

**“Trio A (for
Yvonne Rainer)”**

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nd there I was flying at light speed through the black and cold galaxy. No one around - no one at all. I was all alone in this deep and dark madness. Weightless and soundless floating around in this what seems timeless but oh-so-very long voyage. I was close to losing my mind, but I couldn't, no I can never! I will need to carry on and stop myself from going mad. In order to stay sane, I pace around the cockpit, which is usually, follow by a long and intense walk through the cargo deck of the ship. A routine that keeps me going, the world (or what's left of it) needs me. I methodically check all the health and safety protocols over and over again. I'm surrounded by all these blinking LED light switches, warning signals, pressure gauges. Every single one of them flashes up in its own routine.

On - Off - On - Off - On - Off

On - - - - - Off On - - - - - Off

 On - Off - On - Off - On - Off

 On --- Off --- On ----- Off --- On

On - - - - - Off On - - - - - Off

On - Off - On - Off - On - Off

It is almost like they are performing a dance together, accompanied by occasional warning and checking sounds. A dance in space. A dance in front of the black star-blurred canvas in which I am navigating around. Everything, and everyone, if there is still someone left after all that happened, everything relies on me now. Unsure of what lies ahead, I continue my journey. The silence ...

[At the same time in another remote area of the galaxy...(well, technically about 185.659° to the left and 23.654° up from where we started whilst turning about 35° around oneself) ...]



And there I was carefully stepping one foot in front of the other, balancing myself on a piece of "Bodyspacemothionthings", whilst thinking that this must be rather high up in my list of fun experiences with art. After all, when do you really get a chance of playing around in what can only be described as a collection of plywood climbing-, sliding-, moving sculpture-thingys in one of the major art galleries in London? Especially when you grew up in Germany where most of my art gallery experiences were in three dimensional observing spaces in which you study art work (or works of art?), but don't physically engage with it – it's all about :

Bitte nicht berühren

//

Do not touch

[which is just another way of saying: "It looks good, but you can't have it – Na na na nah nahh – I made/exhibit/curate it and I can touch it, but you can't!!"]

I'm really getting into this --- , just wish that I could be the only one here, or at least a less jam-packed Turbine Hall ... but considering the history of and behind Robert Morris's "Bodyspacemothionthings" I should know better. (Well, I did, but you can still hope, can't you?! – Exactly!)

Let's take a look at what the clever people of the Tate have got to say about it:

"...This is a re-creation of Tate Gallery's first fully interactive exhibition which took place in 1971, inspiring a huge media and public interest, when an art gallery asked people for the first time to physically interact with an art work. Shockingly, it was closed just four days after opening, due to the unexpected and over enthusiastic response of the audience. This time around, it will be created using contemporary materials based upon the original plans, in collaboration with Morris, enabling you to experience an exciting landmark in Tate's history. ..."

And I am experiencing – I'm taking part – I can touch art – I can understand - I'm having fun with art: SOLD.

Let's consider Morris's "Bodyspacemotionthings" further – a series of sculptures that highly rely on the participation of gallery visitors. Without them, the sculptures look rather out of place and lost in the space of the Turbine Hall. Every single person who interacts with Morris's work creates individual art – a piece that is written at the precise moment of the communication with the work. Always unique, always different, always decaying once begun. The work lasts as long as the existence of the movement, once the body stops being in motion, the work is expired – "clean cut" dead and only memories exist until they will fade away. Memories only to return if personal effort is employed.

Oh, need to be careful here; nearly lost my balance on the wooden beam under my feet. I hear laughter, screams, cries of joy and of pain. I see adults being taken back to their own childhood whilst interacting and playing, I observe grandparents watching from a safe and comfortable distance and I see proud parents taking photographs and videos of their children. Millions of amateur short films and stills preserving the memories for long family evenings and the coffee table.

The thought of photographs being forced to appear pops into my head whilst I take the next step.

"Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the

objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstance that were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature." C S Peirce

I imagine every single pixel being created and transported by some sort little square robot or even an army of small robots that create some form of

human chain for robots linking the lens of the camera with the sensor of a digital compact camera. Almost like a light speed painting. A painting created on the canvas of now. We could even call them Pixelbots.

The photograph is created as a snapshot of reality.

"A specific photograph, in effect, is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents), or at least it is not immediately or generally distinguished from its referent (as is the case for every other image, encumbered – from the start, and because of its status – by the way in which the object is stimulated): it is not impossible to perceive the photographic signifier (certain professionals do so), but it requires a secondary action of knowledge or of reflection." Roland Barthes

I wonder whether all these –well, let's actually refer to them as – photographer care about what Peirce or Barthes had to say about the medium and craft of painting with light...

For me, it depends a lot on what I want to photograph. When I press the mechanical shutter of my SLR (yes, I am old-school and still shoot film) one of many thoughts runs through my head. Usually depending on why I am taking the shot.

What happens to the images in a mirror if you don't look?

What makes a photo special? Memories you have when looking at the image? Or does the photo "take over" and presents itself in such a way that you have to love or hate it?

What happens to all the images you see every day, but haven't got a camera to record them? Do they disappear?

What does happen to the images you see in a mirror? ...

I love the days when the camera "takes control" over what I'm shooting. Does it really matter what's on the film? I don't really care.

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Back to the Pixelbots. Death to Polaroid? Death to Negatives and Slides? Good old Polaroid...why did you have to go?

I love old cameras. And I love shooting with them, even if the results may make you wonder "why even bother?".

I recently found an old 35mm camera - covered in dust and without any indication of the name, model or make. So instead of finding out which camera it is or even cleaning it, I loaded it with an old expired slide film, took it for a walk and cross-processed the roll .

Well, the results may not be to everyone's liking, they are not "brilliant" or "great": They are blurry, out of focus, weird and amazing.

Does it matter how they come out? Yes and No. I shoot because I like the subject, therefore would like to keep the moment as a memory, keep it on film. I also shoot because I enjoy the moment and already formed a memory of it. ...

Like I said, I love old cameras, I love shooting with them and I love the results.

Well, maybe my idea of the Pixlebots is just about equivalent to what Peirce calls instantaneous photographs in 1894. (Ok, possibly a bit too simple and

out of this world, I get it, I'll stop.)

Anyway, all the photos taken during that day will in one way or another be used as memories and/or indications of what happened. We take photos so we can remember, show and be reminded of certain moments in our life.

Peirce refers to photographs in his body of text titled "*What is a sign?*"¹ from 1894 as being one of three kinds of signs, called *likenesses or icons* (the

other two "parts" being *indications* and *symbols*).

[At the same time somewhere completely different...]



just got back from the cargo deck. Everything seems to be working and in order. Whilst I stroll back to the cockpit, the ship is flying on autopilot, I begin to wonder if I had actually stepped on the precise ground I just placed my foot, before. If so I would actually re'trace my own footsteps, almost like re'write them over the top. Similar to writing or drawing on a blackboard where I place the chalk on its surface to make marks, then use a sponge to wipe the, let's call it the outside (with hint of Derrida) of the board in order to start fresh again. I guess the more up-to-date version would be a rewritable DVD surface on which my steps would all be recorded. I would only be able to re'play the latest ones, the same principle applies to a blackboard, where I can only read the latest words or marks I made.

[At the same time somewhere completely different again...]

¹ Electronically published on UIPUI - Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis



Good old Peirce and his ideas of "a sign". According to him, the photographs taken during the course of this Sunday afternoon at the Tate are called icons (or likenesses). Each individual image is linked to the actual event, just like a technical drawing is linked and looks like the object it resembles. In other words, had I drawn an image or sketched out the events happening in the Turbine Hall, they would also be called Icons – based on the fact that they resemble the actual happenings. Do they?

A picture alone can never fully show what happened, can it? Let's assume I was talking to someone (let's call him Mr R.) about my experiences at the Tate and whilst talking painted and drew a couple of images to accompany my words. First I would draw a wooden construction, with individual beams, correct angles and a pulling rope. I further would add some colour and shading and pay attention to scale. The page would show a rather realistic view of one of the climbing structures. My next page shows a sketch of a round circular shape right in the middle. This sketch could mean that there was a round ball-like form sitting on the floor of the Tate (which was actually true and existed as a part in Morris's "Bodyspacemothionthings") but it could also mean that I just fancied practising my circle-drawing. So in order to understand the drawings and report my experiences to someone else (let's call him Mr L.) Mr R. would need to acquire further information regarding the "ball-like" structure. He could easily have a conversation about the first drawing, which depicts the situation almost life-like, but in order to discuss my second drawing, Mr R. would need to gain knowledge about it. Without it, Mr R. is not indicating what he is talking about. Peirce refers to this as indications, but the same is also true for general language and all symbols.

[During the same time in a space ship, zooming through the darkness...]



h, almost time for my daily report. Yes, even though no one is possibly going to read this, I am keeping a flight log and dairy of my life on board this ship. It's the rules and by writing what has happened I confirm and validate the hours passed by - with the prevention of insanity.

Whilst I sit at the captain's table, my eyes glanze over to the bookshelves which are filled with hundreds of books. Well, I guess they should come in handy as, quite frankly, being alone on board this vessel, evenings a long and dull. I pick up a copy of George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four":

"It is a beautiful thing, the deconstruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms; there are also antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take "good", for instance. If you have a word like "good", what need is there for a word like "bad"? "Ungood" will do just as well - better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of ... ²'"

Ok, enough of this - Next.

"... In an interview ... bla bla bla Derrida discussed his appropriation of the then seldom used French word déconstruire (in English, 'to deconstruct') in his early texts.³'"

²Excerpt from "Nineteen Eight-Four" by George Orwell, page 54

³Paragraph from "Derrida Reframed" by K, Malcolm Richards, page 11

'Deconstruction of words', 'to deconstruct' ?! I could start to connect the dots here....

" ... *bla bla bla* ... *Derrida cites countless examples in his early text to show how the relation between speech and writing deconstructs itself. bla bla bla* ⁴"

Deconstruction... just another word for textual analysis... the main board computer bleeps something like "...It was introduced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the late 1960s. ...".

[At the same time in another remote area of the galaxy...(well, technically about 23.55° to the left and now 54.4° up from where we started whilst remaining completely motionless on the spot) ...]



in one of Peirce texts written during Winter-Spring 1873, he wrote:

"A sign is an object which stands for another to some mind. [...]"

Just like the drawings I create when I was talking to Mr R.

"I propose to describe the characters of a sign. In the first place like any other thing it must have qualities which belong to it whether it be regarded as a sign or not. Thus a printed word is black, has a certain number of letters and those letters have certain shapes. Such characters of a sign I

⁴ Paragraph from "Derrida Reframed" by K, Malcolm Richards, page 13

call its material quality. In the next place a sign must have some real

connection with the thing it signifies so that when the object is present or is so as the sign signifies it to be, the sign shall so signify it and otherwise not. [...]

So the photograph of the "Bodyspacemothionthings" visitors must share some form of resemblance or signal of what they represent, hence the Peirce'ian classification of photographs = indications or symbols. The individual photographs need to have some form of knowledge (about the event) attached to it, otherwise we cannot process the information correctly.

['SSSWWWOOOSSSSHHHH' that was the sound of the big star-planet-sun-type object we just flew past...]



nyway, I better get on with my writing... well technically I have been writing all day. I made marks: I walked along the corridors of the spaceship (A picture of Richard Long's 1967 *A line made by walking* flashes up in my mind), I move my body around ... to be honest Yvonne Rainer would have been proud of me hanging up my washing in the machine room today.

Similar the two nudes being in motion in Rainer's 1968 film *Trio Film*, or the three dancers in her *The Mind is a Muscle*. *Trio A* work, I performed a series of movements: I picked a piece of clothing up from the laundry basket, I pegged it on the washing line, I move around, I pick up another piece of clothing.

"Which brings me to The Mind is a Muscle. Trio A. [...]
One of the most singular elements in it is that there are no

pauses between phrases. The phrases themselves often consist of separate parts, such as consecutive limb articulation - "right leg, left leg, arms, jump", etc. - but the end of each phrase merges immediately into the beginning of the next with no observable accent. [...]" Yvonne Rainer

So after all, I have been writing all along. My movement in the machine rooms whilst hanging the washing can be seen as writing as well as some form of dance (in a Rainer-Trio A-kind-of-way).

"The Mind is a muscle, huh"

Rainer continues:

" [...] In types of dancing that depend on less impulsive controls, the climaxes are farther apart and are not so dramatically "framed" [...]"

That reminds me of a short film I have seen recently during "Wednesdays Movie Night" called *[Writing...]* (Opus 1). The short black-and-white movie questioned the characteristics and existence of natural sounds by investigating words and works by bright minds like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Frank Lloyd Wright, John Cage and Lydia Goehr.

Goehr speak about the famous and iconic (*Hello Peirce!*) 4'33'' by Cage as *'framed by institutional time and space [...]'*. Well, not too far away from Rainer's *'climaxes are farther*

apart and are not so dramatically "framed". I guess it all depends on being at the right time in the right place (or whatever my mum used to call it).

Daniela Perazzo writes in her article "Speaking Dance: The storm after the calm"⁵ about a dance performance called *Speaking Dance* by Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion.

"The first surprise is that this time the ping-pong game is not of hand gestures but of words, although the title already suggested this - from the rhythmical repetition of 'left', 'right', 'left', 'right', or the production of chains of signifiers that could almost function as a demonstration of Saussurean principle of the syntagmatic relations of phonemes ('left', 'lift', 'stop', 'step'), to the move evocative 'small dance', 'tired dance', 'fragile dance', and 'voices', 'silence' which seem to tell us about the multifarious and multilayered qualities of the work and dance itself. [...]"

Well, that is quite something... good old Saussure.

BEEEP BEEEEEEEP BEEEEEP BEEEP

Oh, reality kicks back in. The cockpit, I guess I better check on the flight progress. While I sit there and stare in the direction of the monitors I start to think whether those blinking lights really performed a dance or whether they just follow a routine.

⁵Published in *Dance Theatre Journal*, Volume 22, no 2 2007

[At the same time somewhere else again...]



It really could get confusing here: it's a question of *Semiology* or *Semiotics* – *F. de Saussure vs. C S Peirce*

"[...] In our terminology a sign is the combination of a concept and a sound patter. [...]" Saussure

"[...] A sign is an object which stands for another to some mind [...]" Peirce

Phhhw, well, if I follow Saussure, my "sign" consist of *signifier* and *signified* – like the two sides of a coin (=sign). If I listen to Peirce, I have to consider three parts – *icon*, *index* and *symbol*.

Let's try and play it through: The photographs taken of the event are *icons* and the drawing I create whilst talking to Mr R. are *indexes*

[At the same time somewhere indefinable in deep space...]



I finished my work for today – Ok, no, I am never finished with saving the universe, but with my physical daily work routine of checking gauges, observing monitors, writing my memoirs... [ok, technically the last one doesn't seem to be such an important task...] , time to relax: it's my weekly movie night. I walk over to the cabinet with all the computer equipment and I notice a film called *Viva España (Long Live Spain)*, 2004 by Pilar Albarracín.

"[...] In *Viva España (Long Live Spain)*, 2004, Albarracín is followed by a band of musicians through the streets of Madrid, who are playing 'How great is Spain'. [...]"⁶

(Catchy tune, Count me in)

*"The repetition of the music, seems to haunt the artist, and her walking picks up as she tries to escape from the men in the band. Through this action she presents a snapshot of the environment in which she lives, from an animal rights protest to a traditional parade."*⁷

Aha, a great example to summarise my thoughts on walking (Richard Long and my own footsteps in the corridors), dance and movement (Yvonne Rainer and my washing in the machine room) and mark-making or writing (my daily journals), as well as introducing another concept. All of these notions could be seen in Pilar Albarracín actions.

While she walks, she creates or writes her way through Madrid. Could she even be dancing? Well, possible, if we reduce her moving to basic actions, such as "left foot", "right foot",...

⁶ Passage taken from the exhibition guide of "Transmission Interrupted" on display at Modern Art Oxford from 18 April 2009 until the 21 June 2009

⁷As above

but I am unsure if Yvonne Rainer would like this similarity between the two completely different forms of movement.

The music band adds a further layer, the idea of music and or the creation of sounds.

Oh, just had a thought about what Barthes had written about images (still and moving) in *Camera Lucida*:

" Last thing about punctum: whether or not it is triggered, it is an addition: it is what I add to the photograph and what is nonetheless already there. To Lewis Hine's retarded children, I add nothing with regard to the degenerescence of the profile: the code expresses this before I do, takes my place, does not allow me to speak; what I add - and what, of course, is already in the image - is the collar, the bandage. Do I add to the images in movies? I don't think so; I don't have time: in front of a screen, I am not free to shut my eyes; otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity; a host of other qualities, but not pensiveness; whence the interest, for me, of the photogram. [...]"⁸

So I guess this adds another layer of understanding to motion images. I better keep my eyes open for signifiers, signs, icons, symbols and signified --

-- Anyway, let's start the movie...

[Theoretically quite close, but technically too far to imagine...]

⁸ Excerpt from *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes, page 55



ell, and there we have it – me..., me sitting at a rather crowded train station waiting for my train home. And the worst in all this mess and business, the train is not due for another three-quarter of an hour... Oh the joy of weekend-train-travel... oh well, I might as well get a coffee whilst I'm waiting.

"Interruption (1)
by Mourid Barghouti

INTERPRETATIONS

A poet sits in a coffee shop, writing.

The old lady
thinks he is writing a letter to his mother,

The young woman
thinks he is writing a letter to his girlfriend,

The child
thinks he is drawing,

The businessman
thinks he is considering a deal,

The tourist
thinks he is writing a postcard,

The employee
thinks he is calculating his debts,

The secret policeman
walks slowly, towards him!⁹

⁹ Published in the exhibition accompanying book *Transmission Interrupted* by Modern Art Oxford

Oh, hey, this reminds me of Martin Heidegger who writes in *Poetry, Language, Thought*:

"[...] Finally, human expression is always a presentation and representation of the real and the unreal. [...]"¹⁰

Heidegger continues with a discussion about poetry regarding a poem titled "A Winter Evening":

"The poem, as composed, images what is thus fashioned for our own act of imaging. The poem's speaking the poetic imagination gives itself utterance. [...] Language is expression. [...]"

I guess this says it all – almost -- ...

¹⁰ Excerpts from *Poetry, Language, Thought* by Martin Heidegger, Chapter VI

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