art Gone Wrong," *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 7, 1 (2002); "Representations of People," *Ethics and Information Technology* 4, 3 (2002); "Where Is the Louvre," *Space and Culture – The Journal* 4/5 (2000); and "Visual Pleasure in Textual Places: Gazing in Multi-User Object-Oriented Worlds," *Information, Communication, and Society* 2 (1999).

In her new book, *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*, White considers how spectatorial positions are produced and structured through such practices as interface design, digital imaging, net art, White poses hybrid critical models and suggests how theories of art viewing, authorship, feminist and psychoanalytic film, gender and queer studies, hypertext, photographic reproductions, television, and postcolonial and critical race studies offer ways to understand Internet sites and spectatorship. The critical models indicated in this book are intended to support ongoing new media research and production strategies.

Her current research includes two book projects: *Buy It Now: Lessons from Imaging eBay* and *Elements of the Internet: Rethinking the Network and Information Technology Workers*. More information is available at <http://www.michelewhite.org>.

Please welcome Michele and join us for 'bare life' on -empyre-

1 Jul 2006 19:54:43 -0700 (PDT) From: M White <mwhite@michelewhite.org> To: empyre@lists.cofa.unsw.edu.au

I am looking forward to participating in this dialog.

Giorgio Agamben's conception of bare life, or life exposed to and closer to death because of inaccessible social and political powers, provides further opportunities to consider the position of politically empowered and valued subjects, how "masterful" positions render others as less important, and the ways socially produced identity positions—including class, gender, race, and sexuality—organize individuals in relationship to different degrees of bare life. The following considerations of New Orleanians suggests how communities and governmental structures can situate individuals in relationship to bare life and the ways these culturally devalued bodies may gain power by rereading, manipulating, and diminishing other individuals. Such behaviors encourage a combination of Giorgio Agamben's and Roger M. Buegel's considerations of bare life with gender, feminist, queer, and postcolonial theories.

I should note that I am writing this while looking out on the lush greenery and vernacular architecture of my New Orleans neighborhood—in what I am constantly reminded is "hurricane season." The news provided a constant countdown to the season—"it's 30 minutes until hurricane season" and reminded viewers of bare life (past and future) and erased it because nothing happened when the clock struck. My mostly air conditioned view is punctuated by the sound of nail guns, the strained bodies of workers fixing my neighbors' and landladies' homes, and a series of fears that none of "us" want to fully mention or explain but that we constantly talk about. This view is also fairly recent to me (I moved here in July 2005, evacuated, moved some more, and returned). As the following critique may show, it is not that easy to be

Orleanianeanian (particularly someone who both lives in and is sometimes critical of the city) while caught between the bare life of communities, the drive of individuals to regain power by regulating who can speak, and the constant articulation of “real” Orleaniansanians. Ironically, during a diversity conference in New Orleans last month, I was chastised and encouraged as a “visitor” to be more sensitive the city and the struggles and pains of New Orleans.

As grrrrl and an academic, I have been using the phrase “big hard” to represent the mythos of New Orleans as the Big Easy and the current struggles that all residents and evacuees face with navigating an infrastructure that is still partially broken and continues to fail on a regular basis. The big hard also represents the struggles residents face when correlating the media production of New Orleans with the diverse places we live. What is also hard about New Orleans is how easy it is to forget our recent losses and pasts when eating at a terrific restaurant (yes we have tons of restaurants but find difficulties in staffing them because of the expenses and limits of the housing market), listening to some jazz, or admiring the glorious architecture in neighborhoods that have not flooded. It is difficult to correlate the everyday shifts between individuals’ experiences—although these shifts are to different degrees—with the big hard, bare life, and situated pleasures and rewards. I also use the phrase “the big hard” in order to represent how empowered masculinities reinstated with popular media indications that women are simply the object of the gaze and are stupid when they willingly exchange views of their bodies, or “flash,” for cheap beads in the French Quarter and other New Orleans locations. Such narratives displace the ways women visually boast about their place in a visual economy of looks by acquiring and displaying large numbers of beads. There are also other gendered narratives at work in New Orleans’ tourism districts and such festivals as Mardi Gras. Men parade through the French Quarter with gigantic bead balls that they buy from vendors—visually boasting about their masculinity. However, this gendered performance is quite different than masculinities that are produced when poorly paid men, who come to New Orleans at their own expense to document women flashing for beads, fail to achieve the large sums of money in the video industry and the sexual appeal that they dreamed of. The tourism, gender, and sexuality play in the Quarter, as my colleague Vicki Mayer has suggested, is quite different when the position of these flash producers is acknowledged.

Bare life is also an apt phrase when considering individuals who had to stay in New Orleans and outlying areas during the hurricane and the more devastating flooding because of health problems, poverty, lack of notification, unavailability of transportation, and experiences with many unnecessary and expensive evacuations. The car culture and wealth of some Orleanians have created a system in which there is no mass transportation for the more disenfranchised citizens to use in evacuating. Bare life represents the struggles and dismissals, from a media culture and country that have questioned the viability, costs, and time taken by Orleanians trying to rebuild their homes. Yet, bare life also represents the experiences of the underpaid or even unpaid, undocumented, and uninsured workers who are rebuilding New Orleans and many other cities. These individuals are mutually dependent but they do not receive equitable rewards or similar cultural and community positions for their work. While New Orleans is currently relying on a huge influx of workers from Central and South America to rebuild, the US federal government mostly ignores these workers and is developing further legislation that can be used to expulse them from the “country” once their work is done. In most cases, these workers have not been invited into our social fabric and are imagined as temporary visitors. The bare life and struggles of Orleanians have created an even more temporary and outcast society. There are clear hierarchies and power structures among these arrangements.

With the flooding of New Orleans and extended evacuation after hurricane Katrina, Orleanians faced the challenge of articulating their place and identity from somewhere else. Evacuated disempowered New Orleans residents established place-based connections and provided assistance by using the NOLA.com forums, which are associated with the area’s *Times Picayune* newspaper. Posters to the NOLA.com forums worked to save individuals and update residents. However, these posters also used newfound authority to articulate a posting ethos. They indicated that only New Orleans residents could understand the city and only positive comments were welcome. Concerns about the environment, current government and NOLA’s infrastructure were discouraged. Critical commentary about the city was countered by indications that individuals should stop posting, were traitors, and should not live in NOLA. There were also suggestions that people who had made no “positive” contribution—and such individuals were often associated with housing projects and assumed to be black—were no longer welcome in New Orleans. Through such posts, place refigured in an area that appeared otherwise desolate by stripping some individuals of the ability to talk about New Orleans as home and as an aspect of their identity. The vibrancy and value of New Orleans communities was

articulated by negating the worth of other lives and opinions. Place is formed and the city of New Orleans is reconstituted in these settings expelling different opinions, alternate visions of the city, and the "other."

The comments on the NOLA.com forums suggest the difficulties in speaking of and from a place after media representations and individuals have fixed its meanings. When people ask me about the city, it is always difficult to imagine how the varied cities that exist, those that can now only be imagined, and the nostalgic visions that we still hold can satisfy their ideas about this place that we call New Orleans. The media exposure of New Orleans has not allowed disempowered to speak since those figured as the most abandoned can only speak in ways that are structured and produced by the media. Roger M. Buerger intriguingly suggests, "absolute exposure is intricately connected with infinite pleasure." To further understand these connections, considerations of the array of bodies, looks, and forms of exposure that produce these pleasures are needed. Looking and being looked at can be satisfying. However, extreme and long lasting forms of pain also accompany such things as regulating stares and medical gazes. Exposure should be correlated to the histories of visibility and invisibility that different cultures and individuals face. Individuals that are described as CEO, tenured faculty member, citizen, adult, artist, or married are likely to associate exposure with different pleasures and risks than those felt by the undocumented worker, adjunct, "alien," juvenile, fan producer, and sex worker. I am interested in considering the different ways that bodies are put on display, the various demands for exposure, and what it means when people decide or are forced to become visible in the world. Culture does not understand the flash of women's breasts, men's breasts (that are supposed to be called something else), and men's penises to have the same meanings. In future posts, I hope to consider questions of exposure and pleasure in relationship to feminist film theory, the feminist "sex debates, postcolonial bodies, postcolonial theory, and queer studies. —Michele

From: Ana Valdes Sun, 02 Jul 2006 10:39:01 -0000

Dear Emypre!

I have been lurking for a while and I have not been participating very actively, I guess, for not having English as mother language and feel my intents to express myself or my ideas can be made in a poorer way through English. I am a writer and cultural activist, born in South America but living in Sweden since 28 years back. My mother language is Spanish and now it's Swedish which is my best language. Michele White's excellent text triggered in me an answer, most based on the use of Giorgio Agamben. I am working with Agamben on the issues of memory and reparative justice, the idea of the people who survived Auschwitz as "witness", with the responsibility of carrying testimony on what happened to them and to their fellow prisoners. I was in a prison as political prisoner during four years and it's still the fact which most distinctly made me reflect upon life and existence, two quite different issues. We merely lived during the time of the prison, our most elementary needs were covered, we got food but it was often not edible, we slept but always with lights on and the constant interruptions of soldiers with gun machines going berserk in our dorms and throwing away our blankets. We were not allowed to have books or newspapers or radio or television, we were forced to work in the fields with dogs and patrols watching us, we were tortured and humiliated. But, did we exist or did we only live? For me, and more clearly after these experience, to live is to be able to full participate in society, with all your rights, the right to exercise your citizenship (as Saskia Sassen and Will Kymlicka state it in their essays about multicultural citizenship) and most important of all, the right to dissent. To me the right to dissent is the only one which is inalienable. —Ana

From: Christina McPhee <christinal12@earthlink.net> Date: Sat, 1 Jul 2006 22:37:46 -0700

Michele wrote:

Roger M. Buergel intriguingly suggests, “absolute exposure is intricately connected with infinite pleasure.” To further understand these connections, considerations of the array of bodies, looks, and forms of exposure that produce these pleasures are needed. considerations to happen where? in contemporary art? in interactive new media?

Looking and being looked at can be satisfying. However, extreme and long lasting forms of pain also accompany such things as regulating stares and medical gazes. Exposure should be correlated to the histories of visibility and invisibility that different cultures and individuals face. Individuals that are described as CEO, tenured faculty member, citizen, adult, artist, or married are likely to associate exposure with different pleasures and risks than those felt by the undocumented worker, adjunct, “alien,” juvenile, fan producer, and sex worker. I am interested in considering the different ways that bodies are put on display, the various demands for exposure, and what it means when people decide or are forced to become visible in the world.

I wonder, if those distinctions start to mesh and blur when everyone is under suspicion, under another gaze, a gaze from the state wanting to subject everyone to itself via the state of emergency? in the name of security? are there ‘occupied bodies’ in New Orleans... (sounds like a question for the Vampire LeStat :-), but seriously. New Orleans used to be known as the “Big Easy.” Post-Katrina, Michele, you’ve turned that idiom upside down with your exploration of ‘ the Big Hard’ :

As grrrrl grrrrl and an academic, I have been using the phrase “big hard” to represent the mythos of New Orleans as the Big Easy and the current struggles that all residents and evacuees face with navigating an infrastructure that is still partially broken and continues to fail on a regular basis. The big hard also represents the struggles residents face when correlating the media production of New Orleans with the diverse places we live. ...

It is difficult to correlate the everyday shifts between individuals’ experiences—although these shifts are to different degrees—with the big hard, bare life, and situated pleasures and rewards. I also use the phrase “the big hard” in order to represent how empowered masculinities reconstituted with popular media indications that women are simply the object of the gaze and are stupid when they willingly exchange views of their bodies, or “flash,” for cheap beads in the French Quarter and other New Orleans locations. Such narratives displace the ways women visually boast about their place in a visual economy of looks by acquiring and displaying large numbers of beads.

is the big hard also something like, being an object of desire/gaze from the media (so you can say what you think the journalists want to hear when you get an interview on the street_?

Giorgio Agamben is a political philosopher who has written on ‘bare life’ . Agamben looks at a state of emergency: in your world, in New Orleans, its a state of emergency of a special kind in which the infrastructure of the city is fragmented , still partially broken and continues to fail on a regular basis.

are people neutralized, ‘are stupid’ in the ‘big hard’ ?

- cm

From christinal12@earthlink.net Sun Jul

2 17:00:28 2006

dear -emptyreans- Joining Michelle White, please welcome Tina Gonsalves (AU)

Gonsalves' (<http://www.tinagonsalves.com>) creative investigation integrates Art, Science and Technology. For over a decade she has used video, painting, animation and interactivity to explore complex emotional landscapes. Rich, painterly video abstractions create emotionally potent narratives that often seduce or repel the viewer. Converging science and art, she attempts to enrich the public understanding of the hidden emotional language of the body. Converging technology and video, she creates embodied interactive audiovisual experiences, discovering new ways of experiencing the internal body and the external environments.

The theme; 'externalising the internal - revealing what lay beneath the skin', has threaded Gonsalves' artistic investigations. From 1995 to 2001, Gonsalves worked with diagnostic imaging departments of hospitals within Australia, gaining access to diagnostic imaging machines and resulting imagery. Her work evolved over this period from interpretative representations of the body using diagnostic imaging to exploring complex emotional landscapes using moving imagery and sound. She created many short single channel films that examined emotional states and emotional contagion. She aspired to show people in the throws of emotion, at times using her own body and emotional experiences as the catalyst for the work. This resulted in intimate works that were screened, televised and exhibited extensively internationally.

In 2002, Gonsalves pursued research to explore how her artwork could probe the audiences' emotional body. She investigated the use of bio-metric sensors as triggers for emotional video narratives, leading to both more immersive installations, as well as intimate ubiquitous works.

Gonsalves' work in mobile and wearable technology investigates ways of using these technologies to creating new, more empathic social interactions. Her projects often attempt to disrupt codes of social behaviours, with an agenda to create more intimate and 'authentic' communication between each other ("Medulla Intimata" , 2004; collaborator Tom Donaldson, "Tryst "2006/2007). She sees mobile technology as a vehicle for the dissolution of the barriers between art, the social and the environmental, creating new art experiences integrated into everyday life.

Searching for more empirical foundations to the emotional cues that drive her work, she initiated a collaboration with affective neuroscientist, Dr. Hugo Critchley. With Dr. Critchley, Gonsalves was awarded an AHRC/Ace arts and science fellowship. Currently, through her role as Artist in Residence at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, she is investigating the mechanisms through which emotions are triggered and shaped. Critchley and Gonsalves are discerning the physiological signatures of emotional states to create software and artwork that recognize and respond to internal emotions. Gonsalves work has been screened and exhibited extensively internationally including the Banff Centre for the Arts, Siggraph, USA; ISEA 2004; European Media Arts Festival 1997-2006; Artsway, UK; IAMAS, Japan; The Australian Centre For Photography, Sydney; Barbican, UK; Pompidou Centre, France; DEAF 2004, ICA, London and ACMI, Australia.

She has taken part in many Artist in Residence programs including The Banff New Media Institute in Canada, the Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague, Asialink artist in residence at the New Media faculty Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, (Pro) duction residency at Artsway and the Advanced Institute of Media Arts and Sciences residency in Japan.

Her music videos for labels Universal, BMG, EMI, and Festival Mushroom Records have been frequently televised worldwide. Tina's single channel video is represented exclusively by Novamedia Arts, and 2D prints are represented by the Helen Gory Galerie in Melbourne, Australia.

-Christina

Sun, 02 Jul 2006 17:07:29 -0000

Tina Gonsalves writes:

Hi everyone

A few thoughts from a rare 30 degree day in London.

My work has always explored aspects of the intimacies and vulnerabilities of being human. Most of us go through life hiding our wounds and vulnerabilities, or trying as best we can to conceal them. Through the use of video, sound and technology, my work often tries to expose the fragilities, looking at the emotions and feelings often felt when we become exposed.

Nothing seems as private as the bodily experience of raw emotion. Emotions are a common thread that every human being can read, understand, and share. Emotions influence all aspect of behaviour and subjective experience; grabbing attention, enhancing or blocking memories and swaying logical thought. Emotions spread in social collectives almost by contagion. In cohesive social interactions, we are highly attuned to subtle and covert emotional signals, Our behaviours often mirror each other in minute detail. At times, we may voluntarily suppress our emotional reactions, temporarily disguising our intentions or vulnerability, though 'true' emotions are nevertheless evident in a pattern of internal bodily responses that set an underlying tone for behaviour. It is these internal emotion responses that I am currently investigating with affective neuroscientist Dr. Hugo Critchley and through my role as AHRC research fellow and artist in resident at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience and Functional Imaging Laboratory at UCL, London. Together, we are creating video installations (FEEL SERIES 2006/2007) that respond to the emotional feelings of the audience. Using a range of cues, (for example sweat, heart rate, breath, prosody, movement, facial emotion recognition, temperature shifts) we are discerning the physiological signatures of emotional states to create software that recognize and respond to subtle changes in the body. We are then creating potent emotional narratives that create [or] engender emotional changes in the body. These are tested in the lab for their salient effect on the body. As the emotional language of the body creates the narratives of the work itself, we are tapping into ideas of bio-feedback. As the audience adjusts their internal body, they adjust the video that surrounds them. Seeing, feeling and interacting with the work allows viewers to gain a personal insight and perspective to their emotional reactions. We are then interested in ways of influencing the emotional state of the audience, entraining different feeling states within the viewer. For example, how can you bring someone from sadness to happiness? It has usually been in my most vulnerable moments when I have truly felt the joy of others, and also true fear of life and all it offers. My senses are highlighted. The feeling of vulnerability elicits a very visceral reaction in my body. A knot builds in my stomach, my heart speeds up, I feel a little faint, hands begin to tremble, voice quavers, face flushes. Feeling of tightness rise in my throat. Tears well up in my eyes, and tumble down my cheeks. I can no longer disguise my emotional state. My autonomous nervous system exposes it for all to see. All who surround me are now confronted with my emotions. Some people pretend not to notice. Other people try to make it go away. My work often tries to highlight how we deal with emotions in social environments. "Medulla Intimata" (2004; collaborator Tom Donaldson, is a sensor based digital video jewelry prototype that monitors the wearer's internal emotional state by using prosody. Video self portraiture is transmitted real time to the screen of the jewelry in response to the emotional tone of the wearers voice. Through video, the wearer reveals more than they usually might, and repressed and hidden emotions leak into the world of polite conversation. The jewelry changed the way people interacted. When people communicated me, they felt my jewellery was very vulnerable, so therefore in return, people began to have more intimate, deeper and more creative conversations. I enjoy Joseph Beuys' comment about what it was to be an artist. "You weren't showing your magnificence and your wealth of ideas and your huge creativity, you were showing your vulnerability. And it was your vulnerability that people picked up on, the perception of your vulnerability as a person and as an artist that sparked the creativity in other people." At one time or another, we are vulnerable, all scared. I create work that attempts to allow us to become more sensitive to our feelings. If we embraced vulnerability would we become more compassionate, more creative, more present? -Tina

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Tue Jul 4 03:06:52 2006

From: M White <mwhite@michelewhite.org>

Thanks to Ana and Christina for their productive questions. I was particularly struck by Ana's consideration of Agamben, and important questions about agency, that were thought through her own imprisonment. I wonder if it is possible to exist without being recognized? What does existence mean when it is only negatively and cruelly constituted through torture and dismissal? How do I, as an individual and critic, offer Ana comfort while attending to her critical consideration through the self? Offers of physical or emotional support, while I mean them, end up seeming unreal.

In my own experiences of being figured as “victim,” even though I watched the flooding of New Orleans from the weird space of my childhood bedroom, I have found that I cannot successfully answer people’s questions about the current and past places of New Orleans. People often want some quick answer that echoes the media’s “truth.” Most of us in the city want to talk both of something else (please!) and in a different way. I certainly find it hard that people both want me to recycle through the old story and then turn away from the length of the narrative.

All my best,

Michele

From Ana Valdes Tue Jul 4 03:27:00 2006

Subject: Re: [-empyre-] on existence

Hi Michele, really interesting to speak about the “victim”. As Agamben writes in Homo Sacer, the victim or the doomed are sacred, they become “divine”, they break or expand the boundaries between themselves and the others. I am now rereading one of Euripides most fascinating tragedies, “Alkestis”. The story of the young queen who chooses to die instead of her husband struck me, why did she chose to become a victim? Was it a proof of love, sacrifice, denial or a proof of strength? I think the challenge to all of us is to discover in all our individual situations the “border” between our conception of ourselves and the sheer existence. You did that in New Orleans, I did that in the jail, other people do that in sickness, or in the lost of someone dear...I was in the Palestinian refugee camp of Jenin in April 2002. A photographer colleague and me were among the few civilian who succeeded after climbing the mountains for hours to go into the city, which had been besieged and shelled by the Israelian army for ten days (very similar to what happen in Gaza today), we saw the destruction of the city, bombed and bulldozed, we smelled the sweet scent of the bodies buried under the tons of stones. People there were sitting in the ruins of their destroyed houses, what kind of life they levt? This is the link to my texts and Ceciliias images, <http://this.is/Jenin> -jAna

From christina.l2@earthlink.net Tue Jul 4 05:48:14 2006

The new film by American filmmaker Liza Johnson, “South of Ten,” was screened recently at the Flaherty Film Seminar at Vassar College. Liza was present for the seminar Q and A afterwards and had some things to say about this problem of how to tell the ‘story’ of trauma after Katrina. The film is so new I haven’t been able to find much online reference to it, but here is some info on the filmmaker herself: http://www.zoominfo.com/directory/Johnson_Liza_158388749.htm

South of Ten (2006) synopsis:

“Using the decimated landscape of the Mississippi Gulf coast as its backdrop, South of Ten restages quotidian activities of survivors of Hurricane Katrina. A girl flees a makeshift tent city. A man finds a trombone. A worker watches the ocean from under a moving house, while its owner gazes at the view from her shifting living room. In ten very short stories, residents of the destroyed Mississippi Gult Coast act out atmospheric scenes of everyday life and the relentlessness of labor in their extreme terrain.” (52nd Flaherty Film Seminar, IFS, Inc <http://www.flahertyseminar.org/>)

From my notes on Liza’s comments at the seminar—hopefully not too garbled:

"Their bodies bear witness to that [trauma]. [I decided to] ask less of them in terms of [verbally] testifying...were ready to feel yet not ready to be put into language."

"They [survivors] were very interested in being 'seen', willing to perform" i. e. to give the news media what they wanted, paralleling Michele's observation (above) that spectators [after the fact] "often want some quick answer that echoes the media's 'truth'." People often want some quick answer that echoes the media's "truth." To get around being told what the survivors assumed she'd want to hear as a media person, Liza developed, with the survivors, a series of scenes that 'has no news hook' to register "affect/shared feeling/ textures/waiting" She did this by asking survivors to pick a typical activity (like chopping wood for cooking fires, riding a bicycle down a street of devastated houses). She filmed the staged activities as performed by t by the people there. They were not professional actors. Rather they acted out through their bodies and gestures what the reality of living in the aftermath of Katrina is. –Christina

From tina@tinagonsalves.com Tue Jul 4 06:07:57 2006

Ana and Michele - thanks for sharing your story. I have a hard time knowing to respond. My role here seems to be to talk from my experiences of being an artist, and my first response to reading your story is to wonder why I bother being an artist. Today, it seems rather inconsequential and irrelevant. At the same time, for me, it often feels limiting to use verbal language to describe the experience of pain, vulnerability, exposure – how do you describe the feeling of the hollowness in your chest or gut when everything that protects you is stripped away? I guess for me, the act of creating an image, sound, video or through performance often enables me to recognize my own pain, and through an image, I might be able to translate those feelings so others can also recognize their own pain, hurt, vulnerability. In that way the work becomes some sort of conduit for viewers to recognize their own emotional feelings. My video work is often created in fast and frenetic vulnerable moments. Often, they are left raw, messy and by not 'refining' them, I imagine I am allowing others to view my own personal flaws and vulnerabilities. I feel a little fearful when people view it, but some how that rawness feels a little more authentic, like its beginning to strip away the residues from the onslaughts that the world delivers, penetrate the sediments.. slowly breaking down the walls that keep much of life safely outside. When I work, the more raw it is, the more it returns a potent pleasure, a feeling of truthfulness, openness. There is room for accident and mistakes. There is room for surprise.

I guess, in my installation and video works, I want people to become more sensitive to themselves, to their breath, their pulse, their emotional feelings. "vulnerability" and "sensitivity" is often regarded in a negative way, but with my work, I am trying to see sensitivity as an asset that enriches each day. Being able to cry, to share the pain, to engage more intensively in feelings. Be more compassionate.

But then again creativity seems a luxury when you just managing to exist. Actually, I dont know where it fits in. –Tina

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Tue Jul 4 06:08:18 2006 Return-Path: <mwhite@michelewhite.org>

Ana, thanks for your important texts and Cecilia Parsberg's images. Such practices make me wonder about Buerger's indication that "absolute exposure is intricately connected with infinite pleasure." How is this pleasure figured among desires to look at unpleasant occurrences, comfort in knowing such occurrences didn't happen to the individual and a belief that they could never happen "here," the desire to look away or be "blind" to such events, individuals' needs to tell or show their stories, and resistance to being imaged in bare life and pain? When we view images of catastrophe and torture, what should our position be as viewers? Certainly there has been important critical writing on the ways that the bare life of subjects can be further compromised by being imaged. As photographers, writers, critics, how do we keep the desires of our subjects and the need for critical conversation ethically in tension?

I was struck by the following passage in your essay and the process through which the image is taken: "An older woman wearing a white scarf on her head and dressed in typical Palestinian dress, with a beautiful ochre colour, talks to us in Arabic. She wants to tell her story. Her house has been destroyed; her pots and pans smashed. The soldiers destroyed cabinets, which she was still paying off. At first, she does not want to be photographed. She says she has not been able to wash herself for twenty days. We compare our dusty clothes, and find that hers are cleaner than ours are. At last, she agrees to have her photo taken."

During a visit to The Ogden Museum of Southern art this summer, I briefly viewed Thomas Neff's "Come Hell and High Water: Portraits of Hurricane Katrina Survivors." However, I had to run out of the gallery because the stories of people's actions during the flooding (and maybe the images) were overwhelming. I am a "trained art historian" but I couldn't see, let alone evaluate, the images. I couldn't view the show because it made me deeply sad, physically sick, and panicked in a way that was already woven into New Orleans life. Personally, I wasn't ready to perform these feelings in front of the museum's opening crowd. I know that such a show needs to be shown elsewhere but I have begun to doubt the political purpose of the many many artistic representations and shows of New Orleans flooding and losses, which appear in the city. Are there other or more global ways of working through our feelings? And given the reactions to questions about New Orleans, I wonder if anyone wants to hear and see these images. My feeling is that this disinterest in other truths makes their showing in other areas and a concomitant resistance to the pleasures of exposure even more imperative.

Since moving back to New Orleans, I have wanted to take pictures of the strange occurrences, tableaux, and visceral mess that frames our everyday lives. However, I have never managed to even carry my camera. When contemplating the possible images, I have been stymied by the real use of such images, how would quality (resolution and "good" shots) figure into these images, and where would they justly be displayed? Yet each time that I drive to work, an old 1950s kitchenette table that sits and rusts on the side of the road strikes me. To me, it represents the loss of things and places that continue in the area. It also stands for the huge piles of trash and former lives that sit constantly in some areas and seemingly will never be fully thrown away. The table has also become a sign for me because intentionally or not, its arrangement and series of things that sit on it change from day to day. One day there is a dead plant on it and then a 1950s ice bucket—hip but stained and these objects are rearranged, disappear, and are replaced by other things. Last week, I was thrilled and saddened on my drive back from work when the table was not there. Then I noticed that someone had just turned it upside down.

Ana's consideration of existence also reminds me of medical imaging issues—particularly as they relate to women. I wonder if Tina would comment on the ways she uses technologies that tend to image women but prevent women from seeing or having any control of their depictions? The ultrasounds that pregnant women receive are one of the few instances where women are allowed to see their own depictions. In most cases [other ultrasounds, CAT scans, MRIs] the images are held back from the "patient" or technicians and doctors refuse to read what the individual is seeing on the screen. I requested to see a CAT scan and the technician wouldn't let me view it without my doctor's permission. What does it mean when we lose control of our bodies in such ways and can be seen by others but cannot "look" at "ourselves?" I am reminded of Roland Barthes' indication that other individuals can see us but we can never see the full view of self except through such mediating structures as mirrors and photography. —Michele

From Ana Valdes Tue Jul 4 07:22:30 2006

Interesting thoughts about the camera as protection or hindrance. In the text Cecilia wrote—"The pictures I didn't take"—she writes about how difficult it was to take pictures of the mayhem or the dead bodies or the young children digging the dead with their bare hands. She writes too about how the camera was her only protection, the shield between her eyes and the images of the destruction. I know well the Chilean/American visual artist Alfredo Jaar. He lives in New York since many years but he has been working with African issues for a long time. He travelled to Rwanda just after one of the worst genocides on our time had stopped,

he got the chance to interview survivors, people who saw their whole family be cut up with machetes and themselves left as dead in a pile of bodies. But Alfredo took never a picture of the mass graves or from the morgues or from the piles of skulls, he took images of laughing children, life goes on and New Orleans, Jenin, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, all those places which were place of death and mourning goes on, as life does.

http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts/rwanda_3412.jsp

- Ana

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Tue Jul 4 08:36:38 2006

Tina, I completely understand your feelings about not having the authority (and ironically) position in relationship to bare life that allows you to speak. However, I also think that we should avoid the ways culture (I hope that I am not contributing to this) likes to silence certain people—particularly those that dissent. Many of us have noticed a tendency among people from other places to tell us that we are “lucky.” “You are lucky that your stuff/house wasn’t flooded” and “you are lucky to have a job,” which somehow suggests we don’t deserve one. Certainly, things could be drastically worse but suggesting that people are “lucky” also erases the ways they live in these situations and silences them. The suggestion is that their luckiness prevents them from “authentically” speaking about the experience. Most of the people saying these things are in fact “luckier” if such distinctions were useful. I want to avoid a tendency that I noticed at a feminist media studies conference (and that I associate with the continued cultural devaluation of women) where women tended to use the dismissive term “just” when representing themselves: “I am just a grad student,” “just an independent scholar,” “just an assistant professor,” It seem to me that art production provides one way to think critically about the world and that such tactics and potential forms of resistance should not be underestimated.

I also wonder, what happens when the silenced, bare life, and the tortured try to speak/write/be visible and no one answers? Our lack of reply might be guilt, disinterest, feeling “lucky,” being told we are “lucky” and that the event does not apply to us, or fear of contamination but this lack of acknowledgment has serious consequences. I know that I have been unable to answer and that worries me.

- Michele

From tina@tinagonсалves.com Tue Jul 4 08:54:00 2006

A major thread through my work is has always been intersections between medicine, art and technology. Like art, the practice of medicine is loaded with grief, intimacy, vulnerability and exposure. Sick people must bare their fragility, reveal intimacies of body and mind, The sick person is often in a dependent, apprehensive, vulnerable, and exploitable state. With the development of the Xray, the internal was externalised, revolutionizing science (and the way we looked at the world) with its ability to reveal what was invisible to the naked eye. It gave us insight into the workings our body, allowing us to build a more intimate relationship with it.

But within the consulting room, these medical images are only briefly shown to the depicted individual and the practitioner rarely explains them. The doctor becomes the all powerful decoder. The patient’s view is rarely sought. There seems to be a one directional flow of information, with the medical professional as an active transmitter and the depicted individual as a passive receiver. To the patient, the medical images of their depicted selves can seem swathed in mysticism and mystery, holding an almost prophetic quality when it comes to detecting serious diseases. Does the image reveal life or death?

With 3 dimensional ultrasounds, expectant parents can purchase high-resolution video sequences of the foetus, as foetal keepsake videos’ . The diagnostic image is transposed to a recreational image. Beyond the purpose of ascertaining foetal well-being and promoting parental

bonding, the technique changes the private experience of the mother and foetus into a public exhibit. Also, the advances in foetal imaging due to ultrasound impacted on society with its potential to underwrite anti-abortion arguments.

Mediating our inner body has also distanced us from it. The medical community is inclined to decode the diagnostic image rationally, objectively, and deny the patient's sensory perception, often creating a discord between what is seen and what is felt. Often the body is rendered alien, as the doctor fragments the body, the patient becomes a specific illness, the dysfunction they suffer. I often wonder if the diagnostic image serve to distance the doctors from their patient's often smelly, vulnerable and messy conditions? Has society has become far too sanitized or clinical and that people no longer engage with the messiness of being human? In the 16th Century, it is said the doctor would use all of his senses to diagnose, often tasting the patients urine in order to diagnose the disease. As the body becomes mediated, the body is then being used as a commodity, a thing consumed. Our bodies unique biological characteristics have become commodities to be sold and traded. The way we smell, our eye structure, our fingerprints, our voice patterns and conversations, sweat, heart rate - are being mapped and digitized as part of a new industry.

In my work, earlier collage works were expressions of subjective emotional response to the beauty and complexity found in the 'medicalised' images of the body, sort of more basic reinterpretations. Some of these questioned the 'nature' of communication, commenting on science and the medical profession in often satirical, subversive, or ambivalent ways. I then started to use video to look at how the rational medical gaze separates images of the body from an awareness of other cultural, sensual, erotic, social, spiritual, emotional and historical conditions and contexts. A lot of earlier video work explored this fragmentation, and the angst this caused. Other video works, such as "Discharge" and "I Am You", attempted to engage the way the contemplation of dreams, emotional states, spiritual awareness and notions of self can inform the artistic reconstruction and representation of modern diagnostic images. With "Loss Series" 2002, I began using my own emotions to create the work itself. to attempt to translate the emotional interiority of the body. I then attempted to mimic the technique, using technology to monitor the audiences' emotional body to drive the emotional narratives. I then began to use wireless and intimate wearable technologies as biofeedback devices, to allow better relationships with our own bodies; --looking at the role of art experiences to create healing.

Ultimately, through artistically reinterpreting the diagnostic images and techniques from a subjective and emotional perspective, my work attempts to emancipate the diagnostic image, imagining how emotional and individually designed images could potentially play a role in future healthcare, by inserting the 'lived' body into the image. imagined, by providing images that did not display solely factual information, this would provide a basis to further inform complementary modes of communication between the practitioner and the patient in the future.

Tue, 04 Jul 2006 03:14:07 -0000 Gianni Wise writes,

Michelle's points are a good counter to those many arguments we hear against taking a position - it's how we voice it that counts - I found myself a while ago having lived in Chile at the end of the dictatorship beginning to write about my the pain I saw around me in the hearts of people I loved and admired. I was also accused of being a part time radical with no authority to speak up. Yes I was from the safe north etc. I was wondering what you meant by culture in the context of your statement "I also think that we should avoid the ways culture (I hope that I am not contributing to this) likes to silence certain people"

Gianni Wise <http://gianniwise.blogspot.com/>

From mendi@blacknetart.com Tue Jul 4 15:35:14 2006

Thanks to all who have been participating in this interesting and challenging discussion so far. I've been thinking about Tina's ideas about mediation while thinking about the question of where art fits in. They reminded me of a poem by Robert Pinsky called "Poem of Disconnected Parts". I'm excerpting it, and hopefully you'll be able to follow since it is, literally, a poem of disconnected parts, but there's a link to the whole poem below.

"At Robben Island the political prisoners studied. They coined the motto Each one Teach one.

In Argentina the torturers demanded the prisoners Address them always as 'Profesor.'

Many of my friends are moved by guilt, but I Am a creature of shame, I am ashamed to say.

Culture the lock, culture the key."

http://www.poetrymagazine.org/magazine/0206/poem_177610.html

It seems to me that one purpose of art is to make sure that as long as culture is used as a lock, we can find a way to use culture as a key.

- Mendi

From: Tina Gonsalves <tina@tinagonsalves.com>

Michel I agree with what you say. But, for me, the feeling of having a 'voice' and the potency of that voice, changes daily for me. Some days I feel my voice is strong. Others not.

I do believe that pain, suffering, is something that links everyone. Everyone has been hurt , known pain. We are all vulnerable. I am a big believer that everyone has the authority to speak about Bare life. I have had times where all that I have depended on has stripped away. To cope, I lost myself in my practice, and tried to make sense of it through the act of creating. Some days I thought the work I produced was hopeless, other days brilliant. But those opinions also changed daily, and only time could allow me to judge the work. What I did have to do, was create, then not look at it for six months or so. If I kept re-working it, it slowly became sort of clinical and sanitized, sort of neutral.

I guess what I am trying to say is, is that my internal environment creates my perception of my external environment. It is always changing, always fluctuates. Some days, my voice is strong, some days it seems diluted. We are constantly affected by, and attuned to the world around us. Powerful emotions can simmer beneath the threshold of awareness, impacting on how I perceive and act, even though I have no idea they are at work. In daily encounters, people automatically and continuously synchronize with the facial expressions, voices, postures, movements of others. Some happen in milli-seconds. In essence, we are carriers, dancing with each other in harmonized body language, infecting each other with our emotions. Through these behavioural patterns, as you suggested, hierarchical and social power structures emerge.

Today, searching for fashionable beauty and youth, plastic surgery has evolved to the point that people (with enough money) can receive augmentation to lips, penises, vaginas, breasts, waists and buttocks. Nerves can be cauterised, so the blushing action can be arrested. Through surgery, we can conceal the body's involuntary responses, the ones which are meant to reveal emotional stress or elevation. Botox causes temporary paralysis of localized muscles, making the face lose expression, and therefore the reading of someone' s emotions harder. As flesh is sculpted with lasers and scalpels, faces and bodies become a dynamic, ongoing works in process - an amour to hide the bodies natural =response to emotions. The face becomes harder to read, harder to show joy, fear - the face sort of becomes a mask.

My current work tries to look at this relationship of how the internal body changes the way experience the world, our daily experience, How the external changes our internal feelings. Why is it that some days there is a huge clarity and vision, and others days it feels dulled and diluted. As an artist, I feel I need to be aware to those daily changes in the way I look at the world, and how I make sense of it. I thinks its important to admit feeling hopeless and dull as much as its important to celebrate feeling strong, salient.

From dkellysocialchange@yahoo.com Tue Jul 4 16:55:37 2006 this is a wonderful discussion, so tentative, skinless, and now with a riproaring poem. thanks!

- Deborah

From kanouse@siu.edu Wed Jul 5 05:20:35 2006

Michele, Ana, and Tina,

Thanks for what has been a thought-provoking discussion. I began reading Agamben only recently and have found him challenging and very exciting for thinking as an artist and a human being.

Michele---While I appreciate your analysis of how being told you are “lucky” both fetishizes as authentic the experiences of the “unlucky” and devalues/silences the ways of living and voices of those designated “lucky,” I’m concerned with how quickly you brush over how “things could be drastically worse.” Yes, there are some non New Orleanians who may mean to imply that you don’t deserve your job, unflooded house, etc, but the statements could just as easily be read as an implicit and unspoken recognition that ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ are useless distinctions—that what separates the professional and jobless, the flooded out and the drylanders is often chance and above all the accident of birth. I am curious how you respond to people when you feel silenced by them in this way. Admittedly, it is different to embrace for yourself the idea that you are “lucky” than to be told it by others. I remind myself every day how lucky I am to be (not only!) an assistant professor, not in order to devalue my accomplishments and certainly not out of a sense of gratitude to the benevolent university, but as an ethical practice. To put it in Agamben’s terminology, I consider myself lucky in order to recognize the fragility and arbitrariness of the “abstractly recodified social-judicial identities” that separate me from others (assistant professor vs. disability aid recipient; homeowner vs. squatter; straight, white, HIV-, woman vs. black, HIV+, transgendered man) and from earlier versions of my ‘self’ (student, renter, arrestee, sexual harassment target, etc.). As I am understanding it, Agamben holds that the apprehension of the potential for these various “forms-of-life” within the self is what allows for the possibility for communication and intellectual thought that is the political project of forging a common form-of-life that does not enforce unity through the expulsion of, for instance, those who have been expelled from New Orleans. In more old fashioned terms, maybe it’s what differentiates noblesse oblige from solidarity.

I look forward to continuing conversation.

Sarah

From christina.l12@earthlink.net Wed Jul 5 05:47:30 2006

On Jul 4, 2006, at 12:20 PM, Sarah Kanouse wrote:

“As I understanding it, Agamben holds that the apprehension of the potential for these various “forms-of-life” within the self is what allows for the possibility for communication and intellectual thought that is the political project of forging a common form-of- life that does not enforce unity through the expulsion of, for instance, those who have been expelled from New Orleans.”

To leave open this vulnerable space in the work itself so that ‘others’ , the audience, finds its ‘various “forms of life” ‘ inside the work. But this kind of work is challenging to the State. In its totalizing mood it wants to set groups against each other not allow the contradictions of free thought..Working within this level of psychological and political risk is as Tina has witnessed, a daunting experience, both with great highs and the many days of emptiness and vulnerable awareness.

if art forges a common form-of-life it is through the open work which itself is instantly subject to disintegration: its ephemerality though is powerful—a moving target

- Christina

<http://strikeslip.tv>

From agora158@gmail.com Wed Jul 5 06:00:06 2006

I feel this discussion so alive and so interesting! In the Middle Ages we were not individuals but collectives, it was not any movement between the classes and the backgrounds. The life was the collective life, the hive. In the 17 century we start to conceive us selves as individuals, not bounded to our class or country or family, but fully able to create a life of our own. Today, after Postmodernity and Baudrillard and Wimlycka and after Agamben, where are our boundaries, where are our borders and our belongings? --Ana

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Wed Jul 5 07:32:10 2006

Thanks to everyone for their comments. I appreciated the parts of the Robert Pinsky poem that Mendi forwarded. I find the line, "Culture the lock, culture the key" particularly intriguing. The first part of this line is what I was alluding to when suggesting some of the ways that cultures and people including cultures in peril try to establish authority by creating further outcasts.

I hope that Ana will expand on her enquiry: "where are our boundaries, where are our borders and our belongings?" I have been thinking a great deal about belongings (stuff that connects us and the things that we have to own) as well as belonging recently. I have been trying to wrap my mind around the ethical and cultural tensions between the imperiled New Orleanians (present in the city and those unable and uninvited to return) and the ways New Orleans has/and continues to be built on the backs of the disenfranchised and ostracized. Part of my earlier exploration of The Big Hard and the New Orleans' bead culture is related to this problem.

Shiny plastic beads, the French Quarter, and Mardi Gras are key aspects of how New Orleans is understood globally and an important part of its tourist industry. Many businesses, and the infrastructure that relies on taxes, are struggling in New Orleans. We would do better with an economy that pays its workers more equitable salaries but how can this be balanced with the ways that losing the tourist industry (at least in the short term) is going to create further problems for most residents and the city infrastructure.

I keep thinking about the varied ways that these beads mean New Orleans and what we pay for this image. The Big Hard should invoke the crunch of hundreds of pounds of beads discarded underfoot and carted off in gigantic coolers after each Mardi Gras parade. These beads and other plastic "throws" are beloved by New Orleanians of every age. Nevertheless, most of these beads are quickly thrown away. If tourism remains one of our key economies then New Orleans may be a city rebuilt on beads. However, this also means it will be a city further built on the backs and through the painful work of women in other countries. In David Redmon's provocative Mardi Gras: Made in China, the viewer learns that Mardi Gras beads are made by women under oppressive conditions in China. Their pay is low, workweek very long, there are health risks from the heated toxic plastics that they breathe all day, and they face the loss of limbs or death from machines with no safety features. Most people in New Orleans don't think about where their beads come from and the greater price of such economies. I keep wondering what it means to live in a city that is so enmeshed with this product and to participate in a recent diversity conference where of course beads become a symbol of being in New Orleans. How can we be ethical visitors and residents after the intense media spectacles that have unfolded in the area? What are the better options in order to rescript New Orleans and these global circulations of beads? -Michele

From voyd@voyd.com Wed Jul 5 09:46:07 2006

As someone who is an extended member of the New Orleans art community, one of my homes being Baton Rouge/New Orleans, this hits home hard.

As noted, I don't think that people realize the oppressive throwaway culture that New Orleans is built on. So much of the arts culture there was built on the poor (often Black) communities, which have been all but discarded. In addition, the State Division for the Arts has been given

a mandate by Lt Gov Mitch Landrieu to structure most new state art projects under the rubric of economic rebuilding, often in higher dollar value terms.

The odd thing to me in looking at Louisiana and rebuilding in the arts is that likewise some of its most vibrant artists are also some of its lowest paid, by and large. And, when cultural rebuilding is mentioned, the hard linkage between culture and capital ignores the foundations that New Orleans as a cultural milieu is based on. There are some grass-roots programs on the way, but I think that there is the possibility for clearing and rebuilding New Orleans in a way that could fundamentally integrate the arts and the fundamental infrastructure of the city that fuels it, and thereby creating the desired environment for the State. However, this would mean funding of contracting, artists, calls, etc. Honestly, I don't see the US government being a hard-weather friend enough to make this investment.

The other odd thing is that the low-income population is becoming hispanic,= so instead of blues and jazz, one is as likely to hear salsa or cojuntao nowadays. It was under Spanish rule once, which makes the shift even more= interesting.

The bead issue - with all respect possibly a little less crucial in the short term than the problems of the NO diaspora, I think could have some solutions.

Could there be a culture of beads, in many ways like Art Cars, or painted street statuary?

Two ideas come to mind. The first is to challenge that artists to come up with ways to make new beads, like Glass (a traditional New Orleans form) or ceramic (easy to do), or others. More or less, turn the bead culture into a populist art culture.

The other comes from contemporary African forms. So much African art incorporates recycling of cast off materials, and it isn't if there aren't entire wards of material there, wire, metal, plastic. It's not easy to get good material that isn't degraded, but I think of the local artists and their extensive use of found materials, and I don't see a problem.

• Patrick

From christinal12@earthlink.net Wed Jul 5 12:19:44 2006 dear -empyreans-
Introducing a third guest, GH Hovagimyan (US)

G. H. Hovagimyan is an experimental cross media, new media and performance artist who lives and works in New York City. Born in 1950, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, he is one of the first artists in New York to start working in Internet Art, beginning in 1993, with such artist's online groups as the thing, ArtNetWeb, and Rhizome. From 1973 to 1986 GH was involved in the SoHo and Lower East Side underground art scene, showing conceptual works at I12 Workshop in 1973. He worked with Gordon Matta-Clark on several projects, including *Days End*, *Conical Intersect*, *Walking Mans Arch*, and *Underground Explorations*. In 1974 during the video-performance series at I12 Greene Street, he performed opposite Spaulding Gray in Richard Serra's video, *A Prisoner's Dilemma*.

Much of his early work is ephemeral in nature. Active in performance art, written and language works, GH used text conceptually in installation. His word piece, *Tactics for Survival in the New Culture*, was exhibited in "The Manifesto Show" (1979) organized by the artist collective colab. This particular piece was to become the basis for one of his first online hypertext works in 1993. He showed in several group exhibitions organized by Jean Dupuy, a French Fluxus artist living in New York. In 1980 he did a series of punk performance pieces for Artist's Space series called *Open Mic*. One piece, *Rich Sucker Rap* was recorded by Davidson Gigliotti for a videotape called *Chant Acapella* (now in the Electronic Arts Intermix catalog). He also performed in several No Wave Cinema films among them, *The Offenders* (1980) by Scott B & Beth B and *The Deadly Art of Survival* by Charles Ahearn. In May, 1994 he created twenty billboard project for Creative Time, *Hey Bozo... Use Mass Transit*, widely publicized on television and in print media. His early internet based works, such as BKPC, Art Direct and, Faux Conceptual Art, converged conceptual practice with punk aesthetics on the net. His pioneering internet radio/TV talk show, Art Dirt, is part of the Walker Art

Center's Digital Studies Archives collection. Of his collaborative works with Peter Sinclair, the most well known are *A Soapopera for Laptops/iMacs*, *Shooter* and *Rant/ Rant Back/ Back Rant*.

Shooter, an immersive sound and laser installation was developed at Eyebeam Atelier as part of its Artist in Residence program.

His new work involves mash-ups online with new art dirt redux at <http://nujus.net/gh/> and <http://post.thing.net/gh/>. He is also active making HD video installations and curating, most recently for SCOPE Hamptons art fair <http://www.scope-art.com/main.php> July 13-16, 2006. He'll be presenting excerpts from an HDV database http://20.nujus.net/gh_04/gallery10.html.

• c=

From agora158@gmail.com Wed Jul 5 18:48:50 2006

Boundaries and belongings and borders are related to one's identity, "this is mine", "this is yours", "this is ours", since we belong to the same family or the same couple. I am raised in a cloister and was always appalled about how the nuns shared everything and made vows of poverty. The order owned all they had, once a nun left the school and she was given a bag with some clothes and some money to take the bus. Later, in jail (I spent four years in jail for political reasons), it was very difficult to learn how to share. Our "belongings", the stuff we were allowed to own was minimal, a toothbrush, a comb, some pictures of the family, underwear and socks. We wore jail clothes and "civilian" clothes were banned. Books and paper to write and pens and pencils were banned as well, no newspapers no radio no tv. But our relatives sent to us some food and cigarettes. At the beginning we had long discussions about how to share the food and the cigs. Some grandmother sent a cake who could feed 5 or 6 people, how to share it among 45? And cigs, how to distribute them? Depending on each one's need or depending on how much your own family had sent? Later on, already in Sweden, I lived for three years in an anarchist collective, we owned all together and we worked, lived and spent free time together. We decided to invest all the wages on projects, we started a publishing house, we supported social movements. The only "belongings" we had were some personal clothes and some few personal items, all was owned by the "collective". When I left them to live by myself I took from the "collective belongings" a pan, two dishes and some few books. Started to gather things again... In all my visits to Palestine I was astonished by the degree of solidarity and hospitality the common people had, in times of hunger and severe pain we, the visitors, were not allowed to pay for anything, we slept in their rooms and shared the pita bread, the cucumbers and the hummus which is the staple diet of the impoverished Palestinian. I guess the people in New Orleans have also the solidarity and the sharing the people learn itself to have when need is big. But often I ask myself, why can we not live in the wealth as we lived in need? I mean, why not share when nobody is asking you to do that, why not share for sharing's joy? I think George Bataille's book "The Accursed Share", where he develops the theory of Marcel Mauss about the "Gift" is a great tool to discuss the conditions for ownership and sharing. —Ana

From ghh@thing.net Wed Jul 5 21:56:20 2006

The only thing artists have is themselves. What's in their hand, what's in their mind, how they move about in the world, is all they have. You make art to clarify your mind, to clarify your thoughts, to see what the world is about, to find the truth... and this now, in the 21st century, using media, using digital media, is all about finding the truth, the truth within the circle of language."—

http://spaghetti.nujus.net/rantapod/archives/2006_05.html>

Art is about stripping bare the psyche. Punk was a consequence of the poverty and recession of the 1970s. We all felt there was no future for us because the previous generation of rich hippies controlled everything. The only thing to do was to negate their philosophy in every way possible. This included challenging feminism by acting outrageous. The other side was a sort of capitalist S & M position.. That was the way out of the dilemma, freedom through punishment; destruction and self-destruction, extreme nihilism. They didn't want us therefore we didn't want them, not only that but we didn't want each other. We didn't want anything. Richard Hell expressed the emotion best in his song lyrics, "I'm part of the blank generation, = I can take it or leave it alone." < <http://post.thing.net/blog/9/feed>>

I'm working on three projects right now. Each one is about stripping bare reality. The processes are different. Let me describe the procedures without telling you which belongs to which. 1) I walk around with a 1 gig flash memory audio recorder and sample the sounds and conversations I hear and engage in. I do this in 3 minute samples. I put the samples into an editing program and then overlap them. What is produced is an immersive sound event that is closer to the way we actually remember things. 2) I decide to go back to the origins of video art

which is essentially an artists doing something in front of a camera. When I edit the footage, I am using myself to create a media object. I am becoming a digital object that can be duplicated, sampled, cut apart, endlessly multiplied and put back together. 3) You walk into a room and a film/video is projected on a wall. The scenes played are not in any particular order yet they make sense. What occurs is that a computer is picking sequences in a random order and playing them. Your mind and your imagination fill in the story. <http://spaghetti.nujus.net/artDirt>
<http://spaghetti.nujus.net/rantapod> http://nujus.net/gh_04/gallery1.1.html

dear -empyre-

Conor McGarrigle is joining us from Paris where he is living this month. He's asked me to forward to you his initial reflections on 'what is bare life?'... these follow his short bio here.

• cm

Conor McGarrigle is a net artist based in Dublin. He is the founder of online arts space Stunned.org . In 2002 as part of the Irish Museum of Modern art project he started the net art open: the uncurated open submission net art show in which all entries are accepted. His art has dealt with themes of surveillance (Spook...) , identity (PLAY-lets) and art activism (IrishMuseumofModernArt.com), often involving fictional identities with an element of prankstivism never far away. He is currently working on an extended narrative work about artists in Dublin based on Joyce's *Ulysses* (Cyclops, Proteus episodes completed to date) and has recently developed an interest in mapping resulting in Google Bono : a google maps / surveillance camera mashup.

His work has been widely exhibited internationally including the Seoul Net Festival, File Sao Paolo, FILE RIO, Thailand New media arts festival, Fundacio La Caixa Barcelona, SIGGRAPH, Rejoyce Festival Dublin, Arthouse Dublin, Project Arts Centre Dublin, The City Arts Centre and Intermedia Cork. He is currently studying for an MFA at the National College of Art and Design Dublin.

Connor writes,

First of all I would like to thank Christina for inviting me to partake in this discussion, it's a great honour particularly to be in such good company.

In reflecting on bare life the work of Giorgio Agamben and his key concept of Homo Sacer are unavoidable. Agamben bases his concept of bare life on an obscure point of ancient roman law; when a condemned person was banned from society and had their rights as a citizen removed, thus becoming Homo Sacer, the living dead whose killing was not a crime, excluded from the protection of the law but still subject to the law, living in a state of exception. Obviously the 'unlawful combatants' of Guantanamo Bay, those subject to 'extraordinary rendition' and held in secret prisons around the world stripped of all rights and at the mercy of the state of exception are modern day Homo Sacer. There is even a school of thought which holds that liberal democracy is a mask and that ultimately we are all Homo Sacer.

What does this mean for art and in particular for the possibility of political art? Around 2000 I was interested in surveillance online culminating in my Spook Project. The central conceit was that it placed a military server which had visited my site under surveillance and was able to track where it had been on the web using very basic techniques. While exposing the amount of data left behind as you surfed Spook... implied that online surveillance was a two way street and that such surveillance was a haphazard affair not to be taken too seriously. What was a little naive even then today looks like a charming period piece which raises questions about the role of political art. It's obvious that political art is needed now more than ever but how can we challenge this growth in the state of exception, of rule by decree – think of all the special anti- terrorism legislation being enacted all around the world – artistically? On what criteria do we judge this art and would the effort not be better spent in some sort of direct action that has a better chance of being effective? These are questions I ask myself, not questions that I raise just to be controversial and I look forward to everyone's thoughts.

There is another more optimistic aspect to bare life. Agamben notes that Bare Life is " a form of life over which power no longer seems to have any hold" which opens up possibilities for a "lyrical or even ecstatic" dimension. Colin McQuillan in his essay 'The Political Life in Giorgio

Agamben' argues that Agamben "defines this politics in terms of "a life directed toward the idea of happiness and cohesive with a form-of-life" in which "the single ways, acts, and process of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always above all power." and that "Agamben's conception of the political life is the result of a radical rethinking of the potentiality of life, and life as potentiality." I have had a long term interest in Joyce and Ulysses in particular and have recently embarked on the (foolhardy) task of attempting a series of narrative based works structurally based on the chapters of Ulysses. This aspect of bare life seems to me to echo many of Joyce's concerns or certainly that aspect of Joyce that I find of particular interest. While Joyce is often seen as the austere high priest of modernism it is the humorous Joyce, the lyrical Joyce, the politically conflicted Joyce who abhorred the absolutist position and most of all the Joyce who believed that the highest form of art was to be found in the everyday lives of ordinary people, that I find of most interest and that informs my recent work. I am interested in the idea that by focusing on simple everyday things like walking through a city, we begin a process which clarifies what we do and how we relate to our world and reveals greater truths about ways of being in the world. It is of necessity an open ended process one for which the result is not clear. For me this ties in with this dimension of bare life the idea that stripping life down to its essentials opens up new and unexpected possibilities.

Which brings me to the idea that art can dissolve the "radical separation between painful subjection and joyous liberation" . An ambitious and honourable aim...but can it be realised? I look forward to the debate. On a personal note I'm doing this on what was going to be a computer free break in Paris. I will be using internet cafes so my responses will not be super fast and I apologise in advance. –Connor

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Fri Jul 7 03:43:06 2006

I think that it might be useful to correlate Ana's comments about mapping and belonging/belongings with Conor's about surveillance. I believe Ana also had some interesting commentary on mapping on her web site.

Mapping is a key aspect of the Internet and new media practices. Yet, mapping has also been a key strategy in the colonization and possession of physical spaces. Cultures, histories, and evidence of specific living situations are reshaped by the ways that countries and areas are drawn, how they are named, and where places end up on a map (centered or represented as smaller and pushed to the edges). Mapping articulates a place and who owns it but it can also provide resistant readings of place and categorizations. Has anyone considered the ways Rhizome's varied maps and rethinking of its structures and the Internet fit into these practices?

There have been some considerations of how Google Maps and other Internet-based services, in providing detailed aerial satellite images, render the individual and home as further surveilled and at threat. At the same time, Google Maps, in combination with varied aerial images of flooded New Orleans, provided a way for individuals to check on homes and offered a connection to place rather than an intrusive gaze.

I find the impossible routes sketched out by attempts to avoid surveillance cameras, as figured by the Surveillance Camera Players and others, both amusing and terrifying. It is clear why their site notes: "Not intended for use in the commission of any crime or act of war." However, such gestures also indicate the difficulties in doing critical work about the state and all of the private enterprises with a stake in watching and gathering data on individuals. Feminist research on surveillance cameras indicates that some bodies are much more likely to be surveilled, feel regulated by the gaze, and to experience serious physical and psychological effects from these viewing and mapping strategies. In the back rooms of such institutions as private companies and public transportation systems, images are alternately ignore and accompanied by workers' technologically facilitated sexist and racist commentary about bodies. In Robert Greenwald's *Walmart: The High Cost of Low Price*, the director indicates that shoppers felt protected from violence because of exterior surveillance cameras but no one came when they were attacked. The cameras were only used when Walmart was trying to prevent employees from participating in union-building activities.

In my book, I consider women's active representation on webcams and too briefly think about how they use or frame these devices as a way to create a global surveillance/protection system for themselves and their belongings. These women alternately control and celebrate their visibility. At the same time, news programs, talk shows, and other media encourage women to submit to being visible for their own safety and suggest that they remain on populated paths, in well-lighted corridors, and within the safe purview of surveillance cameras. Nevertheless, there are some ways women's bodies are not supposed to be visible. Such narratives are much less likely to be directed at men. Such genres as the slasher and stalker film focus on the terrifying possibilities of being in the dark and out of the watchful and protective gaze of society. These

films have indicated that there are ways of being properly visible and protected and ways of being endangered through obsessive and invisible surveillance. Some bodies and individuals face significant problems in trying to navigate their ways through both mapped and ignored terrain. By the way, thanks to Patrick for the terrific thoughts on throws and the NOLA art communities. It would be a pleasure to continue this conversation. -Michele

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Fri Jul 7 04:21:05 2006 00

Hello beautiful Christina, hello Patrick Yes, hello splendid Guests, hello All !

In the acts of Yes Men there is both a funny and hard laconic irony on deep causes, it is both time a wakefulness and that help with a certain exuberance to better coming next, without utopia but in real time, more if they are working to concur socially whatever they create as activist spectacular Art performances. So Courage New Orleans, one day it will turn to people advantage... Courage Patrick < how great is the critical reputation of Yes Men!> And courage French Arts against what is turning into local bureaucratic post-fascism in a global environment that is not to help people, a secret monster upsetting the references. The question is not of people as People closed to a Nation, but population on a territory... We would have to read again 'Eichmann in Jerusalem' that was the report by Hannah Arendt to tribute The New Yorker. The emerging question of this text precisely being of bare life < and the current confirming the exception (can be something lightening institutional practice of Arts, social life, and the current war as porn, in our days ?) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eichmann_in_Jerusalem

From agora158@gmail.com Fri Jul 7 05:02:12 2006

Yes, Michele, you are so right, mapping has been the colonization's principal tools to draw borders, to steal territories and to conquer by fencing the new world. Last year I was in a meeting in Tarifa, in the south of Spain, where Brian Holmes and other people hold a workshop about social mapping, mapping networks and mapping "countersurveillance". The crew of Fadaiat.net and Hackitectura.net has been involved in the alternative mapping of the Gibraltar strait, the border between the rich Europe and the poor Africa, where every day people are killed. (Yesterday 3 were killed and 25 wounded intending to hope over the high fence in Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish colonial enclaves.) <http://madiag.indymedia.org/> Ursula Bieman, from Old Boys Network, has done a great work making video in those camps where desperate people wait for nothing, they are not recognized as refugees by the UN and Spain and Marocco send them back to Senegal, Ivory Coast and Botswana. Mapping the alternative ways and trying to dissect the complex social networks operating in the Strait is a really important political and artistic tool. -Ana

From dkellysocialchange@yahoo.com Fri Jul 7 08:24:16

Speaking of political understandings of people in place, and of radical cartographic practice, there is a lovely blog resource mapping a deep and broad array of related projects; they are also keen to receive clues for their investigations.

It's US-based, but curious:

<http://criticalspatialpractice.blogspot.com/>

I reckon it's a wonderful site,

regards, Deborah (Sydney)

From greg.smith@utoronto.ca Fri Jul 7 09:17:48 2006

...and while on the topic of "the new cartography" I cannot recommend enough the Janet Abrams and Peter Hall edited text "Else/Where: New Cartographies of Networks and Territories." More info on the text is available at <http://design.umn.edu/go/project/elsewheremapping>

-- greg smith <http://www.serialconsign.com>

<http://www.vagueterrain.net>

From ghh@thing.net Fri Jul 7 21:59:39 2006

I don't believe that bare life has anything to do with art. We are all on the edge of a potential tragedy. One day everything is fine, the next you are confronted with your fragile world as it collapses. I live eight blocks north of the World Trade Center. My windows face the buildings. I saw the planes crash into the buildings as I was doing my morning exercises. I saw the people jumping from the burning buildings. No it was not on videotape for me it was "bare life." It is almost impossible to make art about the WTC attack. It is an enormous physical disaster as well as an information event. The same may be said of the New Orleans disaster that is still unfolding. The psyche of America is disturbed. It is now operating on a belief system that has no basis in reality. This narrative and its larger reality make a fitting subject for art. The reduction to bare essentials, to mere survival, does not create the conditions for art. If art matters and is not a diversion (*divertissement*) or entertainment. It is not about teaching (didacticism) or the marketing of high priced objects for the idle rich. If anything the art makes a counter proposition...to process a collective trauma and re-balance the human psyche. This then is the true nature and value of art and the artist. The artist makes it possible to continue living in spite of a shattering event.. What it does is reorder our sense of the world and our internal narrative.

From agora158@gmail.com Fri Jul 7 22:12:42 2006

I feel great sympathy with your eloquent writing, but I am still going to try to make Art about myh experience in a concentrations camp. The jail in Uruguay did not qualify to the horrors of Auschwitz, no crematory ovens, not execution patrols... but we had all the "other", the constant harassing, the dogs watching us work as forced labor in the fields, move around stones to place and move them again, the Sisyphus work, I did it. But it's not good to make level differences in horror, all what is against the life and the freedom and the rights of people its wrong, it's doesn't matter it's called Guantanamo or Gulag or Punta Rieles (it was the name of my prison). I saw Cavanis great film and loved *Maus*, I read Primo Levi and Kertes and Dostoevskis description of his time in Sibirien, I read Ho Chi Minh's books from the jail the French colonial power put him and Mandela's book from Robben Islands. Everyone who traversed such a journey must be able to write or tell its history, because Art is this, the ability to be a protagonist, to use your own feelings and fear and desires to express yourself in the form you choose. –Ana

From ghh@thing.net Fri Jul 7 22:43:29 2006

Ana Valdes wrote:

"the fields, move around stones to place and move them again, the Sisyphous work, I did it." In your snippet I can see a whole art work. Richard Serra the sculptor tells a story of how, when he was a rambunctious young man, his father would punish him by making him move a huge pile of dirt by hand from one location of their back lot to another location. When he was done, he and his father had an aesthetic discussion about it's location. If they agreed the pile was in the right place he was finished his task. If not he would move the pile to the agreed properly aesthetic position. –GH

From agora158@gmail.com Fri Jul 7 22:49:08 2006

I think the point here is how much "bare life" is to feel yourself constrained, privated of your right to dissent, lacking your "citizenship". We gathered a lot of anger and a lot of passion, it's a bit difficult for me today to wake up the passion of a 19 years old girl in a woman of 53, but that's the challenge, to move yourself between your own memory, the collective memory and the fiction and the narrative. Sarat Maharat wrote something wonderful about Memory and we met and discuss my project, to write about the prison in Agamben terms, seeing it as a testimony finding it's place between the documentary and the literary. –Ana

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Sat Jul 8 11:03:22 2006 Searching to keep the safety of insubordination I range in the side of ethic;--

Regarding ethic as a deconstructivist question of phenomenology Jacques Derrida said : "Qu'est-ce que je dis quand je dis : "É me regarde" ?" What I say when I tell me that "it looks at me"?"

From a part I agree with G.H. Hovagimyan. From another part I understand Ana Valdes' request.

But her quotation of Giorgio Agamben reminds exactly of an unpleasant impression that I felt by reading in "Remnants of Auschwitz" his evocation of Primo Levi. That seemed particularly a point of view from an arbitrary observation of laboratory. But Primo Levi was not still alive to revoke this report of their meeting (Agamben having crossed Primo Levi). Primo Levi was in a sort under the regard of a cool machine for the second time in his life, the first time being the regard of the camp (the eyes of the Gaolers more the eyes of the prisoners "surviving" both appointing a prisoner or a prisoner become "mushlem"—of whom Primo Levi reports in "If This is a Man"—and from another part testifying by the complex of the surviving man being other); like a sort of revenge of the life (Agamben being alive sees Levi such as an embodying realization of which he reports and analyzes) against the death (Primo Levi being dead—whatever—Be more the point of view from Agamben to Levi yet dead suicides him for the second time). Here lives a sort of philosophical abuse revealing into obscenity.

Anyway from very far it is not the book of the real time. But the terrific work of the real time exists, which were the hard drawings of Zoran Music when prisoner in Dachau. A way to survival, he said. The documentary of creation as representative cinema surfs between report and Art work : wasn't the first anthological work asking such a mediatic question or the book "In cool blood" by Truman Capote, in 1960?

Any references that surrounds me :

Quotation in the site of the publisher "éditions de minuit" of a review extracted from *Art Press* (issue 297) concerning aesthetician Georges Didi-Huberman's book "Images malgré tout" where it is question of images in certain circumstances (notoriously 4 photos from Auschwitz) : the question of the truth as materialist reality of the life, and as common metaphysical event, of the obscenity, of the testimony, on the irrepressible missing representativity of the worst: "there is no icon of what happened in Auschwitz".

http://www.leseditionsdeminuit.fr/presse/art_press_images_malgre_tout.pdf

More, you have the point of view developed by sociologist and anthropologist of the contemporary, Bruno Latour, co-curator of the exhibition "Iconoclash", ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, in 2002, in his text (part of the book resulting of the exhibition) : 'What is Iconoclash? Or is There a World Beyond the Image Wars? Iconoclash. Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art. ZKM, Karlsruhe & MIT PRESS, Massachusetts, 2002.) "Pourquoi iconoclash et pas iconoclast ? L'iconoclaste détruit une image, une icône, une représentation. Devant ce geste on ne peut que se rejouir ou s'indigner. Dans un iconoclash -neologisme inventé pour la cause on ne sait pas ce qui c'est passé, le plaisir et la fureur se trouvent suspendus - ; leur font place le doute, l'inquiétude et l'incertitude sur ce qui se passe vraiment quand on veut produire ou détruire des représentations. " [http://hosting.zkm.de/icon/stories/storyReader\\$64](http://hosting.zkm.de/icon/stories/storyReader$64) That means for a part how the production and the destruction of representations by icons install the experiment of the life far from the represented events. Icono->CLASH as an accident: mutes the symbolic mirror of representation into a representation not being a mirror but a proper event.

Consequently installing the representation as event by the disappearance of the living reference ; that produces the representation instead of the live event: meta life as representation of the bare life—not being a materialist reality designed by the concept of "bare life".

You can read a realization of entropy from the iconoclash effect in real time of the life, by making its filmic documentary and more... in the novel of science-fiction by Adolfo Bioy-Casares "The Invention of Morel" (1940).

From post-modernity till nowadays as philosophical found in post dialectic materialism, it seems that Jean Baudrillard is still available in his exploration of bare life (through the event and the phenomena as materialist reality of the life and as symbolic representation) and meta life (through the signification and the representation as simulation and simulacrum which the question of commodity).

At last I want to say that I do not believe in memory; collective memory does not own to anyone, it is dynamic and plastic; it is just an event when we think that we are consensually plural as an exception of the social history... Under my point of view collective memory is not the fact of Artists it is the fact of every member of the city in cognitive disposition of the feeling of existing between other existences, with a certain common changing mode. What does not change in matter of testimony are archives, that could not be both of bare life being testimony of former events.

Writers, artists, or thinkers probably they do not testify of other reality than the one of their respective existence and mode of existence at work, even they can sincerely wish to work for others or to others. —Aliette

From Conor McGarrigle Sun Jul 9 01:56:03 2006

I was fascinated with the debate of New Orleans and sorry I missed the flow of the debate. I briefly visited there a few years back and it struck me as a very unamerican city, that is a city that doesn't fit in with this idea that we are receiving, particularly as Europeans, of what America stands for today. Even then it was a surprise what happened. In recent times I think of what has been happening in the US as a slipping of the mask, Guantanamo, Katrina every time a little bit more of what made America great slips away and we're face to face with bare life in the US empire.

When GH says he doesn't believe bare life has anything to do with art I'm inclined to agree. Art is a poor refuge faced with illness, death, disasters, prison camps but at the same time we are close to bare life these things are never very far from us and perhaps today closer than ever." If art matters and is not a diversion (divertissement) or entertainment. It is not about teaching (didacticism) or the marketing of high priced objects for the idle rich."

it must deal with these things. Still it's not easy. I grew up in the 70s in Ireland during the troubles - what we called a 30 year war the T word was almost never used which is why we can now deal with the combatants from both sides - there was much art made about it most of it failed in any attempt to deal with the horror of what was going on. This is the problem, we need to deal with bare life but its very hard. -Conor
From gana@iinet.net.au Sun Jul 9 12:29:26 2006

Hi everyone...

enjoying the way this discussion is going. It occurred to me that there has been a range of quite strong responses to the (im)possibility of an art practice that can deal with or engage with 'bare life'. This maybe true given that by Agamben's critique bare life refers to body's simply the state 'vegetative' being, separated from those qualities, the social and historical attributes that constitute individuality. The stateless refugee. And that artist as a cultural producer - even if he or she is working out their own poetic sensibility or some political engagement. Art is still cultural production. Bare life is raw and means for some the point at which you are starving or losing your humanity.

I saw this in a few faces in the streets in Chile when I lived there.

I produced art there and felt completely useless against the overwhelming sadness of the victims within the family I lived with. I kept making work and hid it away. Yet somehow by the very action of producing something that was not obviously "dealing with the horror" as Conor so eloquently puts it I still was able to keep my humanity and I knew inside of me that the work would feed back into the foodchain - into the cultural bloodstream - and in some small way would give something back. I think it was Susan Sontag who said art only becomes 'real' or 'true' as it changes or reconfigures the field (the culture). It will always do that even in some small way. -Gianni

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Sun Jul 9 22:29:54 2006 Dear all,

From my part entering "the heart of the matter": what disrupts me a lot, it is that the proposition coming from dokumenta under Agamben's reference "bare life" forces us (as turning us into "homo sacer" ourselves in some place of thinking) to separate one of the terms of Agamben's dialectic between the power and the people from which he extracts the contemporary "homo sacer" from, in his work (1998). In a certain sort unfortunately this option of the concurring title of the event acts as a revisionism of Agamben's proposition (which is yet attractive but not so sympathetic) by extracting the power out of the question, that is, What is openly unacceptable? or no more fight could be relevant. Because it returns to a certain conception of "natural" (even resulting from the power) to "homo sacer" that personally I cannot accept.

I know for example that Christoph Winkler has made the best of this inspiration, but if all is possible in a matter from static to dynamic Artistic performances and creations (Winkler being now the famous choreographer who knows after having experimented a lot of contemporary art and music fields and pop fields in an integrated destiny), the same mental action is not possible in matter of reflecting philosophy. That is

exactly the difference between Arts and Philosophy, the frontier, when philosophy tributes to the collective as ethic. Bio-politic is exactly the domain realizing philosophy in ethic, after the separate fields they were.

It is not a question of doctrine it is really a question of ethic at the base of the relevant capacity of reasoning in each human knowing a maternal language, can be the language of the environment without "bare" mother.

But obviously having reached this situation of all frontiers can being over passed in matter of thought to the life, there is no more means to create an event or bare life itself as real?--real criticism of the theory by the event of the life as No art: coming after the radical object of Body Art < a= s ultimate Art.

Besides abstracting " homo sacer " out of its structural context of reference as a concept from Agamben, that unfortunately can inform a revisionism to this philosophy (by installing a "natural" conception of "homo sacer" that makes nonsense regarding Agamben, which installs toward the domination of power the question of "nature" as fate< even social heritage of education< or superiority of certain humans being able to be executive on other humans.

In other words let us return to the dialectic of the master and the slave chez Hegel. But more it makes moving the word toward the sense of the antique Roman conception that tells "homo sacer" in singular symbolic situation to be killed without a crime by whomever has a special leave to deny protection by the law to the one is in danger to be murdered without punishment.

So ontologically (regarding the phenomena of the collective live west culture) and philologically (regarding the history of the concept and of the phenomena of collective humanity from west culture) being impossible to reject the question of institutions and of sovereign power outside of the term of "homo sacer", the same as "bare life" resulting of the condition of "homo sacer", I do not see where "bare life" can make sense all alone or by a total deregulation of the traditional and original progressive philosophic device from which it is extracted; that installs a critical collapse absolved from the philosophy.

(Of the iconoclast crisis of philosophy absolved from the modern philosophy whatever of Dokumenta, we are involving a schism. Can be "bare life" from Dokumenta in this special disposition produce the multi semantic sign of a total redistribution of the references after Human rights. having become totally obsolete as sense at the horizon of current practice outside of the law by more laws effected by the new power (the same of global as local or micro-local). At this point: the representative power of the democracy represents itself as collective citizen itself able to claim at the act "homo sacer" to the part of human genre not being the power, by generalizing the use of murder not being a crime.

The last post political emergent question which results is this one: in which arrangement to save himself all on one's own, or by the other means (then which one?) is "homo sacer" settled by such a deregulation of the law , of the power, of the society?

Otherwise the leak or the social boycott - and consequently the repression?

Thus we would really be in war against the power and against the representative law even democracy in particular and generally. But the war not being dialectical: how to win safe toward the current condition of homo sacer?

As homo sacer is not a missing human condition. Homo sacer is not of another genre. He is the basic human condition as collective condition of the one, it appears. What of the secret known but predictable force of "homo sacer" in danger?

Reflecting this question may be open "bare life"? -Alette

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Mon Jul 10 02:47:28 2006

Thanks for the thoughts on the concept of bare life and art.

I previously questioned Roger M. Buerger's indication in the Documenta texts that "absolute exposure is intricately connected with infinite pleasure." Foucault's critique of the panopticon and feminist film and art history considerations of the gaze would suggest that "exposure" can be extremely painful, regulating, and normalizing. Are we differentiating between self-generated acts of personal exposing and exposure. How do societal messages provide individuals with limits or rules for such actions?

In this earlier post I noted that: Exposure should be correlated to the histories of visibility and invisibility that different cultures and individuals face. Individuals that are described as CEO, tenured faculty member, citizen, adult, artist, or married are likely to associate exposure with different pleasures and risks than those felt by the undocumented worker, adjunct, "alien," juvenile, fan producer, and sex worker. I am

interested in considering the different ways that bodies are put on display, the various demands for exposure, and what it means when people decide or are forced to become visible in the world. Culture does not understand the flash of women's breasts, men's breasts (that are supposed to be called something else), and men's penises to have the same meanings.

Painting, photography, and other forms of art production have a history of exposing some individuals to the observational and regulatory gaze. This would suggest that artists and producers might want to be particularly aware of how exposure and looking are facilitated by their work. What would an ethics of looking and exposure contain? What are the ways to theorize exposure? Certainly feminist art production (Adrian Piper, Lorna Simpson, Laura Mulvey...) has proposed some models for these engagements.- --Michele

From christinal12@earthlink.net Mon Jul 10 03:22:38 2006

what about when and if surveillance generates accidental (or not so accidental) performance? "Bare Life" in a vaudeville costume...

From gh@thing.net Mon Jul 10 03:24:42 2006 Subject:

The Artist vs The Terrorist (New Orleans reprise)

New Orleans is a city that has always been a problem for America. Like New York City it is a place of ambition and neglect. New Orleans was the center of the slave trade. The first place that Africans set foot on American soil. The discussion of bare life is quite pertinent when looking at New Orleans. Its culture of *mélange* and balance is the result of its brutality. If I couldn't live in New York City I would live in New Orleans. There is an anarchy and chaos that is always covered over by the gloss of *laissez les bon temps rouler*. The poor of New Orleans have been scattered in a diaspora around the United States. What is already happening is that the artists are beginning create works about the experience. It will take some time before we fully understand how the city and its poor will reconstitute itself. The art and service industry of New Orleans depends on cheap housing for all the service workers, musicians and parade crews. This is a big dilemma for corporate developers. The opportunity to make a lot of money and turn the city into a bourgeois paradise conflicts with the need for subsidizing the poor and the marginal. Artists never figure into any equation of money and corporate greed in the USA unless they are creating major commodities. There is no such thing as support for struggling artists or mid career or those who might not ever become blue chip. There is no understanding of the environment of discourse and messy anarchy that is the gumbo of creativity.

Bare Life has two components—the individual reality and the group reaction. Both are being played out in this drama. Luckily, the artists' first instinct is to make art. The reaction to a stripping away, to bare life, can vary quite a lot. I see the terrorist and religious fundamentalist instinct as a countervailing reaction to bare = life. Art is a liberating force. The desire for release, for liberation from, can create either a terrorist or an artist. The sad part is that in the worlds and cultures where art is suppressed or not valued or de-valued only religion and war are appropriate. —GH

From: criticalspatialpractice.blogspot.com Tue Jul 11 17:44:32 2006

Just learned of a current project that is very relevant to the "Bare Life" theme....

<< CAMP CAMPAIGN >> <http://www.campcampaign.info/>

How is it that a camp like Guantanamo Bay can exist in our time?

We would like to begin our campaign with this simple question and join other organizations, lawyers, thinkers, and activists in contesting not only the existence of this camp but also examining its relation to other phenomenon we are confronted with in the social and political

landscape. We feel that Guantanamo Bay is only a more acute or extreme version of what is taking place around us in the name of security. And our campaign attempts to draw out those connections and link them to historical precedents as well as everyday phenomenon . The Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, has introduced two critical questions that pertain to our current political crisis and to our campaign. First, that the state of exception, in this case, the suspension of the rule of law (e.g., Patriot Act, illegal combatants, military tribunals, extraordinary rendition, Guantanamo Bay), have become increasingly common devices of governance, perhaps the norm, in “democratic” states in this last century. Second, that the camp should not be seen exclusively as a historical fact (e.g. Auschwitz) or as an exception reserved only for the “inhuman” (e.g. Guantanamo Bay) or displaced refugee (e.g. Palestine), but as the paradigm, the “hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we are still living.” This second theme is interesting because it is closer to a question which relies on discussion to first understand and then to interrogate and explore....

In this context, Camp X-Ray, Echo, Delta* become more than exceptional sites of the suspension of law, or mere examples of America's unilateral policies and ignorance of international law. Instead they serve as glaring examples of what remains one of the critical apparatuses and unspoken structural underwriters of modern governance (including democracy). With this understanding the exception is not a freak occurrence, but rather a means of conditioning and establishing (a relation to) the norm. For these reasons, we believe that Guantanamo Bay is a critical site for developing a discussion with a public about various timely themes in politics today (e.g., security and terror, citizenship and statelessness, human rights vs. political and legal rights, the coming / unavoidable / inoperative or terrible community)....

Continued @ <http://www.campcampaign.info/about.htm>

See also: The Guantanamo Project <http://vectors.aml.annenberg.edu/index.php?page=3D7&projectId=3D3> <http://guantanamo.org/>
--Nicholas www.walkinginplace.org

dear -empyre-

Thanks to everyone for contributing so much already to the discussion on “Bare Life,” in collaboration with the Documenta 12 Magazine Project <http://www.documenta12.de/english/magazines.html>.

Please welcome artist Susana Mendes Silva (PT).

Susana Mendes Silva lives and works in Lisboa, Portugal. She has been working in the interstices of intimacy and affection, but also with reflecting about the object of art. Some of her projects make a very visible bridge between these two universes, especially the site- specific or the performance works. She has recently shown the installation *Mind Walls* in a group show at Museu da Cidade (Lisboa), and has developed the work *Sheet for vector* (the e-zine of virose <http://www.virose.pt/>) and for *hidden agenda, contemporary art editions*. Susana has spoken, this March (2006), about her networked performances - *artphone*, 2002; *art_room*, 2005; and *artphone*, 2005 - at The Upgrade! Lisbon. Her media art is found in festival venues and art databases internationally since 2002, including Free Manifesta, manifesta 4, Frankfurt, progme, Rio de Janeiro, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art / Rhizome Artbase.

In 2005 she presented the solo exhibitions *Words in my mind* (where she presented a drawing installation at Casa d'Os Dias da Água, Lisboa) and *Life-cage* (where she shown video and photographs at Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisboa), and in 2006 *Did I hurt you?* (where she presented video and drawings at Zoom, Galeria Carlos Carvalho Arte Contemporânea, Lisboa). Her video work was shown in the group screenings *Mar Atlantico- Portuguese Video Art*, FVNM, The School of the Art Institut Chicago and *Del Zero* al 2005, Fundação Marcelino Botín, Santander, Spain. This year it will be shown in *Mostra de Vídeo Arte Portuguesa Contemporânea - Antologia*, Luanda, Angola.

susana mendes silva em on <http://www.turbulence.org/blog/index.html>

“spamming: from aesthetics to politics” by luís silva

links http://www.virose.pt/vector/b_16/mendes_silva.html

<http://www.susanamendessilva.com>

• cm

On 11/07/06 18:54, <conormcgarrigle@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Alette, empyreans

As I am in Paris at the moment and as Aliette has already mentioned it's hard to escape football and of course the fortunes of les bleus. I watched both the semi final and the final at the Stade Charléty here in Paris and I feel I got an insight into what Roger M. Buerger means when he talks of the 'ecstatic dimension to it - a freedom for new and unexpected possibilities'. The photographer Jurgen Teller made a video a few years ago consisting of a fixed camera watching him as he watched Germany play in the World cup. Divorced from its context it's very amusing watching him lose all reason but that's what football is all about. Watching France play surrounded by thousands of French fans reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the team, a team it seems that embody so much of the political issues that are important in France today. But when the ball kicks off all that matters is the game and you are exposed to some form of bare life where the highs are ecstatic and the lows terrible but all that matters is the moment and there are no differences, no class, no colour just for that moment. Then it all comes crashing down in an instant as it did in Berlin when Zizou walked off the pitch taking French hopes with him and we all left to be greeted by phalanxes of riot police batons drawn and ready for action. But it is all worth it for those moments and those moments are what I search for in art. -Conor

from gh@thing.net Tue Jul 11 21:36:32 2006

Michelle wrote:

"Individuals that are described as CEO, tenured faculty member, citizen, adult, artist, or married are likely to associate exposure with different pleasures and risks than those felt by the undocumented worker, adjunct, "alien," juvenile, fan producer, and sex worker."

GH comments:

Your categories are points of view created by a corporate society in which everyone has a role. Your underclass functions as the chaotic miasmic countervalance or "other." You play right into the major discourse of Western Techno-culture. You reinforce it. In another culture people might be categorized as, sinners, knights, peasants, nobleman, etc.. This is the reason why people riot in the banlieusn of France. It 's the reason why the Arab world claims that the West does not respect them. The same age-of-enlightenment supposedly dispassionate observer is in reality creating the conditions for an oppressive corporate mono-culture. This dialectic presumes that the underclass wants nothing more than to be part of the ruling technocrats. It assumes that the Arab world wants a Western style capitalist democracy. What if that's not true? Indeed from my point of view people live their lives in spite of the ruling hegemony. What if one does not have a "will to power?" You put artists in the successful category that's even more of a problem for me. That's perhaps the most interesting of your mistakes and exposes the corporate classes point of view. Artist's who play the mercantile game of the art market are accepted by the technocrats. Those who don't are ignored or perhaps they must pick another category such as faculty member or maybe adjunct. I have a colleague who is an artist and runs a major artists' alternative web site here in New York. Since this is America, there is little or no funding for experimental art endeavors no matter how beneficial they might be to the society at large. He is totally without money and has been sleeping on my couch for a year. He is living the life of an anarchist nomad. He is not young. This is not a romantic choice. He doesn't fit into one of your categories. He is in a non-category perhaps akin to Hakim Bey's temporary autonomous zone. Your analysis of exposure is so incredibly trite it's laughable. It's a position born of privilege. It has the same sense as Marie Antoinette dressing up as a peasant and playing as a milk maid. Another romantic choice from a different era. The "bare life" of the 21st century is a life that is lived in spite of the military-entertainment complex. It is a life that is not incorporated or crushed by the supposed benefits of corporate global culture. As an artist I insist that I live my life without categories. That is freedom. My colleague who sleeps on my couch lives in a zone of bare life. I make art that defies categories. My ongoing digital performance piece RANTAPOD <<http://spaghetti.nujus.net/rantapod>> is a stripping away to bare life. The corporate art market an the military-entertainment complex don't have a mechanism to include this work. It is significant and exists in spite of it being outside the realm of corporate categories. It is only by a lucky circumstance that I am not the one who is sleeping on the couch in someone else's home. -gh

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Wed Jul 12 01:42:23 2006

Subject: Re: [-empyre-] Exposure

GH, I am sorry that you have decided to try and textually shout me down with insults more than an argument. You can label my arguments in any way you want and express your opinion but in the process you are articulating the sorts of categories that you claim do not affect you and that you eschew. Every time that you note your artist's status, you create categories and articulate yourself as a type. Distinguishing between artists and social workers, which you have done quite vehemently, is to create a value and hierarchy structure where you dismiss certain behaviors. Artists do not always receive economic rewards for their work but their status and the value of their work is often articulated in society through such governmentally and privately supported institutions as museums, alternative spaces, art books, these forums. Not all production receives even this acknowledgment. In insistently articulating your place outside of the system, which I don't believe exists, you are still talking about and producing the system/government/ as center. I would really prefer to engage in a thoughtful exchange of texts and thus will not be answering your future insults.

m.

From christina.l2@earthlink.net Wed Jul 12 04:32:55 2006

hi all,

As moderator, I just wanted to put out a quick reminder about list rules for -empyre- in case you're new to this online environment. Thanks to everyone for observing this constraint as it helps us to collaboratively generate new insights into the topic at hand.

From our front page:

- empyre- is not a chat space, nor an announcement or self promotion list, nor online performance space, and doesn't accept HTML formatted email or attachments on the list. The facilitators reserve the right to not publish posts that disregard these guidelines, or the current month's topics, disrespect the featured guests, or monopolize the forum either via individuals or group, and may unsubscribe anyone consistently doing so. —c

returning to the leitmotif: "What is bare life?

" This second question underscores the sheer vulnerability and complete exposure of being. Bare life deals with that part of our existence from which no measure of security will ever protect us. But as in sexuality, absolute exposure is intricately connected with infinite pleasure. There is an apocalyptic and obviously political dimension to bare life (brought out by torture and the concentration camp). There is, however, also a lyrical or even ecstatic dimension to it – a freedom for new and unexpected possibilities (in human relations as well as in our relationship to nature or, more generally, the world in which we live). Here and there, art dissolves the radical separation between painful subjection and joyous liberation. But what does that mean for its audiences?" -Christina

From christina.l2@earthlink.net Wed Jul 12 05:23:26 2006

Football mania provides an interesting elision into the conditions of 'bare life' and mass ecstasy and how this intercalates with the 'state of exception,' don't you think? Seems like that's your (and Aliette's—as another football commentator this week from Paris) implication. Elsewhere you explore 'bare life' as 'ordinary life' in a Joycean vein. Do you see a possibility to exceed the limits of the 'state of exception' by adapting or remixing hyperordinary 'ordinary' of James Joyce and his distant Dublin? Outcasts, such as political prisoners at Guantanamo, but maybe all of us, are no longer living 'ordinary life' in a democracy of the rule of law, because the state itself has declared a suspension of the rule of law (as in the loss of habeus corpus in the US) , in the name of a 'state of [permanent] emergency. In his book "State of Exception," Agamben articulates a view that this suspension of human rights and citizenship has legal precedent in the rise of the democratic/revolutionary state itself, specifically in France during the Directory in the years immediately following the overthrow of the monarchy. Not that

totalitarianism arises from somewhere outside democracy. “We have met the enemy and he is us,” as the newspaper comic character Pogo famously said (during the McCarthy years in fifties US).

A perilous, possibly irrevocable, slippage from democracy to absolutism.

Conor: “Football mania draws us all into its ecstatic fold for a brief time—we all crowd around the telly in pubs and bars, at parties at home—we participate in a global Dionysian joy temporarily forgetting the ‘state of exception’” . Maybe, we feel part of something metaphysically real; perhaps this need to feel this, especially as a group, rallying around a game rather than around war (think Hitler’s rallies). Does this ecstasy implicate us in the ‘state of exception’ ?

When I think of those rallies I think of Leni Riefenstahl’s ‘documentaries’ . The intricate collaboration between the state and the mass ecstatic image and the artist: Wikipedia ‘s notes: “She heard Adolf Hitler speak at a rally in 1932 and was mesmerized by his powers as a public speaker. Upon meeting Riefenstahl, Hitler, himself a frustrated artist, saw the chance to hire a visionary who could create the image of a strong, proud Wagnerian Germany radiating beauty, power, strength, and defiance, an image he could sell to the world. During a personal meeting he asked Riefenstahl to make a documentary and, in 1933, she directed the short film *Der Sieg des Glaubens* (Victory of Faith), an hour-long feature about the Nazi party rally at Nuremberg in 1933 (released on DVD in 2003). Reports vary as to whether she ever had a close relationship with Hitler but, impressed with her work, he then asked her to film the upcoming 1934 Party rally in Nuremberg. After initially turning down the project because she did not want to make “a prescribed film,” Riefenstahl began making another film titled *Tiefland*. She hired Walter Ruttmann to direct it in her place. When she fell ill, *Tiefland* was cancelled. Upon her recovery, she reviewed Ruttmann’s initial footage and found it to be terrible. She eventually relented to Hitler’ s pressure, and resumed her role as director of the film. She was given unlimited resources, camera crews, budget, complete artistic control and final cut of the film. *Triumph of the Will* was a documentary glorifying Hitler and widely regarded as one of the most effective pieces of propaganda ever produced. It is generally regarded as a masterful, epic, innovative work of documentary filmmaking. Because it was commissioned by the Nazi party and used as propaganda, however, critics have said it is nearly impossible to separate the subject from the artist behind it. *Triumph of the Will* was a rousing success in Europe, but widely banned in America.

Conor, you write:

“Watching France play surrounded by thousands of French fans reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the team, a team it seems that embody so much of the political issues that are important in France today. But when the ball kicks off all that matters is the game and you are exposed to some form of bare life where the highs are ecstatic and the lows terrible but all that matters is the moment and there are no differences, no class, no colour just for that moment. Then it all comes crashing down in an instant as it did in Berlin when Zizou walked off the pitch taking French hopes with him and we all left to be greeted by phalanxes of riot police batons drawn and ready for action.”

One wonders if your art practice generates from situating actions within a ‘lyrical or even ecstatic dimension’ : Connor, you write,

“There is another more optimistic aspect to Bare Life. Agamben notes that Bare Life is “ a form of life over which power no longer seems to have any hold” which opens up possibilities for a “lyrical or even ecstatic” dimension. Colin McQuillan in his essay ‘The Political Life in Giorgio Agamben ‘ argues that Agamben “defines this politics in terms of “ a life directed toward the idea of happiness and cohesive with a form-of-life” in which “the single ways, acts, and process of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always above all power and that “Agamben’s conception of the political life is the result of a radical rethinking of the potentiality of life, and life as potentiality.”

..... it is the humourous Joyce, the lyrical Joyce, the politically conflicted Joyce who abhorred the absolutist position and most of all the Joyce who believed that the highest form of art was to be found in the everyday lives of ordinary people, that I find of most interest and that informs my recent work. I am interested in the idea that by focusing on simple everyday things like walking through a city, we begin a process which clarifies what we do and how we relate to our world and reveals greater truths about ways of being in the world.. the glossallalia of Finnegans Wake speaks right from the heart of this “radical separation between painful subjection and joyous liberation” .

---or we might say, that the sequencing of generative acts, decisions, that keep moving just out of reach of the barricades and the phalanx.

Connor, does your work, beyond the innocence of your “Spook.. .Project, do this on any level, and how? Can you refer us to some urls online that document some of your new and old work? --Christina

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Wed Jul 12 05:19:46 2006

As I had intervened a lot, previously it is by respect for all if I refrained from continuing after the post of Michele's "Exposure ". On "(New Orleans reprise)" quotation of G.H. Hovagimyan by Christina, I agree with his logical view of the extreme situation of arts nowadays.

From another part I cannot enter the following debate between G.H. and Michele even it regards to respective passion : that is exactly of artists or regarding Arts at the nearest. So a hot debate at Christina's thematic is a good sign.

Of course my come back to answer on Conor's mention of Charléty Stadium and of the last match playing on the common French screens in the city. From my part what did I think? But a real event precisely entering "bare life" from another sort of catastrophe than power or terrorism or natural forces and without material damages of the bodies but of critical symbolic event from the part of one (the butterfly of the chaos to the French team in one act not being of the predictable rules and time). Do you think really that French victory or defeat at last would be an event or a non event? But the defeat by this way it was really a big event from a symbolic point of view. -Alette

From arslonga@netcabo.pt Wed Jul 12 06:48:27 2006

After reflecting about "what is bare life?", I will address some issues that approach this question and that are related to some of my projects. The situations that I find more defying are those when I can promote or be in close relation with people, and I must confess that I find that as seductive as disturbing.

In 2002 I made a performance via mobile phone called artphone. This happen during Free Manifesta (in Manifesta 4). There was a flyer and an online page with my personal mobile phone number and the sentence: "Don't be afraid to ask everything you always wanted to know about contemporary art". I received the calls and established a conversation (about an art issue) either with someone I knew or with someone I have never met before. In the version of 2005, presented at prog:me, I used skype phone and the visitors could talk to me directly from the exhibition space. Even though both experiences went quite well and it was not very difficult to overcome some shyness or awkwardness, every time I talked with a person it was a very intimate experience. Carlos Sansolo (one of the curators of Prog:me), expressed this controverse feeling - of pleasure and fear - quite accurately:

"The Portuguese artist Susana Mendes Silva proposed the artphone. The idea is quite simple, she provides her address so we can talk to her through a microphone and headphones from the computer about contemporary art, using the computer as a telephone. I have talked many times with Susana, never about art, always about technical issues and always presenting one other artist that appeared while talking to her. Actually talking to an unknown person on the phone gives you a certain degree of intimacy that I always felt terrified about. As a matter of fact, I have always felt a certain compulsion to confessing things to this unknown voice. My first thought is always about the history of sexuality of M. Foucault, about this fear of confessing in intimate moments. She says, "have no fear, ask me what you've always wanted to know about contemporary art", and all I felt was fear. The simple presence of a voice that talks about contemporary art has the ability to inspire disturbing or great situations for whoever contacts it. We may think it is a reflection on intimacy on the internet. The work is not only a proposition, but the result of this chat that can never be completely predictable."

---Carlo Sansolo, In Notes about the curatorship and exhibition of prog:Me, the first new medias festival in Rio de Janeiro

A completely different experience was art_room, where I used a webchat called webcamnow. My performance was developed in the context of Identidades Virtuais workshop, and I had set a schedule during the month of June. When I began the performance, on the first day, I went to room 1 to announce what I was doing by simply posting the sentence: "Don't be afraid to ask everything you always wanted to know about contemporary art". I moved to a free room (from 30 rooms, only three rooms had people in them), and I began to have conversations with some of the people. I soon realize that some of the users felt like they "own" the website (no matter what room I moved into), and they began to become very aggressive towards me. If you see the still image of me during the performance, you will only see my eyes. I was hiding behind my powerbook, because some of the users kept saying that I was showing off too much (even if I was decently dressed). In order to avoid some visual disturbance, I ended up "veiled" by my computer...

The result was totally the reverse from the other experiences... The experience of a certain degree of intimacy, soon lead to fear acted as aggressivity and exclusion. In the second day I was expelled from the "family and friends" area: my camera was shut down, and I was disconnected as a user by the moderator (just because he felt like it...he confessed it, when I later protested signed as a new user). At first I was really furious and sent a complaint letter (that was never answered), but soon I realize that this experiment was very fascinating and revealing of how a human community can function - in a social and political sense - no matter what kind of media you are using or what kind of space you are at.

related: <http://www.turbulence.org/blog/archives/001121.html> --Susana

From christina12@earthlink.net Wed Jul 12 07:14:51 2006

About the intimacy and fear the 'artphone' inspired:

Erotic emotions and fears in the anonymous exchange 'ask me anything you want to know about contemporary art.'" Would it be different if we substituted 'anything you want to know about Guantanamo?' --Christina

From dkellysocialchange@yahoo.com Wed Jul 12 08:52:41 2006

From: Deborah Kelly <dkellysocialchange@yahoo.com>

I'm sorry to be coming in late with this, I just want to say that attacking a participant in this conversation is very poor behaviour & insults us all. Disagreement can be productive, but rudeness never can.
sincerely, Deborah

From jackysaw@telus.net Wed Jul 12 10:33:13 2006

I am attempting to talk about the difference in mediated experience of bare life and 'bare life'. The whole world cup soccer experience has me very worried mostly because of the grand scale, realtime broadcast globally of the event, and the rhetoric imbedded in the footage, namely, individualism, and power, and the focus on the emotions not so much on the game. The capability of these images to draw you in as a viewer and give the feeling you are part of the game where, actually, as in my case I am sitting watching in a coffee-shop in Vancouver. I felt that my emotions were manipulated. The convergence in television of , reality -TV, news, and sports. I started a research project that looks at the development and choices made in editing and kind of image since the world cup was broadcasted. The development of technology , clear, crisp, images , the capability of HDTV, makes for a different kind of experience for the viewer then say 16 years ago. (A few dots running over a green patch, with a white dot going from one to another. The emphasis was more on the team effort and gave the viewer more room to analyze the match. The emotional involvement was not instigated as much by the technological abilities, by something else, maybe a commitment to the game , or nation?) This might be all old news but i think when talking about 'bare life' it's important to beware of the use of the entertainment industry of this concept and how this industry wants the viewer or participant to have a 'bare life' experience. --Jacky

From marc.garrett@furtherfield.org Wed Jul 12 11:03:07 2006

I found it a strange experience watching the world cup. I do actually enjoy football myself, and have played a few matches in my time; yet, watching it recently reminded me of *Naked Lunch*. William Burroughs said that it was his greatest novel. 'Naked Lunch,' by which he meant it's

what you see on the end of a fork. As I watched the television to try and find out more context about what was happening around the world in regard to all the inhumane, killings and corporate funded killings by patriarchal systems - the replacement of the 'Cold War', etc... all I could find was football, and the ever dominating spectacle of it. I couldn't help thinking of all the news that could of been featured and seen, instead of the testosterone pumped frenzy of soccer.

"Then it all comes crashing down in an instant as it did in Berlin when Zizou walked off the pitch taking French hopes with him and we all left to be greeted by phalanxes of riot police batons drawn and ready for action."

What does it mean when people are more prepared to cry over their own nation or team losing a game, and not cry over the pain of people dying elsewhere? Perhaps it is too simplistic a notion but, if we observe the haze via the mediation of the World Cup, and how much importance is placed upon this mass (almost religious) experience, and the illusion of togetherness that sports organisations seem to try and (understandably) communicate - suddenly, if the kids don't get what they want it all gets pretty nasty - and then, we are left staring at the end of a fork, just like Burroughs - the naked truth of it all.—Marc

-- Furtherfield - <http://www.furtherfield.org> HTTP - <http://www.http.uk.net> Node.London - <http://www.nodel.org>

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Wed Jul 12 11:02:39 2006 Subject: Re: [-empyre-] 'Bare Life'—a lyrical and even ecstatic dimension From: Alette <aliette@criticalsecret.org>

I just want to insist from my part on the positive critical event to the world cup and to the public of football under the eyes of the world < of the TV screen ; people specially criticized on nationalism and machismo (can be in homo or hetero sexual presentation) by ZZ's whim (blow of head in all the sense of the terms). Even it would be negative to his team at the proper moment. By this critical way leaving the stadium (as last match by the player) he is the medium of inaugurating a new episode of the screening stadium... I mean rather less of his proper life after playing football, than of football after he leaves it by this blow as we regard to collective tribute that can have an impact.

With bare life in Art we are not in this alternative but a changing alternative; by a strange way returning to the symbolic signification of the existential rupture between the signs and the 'bare reality,' that creates a new system of representation, on the one hand, as a true event not being art, and on the other hand, the methodology to get phenomena from bare effect as Art or to invent situations of Art as bare effect. Really in this opportunity of the critical event of the world cup by ZZ whatever he wanted or not wanted make a collective event from his very personal part, yet it is one event of emergent bare life in the rule of football that informs otherwise of the global public and of his representative scene.

So, I think that it is over passing bare life as "'Bare Life'—a lyrical and even ecstatic dimension" by bare life as the emergent stochastic dimension of the raid in bare critical reality, in real time of the changing cultural adjusted society (may be the cultural adjusted society regarded equal to the domain of sovereign power at Agamben's)... The same of hard disasters but here not being a hard disaster just a cultural schism. To follow the actual example: apparently after the acting moment, the image of Zidane himself has not changed even no more the one of the outside national view of France (that could be all the contrary the bare image of France: insubordination to the rule and personal comportment to common).

What is really changing but the image of the cup and of the world cup? through the perfect star but forgetting the rule at the ultimate moment that means a disappearance of the game or a leaving?

The interest being in the reorganization of the chain of signification from a rupture by the fate random of an individual signification (bare life), which installs consequently a fate random selection to a new chain of next collective significations or rules... For example in football: using currently video as tools of arbitrage in the future, or/ and changing the ethic rules on the grass (not only the struck and knock but the words), can be the rule of the disappearance of the racist or neo fascist provocations on the playing fields which claim "raising human rights"? What can I tell more or a lot of other possible opportunities?

(Having examples corresponding with the specific evocation, but a lot of other fields or domains, or other failing compartments, could be quote or imagined as possibly positive to the collective but not a war).

Can be a complete involution of mass games signification, regarding the original antique Roman circus which played with the slave condition offered by the power to the enjoyment of cruelty of the people (as symbolic exchange); or may be more an involution of the traditional reference of the primitive Olympic stadium, where people having his proper youth in competition it installs a model of plastic academic beauty... regarding the transcendental collective representation in a lyric identification it is exactly the opposite which happened any days ago, a rupture of the rule becoming a depressive event of the traditional emotions and representations of the current world cup.

A sort of initiatory test of the end of a world which the meanings change and more: one as several (the public) having to adapt themselves together to the change. –Alette

From marc.garrett@furtherfield.org

Wed Jul 12 12:24:44 2006 Hi all,

Even though GH has expressed thoughts in a tone which is not in keeping with the usually accepted behaviour on this list, ignoring his comments via the process of dumbing it down to a level that cheapens the original intention itself, is not advisable. For what was expressed were actually 'bare bones', even though it was intensely shared. What some may conveniently perceive as insults, may actually be something else, if explored further than mere immediate reactions and protocolian default-settings.

A commonly used tactical weapon (especially on the working classes), by (inspiring) despotic rulers, or tactically controlling organizations, and those who follow such unquestioning, institutional protocols; is to drown out valid concerns, dissent and social disquiet by stigmatizing the 'subjective and questioning voice', as a whiner or aggressive attacker. This could be in the form of what is perceived as political correctness, which can serve as an officially accepted process and authoritarian positioning of a moral code. This moral code sits well with conservative behaviour, rejecting 'real-raw energy', in favour of a more socially constructed and accepted distant, mechanistic value.

Such properties in essence, whether conscious or not - do act to inflict a de-positioning, which is not a necessary action and more creates yet another scenario of cultural disempowerment and trivializes the disputer's voice, diverting one away from the actual context of what was originally argued or disputed. A patriarchal function that pulls rank, displacing the upstart in question and literally placing them to the back of the queue. Which is political.

GH is a very important curator and artist in regard to net art and media art, and by not recognizing that his voice is of equal value only communicates a suspicion that we are only allowed to be discussing, under terms of a bourgeois criterion that serves an elite of people who feel more stronger and sure that they are correct and better than certain groups or individuals, mainly because they are supported in feeling that way.

When one is actually part of a creative field such as net art/new media, and aware of certain opposing forces contrary to creative freedoms and genuinely interested in sharing troublesome flaws that are either lodged in ourselves, or perpetrated institutionally. It is usually constructive to air ideas and thoughts (they do not necessarily have to be academic) and go through the positive process of discovering where some of these varied and interesting issues lie, theoretically and in practice.

What was experienced on here, on this list was 'Bare Life', and to simply brush the essence of such an experience under the carpet says something, which is unfortunately all too common. That there is no place for urgency, passion and fluid communication that does not conform or reflect the allotted 'tags' or 'signifiers'.

There is a big difference between intellectual argument and academic argument, academic argument comes from a place of culturalized reference, high art, high science, or accepted and supposed informed knowledge that has been institutionally accepted. This means that if you use an academic argument or already prescribed canon in your argument, you are more likely to be agreed with by those who value such structures and theories. Thus, an immediate rapport occurs, a kind of mental handshake and recognition that one has equally gone through the

same learning processes. This is of course a positive experience for those who wish to have their so called intellectual and educational references re-affirmed, but it serves no solution to solve the issue or crux, that 'Academia' only serves the few.

I personally, was not insulted by GH's comments, as Deborah proposed. He was rude to only one individual on this list. To me, it seemed very much a personal reaction to the position of the debator, and their credentials. –Marc

From christina12@earthlink.net Wed Jul 12 14:14:34 2006

Subject: [-empyre-] the invisible subject

When I was a little girl, I could not get my dad (an academic) to admit that there was such a thing as women's history (he was a professional historian). He argued that to label history as women's was to stereotype history. At the same time it was agonizingly obvious that there were 'no women artists' . The grammar that insisted the term 'woman' was just a subset (subject?) of the term 'man' made for a violent erasure. in the fundamentalist community in which I grew up, the talent and intellect required of an artist, could never be actualized if born female. I began to devise, visual art, as a tool to bash a way through the barriers. I had to leave that community or die. Because I learned this as a child I experience life from a certain remove.

When in the seventies American culture put 'differential' into descriptive language about human beings, so that you always were obliged to say, 'he or she' , instead of 'he' , this was a step towards actual speech in real words, in actions, in art, things like, how 'exposure' and 'gaze ' are different for women than for men. Being 'erased' in that culture caused a resort to trying any means available, any resource, to create a communication. Drawing. Writing. Making grades so I could get the fuck out of there. Living in the 'bare' of being invisible. how to make visible work when you are invisible.

Art practice is an inflammatory speech against, the making invisible of the individual subject. –Christina

From gana@iinet.net.au Wed Jul 12 13:33:28 2006

Marc wrote:

"Even though G.H. has expressed thoughts in a tone which is not in keeping with the usually accepted behaviour on this list, ignoring his comments via the process of Dumbing it down to a level that cheapens the original intention itself, is not advisable. For what was expressed were actually 'bare bones', even though it was intensely shared. What some may conveniently perceive as insults, may actually be something else, if explored further than mere immediate reactions and protocolian default-settings... What was experienced on here, on this list was 'Bare Life', and to simply brush the essence of such an experience under the carpet says something, which is unfortunately all too common. That there is no place for urgency, passion and fluid communication that does not conform or reflect the allotted 'tags' or 'signifiers'."

Agreed .. maybe there's bit of the Zizek in his style. Yes he is abrasive in his style but check out his movie rants. When I'm feeling down and de-energised I play one of them and it re-energises me. We are all liars aren't we ... a poet? why not . G.H. Hovagimyan's abrasiveness is something that can be effective but I do acknowledge that Michele's response is genuine. I guess I would have been taken aback but it doesn't mean we need to smother strong disagreement. At the heart of the matter is whether we can keep our debate robust. There are some huge issues out there ... the indifference of a true political elite, indifferent to our needs, ruthless in its greed. ...-Gianni

From christina12@earthlink.net Wed Jul 12 14:25:36 2006

GH writes, "I decide to go back to the origins of video art which is essentially an artists doing something in front of a camera. When I edit the footage, I am using myself to create a media object. I am becoming a digital object that can be duplicated, sampled, cut apart, endlessly multiplied and put back together." <http://spaghetti.nujus.net/artDir> <http://spaghetti.nujus.net/rantapod> http://nujus.net/gh_04/gallery11.html

Want to comment on this? relative to maybe, how this practice is 'bare life; against stereotyping? –Christina

From: Jacquie Clarke <arapito@pl.net> Wed Jul 12 14:27:27 2006

Has New York City now become the centre of suffering instead of the art world and so can define it for the rest of us - once again.....? -Jacquie

From christina112@earthlink.net Wed Jul 12 14:39:27 2006

Susana writes,

“The experience of a certain degree of intimacy, soon led to fear acted as aggressivity and exclusion.. In the second day I was expelled....

“A completely different experience was art_room, where I used a web chat called webcamnow. My performance was developed in the context of Identidades Virtuais workshop, and I had set a schedule during the month of June. When I began the performance, on the first day, I went to room 1 to announce what I was doing by simply posting the sentence: “Don’t be afraid to ask everything you always wanted to know about contemporary art”. I moved to a free room (from 30 rooms, only three rooms had people in them), and I began to have conversations with some of the people. I soon realize that some of the users felt like they “own” the website (no matter what room I moved into), and they began to become very aggressive towards me. If you see the still image of me during the performance, you will only see my eyes. I was hiding behind my powerbook, because some of the users kept saying that I was showing off too much (even if I was decently dressed). In order to avoid some visual disturbance, I ended up “veiled” by my computer...

“The result was totally the reverse from the other experiences. The experience of a certain degree of intimacy, soon lead to fear acted as aggressivity and exclusion. In the second day I was expelled from the “family and friends” area: my camera was shut down, and I was disconnected as a user by the moderator (just because he felt like it...he confessed it, when I later protested signed as a new user).

“At first I was really furious and sent a complaint letter (that was never answered), but soon I realize that this experiment was very fascinating and revealing of how a human community can function - in a social and political sense - no matter what kind of media you are using or what kind of space you are at.” –Christina

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Wed Jul 12 15:46:26 2006

Hi Christina,

Thanks for your powerful thoughts and personal descriptions about the ways women are both rendered invisible as subjects and are hyper-visible as objects. I have been considering the ways that traditional forms of gazing are enforced by the sale of vintage erotic photography on eBay and how descriptions of these images also articulate other viewers and desires. In some developing work, I suggest that some eBay vintage photography sellers address heterosexual male buyers but list mass-produced erotic images of women as “lesbian” and “lesbian interest.” Vernacular photography sellers also employ the terms “lesbian” and “lesbian interest” when presenting items to lesbian viewers and consumers. Through this conflicted usage, sellers make male buyers of nude images of women seem less straight and begin to reconceptualize sexuality and eroticism outside of the straight/gay binary. Sellers use the terms “lesbian” and “lesbian interest” to indicate images that are of note to lesbians; photographic documentation of lesbian pasts; women dragging and performing masculinities; queer readings of photographs that confuse stable categories, desires, and subject positions; political positions that can enhance lesbian communities; and erotic images of women.

Men cannot just pleasurably view the “lesbian girl on girl action” photographs that were originally directed at them when engaged by this diverse grouping of images and texts. Men view versions of lesbians that were not coded or designed for them and are situated within and in front of the pictures in different subject positions than anticipated. Their unexpected situation encourages a rethinking of the ways binary gender and stable sexualities are articulated by theories of consumption and viewing. The construction of men with lesbian interests and

portrayal of women performing masculinities promote continued examinations of how sex and gender are identified. As the work of Anne Fausto-Sterling and Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna indicate, presumptions about genitals and other sex traits are better described as “cultural genitals.”

In my work, I want to consider the ways cultural and economic processes structure men as well as women. Addressing the ways women are constructed without also considering issues of men and masculinity may leave such positions empowered and naturalized. Concepts of the male computer programmer and self-representations by men in the information technology field suggest very conflicted versions of masculinity as well as femininity. For instance, narratives about nerds and geeks in text-based communication settings, usenet, cyberpunk literature, and films like *War Games* (John Badham, 1983) and *Thomas in Love* (Pierre-Paul Renders, 2000) depict pasty-faced and asocial men languishing in the monitor’s glow. The programmer Sir Timothy humorously and ambivalently describes his lifestyle as “get up, walk to computer, use computer, eat, go to the bathroom.”

Individuals who self-present as male programmers in Internet settings write about the male body, concerns about weight, and fear of fat in ways that feminize them. Ironic commentary on the lifestyles and eating habits of male programmers and other intensive computer users abound. This fascination with the male body is notable. While men are traditionally expected to view the female form—a problem that feminists have addressed—such Internet stories indicate that men are often considering the bodies of other men. Their focus suggests a homosocial or even homosexual setting and system of desire. However, this male-centric setting, which certainly presents problems for other gender representing individuals, does not inherently lead to a consolidation of power. These men are coded as feminine because they seem to exist within an excessively meaty and embodied state.

Charles Arthur describes the attendees of a hacker conference as “about 20 pounds overweight. It’s all those hours at the keyboard.” There are pronouncements that “geekus midwestus” has “rolls and rolls of fat” and that the Internet is “full” of “fat ass ugly guys.” Negative and harassing posts suggest that some male programmers are unable to control their bodies. There are suggestions that an individual could lose weight by getting “off your lazy ass and do something,” “Get off your ass, stop watching >4 hours of TV, eating a bucket of crap (chips, popcorn, burgers, whatever),” and “Eating is about self control and not being a child.” This lack of control is usually coded as feminine and associated with women. However, the bodies of women programmers are rarely mentioned in these discussions and women seem less likely to post in these forums on body issues, perhaps because they already encounter so many comments and social pressures in other situations. Men are the intended targets of these comments, which provide moral superiority to those with bodily control, and render larger male individuals as weak and indolent.

I am happy to provide citations for this material if people are interested. I address some of these masculinity issues in *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship* and “Where Do You Want to Sit Today? Computer Programmers’ Static Bodies and Disability,” *Information, Communication and Society* 9, 3 (2006). –Michele

From Tracey.Meziane@deh.gov.au Wed Jul 12 16:00:37 2006

I think the invisible woman as subject, visible woman as object can be deployed in a range of subjective contexts. This example brought to mind for me the detainee identity of immigration detention centres and Guantanamo Bay. In these cases the identity is figured as objective stereotypes, predominately terrorist, asylum seeker and refugee. However, the subject is rendered invisible not only because of these associations, but because of the restrictions in place regarding access to the outside world. -Tracey

From christinal12@earthlink.net Wed Jul 12 16:24:20 2006

Tracey writes,

"I think the invisible woman as subject, visible woman as object can be deployed in a range of subjective contexts. ...However, the subject is rendered invisible not only because of these associations, but because of the restrictions in place regarding access to the outside world."

And Michele writes of the ways women are both rendered invisible as subjects and are hyper-visible as objects. I have been considering the ways that traditional forms of gazing are enforced by the sale of vintage erotic photography on eBay and how descriptions of these images also articulate other viewers and desires.

Or—one might add—regarding information access, hence, language usage or branding, to the 'outside' world. In the permanent state of emergency, it seems that how the subject is characterized is more important than the subject, or what has happened to the subject.

Observing the sexual labelling of the victim of the gang rape and murder in Iraq by US troops, a new article by Susan Weber in Editor and Publisher is pertinent (cc below)

http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=2803062

Evidently, the rape was less outrageous if the victim was considered a 'woman'. Evidently the assumption may be that a woman deserves to be raped, or is customarily raped. Or that there are rights extant (accorded to unnamed entities) to rape a woman, whereas no rights, or fewer options anyway, exist to rape a girl. Meanwhile, they gangraped the girl and killed her and her family. It was less OK if it was a girl, I guess.

Christina

When Is a 14-Year-Old Girl a 'Woman'?

By Sarah Weber

Published: July 11, 2006 1:45 PM ET

NEW YORK Ever since the case of the raping and killing of an Iraqi and the alleged murder of three of her family members by U.S. troops went public, the age of the rape victim had been in dispute, ranging from about 15 to 25. Two days ago, Reuters and others news agencies produced proof that she was 14, based on a passport and identity card. Most news organizations then started calling her a girl—but some persist in referring to her as a "woman."

The girl was apparently born August 19, 1991. Yet a widely published AP story today by Robert H. Reid repeatedly referred to the girl, whose last name was al-Janabi, as a "young Iraqi woman" and later again as a "woman." The story was in reference to the gag order being requested by attorneys of Steven D. Green, an ex-soldier who is one of the men charged with the rape and murders. It begins: "An al-Qaida-linked group posted a Web video today purporting to show the mutilated bodies of two Fort Campbell soldiers, claiming it killed them in revenge for the rape-slaying of a young Iraqi woman by American troops from the same unit." A separate AP story today by Juan Lozano, on the soldiers' families defending them, also refers to the girl as a "young woman." In Tuesday's Washington Post, an article by Joshua Partlow refers to the teenager as an "Iraqi woman." USA Today continues to feature the AP "young woman" story. The CNN site calls the victim a "young female" and a "woman." A CNN report aired Tuesday by Nic Robertson continued to refer to the child as a "young woman."

Yet a full day earlier, and again today, The New York Times was calling her a "girl." The Los Angeles Times today referred to her as a "teenage Iraqi" and later as a "teen." Bloomberg used "girl" and McClatchy's dispatch chose "teenager." Reuters simply stated her age: 14.

But Jim Lehrer on his PBS "NewsHour" last night referred to her a "woman." At the CBS News site today, a joint CBS/AP story uses "young woman." Other stories today continue to offer caveats, claiming that the age of the young victim was "in dispute." The Reid AP story referred to an FBI affidavit concerning Green's charges, which estimated al-Janabi to be about 25. The article went on to say that "a doctor at the Mahmoudiya hospital gave her age as 14. He refused to be identified for fear of reprisals." The AP story does not mention the Reuters release of al-Janabi's passport and the other supporting documents. An AP wire photo published with many of the stories does refer to the victim as a "girl."

UPDATE: In a story for Wednesday's Washington Post, following the E&P story above, reporter Joshua Partlow, who had earlier described the 14-year-old as a woman, now refers to her as an "Iraqi girl." Sarah Weber (sweber@editorandpublisher.com) is a reporter for E&P.

From aka.leafa@xtra.co.nz Wed Jul 12 16:41:22 2006

Talofa all, thanks for sharing that story. The whole notion of the invisible is one of huge interest to me as a visual artist. I often find that the great minds on here discussing philosophic and particularly academic finer points of activities of artists both on and off the net leave me in the dust - I find that there is almost a cyber-invisibility that occurs every time I read. This is not a terrible thing, because I always find the discussion inspires me to research some of the ideas that never occur to me. Big ups to those amazing minds... I love to feast on your words. I guess there is always some space between various 'knowleges' and I believe that is where I operate best in the margins / at the limn. this is the place where I situate myself because I can only understand that which enters my world and this is where I can share. Again- a place of relative comfort for me because being brought up in a culture which was intelligent in its own Samoan culture, I have absorbed the culture which I have chosen to view art with, and I guess all the world with. My recent work is based in an arcadia of my own making, where my invisible GERMAN self is the prominent character. We - my Samoan and German selves co-exist in harmony, with an equal power base. Perhaps this sounds fake and silly, but here - my GERMAN self OLGA KRAUSE, gets to speak and make art and exist and purport to do all sorts of things in the body of this Samoan woman that everyone knows as Leafa. Unlike Et Al, L. Budd - Marilyn Tweedie - I operate from a this dual self because I actually AM known as a Samoan - Taufau Leafa Janice, but my birth certificate tells the world that I am a German Olga Hedwig Krause is no longer invisible. Thanks for the forum to share. Tchuess Leafa/ Olga

Date: Wed, 12 Jul 2006 11:00:47 +0200 From: "Ana Valdes" <agora158@gmail.com>

I was raised by German nuns, also a very fundamentalist community. For them the issue was to make the body invisible, to hidden it behind black dresses and coifs, according to them "the body was only the vessel of the soul", a source of sin and decay and foul odours. Later, on the jail, we were also hidden in grey uniforms and our hair was cut, to avoid "tempt the male jailers and soldiers we were guarded by". When I was in Palestine, in Gaza, I spent the 8th March, International Womens Day, with several hundred women, performing and acting. Almost all the women were covered by veils, some of them wore burkha similar clothes which covered the whole body, gloves too, the only you could see were the eyes and many wore dark sunglasses. The invisibilization of the body made the body only more desirable and the itch to peel the layers of clothes and see behind was very clear for all of us who were not fully clothed. -Ana

From: Susana Mendes Silva <arslonga@netcabo.pt>

Date: Wed, 12 Jul 2006 11:17:02 +0100

Ana Valdes wrote:

"Almost all the women were covered by veils, some of them wore burkha similar clothes which covered the whole body, gloves too, the only you could see were the eyes and many wore dark sunglasses. The invisibilization of the body made the body only more desirable and the itch to peel the layers of clothes and see behind was very clear for all of us who were not fully clothed." And Michele writes of how the subject is rendered invisible not only because of these associations, but because of the restrictions in place regarding access to the outside world.

- the ways women are both rendered invisible as subjects and are hyper-visible as objects.

I have always been fascinated with the possibilities of undermining expectations. If one is by moral laws forced (or willing) to become invisible as a subject, it is quite disturbing to find that as an "object" or an anonymous she becomes an object of desire. The question of uniformization - I wouldn't simple call it a dress code - is due to issues of identification and control. The use of uniforms bring up a lot of questions about the society of control. Ana even refers the hair cutting, which is seen as something to withdraw some seductive appeal, but is also seen in some cultures as a punishment (or part of it).

Imagine that this object underneath those burkhas, veils and sunglasses there were some men?

In 2001, I presented an installation called "Tchador", that consisted on two walls, in each wall there were 300 repeated 10x15 cm photos (set in a grid, almost as a tile repetition). on the left side, the photo was a veiled head (white veil, with a crochet stripe for the eyes). on the right side, the photo showed the veil pulled away just before the eye level- you could see part of the face. and it was a man face.

Some reactions were very curious: people could not believe that it was the same model in two pictures. For them the first was "obviously" a woman, and the second was a man (because it was visibly a man's face, even if you could not see his eyes). The question was really about how do we deal with our own expectations, with our prejudice, with our conceptual frames?

What is really a "human person" (beyond all distinctions of gender, ethnicity, etc...)? How people address issues if you change/undermine the rules, or if you change the point of view? --susana mendes silva

From marc.garrett@furtherfield.org Wed Jul 12 20:02:57 2006

Hi Gianni,

"G.H. Hovagimyan's abrasiveness is something that can be effective but I do acknowledge that Michele's response is genuine. At the heart of the matter is whether we can keep our debate robust."—agreed and understood... "There are some huge issues out there ... the indifference of a true political elite, indifferent to our needs, ruthless in its greed. ..

I think that it is important to point out that I am not condoning G.H's tone but, there is more to it than meets the eye - a subtext is at play here that, probably cannot be aired and debated until another time. Your comments and open communication is much appreciated,—marc

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Wed Jul 12 21:31:52 2006

This time from my point of view I approve this remark by Ana, in the sense that nowadays there is no rule regarding symbolic criticism: just different events changing the former signs by taking meaning from dependence on the environment and this is a plastic process (always moving ever more or less fast). Always we would have to regard the context as a predictable structure interpreting the fact, more the proximate aspects of situations. Art still may anticipate the predictable collective situations, not in the terms of the prophecy as 'bare life', but in terms of the prediction of emergent sense through the critical event disrupting the chronology by anachronistic or broken chains of comparisons? (homage to Nelson Goodman on "languages of Art" regarding "Facts, fictions, predictions") ----Aliette

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Thu Jul 13 01:25:39 2006

Marc, I am a little confused about who the silencing person of privilege is that you keep invoking in your earlier comments. Could you be clearer about the problems in play since you keep hinting at them? I appreciate your celebration of openness, perhaps you would indicate your detailed critique since comments like: "there is more to it than meets the eye - a subtext is at play here," hint at some underlying controlling intention, which you seem to condemn, without providing any examples. If you are accusing someone (me?) of some action then it seems appropriate to be open about your comments and own position in this. I am utterly perplexed about what is at issue here. —Michele

From christina.l2@earthlink.net Thu Jul 13 01:52:01 2006

If you all don't mind taking a brief break in the action here, I 'd like to just take a second to clarify how I apply the posting guideline about 'disrespect' for -empyre- soft-skinned space. This is my subjective interpretation, of course. -empyre-'s a volunteer space, not an organization so the moderators don't really have detailed rules of order, just this guideline. Other months, when someone else on our team is the moderator, you'll have a different interpretation than mine. All I am going on is, our founder, Melinda Rackham's guideline, specifically about 'disrespect the featured guests'. Here it is, from our front page:

"-empyre- is not a chat space, nor an announcement or self promotion list, nor online performance space, and doesn't accept HTML formatted email or attachments on the list. The facilitators reserve the right to not publish posts that disregard these guidelines, or the current month's topics, disrespect the featured guests, or monopolize the forum either via individuals or group, and may unsubscribe anyone consistently doing so."

Ok, so as moderator I am obliged to take a position relative to posts to the list, in order to facilitate this guideline. The criterion I've been given for moderation concerns modes of speech, or what may be called rhetorical devices. (example, no performance, no disrespect, no announcements, etc, see above). The following phrase contains a rhetorical device, which I interpret as 'disrespectful of a featured guest':

"Your analysis of exposure is so incredibly trite it's laughable. It's a position born of privilege. It has the same sense as Marie Antoinette dressing up as a peasant and playing as a milk maid. Another romantic choice from a different era."

So what's wrong with that?

The articulation of the argument is flawed because the writer resorts to 'ad hominem argument' . (Of course in light of our discussion about gendered speech I should also say 'ad feminem argument' ! I use 'ad hominem argument' as a working tool to decide if a post 'disrespects the featured guests.' What is 'ad hominem argument'?

In ad hominem argument, also known as argumentum ad hominem (Latin, literally "argument against the person") or attacking the messenger, involves replying to an argument or assertion by attacking the person presenting the argument or assertion rather than the argument itself. It is usually, though not always, a logical fallacy (see Validity below). (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad_hominem " Ad hominem as logical fallacy: A (fallacious) ad hominem argument has the basic form:

A makes claim X. There is something objectionable about A. Therefore claim X is false. The first statement is called a 'factual claim' and is the pivot point of much debate. The last statement is referred to as an 'inferential claim' and represents the reasoning process. There are two types of inferential claim, explicit and implicit. Ad hominem is one of the best-known of the logical fallacies usually enumerated in introductory logic and critical thinking textbooks. Both the fallacy itself, and accusations of having committed it, are often brandished in actual discourse. As a technique of rhetoric, it is powerful and used often, despite its inherent incorrectness.

In contrast, an argument that instead relies (fallaciously) on the positive aspects of the person arguing the case is sometimes known as "positive ad hominem," or appeal to authority. An ad hominem fallacy consists of asserting that someone's argument is wrong and/or he is wrong to argue at all purely because of something discreditable/not-authoritative about the person or those persons cited by him rather than addressing the soundness of the argument itself. The implication is that the person's argument and/or ability to argue correctly lacks authority. Merely insulting another person in the middle of otherwise rational discourse does not necessarily constitute an ad hominem fallacy. It must be clear that the purpose of the characterization is to discredit the person offering the argument, and, specifically, to invite others to discount his arguments. In the past, the term ad hominem was sometimes used more literally, to describe an argument that was based on an individual, or to describe any personal attack. However, this is not how the meaning of the term is typically introduced in modern logic and rhetoric textbooks, and logicians and rhetoricians are in agreement that this use is incorrect.

Examples:

"You claim that this man is innocent, but you cannot be trusted since you are a criminal, as well." "You feel that abortion should be illegal, but I disagree, because you are uneducated and poor." "Only right-wing nutjobs believe that homosexuals account for one to two percent of the population."

Not all ad hominem attacks are insulting:

Example:

“Paula says the umpire made the correct call, but this is false, because Paula is too important to pay attention to the game.” This is an ad hominem fallacy, even though it is saying something positive about the person, because it is addressing the person and not the topic in dispute. Ironically, accusing an opponent of ad hominem can itself be an example of ad hominem if it is worded as an insult: “I’m not going to stand here and let him insult me!” or “My opponent is resorting to logical fallacy to win,” or “Since he is out of good arguments, he’s attacking me.” (partial Argument from silence)”

--- wikipedia entry http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad_hominem

- Christina

From marc.garrett@furtherfield.org Thu Jul 13 02:18:01 2006

I should mention that none of my text is in any way meant to put anyone down personally. When I say subtext, it is no way regarding to Michelle specifically - the subtext at play is a social context regarding the general behaviour of the list, not anyone specifically. I'm referring to the psychological relationship between say one individual such as H.G, in contrast to the rest of the list users. On our own list 'Netbehaviour.org - every now and then we get an outspoken individual who expounds a point of view more vocally than others, and sometimes directly to certain individuals - and much worse, to be frank.

I would love to discuss much more about list dynamics, protocols and other relational aspects connected to such issues but, I really do not want to become a bully - would people mind if I changed the subject back to what was being discussed generally? For there are actually other ideas and dialogue happening here that could be drowned out, and I respect that...—Marc

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Thu Jul 13 03:29:23 2006

My opinion is that suspicious investigations between subscribers as they are discussing of the intensity of our times (Bare life in all statements and from each point of view) from their respective intensities and opinions (as artists, as thinkers, as curators, socially integrated and linked to art and poetry even tech and development) it really makes me in trouble as a sort of preliminary to civil wars (between artists) or a perpetual code of censure that does not sound right in the following debate that must go on...

Of course we are all from several social classes and formations. It is absolutely a gift to be able meet and discuss together thanks the respectable and relevant freedom of Christina. Of course all together we represent a micro example of the diversity in game to the actual and to the predictable future of working that will not have to be so much meta or so much expert than the immediate past days.

We are no more cut from the bare social and material reality of our words that have become much more hard for everyone (notoriously the strange application of human rights). Can it be that the disappearance of the sense of human being after all is in question (I think that, but it doesn't matter because each existence can change the collective environment from a representative unknown differential acting by a fate random effect, as I tried to describe, regarding, for example, football. Overall artists and poets, when they hope to show any message of their sensibility, of their words, innovate anyway more through intercriticism.

Please to leave the current ideological divide and to accept any shocking words for the benefit of difference. I know how to receive my lot. But I know that I cannot be an example being myself so much of the margin, more different but self defensive. Anyway, Michele, look at me, I am still alive on —empyre- ! GH is radical but not a bad guy; it exists probably a place where he can be with us with his clear-cut point of view not being an abyss but his raw personality. Let us find the solution to go with freedom of expression, even having to correct our respective regards to respect each one? As an old woman (we say an “old monkey”) to my sisters who are not offended, really, but are as we expected to seduce from the point of view of men, we can be also doing so from the part of women to each other.

All my best and my best effort in English to contribute to an opening of peace...to begin currently by amnesty.—Alette

From christinal12@earthlink.net Thu Jul 13 05:20:02 2006

Susana writes about her experience of veiling herself and being surveilled. In a way she was 'made into' a non person, or at least an expelled person because 'she was showing off too much.' Silencing of people who represent as 'women' is rampant. Susanna was expelled from the 'family and friends' area ; her camera was shut down. The implication of 'bare life' is that anyone can be shut down. To paraphrase Diane Enns, anyone 's life can be judged unworthy of being lived. One's death has no sacrificial value. The 'woman' or 'girl' of fourteen was ok to be raped and killed because she is a non entity. She is the life judged unworthy to be lived. Judged capriciously to be unworthy, by whatever whim possesses the one who has power of death over her. Her countervailing presence in death "exhibits a strange power' according to Enns, who continues, "Agamben's conceptualization of bare life (*la nuda vita*) derives from the Greeks' use of two terms to signify what we usually mean by life: *zoe*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings, and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group. Bare life recalls Aristotle's distinction between mere life and the good life; between private life and the public life of the polis where justice arises from the human community's capacity to reflect on what is best and necessary for the common good. In the interests of exploring limit concepts, Agamben describes bare life as the life of *homo sacer*, the obscure and paradoxical figure in ancient Roman law whose life was included in the political order only by way of its exclusion; a life judged unworthy of being lived; a life that could be killed with impunity and whose death therefore had no sacrificial value.[i] This figure, manifest in a continuum of examples from the landless refugee to the Muselmann of Auschwitz, has an essential function in modern politics as democracy's strength yet inner contradiction, Agamben seeks to demonstrate.[ii] It is "a two-faced being' or *corpus*, the bearer both of subjection to sovereign power and of individual liberties." [iii] Unless we analyse this interlacing of politics and life - become so tight it is difficult to unravel - we will not succeed in illuminating the opacity at the center of the political nature of bare life; an essential task for Agamben, if we are to understand the coming politics.[iv]."

Enns continues, "The facticity of birth, for example, becomes what is at stake in the question of rights for the refugee. Agamben refers us to Hannah Arendt, who points out that in the system of the nation-state the so-called sacred rights of man disappear the moment they no longer take the form of citizen's rights. It is the pure fact of birth, or bare life, that in this case appears to be the source and bearer of rights, Agamben concludes. Birth, or the principle of nativity, is responsible for man's passage from subject to citizen: birth becomes nation.[v] The refugee therefore provides a limit concept, according to Agamben, demonstrating the inclusion of bare life into politics, as does the euthanized life - the life judged unworthy of being lived - the life in limbo, hovering between birth and citizenship or between life and death. The most radical case for Agamben is the Muselmann of the Nazi death camps: the camp inmate who was no longer considered human he was so close to death, "the drowned" as Primo Levi called him, an "anonymous mass of non-men" who marched and laboured in silence, "the divine spark dead in them, already too empty to really suffer." [vi] These men, who marked the limits between the living and dead, described as neither one nor the other, also marked the threshold between the human and the inhuman, the ethical and the unethical. They were beyond dignity and self-respect - unbearable to look at - rendering these moral concepts useless.

"Agamben claims that this fact of the Muselmann's limit status therefore leads to the loss of the very idea of an ethical limit. For if an ethical concept such as dignity makes no sense for the Muselmann, neither alive nor dead, neither human nor inhuman, then it is not a genuine ethical concept, 'for no ethics can claim to exclude a part of humanity, no matter how unpleasant or difficult that humanity is to see.' [vii] Indeed, Auschwitz - a space in which the state of exception became the norm, where law was completely suspended - marks the end and the ruin of every ethics of dignity and conformity to a norm. The bare life to which human beings were reduced neither demands nor conforms to anything. It itself is the only norm; it is absolutely immanent. And 'the ultimate sentiment of belonging to the species' cannot in any sense be a kind of dignity.[viii] The Muselmann, Agamben concludes, the most extreme expression of this new knowledge, is the guard on the threshold of a new ethics that begins where dignity ends.

"The bare life of this *homo sacer*, in whom the divine spark is dead, is therefore paradoxically, anything but sacred. As the facticity of birth, of suffering, and of human life that is judged unworthy of being lived, it is a reference to extreme and absolute human fragility, a vulnerability that is no longer excluded from political life, yet one that exhibits its own strange power. While once it was relegated to the margins, now it has entered politics to an unprecedented degree. With our political order turning into a state of emergency, or state of exception, Agamben argues, this bare life, trembling on the threshold between the human and the inhuman, 'becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it.' [ix] *Corpus* is a two-faced being.' (excerpt from Diane Enns, "Bare Life and the Occupied Body," *Theory and Event*, 7.3, 2004.

From arslonga@netcabo.pt Thu Jul 13 07:07:06 2006

Christina asked me about "art_room": "Erotic emotions and fears in the anonymous exchange 'ask me anything you want to know about contemporary art.?' would it be different if we substituted 'anything you want to know about Guantanamo?' "

Yes, it would be very different if the sentence was: 'anything you want to know about Guantanamo?'. I am very disturbed about what is the concept behind that...a place without international laws...what would Kant think of this? He, who imagined the Society of Nations? --Susana

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Thu Jul 13 07:41:17 2006

On "cultural genitals" :

I found Susana's discussion of the ways viewers engaged with images of veiled bodies quite interesting. I think we could push their readings and incorrect attributions even further. Such cultural presumptions about sex suggest the general belief in a set of coherent attributes for male/masculinity that is different than the attributes for female/femininity. While gender and sex are supposed to be different, we often "see" real sex below the constructed aspects of gender. Nevertheless, gender and sex identifications are usually based on readings and assumptions rather than proof and what would this proof be? Emily Martin, Anne Fausto-Sterling, and other science studies scholars indicate how the biological and fleshy aspects of sex are also constructed and medically produced. This makes the distinctions between gender and sex messy and perhaps counter-productive. People rarely see the genitals of other individuals that they have accepted as "biological" men or women. They also rarely considered the possibility that there is an array of genital variations.

Alisa Solomon indicates that butch performances can be the "most dangerous queer image" because they challenge normative gender and sexuality. Women performing many of the aspects of "man" indicate and provide a critique of how the role is produced. The confusion of identification is visceral when the eBay seller 'photogyred' describes an image as "Lesbian Antique Real Photograph Kissing" but then notes "Lesbian (?) two girls (?) kissing! On a boat with Teens type bathing suits. The more colorfully dressed person on left is of indeterminate gender as far as I can judge. Returnable if you can prove other than my title" (2006). These moments of failed identification, with the need for constant contextualizing question and exclamation marks, suggest that clothes make the man and the woman but that the genitals and shapes beneath these clothes can be complicated. At such instances and when Susana's viewers get sex identification wrong, the functioning of cultural genitals and the ways we read rather than know bodies is difficult to ignore. --Michele

From dv@vilt.net Thu Jul 13 09:39:12 2006

Well I have only read part of this ongoing discussion mostly because the topic makes me feel a bit uneasy. So i will apologise rather vainly before starting, knowing however that in life's process these moments are unredeemable, and claiming that this text will at least attempt to be meaningful. It's not too long.

No doubt what happened, my unease, that's a good sign for any discussion, the arousal, even the incidental breach of protocol, but the fact is, to me, some things concerning this topic would make it either impossible to discuss them (I feel Bare Life, conceptualized as in Christina's Agamben below actually negates the bare life it attempts to reference) or improper (the fabric woven by the discussion allowing several human atrocities to be listed in a way that could suggest comparison or even common ground, the encapsulating, the wrapping of bare

life into Bare Life, the consequent use of Bare Life in a gender context repeating the argument it wants to put forward, the clothes bought for Bare Life as if she starred in a Shaw-redemption, an Our Fair Life, Bare, ----well one can understand some of the emotional objections, it launches the whole spectrum of the arts-ethics imbroglio, it goes straight to the bare artist and her right to claim the title without the usual vestments, the torn off shirts and trousers of former appearances, so yes, it's a good question it actually forces you to think beyond any certainty you still might have or cherish).

Concepts like these i think mostly are best approached as functions, there is no such thing as Bare Life but you can watch your thoughts move towards "Bare Life" in a limit. In the mental space that unfolds several things happening can be made out. I haven't read Agamben, but as i read its representation here it seems in Agamben's space there's a lot of stripping going on, clusters of Life being ripped of their humanity, of their dignity, pictures of individuals being bereft of freedom, rights, abilities, possibilities are shown. The negational is being driven to its limit, and the produced residue is thought as being projectable in the political, global scene, it 'enters the political to a degree previously unseen'. As such the Agamben's discours (the caricature I am able to draw up for myself) seems to be negating itself, but there's a need to rescue some of its produces (again within the limitations of this wrapped up form, stripping the un-read Agamben corpus to a few paragraphs beyond its dignity), because some of his conclusions seem absolutely right (here the initial unease hooks up in a recursive way: "right"? "absolutely"? "conclusions"?).

I think, nonetheless, i must admit, at this instant, (given every previous events generated in this text and before it) I'd propose a different glide towards Bare Life, starting from the Unbearable, the Unspeakable, the Incomprehensible. The Holocaust is not an example. Exemplifying the Unspeakable is immoral. The glimpses of bare life we might have been forced to witness do not in fact refer to what needs to be shielded off as an impossibility. Starting from the unrelated, unrelatable experience of Bare Life we need to step aside immediately because we know it happens, it happened, it will happen, but we will never know it, for to know it is to be beyond life.

There are of course detailed and horrifying descriptions of how it happens. The process "also" involves (I remember reading this but the memory is corrupted by the ease of my life) a contraction within the individual, a reversal of life within life, an "abreaction" beyond the point of rescue or defense.

Towards.

Outwards, negatively.

Feeding negation with negation.

An end.

What might (have been)(be) created is a fantasy of a negative space of Bare Life, a black hole in the media where Bare Life can be sucked out of Sight.

Beyond cynicism it draws a seemingly inevitable Six Million Dollar Man analogy: (NY Times today)hey, its 9/11, we know we can push legislation aside and use the Territory gained in the meantime, we have the technology, why don't we expand beyond the human, from now on let's use this space called Mistakes Have Been Made.

[Answer the question, then, to your best knowledge, after the end]

Bare Life is a method. In life's process the bare moments are unredeemable. --Dirk Vekemans

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Thu Jul 13 17:10:02 2006oft_skinned_space 000

I agree mostly with Dirk's intervention. Conceptually, it appears that Bare Life surely is a resistant formula to Art and theory (that is to say as a philosophical concept of a living it cannot discuss) because it is precisely the concept to say what each live being own self inside is as an enigma to outside beings: also the unconscious, and the opacity of a human limit between humans and another mode of being living.

To extract "bare life" from its dialectical philosophical signification (even chez Lacan), is to negate that there are some places of being that can be illegible enigma; it is to negate opacity and so negate all other selves or otherness, can be human, can be no human, can be of things. If all sets of game are possible in matter of languages, concerning their value (symbolic relationship between the words regarding the society where they are practiced) is another question. Extracting certain words from their chain of symbolic relationship does not produce necessarily a new sense. It can produce a nonsense.

The question of the extraction is: to which chain? --Alette

From christina12@earthlink.net Thu Jul 13 21:01:26 2006

(quote from an internet ad, observed by Michele).

"Lesbian Antique Real Photograph Kissing" but then notes "Lesbian (?) two girls (?) kissing! On a boat with Teens type bathing suits. The more colorfully dressed person on left is of indeterminate gender as far as I can judge. Returnable if you can prove other than my title" (2006).
Real Life! returnable if you can prove otherwise!

The ad reminds me, Conor, of Joyce's Ulysses, Bloom as an adman(Plumtree's Potted Meats, etc).

"Bare Life! returnable if you can prove otherwise!"

Dirk thinks of going "straight to the bare artist and her right to claim the title without the usual vestiments, the torn off shirts and trousers of former appearances".

Is this 'straight to the bare artist' (straight or queer) a surmise that anybody could actually catch a bare live one, her torn shirts tattered at her feet in a tangle, her hair wild?

(Or are we in the forest of Arden).

There is no 'bare artist;" I am just trying to figure out how to say something about this. (nor bride stripped bare)

"They saw a naked woman running at night..." (Calvino)

Hoping to erase gender-ed self by changing names, I was eight, in second grade when I said I'd be called henceforth "Chris". I thought, if I could do this the name would make a space for artwork, by being inside or wearing a boy's or anyway ambiguous name. The wearing would create a space around. The name stuck for about twenty years.

Some years after graduate school, when I reclaimed my full first name as a professional name, it was a kind of torture, antagonizing the old child=bred desire to displace and hide, but i did it anyway. I guess I thought it'd make me bare, or seeable as I 'am' . And, hedging bets, also thought, it'd be a nice 'cover': taking-up of my 'real' name was a new 'mode', maybe even pret a porter.

Under my new old name I found I was even more acutely seen as doing --- what Michele writes of here: Women performing many of the aspects of "man" indicate and provide a critique of how the role is produced. Not conscientious about this production, nor even, often conscious. Apparently the 'feminine' persona tagged to 'artist' shifting target apart from whether or not I was deliberately trying to create a critical position about gender;

It's strange how the overwriting onto that persona attributes of gender gave a kind of a subversive dodge , in the present case, into online media. I am not totally sure why this is. Perceived as persisting, in 'doing a man's job' could my persona / aka work not be completely eviscerated, because the "critique of how the role is produced" was always right there? alongside the confused presence of inarticulate queries , 'who is that woman / is she a man? if she's a woman / how could it be she /who made that work of art?'

Recast online in new media, I'd see through / be 'seen' Like, "Lesbian (?) two girls (?) kissing! the real me kissing the persona me

But not one anybody 'watching' online could ever know (as in 'know' a woman = rape a woman). The audience might hunt but it would never be able to catch and trap the bare life. "They saw a naked woman running at night..." (Calvino) --Christina

From tina@tinagonsalves.com Fri Jul 14 00:21:07 2006

I think artists can address issues related to the concept of bare life, but I don't think that art is bare life. But there are very interesting artistic approaches to the concept and its implications. I have been following the posts and have wanted to respond, but also feel a little intimidated by the theorizing, and wonder where words sit with bare life. Actually, even in the act of posting, there is some bareness there is exposing. With send the send button, it is thrown into the open, no control of interpretation. It is judged, compared, ignored. Maybe inspires other ideas. But on the other side, each day as an artist, I find a lot of my process is about stripping away, becoming bare, through images, technology, through sound. There is push and pull – a tension I enjoy. In my art, I feel more brave to explore exposure. In my process of creating, what resonates with me, is the feeling of being exposed, of stripping back, or being raw. I often correlate this feeling with a innate sense of 'rightness' for composition, form, texture,... It's in that feeling of exposure where I can feel a dialogue with the work – make sense of it – it reveals a meaning.

I feel exposed especially today. I am working on an interactive piece that looks at mirroring and empathy. I spent yesterday with the director of the clinical hypnosis unit who works a lot with the neuroscientists (I am currently artist in resident at the Institute of Neuroscience, UCL). We have been working on a few projects together. I needed to start working on the sound of a responsive video piece that is about mimicry. It is quite personal. Basically, a video of my facial expressions mimic the movement of the audience, but if they move too much I start to cry, and through movement they have to work out how to calm me. Anyway, I needed sound, and I am very much interested in capturing authentic emotions, those that are stripped back from social conditioning. So he hypnotized me into these various emotional states. We recorded it all. I was nervous at the release of self control, and didn't think I would be hypnotizable. But for over an hour, I felt these visceral strong emotions of different events in my life.. Today I am exhausted, and feel raw. Yesterday I found myself reliving events that I haven't thought about for years. Strange, deep. I haven't been able to look at the tape we recorded. Today it seems hard to pull it into my work. How do I now edit this? How will I fight the self censorship? but maybe I will feel different about it in a few days. The act of creating work is very visceral for me, and in order to continue making work, I spend a bit of time investigating my own body, mind, and its internal processes. Over the years I have probed my body and mind by taking part in all sorts of things that take me out of my comfort zone. In some ways, the personal investigation reflected my artistic process. The deeper and more inward the personal journey took me, the more internal my work became. My emotional body becomes a big part of my every-day, and in those times I feel that my skin, as a barrier, was also breaking down. I feel more vulnerable. So for me, in the process of creating that is when things get stripped bare. In my own process, I correlate exposure with a feeling of creativity. The exposure gives the new, the unexpected, the mistakes. Giving up. Letting go of preconceived ideas. The work that this process produces, may engage feelings of emotions in others – maybe pushing them to feel more deeply, to reflect, make meaning out of past disparate memories, present situations. For me, the notions of 'bare life' lies the interest in where meaning comes from when everything you have used as pillars is stripped away. What are the sediments, what does it look like, feel like, when it all gets stripped away, what are you left with. Adorno (2002) writes, "Hegel's thesis that art is consciousness of plight has been confirmed beyond anything he could have envisioned" = (p. 18). For it is in art that personal anxiety becomes politicized and individual emotions enter into a larger narrative of collective suffering that cannot be falsely massaged into the pre-packaged pleasures of the culture industry or the indifference of coldness and hardness. Here aesthetics emerges as a moment within an overall pedagogical problematic centered against hyper-fascism. The arc from pedagogy to aesthetics resists reification of consciousness into a thing, opening up the subject to its own constitutive incompleteness. Art moves this individual process to a higher level of collective articulation, even if this collectivity remains forever differed in the aesthetic realm. But we must make it clear that for Adorno, fascism is not simply psychological, and as such, genocide is not the result of an aberrant perversion. The psychology of fascism is conditioned by the material relations of capitalism, and is thus the subjectivity necessitated by the mode of production.

Victor Frankl - Man's Search for Meaning, he says this: "...everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." (1963). –Tina

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Fri Jul 14 09:06:45 2006

Christina, you are searching to characterize something of the domain "bare life" as being able to be revealed described, or announced as new; yet this may contradict with the radical concept of bare life beyond interpretation (outside culture); to open the disappearance of the culture or the missing culture (not still existing) refers, not to illegible metaphysical enigma of life, but to the limit of the former knowledge exceeded by the opening of a possible new one.

Agamben researches disappearing relationships of value after modernity, especially concerning the theme "what stays after the camps". (Elias Canetti posed of Habermas.) But at the same moment Agamben has conceptualizing the end of History, that may be Agamben follows in "ce qui reste d'Auschwitz" from "Mass and power" to "the territory of human").

Contradictory positions, these form a voluntary paradox or a sort of misunderstanding, to remix the cards. That can be fertile and make sense through complexity.

"Cultural genitals" : we research disappearance of the percept of the body from materialist critique, as never expressed before outside of mysticism. Maybe the feeling of insecurity of the body (relating genre or women) from not only from the internal point of view can be relevant at the margin of homo sacer, but also returning opacity to the collective. More, opacity (invisibility) of an external bare life (in all the hardest social terms of a-cultural realities) could integrate a new internal experiment by the artist.

Even more, perceptible signs reveal themselves as new events as the disappearance of the current collective signification (from which any new signification can be tracked down), while negating the ethical question of the same possible renewal of the camps (that is in fact what happens at Guantanamo more in the populations and their territories resulting of the new wars that biodestroy the environment): progressive realities simulate the past but bare events.

Moving from bare life to bare live experiments, we neglect the criticism of the ethical question of opacity of bare life concerning the camps (both other bare realities), and install the same default of neglecting the organic structure of the events regarding all other realities in progress of renewal without symbolic relationship of value between the question of experiment and the question of the renewal history (more than the question of the means and the purposes)? "They saw a naked woman running at night..." (Calvino)

There is (otherwise) another vision of Messaline naked walking by night in Roma , by Alfred Jarry (Messaline, Roman de l'ancienne Rome. Paris : 1922) all depends of the context.

"Hoping to erase gender-ed self by changing names, I was eight, in second grade when I said I'd be called henceforth "Chris". I thought, if I could do this the name would make a space for art work, by being inside or wearing a boy's or anyway ambiguous name. The wearing would create a space around. The name stuck for about twenty years." (Christina)

May be 'Chris' is nothing more specific than a variation in tone from "the bare husband" (existing Sylvie Lotringer) and "the bare lover" (existing the lover), in the book "I Love Dick" by Chris Kraus (existing as "bare wife and mistress") in this critical novel of a moment of mixed biography by a trio <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?rttype=3D2&tid=3D8862>

A bare suspension of lovers (a famous performance (in UK I presume?) -- the man suspended above the suspended woman has hairs drawn up on the head (what Bataille quoted about the photography of the Chinese victim of the torture "of the 8 knives" (or of the 100 pieces), in "The tears of Eros?) <http://www.desordre.net/textes/bibliotheque/bataille.html>

(...)

The question of double or false identity, the question of the mask as the question of the clothes or/and what more follows in your email is an uncontested explanation of creative sensibility in a poetic disposition; but the explanation is not the art work, even between the sensitive situations that can be said and the works which finalize the sum of impressions, there is a relationship of opacity taking place, more may be an iconoclastic rupture from imagination to bare work; in art (in poetry) the means does not inform the final sense of the work.

And so I discover how all the contrary hopes for enlightening "for new and new and unexpected possibilities" overpass (exceeding) that opacity marks the limit of the part of unconsciousness that cannot be deciphered, even yet formulated thought but that which would be silent (not completely transparent nor connoted to the supreme outside power of control). The part which is not yet "thought" and much more that

Lacanian calls “l’impensé radical” being of bare life from outside regard to inside opacity (individual as stranger) and from inside regard to outside opacity (collective environment). —Alette

From christina.l2@earthlink.net Fri Jul 14 17:11:45 2006

Tina, How does this work,

“if they move too much I start to cry..”

Do you perform a cry, are you live or onscreen in the video? Did you film this in advance under hypnosis, and then associate the clips in an interactive interface so that the audience movements when they reach certain limits, trigger crying clips?

From tina@tinagonsalves.com Fri Jul 14 17:24:58 2006

It is a video of me. It was shot a couple of years ago. It was taken at the end of huge shoot that went on for many days in the studio. In the video, over about 10 minutes, I start of laughing and end up crying. Now i have reworked it, the movement of the audience edits the video in an interactive interface. If the audience moves, my face moves. The more movement, the image also becomes blurier - you can't see it clearly anymore. When the audience stills, the video freezes and also becomes clear. Too much movement causes crying. And then its hard for the audience to make is stop - to calm the image. I am now overlaying the hypnosis sound to that video. But now, I also have the same footage - laughing, crying, under hypnosis (eyes shut though), so I might use that instead. Still in the midst of it.—Tina

From conormcgarrigle@gmail.com Sun Jul 16 02:18:09 2006

Christina wrote, “Football mania provides an interesting elision into the conditions of ‘bare life’ and mass ecstasy and how this intercalates with the ‘state of exception,’ don’t you think? Seems like that’s your (and Alette’s—as another football commentator this week from Paris) implication.”

I see football, or more precisely the act of watching football, as an interesting lead into connecting much new media - net art especially - to Agamben’s concept of bare life in it’s different forms. Football is undoubtedly a cultural product, a multi-million euro business vital to the profits of sportswear manufacturers and media empires, a top down industry with the consumer at the bottom. A consumer whose only role is to consume in the pre-approved manner?

I rather see watching football as more of a tactical activity as described by Michel de Certeau in which the audience appropriate the received space of the game and use it in a way that is meaningful to them, often totally foreign to the intent of the producers. Rather than this being a contemporary Roman games or ‘opium of the people’ designed to take the minds of the masses off the state of exception I see as a product of this very state and watching football as one of the many spaces that have been appropriated by the excluded and the powerless. Tactics which are at the heart of so much new media art today including my own work. I don’t think it’s an accident that the real Luther Blisset was a footballer.

One of the aspects of the state of exception is the increasingly panoptic society we live in. Agamben refuses to travel to the US because he will not subject himself to the retinal scanning and fingerprinting required to enter the country because he feels that this would render him to a state of bare life. It was revealed recently that the Pentagon are funding research to data mine social networking spaces like myspace and connect this with their other datasources. When we look at the detail freely available in Google earth we can only imagine what level of detail

is available for military or security use add to this the unstoppable march of surveillance cameras and this is only what we know about. We are now all constantly exposed and, I feel, powerless to stop or reverse these trends how do we deal with it, how can we make art about it? Tactical new media exposing the workings of the systems, using the tools in subversive ways and intervening, often in small seemingly inconsequential ways which have a cumulative effect, shows the way. Think of plagiarist's SVEN, recently mentioned by Christina, or Michele Teran's "Life: a User's Manual" where she hacks into wireless surveillance camera feeds using off the shelf gear, or my own 'Spook'... which used unprotected server logs as a datasource; or my 'Google Bono' which has as its raw material Dublin's traffic cams used in a way that the city fathers would never have imagined. Certeau proposes that it is this tactical usage, where "the imposed knowledge and symbolisms become objects manipulated by practioners who have not produced them" is the way in which it is possible to live in intolerable situations, and the way in which the weak and the powerless can appropriate a self made power, which can't be controlled by the powerful. In is this space that I see new media art being effective and it opens new possibilities of making art. —Conor

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Sun Jul 16 03:09:17 2006

I have been wondering whether Roger M. Buerger and other people involved in producing Documenta this year will be participating in the varied listserv conversations? At least within this setting, this does not appear to be happening. I know that Christina will be editing this material and appreciate her work. At the same time, Documenta's process of potentially introducing some of the listserv material into a magazine may seem to provide various engagements but does not (at least yet) provide an open dialogue between listserv participants and Documenta. This structure articulates an inside and outside where listserv participants seemingly engage and talk about the empowered center but no one from the Documenta structure answers. It creates even more press coverage and engagement with Documenta and centers the event but what does it do for the listserv? How do we keep any control over our voice or write into the structure that Documenta produces? —Michele

From agora158@gmail.com Sun Jul 16 03:21:30 2006

Very symptomatic, you write about Documenta when I am writing about Documenta, Michele! Telepathy?? I am writing a new version of my book "Women@Internet" and write about —empyre-, Under Fire—Jordan Crandalls excellent work—and Catherine David's Documenta. I own the enormous books edited by Documenta X and they are extraordinary interesting, but they are too big to be used for "everyday" purposes. I think the material should be more useful and gain a lot more of readers if they were edited as magazines or podcastings. Now they are only huge :) But this is still a great material and I still think Catherine's Documenta was the best Documenta. -Ana
ps: by the way, I can also recommend Catherine's exhibition, which she called not an artistic exhibition, rather, an artistic platform—the "Iraqi Equation." It was shown first in Barcelona, now it's going to Sevilla and later, in November, we are taking it to Sweden, to the museum of contemporary art where I have my project, Crusading, <http://www.crusading.se>

From christina12@earthlink.net Sun Jul 16 11:43:21 2006

This conversation hasn't been about the empowered center, I guess you mean, Documenta's management. Even so, those from that management center don't contribute to our list, just like they don't to the other magazines involved. It's really not interactive in that way, structurally, that's true. Personally, I have the impression, that Documenta is much more interested in what we have to say, than imposing comment from their curatorial team. It's our voices they want to share with the world. It's a venue for that, in my opinion.—Christina

From mwhite@michelewhite.org Sun Jul 16 11:59:59 2006

I would have to argue that considerations of structures that create an inside and outside, empowered and disempowered, are very much related to bare life. –Michele

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Sun Jul 16 12:25:20 2006

Obviously this Documenta does not announce the large critical opening to the contemporary that the last Documenta(s) have installed in the past. Specially X, the last of the former century, which celebrated cultural and social freedom, free software, and the inclusion of the paperless in the EU, for whom a mere ten years later (more or less) we are actually fighting for official ID.

Obviously, there really is a problem instantiated not from the curate thematic suggested by Christina from the leitmotifs of Documenta 12, because we are openly discussing to a fertile critical vision of the leitmotifs, as well as Art projects or Art works which tribute from their autonomous research; but to which global project documenta 12? That is the question.

Obviously we can note how mostly the men (and from my part of woman as 'old monkey' tracking in dialectical materialism from a former extreme practice and theory) do not trust the question of the relationship of Arts and Bare life informed by the leitmotiv; more we can note how at last my sisters become suspicious of the global project of documenta 12 outside of the list (as they are concerned how might their critical tribute and their critical works, researches or experiments, be used elsewhere by decontextual demand).

Christina is the curator of this discussion; special guests, current subscribers including myself, have accepted to debate. If we have accepted to tribute it means that we trust her ethical position. Apart from the question of the utility of the debate or concerns about her leadership and her responsibility as curator of the debate on this list, at the moment we have agreed by the act of freely discussing. Of course we can wonder if the high curator of documenta 12 himself is author of the three leitmotifs, specially the first one of which we have already debated in March 2006, more, the second of which we are now discussing, or if he observes our current debate, which would seem logical, but then why he would stay silent? Why not also come to discuss with us?

Obviously the problem all the contrary of the diverse opposite arguments in each leitmotiv comes from a political project which acts in coherence through the three leitmotifs-- Habermas (1985) The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity; may be containing this article (1981) that was translated in the FR review Critique (éditions de minuit): "Modernity: unachieved project" (approximate English title), he is the leader of those who rebuild historical materialism... That explain the third leitmotiv: "What is to be done". A perfect installation of Habermasian (?) strategy in three terms: tradition from antiquity to modernity/ bare life and ecstatic after the camps (rupture)/ what to be done, calls to invent or show the new modernity and reforms. The message might be: there is no problem here and now on earth, all is to continue as before in rebuilding the chain reproducing the pact of the past History to the future and the problems will disappear. Habermas is symptomatic of the latent but real EU hegemony in thought about the contribution of historical materialism to modernity); such pretends to be progressive by returning to the good values of the times of the criticism of the political economy. But post modernity has pointed to all that is proscribed since the war since Nazism : reason as universal certitude, together with the great stories, including History of the Nations, History of the production, and Progressive Project of the Production (after the commodity value and sign).

Agamben's post modern thought speaks precisely to the broken chains and explores what is perversely changing under the effect of the reproduction of the chains, not being merely symbolic relationships of value (even emergent bioethic values). For Agamben, this is not a game, it is a criticism of what Freud calls the metaphysical thought of modernity (being in the transmission of the changement) and what Hannah Arendt, after Heidegger, has shown of radical evil.

If this discussion is a laboratory as machine to integrate the artists into good reforms and ideology respecting the global world and the local justification of the new order of the bare life condition, resulting whatever the situations under the new power on earth, credibilized by the debates and the refoundation of the historical materialism, by creating a public sphere from/as the artists themselves: what to say then about or a new academism of modernity re-borning? Re-borning in bare life is it the subject in the mobility of the performance? It remains to be observed... –Aliette

From ghh@thing.net Mon Jul 17 00:01:03 2006

The meaning of bare life is a person who is stripped of all their rights as a Roman citizen. They are excluded from the community of citizens. This is Agamben's definition of Bare Life. Further, 'The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him = will not be condemned for homicide; in the first Tiburtinian law, in fact, it is noted that 'if someone kills the one who is sacred according to the plebiscite, it will not be considered homicide'. This is why it is customary for a bad or impure man to be called sacred. [Giorgio Agamben, Homo sacer, 1995, p. 71] In America, a large part of the political discourse occurs in mass media I.E. television, radio, newspapers, this is a supra-discourse and functions as the media-logos (from Regis Debray) of American technocracy. Being included in mass media is a verification of citizenship in the society. It is one of the reasons that reality television is so popular. In 1993 I did my first internet piece, Terrorist Advertising, <http://www.artnetweb.com/gh/terror/>, it pointed out the media-logos dynamic. "We live in a media saturated environment. Family, neighborhood, vocation, religion, and ethnic affiliation have been replaced by media driven identities. The spectacle created by the television daytime talk shows illustrates how media attention changes people. Consider how relatively ordinary people are perceived as more important and possibly more real than they do in their daily lives, after they appear on television for any trivial or far-fetched reason." -Terrorist Advertising, pg. 2" There are several dynamics at work in the human instinct for tribe and community on the one hand and exclusion or expulsion on the other. There is a coming of age instinct that compels a person to separate from their family and tribe to seek a mate and create a new family. This is a positive exclusion. This particular instinct has been codified in mass media advertising as sexuality and is used to sell everything. It also creates a dynamic that associates tribal groups with lifestyles and product logos. Someone who doesn't have the right logos on their clothing and possessions is not one of your tribe and must be expelled. Agamben argues that the Greek understanding of politics contained two conceptions of life: zoe, or bare life, which is distinguished from bios, or politically or morally qualified life, the particular form of life of a community. The constitution of the political is made possible by an exclusion of bare life from political life that simultaneously makes bare life a condition of politics. In contrast to arguments that understand political community as essentially a common 'belonging' in a shared national, ethnic, religious, or moral identity, Agamben argues that 'the original political relation is the ban in which a mode of life is actively and continuously excluded or shut out (ex-claudere) from the polis. The decision as to what constitutes the life that is thereby taken outside of the polis is a sovereign decision. Sovereignty is therefore not a historically specific form of political authority that arises with modern nation-states and their conceptualization by Hobbes and Bodin, but rather the essence of the political. The sovereign decision as a cut in life, one that separates real life from merely existent life, political and human life from the life of the non-human. Consequently, there is a difference for Agamben between biopolitical life and bare life:----the former being the managed political subject of power relations, and the latter being the necessary negative referent by which power-relations (through the sovereign exception) demarcates what counts as legal life, life that matters. So that there is a limit, or an 'outside' to power relations in biopolitical life." - from philosophy.com , Posted by Gary Sauer-Thompson at May 4, <http://www.sauer-thompson.com/archives/philosophy/2005/05/im_reading_agam.html>

In 2000-2001 Peter Sinclair and I developed an immersive, interactive laser and 3D sound art work called Shooter, <<http://nujus.net/shooter-new-site/index-1.html>> the piece allowed the viewer to walk into a darkened room laced with red lasers. Passing through a laser triggered sounds that were fed to the 3D sound space. The sounds included, firearms, guns, explosion, video arcade sounds and xenophobic rants. The piece was about Bush's buildup to war and video games. When a person walked into the room they became the target. For our next collaborative piece we did a performance work called, Rant/ Rant Back/ Back Rant: "Peter Sinclair created a special interface to sample voice input, manipulate it and send it back into the general audio mix in real time. GH projects the ramblings of a borderline schizoid personality type who = can't tell the difference between media news information, gossip and paranoid rumors. The piece is a techno driven word or poetry jam that resembles the ranting of a delusional street person. GH prepared the content by clipping news articles and posting them on a web in a blog called rantblog PTP (power to the people)." http://nujus.net/gh_04/gallery9.html

The sacred man of Agamben's equation is quite interesting. This sacred man is outside of society. By the way, he doesn't say sacred woman. I believe in Roman society that sacred women were integrated into the culture and had an honored position. In any case, I believe that the sacred man can be equated with the artist, at least in modern times as being one who is operating outside the political culture. This sacred man can also be equated with the terrorist or perhaps the forces of exclusion create the dual impulse for art and terrorism. As I documented the

language being used in the global media-logos for my rant performances I was struck by its manipulative and emotive power. Such phrases as, ghost detainees and extreme rendition were chillingly concise. The ghost detainee in particular highlights the idea of bare life. Even in a POW camp there is a political society by not registering the incoming prisoner he became a sacred man in extreme rendition a terrorist suspect is snatched from the street and taken to a secret place to be questioned (and tortured). Agamben also talks about the tattoo, the retinal scan and the barcode as tools to create a global techno-identity database similar to the tattooing of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. With the 21st century global information networks comes a media driven polis. The positions of bare life and the sacred man are situated in this media-polis. The terrorists use the internet to present their message and recruit new members. Artists such as myself use the internet to critique the global polis. The question is this; do my actions and that of terrorists constitute normal political discourse in a global techno society? Furthermore is expulsion or bare life negation created by denying access to or recognition of a person in the web and internet and mass media?—GH

From ghh@thing.net Mon Jul 17 03:40:12 2006

Internet video is an assertion of citizenship in the media-polis of the global network. In particular is the Islamic fundamentalist use of websites to show the beheading of Westerners on video. Agamben discusses how the sovereign has the power of life and death over the political body. The demonstration of the beheading of a Westerner is that assertion of sovereignty. The Islamist and terrorist have two dynamics. Since Western culture excludes Islam, the Islamic terrorist asserts its power over the Western exclusion by beheading Westerners while reading the legal, moral and religious justification for the act. “ In contrast to arguments that understand political community as essentially a common ‘belonging’ in a shared national, ethnic, religious, or moral identity, Agamben argues that ‘the original political relation is the ban in which a mode of life is actively and continuously excluded or shut out (ex-claudere) from the polis. The decision as to what constitutes the life that is thereby taken outside of the polis is a sovereign decision. Sovereignty is therefore not a historically specific form of political authority that arises with modern nation-states and their conceptualization by Hobbes and Bodin, but rather the essence of the political.” -from philosophy.com, posted by Gary Sauer-Thompson at May 4, http://www.sauer-thompson.com/archives/philosophy/2005/05/im_reading_agam.html The counterpoint to Western cultures’ globalization and corporate mono-culture is Islamic fundamentalism. It’s a usurpation of authority. Or to use deconstruction parlance, a reappropriation of power.

Two summers ago I was at an opening and speaking with my old friend Carolee Schneeman. She is one of the first women performance/video artists in America to deal with the issues of the female body in performance. We were talking about the beheading videos. Carolee insisted that they were fakes. She told me that the CIA was manufacturing them to drum up war lust. Around the same time a young man in California made a fake video of a beheading and put it on the internet just to show how easy it was. This reminds me of Jean Baudrillard’s discussion in the *Conspiracy of Art*, where he talks about how we are beyond simulation and into a realm of performance where everything is performed. Indeed because of digital technologies even the supposed authenticity of a photograph is suspect. Even photography becomes a performative art. The beheading videos have become so popular that in order to see the video you have to pay a fee online. The spectacle of a Westerner being =made to kneel with his head bowed, in bare life, about to be murdered is exactly what Agamben talks about. Even as I write this, Israel is attacking Lebanon in retaliation for Hezbollah’s kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers. It is quite clear that Hezbollah has asserted its sovereignty in Lebanon and is demonstrating it with this action. Israel is also attacking Hezbollah while ignoring the sovereignty of the state of Lebanon.

From agora158@gmail.com Mon Jul 17 04:14:35 2006

The issue I find most interesting in your reflexion is about the Islam as fundamentalist. The Islamicists took the fundamentalism from the Catholics. In the last century, the Catholic church started a “Reform” to find spiritual and politics tools to oppose the gaining terrain of the Marxism and its materialistic grounds. Christian fundamentalism, used in the colonization of the New World, South America, Asia and Africa, erased old cultures and burned on the stake priests and shamans. Old temples and shrines were put to fire and destroyed, while in the old mosques Christian churches were built. When Islam ruled Spain, the Jews, the Christian and the Arabs worked together to create philosophy,

architecture and art. In the West, mosques are still an exception and many mosques and synagogues are threatened and arsoned. I, raised as Catholic, am ashamed about the heritage I share with so many others, a heritage of intolerance, religious hatred and hypocrisy, the hypocrisy we see in the trials against pedophile priests in the US and Europe, the hypocrisy we see when the Church reclaim the Crusades as a Catholic enterprise of love and civilization. The Crusades were the first successful expansion of the colonial Europe and the rhetoric and the myths of the Crusades are still being alive in the Middle East, when many Arabs see Israel as a new Crusading power. –Ana

From christinal12@earthlink.net Mon Jul 17 04:52:54 2006

GH writes,

“In 2000-2001 Peter Sinclair and I developed an immersive, interactive laser and 3D sound art work called Shooter, <<http://nujus.net/shooter-new-site/index-1.html>> the piece allowed the viewer to walk into a darkened room laced with red lasers. Passing through a laser triggered sounds that were fed to the 3D sound space. The sounds included, firearms, guns, explosion, video arcade sounds and xenophobic rants. The piece was about Bush’s buildup to war and video games. When a person walked into the room they became the target.”

GH, Does the person’s image appear on a screen (web cam?)also (like a mirroring?) Staged with that representation of the target you could make a ‘reality tv’ display—like on overhead monitors similar to those used in hospitals, casinos, etc.

“For our next collaborative piece we did a performance work called, Rant/ Rant Back/ Back Rant; “Peter Sinclair created a special interface to sample voice input, manipulate it and send it back into the general audio mix in real time. GH projects the ramblings of a borderline schizoid personality type who can’t tell the difference between media news information, gossip and paranoid rumors. The piece is a techno driven word or poetry jam that resembles the ranting of a delusional street person. GH prepared the content by clipping news articles and posting them on a web in a blog called rantblog PTP (power to the people).” http://nujus.net/gh_04/gallery9.html

In this piece the rambling of your voice is repetitively resampled and looped (in max/msp?) and reiterated , especially in the repeat ‘second coming, second coming...’

Can you comment on the disassociation, the schizoid speech? is it the voice of the ‘state of exception’ , what you call the “global media-logos for my rant performances I was struck by its manipulative and emotive power. Such phrases as, ghost detainees and extreme rendition were chillingly concise. By giving voice to the ‘state of exception’, ie mimicking the global media-logos, you interpret or translate the hysteria by setting it apart. This brings to mind a scene from Vittorio de Seta’s Diario di un Maestro (A Schoolmaster’s Diary of 1973. Young street kids in school listen to the radio tapes of Mussolini announcing the state of war from the Piazza di Popolo in Rome. Their fathers had all fought in the war, their families had all starved. The delay was an interesting cinematic device. In your new media mode you make a work that gives that same delay (via the resampling + looping) -- you effect a distancing on the schizoid rhetoric in the middle of the war. We don’t have to wait till it’s over when sifting among the ruins of our cities we hear the horror of the totalitarian babble. Instead the ruins are now we are in them as we hear the rantapod. –Christina

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From jackysaw@telus.net Mon Jul 17 15:18:58 2006

Conor writes,

“I see football, or more precisely the act of watching football, as an interesting lead into connecting much new media - net art especially - to Agamben’s concept of bare life in its different forms. Football is undoubtedly a cultural product, a multi-million euro business vital to the profits

of sportswear manufacturers and media empires, a top down industry with the consumer at the bottom. A consumer whose only role is to consume in the pre-approved manner?"

I think that the message embedded into the image, like the camera angles, use of close-ups, editing techniques, like slow motion, determines the amount of space the consumer has. The camera techniques, the editing choices and the very vivid detailed HDTV image creates an more 'real' experience as if one is there. The message imbedded into the images was one of individualism an identification with an individual. I often found myself in the position of a voyeur having a sometimes to intimate view of the soccer players. Lots of tattoo's! The meaning of the broadcast was less about the game, then making the viewer or the consumer an accomplice to the game and creating an very 'real' illusion of the bare live experience of the match. Herein I saw a difference with older broadcasts of the worldcup. One can argue that this is a inevitable evolution of the technology, namely, the image quality of the HDTV camera. (this world cup was the first wherein al the 25 camera's per stadium where of HDTV quality) I think that this does not have to be so. To give the consumer a choice, of camera angle, and the amount of close-ups would be an interesting art-project. A personalized viewing experience determined by one's desires. A potential interesting project as a hack, not as an institutional implimented possibility, because that would only lead to another marketing and surveillance tool.

I rather see watching football as more of a tactical activity as described by Michel de Certeau in which the audience appropriate the received space of the game and use it in a way that is meaningful to them, often totally foreign to the intent of the producers.

I just finished a sound project on this received space of the game. it's a homage to the coffee-shop and the eclectic group of people gathering there to watch the match, laugh, and drink coffee. It was a very special experience, which was completely different then watching the game in Holland what I was used to. http://www.jackysawatzky.net/single_cappuccino

- Jacky

From arslonga@netcabo.pt Mon Jul 17 19:38:29 2006

"GH projects the ramblings of a borderline schizoid personality type who can't tell the difference between media news information, gossip and paranoid rumors....The terrorists use the internet to present their message and recruit new members. Artists such as myself use the internet to critique the global polis. The question is this; do my actions and that of terrorists constitute normal political discourse in a global techno society?"

I am quite curious about the way that you (GH) built your character for this specific performance project. Why did you choose a "borderline schizoid personality type"? What do you consider "normal political discourse"? How do the communication strategy of terrorist groups and your action as an artist can be both seen as having that discursive political normality?-susana

From arslonga@netcabo.pt Tue Jul 18 04:46:45 2006

I received this post from the idc list, and due to our current discussion I thought, this is live bare life occuring this very moment, in the middle east. This was written by Zena el-Khalil, who is an artist living in Beirut and revealing to us the motives why she is staying in the city and making an appeal to stop this violence escalate:

"Tell them that violence begets violence. Remind them that Lebanon is their neighbor and that co-existence is possible. How are we going to ever reach an understanding through violence? We were so close... We were so close...Please stop this brutality! Still with love, Zena el-Khalil"

I wish I could do something more than just forward... Susana

Begin forwarded message:

From: Judith Rodenbeck <jrodenbe@slc.edu> Date: July 17, 2006 7:30:22 AM GMT+01:00 To: fdc@bbs.thing.net Subject: [iDC] FW: Another Beirut update

From: zena [<mailto:dude@ziggydoodle.com>] Sent: Sunday, July 16, 2006 8:24 PM To: beautiful beirut Subject: Another Beirut update

I have started coughing, but I don't know why. I am not sick. I don't have a cold. I think it's a reaction I'm having to stress. My body feels weak. My mouth is always dry, no matter how much water I drink. And I'm afraid to drink too much water because I don't want it to run out!

Last night was probably the most frightful night I have ever experienced in my whole entire life. I was so tired and exhausted... have not slept in days. When there is finally a quiet moment, the tension in my stomach and heart prevents me from falling asleep.

Last night we counted at least 15 bombs falling into Dahiyeh (Beirut Suburbs).. and these were just the ones we heard. At some point during the night, I said to myself that if I didn't at least try to get some sleep that I was going to go crazy from fatigue; and that that was what was going to kill me. Haven't been able to eat either, so am losing physical strength. It's all psychological at this point. I know I have to be strong, and I will be, but I can't deny what I'm going through. And I think it's important that people hear about the downside as well as the bravery. So many of us are already working hard to fix things, we are running around Beirut trying to get food and water and medicine to people, we are doing things online, etc, but it doesn't mean we are not scared, sick or tired.

So, last night amidst the worst shelling we've had so far, I realized that I was not afraid of the noise anymore; how quickly you get used to it. I realized what was hurting the most was the "UNKNOWN". What is going to happen tomorrow? When will this all end? How are we going to start re-building again? Are the refugees going to be ok? How are the people in the south? And why punish a whole country? What is the real plan behind all of this? How much worse is it going to get?

My husband and I have been housing foreign "refugees" helping them to find their way out of the country. Two managed to leave this morning, a German and Swiss. The other two are British and American. The craziest thing is that out of all people, the American embassy has been the LEAST helpful to its citizens here. The phone line to the embassy has been practically out of service. My friend, Amanda, (whom I just met a few days ago, by the way) had to hire a cab to take her to the embassy (which is a ride out of Beirut) and all they could tell her was that they didn't know what they were going to do and to keep checking the website. Only thing she has gotten on the website is that she now knows that there is going to be an evacuation (5 days later), but when it happens, she is going to have to pay for it! Yes, they are saying to their citizens that they are going to bill them for their ride out! Can you believe that?!

Trying to evacuate people has put me under stress. The question is what am I to do if I had the opportunity to leave? Would I leave? What do I do with my friends? My family? My art studio? I have a British passport; I could be evacuated with my husband. But what would happen to my best friend Maya? She has a very rare and bad case of CANCER! I have been taking care of her since she was diagnosed a few months ago and I know that my care for her is what has helped her do so well. Her type of cancer is "untreatable", but ironically, the day the shelling started, her doctor told us her tumors had shrunk! Unbelievable- a true miracle. I can't leave Maya! ...

Biggest cynical statement of the day: Israel has told people to evacuate from the south because they are going to annihilate the south of Lebanon. However, the people can not leave because all the roads have been destroyed/blocked. And yesterday when people did try and leave, the Israelis opened fire on them! A massacre is happening!

Lebanon is a peaceful country. We are the only country in the region in which people of all religions co-exist peacefully. It is unbelievable how biased the news is. They are not reporting the real damage being caused. They don't report that the Israelis are killing innocent civilians. It seems from this end that all they are focusing on is G8! Are the Israeli & US government really just trying to wipe us all out?? Well, you can tell them that I'm not leaving. And there are many of us who are not leaving. We love Lebanon. We love what we have spent our lives building.

Tell them about people like me.. who build culture and tolerance. Who work for peace and understanding. Who work to educate. Who work to promote love and compassion. There are thousands like me here. What about us? Tell them about people like me, that despite all of this, I have still not learnt to hate. They can take everything from me, but not my dignity. Not my morals and beliefs. They will never never break my spirit. Tell the Israeli citizens what their government is doing to us. Tell them that violence begets violence. Remind them that Lebanon is their

neighbor and that co-existence is possible. How are we going to ever reach an understanding through violence? We were so close... We were so close...

Please stop this brutality!

Still with love, Zena el-Khalil

From christina112@earthlink.net Tue Jul 18 07:20:26 2006

This is a letter from the artist Walid Raad of the Atlas Group. From the I 6 Beaver site.

Walid --2 letters from beirut -- 07.15.06

Yet another day of bombing all over the place. In the mountain here, we were subject to about three different bombing runs: 1 to continue destroying the Beirut to Damascus road; another to destroy the cell phone antennas; and another to again hit the Beirut to Damascus road. Just a few minutes ago, the house was shaking again, and I only assume the Israelis are pounding the same area. The safe areas are much further to the north, the northeastern enclave, an area traditionally christian. Listening to Nasrallah's speech tonight was not reassuring one bit. After pleading with the Lebanese to stand firm, and after denouncing Arab government leaving Lebanon to pay the price for Israeli aggression, he asked us all to look at sea and watch the Israeli gunboat that had been pounding the coast and hills all day. he said that it was about to be hit by a HizbAllah missile. He promised that it will burn, that it will sink, that its sailors will die. It made me sick to my stomach, almost as much as it makes me sick to hear Olmert, Bush, the Saudi, and Palestinian position about this. Nasrallah also called for an open war against Israel, and that he will hit Haifa, and what is behind Haifa, and behind and behind Haifa. What this means remains unclear. But clearly it is worrying. Within minutes of the speech, parts of West Beirut were celebrating. The city is about to be reduced to rubble, and fireworks are being fired in the air. Incredible. Al-Jazeera and most local networks pointed their lenses towards to sea, to look for a missile launch, which came but was not visible. This is just not good. This is just about to get worse. I don't know what to think anymore. Pundits are speculating, making noise: Did HizbAllah need to drag Lebanon into this mess at this time? How can HizbAllah monopolize the decision to launch a war, to destroy the country? Others are convinced that Israel is simply intent on enforcing resolution 1559, namely to disarm HizbAllah by force. HizbAllah is asking everyone to stand firm, and to be patient. This has happened before and we have triumphed. We will triumph again, they say. Whatever all this leads to, one thing is certain, the scale of the destruction is enormous. People are dying in the south and elsewhere. Too many. The bombing has moved to the north and in the past hour positions inside Syria were hit. Iran has said that were Syria to be hit, they will respond. A regional war? ...We are trying to think of what to do. To leave, and be stuck in the U.S glued to the TV trying to figure out what is happening will be maddening.

This evening

We still have the land-line. Cell phones are working from time to time. Electricity is being rationed. We are getting around 8 hours a day. Generators provide the rest at this point. It is a situation we are used to, one that is decent—even very good compared to what other areas of the country are living through at the moment.

Do we need to say this again and again and again: There is no such thing as targeted/surgical shelling in a city with hundreds of thousands of homes, built cheek to cheek. Israel shelled the house of Hassan Nasrallah. I suppose they thought he would be home enjoying his afternoon tea at the time. They took out the light house that stood on the Corniche, lest it send out distress signals that the world will not see. A family leaving, fleeing its village in the South was pulverized—surely the smoke from the shelling blinded the scope of the gunner, preventing him/her from seeing that the small people in the car were not extremely short HizbAllah fighters. Should we tally numbers? Do we need to open more morgue doors to reveal yet another mangled body, yet another weeping parent, yet another angry relative denouncing this or that government? this or that policy?

Amr Moussa stated tonight, after the spineless meeting of Arab ministers, that it is clear now that the U.S. has handed Israel a free hand in solving the Mid-East crisis, as it sees fit. Whether it decides unilaterally to withdraw from Gaza, from the West Bank, from destroying Gaza again, from destroying Beirut, etc. I wonder what took them so long to figure this out. Is the oil in the Gulf still a weapon in their hands? Surely not, as we are reminded time and time again. What is the price of oil again? How much of Europe's oil supplied by the Saudis and the Kuwaitis?

How much of the U.S. oil is supplied by the Middle East? Did we reach 78 USD a barrel yet? Maybe the Saudis will use some of the surplus to rebuild the country again. What's a billion dollars when the price of oil reaches 78 USD? Someone knows this somewhere, and is most likely depending on it....

From ghh@thing.net Tue Jul 18 21:38:13 2006

Hi Susana, To answer to your questions. Perhaps I should have said schizotypal personality disorder to describe the character. Here's the definition from wikipedia;

"Schizotypal personality disorder, or simply schizotypal disorder, is a personality disorder that is characterized by a need for social isolation, odd behaviour and thinking, and often unconventional beliefs such as being convinced of having extra sensory abilities. Some people believe that schizotypal personality disorder is a mild form of schizophrenia."There is a high rate of comorbidity with other personality disorders.

McGlashan et al. (2000) stated that this may be due to overlapping criteria with other personality disorders, such as avoidant personality disorder and paranoid personality disorder[1]."

- from wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schizotypal_personality_disorder>

In America this is the common understanding of borderline schizo. There is also a sort of underlying archetype which I can loosely define. It is the loner who may also be an assassin, such as Theodore Bikel in the movie Taxi Driver. There is also Ted Kozinski the Una- bomber, and any number of people who don't engage in the normal political society. These people believe they have been abducted by aliens or aliens are controlling their mind. They hear voices commanding them to kill such as the 44 Caliber Killer. In the 1970's in Soho, New York there was a homeless man who used to walk around and shout about the news reports. I'm sure that everyone has encountered this type of street person in their own country. The person speaks the truth but it is mixed up with his own mental disease. I was on a bus in Paris a couple of years ago and a man started to rant to the people on the bus about Chirac and Sarkozy. Everyone was listening and the man was expressing what the society felt. Normal political discourse means to me that there is a debate in a society that is ongoing about what constitutes the contract of power given to the government by the people and what the rights of the people are in a society. Montesquieu was the one who defined these principals. I believe that the internet is a manifestation of multi-national corporate global structures or rather it is a mirror of globalism structure. It constitutes a global forum that does what the United nation cannot do, it gives everyone a voice in the discourse. It is not filtered or censored. When terrorists set up web sites to convey their messages and ideas they are using this global forum. When I do my art I use this global forum. The content of my work is the language and forms of the global news media. I engage in political discourse or I question the language.

In turning back to the main discussion of bare life, there is an understanding that the polis Agamben discusses is an organized society of rules, laws and rights. I wonder where the internet fits with the structures posited by Agamben? --GH

From nr03@fsu.edu Wed Jul 19 01:49:47 2006

The discourse and praxis of war has always been formalized as a formidable image; a reign of terror and deterrence, all the way back to Lascaux, Altamira and beyond. One can see this in the painted 'envelopment' formations on the walls of the caves... even though today such an ancient reign masquerades as ethical war, responsible war, wars for freedom as a response to acts of terror and so on.

As for Debray's 'superscreens,' Baudrillard's 'l'ecran total' and other characterizations of the mediasphere—few can adequately consort with the mass media, or initiate a conversation as we do with one another here (we all know that the mass media channels are somewhat locked

and policed), without the appropriate tele-currency; so what circulates is mostly a function of the largest Capital flows. Alas, the largest flows of Capital are representative of only an aristocratic sliver of all bare life—a minority which has taken it upon itself to represent the world.

Borrowing from Agamben, we say that most of bare life is excluded 'inclusively', as currencies in Capital circulation—human rights and world famine agendas, ribbons and bows, etc. Perhaps this is beneficent progress, relative to ancient times...

We ask ourselves: is this better than before Progress—or 'same as it ever was...'? A political choice, no doubt. At any rate, the net is still somewhat available to bare lives that can purchase access and manage to connect—our conversation is proof of that—but then, this does not mean that we do not remain docile bodies, in the Foucauldian sense, since the undecidable has been decided, for us.

The world has made its offer and the representatives of bare life have accepted it on our behalf, no? –Nicholas

From arslonga@netcabo.pt Wed Jul 19 02:18:26 2006

Just because terrorists use the internet to convey messages, and you use it for your work, it doesn't mean that you are doing the same thing or using the same strategy just because you are using the same space. They use it to convey a specific message that has a specific target, you use it with very different implications and meanings - you are positioning yourself critically and opening your work to several interpretations.

One thing that you have in common is that both have access to the Internet and skills to use it.

As you have read from the posts of those who are living the war in Lebanon, they are concerned because they don't know for how long they will be connected (to the net and to life too). –Susana

From christina12@earthlink.net Wed Jul 19 04:56:27 2006

Nicholas Ruiz wrote:

"At any rate, the net is still somewhat available to bare lives that can purchase access and manage to connect—our conversation is proof of that—but then, this does not mean that we do not remain docile bodies, in the Foucauldian sense, since the undecidable has been decided, for us."

I tend to have a much less structural view (together with Conor) , I don't think that speech and power are completely occluded, probably because I work from imaginaries of topologies in flow that might subvert or subtend the power relations of speech and bodies. See "Aphasia+ Parrhesia: Code and Speech in the Neural Topologies of the Net"

neural.it/english 2003 <http://www.neural.it/english/aphasiaparrhesia.htm>

drunkenboat <http://www.drunkenboat.com/db7/index.html>

Traumatic memory is characterized by delay. The horror of what was experienced is shut inside a place in the spirit that intensely resists cognition. It's not anyone's lack of caring or fault that the traumatic event cannot be directly 'represented.' An absence exists at the core.

What Richard Rhodes named, in the book of the same name, "A Hole in the World." An aesthetic strategy of displacement is possible (like a cover over a manhole, shifted to just one side, so you can see part way into the hole). Persistence of speech—mass suffering still finds a catharsis in new media and multimedia projects. In New York City, Jonathan Zalben's WTC: a multimedia response to September 11, 2001 employs delay as a spatial (interactive video installation) displacement as well as a temporal (aural) fugue. Jonathan begins with shatterings and reformations from Bach's Well Tempered Clavier . He writes,

"WTC is a multimedia work in response to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 on New York City. The piece is in two movements, one devoted to each tower that fell. Each movement is based on a piece from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. Recordings and transcripts of radio transmissions released by the FDNY on August 12, 2005 are layered into the original music score, consisting of strings and electronics.

As visitors walk through the space, their movements trigger excerpts of the radio transmissions, while transcripts are read over walkie-talkies by live performers. The walkie-talkies not only evoke the original sound of the radio transmissions, but they can pick up stray conversations on open frequencies in a two-mile range. Video footage using images of the World Trade Center, is also projected in the space and responds to the audio through custom computer software. The colors vary with changes in the sound score, and a person's movement can also trigger changes in the video, such as cueing new images. In the center of the space are two columns of light which recall the memorial each year at the World Trade Center site. When a person enters the light, their image becomes an outline for an American flag revealed in the video

projection. The movement captured in the light also serves as the focal point for triggering audio and video clips to be filtered through the computer.”—Christina

From conormcgarrigle@gmail.com Wed Jul 19 21:14:31 2006

GH writes,

“In 2000-2001 Peter Sinclair and I developed an immersive, interactive laser and 3D sound art work called Shooter, the piece allowed the viewer to walk into a darkened room laced with red lasers. Passing through a laser triggered sounds that were fed to the 3D sound space. The sounds included, firearms, guns, explosion, video arcade sounds and xenophobic rants. The piece was about Bush’s buildup to war and video games. When a person walked into the room they became the target.”

I think that shooter and works like it - did you see Joseph Delappe’s Dead in Iraq

http://www.unr.edu/art/DELAPPE/Gaming/Dead_In_Iraq/dead_in_iraq%20PEGS.html?

- which are subverting existing genres of cultural product (and with the online shooter is now used as a recruiting tool by the US army) is where new media art actually works as an effective form of political art because we make our art in the wild so to speak, outside of the protected gallery space where it is categorised and the audience knows what their reaction should be our audiences have to make their own decisions about what it is they are seeing and how they should react to it, in other words tactically as they do with their everyday life which I believe ties our art into real life. My work Google Bono www.stunned.org/bono/googlebono.htm was taken up by U2 fansites all over the internet all which carried it as a ‘serious’ service playing along with the spirit of the work.

The question is this: do my actions and that of terrorists constitute normal political discourse in a global techno society? Furthermore is expulsion or bare life negation created by denying access to or recognition of a person in the web and internet and mass media?

Whether or not terrorism - and that word is a loaded one - is normal political discourse or not, history teaches us that at some time ‘terrorists’ will become mainstream and be negotiated with, so perhaps at the heart of every terrorist movement is a genuine cause that, left untreated, lends a legitimacy to extreme elements that, in the normal course of events, would remain isolated. Exclusion from access to media, while not bare life in itself, would certainly seem to me to be a powerful tool in facilitating exclusion.

In my opening post I mentioned my interest in the lyrical and even ecstatic dimension of bare life and how this aspect of bare life seemed to be closely related to my current work in progress. I’d like to further draw the connections as I see them. To recap from my introduction, Agamben notes that Bare Life is “a form of life over which power no longer seems to have any hold” which opens up possibilities for a “lyrical or even ecstatic” dimension. Colin McQuillan, in his essay ‘The Political Life in Giorgio Agamben’, argues that Agamben “defines this politics in terms of “a life directed toward the idea of happiness and cohesive with a form-of-life” in which “the single ways, acts, and process of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always above all power.” and that “Agamben’s conception of the political life is the result of a radical rethinking of the potentiality of life, and life as potentiality.” This aspect of Bare Life is, I feel, a far more difficult concept, more elusive and harder to define but at the same time one worthy of further exploration. In my current work (*Cyclops* is an example of this work www.stunned.org/cyclops), in progress, I am creating a series of interlinked narratives based on the everyday, the series which is broken into eighteen discrete but interconnected episodes each structurally based on a chapter of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. It’s probably worth taking a little time to explain why I chose to play with fire like *Ulysses*. Firstly a disclaimer for this work I am transposing the structure and themes of *Ulysses* onto contemporary Dublin as a working structure, the connections between this work and *Ulysses* are about as tenuous as the links between Joyce and Homer. When Joyce was asked why he adopted Homer’s structure for his new novel, he replied that it was the perfect structure to tell a story and one on which he could not hope to improve so why would he try. To tell a story based in Dublin, I feel the same.

Most importantly, though, Joyce wrote of the lives of ordinary people in an ordinary city, people with little personal power, subjects of an empire with no political power, who did no great or extraordinary deeds, people not normally considered worthy of inclusion in works of literature certainly not in a work of such grand ambition. But he revealed in these characters a extraordinarily rich, lyrical and even ecstatic inner life, and he showed how they transformed their environment, in what can only be described as tactical way.

There's no doubt that he was influenced by political events at home in Ireland. As he wrote the Irish War of Independence was raging—a war in which ordinary people - many of them his peers and friends - rose up against the might of the British Empire at the height of its power (using tactics that would be the foundation of modern guerilla warfare, tactics which, in so small part, would help bring about the demise of that Empire within a generation), and against all odds won.

In *Ulysses* I see correlations with this aspect of bare life as “ a form of life over which power no longer seems to have any hold” in which “the single ways, acts, and process of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always above all power.” and it is this that informs my current work, this freedom of the everyday, the unstoppable creativity and spirit that can't be suppressed because, as Michel de Certeau asserts in *The Practice of Everyday Life* , everyday practices don't get suppressed because you can't suppress what you don't even know exists. As I mentioned earlier, I am interested in the idea that by focusing on simple everyday things like walking through a city, we begin a process which clarifies what we do and how we relate to our world and reveals greater truths about ways of being in the world. It is of necessity an open ended process one for which the result is not clear. For me this ties in with this dimension of bare life the idea that stripping life down to its essentials opens up new and unexpected possibilities. —Conor

From ghh@thing.net Fri Jul 21 05:44:13 2006

The second Documenta question reads; “... There is, however, also a lyrical or even ecstatic dimension to it – a freedom for new and unexpected possibilities (in human relations as well as in our relationship to nature or, more generally, the world in which we live). Here and there, art dissolves the radical separation between painful subjection and joyous liberation. But what does that mean for its audiences?”

The obsessive documentation of the staged humiliations of prisoners at Abu Ghraib is of its time. On the web is an information war that is being fought back and forth. The prurience on all sides is enhanced by the internet. My search on the words photos of Abu Ghraib returned 3,920,000 references. I have stayed away from viewing these images, however there are several important benchmarks that refer to the Documenta subject. If you look at the video and photos from Abu Ghraib they are art works, albeit rather twisted. For a certain segment of the West, the image of Arab humiliation is a catharsis and a revenge for all the terrorist acts of the past. The images assert Western power. They also assert the power of the media and the power of the internet. The Documenta asks about joyous liberation and what it means to its audiences, well, for a certain section of the West, the Abu Ghraib photos are quite liberating just as the beheading of Westerners by Al Qaeda thugs is for Arabs. Obviously I don't think that the Documenta curators were thinking of Abu Ghraib when they posed this question. I believe they were thinking more of a transgressive art that is part of a fairly standard avant-garde position—essentially *épatez les bourgeois*. However, the position of the transgressive, you know, elephant dung Virgin Mary, Photo of Crucifix submerged in piss, are also the symbolic transgressive techniques used on the Abu Ghraib prisoners.

The relationship that the documenta question talks about is one of power and submission. It is also in some measure about fairly traditional sadomasochism, where pain and pleasure are mixed together. I find these definitions to be rather old fashioned when discussing the information environment of the 21st century. It assumes that pain created through some sort of power relationship or a stripping down to bare essentials such as a minimalist *reductio ad absurdum* can somehow create liberation and ecstasy. Yes maybe, but no, not really. The creative processes of an artists' internal logic might be what the question is about. This reminds me of a minimal artist I knew, Lee Lozano; she reached the conclusion that the art object was de-materializing. She tried to illustrate that in a series of op art paintings that were also a challenge to her physical body. In the end she set up a painting structure that she could not complete. She stopped painting and insisted on staying high on Marijuana as her art project. Based on the Documenta's premise this would be ,”..a lyrical or even ecstatic dimension to it – a freedom for new and unexpected possibilities..”—GH

From ecrudden@eircom.net Fri Jul 21 10:24:00 2006

She stopped painting and insisted on staying high on Marijuana as her art project. Based on the Documenta's premise this would be ,"...a lyrical or even ecstatic dimension to it =96 a freedom for new and unexpected possibilities.." Add playing chess and drinking green tea and avoiding usury and I'm with her. —ec

From arslonga@netcabo.pt Fri Jul 21 21:28:54 2006

GH writes, "If you look at the video and photos from Abu Ghraib they are artworks, albeit rather twisted."

I find this sentence quite intriguing. Why this images are art works for you? Because you find in them some aesthetical value? Because they mimic the "transgressive art that is part of a fairly standard Avant-garde position essentially épatez du bourgeois"? They seem to me like war trophies. I am also asking you this because in 1999, for a work called "Vigilante" I looked for images of east timorese being tortured by indonesean police agents. I never saw these images like art...I could not do it.--Susana

From ghh@thing.net Sat Jul 22 00:25:25 2006

There's a TV show and web site called, "how art made the world that talks about the power of the image and how it has been used throughout history by sovereigns to assert their power. Going back to Agamben, it is the sovereign that creates both the polis and through the ban or excommunication the bare life. Art is always wrapped up with those in power. It is used to represent power. The Abu Ghraib images are aesthetic, composed presentations of power images. The debate in art is who decides what is art? The answer is that the artist defines what is art. Trying to work through the 21st century media-scape and produce art is an interesting endeavor. Artists are slippery characters. They may need the support and patronage of the powerful elite but they are not on anybody's side but the side of art and creativity. Richard Serra took the most iconic image of Abu Ghraib, the hooded man in chains standing on a box with his hands out stretched like a Christ figure and made a paint stick drawing and billboard. He immediately recognized the aesthetics of the situation. The larger debate for all of us is how artists can live and expand creativity while critiquing the power structures that support the activity of art. One can be excommunicated from the art world. For those who present the images of power such as Damien Hirsh, the rewards are unlimited. They re-inforce and represent the power elite.—GH

From christinal12@earthlink.net Sat Jul 22 02:34:23 2006

Speaking of the notorious Abu Ghraib hooded prisoner photograph,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=3D/news/2006/03/10/=20&wirq10.xml&sSheet=/portal/2006/03/10/ixportal.html>

a recent debacle surrounding a tiny watercolor image by the American artist Amy Wilson gives a telling look into the reactionary mentality GH is talking about. Amy works in a faux-naive style reminiscent of outsider art (think Henry Darger), with very 'femme' color palette and lots of cartoon bubbles with little texts in them. interpreting the Abu Ghraib image as one tiny figure in a series of panoramic, narrative watercolor drawings, Amy created "A Glimpse of What Life in a Free Country Could Be Like," which was shown at the Drawing Center in New York in September 2004. The hooded figure was a small part of the overall work: here is a detail

<http://www.amy-wilson.com/glimpse06.htm>

The entire work is reproduced here:

<http://www.amy-wilson.com/glimpse.htm>

The New York Daily News turned her use of this image into a scandal—this is an article from Time Out New York: relating to the fact that the Drawing Center was going to be part of a new proposed World Trade Center arts complex, then on the drawing boards.

http://www.bellwethergallery.com/images/artwork/tony_groundzero.jpg

The Drawing Center was villified as anti patriotic. Not long afterwards, the Center withdrew from involvement with the World Trade Center plans.

It's worth having a look at Amy's statement about how she works. In these times the application of critical thinking within art making is in itself an act of resistance.

"My paintings and drawings employ texts from both left- and right- leaning political sources along with selections from my journal entries, which are fused together to create an ongoing narrative. This text is then interspersed with a backdrop of images cribbed from political and daily newspaper cartoons of the 1800s and early 1900s, as well as allusions to the work of Henry Darger. Although only the most engaged viewers are likely to read these long texts closely, they are meant to reveal the limitations and possibilities of such hard-line, reductive thought, to show the complex similarities that exist in supposedly diametrically opposed lines of reasoning. Skimming the texts—the approach favored by most viewers—gives one a sense similar to that experienced while watching the TV news: Words float by, a few notable names or phrases stick in one's head, and the opinions that viewers start with are confirmed by what they believe they've seen. It's not an unusual occurrence for my work to be interpreted as pro-something or anti-something—the same work interpreted in two different ways by viewers who haven't actually read the text—when a close reading of the pieces makes clear that I set forth no such easy conclusions at least not with such simplicity). Rather, I strive to give equal time and voice to as many political views as possible while also interjecting my own, using my work to lay out each argument as it comes in, ushering each one to its own logical conclusion." --Christina

From: "John Haber" <jhaber@haberarts.com>

So one issue is whether the photos were art or the image itself is. I'm surprised, too, one would think so. The photographer didn't have that in mind, and people generally haven't spoken of them that way. One can't abstract to something called "the image" apart from which work is at stake—Serra's, Amy's. I've my doubts whether we need even bother to take Serra's poster here as art rather than as a political poster from an artist, just as we don't take Bono's statements on politics as music, but I'm willing to grant that the poster was given out at the 2006 Whitney Biennial and that we should all cut Serra a heck of a lot of slack!

Another is what makes something art. That's way too much to settle here, for sure. I've joked that art is whatever artists do and artists are defined in turn as whoever makes a work of art, but I meant at least a half-serious statement of the impossibility of resolving the definition of art so easily. Did Serra, say, just declare himself an artist, thereby getting to make what he does art, or did he go about making art? I doubt a definition is possible. The closest to the idea that the artist decides is Danto's, but his point really is that an artist makes something art by imbuing it with meaning that an identical object would not have had, and that's close in fact to GH's looking for the visceral power. The point could come up when, say, war photograph has become exhibited in places like the International Center for Photography or famous war photographers have had books dedicated to them and sold in museums. That could happen with these war images at some point in the future, too. But we're then up against who gets to decide on the meaning—the artist, the audience (as in Dickie's theory) -- and in fact who then gets to decide what constitutes the artist or audience. Anyhow, it's a long one, and I don't think it'll be resolved in philosophy any time soon.

Amy was really a pawn in a political game, as you can guess, just as Mapplethorpe became convenient to Jesse Helms on the retrospective's third stop or Chris Ofili to Rudy Giuliani. (When "Sensation" showed in London, it was the Chapman brothers whose work was set aside with a warning to children.) The Daily News was looking for a scandal. They sent a reporter to the Drawing Center when they heard it might become part of the International Freedom Center. The reporter saw the usual dull crap and returned without a story. They sent him back and had him rummaging through old catalogues until they found something. They made sure to run it on the front page before soliciting comment from anyone involved, so that they could set the terms in which others would talk. Governor Pataki went along and did the real damage, as at

the time he was thinking about a presidential run and worried more about his image in the Republican party base than in how delays of plans at Ground Zero were hurting his image as a leader and thus viable candidate.

Amy was really hurt, even though friends told her there's no such thing as bad publicity. (I actually emailed her first thing that morning to say she had better see the Daily News; she hadn't yet known about it.) She felt misrepresented, not to mention taken out of context of such a large work. (She thought of the five sheets as a single drawing, believe it or not.) I think the emotional impact has a lot to do with her change in subject matter. Her latest work, a full room in a small group show through July, moves the little blond girls from politics to art. They romp around a museum, and the thought balloons contain cryptic statements about the power of art to help us. It's well worth seeing.

Here's a capsule review of Amy's original drawing, before it became notorious:

<http://www.haberarts.com/wilson.htm#wilson>

Here's a long, opinionated account of the Drawing Center controversy:

<http://www.haberarts.com/drawingc.htm>

Here's a panel lecture I was invited to give on art and censorship, where Amy spoke earlier the same evening and is a key example:

<http://www.haberarts.com/pierro.htm>

- John

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Sat Jul 22 06:13:21 2006

Lee Lozano was among these artists making of their life as experiment as living Art work both producing Art works; here is a Surrealist influence from the forties and the beginning fifties in New York).

But these years of Lee Lozano (early sixties and a bit later), the radical criticism of art as power produced an interest in the value of a free social conception of ordinary life as a proper Art work (the total coherence of the value by denying the value): as/and the political criticism of Art, more the critical Art as poetry from NYC to SF, since the beat generation till underground movement, Hippies and Pop years and the free experimental multimedia works from text to painting through "collages" and simulated collages (or movies). But can you talk of ecstatic regarding Lee's works? Even if you think she could be self ecstatic regarding her own vision? Lozano moves through a most radical process from a self dissolution—both coming from self abuse to herself, of staying high in Art by not reproducing her Art instead of making her Art. In the political renaissance just emerging in the US after the McCarthy Era, Art was the incredible solution of beauty being not beauty, but critical politics, which ends up in Pop Art as the Art of the new galleries, with the producers and stars of The Factory posing a radical criticism of the American society of commodity and information (this last celebrated by Valery Solanas, author of *Scum Manifesto*, in her tentative of killing Warhol as revenge for an humiliation she has received about a scenario).

Regarding the image of S+M as a critique of power, please note the critical sense from *Salo*, the film which probably cost Pasolini his life, because he treated S+M as an extreme Art emanating from and implicated from the nazis' and fascist power. Being still secretly powerful alive since the war, this part of the power could not but have an extreme revenge. It is not Art but Politics through the Art of being a filmmaker and a poet, that puts the artist into a bare critical implication. —Alette

From arslonga@netcabo.pt Sat Jul 22 22:29:03 2006

GH writes:

"Art is always wrapped up with those in power. It is used to represent power.

I disagree with the "always"...that means that you too are wrapped with those in power. are you?

"The Abu Ghraib images are aesthetic, composed presentations of power images.

I see them as a document of revenge and of subjugation. the images by themselves are not art. they were made as a trophy like the photographs of all tortures related to camps, to dictatorships and to wars.

“The debate in art is who decides what is art? The answer is that the artist defines what is art. Trying to work through the 21st century media-
scape and produce art is an interesting endeavor. Artists are slippery characters. They may need the support and patronage of the powerful
elite but they are not on anybody's side but the side of art and creativity.”

What is art is defined by us, artists, by curators and by critics too. Maybe artists are not all slippery characters as you depicted them, maybe
they are free thinkers.

“Richard Serra took the most iconic image of Abu Ghraib, the hooded man in chains standing on a box with his hands out stretched like a
Christ figure and made a paint stick drawing and billboard. He immediately recognized the aesthetics of the situation.”

Like you said he “took”, he used the image as a reference to use in his work. the image by itself - in the document context - is not art. the
reference or the appropriation of this image or parts of it had become art because artists used it.

“The larger debate for all of us is how artists can live and expand creativity while critiquing the power structures that support the activity of
art. One can be excommunicated from the art world.”

If an artist would/could be excommunicated from the art world...that would mean that as an artist she/he had started to live a “bare life”?

Christina described the Drawing Center incident. I wonder in what situation, as an artist, is now Amy Wilson? Is she a persona not grata or is
she seen as an artist with a critical approach by the artistic community? -Susana

From gana@iinet.net.au Sat Jul 22 22:23:41 2006

With reference to the Abu Ghraib images, firstly perhaps the question should not really whether it is art but whether these images should be
made accessible to art or media - what right have we to possess these images of the defamed bodies of these men? Too much art just mimics
the trauma or the memory of the event as do the horror film that exploits with fear triggers.

Art is best used not so much as a bare witness or mere re-narration but as presenting trauma as a political phenomena.

By mimicking the act of trauma through multiple reproduction of the images from Iraq we may just be acting against the interests of those
victims - what is it we imagine we are doing? adding to some “awareness”? or simply maintaining the cycle of violence between victim and
perpetrators and onlooker (voyeur) secondly do we ask the victim for permission for usage of these images? or perhaps the soldier/
tourist/photographer? --Gianni

From: “John Haber” <jhaber@haberarts.com> Sat, 22 Jul 2006 13:15:55 -0000

It occurs to me, too, that it's even less likely than I conceded that someone will resurrect the photographs as art: unlike in the case of past
news photographs that have, inconsistently earned the photographer a reputation, here the soldiers themselves did the photos, and someone
can't see their artistic career advancing... Also, great documentary photographers of the past may have worked at a time when the status of
photography, period, wasn't always making it as art. Now that the boundaries are more fluid here, there's paradoxically less likelihood of
massive future revaluation, I bet.—John

From bee@beeflowers.com Sat Jul 22 18:02:48 2006

They struck me as art. In fact, my first thought was that reality had overtaken art, that art had dropped the ball. Now, of course if art is that
which is presented as art, then those images fail as such, which is too bad, so for myself I quickly invoked the idea of art emerging in the

viewer's mind. At some level it doesn't matter anyway, really, what something was intended as; as long as it 'works' in the way art does. Anyway, I preferred the one with Lyndie and the leash. It made me think of Kristeva, of Horror and the Female, and of a special type of soldier, designed to inflict maximum damage in this particular theater of war. So I set about making a collage <http://beeflowers.com/Liberation/pages/02B.htm>—Bee

From nr03@fsu.edu Sat Jul 22 22:13:27 2006

Indeed. The majority of art is inclusively 'excluded' from the larger = trade in art, no? If art is to communicate it must circulate; unless it plans on communicating only with itself—but then that is therapy, not art. = Perhaps we need more therapy, and less art. But that may be an old dream of the psychoanalysts. We all know that life does not conceive—in art—or otherwise—asocially. However, our burgeoning biotechnical futures may herald a more antisocial ontology of conception.

Perhaps one day, humanity will no longer desire 'art'? —Nicholas

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Sun Jul 23 00:27:17 2006

Yes mostly modern artists of the beginning of the century were not linked to power; as well in Vienna as well in Berlin as well in France as well in UK... Of course Kokoshka is not Klimt. But traditionally architects: mostly yes; it is easy to understand why architecture itself as work to the city is linked to power and a part of the critical composers through their traditional masters in studies.

What happened with power in the modernity of Arts? After Van de Velde, creating furniture, passed the direction of Bauhaus to Walter Gropius as architect, to create a new Bauhaus at Weimar in 1919, the Bauhaus initiated its hegemonic project of major and minor arts to tribute globally the industrial society: to bring an esthetic of production as project of democracy to the West. Similarly, in Russia, art was an emergent activity to communicate the line of the party through USSR revolution to the East. But at the beginning all modern avant-gardes were not linked with the power, they were absolutely opposite and radically critics of the power in all its places before the first war in EU! Even they could receive commands from the part of princes or capitalist bourgeois. Later they were called by Hitler: degenerated arts.

What to say of dada and of surrealism till the second war in EU... When Futurists but a very little part of modern artists joining Mussolini as the architect Libera following Malaparte.. It was really singular. It is impossible to affirm the contrary as dominant rule.

I am absolutely convinced that it is the bare problem of an emergent bureaucracy managing and mastering arts that kills the critical vitality of Artists and produce a conventional contemporary art to conformist power. That is exactly the problem of the governments in post democracy to be irresponsible as elected front a community of supra experts as bureaucracy at the power but not they being elected. By this way they do not remember that freedom cannot be completely eradicated. At the worst it can be conversed in perverse deletions by a critical mass effect—but never reduced.

The difference between a situation of a prisoner body in the civil society and a prisoner body in a camp: it is exactly here, where art or writing can create the critical social act (hospital even prison, remember Gramsci or Jean Genet or other famous examples) , or when they cannot run more: the camp as realizing global power destroying humanity as critical existence.

It happens that psychiatrist hospital may have the same role, for example, Camille Claudel. But never they would be successful to radically destroy Antonin Arthaud (that was exactly the sense in freedom, revolt, and creativity, from Derrida's homage to Antonin Arthaud entering the MOMA by a misunderstanding of the transcendental destiny of critical Artists from a society to the next one).

For there I disagree with the hegemonic interpretation by Michel Foucault under the global attribution of the society to the Panopticon (even yes it is a project of the power, it does not answer on the question of the inalienable conceptual freedom). But as Structuralism disposition to the whole society it is reducing it in the system.

Finally re Lebanon <http://www.electronicintifada.net/lebanon/> -Alette

From ghh@thing.net Sun Jul 23 05:40:34 2006

Lee Lozano's practice may come closest to the Documenta's oddly poetic interpretation of bare life. Indeed, the bare life question is very bizarre and cobbled together. When you allude to Baudrillard's discussion of war pornography I believe he is partially correct but I also have to counter with two artistic examples; Andy Warhol's black and white silkscreen painting of an electric chair taken from a Daily News tabloid front page headline and Waalid Rashad's photographs of mangled automobiles that he claims are from car bombings. There is some discussion as to whether or not the photographs are real and whether or not Waalid is actually in Beirut. The key factor is the information environment. How they are presented. The discussion of recent institutional critique within the art world assumes that anything presented within an art space, such as a museum, art gallery, art fair etc.. can be construed as art. This email discussion list is art in some manner. I'm not particularly convinced of anything, maybe the term should be an art-like activity.

Ana Valdes wrote:

'The Christian fundamentalism, used in the colonization of the New World, South America, Asia and Africa, erased old cultures and burned on the stake priests and shamans. Old temples and shrines were put to fire and destroyed, in the old mosques Christian churches were built.' All religions destroy the holy spots of the nations they conquer and build their temples on the same spot. Think about Istanbul and the Hagia Sophia which was the largest church in Christendom until the Turks overran Byzantium. The 80 year period of the Al Andalus was a very small part of the competing Moslem empires. An eighty year golden age in a 1300 year history of Moslem conquest and empires is not much to brag about. You may be ashamed of your Christian heritage, but as an Armenian I can say that the Moslem Turks perpetrated the first modern genocide on the Armenian Christians. The Armenian Genocide became the inspiration for Hitler's final solution for the Jews. Which brings us back to the discussion of Bare Life. From my perspective I grew up in an Armenian community where everyone had a story about the genocide. It was the collective mythos of the Armenian community. For instance my Grandmother was sent here in 1915 to escape the genocide. She was sent with her brother and an orphan from the village. They came in steerage to America. She was 15 years old. Her brother contracted an eye infection on the trip over which later left him blind. They were almost refused entry because of the infection. The Armenians are not any better having just recently started a war with Azerbaijan and pushed out all the Azeris from their homes in the Ngorno-Karabach region.—GH

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Mon Jul 24 00:04:41 2006

"On Giorgio Agamben's Profanations" by a young French writer that I enjoy the name being Mehdi Belhaj Kacem...
(on the book Profanations)

It has disappeared of the free access in <http://lacan.com> < but the only quotation of an extract: <http://www.lacan.com/lacinkXXVII5.htm>

By Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, translated by Jorge Jauregui

"Agamben defines religion as the sphere of separation: consequently every kind of separation seems to be religious. His rationale roughly follows that of Walter Benjamin, who declared that the religion of our times was capitalism, and that capitalism has raised the category of separation to its utmost degree of perfection. Capitalist nihilism is a religious cult of the purest kind - formal - its contents being the empty forms of separation and sacredness. We may easily surmise where he is leading us: profanation is the logical solution to the hegemonic curse of the commodity; the pure and empty form of separation - sacrare - rules among men. Still we will run up against a difficulty."

[...]

"Agamben argues that in the capitalist cult everything is profaned, yet at the same time everything is useless so that use itself has become impossible. To describe the cultural emptiness of capitalist profanation Agamben resorts to pornography and fashion. The affinities between contemporary art and these two spheres of production are quite obvious. In Feuerbach's terms, pornography is defined by sex as the identity of the profane and truth, whereas fashion is defined by money as the identity of the sacred and the illusion. All this seems fairly clear, and

nevertheless why does Agamben target pornography as the potential and elective object of profanation rather than fashion? In a sense, fashion would be more entitled, and would certainly be likely disposed, to profanation than pornography, despite the fact that the latter is prone to profanation as well.

Roughly speaking, Agamben tells us: "The profanation of the unprofanable is the political task of the coming generation."—Alette

From conormcgarrigle@gmail.com Tue Jul 25 00:43:13 2006

Isn't the power of the Abu Ghraib images (in particular the hooded figure with outstretched arms) dependent of the fact that it is artistically a strong iconic image that the viewer responds to on an aesthetic level, and it's this power of making the viewer admire something reprehensible that gives it its power to shock - a bit like Triumph of the will.

The Amy Wilson case has echoes of the Brandeis censoring an exhibition of drawings by Palestinian teenagers of Palestinian daily life done at the behest of an Israeli student at the college because they lacked reference to the Israeli point of view.

http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2006/05/03/brandeis_pulls_artwork_by_palestinian_youths/

• Conor

From jcrandall@ucsd.edu Wed Jul 26 16:41:13 2006

The scene is a familiar one. We're on a plane, descending. Tray table up. Seat back upright. The entire cabin is silent. Live images of moving clouds fill the video monitors (thanks to a camera mounted on the nose-cone), affording us the spectacle of the very sky through which we speed. We are inside the plane's own movie. Spellbound.

The passenger across the aisle, however, has diverged from this subtle synchronization. He has become increasingly agitated. Nervous energy surges through his body. He jostles in his seat, rustling with anxiety, his gaze darting back and forth across the cabin. He has become a disconnected bundle of rapid, uncoordinated movements, as if suddenly plunged into a free fall. Waves of tension ripple outward from him, electrifying the space around him like a brewing storm.

His body now begins to stiffen. His face reddens and swells as if he were a volcano about to erupt. As the landing gear begins to rumble into place, he begins to emit a low, guttural roar, which seems to rise up from the very depths of his being. The roar vibrates in unison with the mechanical rumble of the landing gear. It resounds throughout the cabin, a strange hybrid of human and machinic discharge. One ascending from the belly, the other descending from the hull. As the wheels lock securely into place, the man unhinges. His guttural emission, having rapidly increased in volume and pitch, phase-shifts into a wild screech that cuts through the cabin like a knife.

In such situations—when a fellow traveler becomes drastically unmoored, his only recourse a primal screech—one cannot be "caught" looking. Decorum requires a furtive, sidelong glance. Stealing a quick succession of such looks, I notice that the man's hands are clenching the armrest with an iron grip. His head is thrown back; his eyes are closed; and his mouth is opened in a wild grimace. Is it fear or delicious exhilaration? A roller coaster ride or a dance with death?

The atmosphere of the cabin has now radically changed. Passengers shift nervously in their seats. Yet, strapped into our seats, subject to the regulatory agency of air travel and of the social contract, there are only three acceptable positions. Our heads turned sideways, we look out the window. Our heads aimed straight ahead, we look at the monitors. Our heads lowered, we avert our eyes—unsure of how to deal politely with the outburst. We are caught in some kind of elaborate choreography that traverses body, machine, and social space, shaped by a regulatory domain whose materialization is the plane.

In one sense, it's a choreography of power. There is a machinery and an institution that makes us adequate to see; that shapes the legitimacy of our perspective; and that positions us as subjects. And yet there are the ways in which we SQUIRM within these machineries, maneuvering in

their substrata. Thousands of stimuli impinge upon us, embroiling us in a larger sensory network that spans the entire room. Our bodies negotiate this, but we're not aware of it. We might sense it as "mood." Potential actions brew inside us, to be expressed outwardly or infolded inwardly. Our interior states push at the boundaries of visibility. They may erupt at any moment. Someone could sigh. Someone could shout in frustration. Someone could gesture abruptly. Someone could leave the room. Like the volcanic, erupting man, someone could "blow their top." The technology and the rules of air travel do not simply enclose, contain, and determine. Rather, they network particular objects and machines with the sensorial and physical capacities of the passengers. They set forth a particular compositional dynamic, interweaving programs, people, and tendencies. Objects tend to do things; people do too. Objects tend to afford certain behaviors; people tend to gather in clusters and, through their behaviors, transform the vibe of rooms. Unpack the abbreviative term "airplane" and you have things-in-arrangement, programmatic impulses, and tendencies to action. You have the play of language, gesture, and sensation. Resonances are transmitted across bodies and environments. One becomes disposed for action in particular ways. The body wiggles within the ordering forces that maintain its coherency. At any moment, there is the potential of the eruption.

If power is the site of the REPRESSIVE, then this is the site of the EXCESSIVE.

SPEECH, and the SCREECH.

- Jordan

From bioport@gmx.net Thu Jul 27 01:05:18 2006

Jordan wrote:

"The scene is a familiar one. We're on a plane, descending. Tray table up. Seat back upright. The entire cabin is silent. Live images of moving clouds fill the video monitors (thanks to a camera mounted on the nose-cone), affording us the spectacle of the very sky through which we speed. We are inside the plane's own movie. Spellbound."

Nice piece, Jordan. excuse me for being trivial but your little prose reminded me a lot of my ex-wife who behaved like that *all* the time whenever we had to fly somewhere (and at that time it was quite often). She, more like the cat in one of Malaparte's short stories of "Sangue", indeed started to talk in despair (instead of falling silent - like the human being / Malaparte's thesis). the steward, all friendly compassion, offered to ask the captain what was happening. Back to our seats, he handed her a soft drink then smilingly apologized that "the street was under reconstruction".

What did he say? he gave a metaphor to the frightened who did not know precisely what she was afraid of because flying is not an inherent dimension of the human being. "We" don't know what this monstrous violent alien metal bird (875000 pounds, Boeing 747) can do or cannot do in the air. Only if you know how to pilot planes you know and most of the rumbles that occur during a flight (including being thrown back and forth by winds) can be cast with joy (even from challenging a situation).

"Beneath" flying, machine-angst has always captured humans and i bet you could have observed similar behaviours in 1903 on a back seat of a Model A Ford. -Malik

From tina@tinagonsalves.com Thu Jul 27 04:25:09 2006

Machine angst - a fear of loss of control. holds both immense freedom and the angst of loss of control, of falling. Of no decision over the ending of life. I am working on an interactive video piece right now that is triggered from your sweat using bio sensors. Sweat is really responsive, even to anticipation of what your going to say. So I have shot the piece from a helicopter that had no doors - the video image is of flying through the sky out to a never ending horizon over the sea. And basically, if the person shows any arousal/anxiousness in their sweat, they are revealed images of dropping through the sky, through clouds. Very visceral sense of vertigo arises. If they remain calm, through focus and breath they can keep they are revealed images of a never ending horizon. They can stay out there for hours if they achieve a more meditational state. The calmer they are, the more horizontal the horizon. On the other hand if they get really anxious, the whole things starts to crash. The project

has become a sort of bio feedback machine so people become more aware of psychophysiological relation of feeling states/external stimuli.—

Tina

From jcrandall@ucsd.edu Fri Jul 28 04:52:40 2006

Identifiable speech: sounds forming patterns, distinct ideas and forms—as they are relayed through voice and a shared matrix of language.

Vibratory screech: resonating transmission—modulation, rhythm, expression, attitude, and disposition. What is equally (if not more) important to my message is your unconscious resonance with the experience of its delivery. What are the factors of this delivery-experience on the narrow sensory pipeline of the email list?

Just as meanings are communicated between people, sensations are transmitted among them too—as well as between people and their environments. Every social environment has its vibe. This vibe is composed of the affective resonances of everyone present, yet it spills over to include the space itself. As when, captivated by a familiar mix, we have to move to the beat. If the energy is right, one might burst into a full-on dance move: arms aflail, hips abounce. The space of –empyre- has its vibe. What is this vibe? To ask “in what sense are we present here?” is an old question; to ask “in what sense do we transmit affect here?” is a new one.

To feel the beat is to infuse the atmosphere with cadence; to emit and inhabit rhythmic codes with the entire body sensorium. Jeremy Gilbert points out that music has physical effects that can be identified, described and discussed—but this not necessarily the same thing as it having “meanings.” What we derive from music has less to do with the communication of meaning, and more to do with how music moves us.

Constantly transmitted to others, these affective resonances can accumulate into something like a collective good will (hot dance floor scene) or an uneasy tension (online forum tension due to inflammatory posts, or long silences with nothing happening). Since they can be transmitted, they are a powerful social force. They can transform, traverse form, and overcome thought in a sweep of delicious delirium. They can be more forceful than ideas. They can be replicated to a certain extent, applied as a formula. This is what advertising does. The tried-and-true mechanisms of “rallying the crowd” in political speech. Dale Carnegie’s enduring rules of effective salesmanship. DJ-ing. Flaming. Religious ritual. Drill. –Jordan

From ryan.griffis@gmail.com Fri Jul 28 15:37:16 2006

Quick snapshot from NE Florida, USA. i was driving South through Alachua County Florida today, heading towards Gainesville - the location of the University of Florida. Coincidentally, Tom Petty, the rock star, was being interviewed by Terry Gross on on NPR. Tom Petty grew up in Gainesville. Growing up in NE Florida (Jacksonville specifically), i hadn't been to that particular area in probably 12 years. i was visiting various historical markers relating to colonialism and the 1960s civil rights movement. His father operated a grocery in a “black part of town.” On County Road 241 South, “American Girl” played on 89.9 FM, the local NPR station, between discussions of Petty’s professional career as a musician. It’s a mostly rural area with rolling hills, sugar cane, grazing pastures, some inexplicably large houses with gates and lots of trailer homes. Quite pastoral. I had just passed the Florida State Prison, a Maximum Security facility near Raiford, FL. That’s the prison where Ted Bundy was executed in 1989. Later that day, driving North from the Matanzas Inlet, the site of a Spanish massacre of French colonists in the 17th century, i listened to another NPR documentary on super max prison facilities and its horrific effects on the inmates subjected to them. I was there because of the undertold stories of the 1960s civil rights movement in NE Florida. Something i had never learned, despite having been there tens of times, and knowing more than i should about events that happened more than 400 years ago—conquistadors, franciscans and timucua. Hundreds of people were arrested and beaten in the early 60s, and today mostly ignored. The former Monson Motor Lodge in St. Augustine (just South of Jacksonville - a “quant” historic beach town), where owner James Brock infamously poured acid on demonstrators protesting the segregationist policies by occupying the lodge pool in 1964, is now a Hilton hotel. The picture of that event helped solidify the

civil rights act of that year. No historic marker. But the hotel blends in well with the mixture of historical colonial and contemporary beach-front architecture. "Oh yeah, all right. Take it easy baby, make it last all night." --Ryan

From jim@vispo.com Fri Jul 28 15:57:10 2006

From Cormac McCarthy's novel 'Blood Meridian'. a western. set in Texas, Bush's home state, nineteenth century; in the below excerpt, the kid's an outlaw (nacherly). The old man's a hermit the kid has stumbled upon in the wilderness while escaping the law. This is the best dialog i've heard in a western. My dad used to watch western movies, so i've heard some of that sort of dialogue. Bare life a la the usamerican mythos. "he stirred about in the corner and came up with an old dark brass kettle, lifted the cover and poked inside with one finger. the remains of one of the lank prairie hares interred in cold grease and furred with a light blue mold. he clamped the lid back on the kettle and set it in the flames. aint much but we'll go shares, he said.

i thank ye.

lost ye way in the dark, asked the old man. he stirred the fire, standing slender tusks of bone up out of the ashes.

the kid didn't answer.

the old man swung his head back and forth. the way of the transgressor is hard. god made this world, but he didnt make it to suit everbody, did he?

i dont believe he much had me in mind.

aye, said the old man. but where does a man come by his notions. what world's he seen that he liked better?

i can think of better places and better ways.

can ye make it be?

no.

no. it's a mystery. a man's at odds to know his mind cause his mind is aught he has to know it with. he can know his heart, but he dont want to. rightly so. best not to look in there. it aint the heart of a creature that is bound in the way that god has set for it. you can find meanness in the least of creatures, but when god made man the devil was at his elbow. a creature that can do anything. make a machine. and a machine to make the machine. and evil that can run itself a thousand years, no need to tend it. you believe that?

i dont know.

believe that.

when the old man's mess was warmed he doled it out and they ate in silence. thunder was moving north and before long it was booming overhead and starting bits of rust in a thin trickle down the stovepipe. they hunkered over their plates and wiped the grease up with their fingers and drank from the gourd." --jim

From christina.l2@earthlink.net Mon Jul 31 04:05:23 2006

Writing from the desert at Wendover, Utah, I've been participating in a very ad hoc GPS 'expo' with projects on the Bonneville Salt Flats, planned with -empyre- contributor Brett Stalbaum. We've been out in the salt for a couple of days (stinging eyes, searing heat, brilliant whites). If it wasn't 'bare life' it was anyway sublime or anyway sub-alkaline (below the salt). I've been a bit off line (if not out of line...). Leaving today to drive back to California, and since the Nevada desert by car is not the best for internet connections, it's time to bid farewell.

Last month, in June 2006, our guest Sergio Basbaum helped us consider 'liquid narratives'. Recently in VIROSE (<http://virose.pt>) Sergio also has referenced McLuhan's trope about media narcosis-----

"(...) The greek myth of Narcissus is directly concerned with the fact of human experience, as the word Narcissus indicates. It is from the the Greek world narcosis, or numbness. The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until he became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image. The Nymph Eco tried to win his love with fragments of his own speech, but in vain. He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system.(...)" (from Understanding Media)

Considering 'What is Bare Life?' If there's anything the -empyre- list contributors, guests and readers alike, have done, is to de-numb Narcissus. To be, if even for a moment, in a space of raw speech, inside 'bare life.' The list's work contributes substantively to the concurrent conversation worldwide on "What is Bare Life?" in collaboration with Documenta 12 Magazine Project.

The entire discussion is archived at <https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/=20> pipermail/empyre/2006-July/

There has been exceptional participation from list members including Aliette Certhoux, Ana Valdes, Leafa/Olga, Bee Flowers, Tracey Benson, Malik, Deborah Kelly, Dirk Vekemans, ecrudden, Gianni Wise, Greg Smith, Jacky Sawatsky, Jacquie Clark, Jim Andrews, John Haber, Luigi Pagliarini, Marc Garrett, Mendi Obadike, Nicholas Brown, Nicholas Ruiz, Patrick Llchty, Ryan Griffis, and Sarah Kanouse. Thanks to all who took time to read through the threads and communicate in our empyrean 'soft-skinned-space'. I hope I've remembered everybody.

Special thanks go to our July 2006 guests on -empyre-, for the second of three topics organized around leitmotifs with Documenta 12 Magazine Project. <http://www.documenta12.de/english/magazines.html>

Michelle White (US) -----> Michele's new book, "The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship," is new with MIT Press <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?> Michele White is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Tulane University. She teaches Internet and new media studies, television and film theory, art history and contemporary visual culture, science fiction and technology literature, gender and queer theory, and critical race and postcolonial studies. Her current research includes two book projects: Buy It Now: Lessons from Imaging eBay and Elements of the Internet: Rethinking the Network and Information Technology Workers <http://www.michelewhite.org>

Tina Gonsalves (AU)-----> (<http://=20 www.tinagonsalves.com>) Tina's creative investigation integrates Art, Science and Technology. For over a decade she has used video, painting, animation and interactivity to explore complex emotional landscapes. Rich, painterly video abstractions create emotionally potent narratives that often seduce or repel the viewer. Converging science and art, she attempts to enrich the public understanding of the hidden emotional language of the body. Converging technology and video, she creates embodied interactive audiovisual experiences, discovering new ways of experiencing the internal body and the external environments.

G. H. Hovagimyan (US)-----> GH is an experimental cross media, new media and performance artist who lives and works in New York City. He is one of the first artists in New York to start working in Internet Art, beginning in 1993, with such artists' online groups as the thing, ArtNetWeb, and Rhizome. His new work involves mash-ups online with new art dirt redux at <http://=20 nujus.net/gh/> and <http://post.thing.net/gh/>

Conor McGarrigle (IR)-----> is a net artist based in Dublin. He is the founder of online arts space Stunned.org . In 2002 as part of the Irish Museum of Modern art project he started the net art open: the uncurated open submission net art show in which all entries are accepted. His art has dealt with themes of surveillance (Spook...), identity (PLAY-lets) and art activism (IrishMuseumofModernArt.com), often involving fictional identities with an element of prankstivism never far away. He is currently working on an extended narrative work about artists in Dublin based on Joyce's Ulysses (Cyclops, Proteus episodes completed to date) and has recently developed an interest in mapping resulting in Google Bono : a google maps / surveillance camera mashup. <http://=20 www.stunned.org/>

Susana Mendes Silva (PT)-----> lives and works in Lisboa, Portugal. She has been working in the interstices of intimacy and affection, but also with reflecting about the object of art. Some of her projects make a very visible bridge between these two universes, especially the site- specific or the performance works. She contributes regularly to VIROSE as well, at <http://virose.pt> She has recently shown the installation Mind Walls in a group show at Museu da Cidade (Lisboa). In 2005 she presented the solo exhibitions Words in my mind (where she presented a drawing installation at Casa d'Os Dias da Água, Lisboa) and Life-cage (where she shown video and photographs at Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisboa), and in 2006 Did I hurt you? (where she presented video and drawings at Zoom, Galeria Carlos Carvalho Arte Contemporânea, Lisboa). Her video work will be shown in Mostra de Vídeo Arte Portuguesa Contemporânea - Antologia, Luanda, Angola in 2006. http://www.virose.pt/vector/b_16/=20 mendes_silva.html and <http://www.susanamendessilva.com>

Jordan Crandall (US)-----<http://jordancrandall.com>

Jordan is a media artist and theorist. His ongoing art/research project, UNDERFIRE, concerning the organization and representation of political violence, opens in October 2006 at the Seville Biennial. He is currently completing HOMEFRONT, a new 3- channel video installation that explores the effects of security culture on subjectivity and identity. He is Associate Professor in Visual Arts, University of California, San Diego. For a forthcoming special locative media issue at VIROSE, <http://virose.pt>, Jordan has contributed an essay that relates directly to his posts here in the past week, called "Precision+Guiding+Seeing," originally published with CTheory in 2005. VIROSE is edited by -empyrean- Miguel Leal, who has also included a conversation bare life as a motif for site study on the mudslide-torn beach town of La Conchita, California, with Amy Wiley and myself; and a third piece, "The Rise of the 'Location-aware Generation,' by Ana Boa-Ventura. The locative media issue is online from August 2006.

Thanks again to everyone who has taken part whether silently or in print on our list this month for the question "What is Bare Life?"

- Christina McPhee

California-based [Christina McPhee](#) interprets electronic landscapes in drawing, video installation, and multimedia, with a particular interest in the psychic terrain of the net, migration, electronic speech and the poetics of electronic space. She explores the synchronicity between natural disaster and human trauma with the multimedia project, *La Conchita mon amour*, which first showed at Sara Tecchia, New York (Chelsea) in October and November 2006. Video installations from *La Conchita mon amour* appeared at SCOPE Art Fair, Miami 2006 with Perpetual Art Machine. In May 2007 she will create a new installation of Naxsmash (www.naxsmash.net) on the condition of the disappearing woman in regard to the landscape of sex slave trafficking in California for the transEuropean conference DO NOT EXIST: woman, Europe, digital medium, for Thealit.de at the Kunst Hochschule Koln. She recently created theatrical video for Pamela Z's "[Wunderkabinet](#)", an opera based on stories from the Museum of Jurassic Technology, opening in October 2006 at REDCAT Theatre, Walt Disney Music Hall, Los Angeles. Her [films](#) and interactive media have shown at FILE Sao Paulo, prog:me Rio de Janeiro, ICA /Cyberonica; Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; and are in the collections of Cornell University Rose Goldsen Archive of Electronic Media Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art Artport, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art / Rhizome Artbase. Her paintings and drawings are found in American museums including the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery. Her multichannel video installation "*Carrizo-Parkfield Diaries*" on seismic memory was installed for the summer of 2006 at the [Cartes Centre for Art and Technology](#), Espoo (Helsinki), Finland with support from the American Scandinavian Foundation, following solo exhibition at Bildmuseet, Umea, Sweden (2005) and Transport Gallery Los Angeles (2005). Recent group exhibitions include "Groundworks: Environmental Collaborations in Contemporary Art," at Carnegie Mellon University (2005). Her writing on the poetics of electronic space, trauma, and identity have been published online for Neural and [CTheory](#). 2003-2006. New writing on locative media and La Conchita appears on VIROSE (<http://virose.pt>) and related video at www.drunkenboat.com (2006). She is a moderator for the online list -empyre- and curates discussions for documenta 12 magazine projects with -empyre- via the University of New

South Wales, College of Fine Arts, Sydney. She is a visiting artist/critic at California Polytechnic State University Department of Architecture, San Luis Obispo. www.christinamcphée.net
www.strikeslip.tv, www.naxsmash.net

“ What is bare life?

This second question underscores the sheer vulnerability and complete exposure of being. Bare life deals with that part of our existence from which no measure of security will ever protect us. But as in sexuality, absolute exposure is intricately connected with infinite pleasure. There is an apocalyptic and obviously political dimension to bare life (brought out by torture and the concentration camp). There is, however, also a lyrical or even ecstatic dimension to it – a freedom for new and unexpected possibilities (in human relations as well as in our relationship to nature or, more generally, the world in which we live). Here and there, art dissolves the radical separation between painful subjection and joyous liberation. But what does that mean for its audiences?”

- Documenta 12 magazine project 2006-2007
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