Between Oxford and Reading

Ambient Corporation versus shallow acoustics

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The photographs on page 01, 13,21 and 28 have been taken by me, with the images on page 13, 21 and 28 specifically in response to the engagement with the dissertation topic. Furthermore, a short video is also available online at http://www.vimeo.com/9114400 called *"To Whom It May Concern, 2010"*, in which I am exploring the development of time and space.

To whom it may concern

Contents

A working manifesto for the next and final year

September 2009

1. I want to explore and create.

2. I want to record and be inspired.

3. I want to work with my best intentions.

4. I want to give my best to become one of the best.

5. I want interaction and connection.

6. I want to write.

7. I want to take pictures and let the camera take over.

8. I want history.

9. I want to be designing with purpose, no matter what the purpose.

10. I want to remember "the cave" from time to time.

11. I want to be able to visit "my cave" when I need to.

12. I want you to meet me in "my cave" for a coffee and a chat.

13. I want to be seen as individual creativity with ideas.

14. I want to be a UNICORN.

15. I want to investigate and understand *the power of three*.

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18. I want names and numbers.

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22. I want my name in lights.

23. I want to tell stories.

24. I want to re'think and re'organise my world.

25. I want time to think and I want no time to think.

26. I want to stop at exits, even if life is a race.

On the development of an idea (or: "You must be mad")
Abstract

An idea becomes alive on paper. Once there was a thought, now there is … well, what is actually there now?

White was there in the beginning

　　White will be there in the end

Let's start with the beginning:

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.
"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."
(Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Chapter 6)

I like inspiration. I like creativeness. I like the bombardment of visual stimuli. I like visual noise. I like being inspired. I like being creative. I like to bombard others with visual'ness. I like visual silence. I dislike interior design.

Where would I rather be then in a place where I can be? A place where I can leave my marks, where I can exist in and around a haze of visual'ness. A place where everyone else is "mad" with something personal?
Developing an idea into another idea is a creative journey. I stopped at several exits along the track, but have not yet settled for the final destination. I looked into other creative concepts and decided to borrow what I liked, to dismiss what I thought wouldn't work, and to judge. Judgement – for own ideas and the ones of others.

"She lived there for a month without seeing anybody she knew. She talked only when buying food or dealing with tradespeople. She never heard or spoke her own language. " (Rainer, 1999, page 150)

Movement // Space

"A body exists in space … moves in space... is contained by space. A dancer's place and design in space, the direction and level she moves in, and her attitude towards the space, all help the images she is creating. Her focus and the way she shapes space are integral parts of the space. Space is the 3-D canvas within which the dancer creates a dynamic image. Breaking it down into component parts brings a wealth of possibilities for movement exploration."
(Blom and Chaplin, 1989, page31)

What does one understand of *space*?

According to the Collins English Dictionary (2006), *space* is "the unlimited expanse in which all objects exist and move", an "interval", a "blank portion", an "unoccupied area".

"A body exists in space … moves in space... is contained by space."

A glass filled with milk is placed on a table. The glass takes up *space* - it occupies now the area on the table which was before "glass-free" and unoccupied. The milk inside the glass fills the part of the object that was before "milk-free". The *body* of the glass exists in space, is with space and is contained by *space*. It is just a glass of milk on a table – an area that was once vacant and now is occupied. Unless one is reminded of Anthony Burgess' 'A *Clockwork Orange'* and "the glass of milk"(on the Penguin Classics copy of the book) becomes loaded with connotations and denotations.

"Space is the 3-D canvas within which the dancer creates a dynamic image."

The "unoccupied area" becomes occupied by the dancer's actions of creations, one "interval" (filled with action-space) begins, and another one (filled with non-action) ends. An "interval" or "phase" followed by another, a long chain of "happenings" strung together by their uninterrupted occurrences – a repetition of phases – a chain of individual pieces bound together, like a child's paper chain[1], which, of courses, would only

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[1] Please refer to Appendix I for an image reflecting mentioned concept. The images is the exhibition poster *Art & Language: Portraits and a Dream,* which held between the 27 January 2010 and the 27 February 2010 at Lisson Gallery in London.

be significant if dance (language) would be seen as a linear concept.

One might also consider *space* as the three-dimensional canvas for the existence of, and often created by architects, engineers, designers and artists. *Space* is one's surrounding in three dimensions – the length, width and depth of any given object.

As I walked through the room I encounter several "occupied spaces", one might call them *tables, chairs, pens, paper, light switches.* I move through one "occupied space" into another by walking through the door, I move down more "occupied spaces", one step at a time and buy a cup of coffee.

"Breaking it down into component parts brings a wealth of possibilities for movement exploration."

A game can be played in order to locate the individual links of the chain:

- Initial event (the "interval" seen as the first in the series) *Phase one: I walk through the room.*
- Second event (the "interval" following) *Phase two: I move through the door.*

One might take the game further and divide each individual step taken by a person when walking as a "phase" or "interval", one might even consider each muscle twitch as an individual phase or component. Furthermore, it is possible to apply this method to any given event, happening or apparatus, be it mechanical or organic.

"There are many systems for analysing space. One can divide it into point, line, direction, dimension, plane, and volume. Of these, direction implies the greatest degree of mobility."
(Blom and Chaplin, 1989, page33)

How might one start investigating *space*?
A quick pen sketch into a notebook, an exploration in charcoal on recycled paper, a digitally controlled measurement; one might take a photograph or write an essay in explanatory terms.
In order to make sense of the three-dimensional, one reduces it to the two-dimensional.

Arguably, the photographic film reacting to light, the page in the sketchbook where the piece of charcoal made a mark on, the sensors of a digital camera, the piece of tracing paper that operates as the surface for the technical drawing; all are not two dimensional. A pen leaves an indentation once it draws a line, charcoal crumbles into fine powder covering the surface and chemicals react.

In descriptive terms though, one sees the world and reduces it to lines and shades, explores shadows to distinguish depth and portrays 'three-dimensional being 'with a slightly "flatter" appearance. One uses several techniques, methods and equipment to aid the "flatness", but without prior knowledge of such processes, one might not succeed and fail along the way.

In 1872, highly celebrated and very influential photographer Eadweard Muybridge experimented with "the art of drawing with light" and took a photograph of a horse that opened up the path for motion pictures, and , to a greater extend, made three-dimensional viewing experiences such James Cameron's animated movie 'Avatar' (2009) possible. Muybridge took a series of photographs of animals and people performing activities, such as walking, running or jumping, and annihilated any conspiracies of, and answered questions regarding, physical movement in space and time. Eadweard Muybridge created "marks in time" and just as the photographs could freeze a precise moment and visualise exact seconds in two dimensions on a "flat plane", an oil painting or an orthographic drawing can use descriptive visual language to the same, but somewhat different expressive extent and outcome.

One just takes a look at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City painting by Michelangelo, and one starts to realize the, in today's terms often commented as 'slightly dated', educational value.

Instead of writing down what one ought to do, one painted a picture and educated the illiterate masses with visual imagery.

Shadows were and are often added to drawings, paintings and sketches in assistance of re-creating the three-dimensional "interval", to help the flat images back into "something

that seems to have a body", "something that seems to occupy *space*", "something that exists in *space*".

In Junichirō Tanizaki 's essay "in praise of shadows", the Japanese novelist engages with the conflict that arises between the glittering brightness of the modern age and the shadows of traditional Japanese interiors , architecture and culture, including Nō theatre.[2]

> *"The darkness in which the Nō is shrouded and the beauty that emerges from it make a distinct world of shadows which today can be seen only on the stage; but in the past it could not have been far removed from daily life. The darkness of Nō stage is after all the darkness of the domestic architecture of the day; and Nō costumes, even if a bit more splendid in pattern and colour, are by and large those that were worn by court nobles an feudal lords."*
> *(Tanziaki, 2001, page 41)*

Shadows give an object depth; shadows are part of the three-dimensional world that surrounds us.

If I look at my coffee cup I experience it as "having depth or volume", as "a body in the world of bodies"– I can see shadows, even more pronounced by holding it under, next or over a light sources.

Shadows are as important brightness: one might imagine the darkness (or shadows) as night and the brightness as day, and one understands that without the phase or interval of one followed by the other, we cannot distinguish between the two. Without "noise" we don't appreciate "silence" and without "silence" we would not be grateful for "non-silence".

"The darkness of Nō stage is after all the darkness of the domestic architecture of the day [...]"

An architect or designer creates a technical drawing to support the production process of a building or an object. A sculptor or artist might jot down a series of sketches in order to

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[2] Please refer to http://www.flickr.com/photos/36179943@N00/5209250 for an image of a Nō mask.

perfect the work. The three-dimensional world becomes flattened to aid understanding and knowledge.

A dancer or choreograph might employ similar techniques in order to visuals the dance or intervals of movement, even though, the translation from 2-D back into 3-D might happen more rapid or prominent, due to the very own *spacious*ly expressive nature of dance itself, appearance in the three-dimensional environment.

Such as a dancer might twirl through the *space,* a building or an object *moves in space* and *is contained by space,* exists as *space.*

Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 B.C.) used '*The Allegory of the Cave' as a metaphor for his philosophical assumption, that the world one lives in be a duplicate of the "real world" , which in turn, one might only access intellectually, after one has dealt with the consequences of "breaking one's chains and reaching enlightenment"*

During Milan's fashion week in 2007, Martin Margiela installs a 'modern' version of the world of shadows, titled "Shadowlands": a fashion installation, predominantly created in white with shadows of objects peering through the ceiling hung fabrics.

One might take "Shadowlands" as a rather theatrical and over-the-top performance, with little usefulness in terms of actually selling fashionable garments, or one might ponder the connections, take the white light as actual "enlightenment" , the shadows as "unreal" and essentially having to "cross the path and get used to the sunlight" in order to exist. A decision one must take for oneself - a warning should be issued that one might want to take(creative) "phases" as balancing acts – organic living and breathing episodes.

> *"One of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell , one of the central human acts is the act of inhabiting, of connecting ourselves, however temporarily , with a place on the planet which belongs to us and to which we belong."*
> *(Tanziaki, 2001, page 1)*

Have we escaped the cave? Are we looking for a way back in?

Does one, once found and walked the path to enlightenment, consider the possibility of "Ignorance is Bliss"?

To the extent that phases of brightness would seem mundane and almost ineffectual without intervals of shadows, speech (the spoken word), would suffer without intrusions of phases of silence.

Without a silent phase, a break from receiving and listening to acoustically presented material one cannot process the information sufficiently and make sense of such 'noise'.

The 'noise' issue in this instance, could be interpreted in a variety of ways, with one being that the *three dimensional environment* is filled with intervals of noise and one has to actively seek certain phases of 'noise'. One might even want to explore Yuri Suzuki's 'white noise machine', a machine that creates a "backwash/backdrop" of 'noise'.

If one imagines a constant stream of 'noise', how could one distinguish between *useful* and *useless* noise, without a phase of making sense?

"There is no architecture without the corner."

Anish Kapoor

White // Noise

One composer who investigated and actively engaged with "Noise" was the man behind the words "*I have nothing to say and I am saying it*"[3], John Cage. Some might refer to it as his most famous or iconic piece of work, but it seems to be *going further* than that. The silent piece , titled " *4'33''* [4]" has been performed numerous times around the globe since its composition 1952, and it's actual appearance is always different- no two performances are alike- A notion that one could apply to any live performance, but unlike the ballet choreography executed in Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (1875) or Yvonne Rainer's performance in her *Trio A* (1965), Cage's " *4'33''* " takes the "viewer / listener / visitor" on a more unexpected auditory journey.

Cage's compositions are organic, they are alive – and every living being *changes.* Change is vital for existence, and Cage's pieces capture the change, the transformations from one phase into another.

> "*If I hear what we call music, it seems to me that someone is talking, and talking about his feelings, or about his ideas of relationships, but when I hear traffic, the sound of traffic – I don't have the feeling that anyone is talking. I have the feeling that the sound is acting – and I love the activity of sound.*"
> (*Cage,1991, www.youtube.com*)

" *4'33''* " highlights the otherwise often unnoticed background noise present in a room – one might even call it (*noise-) pollution*. And according to the artist Jorge Otero- Palios, pollution is today's society's best and fastest created product[5].

In the world of art and design, the "background pollution" is often seen as an integral part of the whole concept. Amongst other training activities and practices, designer, artist and

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[3] Please refer to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HypmW4Yd7SY#movie_player
[4] Refer to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HypmW4Yd7SY#movie_player for a video clip of David Tudor performing 4'33 on the piano.
[5] "Ugly Beauty" BBC 2, 21 November 2009

architects employ Gestalt psychology[6] to create buildings, artwork or interiors, to name a few.

The approach "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" seems to apply to various aspects of life. When studying John Cage's work, one will come across the following sixteen words:

"To Whom It May Concern :
The white paintings came first;
my silent piece came later."
(Cage in A Genteel Iconoclasm, 2006, www.tate.org.uk)

What Cage is talking about are paintings by an artist he had worked with in *Theater Piece #1* during the summer of 1952 in New York, the artist Robert Rauschenberg. Apart from his *White Paintings*, Rauschenberg is famous for a piece of "performance" art: In 1953 Rauschenberg erased a drawing by and in agreement with the artist Wilhelm de Kooning (*Erased de Kooning Drawing, 1953*).

Could one not understand such an act as making "the background" noise visible? Once all the glitz and glamour has been removed, the backdrop becomes visible [see *Appendix II "Traces"* for an image of *Erased de Kooning* Drawing] – similar to the *acoustic effects* " 4'33'' ", which, according to Cage, was composed after Rauschenberg's *White Paintings*[7]

"Es war einmal mitten im Winter, und die Schneeflocken fielen wie Federn vom Himmel herab. Da saß eine Königin an einem Fenster, das einen Rahmen von schwarzem Ebenholz hatte, und nähte. Und wie sie so nähte und nach dem Schnee aufblickte, stach sie sich mit der Nadel in den Finger, und es fielen drei Tropfen Blut in den Schnee. Und weil das Rote im weißen Schnee so schön aussah, dachte sie bei sich: Hätt' ich ein Kind, so weiß wie Schnee, so rot wie Blut und so

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[6] According to the Oxford Dictionary of Psychology (2003) *Gestalt psychology* is *a school of psychology concerned largely with emergent Gestalt phenomena in perception;* with *Gestalt* being *a perceptual configuration or structure that possesses qualities transcending the sum of its constituent elements or parts that cannot be described simply in terms of its parts.*
[7] Refer to *A Genteel Iconoclasms* by Vincent Katz in Tate ETC, Issue 8, Autumn 2006

schwarz wie das Holz an dem Rahmen!"[8]

(Gebrüder Grimm, http://www.grimmstories.com/de)

One might even say that Rauschenberg's *erasing* left only memories of *what-was-once-and-not-is-anymore,* of the past, similar to a photograph.

Or where the *memories* there all along, and the act of erasing the *top layer* brought them to the surface?

Could one consider the background for de Kooning's ink and crayon drawing as similar to a Tabula Rasa[9] or more like the 1950's toy, the *Etch-a-Sketch*[10] ?

Does one perceive the erasing as a *negative* or a *positive* act?

One can find this opposition of negative and positive, of solid and void, in Rachel Whiteread's sculptures. One particular one is the Holocaust Memorial (2000) in Vienna. [Please refer to *Appendix V "Blank Pages "*for photographs of the memorial]

The sculpture almost haunts the observer, there are casts of identical *blank books*, but opposed to showing their spine, the books bare the opposite site, their pages. Each book is indistinguishable to its neighbour, just white *empty* concrete, separated by casting shadows.

As much as shadows are a fundamental part of the *three-dimensional world of objects*[11], speech (the spoken voice), is almost the equivalent structural element in the *three-dimensional world of sounds:* One might consider our surroundings as *space* filled with noise – one can never fully experience *non-space*, as it cannot be fully understood on earth. One would need to dwell further into *open deep space* and investigate antimatter and 'Black Holes' , but even with Einstein's general theory of relativity (1915) and

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[8] Please visit http://www.grimmstories.com/en/grimm_fairy-tales/snow-white for an English translation of the opening lines of "Snow White" and *refer to Appendix III "White Snow"* for a short digression
[9] The mind prior to the experience (at birth, having no innate understandings)
[10] Consult http://www.etch-a-sketch.com/ for a visual of the toy
[11] In this case, I am referring t to the 'traditional' "length x width x depth" spatial approach of measuring the three-dimensional world.

modern physics on one's agenda, *non-space* seems too far to be fully intellectually experienced, which, does not imply one cannot.

One might wish to connect and draw parallels with Blom and Chaplin' studies (1989) of choreography and the dancer's place in the given environment: "*Space is the 3-D canvas within which the dancer creates a dynamic image.*".

Nevertheless, one dancer's movements in *space* could be seen as a person's movement of crossing the street or entering a building, with the former concept of movement having attention drawn onto the actual physical engagement of muscles and the psychological awareness of motion.

The concept of the *3-D canvas* can be used to draw imaginative canvases around one's surroundings, almost like a box, with sound phases, such as spoken words, hitting the walls and leaving marks whilst bouncing back at us, creating "sound spaces".
When we voice an internal mental construct, such as a thought, we make it "visible" to the listener.

Examples of such "sound spaces" include sound sculptures, with one in particular by artist Susan Philipsz. Between the 31st of October and the 3rd of December 2009,the Radcliffe Observatory at Green Templeton College in Oxford, UK, was filled with recorded radio intervals [12] on vibraphone ,once used to identify and tell individual radio station apart, but since the "new age" of digital possibilities almost completely vanished from the ether of radio technology. The piece is called "You are not alone" [13].

    " *In her work, Philipsz recalls Guglielmo Marconi[14]'s suggestion that sounds, once generated, never die; they fade but continue to reverberate as sound waves across the universe.*"
(Exhibition Guide "Susan Philipz – You are not alone", Modern Art Oxford, 2009)

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[12] "Brief musical sequences typically played before or during breaks in radio transmissions." (Exhibition Guide "Susan Philipz – You are not alone", Modern Art Oxford, 2009)
[13] One might wish to connect with http://bit.ly/SusanPhilipsz for a short video by BBC Oxford "Strange sounds at the Radcliff"

[14] On might wish to visit http://bit.ly/GuglielmoMarconi for a short biography of and information about Guglielmo Marconi and his work.

When one visits the observatory filled with the sculpture, one first walks across a short path through a garden before climbing up ninety-eight steps to the top of the oval building. The higher one gets, the more pronounce the sound becomes. The visitor takes on a journey: he or she travels from the "every-day sounds", such as the passing traffic on the main road nearby or the rain drops hitting the pebbled path one at a time, towards the "divine auditoria", the actual sound sculpture.

By entering through heavy wooden doors once reached the top, one experiences the sound for the first time how the artist intended them to be "felt".

It is not a too farfetched suggestion to make, that the interior of the observatory at Green Templeton College could be seen as the previous mentioned imaginative canvas box, with the sounds of the vibraphone being seen as equivalent to one's spoken voice.

Once one has spent a few minutes in Pilipsz "sound environment", one grows rather familiar to the backwash of musical composition, the sound seems to take one over, to hug one and comfort one in its "*spaciousness*". One walks through the room and depending on where one stands, the sound appear to reach one differently through the mounted speakers in the room. To the same extend one is taken over by the sound; one feels almost robbed by its presence, when the speakers transmit a silent phase.

"A body exists in space ... moves in space... is contained by space." seems appropriate, David Bintley's *'Still Life' at the Penguin Cafe* comes to mind, but without any positive or negative loaded attributes or questionings of controversial concepts or phases, which one might see as ambient to the *"The Southern Cape Zebra"* interval of the ballet: a dance interval in which movement takes the deed of explaining and expressing the critical values of the piece.

> *"[...] Adding a distinct and sculptural device in her use of time and space and the physical journey of sound across the city of Oxford, visitors to the observatory experience a lament of sound, which is given a distant, ethereal and haunting quality by the use of the vibraphone."* (Exhibition Guide "Susan Philipz – You are not alone", Modern Art Oxford, 2009)

One might wish to picture the visitors of "You are not alone" as dancers moving through the sound-filled space, an unintentional, unwritten or unscripted ballet piece.

Furthermore, one might desire to perceive the people as visitors to time and space, borrowing and lending out their own *space* and *time*, accumulating to the greater *time* and *space*.

"You are not alone" – a statement that suggest of *more*.

If one is an avid reader of Ferdinand de Saussure, one will be familiar with terminology; the Swiss linguist refers to as "linguistic signs"[15], more precisely the "nature of the linguistic sign", i.e. the arbitrariness of a sign , the linear character of a signal and how one should be aware of the structure of a linguistic sign.

In the "Course in General Linguistics" (Duckworth edition, 2005), a *linguistic sign* is described as *"not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern"*
One should be aware that the sound pattern is not actually a sound, as a sound's nature is to be something physical, such as John Cage's " 4'33'' " or the "sound environment" in Susan Philipsz's "You are not alone".

One could now open up the investigations into the very "building" blocks of a sound, such as the actual movements and sound waves, and question to what extend a sound appears to be physical.
One might want to communicate with members of today's society that experience visual and or auditory disabilities and difficulties and investigate how one "copes ad lives" (I have no positive nor negative statement intended here) with and in such circumstance.

Lydia Goehr, author of the essay *For the Birds /Against the Birds,* refers to John Cage's *work* as being open, not fixed or static – work that *creates* its existence through movement, being in flux, but *"framed by institutional time and space"*[16] [17]

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[15] I am using an English copy of the 'Course in General Linguistics', translated and annotated by Roy Harris in this instance, and will therefore use (translated) English terminology; and in some cases refer discussed concepts in French as well as in English.
[16] Please refer to Goehr's essay *For the Birds /Against the Birds*
[17] For an essay dealing with the concepts of the existence of natural sounds *being framed by time and space,* visit http://lottiesblog.wordpress.com/2009/04/16/writing/ and for the mentioned video [Writing...] visit http://vimeo.com/6733692

One example that almost begs the inquirer to question what lies in front of oneself, is a device by Ambient Corporation, called "The Audeo" which is designed to enable individuals with lost speech capabilities to voice their thoughts again. According to the creative and bright minds behind the device, Michael Callahan and Thomas Coleman, the device will pick up on the user's neurological signals (which one could interpret as thoughts), obtain and process such with speech generation software, which in turn enables the user to speak again.

However, one might wish to consider "The Audeo" alongside one's own moral principles, for I can only voice own opinions.

"The Audeo will allow people with disabilities to express their thoughts and ideas, an aspect of life which is often taken for granted"
(Callahan, 2010, www.theaudeo.com)

"This is where 'The Money' is, but it expands the gap between those who can and those who can't. We have decided to close this gap, by focusing on those who have lost capabilities which we take for granted. Only then will we feel right about introducing ourselves to the masses."
(Coleman, 2010, www.theaudeo.com)

One might further wish to investigate another technique used in "voicing one's thoughts", one refers to as "writing". An example of Derridian thought:

"If the voice is the king, writing is its enemy. Writing is a pernicious threat to the true carrier of meaning .If writing represents speech, speech is the representative of THOUGHT, of sovereign idea, of identification, of consciousness itself."
(Collins & Mayblin, 2006, page 42)

If one follows Saussure's thinking, one will know that the Swiss linguist considered writing as a secondary system and that he *chose* speech to be the prior system in linguistics.[18]

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[18] In my essay "C'est STILL n'est pas possible" (2008) I discuss Saussure's concepts with the help of *'The Statistical Clock (2007) by* Dunne&Raby and Michael Anastassiades. The essay can be found on KurzGeschichten: http://lottiesblog.wordpress.com/2008/12/13/cest-still-nest-pas-possible/

"Buildings create, maintain and protect silence;
great architectural spaces are patient fortifications
and museums of tranquillity."

Juhani Pallasmaa

Unicorns // Mirrors

Let us dwell into the 'world of contemporary design', to find a visual example to underline the concepts mentioned previously, and look at Droog's "Soft Knobs", designed by Ed Annink [refer to *Appendix IV"A Grip on Language?"*for an image]

One will encounter a piece of design, an object (of desire some might even say) that challenges the recognisable familiarity and awareness of such given objects.

> *"Sometimes it takes an unfamiliar material for us to reassess the function of a wellknown shape. These soft mushroom-shaped knobs can be used in all kinds of ways, either in your bathroom, to hang your coats on, etc."*
> (www.droog.com, 2010)

Must one now chase unicorns through mirrors or study the "nature of a linguistic sign" carefully to find connections?

Design, as much a process as an organic being in flux, depends very much on language, be that the spoken or written word, be it drawings, pictures or objects. As previously mentioned, a designer might engage with social and/or cultural investigation, he or she might translate a *three-dimensional environment* into an orthographic representation of the given environment. As an educated individual, the designer will be able to translate between "the different languages" used and create a three-dimensional representation in two-dimensions, such as the technical drawing of a shampoo bottle or the next public library, as well as actions and processes vice versa.

By merely sitting here, in front of my desk, I am *defining, translating*. I am communicating with my immediate environment and my environment is responding. I am looking at the keyboard of my laptop[19]. It has been developed as a user-friendly 'writing device', a gadget that converts or translates "human" to "CPU". Even if I am fluent and efficient in Binary Code, it would take me a painstaking amount longer to write these words right now, I would use a considered amount of "rainforest in paper format"; plus I would have

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[19] For an essay and a short video, dealing with such concepts please visit:
http://lottiesblog.wordpress.com/2009/09/24/writing-is-online and follow the links.

to assume that the audience is also fluent in Binary Code. Thanks to the translation of my 'touch' to 'high voltage – low voltage' I can communicate without difficulty.

Apart from this *translation*, the keyboard itself, the mouse, the green pen behind the laptop, my coffee cup, well even the speck of dust on the end of the writing desk, all are in communication and translation with me.

The pen tells me its colour – green, its position – behind my laptop, seeing the dusty edge of my desk *translates* into "I will need to clean the desk". Me, the (end) user or consumer, the "human", is able to understand, *translate* or *define* the objects on my desk in front of me, even though, they don't "speak" to me through a *voice*.

> *"We use our voices, and we listen to voices, at every moment; all our social life is mediated by the voice, and situations where reading and writing actually take over as the medium of our sociability are, all things considered, much less common and limited (he internet notwithstanding), even though, in a different and less tangible sense, our social being depends very much on the letter, the letter of the law - [...]"*
> *(Dolar, 2006, Chapter 1)*

> *"There are an amazing number of everyday things, perhaps twenty thousand of them. Are there really that many? Start by looking about you."*
> *(Norman, 1988, page 11)*

Well, Donald A. Norman wasn't wrong when he wrote those words, we are surrounded by objects. Our surroundings are thought about by bright (and unfortunately sometimes even not-so-bright) minds, we rely on designers to deal with issues like ergonomics, anthropometrics, ethic, beauty, style, usability, simplicity... the list is 'as long as a piece of string'.

We trust everyday objects to do what we expect them to do. If I pick up a ballpoint pen to write a thought in my journal, I don't think about how perfect it sits in my hand or how the ink will be delivered to the tip of the pen in order to make my words visible. In any case, if I was after quality in terms of usability, or magnificence, I would not use a ball point pen. Instead I would spend money and invest into a fountain pen, one which has the notions of *history* and *quality* attached. Concepts I have *learned* or *acquired* through usage, engagement with everyday objects, trial-and-error. But how to I manage to select

the *right* objects for the *right* situation? How do I not get too distracted and caught up in trying to untangle the object surrounding web of information? Nature or Nurture? Learned or innate? Norman ponders the same issue in his book 'The Design of Everyday Things':

"How do people cope? Part of the answer lies in the way the mind works – in the psychology of human thought and cognition. Part lies in the way the information available from the appearance of the object – the psychology of everyday things. And part comes from the ability of the designer to make the operation clear, to project a good image of the operation, and to take advantage of other things people might be expected to know."
(Norman, 1988, page 12)

If one engages in designing, one automatically switches between what Saussure referred to "organized thought coupled with sound", namely *languages (the language of design, culture, art, technique and so on).*
With Saussure seeing and comparing language as a sheet of paper (*see "Course in General Linguistics", Chapter IV*) the act of drawing a scaled measured (and translated) isometric drawing onto a piece of layout pad, one might engage in the almost irony of the process in itself.

"A language might also be compared to a sheet of paper. Thought is one site of the sheet and sound the reverse side. Just as it is impossible to take a pair of scissors and cut one side of the paper without at the same time cutting the other, so it is impossible in a language to isolate sound from thought, or thought from sound."
(Saussure, 1983, page 111)

But how does one know what a thought is?
To continue with Saussure's notion of the nature of the linguistic sign, one will be aware of the "sound pattern" (or l'image accoutique) and its description, being "*the hearer's psychological impression of sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses."* [20]
With such consideration fresh in one's mind, one can now understand the relevance and the very purpose of such studies.

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[20] As found on page 66 of the Duckworth edition of the "Course in General Linguistics" publication

Just by examining the previously printed paragraph, one will have "engaged" in one of the following potential behaviours:

- One has read the paragraph out aloud, actually moved ones lips and spoke the very words as they were printed
- One has read the given words in silence, without moving one's lips or tongue, without engaging one's own voice box in movement

One might even after reading the scenarios outlined above, employ in this psychological nature of one's own linguistic activity, and consider such acts of "speech".

One could now shape a theory that the second option of linguistic activity, the *spoken words in one's own head*, the internal form of speech, could be referred to as thought or internal communication.

Could the parallels between the internal voices (or thoughts) and the external voices (the speech) actually be *that* acute?

Could one apply Saussure's notions of language freely to the technologies and mechanisms used in *the audio*?

Could one see the role of a designer as inquirer and translator of Saussure-ian theory onto day-to-day life?

One could ponder such intellectual exploration in internal or external form, be it in primary or secondary order to language, but one will always have to engage with such *material for thought* in order to reach a conclusion.

And, once that conclusion is reached, one will be able to answer those inquiries *thought*fully.

After stating that once one embarks on such an examination of the "two sided coin (of language)", one will either be taken into psychology or phonetics, but by no means the subject and study of linguistics.

One could know follow this thought and previously motioned concepts, and conclude that Ed Annink's "Soft Knobs"

- exist in space,

- move in space (due to their 'softness ' or materiality),

- contain space ,

- belong to a greater group of space, the design practice ,

- have their own language attached, which cannot be separated from them,

- were borrowed concepts from a larger pool of thoughts and sounds (the *language of design*, which in turn is inseparable from the field of design),

- the field of design is in constant (creative) instability due to the "sheets of paper" colliding, moving, falling with and on each other when place on top of one another.

But one will not have to take mentioned mentally steps along the *paper-trail* in order to enjoy and engage with "Soft Knobs", just as much as one did not need to think about the *spacious sound* of "You are not alone" or any other visual creation.

"Gutes Design ist möglichst wenig Design"[21]
Dieter Rams, industrial designer (1972)

"Design is not as it seems today- just a style!! It makes no sense to still follow the rules of ancient machinery. We can no longer fall in total awe at a tube being bent. We can no longer tell our audience that a product is better because it is easier to make it! Today the industry is able to follow humanity and make its most exciting dreams reality.
As we designers have to represent our public and their dreams instead of the machine and the anachronistic political dogmas it represents. We have to challenge the industry so they will learn to follow instead to lead.

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[21] "Good design is less design"

It is on humanity that the design of the future must be built. With love, passion and poetry we will take design to new heights."

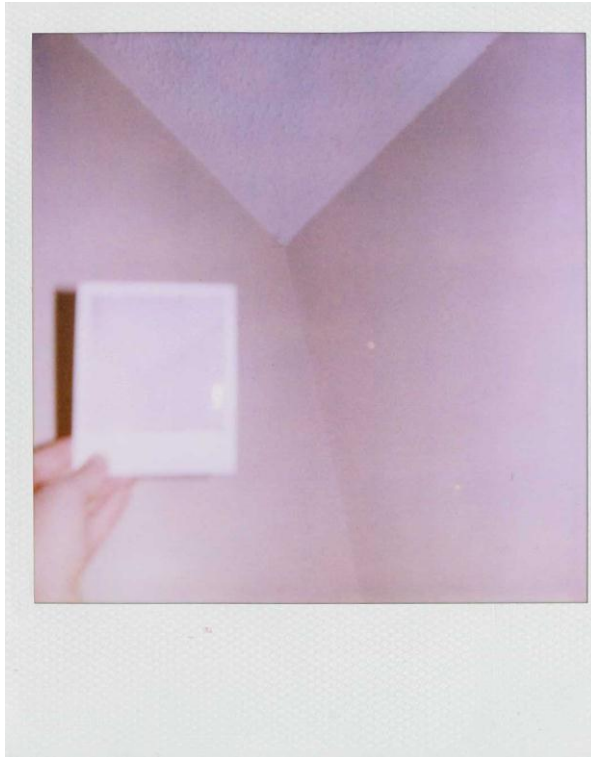Marcel Wanders, product/interior designer (2007)

"Quand on est un designer français... n'oublions pas que ça n'existe pas, un designer français ![22]"

Philippe Starck, product designer (2003)

"If anything can save us: that will be beauty!"

Ettore Sottsass, architect/designer (2001)

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[22] "When you're a French designer... you must never forget that there's no such thing as a French designer!"

"The design principle of rhythm is based on the repetition of elements in space and time."

Francis D.K. Ching

Time // Delay

To reconnect with previously engaged material on time and space one might find the conversation itself opens up the notion of time, more specific *time – delays*, a word combination that reminds of Muybridge and his experimental approaches to photography, the "freezing" of a specific moment in time.

 Since then, the world has seen far too many photographic experiments, methods and techniques than to mention, and artists, architects and designers are (still) using it today, be it as a visual tool to "reduce" 3-D into 2-D, as a instrument of preserving a certain aspects of given happenings, or be it just a "snapshot" serving as a reminder of what once has been. Photographs are historical connections with one's own past - stains and records of what was and now is not anymore.

For the author Susan Sontag, the pictorial results of photography serve as confirmation of time, a documentation of experience, they *"furnishing evidence".* Artist and sculptor Richard Wilson refers to photography as *"the current mode of looking"* as one tends to carry around a device that is capable of "freezing " a moment. One can underline one's knowledge of events and happenings on pictorial verification , and after all, designers, as much as artists and architects, do employ the use of a camera in their professions. Be it a site survey on a Tuesday afternoon, an exploration of falling shadows on a Friday morning or a quick snap for the reflective journal during a lunch break.

As much as Sharon Lockhart's *Untitled Studies (1996)* create a "mark of time" or a timeline of one's life (from birth to death)", the re-photographing of the photographs creates another "layer" of evidence.
If one takes a photograph at 03.12 pm on a Friday, then one has a reminder of that precise happening on that day, at that time one pointed the lens towards and pressed the shutter. If one now took a photograph of the mentioned evidence "03.12 pm", then one would have created evidence of another moment in time, a moment further "down the

line". Even if one took a photograph during the same minute [23]one would still have two individual images that might not differ in content, but in the actual time of conception. One would have created two almost identical pieces of a moment, only divided by a (time) phase.

One could take these notions another step further and start investigating the work by Steve Reich , specifically *It's gonna rain* (1967)[24] or the experimental *Pendulum Music* (1968). In her essay "In Plato's Cave", Susan Sontag discusses among other concepts, how the cultural background of a person influences the process of photography, specifically the tourist behaviour when sightseeing or travelling - the "tourist gaze".

> *" […] Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter. Unsure of other responses, they take a picture. This gives shape to experience: stop, take a photograph, and move one. The method especially appeals to people handicapped by a ruthless work ethic – Germans, Japanese, and Americans. Using a camera appeases the anxiety which the work-driven feel about not working when they are on vacation and supposed to be having fun. They have something to do that is like a friendly imitation of work: they can take pictures. […] "*
> *(Sontag, 1979,page 10)*

Am I now, as much as the *voiceless* individual referred to by the inventors of the "The Audeo", on a different level of engagement with the world than any non-German (or any *voicing*[25] person)?

Should I compensate in order to fulfil a certain template of individuality?

Can one not understand a blind person as visual?

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[23] *"oh joys of digital imaging"*

[24] *It's gonna rain was* composed using a technique called "phasing" : one musical paragraph was recorded on tape in San Francisco's Union Square , which was then transferred to a second tape and both played at the same time, until one of the tapes falls out of sync und eventually "catches up" again.

[25] I am using the word voicing instead of speaking, as I am including sign language and other gestural forms of communication.

In the precise moment I press the shutter on a camera, am I engaging in something different than a person born in a different *space*?

Could one not occasional take the position or presence of Poeme-Electronique (1958) ?

Is my world not a combination of different visual stimuli?

In other news...

In 1921 a book is published in German, in 1922 the English translation becomes available to the world. The author is Ludwig Wittgenstein; the title is "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus"

In this fundamental text of twentieth – century philosophy Wittgenstein *defines* a thought as "*a proposition with a sense*, and states further that "*The totality of propositions is language*" Whilst one might ponder such statements and almost mistakenly concur them to be definitions, one should be aware of the philosopher's following paragraph, as published in the "Tractatus Logico - Philosophicus".

> *" 3.343   Definitions are rules for translating from one language into another. Any correct sign-language must be translatable into any other in accordance with such rules: it is this that they all have in common "*

> *(Wittgenstein, 2001, pp 21-22)*

One must concern oneself with the (key) word *propositions* when engaging with Wittgenstein's writings, particularly when studying the "Tractatus Logico- Philosophicus". Following the philosophers view, one's 'mental' thoughts, pictures or representation are *an effect* of one's surroundings and more crucially one's engagement with such mentioned environment.

The world consists utterly of facts (*see Tractatus Logico-Philosphicus 1.1)* as one *connects* with one's world, one creates such intellectual illustrations to "observe" the (world of) facts. One pictures one's surroundings in order to make sense of such *(see Tractatus Logico-Philosphicus 2.1).* Wittgenstein's "language" (or thought) is hence not akin with Saussure's notions of language, thought and followed argumentations, although both engage with "language" .One must be aware that, if we imagine philosophy or philosophical understanding as linear, Saussure would occupy a different point (on the line) compared to Wittgenstein.

The "Tractatus Logico- Philosophicus" was written as documentation to highlight limitations of language, more specifically the expressions of thought. One might now be able to *connect* and become aware of the factual nature of (Wittgenstein's) language, and draw ones attention towards the "differences" in the two schools of thought.

Departure // Board

I communicate.

I communicate my thoughts.

I communicate with my surroundings.

I communicate with space.

I am my thoughts.

I am my communication.

Just as Steve Reich's "*Different Trains*" (1988), but without the same extend of *political* [26]notions attached, design consists of trains leaving and arriving, travelling on lines next to each other, turning away from each other and meeting again during their travel. Some run on steam and ponder through the landscape, while others blitz through the environment, some enter a long tunnel and only surface to enter another, while others again run through the countryside in plain view. One requires the assistance of others more than its neighbour, but all enter the environment and borrow help, concepts, ideas and resources, until they leave their surroundings again.

And similar to Reich who *found* hired himself travelling on a different train*,* one finds oneself, when engaged in design, buying tickets to certain destinations, but sometimes missing the departure of the desired train and taking a different, maybe even more scenic route.

Design is a journey, and it existed *before one boards the train*, and it will exist after *one got off* at the destination*.*

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[26] I am using *political* not *just* in regard to the Holocaust, but also in a broader sense, the idea that someone might carry out a task for reasons that best serve a desired outcome, be it emotional, national or social : Political becomes a more *spacious statement.*

Personal dialogue..

To be continued.

[5335 words]

Class	Ticket type		Adult	Child	
STD	OFF-PEAK DAY R		ONE	NIL	RTN
	Start date		Number		
Y-P	20·JNR·10		07439 2734⊕1893W25		
From		Valid until			Price
OXFORD *		20·JNR·10			£4·95X
To		Route			Validity
READING STATIONS		ANY PERMITTED			SEE RESTRICTNS

2-PART RETURN

Printed 16:47 on 20·JNR·10

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Appendix I

"Word-Chains"

Exhibition Poster

Appendix II

"Traces"

Robert Rauschenberg
Erased de Kooning Drawing 1953

Appendix III
"White Snow"

During the early hours of one night in January, snow fell from the sky and turned the world into a featureless landscape.
One would wake up and see the trees and streets, the cars and fences cover in a white blanket, a layer without characteristics, just white snow.

"
                                    And

                                  white

                          appears. Absolute

                                  white.

                                  White

                               beyond all

                               whiteness.

                                  White

                    of the coming of the White.

                                  White

without compromise, through exclusion, through total eradication of

                               non-white.

                            Insane, enraged

                                  white,

                              screaming with

                               whiteness.

Fanatical, furious, riddling the retina. Horrible electric

                                  white,

                         implacable, murderous.

                                  White

                               in bursts of

                                  white.   "

(Henri Michaux, 'White Mescaline', 1956)

Appendix IV
"A Grip on Language?"

"Soft knobs" (1992)for Droog by Ed Annink

Appendix V
"Blank Pages"

Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial , Vienna by Rachel Whiteread, Januray 2009