



Hilary Lloyd

Hilary Lloyd (*1964) lives and works in London. Her work has been presented in numerous international solo and group exhibitions, amongst others at: Raven Row, London (2010), Tramway, Glasgow (2010), Le Consortium, Dijon (2009), Kunstverein Munich (2006), Venice Biennale (2003), Gwangju Biennial (2002), Steirischer Herbst (2001), and Tate Triennial, London (2000).

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Joining Hilary Lloyd's Video Installations Michael Newman

It was getting dark on a January evening when I walked into Raven Row – a non-profit gallery in an 18th century house in London's East End – to see Hilary Lloyd's exhibition of video installations. My first impression from the reception area, looking into the large modern space that has been added at the back, was of emptiness. Before noticing any images, I saw two large, black metal boxes housing the players, and two projectors suspended on their sides at different heights from the ceiling, all on shiny poles. The display was at once alluring and slightly ominous. The steel tubes reminded me of the poles around which strippers dance, going through their teasing routine while remaining remote and self-absorbed. This same duality was carried over into the images. In the first room, two sequences of still shots of a man in a dark, fashionable suit, cut off at the chest – which on inspection appeared to have been taken from an advertising poster – were arranged vertically, from floor to ceiling. Sometimes one would be projected upside down, then the other. The framing of the images drew attention to the area of the groin, while the continual cycling through the sequence, the inversions, and the relation between upper and lower images, created a sense of abstraction. Rather than negating desire, the abstraction of *Trousers* (2010) created a peculiar feeling; a sexuality that had nothing to do with the body behind the surface of the clothes, but rather with the surfaces themselves, connecting the figure less to the space in which he stood – in effect there was no space since this was in the first place an image on a surface, most probably an ad – than to the black metal and steel apparatus in the gallery, as if the body had become a thing seen, as much as projected by another thing.

Looking to my right, I could see in the next space six aligned video players, and images reflected in the windows beyond from the opposite wall. Passing into the room I saw six projectors, this time white, suspended from the ceiling in two banked rows of three, from which six images were projected in grid formation on the wall that

was not visible from the previous room. As opposed to the previous steady images of the suited man, these moved around, as if the camera were hand held, the geometric rigidity of the grid contrasted with the unpredictable mobility of the images. These were recognizably from advertisements or fashion shots of men's underwear.¹ As with *Trousers*, the already-mediated subject matter of *Man* (2010) was mediated once again through the abstraction of its presentation, producing a sensation of suspended but compulsive attention.

Even before seeing the other four image projections in the area by Raven Row's lobby, and ascending the stairway to the domestic rooms with their white-painted rococo paneling where the other two works in the exhibition – this time on monitors – were installed, it was possible to see how important to Lloyd's work is the presence of the apparatus in the mise-en-scène of the display. It would be tempting to speak of a fetishism of equipment, if this were not to be understood in terms of a lack or difference being avoided through the fixation on an object or material.² The aim of Lloyd's work is certainly not, it seems to me, to unmask anything hidden behind the surface of appearances – such as a mechanism of substitution and objectification, or concealed anxieties – but rather to create a peculiar kind of sensation which is very much on and of the surface.

One aspect of this sensation is indifference – not the viewer's indifference towards the work, but rather the other way round: the work somehow seemed sublimely indifferent to whether I was there

1 The appropriation of an advertising image while removing the text recalls the re-photographed ads in the work of Richard Prince. See Michael Newman, *Richard Prince: Untitled (Couple)* (London; Cambridge, Mass.: Afterall Books, 2006).

2 In the psychoanalytic definition the male fetishist is supposed to maintain a belief in the maternal phallus by fixating for his excitement on something contiguous – foot, leg, hair, skin (and its surrogates such as leather and plastic clothing) – stalling the return of the memory of the little boys confrontation with the terrible lack that filled him with anxiety for his own castration. The fetishist knows, of course, that the woman doesn't have a penis, but all the same...The classic psychoanalytic account is Sigmund Freud, 'Fetishism' (1927) in *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXI (London: Hogarth Press), pp. 152-7. "I know very well but all the same..." is from the essay 'Je sais bien, mais quand même...' by Octave Mannoni in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), pp. 9-33.

looking at it or not.³ This is strange, because what the work does take from fetishism is the merging into each other of the sensations of looking and being looked at. As Rosalind Krauss highlighted in the strange example that Freud took of a fetish, the "shine on the nose", the German word 'glanz', meaning 'shine', is also related to the English 'glance'; "perfectly bilingual, *Glanz(ce)* now allows the fusion of looking and looked at, subject and object, seer and seen."⁴ The perception of the indifference of the work to the viewer could be taken to indicate that its aesthetic autonomy has a basis in sexuality – the sex-appeal of indifference. I am drawing here on the idea that bodies and objects are the givers and receivers of a neutral and anonymous enjoyment, an idea that the Italian philosopher Mario Perniola has called "the sex appeal of the inorganic": a sex that is not teleological, does not culminate in orgasm, and in which both subject and object take on the character of things.⁵ It is through this impression that we can begin to appreciate Lloyd's place and importance in the history of moving image installation art.

Just as any human action can have multiple motivations, so the emphasis in Lloyd's work on equipment, and the precise set-up of the space of projection, fuses a number of moments in art and of thinking about moving image, in effect re-writing their history. The first moment is that of installations of Minimal art in the 1960s – Donald Judd's various repeated colored metallic rectilinear forms, or Robert Morris's *Untitled (Mirrored Cubes)* (1965). These were taken to have thrown the emphasis on the viewer's bodily experience of the objects as he or she walked around the space. While the objects themselves are still, time enters through the phenomenological experience of the viewer. Lloyd's installations combine the duration of this kind of experience – now directed not towards an abstract object but to the projection equipment

3 The indifference of the work of art to the viewer as it emerges in the 18th century tableau is for Michael Fried a source of modernism. See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting & Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (California: University of California Press, 1980).

4 Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press) p. 162.

5 Mario Perniola, *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic* (New York: London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 53-64.

itself – with the experience of the time of the image. The virtual time of the image is folded back onto the object, facilitated by characteristics they both share, which involve both a common allure and a structure of repetition rendered potentially endless by the loop. In the process, the appeal of each dimension is transferred onto the other, so that the image becomes abstractly autonomous, while the equipment takes on sex-appeal. (That this is exactly how advertising works, and that the advertising industry was accelerating at the time of Minimalism, is probably no coincidence.) Effectively, object becomes image, and image thing.

To demonstrate that the very set-up of the situations of filming and projection reinforce the ideology conveyed by cinematic representation was the burden of so-called “apparatus theory” in the 1970s, which followed avant-garde developments in cinema, such as Jean-Luc Godard’s deconstruction of the cinematic image through the use of montage with text on the screen. Theorists including Jean-Louis Baudry argued that cinema worked through identifications not only with characters in the movies, but also with the position of the camera, reproduced in the projector hidden high up behind the heads of the audience in the dark movie house.⁶ So the viewer is simultaneously implicated in the narrative of the film, and enabled to take a “transcendental” position removed from the interaction of bodies though the all-seeing camera. The critical idea of the 1970s was that to make explicit the structure and effects of the apparatus would be to demystify the ideological operations of cinema, which was up to that time the dominant mode of the mass-consumption of moving images. The problems inherent in this idea became clear when artists started presenting the projection apparatus itself in their installations. On the one hand, to place a projector – whether film, slide, or video – in the gallery space is to foreclose the viewing subject’s fantasy of occupying that position: if it’s there, I can’t be. The viewer is ejected from being the source and vanishing point of the image. This may induce a critical awareness of the way in which images work to position the subject.

6 Jean-Louis Baudry, ‘Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,’ *Film Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1974), pp. 39-47.

But on the other hand, it may also turn the equipment itself into an obscure object of desire, even of a masochistic fascination with that which has ejected me from my rightful place, and continues to produce its images relentlessly, unmoved by my presence.

It is now possible, after installation art, to see that the supposed aesthetic autonomy of high modernism involved not disinterestedness but a peculiar blend of sexual impulses – the pleasures of seeing without being seen, the ecstatic relation with an object that is singular beyond reduction to any relations.⁷ With Minimalism the object becomes, if not a slippery, reflective mirror, utterly indifferent to the subject that walks around it. Minimal art was accused of ignoring its own alienating effects and power relations.⁸ But these were also, it must be said, sources of pleasures new to art, if sometimes ones familiar from other spheres – as Cady Noland has shown in her installations produced since the mid-1980s with scaffolding poles and hand cuffs, relating the shiny metallic Minimal art object to worlds that fuse the pleasures of the body with those of the artifice of objects and surfaces: from the S&M dungeon to the gym. Lloyd has taken these pleasures, and applied them, in her installations, to the very apparatus of the moving image.

What happens, then, to the image itself? If the equipment is no longer just a means, but also an image, the images it produces take on the character of an object. Indicative of this is the way in which in *Trousers* and *Man* the images that we might initially think are representations of bodies turn out to be of paper surfaces – that is to say, objects. But that images affect us like things means more than that they represent objects rather than actual people, because this also occurs in works by Lloyd where people are filmed directly. As in *Trousers*, where the body at times resembles a caryatid, a form of support that rhymes with the columns holding the projectors, in *Car Wash* (2005) Lloyd projects slides from multiple projectors of men washing cars in a lot, the well built body of the car washer paralleling

7 Whitney Davis takes this back to Kant in *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics From Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 37-50.

8 See Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn, ‘Don Judd’, *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975), pp. 129-42.

the upright stands on which the slide projectors sit. These parallelisms between the bodies represented and the image projection equipment subliminally evoke the transfer between human and thing. As in the installations by Bruce Nauman that involve video monitors shown with the players, tables and boxes, the presence of the equipment is emphasized, so that the people represented in the videos are part of a sculptural work, making the point that we are prosthetic beings, inseparable from the instruments of memory and mediation.⁹

In 1999, for her exhibition within the single open space of Chisenhale Gallery, London, Lloyd presented videos predominantly of people, shown on professional video monitors on wheeled stands, with the flight cases for the monitors left stacked along the walls of the gallery. Among these videos was *Fiorenzo* (1999), where a young man in a white t-shirt and black pants is shown smashing cardboard tubes on the ground in front of a wall; *Maddy and Kate* (1999) where a woman in a park holds a large ball of twine, while another woman pulls at the twine so that it unwinds and falls to the ground in front of her until it is completely unraveled, a joint enterprise of entropy; and *Dawn* (1999) where a woman in a cream pants suit and high heels is sitting on a wire chair moving around, leaning back and forward, touching her foot, crossing and uncrossing her leg, at once poised and nervous. Self-absorbed or taken up in their actions, these people don't take notice of the camera or viewer. A contrast to this self-absorption is the video *Constructors* (1999), also included in the Chisenhale exhibition, where workmen in twos or threes hold each other to form the shapes of architectural elements, so that their bodies become both the instruments and objects of their activity as constructors, performed manifestly for the camera. The subjects of the video become sculptures within a sculptural video installation, as much as the equipment becomes actors or props in a particular scene of display. Workers collaborating in becoming artworks also raises the question of the

9 For the idea of human being defined in relation to an original lack that requires prostheses such as tools and instruments of memory, see Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

relation between artistic labor and other kinds of work.¹⁰ Instrumental, means-end directed activity becomes a source of pointless pleasure where people enjoy becoming things.

Comparing Lloyd's videos of people with her videos of things, we can see that there is a commonality. *Motorcycles* (2008), a three-channel video projection, comprises a sequence of shots taken with a static camera of motorcycles and scooters in a workshop, with the occasional mechanic's hand that intercedes from out-of-frame. We can hear the sounds of the workshop – the noise of tools, a radio on in the background, voices – without being able to discern anything in particular. What we are mainly shown are the luscious curves of fenders, gas-tanks, spoilers, exhaust pipes, as well as taillights, and insignias with their evocative brand names. The bikes have no less sex-appeal than the young men in *Car Wash*. But in neither case do we get the sense that a human essence has been alienated in the object, or that the body as something to be enjoyed by being looked at involves a diminishment of autonomy. Car washers and motorbikes become what Perniola has called things-that-feel. This provides a new and unexpected way of thinking about aesthetic autonomy: Lloyd's video installations are not anti-aesthetic in the pursuit of sheer reality, but rather hyper-aesthetic in generating abstract sensations and affects from things.

No doubt Lloyd's work evokes thoughts about the alienation of social relations as relations between things, and the fetish as an object or material that stalls the acknowledgment of lack and difference. Both ideas depend on there being something hidden, and therefore a distinction between surface and depth, between a superficial experience of phenomena, and the relations that produce them. Critique, after all, must have something to expose. In 2009 Lloyd presented an installation titled *Studio #2* at Le Consortium in Dijon that comprised multiple projected videos, not of objects or people, but of reflections – what appears to be glimmering water or oil, or a shimmering plastic or metallic sheet. These projections were shown

10 See John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (London; New York: Verso, 2007).

on different walls throughout the exhibition space, as if they were moving paintings. There is nothing to see other than the shine of light off surfaces that sway and undulate, making riveting colors and patterns that can neither be described nor named. Unlike ink-blots or Max Ernst's "declamomania" paintings – formed by pressing and peeling apart a surface covered with wet paint from another, leaving a blotchy ooze into which fantasies may be projected – these videos seem to repel the attempt to psychologically project into or appropriate them. In film theory excessive shine – a "rich sight" in which the technology of the medium manifests not an object but itself – has been read as a form of fetishism, "disavowing the traumatic sight of nothing, and thus constructing phantasmatic space, a surface and what the surface might conceal."¹¹ Rather than a fetishistic surface, Lloyd's shining videos proffer an undulation between perception and sensation, a continual un-forming and re-forming that takes place between something recognizable as an object – an oily puddle, a piece of plastic – and the pure sensations of color and light. These call for an attention over time in order to detect changes in the image, but also seem suspended, floating, like the feeling of dancing in a nightclub in the small hours. Like sex without any goal or consummation, they could go on and on, and they don't hide anything.

On seeing this video installation I was reminded of the opening section of Italo Calvino's novel *Mr Palomar* called 'Reading a wave'. On the beach, Mr Palomar wants to see a single wave as a precisely delineated object:

Since what Mr. Palomar means to do at this moment is simply *see* a wave – that is, to perceive all its simultaneous components without overlooking any of them – his gaze will dwell on the movement of the wave that strikes the shore until he can record

11 See John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (London; New York: Verso, 2007). Construction *in* the work also mirroring the construction *of* the work as it is locked into the site was also reflected at Raven Row in *Motorway* (2010), four projected color videos showing different levels of a highway under construction, the images shown side by side and overlapping in different sizes with steel elements often jutting at the diagonal, at right angles to and inverting the relative levels of the windows and a glazed double door in the space, with a soundtrack of traffic noise.

aspects not previously perceived; as soon as he notices that the images are being repeated, he will know that he has seen everything he wanted to see and he will be able to stop.¹²

Of course this is a project doomed to failure. Mr Palomar can never really see a wave, since each wave is continually changing and is in relation to the others, so that every time he looks he sees something different. The very task takes on an obsessive character, as a way of avoiding a horrifying void. Lloyd's work presents its different kinds of singularity – whether of people or of reflections – to simultaneously provoke but also relax and invert this kind of looking. In addition to the doubling of the image and the use of a grid-arrangement of projections, a way in which this suspension of the cognitive, penetrating look is created is through uncoordinated rhythms. At Raven Row Lloyd installed two works in close proximity to one another, within which truncated aural and visual gestures fall in and out of synchronicity. In both *Crane* and *Tunnel* (both 2010) two identical images appear next to each other on single wide-screen monitors that are attached to two steel poles running from floor to ceiling. These images are composed of short looped sequences of video, the first work showing the shaft of a construction crane, and the second taken emerging from a tunnel into what looks like an Italian city street. Shot with the camera angled upwards to catch the tops of buildings and the sky, these latter sequences are shown inverted on the screen, with the arch of the tunnel at their bottom. The images emerge from and disappear into downward wipes set to different speeds, so that their rhythms converge and diverge. This means that while it is very difficult to calculate the relations between the moments of appearance of the two images, the viewer is somehow compelled, through the very fact of rhythm, to try. This is further complicated by the accompaniment of short, repetitious edits of recorded sound, that repeats, overlapping at times contrapuntally, and at others discordantly. That the visual wipes suggest blinks, but that one could not possibly blink one's two eyes in the rhythm of the video, implies that the technology of the work creates a peculiar kind of sensation that cannot be contained

12 Italo Calvino, *Mr. Palomar* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), p. 4.

within the limits of normal perception. Further, this idea of the blink connects Lloyd's earlier works based on still images – those using slide-projection carousels, and the later sequences of 'still' images in video projections – with the moving image projections where the blank moments between images – those invisible gaps elided through perceptual delay in the "optical unconscious" of film – have been replaced in more recent works by other rhythmic devices, which bring to the surface the nothingness and disconnectedness that sustains the presence of the image. If the images can become eyes, so can the projectors. The sense of emptiness at Raven Row had nothing to do with the number of visitors in the gallery, but rather with the feeling that the installations were watching themselves; that the projectors were surrogate viewers that not only produced the images, but also regarded them on our behalf. As Robert Pfaller writes when discussing the way in which "interpassivity" has replaced interactivity in art; "the artwork would be an artwork that observes itself".¹³ According to Pfaller, just as the function of ritual is to suffer on our behalf, so that we don't have to, so the Xerox machine – today the scanner – reads on our behalf, and the work of art enjoys on our behalf. But where does that leave the visitor to the Lloyd's installations?

While there are consistencies across Lloyd's work, there have also been changes. Parallel with the shift from provisional and mobile installations such as that at Chisenhale Gallery, to those at Raven Row and Le Consortium that were highly engineered and locked into the architecture of the building, Lloyd's interest seems to have turned from individuals' relations with their self-presentation and gestures – DJ Princess Julia documented playing records at a club in the slide-piece *Princess Julia* (1997), hairdressers, waiters, car washers, and people just doing nothing like the woman in *Dawn* – to fixed representations, such as the photographs given movement by the apparatus itself in *Trousers* and *Man*, and to the abstractions and repetitions of *Crane* and *Tunnel*. The emphasis on finessed structures and the abstractness of Lloyd's recent installations appears to have

¹³ Robert Pfaller, 'Little Gestures of Disappearance: Interpassivity and the Theory of Ritual', in *Journal of European Psychoanalysis: Humanities, Philosophy, Psychotherapies*, 16 (Winter-Spring 2003).

developed out of the honed, self-contained quality that interested her in the individuals she worked with in her earlier work. Lloyd's images and videos are not about relating people and objects to their context. Their tendency is rather towards distancing the subject from their everyday world, or an intensity of regard of objects created by framing. Rather than producing meaning through relationships, Lloyd takes people and objects out of relation so that they become enigmatic. Both give pleasure through autonomy. Autonomy in this case implies not so much a negation of instrumental means-end relations, as excess – something more than and inassimilable to function. Fascination with this excess of autonomy is carried over from the people who were the subjects of the video, to the equipment of the installation itself. Entering the spaces of the gallery, we join these apparatuses of viewing, to become their living accessory.

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September 22, 1907

My dear ones

On the Piazza Colonna behind which I am staying, as you know, several thousand people congregate every night. The evening air is really delicious, in Rome wind is hardly known. Behind the column is a stand for a military band which plays there every night, and on the roof of a house at the other end of the piazza there is a screen on which a *società Italiana* projects lantern slides. They are actually advertisements, but to beguile the public these are interspersed with pictures of landscapes, Negroes of the Congo, glacier ascents and so on. But since these wouldn't be enough, the boredom is interrupted by short cinematographic performances for the sake of which the old children (your father included) suffer quietly the advertisements and monotonous photographs. They are stingy with these tidbits, however, so I have had to look at the same thing over and over again. When I turn to go I detect a certain tension in the attentive crowd [der Menge aufmerksam], which makes me look again, and sure enough a new performance has begun, and so I stay on. Until 9pm I usually remain spellbound [so der Zauber su wirken]; then I begin to feel too lonely in the crowd, so I return to my room to write to you all after having ordered a fresh bottle of water. The others who promenade in couples or *undici, doldici* stay on as long as the music and lantern slides last.

In one corner of the piazza another of those awful advertisements keeps flashing on and off. I think it is called Fermentine. When I was in Genoa two years ago with your aunt it was called Tot; it was some kind of stomach medicine and really unbearable. Fermentine, on the other hand, doesn't seem to disturb the people. In so far as their companions make it possible, they stand in such a way that they can listen to what is being said behind them while seeing what is going on in front, thus getting their full share. Of course there are lots of small children among them, of whom many women would say that they ought to have been in bed long ago. Foreigners and natives mix in the most natural way. The clients of the restaurant behind the column and

of the confectioner's on one side of the piazza enjoy themselves too; there are wicker chairs to be had near the music, and the townspeople like sitting on the stone balustrade round the monument. I am not sure at the moment whether I haven't forgotten a fountain on the piazza, the latter is so big. Through the middle of it runs the Corso Umberto (of which it is in fact an enlargement) with its carriages and an electric *tranvia*, but they don't do any harm, for a Roman never moves out of a vehicle's way and the drivers don't seem to be aware of their right to run people over. When the music stops everyone claps loudly, even those who haven't listened. From time to time terrible yells are heard in the otherwise quiet and rather distinguished crowd; this noise is caused by a number of newspaper boys who, breathless like the herald of Marathon, hurl themselves onto the piazza with the evening editions, on the mistaken idea that with the news they are putting an end to an almost unbearable tension. When they have an accident to offer, with dead or wounded, they really feel masters of the situation. I know these newspapers and buy two of them everyday for *five centesimi* apiece; they are cheap, but I must say that there is never anything in them that could possibly interest an intelligent foreigner. Occasionally there is something like a commotion, all the boys rush this way and that, but one doesn't have to be afraid that something has happened; they soon come back again. The women in this crowd are very beautiful (foreigners excepted); the women of Rome, strangely enough, are beautiful even when they are ugly, and not many of them are that.

I can hear the music plainly from my room but of course I cannot see the pictures. Just now the crowd is clapping again.

Fond greetings,

Your Papa

Excerpt from Sigmund Freud, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, Basic Books, New York, 1975, pp. 261-263.



Edouard Manet
In the Conservatory, 1879
Oil on canvas

1879: Unbinding Vision Jonathan Crary

Implicit within such dynamic theories of cognition and perception [Pierre Janet's *Névroses et idées fixes* (Paris, Félix Alcan, 1898)] was the notion that subjectivity is a provisional assembly of mobile and mutable components. More explicit, perhaps, was the idea that effective synthesis of a "real world" was synonymous to a large extent with *adaptation* to a social environment. Thus, within various studies on attention there was a consistent but never fully successful attempt to distinguish two forms of attentiveness: the first was conscious or voluntary attention, which was usually task-oriented and often associated with higher and more evolved behavior. The second was automatic or passive attention, which included for scientific psychology the areas of habitual activity, daydreaming, reverie, and other absorbed or mild somnambulant states. The point at which any of these states could shift into a socially pathological obsessiveness was never clearly defined and could only become evident with some clear failure of social performance. Hippolyte Bernheim, in the early 1880s, directly addressed these issues: "If their attention is self-concentrated, and their minds self-absorbed in an idea or an image, it is sufficient to produce a sort of passive somnambulism, passive only in that it cannot be made to change the condition. And this is so true, that many somnambulists are susceptible to suggestion in the walking condition."¹

In relation to these problems, a critical question is how one chooses to characterize the state of the seated woman of [Edouard Manet's] *In the Conservatory*. Clearly, we might affiliate her with many other figures and faces in Manet's work. Is she merely another instance of an often-noted Manet "blackness," psychological emptiness, or disengagement? T.J. Clark offers a rich discussion of the relation of social class to what he calls the "face of fashion" in terms of Georg

¹ Hippolyte Bernheim, *Hypnosis and Suggestion in Psychotherapy* (1884), trans. Christian Herter (New York: Aronson, 1973), p.155.

Simmel's notion of impersonality and the "blasé."² Also it is difficult to consider this image without reference to Benjamin's articulation of modernity as a public sphere in which, for the first time, individuals are systematically habituated *not* to return the gaze of the other. But I believe such readings can be specified and pushed further. Jean-Jacques Courtine and Claudine Haroche insist that in the nineteenth century a new regime of faciality takes shape.³ After nearly three centuries in which the meanings of the human face were explained in terms of rhetoric or language (such as in Charles Le Brun's 1698 treatise on expression), the face in the nineteenth century comes to occupy a precarious position, belonging to a human being both as a physiological organism and as a privatized, socialized individual subject. Courtine and Haroche see Charles Darwin's *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, published in 1872, as the product of a world no longer in communication with that of Le Brun. Darwin's work is indicative of the split status the face acquires, becoming simultaneously a symptom of an organism's anatomical and physiological functioning *and*, in its relative impenetrability, the mark of the success or failure of a process of self-mastery and control implicit in the social construction of a normative individual. In particular, it is within the new field of mental pathology, with its analyses of hysterias, obsessions, manias, and anxieties, that the face with all its intrinsic motility becomes a sign of a disquieting continuum between the somatic and the social.

With the idea of that continuum in mind, I think it is possible to see the woman, with the face and eyes as a special key, as a public presentation, as an impassive mastery of self (perhaps a self-mastery, or recomposing of the self in response to some verbal remark or proposal by the man), which coexists with being in the grip of some thoroughly ordinary involuntary or automatic behavior. We are allowed by Manet, who painted this face with uncharacteristic definition, to ask such specific questions. Is she engaged in thought, or vacuous

2 T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 253-254.

3 Jean-Jacques Courtine and Claudine Haroche, *Histoire du visage: Exprimer et taire ses émotions, XVIe-début XIXe siècle* (Paris: Rivages, 1988), pp. 269-285.

absorption, or that form of arrested (or diverted) attentiveness that borders on a trance? Like Freud's Anna O. (who became ill in 1880), is she simultaneously conforming to a learned set of social expectations *and* indulging in the "private theater" of her own day-dreaming?⁴ It was discovered that in both somnambulant and hypnotic states, sensations, perceptions, and subconscious elements could loosen themselves from a binding synthesis and become floating detached elements, free to make new connections. The particular spatial relation between the two figures in this painting has a curious similarity to one of the early forms of therapeutic practice that came out of the work of Charcot, Janet, and others in the early 1880s at the hospital of Salpêtrière: a method of standing behind so-called hysteric patients and whispering to them while they appeared to be preoccupied and inattentive to their surroundings, so that it seemed possible actually to communicate with a dissociated element of a fragmented subjectivity.⁵ Dissociation in such cases was linked with an extremely narrowed field of attention.

It's hard to think of another figure of Manet's with this inanimate, waxwork quality. In a sense we are shown a body with eyes open but which do not see – that is, which do not arrest, do not fix, or do not in a practical way appropriate the world around them. They are eyes that denote a momentary state in which a normative perception is suspended.⁶ Again, it is not so much a question of vision, of a gaze, but of a broader perceptual and corporeal engagement (or in this case, disengagement) with a sensory manifold. If it is possible to pose the suggestion of trance here, it is simply as a forgetfulness in the midst of being wakeful, the indefinite persistence of a transient daydreaming. By the late 1870s, researchers reported that seemingly inconsequential and everyday states of reverie could transform themselves into autohypnosis. The Belgian psychologist Joseph Delboeuf identified reverie as a state in which a potentially dangerous weakening of perceptual norms could take place, at which hallucinatory content

4 Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, p. 233.

5 Pierre Janet, *The Mental State of Hystericals*, 1893, trans. Caroline Corson, (New York: Putman, 1902), pp. 252-253.

6 Pascal Bonitzer, *Décadrages: Peinture et cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1987), pp. 73-77.

could become intermingled with “determinate perceptions.”⁷ William James, himself a painter for a time, in his *Principles of Psychology*, which he began writing in 1878, describes how such states are inseparable from attentive behavior:

This curious state of inhibition can at least for a few moments be produced at will by fixing the eye on vacancy. ... Monotonous mechanical activities that end by being automatically carried on tend to produce it. ... The eyes are fixed on vacancy, the sounds of the world melt into confused unity, the attention becomes dispersed so that the whole body is felt, as it were at once, and the foreground of consciousness is filled, if by anything, by a sort of solemn sense of surrender to the empty passing of time. In the dim background of our mind we know what we ought to be doing: getting up, dressing ourselves, answering the person who has spoken to us. ... But somehow we cannot start. Every moment we expect the spell to break, for we know no reason why it should continue. But it does continue, pulse after pulse, and we float with it.⁸

James gives an account here of what neurologist John Hughlings Jackson had described as “a temporary relaxation of object consciousness, or speaking more simply, we are dim to our surroundings,” a state of “temporary normal dissolution,” synonymous for Jackson with “reverie”.⁹

For him, dissolution meant a disintegration of the highest and most complex operations of the nervous system and the activation of a lower, more automatic functioning. Even though Jacksonian dissolution was a regression to simple and more elementary patterns of behavior, it was nonetheless a breakdown of the arrangements that bound a subjective world together into a unified milieu as a bulwark against dissociation. In this sense *In the Conservatory* is a partial and finally ineffective system of such binding arrangements. If in this image Manet operates hesitantly within the terms of a “reality principle,” it is a “reality” whose legibility is possible only through its reciprocal

7 Joseph Delboeuf, *Le sommeil et les rêves* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1885), pp. 87-90.

8 William James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, p. 444.

9 John Hughlings Jackson, *Selected Writings of John Hughlings Jackson*, vol. 2, ed. James Taylor (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), pp. 24-25.

relation to the creative process of dissociation. Gaston Bachelard provides a way of approaching Manet’s ambivalence here: “The demands of our reality function require that we adapt to reality, that we constitute ourselves as a reality and that we manufacture works which are realities. But doesn’t reverie, by its very essence, liberate us from the reality function? ... Reverie bears witness to a normal, useful *irreality function* which keeps the human psyche on the fringe of all the brutality of a hostile and foreign nonself.”¹⁰

Manet’s painting discloses a more generalized experience of dissociation even while he maintains a superficially unified surface. Consider how he has painted the man’s eyes (or more accurately, only alluded to them). This is a dramatically different male figure from, say, the young man with the intense wide-eyed omnivorous gaze in *Chez le Père Lathuille* of the same year (though exhibited at the salon of 1880), with which *In the Conservatory* has often been associated. In the former, the couple is constituted through the man’s almost excessively attentive gaze and reciprocal gesture of his left arm enveloping the woman. She does not return or exercise in any way a corresponding gaze. *In the Conservatory* presents a very different set of relations. There is a fundamental ambivalence in how the male figure leans over the bench toward the woman and simultaneously holds himself in reserve, how his eyes seem directed at the woman and averted at the same time. In terms of the narrative content of the painting, Manet provides an instance of Simmel’s later formula of modern flirtation, in which “refusal and the withdrawal of the self are fused with the phenomenon of drawing attention to the self” in one indivisible act.¹¹

But more significantly, Manet suggests a deeply equivocal attentiveness and distraction: for clearly the punctuality of vision in the man is disrupted far more thoroughly than in the woman. (The possibility of the same effect of self-portraiture here should not be discounted, given the similarity of the figure to many surviving

10 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon, 1971), p.13.

11 Georg Simmel, *On Women, Sexuality and Love*, trans. Guy Oakes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1884), p.137.

images of Manet.) Inverting the example of *Père Lathuille*, there is no enactment of visual mastery, no ocular potency here. In a move with intimations of “disfiguration,” Manet shows the two eyes in an asymmetrical, dissociated relation. One eye, his right, is seemingly open, looking beyond and perhaps slightly above the woman beneath him. All we see of the other eye is the lowered eyelid and eyelash. The deliberate disorder and vagueness not only of the direction but even the efficacy of his glance is one of the striking features of the painting. Perhaps he is looking at the woman’s umbrella, her gloved hand and the loose glove it holds, the pleats of her dress, perhaps even at the ring on her finger. But whatever this effectively cross-eyed figure sees (if anything at all), it is as a disunified field, with *two disparate optical axes*. Perhaps the eyes indicate the moment when attentiveness shifts into that “eclipse mentale” that Janet described, or that vacancy in which, as Breuer insisted, awareness of an immediate environment grows dim. Equally plausibly, it may be a gaze profoundly disrupted, even disabled by the multiple sites of libidinal or fetishistic fixation, by their unstable and shifting valences. The attentive subject here is part of what Paul Ricoeur calls “the open state of the universe of signs” in which the very ruse of desire is expressed.¹² In this way, “symbols” like the glove, the umbrella, the spiky plant, in all their overloaded semiotic banality, stand for the irreducibly diffuse attentiveness that is continually deflected and misaligned by the gazes within this compressed reversible world of the green house.

Excerpt from Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 97-104.

¹² Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 66.

Cyber-time, Eroticism, Desensitization Franco “Bifo” Berardi

After the end of the avant-gardes and their infiltration into the circuit of social communication, aesthetic stimulation in the form of advertising, television, design, packaging, web design etc., is increasingly widespread, pervasive, insistent, indissociable from the informational stimulation to which it has become complementary. The conscious-feeling organism is enveloped in a flux of signs that are not simply the bearers of information, but also factors of perceptive stimulation and excitation. In the past, artistic experience was founded on the sensorial centrality of catharsis. The work of art created a wave of involvement and excitement that rushed forward towards a climax, a cathartic state of agitation comparable to orgasmic release. In its classical, as well as romantic and modern conceptions, beauty was identifiable with the moment of completion, an overcoming of the tension implicit in the relationship between the feeling organism and the world: catharsis, harmony, sublime detachment. Reaching harmony is an event that can be compared to orgasmic release following the excitement of contact between bodies. Muscle tension relaxes in the fullness of pleasure. In the happy perception of one’s own body and the surrounding environment what is at play is an essential question of rhythm, time and lived temporalities. But if, into the circle of excitement, we introduce an inorganic element such as electronics and impose an acceleration of stimuli and a contraction of psychophysical reaction times, something ends up changing in the organism and its forms of erotic reaction. Orgasm is replaced by a series of excitations without release. Orgasm is no longer the prelude to any accomplishment. Inconclusive excitation takes the place of orgasmic release. This is something like the feeling that is conveyed to us by digital art, the coldness of video art, the inconclusive cyclical nature of the work of Tinguely or the music of Philip Glass. Not only aesthetics but also eroticism seems to be implicated in this inorganic acceleration of the relationship between bodies. [...]

Traveling the circuits of social communication, the erotic object is multiplied to the point of becoming omnipresent. But excitation is no longer the prelude to any conclusion and multiplies desire to the point of shattering it. The unlimited nature of cyberspace endows experience with a kind of inconclusiveness. Aggressiveness and exhaustion follow from this unlimited opening of the circuits of excitation. Isn't this perhaps an explanation of the erotic anxiety that leads to de-eroticization and that mix of hypersexuality and asexuality that characterizes post-urban life? The city was the place where the human body encountered the human body, the site of the gaze, contact, slow emotion and pleasure. In the post-urban dimension of the cyberspatial sprawl, contact seems to become impossible, replaced by precipitous forms of experience that overlap with commercialization and violence. Slow emotion is rare and improbable. And the very slowness of emotion is transformed little by little into a commodity, an artificial condition that can be exchanged for money. Time, an indispensable dimension of pleasure, is cut into fragments that can no longer be enjoyed. Excitation without release replaces pleasure.

Excerpt from Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*, Minor Compositions, London, 2009, pp. 90-91



Princess Julia

20 & 21 August 1997

The tools that you use are pretty basic, just two decks and a mixer. There are a lot of little things in between, but essentially that's it. The technical part is somebody else's eye, somebody else's experience and it's down on a piece of vinyl. When you're playing music you have to dissect it. It ruins it in a way because when you're out you listen to the whole piece. If you're playing it, you have to break everything down to its basic patterns. When I'm DJ-ing I'm not listening to the whole song, I'm listening to beats and high hats, to the very basics. It takes the edge off it in a way. I had to train myself to do that. You have to time everything, to match up the beats so it's like a flowing feeling rather than one record then another record. It's like building a jigsaw, making a picture, but it's a dance picture. When you're in a nightclub it's a three-dimensional feeling, it's the whole environment. If you have

the music without the lights it's really hard work – I like to have a dance floor that's going somewhere. When I was learning I did ask for tips and I also watched people DJ-ing and listened really hard. For some people it's natural and they get the hang of it really quickly. It took me a few years and tears. Once you do get the hang of it you can pick it up at any time. There's always new technology, but basically the whole process of making this picture is fundamental. Most people practice in their bedrooms until they get it perfect. It's a very obsessive experience. I've managed not to be too bad, but it was frustrating fitting the jigsaw together, piecing it together so it sounded perfect, a flowing feeling rather than here, there and everywhere. It's considered a boy's thing to do because it's all machines.

Every now and then I get stuck on a sound and I think, "Yes, this is the way forward". Then I buy everything. There are producers that I respect for sticking by what they do even if it's not popular at the beginning. I mean someone like Armand van Helden, he's quite forward thinking in his way. He hit on a sound. Basically it's a fusion of House, with the sub-bass of Drum and Bass and certain sorts of drum rolls. More breakbeat-y rather than House beats. It was the fusion that I was waiting for, but I didn't know what it was called. I was waiting for that sub-bass feeling to come. It crept in last year, but it's already become popularised. It happens that quickly.

I go for things that have more of a club feel rather than radio type records. I guess that's a contributing factor to my style. I don't do a lot of fancy mixing, I'm more into keeping pieces as pure as possible rather than tampering with somebody's artistic input. I have to take risks sometimes, putting two records that wouldn't fundamentally go together. I might play something that's a new diversion on a theme that people aren't quite used to just yet. People do get locked into a style, you have to educate them a bit. That's why I'm not a purist. I'm more experimental. I like modern things, things that break the rules. DJ-ing, in a way, is an artistic interpretation. It's a form of expression. There are parts of my set that I think are the future, but it's an ongoing excursion.

I like Minimal House, raw sounding music but it's not everyone's cup of tea. It's actually quite hard to work a minimal type track in, I do on occasion but that's my indulgence. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't according to the crowd. I'm very aware that I'm not playing for myself. If people come up and ask me for requests it's quite scary and that's where I draw the line. People really do know their music, but they usually ask for something that I've stopped playing for a year. I've moved on from that already.

I take enough records for a two-hour set, about 150 records maybe, no less than 100. I have streamlined it down – some places you go to you're only playing for an hour. It's not a long time – usually its two hours so I take the fixed set and extra records, because my set's quite loose. I'm always waiting for things to tease my ears, you know. It's really nerve wracking, yeah, I don't really think about it that much. It's like walking a tight rope because it's all live; if you fuck up, you know, you've fucked up. There's quite a lot of stress and pleasure involved. I mean, even if you just go to a nightclub in another country, or another club that you're not used to, it's daunting. The decks are always the same though – everyone uses Technics, the basic set up. Sometimes they have three decks, which is rather nice, and you can mess around – there are more tricks you can do and acapellas. You can layer two tracks together and make a whole new song. I'm sort of an OK mixer. To me it's about music, so I don't really like to distort the piece. I'd rather leave it how it is rather than try and mess around with the piece too much. When you're actually putting records together you are thinking about the technical possibilities, and where you can stretch one record into another. If you're really into mixing then that's your main occupation. It's a simple process but once you've learnt that, you can start developing your own style. I love the scariness of DJ-ing, it's the funniest feeling when I'm in a club and there are two thousand people dancing to what you are playing.

Excerpt from Hilary Lloyd, *Princess Julia*, 1997

A Violent Life

Pier Paolo Pasolini

Yawning, Zucabbo tied his clothes with his belt and threw them in the pile, going straight off with a loud whistle towards the diving plank. Tommaso didn't go swimming: while Zucabbo swam, he sat there, crouched on the sand with his back against the steep bank full of dried roots, a bit in the shadow.

All around there were dried reeds. The stems of the flowers were dry too, more than a yard high, piled together like a planted field, on the other side towards the water: black, rusty, they shredded if you touched them, like ash or like burnt paper.

In the midst of these canes, very thick, there were some other plants, like a second crop inside the first: they were those white flowers that come apart when you blow on them, big as fists, on rotting stems. They had only the skeleton left, because all the white stuff had fallen on the ground, on the sandy grass and on the turds. But, apparently, on some bank in the area a pile of straw had caught fire, a meadow's edge, a tree, and had become a cloud of black dust: the air, the wind had scattered that dust around and had dirtied everything: if you put your hand down somewhere, it was black when you raised it again.

That dust covered everything: the clump of dried flowers, the white stuff that had fallen on them, the weeds, the kind of grasses you see everywhere in the summer, that crawl like snakes, dry and stinking, over the piles of rubbish, with tins, empty medicine jars, broken plates, turds, everything submerged in that rank brush under the baking sun, also black, by now, if you called for September, it was close enough to answer.

Excerpt from Pier Paolo Pasolini, *A Violent Life*, Pantheon, NY, 1992, pp. 260-261.

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