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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.

INTERFERENCE STRATEGIES

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Interference Strategies

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LANFRANCO ACETI & PAUL THOMAS

EDITORIAL MANAGER
ÇAĞLAR ÇETİN

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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 interference – 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-conservant 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 warring 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 is "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 rewisit 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 furry 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 favouring 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 favour 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 increasingly small 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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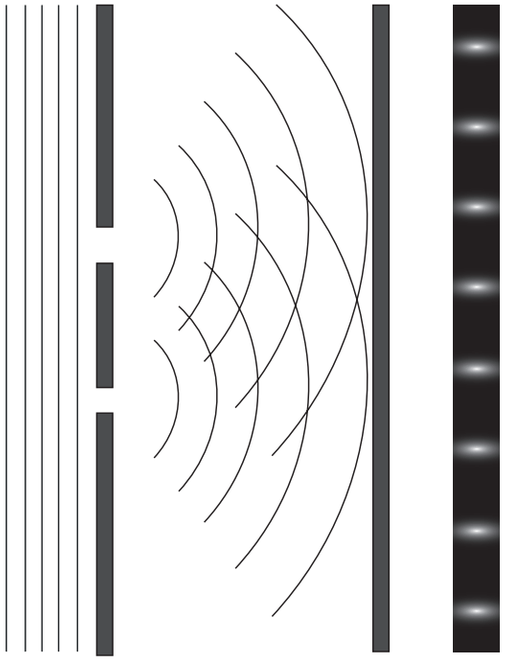

Figure 1. Diagram of the double slit experiment that was first performed by Thomas Young in the early 1800's displays the probabilistic characteristics of quantum mechanical phenomena.

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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MERGE/MULTIPLEX

by

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INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the issue of interference in another context. Not in terms of the spectre of a machinic economy of the image, in which visibility precisely is put at risk, but in terms of the aesthetic identity of socially engaged art. I am thinking of interference specifically as a form of blurring – the apparent obfuscation of identity. There is the conventional sense, for instance, in which contemporary socially engaged art blurs the lines both between art and ordinary social life and between art and other disciplines (ethnography, social work, etc.). Despite this specific focus, I am hoping that the issues I raise have more general implications, addressing not only the limits of art but also the limits of strategies of interference. Towards the end of this paper, my aim is to propose an alternative to the blurring of boundaries, to suggest the possibility of another way of drawing into relation multiple signals – not interference, but multiplexing. Multiplexing involves the spatial or temporal interleaving of multiple signals within an overall signal. The signals are combined but maintain their distinct identities and can at any time be separated into their component parts. This provides a means of conceiving socially engaged art practice differently, less necessarily as a site of aesthetic ambiguity than as one of unexpected clarification. Indeed these tendencies are not so easily opposed.

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A B S T R A C T

The tradition of modern and contemporary art seems to be characterised by an endless pushing back of the boundaries separating art and everyday life, art and the sphere of the social. This is typically interpreted in terms of a work of merging and blurring – an effort of interference that affects dimensions of both art and life. This paper suggests an alternative conception. Drawing upon the metaphor of electronic multiplexing, it argues that, while never simply absolutely distant from one another, art and the sphere of lived relations and social interaction are closely interleaved and yet retain a sense of distinct, differentiated identity. The energy of their relation, their potential to suggest new relations, depends upon an interplay of heterogeneous and always contingently determinable component signals.

EVERYDAY PRACTICE

The title of a recent book on socially engaged art practice, *Living as Form* [1] suggests a contemporary transition beyond ordinary artistic means and ordinary contexts of art. Life itself now takes shape as a form of artistic practice. Of course the danger here, in this specific context of blurring and interference, is the one-sidedness of the relation. Rather than equitably merging, life appears to be sublated within art. The title suggests a very conventional Hegelian dialectical framework in which art discovers a relation to its other, consumes its other and renders the other in its own terms. This issue of which of the two dissolves into the other, or how precisely they can find means to collapse together in a non-subsuming manner, is always fraught and never easy to resolve. Of course this title and the modes of social engaged art that concern it link to a very long tradition of utopian avant-garde practice that aims to disrupt the boundaries between art and everyday life and to foster new contexts for engaged living.

In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, for instance, Peter Burger argues:

> *[t]he European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life of men.* [2]

We can find all sorts of evidence for this in the manifestos of the early 20th century avant-garde, from the

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Italian Futurist, Umberto Boccioni's, call for a "[l]iving art" that "draws its life from the surrounding environment" [3] to the Russian Constructivists, Naum Gabo and Anton Pevzner's, insistence that "[a]rt should attend us everywhere that life flows and acts...at the bench, at the table, at work, at rest, at play." [4] It is evident, as well, in French Surrealist, Andre Breton's, summoning of an "absolute reality, a surreality" [5] in which dreaming and living are combined, and in Romanian and French Dadaist, Tristan Tzara's, proclamation, "Freedom: DADA DADA DADA, a roaring of tense colours, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE." [6] For my purposes, the interesting thing about these early examples is that they suggest less a seamless merging of art and life than an abrasive, energising interrelation. They acknowledge that life has its own richness and poetry. The relation, in other words, is not unequal, is not predicated on an assumed division between a dynamic, healing sphere of aesthetics and a moribund sphere of ordinary life. On the contrary, if anything, art risks its notional and disabling integrity to engage with a dynamism that exceeds and attracts it.

Later, of course, things appear a bit different as the initial integration of art and everyday life fails and, more generally, as the experience of vibrant industrial modernity passes into the experience of commodity capitalism. Theodor Adorno famously cautions against conflating art and dimensions of direct social existence, arguing that "art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art." [7] Art, in his view, necessarily inhabits a contradictory space – it withdraws in order to engage. Any effort to reconcile the distinction between art and life would only serve to obscure the genuine bases of antagonism, the genuine forces that make reconciliation impossible:

> *By emphatically separating themselves from the empirical world, their other, they [art works] bear witness that the world itself should be other than it is; they are the unconscious schemata of that world's transformation.* [8]

But this hardly puts a stop to efforts at aesthetic intervention. In the wake of Henri Lefebvre's foregrounding of the sphere of everyday life, in which he portrays a profoundly elusive and ambiguous layer of experience, which figures as both a site of alienation (shaped by the spectre of consumption) and as a site of utopian potential (a realm of interference, in which the schemata of capitalist relations come unstuck as they are played out, as they are lived), [9] [10] Guy Debord emphasises the need for strategic intervention in the everyday. He begins by acknowledging its central importance, "Everyday life is the measure of all things: of the (non)fulfillment of human relations; of the use of lived time; of artistic experimentation; and of revolutionary politics," [11] but moves on to argue that, as a sphere of "separation and spectacle," everyday life lacks adequate means on its own to serve as a genuine site of resistance. There is a need for conscious, radical, critical agents to intervene within the everyday and transform it. The urgent task is to "replace the present ghetto with a constantly moving frontier; to work ceaselessly toward the organization of new chances." [12] While initially this was conceived in terms of artistic strategies of unitary urbanism, *detournement* and *derive*, the Situationists are famous for shifting beyond aesthetic intervention, for refashioning their critique and their modes of resistance in more explicitly political terms. Their work engages a tension between their commitment to pass away from the language of spectacle (whether cast in aesthetic, political or consumerist terms) into the realm of direct action and their awareness that every situation, every effort at subversion, is inevitably subject to recuperation (becomes an image, becomes distanced from its immediate, vital social energy). In this sense, despite serving as a continuing model for currents of activist art, the spectacle of the Situationist International disrupts any neat sense of subversive artistic agency. Art and agency are awkwardly configured, even opposed.

The 'activities' of Allan Kaprow, which involve the re-performance of everyday actions (brushing teeth, etc.) in an attentive, engaged manner, may seem very distant from Debord's more politically charged conception of the 'situation', yet they share a common assumption that the everyday requires active intervention, that it dissolves into habit and routine if left to its own devices. Although apparently emblematic of a concern to merge art and everyday life, his activities establish a tense and uncertain relation between the two. He describes his activities as having a paradoxical relation to art. They are performed, he argues, without any particular thought of art at all: "I could, of course, have said to myself, 'Now I'm making art!!' But in actual practice, I didn't think much about it." [13] What is it then that links the notion of the activity to art? Kaprow acknowledges its logical position in the tradition of historical avant-garde resistance to the field of autonomous art, suggesting that "developments within modernism itself let to art's dissolution into its life sources." [14] In this fashion, his non-art activities have a kind of inevitable relevance to art – they bear the imprint of art's own motion of self-critique. Yet there seems to be more to it than just this. The very act of re-performing the everyday has very evident aesthetic implications. It involves a work of making strange, of fostering heightened perceptual awareness. It follows a legibly conventional avant-garde critical model: life, the experience of life, has become empty and routinised; there is a vital need to renew it from within, to discover means to lead it to fully engaged reflective apperception. In short, the aim is to re-animate life, but this can only occur through a strategic withdrawal – if not via the traditional means of drawing, painting and sculpture then through the insertion of the slightest layer of difference within the texture of ordinary activities; the sense of re-performance rather than the blindness of action as such. Despite Kaprow's resistance to the field of art-objects, to the autonomy of images, he describes this layer of difference precisely in terms of the language of images:

> *This was an eye-opener to my privacy and to my humanity. An unremarkable picture of myself was beginning to surface, and [sic] image I'd created but never examined. It colored the images I made of the world and influenced how I dealt with my images of others. I saw this little by little.* [15]

The metaphors are all of images. They all relate to a coming to visibility, as well as a shift away from the specific to the general. Kaprow recognises this. He catches himself slipping into the terrain of the aesthetic, so insists on bringing things back to the specific aesthetically alienated field of the activity itself:

> *But if this wider domain of resonance, spreading from the mere process of brushing my teeth, seems too far from its starting point, I should say immediately that it never left the bathroom.* [16]

Overall, Kaprow struggles to position his activities beyond the frame of art, or just across its exterior threshold, but it could be argued that this alternation, this shift back and forth between interior and exterior, image and non-image, experience and reflective apperception, specificity and generality is the very motion of the aesthetic itself.

I lack the scope in this short essay to trace this history of ambivalent relation between art and everyday life, art and social action, convincingly through currents of conceptual, post-object, feminist, community and relational art to contemporary social engaged art

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and so-called social practice (the latter abandoning the mention of art altogether), but many of the main thematic contours are in place. It is worth mentioning, however, that different, less grand, conceptions of resistance have emerged. Apart from Nicolas Bourriaud's [17] social models and micro-utopias, there is also Jacques Ranciere's notion of an aesthetically grounded politics of "dissensus," [18] involving conflicts "between two regimes of sense, two sensory worlds," [19] which inevitably suspends dimensions of cause and effect, which, in a manner not altogether dissimilar to Adorno, brackets any simple, unmediated relation between art and the social. Also worth mentioning the efforts by critics such as Grant Kester [20] and Ben Highmore [21] to re-conceptualise the aesthetic, not as a terrain of separation and distance, but as fundamentally founded in the sphere of everyday experience and dialogic interaction. Finally, and most saliently for my purposes, is the Austrian philosopher, Gerald Raunig's, Deleuzian and Guattarian conception of the transversal relation between art and political activism; "[c]ontrary to models of totally diffusing and confusing art and life," Raunig "investigates other practices [...] in which transitions, overlaps and concatentations of art and revolution become possible for a limited time, but without synthesis and identification." [22] However, rather than pursuing these various debates in depth, it may be more useful to consider two contemporary examples of socially engaged art which demonstrate, as Claire Bishop suggests, that "art and the social are not to be reconciled or collapsed, but sustained in continual tension." [23]

GAME OVER

In March 2011 the Belgian-Mexican artist, Francis Alys, produced a short video entitled *Game Over*. [24] It documents the process of the artist crashing an old VW beetle into a tree at the botanical gardens in Culiacan, Mexico, then getting out of the car and walking off. This is followed by a brief inter-title explanation and a concluding statement: "Nature will do the rest."

The botanic gardens commissioned Alys to produce the work, which he conceived as a kind a road movie, in which he'd drive his car the entire way up to Culiacan only to crash it into a tree. He initially pitched it in terms of its capacity to establish "empathy between nature and culture": "[t]he plan was for the car to remain in the site and devolve into a sort of giant flowerpot for the garden's flora and fauna, becoming integrated with the local ecosystem." [25]

However, the absurdity and violence of the act clearly lends it wider implications. The town of Culiacan and Sinaloa state generally are notorious for drug-related crime. But even more than acknowledging this violent social background, the work emerges as a reflection on the dilemmas of socially engaged art. As he is driving intently towards the "wretched tree," Alys describes a sudden moment of realisation: "[i]t was as if I'd been punched in the chest by the absurdity and tragedy of this art mission in this lost town of Sinaloa. I don't know; a lot came to my mind..." [26] The work pointedly confronts an awkward and unresolved problem. It acknowledges that fond dreams of art-driven, ecologically inflected, social amelioration fail to adequately speak to the complex and intractable local situation. It interferes then precisely by suspending any ostensibly effective work of interference, by representing it instead as a moment of bathos and indirection. In this manner *Game Over* takes shape as a charged crystalisation of the contradictory forces that shape it. Rather than confronting the social field directly, the work is lightly and obliquely interleaved within it. This lends it a sense of separate, forlorn and impertinent identity.

Here, however, it is less a matter of multiplexing than of surreptitious action. *Game Over* is not so much a carrier of multiple signals - some positioned within everyday life, others within art – as it is a understated meditation on the limits of art, and the limits of arts critical relation to dimensions of everyday life.

SHELTER FOR DRUG-ADDICTED WOMEN

The work of Austrian art collective, *WochenKlausur*, is more clearly multiplexed. The group produce tactical activist work that aims to intervene within society and improve it. They have an unashamedly instrumental orientation, employing art as a means of achieving what they regard as socially useful ends. *Shelter for Drug-Addicted Women*, [27] one of their early works, was produced in 1994 in Zurich, Switzerland. As the title indicates, the work involved setting up a daytime shelter for Zurich's drug-addicted and typically homeless prostitutes. The role of *WochenKlausur* was to act as an innovative social catalyst. They arranged a series of meetings in boats on Lake Zurich, in which politicians, journalists, legal and medical professionals came together to consider practical ways of addressing this problem. In short, *WochenKlausur*, produced a novel context for social policy dialogue that led to the establishment of a women's shelter.

This would seem a clear example of a work in which the limits of art have become ambiguous, in which art has effectively merged into ordinary political activism. Yet the issue is not as straightforward as it seems. I would argue instead that *WochenKlausur* have discovered a very specific niche for intervening within society. They speak very clearly of taking advantage of the cultural prestige of art and its peculiar freedom to accomplish practical tasks. [28] So at the very same time that they are subverting the autonomy of art, they draw upon that autonomy for instrumental purposes. In this manner, they effectively play a trick on both art and society. This dimension of trickery, of employing all available means, whether in terms of adhering to the institutional demands of institutional art, publicising their actions in the media, manipulating local officials or conspiring with community groups, suggests a very different notion of interference. Not the interference of a pure and exterior form of artistic resistance, but the complicit, embedded interference of a tactically positioned cultural actor. Rather than fundamentally blurring the relation between art and the social, *WochenKlausur* suggest a new social identity for art and a new play of integration and distance. The gap between art and non-art is at once both exploited and rendered less pertinent. The important features now are skills, goals, tactical advantage and institutional authority. Within this context it is more important to pay attention to the multiple streams of differentiated social signals, to recognise their endless multiplexing and de-multiplexing, than to describe merging, blurring and ambiguity per se.

CONCLUSION

This paper has suggested that throughout the history of avant-garde art practice and even within the context of contemporary transdisciplinary and socially-instrumental art projects there is still a gap evident between the art signal and the signal flow of the social as such. It is not that art lies beyond the social – that it supervenes and intervenes from without – but rather that it preserves dimensions of distinct identity within an overall, complex and multiply stranded field. In saying this, however, there are always consequences in running signals so closely side by side. The art signal may not literally dissolve into the life signal or vice versa, but each of them is still integrally affected. Art discovers new institutional, political and discursive alignments. Everyday life once again reveals its profound, aesthetic implications. Within this context, socially engaged art obtains its critical force precisely in

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terms of the limit play it opens up between artistically marked social actions and social actions generally.

Multiplexing indicates not only an alternative way of conceiving the relation between art and the social, emphasising dimensions of interleaving and distinct identity, but also a specific artistic strategy that shifts away from notions of interference - whether conceived in terms of blurring or in terms of some capacity for integral subversion – envisaging, instead, a more discreet and cunning etiquette of attachment and separation, correspondence and sidelong glances. ■

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