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EDITORIAL MANAGER **ÇAĞLAR ÇETIN**

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INTERFERENCE STRATEGIES

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Interference Strategies

BOOK EDITORS
LANFRANCO ACETI & PAUL THOMAS

EDITORIAL MANAGER
ÇAĞLAR ÇETİN

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Sabancı Üniversitesi

KASA GALERİ

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Interference Strategies: Is Art in the Middle?

If we look at the etymological structure of the word interference, we would have to go back to a construct that defines it as a sum of the two Latin words *inter* ((in between)) and *ferio* ((to strike)), but with a particular attention to the meaning of the word *ferio* being interpreted principally as *to wound*. Albeit perhaps etymologically incorrect, it may be preferable to think of the word interference as a composite of *inter* ((in between)) and the Latin verb *fero* ((to carry)), which would bring forward the idea of interference as a contribution brought in the middle of two arguments, two ideas, two constructs.

It is important to acknowledge the etymological root of a word not in order to develop a sterile academic exercise, but in order to clarify the ideological underpinnings of arguments that are then summed up and characterized by a word.

This book, titled *Interference Strategies*, does not (and in all honesty could not) provide a resolution to a complex interaction – that of artistic interferences – that has a complex historical tradition. In fact, it is impossible, for me, when analyzing the issue of interference, not to think of the Breeches Maker (also known as Daniele da Volterra) and the coverings that he painted following a 1559 commission from Pope Paul IV to 'render decent' the naked bodies of Michelangelo's Buonarroti's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. That act, in the eyes of a contemporary viewer, was a wound inflicted in between the relationship created by the artwork and the artist with the viewer ((*intentio operis* and *intentio auctoris* with *intentio lectoris*)), as Umberto Eco would put it. Those famous breeches appear to be both a form of censorship as well as interference with Michelangelo's vision.

Interference is a word that assembles a multitude of meanings interpreted according to one's perspective and ideological constructs as a meddling, a disturbance, and an alteration of modalities of interaction between two parties. In this book, there are a series of representations of these interferences, as well as a series of questions on what are the possible contemporary forms of interference – digital, scientific and aesthetic – and what are the strategies that could be adopted in order to actively interfere.

The complexity of the strategies of interference within contemporary political and aesthetic discourses appears to be summed up by the perception that interference is a necessarily active gesture. This perception appears to exclude the fact that sometimes the very existence of an artwork is based on an interfering nature, or on an aesthetic that has come to be as non-consonant to, and, hence, interfering with a political project.

Interfering artworks, which by their own nature challenge a system, were the artworks chosen for the exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (1937). The cultural and ideological underpinnings of the National Socialist German Workers' Party could solely provide an understanding of aesthetics that would necessarily imply the definition of 'degenerate art' produced by 'degenerate artists.' Art that was not a direct hymn to the grandeur of Germany could not be seen by the Nazi regime as anything else but 'interfering' and hence 'degenerate,' since it questioned and interfered with the ideal purity of Teutonic representations, which were endorsed and promoted as the only aesthetics of the National Socialist party. Wilhelm Heinrich Otto Dix's *War Cripples* (1920) could not be a more critical painting of the Body Politic of the time, and of war in general, and therefore had to be classified as 'degenerate' and condemned to be 'burnt.'

Art in this context cannot be and should not be anything else but interference, either by bringing something in between or by wounding the Body Politic by placing something in between the perfectly constructed rational madness of humanity and the subjugated viewer. An element that interferes, obstructs and disrupts the carefully annotated and carefully choreographed itinerary that the viewer should meekly follow. In this case interference is something that corrupts, degenerates and threatens to collapse the vision of the Body Politic.

In thinking about the validity of interference as a strategy, it was impossible not to revisit and compare the image of Paul Joseph Goebbels viewing the *Entartete Kunst* (*Degenerate Art*) exhibition [11] to the many images of pompously strutting corporate tycoons and billionaires in museums and art fairs around the globe, glancing with pride over the propaganda, or – better – over the breeches that they have commissioned artists to produce.

Today's contemporary art should be interfering more and more with art itself, it should be corrupted and corrupting, degenerate and degenerating. It should be producing what currently it is not and it should create a wound within art itself, able to alter current thinking and modalities of engagement. It should be – to quote Pablo Picasso – an instrument of war able to *interfere*: "No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy." [12]

If art should either strike or bring something is part of what has been a long aesthetic conversation that preceded the Avant-garde movement or the destructive fury of the early Futurists. In this particular volume the issue of art as interference and the strategies that it should adopt have been reframed within the structures of contemporary technology as well as within the frameworks of interactions between art, science and media.

What sort of interference should be chosen, if one at all, remains a personal choice for each artist, curator, critic and historian.

If I had to choose, personally I find myself increasingly favoring art that does not deliver what is expected, what is obvious, what can be hung on a wall and can be matched to tapestries. Nor can I find myself able to favor art that shrouds propaganda or business under a veil with the name of art repeatedly written in capital letters all over it. That does not leave very much choice in a world where interference is no longer acceptable, or if it is acceptable, it is so only within pre-established contractual operative frameworks, therefore losing its 'interference value.'

This leaves the great conundrum – are interferences still possible? There are still spaces and opportunities for interference, and this volume is one of these remaining areas, but they are interstitial spaces and are shrinking fast, leaving an overwhelming Baudrillardian desert, produced by the conspirators of art and made of a multitude of breeches.

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In this introduction I cannot touch upon all the different aspects of interference analyzed, like in the case of data and waves presented by Adam Nash, who argues that the digital is in itself and *per se* a form of interference: at least a form of interference with behavioral systems and with what can be defined as the illusory realm of everyday's 'real.'

Transversal interference, as in the case of Anna Munster, is a socio-political divide where heterogeneity is the monster, the wound, the interfering and dreaded element that threatens the 'homologation' of scientific thought.

With Brogan Bunt comes obfuscation as a form of blurring that interferes with the ordered lines of neatly defined social taxonomies; within which I can only perceive the role of the thinker as that of the taxidermist operating on living fields of study that are in the process of being rendered dead and obfuscated by the very process and people who should be unveiling and revealing them.

With Darren Tofts and Lisa Gye it is the perusal of the image that can be an act of interference and a disruption if it operates outside rigid interpretative frameworks and interaction parameters firmly set via *intentio operis*, *intentio auctoris* and *intentio lectoris*.

It is the fear of the unexpected remix and mash-up that interferes with and threatens the 'purity' and sanctimonious fascistic interpretations of the aura of the artwork, its buyers, consumers and aesthetic priests. The orthodoxical, fanatic and terroristic aesthetic hierarchies that were disrupted by laughter in the Middle Ages might be disrupted today by viral, amorphological and uncontrollable bodily functions.

My very personal thanks go to Paul Thomas and the authors in this book who have endeavored to comply with our guidelines to deliver a new milestone in the history of LEA.

As always I wish to thank my team at LEA who made it possible to deliver these academic interferences: my gratitude is as always for Özden Şahin, Çaglar Çetin and Deniz Cem Önduygu.

Lanfranco Aceti
Editor in Chief, Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Director, Kasa Gallery

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Interference Strategies

The theme of 'interference strategies for art' reflects a literal merging of sources, an interplay between factors, and acts as a metaphor for the interaction of art and science, the essence of transdisciplinary study. The revealing of metaphors for interference "that equates different and even 'incommensurable' concepts can, therefore, be a very fruitful source of insight." [1]

The role of the publication, as a vehicle to promote and encourage transdisciplinary research, is to question what fine art image-making is contributing to the current discourse on images. The publication brings together researchers, artists and cultural thinkers to speculate, contest and share their thoughts on the strategies for interference, at the intersection between art, science and culture, that form new dialogues.

In October 1927 the Fifth Solvay International Conference marked a point in time that created a unifying seepage between art and science and opened the gateway to uncertainty and therefore the parallels of artistic and scientific research. This famous conference announced the genesis of quantum theory and, with that, Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. These events are linked historically and inform interesting experimental art practices to reveal the subtle shift that can ensue from a moment in time.

The simple yet highly developed double slit experiment identifies the problem of measurement in the quantum world. If you are measuring the position of a particle you cannot measure its momentum. This is one of the main theories that have been constantly tested and still remains persistent. The double slit experiment, first initiated by Thomas Young, exposes a quintessential quantum phenomenon, which, through Heisenberg theory, demonstrates the quantum universe as a series of probabilities that enabled the Newtonian view of the world to be seriously challenged.

> *If the measurement intra-action plays a constitutive role in what is measured, then it matters how something is explored. In fact, this is born out empirically in experiments with matter (and energy): when electrons (or light) are measured using one kind of apparatus, they are waves; if they are measured in a complementary way, they are particles. Notice that what we're talking about here is not simply some object* reacting *differently to different probings but* being *differently.* [2]

In the double slit experiment particles that travel through the slits interfere with themselves enabling each particle to create a wave-like interference pattern.

The underlying concepts upon which this publication is based see the potential for art to interfere, affect and obstruct in order to question what is indefinable.

This can only be demonstrated by a closer look at the double slit experiment and the art that is revealed through phenomena of improbability.

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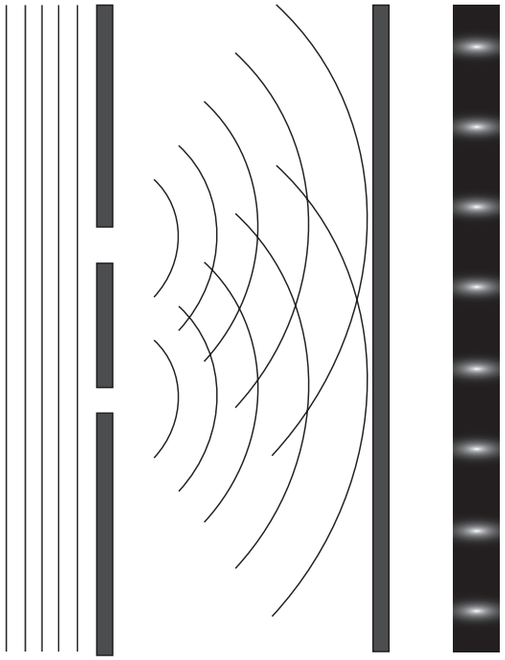

Figure 1. Diagram of the double slit experiment that was first performed by Thomas Young in the early 1800's displays the probabilistic characteristics of quantum mechanical phenomena.

When particles go through the slits they act as waves and create the famous interference pattern. The concept is that one particle going through the slit must behave like a wave and interfere with itself to create the band image on the rear receptor.

Interference Strategies looks at the phenomenon of interference and places art at the very centre of the wave/particle dilemma. Can art still find a way in today's dense world where we are saturated with images from all disciplines, whether it's the creation of 'beautiful visualisations' for science, the torrent of images uploaded to social media services like Instagram and Flickr, or the billions of queries made to vast visual data archives such as Google Images? The contemporary machinic interpretations of the visual and sensorial experience of the world are producing a new spectacle of media pollution, obliging the viewers to ask if machines should be considered the new artists of the 21st century.

The notion of 'Interference' is posed here as an antagonism between production and seduction, as a redirection of affect, or as an untapped potential for repositioning artistic critique. Maybe art doesn't have to work as a wave that displaces or reinforces the standardized protocols of data/messages, but can instead function as a signal that disrupts and challenges perceptions.

'Interference' can stand as a mediating incantation that might create a layer between the constructed image of the 'everyday' given to us by science, technological social networks and the means of its construction. Mediation, as discussed in the first Transdisplinary Imaging conference, is a concept that has become a medium in itself through which we think and act; and in which we swim. Interference, however, confronts the flow, challenges currents and eulogizes the drift.

The questions posed in this volume, include whether art can interfere with the chaotic storms of data visualization and information processing, or is it merely reinforcing the nocuous nature of contemporary media? Can we think of 'interference' as a key tactic for the contemporary image in disrupting and critiquing the continual flood of constructed imagery? Are contemporary forms and strategies of interference the same as historical ones? What kinds of similarities and differences exist?

Application of a process to a medium, or a wave to a particle, for example, the sorting of pixel data, literally interferes with the state of an image, and directly gives new materiality and meaning, allowing interference to be utilised as a conceptual framework for interpretation, and critical reflection.

Interference is not merely combining. Interference is an active process of negotiating between different forces. The artist in this context is a mediator, facilitating the meeting of competitive elements, bringing together and setting up a situation of probabilities.

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In response to the questions posed by the conference theme, presentations traversed varied notions of interference in defining image space, the decoding and interpretation of images, the interference between different streams of digital data, and how this knowledge might redefine art and art practice. Within that scope lies the discourse about interference that arises when normal approaches or processes fail, with unanticipated results, the accidental discovery, and its potential in the development of new strategies of investigation.

In "[t]he case of Biophilia: a collective composition of goals and distributed action", [3] Mark Cypher highlights the interference in negotiations between exhibit organisers, and space requirements, and the requirements for artist/artworks, resulting in an outcome that is a combination generated by the competition of two or more interests. As part of the final appearance of *Biophilia*, the artwork itself contained elements of both interests, an interference of competing interests, comprising a system in which the artist and the artwork are components, and the display a negotiated outcome. Each element interferes with itself as it negotiates the many factors that contribute to the presentation of art. In this sense the creation of the final appearance of *Biophilia* is the result of the distributed action of many "actors" in a "network." [4] (To put this in another form all actors are particles and interact with each other to create all possible solutions but when observed, create a single state.)

In summing up concepts of the second Transdisciplinary Imaging conference, particularly in reference to the topic of interference strategies, Edward Colless spoke of some of the aspirations for the topic, entertaining the possibilities of transdisciplinary art as being a contested field, in that many of the conference papers were trying to unravel, contextualise and theorise simultaneously.

The publication aims to demonstrate a combined eclecticism and to extend the discussion by addressing the current state of the image through a multitude of lenses. Through the theme of interference strategies this publication will embrace error and transdisciplinarity as a new vision of how to think, theorize and critique the image, the real and thought itself.

Paul Thomas

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Contaminated Immersion and Thomas Demand
THE DAILIES

by

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A B S T R A C T

If, as Oliver Grau has stated, immersion "is characterized by diminishing critical distance to what is shown and increasing emotional involvement in what is happening," any artwork might be thought of as potentially immersive. Arguably, immersion is a condition contingent upon the viewer responding to the artwork, rather than an inherent quality within the artwork alone. Considered in relation to some art historical contexts, the relationship between immersive experience and interference will be discussed in order to contextualize Thomas Demand's Kaldor Public Art Project, The Dailies*. Demand's project both relates to and departs from some of the key aspects of what is conventionally thought of as immersive art. It is useful to consider this in order to engage with the implications of immersion in art, and reflect on the possibility of strategic interferences operating within what might be described as contaminated immersion.*

IMMERSION AND INTERFERENCE

Oliver Grau has stated that immersion "is characterized by diminishing critical distance to what is shown and increasing emotional involvement in what is happening." [1] In that sense, any artwork might be thought of as offering a potentially immersive experience, inviting a level of engagement best described as a kind of absorption, engrossment or immersion. Does a large-scale installation or virtual reality environment offer greater immersion than the experience of being transfixed by a small painting on a wall? Arguably, immersion is a condition contingent upon the viewer responding to the artwork, rather than an inherent quality within the artwork alone.

Writing about the pictorial tradition of still life, Hanneke Grootenboer draws upon the notion of conflict, as identified by Victor Stoichita. [2] This 'conflict' exists as a schism (or *cut*, as Stoichita refers to it), between the foreground and background in paintings such as Joos van Cleve's *Holy Family* (1513). The objects on the shelf in the lower portion of the composition are distinct from the space of the Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph. Although the still life objects are relegated to a minor position within the image, they complicate the pictorial space because of their ambiguous location between the viewer and the scene beyond. Grootenboer argues that the notion of the conflict between foreground and background continued to have ramifications throughout the development of seventeenth century Dutch still life painting. [3] Pieter Claesz's *Little Breakfast* (1636) can be seen in this context, as Grootenboer demonstrates. [4] Both Pieter Claesz and Willem Claesz Heda were the primary exponents of the breakfast still life, an art form that occupied a relatively brief period of Dutch painting during the 1630s and 1640s. Such works are distinct from the more abundant banquet pieces of the seventeenth century Dutch era. Grootenboer writes, "Not afraid of empty spaces, Claesz and Heda allow a void to appear in a genre where *horror vacui* once ruled. There is no compensation for this emptiness." [5] Focusing her attention on the nondescript background, Grootenboer interprets the void in such a work "as a commentary on the complexity of spatial representation." [6] The void here could be said to operate on the level of interference. Where one would conventionally find the articulation of more objects, a narrative scene or an architectural context, the artist has chosen to paint a soft enveloping haze. The schism between foreground and background is articulated in the absence of the background. While this painting belongs to a tradition of illusionistic representation, it also signals a turning away from the 'view.'

Describing the impact of the window view implied by linear perspective, Joseph Nechvatal has pointed

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out "there has been a de-emphasis in the peripheral and the ambient as vision has become restrained by the habits of linear perspective; pre-established habits now encoded in the methods and expectations of photography, video and film. Thus vision has increasingly taken on the attributes of a focused, singular, narrow vision which is staring straight ahead." [7] While Nechvatal identifies strategies of immersion that utilize digital virtual reality environments to expand the image and lead the viewer toward a more comprehensive spatial awareness, I would challenge the notion that such an awareness is entirely the domain of the computer and identify a work such as Claesz's *Little Breakfast* as very much concerned with the peripheral and ambient.

In the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery in Dublin, we are able to literally peer through a window into a painting space. Here, we find the studio of Francis Bacon, posthumously reconstructed after having been relocated from its original site in London, where the artist lived and worked from 1961 until his death in 1992. The entire contents of the London studio, including the dust on the floor, were catalogued by archaeologists and moved into the museum in Dublin with painstaking attention to detail. Bacon accumulated detritus to the point of filling his studio to impractical proportions. Here perhaps is an expression of the *horror vacui* referred to by Grootenboer. But there is a notable absence: the easel is empty and the majority of canvases in the studio have been turned to face the wall. Scanning the floor, one can see a pile of small paintings, destroyed with slashes that leave gaping voids in the canvas. Although Bacon's paintings themselves are not visible, his visual sources are evident among the many photographs and various other fragments, and his palette is in evidence in expansive proportions across the door, walls, and surrounding objects. This is the peripheral and ambient space of Francis Bacon's paintings; the indexical signs of his art, perhaps even its aura, without the art itself. Hermetically sealed behind glass, Bacon's studio is not physically accessible, but the viewer is granted multiple vantage points strategically placed at the doorway, two windows, and through two small peep-holes in the wall opposite the doorway. As a scopic apparatus for art, the peephole may be considered a rudimentary antecedent of head mounted displays developed for virtual reality technology.

Immersive art is typically thought of in terms of an all-encompassing organization of the visual field, so that a viewer is surrounded by an image, as though he or she has stepped inside a pictorial space. Immersion frequently invokes polysensory experience, i.e., it is typically more than visual and can engage, for example, aural, spatial, kinaesthetic, tactile, and olfactory awareness. Char Davies is an often-cited artist in this field whose two key works *Osmose* (1995) and *Ephémère* (1998) are exemplars of immersive technology. Davies contends that immersive virtual space can "redirect attention from our usual distractions and assumptions to the sensations of our own condition as briefly embodied sentient beings immersed in the flow of life through space and time." [8] A key strategy behind immersion seems to lie in the purging of interferences, by which I mean any distraction that might call one's attention away from the sovereignty of the work of art over its environment. These interferences occupy the space between the art and the audience, or the peripheral space around the art. An immersive environment might be described as one that removes or diminishes the presence of that which is extraneous to the artwork (e.g. surrounding architecture, furniture, other people, etc.). The head-mounted display for immersive virtual environments is an effective means to deal with this, even obscuring the participant's own body. In the aforementioned works by Char Davies, a participant is able to navigate through digitally constructed space in real time through the control of breathing and balance.

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However, the experience of immersion is always contingent upon a participant's responsiveness and susceptibility. According to Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, an immersive medium is one "whose purpose is to disappear. This disappearing act, however, is made difficult by the apparatus that virtual reality requires." [9] Francis Dyson points out "there are *multitudes* of technical and circumstantial impediments to forgetting the presence of the apparatus." [10] Referencing Char Davies' work in particular, Dyson quotes Richard Coyne's remarks regarding "the heavy headset, the low image resolution, the noises in the museum, the time constraint, and so on." [11] If one regards interference as an inevitable component of immersion, immersive methodologies might logically incorporate strategic interference, allowing for the peripheral, incidental environment to encroach upon the immersive experience. Writing about virtual reality, Bolter and Grusin refer to the technology's "many ruptures: slow frame rates, jagged graphics, bright colors, bland lighting, and system crashes." [12] In the terminology employed by Bolter and Grusin, such ruptures interfere with the 'transparent immediacy' of a medium, instead contributing to a condition of 'hypermediacy,' multiplying the signs of mediation and making them more apparent. [13] Strategic incorporation of such ruptures or interferences that disrupt the ideal of a pure immersive experience might be best understood as contaminated immersion.

While digital technology has been implemented to simulate the sensation of entering the image, such a strategy is not unprecedented. As Oliver Grau has demonstrated, [14] there is a long history of immersive art practices that can be traced back to classical antiquity, and the nineteenth century panorama is worth considering in this respect. The term panorama is a combination of words of Greek origin: *pan*, meaning 'all', and *horama*, meaning 'view'. In a publication to commemorate the centenary of the Mesdag Panorama in Den Haag (constructed in 1881 by Hendrik Willem Mesdag), Paul A. Zoetmulder wrote, "the secret of the panorama lies in the elimination of the possibility to compare the work of art with the reality outside, by taking away 'all' boundaries which remind the spectator that he is observing a separate object within his total visual field." [15] In practice, however, the image of the panorama does not constitute the totality of the visible space, and strategies were employed to address the transition between the viewer and the image. One such strategy is the placement of extraneous objects in front of the panorama as props to aid the illusion, expanding the image into the three-dimensional space of the interior that the panorama encircles. The objects in this zone were known by the French term 'attrapes', and Zoetmulder attributes this innovation to the French panorama painter Jean-Charles Langlois, also known as 'The Colonel.' Zoetmulder writes, "Gradually this technique was further refined to the extent that the tri-dimensional attrapes faded perfectly into the bi-dimensional canvas, thus creating a very realistic effect." [16]

Many of the panoramas popular with audiences in the 19th century are no longer in existence, however, firsthand experience of one of the few surviving 19th century panoramas, the Mesdag Panorama, leads to questions regarding the supposedly perfect integration of *attrapes* into the illusion. Indeed, it is possible to discern a rupture between the intermediary terrain where the *attrapes* are situated and the illusionistic space of the painting. Viewing the panorama at its perimeter, an angle not normally visible to the spectator, this rupture is revealed as an actual chasm. In fact, a gap big enough to fall through separates the foreground terrain and the painted panorama beyond it. Mesdag's panoramic painting is disrupted, or contaminated, by the surrounding environment, calling one's attention to the space that separates the viewer from the image as much as contributing to a sense of immersion.

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Figure 1. Kaldor Public Art Project 25: Thomas Demand's *The Dailies*, 2012. View of the Commercial Travellers' Association, Sydney in Martin Place, at night. Photograph by Paul Green. © Kaldor Public Art Projects, 2012. Used with permission.

At the *New Imaging* conference held at Artspace in Sydney in 2010, Stephen Little recounted his experience of being intrigued by the wall space between two paintings, in which holes indicated that a painting had possibly been removed from the exhibition. The experience correlates with Little's strategies to critique painting through "a refusal of traditional means." [17] He remarked that the blank space "had offered a more fulfilling and informative encounter with painting than any of the works on show." [18] While this may be interpreted as an indictment of the paintings in that particular exhibition, it also evidences the potential significance of the environment extraneous to the art on display. If the wall-space between two paintings can be valuable contemplative terrain in competition with the adjacent art, it is apparent that no space is entirely neutral, just as no space is inherently immersive.

THE DAILIES

Thomas Demand's exhibition *The Dailies* could be said to activate the space between, calling attention to the peripheral and ambient. The project occupied the Commercial Travellers' Association club at Sydney's MLC Centre, [Figure 1] a building designed by Harry Seidler and specifically selected by Demand to house the installation. As the 25th Kaldor Public Art Project (March 23 – April 22, 2012), *The Dailies* is one of a series of Kaldor-sponsored major projects by international artists in public spaces primarily located in Australia, beginning with Christo and Jeanne-Claude's wrapped coast in 1969 and including the work of Gilbert & George, Jeff Koons and Bill Viola.

Installed throughout hotel rooms on the fourth floor of the building, the surrounding environment of *the Dailies* was integral to the reception of Demand's photographs, and taken as a whole, the project may be considered an immersive installation. The idiosyncratic design of the hotel was at the forefront of the viewer's experience of the exhibition. The artist did not try to dominate the space; rather, the installation was more like a series of understated interventions designed to assimilate with the environment.

Demand enlisted collaborators to contribute to his installation. Having noticed the Prada store in Martin Place from the window of one of the CTA hotel rooms, Demand invited Miuccia Prada to manufacture a fragrance for the exhibition. Every room was installed with a scent dispenser that emitted an aroma made from a synthesis of green leaves. The scent was subtle and difficult to discern. Also for the exhibition, the novelist Louis Begley wrote a short story, *Gregor in Sydney*, entailing a series of experiences in the CTA hotel narrated by a fictional business traveler. Fragments of the story were disguised as menu cards and inconspicuously placed in each room.

The venue of the exhibition significantly informed the reception of the work. The central shaft of the tower houses the elevator and rises from the underground bar and function rooms up to the floors above on levels four and five. Level four consists of 16 single hotel rooms, 15 of which were used for the installation

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Figure 2. Kaldor Public Art Project 25: Thomas Demand's *The Dailies*, 2012. Installation view of *Daily #3*, 2008, at the Commercial Travellers' Association. Photograph by Paul Green. © Kaldor Public Art Projects, 2012. Used with permission.

of *The Dailies*. Visiting the exhibition on a typical day in March or April 2012, one exited the lift on level four and entered a circular corridor punctuated by a series of closed hotel room doors. A volunteer was there to welcome visitors and encourage exploration of the environment. Selecting a door and entering, a visitor would find a wedge-shaped room just large enough to accommodate a single bed, a desk, a wardrobe and a mini-bar fridge. At the wider end of the room one could look through the curved window in the outer wall of the building to a view of buildings and streets in the vicinity. [See figure 2.] On the wall above each single bed was a framed photograph by Thomas Demand.

ENTERING THE IMAGE

Demand is known for his process of photographing life-size paper models constructed in his studio. A characteristic feature of his practice is the use of the Diasec-mounted photographic process, in which photographs are face-mounted onto acrylic glass, producing images of high gloss and brilliant color. Speaking in conversation with Judy Annear at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2011, Demand commented on the rationale behind the format of his work: "It's kind of a way of making the photographic print invisible... I wanted people looking at the thing I made, not the thing somebody else printed for me... I want to have them like windows, basically... you look through a window... you look into my studio. And that's why they don't have a frame, they don't have any edges." [19] Demand's description of the experience of looking at his photographic prints aligns closely with Bolter and Grusin's notion of a medium effacing itself to establish an immersive experience: "the logic of immediacy dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented." [20] On a significantly reduced scale and printed using an early, superseded color photographic technique known as dye transfer rather than the Diasec mount process, *The Dailies* project is notable for its departure from the format typically associated with Demand's work. Unusually, the photographs were presented in a dark frame in keeping with their context as hotel room décor. The presentation of these works in such a context was a conscious departure from the transparent immediacy sought in earlier modes of presentation. Instead, Demand's photographs can be understood as fragments within a complex set of associations that include the Prada scent, the Begley story, the window views and Seidler's architectural interiors.

Insulated from the noise of the city streets visible through the hotel room windows, the interior of the CTA hotel is faithful to its 1970s origins, as though caught in a time warp. According to Demand, upon entering the building, "somehow you're just completely removed from reality there." [21] Walking through the installation elicited the kind of odd sensation one might imagine feeling if it were possible to walk into one of Demand's photographs. Just such an experience is available to the artist himself when he is in the studio with a life-size paper model. Demand has described walking through his constructions:

> *The funny thing is, once you've finished a place and you've got it right in front of you, large as life, you can go through it like a computer simulation. You don't actually exist yourself. This sense of timelessness and virginity, a feeling that everything is new and unused, communicates itself to the viewer moving around in this kind of space.* [22]

It is as though Demand were describing an experience of immersive virtual reality. In conversation with Alexander Kluge, Demand stated of his models:

> *When I walk around them I feel a strange sense of destabilization. Once such a space is finished you are very cautious in it, because you know that you would destroy everything if you took a wrong step. Yet it's the idea of the space that you remember, even if you can't yourself experience the memory of it. That's the strange thing – you transpose yourself to a time and place in which you could never be. Yet you can of course be there in your imagination. You are standing in the midst of the thing that arose in your imagination and then it's all gone and the photo takes over.* [23]

It could be argued that visitors to *The Dailies* encountered a strange, otherworldly experience similar to Demand's description of walking through his own models. Navigating one's way through the hotel and observing the photographs on the wall, it is almost as though the immersive ideal of an image that one can enter has been realized.

PARERGA

Demand's models are typically based on found photographic images from the media and are often charged with historical or political content. The artist undertakes careful research to find out as much as he can about his source photographs. He has commented, "I try to find the photographer, the publisher, how it came to the photo-agency. And I often discover even more interesting photos in the process." [24] The significant historical events or newsworthy incidents behind many of the images to which Demand is drawn give credence to Robert Storr's description of Demand's practice as "reviving 'history painting' by other means." [25] It is rare for Demand to seek subjects that have had no prior incarnation as images circulated in public. An image "sufficiently devoid of significance," as he described *Sink*, a work from 1997, is considered by the artist himself to be "a precious counterpoint to my other works." [26] The fact that the artist once more turned to quotidian subject matter for *The Dailies* may be considered another such counterpoint within his oeuvre.

The Dailies, a project the artist had worked on since 2008, initiated from a series of photographs taken with his own phone camera, capturing images of ordinary things the artist observed on his travels: a power outlet detached from a wall in an Ethiopian airport [Figure 3], a paper cup stuck in a chain link fence, an ash tray full of butts, a screwed up piece of paper in the gutter. These photographs became the source for a series of paper reconstructions built in his studio, which were then photographed. The images could be classified as rhopography, defined by Norman Bryson as "the depiction of those things which lack

Figure 3. Kaldor Public Art Project 25: Thomas Demand's *The Dailies*, 2012. Installation view of *Daily #1*, 2008, at the Commercial Travellers' Association. Photograph by Paul Green. © Kaldor Public Art Projects, 2012. Used with permission.

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importance, the unassuming material base of life that 'importance' overlooks." [27] In relation to the historical emergence of still life as a genre, Grootenboer refers to still life objects as 'parerga'; in other words, subsidiary or peripheral. As she points out, still life objects traditionally "appear at the border of representation, at its margins, on its frame or verso." [28]

Peripherality played a key role in *The Dailies*. The installation directed one's attention toward the extraneous and tangential. To experience the exhibition was to experience a series of digressions. In the context of the installation in the hotel, one cannot consider Demand's fifteen photographs in isolation. Clearly, Demand intended to trigger a range of experiences within the installation, not only by commissioning the Prada scent and Louis Begley's short story, but also by mounting the exhibition in Harry Seidler's distinct architectural space and selectively modifying the décor. Beyond the intentionality of Demand's highly considered installation in the CTA building, remain the unexpected conditions that rupture any possibility of a hermetically immersive experience. Instead, a complex set of associations between the photographs and the environment were to be detected. Amelia Douglas has discussed the role of detective work in relation to strategies within Thomas Demand's work that:

> *push the viewer into detective mode. Reading Demand's images requires involvement. We are never quite looking at what we are looking at. This uncertainty generates a covert thrill that, of course, stems first from acknowledgement of the illusion and the cleverness of the architectural artifice, but also from an enjoyment of role playing. The blankness of the images engenders narrative speculation.* [29]

In *The Dailies*, this blankness remained present, but extended beyond the photographs themselves. The surrounding space of the hotel's décor seemed to echo Demand's familiar aesthetic. New red-brown bedspreads were manufactured to ensure consistency from room to room. Likewise, the walls were freshly painted a particular shade of off-white. The exterior windows were cleaned to improve and highlight the view of the city outside, and new light globes installed to enhance the lighting. These modifications to the décor contributed to a pronounced sense of sterility throughout. Like the crisp planes of clean paper in his photographs, the clean walls and new bedspreads were devoid of indexical signs of the kind of history and events that one might imagine in a hotel room. Indeed, the single beds further underscored an abiding sense of asceticism and isolation. Such observations generated the impression that Demand's fabricated worlds had extended beyond the photographs themselves and had somehow spread into the space of the viewer.

Beyond the immediate space of the hotel interior were further associations to be made with Demand's photographic images. The view outside the hotel windows could often be found to have a visual resonance with an aspect of *The Dailies*. For instance, Demand's photograph depicting a ceiling with missing panels related to the trace of removed signage from a nearby building façade. The connections between the photographs and the surrounding space were there to be found by astute observers. Demand has spoken about his Kaldor Project as leading the viewer to discover "constellations" [30] which expand the image beyond the frame and blur distinctions between art and non-art, emphasizing the viewer's agency to locate hidden or unanticipated connections in the surrounding environment. Moving through the series of uniformly designed rooms around the circular building elicited a sense of disorientation. Once inside a room, there was little about the interior to distinguish one from another aside from Demand's photographs. To aid one's bearings, the visitor would be better served to be attentive to the series of views through the windows, which cumulatively amounted to a 360-degree view. In this respect, the design of the CTA building's design has obvious parallels with the enveloping space of the 19th century panorama, as does the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's prison design. [31] From the vantage point of the fourth floor of the CTA building, one is well positioned to surveil the pedestrians below.

It is noteworthy that so many features of Demand's Kaldor Project appeared to comprise peripheral details, or parerga. Shifting the format of his photographic process, particularly in terms of presentation, Demand moves away from the immediacy that characterizes his Diasec-mounted prints. This shift marks a deflection away from the photograph's immersive potential, directing the viewer towards a more hypermediated condition in which the viewer is made all the more conscious of the photograph as a framed print on a wall, a single item among a multitude of diversions within the environment of the CTA hotel.

CONCLUSION

The subjects in Demand's photographs reveal themselves as ersatz objects, like the *attrapes* of the panorama, designed to misdirect and confound. Upon scrutiny, the paper-thin veneers that constitute Demand's tableaux reveal themselves as lacking in substance and weight; they are all artifice and pure contrivance. Regarding the space surrounding the photographs in the CTA hotel rooms, everything became contingent. *The Dailies* simultaneously courted immersion and interference, to disorienting effect. Expanding the image beyond the confines of the frame, Demand's installation blurred distinctions between art and 'non-art,' emphasizing the agency of the audience to locate hidden or unanticipated connections in the surrounding environment. Upon entering the fourth floor of the hotel from the lift, the viewer encountered the cumulative experience of moving from room to room, finding oneself in the contradictory situation of an immersive space that incorporated diversions as an integral component of the installation. The exhibition presented multiple layers of experience in which it was unclear where the work began and ended. It was a hypermediated environment that required connections to be located across a fragmented terrain. Bolter and Grusin state, "the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible." [32] Demand's hypermediation is apparent through the remediation of source photographs into paper sculptures and back into photography. In the Sydney presentation of *The Dailies*, hypermediacy extended into the environment of the CTA hotel. Enlisting Seidler's architecture, subtly manipulating its décor, introducing a manufactured scent and a fictional short story, Demand asks us to notice that which lies outside the photograph. The size and color of the frames around the photographs closely matched the window frames, as though to draw a close comparison. Demand directed attention toward an all-inclusive experience related to Bolter and Grusin's description of hypermediacy as offering "a heterogeneous space, in which representation is conceived of not as a window on to the world, but as 'windowed' itself—with windows that open on to other representations or other media. The logic of hypermediacy multiplies the signs of mediation and in this way tries to reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience." [33]

Roland Barthes wrote about an element that will "break (or punctuate)" a setting... "it is this element which rises from a scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument." [34] Barthes' word for this is *punctum*, which he likens to a "sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast

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of the dice." [35] Barthes indicates that the *punctum* is an element of chance, outside of the photographer's control: "the detail which interests me is not, or at least is not strictly, intentional, and probably must not be so; it occurs in the field of the photographed thing like a supplement that is at once inevitable and delightful." [36] The highly controlled scenes constructed and photographed by Demand might be better understood as falling into Barthes' other category, that of the *studium*. "To recognize the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions." [37] Michael Fried has highlighted the role of intentionality in relation to Barthes' distinction between the *studium* and *punctum*, commenting, "the detail that strikes him as a *punctum* could not do so had it been intended as such by the photographer." [38] Demand's highly controlled tableaux in *The Dailies* are opened up to the more contingent condition of the *punctum* through the context of the installation. It is this contingency that contaminates immersion and highlights the potential for the role of interference, operating as a cut, or rupture, as in the schism of the breakfast still life or the chasm of the Mesdag Panorama. ■

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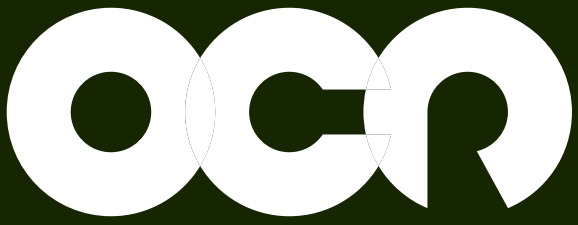

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