

# The Bliss of Creative Destruction; or, the Outlandish Outgrowth of Hugo Ball's Mimicry and Ventriloquy

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*There is stupid being in every one. There is stupid being in every one in their living. Stupid being in one is often not stupid thinking or stupid acting. It very often is hard to know it in knowing any one. Sometimes one has to know of someone the whole history in them, the whole history of their living to know the stupid being of them.*  
—Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans* (1906-08)<sup>1</sup>

*The Splinter in your eye is the best magnifying glass.*  
—Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (1951)<sup>2</sup>

*What we call Dada is a farce of nothingness in which all the higher questions are involved.*  
—Hugo Ball, June 12, 1916, *Flucht aus der Zeit*<sup>3</sup>

Recent discussions and reconsiderations of Zurich Dada have emphasized the social semiotics and structural logic of its strategic models of artistic practice.<sup>4</sup> In effect, the heterogeneous and vehemently anti-systematic artistic practices of Zurich Dada have been spuriously evened out, made to appear coherent, homogenous, and reified. In manifest contradistinction to this overdetermined, semiological impulse, this essay will regard Dada as an ever-shifting, dynamic “constellation,” or “structure of feelings.” That is, an unqualified, pre-semantic formation, irreducible to any originary core, essence, or rational logic.<sup>5</sup> This essay will focus on the German expatriate Hugo Ball's still astonishing performance or

sound-poem, *Karawane*, as the Magical Bishop at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich at Spiegelgasse 6, on June 23, 1916, and which Ball reflected on in his aphoristic diary, *Flight Out of Time*:

*My legs were in a cylinder of shiny blue cardboard, which came up to my hips so that I looked like an obelisk. Over it I wore a huge coat collar cut out of cardboard, scarlet inside and gold outside... I also wore a high, blue-and-white-striped witch doctor's hat... I was carried onto the stage in the dark and began slowly and solemnly: “gadji beri bimba / glandridi lauli lonni cadori / gadjama bim beri glassala / glandridi glassala tuffm i zimbrabim / blassa galassasa tuffm i zimbrabim...” Then I noticed that my voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic churches of East and West... For a moment it seemed as if there were a pale, bewildered face in my Cubist mask, that half-frightened, half-curious face of a ten-year-old boy, trembling and hanging avidly on the priest's words in the requiems and high masses in his home parish... Bathed in sweat, I was carried down off the stage like a magical bishop.<sup>6</sup>*

Ball's performance will be interpreted as a kaleidoscopic prism of antinomical imbrications and a befuddlement of qualitative and categorical distinctions: between work and play, occupational and cultural performance, material and immaterial divisions of labour, performative speech and bodily action, the symptomatized “shock” of trauma and the blasé attitude of psychic inurement, communicative rationalism and private solipsism, affirmative stupor and dialectical negation, and the paradox of a lyric poetry without words (or, “verse ohne worte,” as Ball wrote).<sup>7</sup> It will be argued that Ball's performance is as much destructive as it is constructive, affirmative as it is negative, and views these “suspended contradictions,” to use the art historian Rosalind Krauss' term, as dialectical compliments towards the dissolution of the differentiated, reified spheres of capitalist culture.<sup>8</sup>

In her structuralist article, entitled "Dada Gambits," the art historian and curator Leah Dickerman attempts to transcend the legacy and reception theory of Dada; and, in its wake, focus on "the centrality of art making to the movement's concerns."<sup>9</sup> She argues that "its 'anti-art' diatribes are better off read as a deeply engaged critique of the procedures of modernism, rather than a wholesale rejection."<sup>10</sup> Dickerman's argument is addressed in diametrical opposition to the art historian William Rubin's oft cited claim that Dada's "attitude" is nihilistic, anti-bourgeois, and/or anti-art.<sup>11</sup> Dickerman argues that Dadaism "is a rethinking driven by ethical imperatives" in the profoundly changed historical circumstances of bourgeois culture after World War I.<sup>12</sup> Hence, for Dickerman, the cultural practices of Dada are regarded as "interventions within and activations of the terrain of modern culture itself."<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the curator and art historian Helen Molesworth has argued against Dickerman's interpretation, and suggests that, more in accord with Rubin's claim, we shift our inquiry away from what the literary theorist Andreas Huyssen refers to as the historical avant-garde's "false sublation"<sup>14</sup> of art into the material life-processes of capitalist modernity, and towards "dismantling the traditional life of the [bourgeois] artist."<sup>15</sup> Molesworth highlights Zurich Dada's negation of traditional forms of artistic labour. According to Molesworth, Zurich Dada directed its anarchic attack on the signifying practices of bourgeois cultural production, which were regarded as conforming to the logics of Taylorism and the industrialized modes of capitalist production.

Hence, for Molesworth, Dada's rebellion and anarchic assault is one levelled "against work."<sup>16</sup> In accordance with Molesworth, the literary theorist Sianne Ngai has argued that this form of "immaterial" and "virtuosic" labour can be understood in terms of the aesthetic category concerning production and labour: namely, the "zany."<sup>17</sup> For Ngai, this "minor," non-canonical aesthetic category came into historical being

through the assembly-line, performance-driven conditions of Fordist and Taylorist society. It is, according to Ngai, an aesthetic about "performing as not just artful play but affective labour"<sup>18</sup>; that is, a kind of performative work that produces affects and social relations in the service of surplus-value. The zany, Ngai argues, is characterized by "a non-stop doing and playing," which effectively blurs or troubles distinctions between such binary couplings as work and play, occupational and cultural performance, material and immaterial labour.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, for Ngai, the affective labour of the zany performer is necessarily precarious, compulsive, strained, and desperate.<sup>20</sup> "An unusually beset agent" acts out, according to Ngai, the performance-driven aesthetic of the zany; wherein, "the potential for [her or his] injury is always right around the corner."<sup>21</sup> In Ball's case, however, this "beset agent" is the traumatized, shell-shocked soldier who acts out, what Dickerman refers to as, the "automatized sociopathologies" and "psychic inurement" caused by World War I.<sup>22</sup>

As Ngai states, "the zany designates an activity and practice of imitating the action of others."<sup>23</sup> By the same token, the art historian and critic Hal Foster refers to this Dada strategy as a form of "mimetic exacerbation."<sup>24</sup> Foster characterizes the "traumatic mime" of Ball's persona in terms of Marx's maxim that: "petrified social conditions must be made to dance by singing them their own song."<sup>25</sup> Thus, Foster makes the claim that "Ball regarded the Dadaist as a traumatic mime who assumes the dire conditions of the war, revolt, and exile, and inflates them into a buffoonish parody."<sup>26</sup> In assuming the dire conditions of the day, as Foster argues, Ball subsequently parodies the "armoring military body, the fragmenting of the industrial worker, [and] the commodifying of the capitalist subject."<sup>27</sup> Seen from this nodal point, Ball's maniacal, or rather "hypertrophic,"<sup>28</sup> performance of the identificatory constellation of soldier, worker, artist, and reified subject, that is so integral to the complex social formation of capitalist modernity, des-

perately tries to suture together and relinquish through a “gladiator’s gesture” the “shabby left-over’s” of the metaphysical notion of “totality.”<sup>29</sup> As Ball writes just two weeks before the Magical Bishop performance, “the Dadaist does not give up on totality... he is still so convinced of the unity of all beings, of the totality of all things, the he suffers from the dissonances to the point of self-disintegration.”<sup>30</sup> In his performance of *Karawane* as the Magical Bishop, Ball acts out this precarious dialectic between “dissonance” and “self-disintegration.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, this metonymy, or allegorical synecdoche, between various forms of work and labour and its aporetic amalgamation into the “thousandfold problems of the day,” as the Berlin Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck once wrote, indexes the zaniness of Ball’s performance.<sup>32</sup> As Ngai argues, the zany performance involves a deformation of the forms of activity and threatens to dissolve the performer him or herself.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, rather than the nouns punctuating Foster’s aforementioned claim, it is the verbs — “armoring,” “fragmenting,” and “commodifying” — which characterize the zany aesthetics of action of Ball’s performance.

Conversely, Foster argues that “mimetic adaptation is a biological technique of survival through camouflage in a hostile environment.”<sup>34</sup> Hence, mimetic adaptation is an “immunological”<sup>35</sup> defense mechanism, a reaction formation against the “the agony and death throes of this age,” in Ball’s hysteric words.<sup>35</sup> Foster regards Ball’s Magical Bishop performance as a dialectical strategy which both “threatens and soothes at the same time.”<sup>36</sup> And, only through this mimetic immersion, writes Ball, can “the Gorgon’s head of a boundless terror smiles out of the fantastic destruction” of civilization.<sup>37</sup> Ball wrote that “everyone has become mediumistic.” This statement not only prefigures the postwar body artists who would go on to make similar claims for their practice, but characterizes, as I have argued, the performance-driven aesthetic of zaniness.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, Ball’s “mediumistic” or affective social body enacts what Walter Benjamin describes at the end of his literary montage, “One Way Street” (1923-26), that: “in the nights of annihilation of the last war, the frame of mankind was shaken by the feeling that resembled the bliss of the epileptic. And the revolts that followed it were the first attempt to bring the new boy under its control.”<sup>39</sup> What is important to note for the intents and purposes of this essay, is that in re-enacting the zany pandemonium of “the bliss of the epileptic,” Ball is simultaneously gesturing towards a future-oriented figure, ambiguously referred to by Benjamin as “the new boy.” Hence, mimetic exacerbation can also be regarded as a generative strategy which moves beyond mere parody, and points towards the impossible possibility of a utopian figure which is not dehumanized or “betrothed to the glockenspiel of hell, as Tristan Tzara wrote in the “Dada Manifesto 1918.”<sup>40</sup> For Benjamin, this is the “convalescent” figure of the proletariat not-yet thwarted by the totalitarianism to come of the 1930s.<sup>41</sup> However, Dada negative dialectic elides putting forth any such positive identity or figure. One possible reason is that, unlike Italian Futurism, Russian Constructivism and French Surrealism, Zurich Dada, and especially Ball’s practice, profoundly lacked any programmatic political ideology. Even the figure of “Der Neue Mensch” (“the new man”), accounted for by Richard Huelsenbeck, is only redemptive or recuperative insofar as he passes through the catastrophic effects of capitalism’s putative form of “progress.”<sup>42</sup> The Dadaist’s recognized the impossibility of starting from scratch (*tabula rasa*) or of forging a space of autonomy and yet desired, as the art historian T.J. Demos has argued, “a new redemptive order outside of the domination of capitalist alienation and nationalist exploitation.”<sup>43</sup> As Foster suggests, Dada’s redemptive “*Ecco Homo novus*” is uncannily analogous to Benjamin’s allegorical figure, Angelus Novus.<sup>44</sup> As the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno once wrote of the paradoxical thrust of Benjamin’s philosophical project and his talismanic Angelus Novus: “only for the sake of the

hopeless are we given hope."<sup>45</sup> The same could be said of Ball's ethos. For Foster, however, "it is this very hopelessness that gives the bashed ego [of Dada] its critical edge, its unaccommodated negativity."<sup>46</sup> Yet, for Ball, this melancholic double negative, or allegorical double-speak, is transfigured into mimetic exacerbation and ventriloquy.

In accord with Foster, the art historian Brigid Doherty has argued that the traumaphilic subject of Dada "aimed to be mimetic of the traumatic shock in such a way that the materialization of shock experiences would be effected in the bodies of the maker and the beholder of the Dada object."<sup>47</sup> Doherty argues that Dada's mimetic "simulation of the war neurosis" refers specifically to the condition of shell shock:

*"Soldiers displaying psychogenic physical symptoms including tics and tremors, paralysis, hyperaesthesia of one or all the senses, swooning, catatonia, mutism, blindness, deafness, stuttering, rhythmical screaming, and crawling on all fours, along with psychical symptoms such as depression, terror, anxiety, a tendency to outbursts of rage, and a general lapse into atavistic or infantile methods of reaction."*<sup>48</sup>

Here, the physical symptoms of the repressed trauma of "civilized carnage," the phrase Ball's used in his diary to refer to the barbarism of nationalism and war, are invoked.<sup>49</sup> Whereas, Dickerman argues that "Dada was envisioned as shock tactic, analogous to the electric shock therapy used to treat shell shock, breaking through a protective mental buffet to consciousness."<sup>50</sup> Alternately, the art historian Dorothee Brill argues that Dada did not mimic the symptomatized dance (that is, the effects) of the sociopathologies of the soldier (make sure to reference Dickerman here), but rather the first-order etiological conditions which produced the traumatic shock.<sup>51</sup> Foster's understands Dada's mimetic exacerbation as one of ironic detachment. But, as Ngai argues, "due to the precarious situations into which they [i.e., the frenzied perform-

ers] are constantly thrust... pointing to a laborious involvement from which ironic detachment is not an option."<sup>52</sup> In addition, Ball mimes a multiplicities of other subjectivities: namely, the political speech of the admiral, the priest's sermon or "mass requiem"<sup>53</sup> (as Ball once christened it), the metaphysics of the shaman, the pre-linguistic realm of the infant, and the geo-political dislocation of the figure in exile.<sup>54</sup> The simulated form of dehumanization performed by Ball was directed towards multiple fragments and registers of bourgeois culture taken together as one, barbarous whole. As Foster argues, Zurich Dada was a mimetic formation against the totalizing forces of the war, industrialization, nationalism, and the government.<sup>55</sup>

For the art historian T.J. Demos, as Roman Jakobson before him, it is against the backdrop of the "zoological nationalism" of European nation-states after World War in which the Dadaist's advance their negative critique.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, for Demos, it is language itself which is negatively critiqued by the Dadaists. The generative thrust to their negative, at times derisive, critique of language, Demos argues, is related to the Dadaist's geopolitical displacement and exile in the neutral locale of Zurich. As Demos argues, Dada's "antinationalism was both cause and effect of their displacement."<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the multiple identities adapted and mimicked by Ball can be understood in terms of the crisis of nation-state identity formation following World War I that Ball and other dislocated Dadaist's had experienced.<sup>58</sup>

I want to argue that Ball's subjective identity is a "languaged-self," in which, to borrow the words of philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein, the limits of his language are subsequently the limits of his world.<sup>59</sup> In effect, Ball would attempt to shatter the forms of identity symbiotically tethered to the particularities and of a nation and its concomitant hegemonic ideology, through the integration of multiple languages at once in the performance of his sound poem

Karawane at the Cabaret Voltaire. As a result, Ball opened up the potentiality for assuming hybrid or transnational identities.<sup>60</sup> For Demos, the Cabaret Voltaire was “a social space founded on difference and inclusiveness” which gave way to a form of identity that was postnational and post-traditional.<sup>61</sup> One may even regard this as a form of cosmopolitanism *avant la lettre*. However, like Jakobson, Demos paradoxically emphasizes the structural logic of Dada’s anarchic rebellion against language.<sup>62</sup> Against this claim, I would argue that, if Zurich Dada is said to be programmatic, structural, or to have any epistemic substrate to their cultural activities, it would be that of an ambivalent “hermeneutics of suspicion,” in which the hubristic truth-claims of the Enlightenment project and its vaunted rationalization of society are unsystematically deconstructed.<sup>63</sup>

As Demo’s argues, Ball’s language, down to its smallest semantic unit (i.e., the word), repudiates a system of language based upon positive values; for Ball, language is rendered profoundly relative, negative, and arbitrary, “whether naming an object or clearly identifying its subject... its signification was halted within a repetitive stuttering (the “ü üü ü” in *Karawane*).”<sup>64</sup> This repetitive stuttering both performs the traumatic repetition of the shell shocked soldier and subsequently produces the histrionic zaniness of the “blissful epileptic.”<sup>65</sup> However, this is not to say that the uprooted phonetics of Ball’s sound poem mark a total rupture with a system of language based upon mimetic resemblance (i.e., the “iconic”), and is therefore based on a linguistic structure of oppositions and the interplay of negative contrasts (i.e., the “symbolic”).<sup>66</sup> The positive identities of *Karawane*’s first line “jolifanto bambala/ o/ falli bambala” are indeed opaque, and yet the signifiers are still not unequivocally disentangled from what they might signify nor is the signifier and signified, in Ball’s language model, imaginarily reconciled into depoliticized, mythic unity. In the case of *Karawane*, as Demos argues, it is the traditional forms of identity formation mediated through the conventions of language which

are criticized.<sup>67</sup> However, in order to level this ideological critique of language, it was necessary to inhabit these very forms, and thus retain the conventions of this language, however vestigial. On the face of it, there appears to be no subjects or objects to which Ball’s sound poem *Karawane* refers to. However, upon breaking down the compounds of its polyglot enjambments, *Karawane*’s referents are made unambiguously apparent. As Demos states, jolifanto strings together the French *joli* (pretty) and *éléphanteau* (baby elephant).<sup>68</sup> Moreover, by looking at the whole of Ball’s disjunctive sound poem, *Karawane* (which means “caravan” in German), one discerns the overarching concern and thematic in the very hybridity and reflexivity of the form of the sound poem itself, as Demos points out.<sup>69</sup> As Demos further elucidates, in Spanish *habla* means to talk; in Portuguese *falli* means to speak; and, *anlogo* is very proximate to “logos” in Latin.<sup>70</sup> For Demos, the profundity of *Karawane* lies in its espousal of a radically new form of subjectivity: namely, “a multilingual discourse *in the speech of a single speaker*.”<sup>71</sup> In effect, Ball negates the ideological Ur-myth of “organic unity” and “linguistic essentialism” so integral to European nationalism.<sup>72</sup> For Demos, at the bottom of Ball’s speech act, one finds “the Other — a divided logos.”<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Ball is enacting the constitutive structure of a split subject, divided by a multitude of heterogeneous discourses and languages that mark and flow through him, and in which he ironically ventriloquizes.

Although having historical avant-garde precedents in the poetics of Stéphane Mallarmé, Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars, post-cubist collage, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s “words-in-freedom,” Ball’s linguistic model and aesthetic mode is markedly distinguished. The art historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloh has claims that “the Dadaist poet depletes words, syllables, and sound of all traditional semantic functions and references.”<sup>74</sup> The dialectical complement, for Buchloh, to this depletion is “the liberated phonetic dimension of language... where

expression is freed from the spatial image of language, and imposed meanings.”<sup>75</sup> Buchloh argues that the dialectic that goes on between the depletion of traditional semantic functions and the emancipatory deregulation of phonetics is what characterizes the poetics of Dada. However, Buchloh’s characterization neglects the radical alterity and unique politics which make Dada distinct from its avant-garde precedents: namely, its postnational hybridity. Moreover, the action based aesthetics at the core of Ball’s artistic practice are based upon other art historical models, that is, “the romantic, dandyistic, and the demonic theories of the nineteenth century,” as Ball himself claims.<sup>76</sup> I would argue that Ball *both* deracinates the traditional semantic functions of language and liberates its phonetic dimension — as one dialectical whole towards the emancipatory potential of heterogeneous identity through the performative play of multiple languages.

The sound-event and performative speech-act of Ball’s *Karawane* is perhaps best understood as a dialectical negation that refuses to play along with the social processes and corrupt conditions of language and instrumental reason which buttress the bourgeois public sphere. For Ball, however, the way out of this double bind was neither to aggressively negate nor to renounce through unconditional withdrawal, but rather through a contingent dialectic of mimetic exacerbation, disorder, and ventriloquy. As Ball explained of his language-based critique of instrumental reason, “we must break with the system of reason, because higher values exist.”<sup>77</sup> In effect, Ball’s hermetic aesthetics of resistance is performed through an opaque, hybridized language that purposively fails to register within the normative language systems of the bourgeois public sphere. As a result of this linguistic form of resistance, however, Ball’s artistic practice has come to be regarded by some art historians and critics, like Dickerman, as “solipsistic.”<sup>78</sup> On the one hand, Dickerman’s article on Dada’s “solipsism” appropriately situates Dada’s artistic practices within the historical “crisis of the con-

cept of the public” and the subsequent structural transformation that occurred in the construction of social organization immediately after the revulsions of World War I (which are contemporaneous to Ball’s own histrionic performance at the Cabaret Voltaire).<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, Dickerman mistakenly critiques Ball’s “public performance of privatism” as mere solipsism.<sup>80</sup> To use the words of the philosopher Herbert Marcuse, Ball’s “artistic alienation” ought to be seen as a “conscious transcendence of alienated existence.”<sup>81</sup> Ball’s mimetic strategy is, as Marcuse’s argues, “a ‘higher level’ or mediated [form of] alienation.”<sup>82</sup> That is to say, Ball’s mediated (i.e., sublimated) form of alienation is a purposive negation of alienated labour and existence as such. Ball regarded his sound poems as “a chance to get rid of all the filth that clings to this accursed language.”<sup>83</sup> “The word has been abandoned... it used to dwell among us. The word has become a commodity... and has lost all dignity.”<sup>84</sup> In effect, Ball’s aesthetic resistance to hegemonic, oppressive forms of communicative language subsequently carve out a space of linguistic alterity. However, this “incompatibility” with the linguistic forms of the bourgeois public sphere, in the words of Marcuse, “is the token of their truth.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Dickerman fails to see how Ball confounds various forms of precarious labour and dissolves the dichotomous distinctions between the “public” and “private” realm through the zany performance of seemingly raw material sound. Through the dissolution and dialectical synthesis of reified language (in which the signifiers literally pass through the Mallarméan flesh of Ball’s body) centered on “the matrix of bodily senses,” to use Foster’s words, Ball, in effect, points towards a form of subjectivity that is radically other to the status quo.<sup>86</sup>

In contradistinction to Dickerman, Demos has claimed that it is “precisely the *publicness* of its [Zurich Dada’s] performances as *constitutive* of a new form of community — one constituted by national difference and linguistic diversity,” that is the radical component to Dada.<sup>87</sup> Simi-

larly, Foster seeks to highlight to productive and generative aspects of Ball's aesthetics, arguing that, "even as Ball worked to shatter language... he also sought to recover the word as "logos," to transform language into "magical complex images."<sup>88</sup> Perhaps this is what Ball means by "an-logos."

This essay has sought, in part, to reflexively mirror "the tragic-absurd dance" of Ball's performance and adapt to the forms of its zany, Mobius-like, polymorphic perversity without effacing any of its analytical rigour.<sup>89</sup> I have attempted to argue that Ball's performance at the Cabaret Voltaire is not reducible to a social semi-otic, and that the constellation of affective relations which his performance adopts, thwarts any such synchronic, hypostasized interpretation. The "libidinal economy," to use Jean Francois Lyotard's term, of Ball's sound poem spilled out over the spatialized page of reified language and into the performative space of an aleatory, contingent event where affective and labouring relations of the bodily come into precarious play.<sup>90</sup> Ball's schizophrenic play of deadpan rigour and farcical nothingness is put into the highest possible relief — simultaneously thwarting and deconstructing the binary couplings of semiotic interpretation into an undifferentiated stream of affective materiality.

To invert and uproot the intended meaning of Walter Benjamin's parable of the Angelus Novellus in the "Theses on The Philosophy of History" (1940), the last writings before his tragic death, what could only but register in the bourgeois public sphere, and the instrumental reason of communicative language, as hysterical, degenerate, or simply banal nonsense, Ball and those other damaged, deterritorialized eccentrics in exile, might say of their aesthetic activities with schizophrenic glee and heavy hearts: "This storm is what we call progress."<sup>91</sup>

## Notes:

1. Stein, Gertrude. 1995. *The Making of Americans*. Reprint ed. New York: Dalkey Archive Press., 117. Gertrude Stein's quote has structured the argumentation and position of this essay. It has functioned as a parable or allegory that elides explication.
2. Adorno, Theodor W. 1995. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Trans. E. F. N. Jephcott. London: Verso., 50. I take the "magnifying glass" to symbolically refer to Enlightenment thought, rationalization, and systematic philosophical inquiry, which Adorno tries to thwart and simultaneously use against itself.
3. Ball, Hugo. 1996. *Flight Out of Time: Dada Diary*. Trans. Ana Raimes, ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, California: University of California Press., 65. June 12, 1916.
4. Dickerman, Leah. 2003. Dada gambits. *October* 105 (Summer): 3-12, 4.
5. Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations: Essays & Reflections*. New York: Schocken., 253 for his use of the notion of a "constellation." Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. 1995 Paperback ed. Oxford: Oxford Paperback, 132. Williams notion of a "structure of feelings": "It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations... We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity" (132). Importantly, Williams makes the distinction between his "structure of feelings" and social semiotics: "For structures of feeling can be defined as social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available" (133-134).
6. Ball, Hugo. 1996. *Flight Out of Time: Dada Diary*. Trans. Ana Raimes, ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, California: University of California Press., 64.

7. This statement references many theorists' arguments which I use in this essay. Ngai, Sianne. 2012. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, discusses the "zany" performer in terms of blurring the boundaries between "labour and play" (13, 186); as "an ambiguous convergence between cultural and occupational performance" (7); my argument about the material and immaterial divisions of labour is in reference to Ngai's discussion of zaniness and sub-categories of labour (189, 300). "Blasé attitude" is a concept developed by George Simmel. See: Simmel, George. 1902-1903. The metropolis and mental life. In *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas.*, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, 130. Oxford: Blackwell., 32. I use term "communicative rationalism" which comes from: Habermas, Jurgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Trans. Tom McCarthy. 1st ed. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press. My reference of "solipsism" is in relation to: Dickerman, Leah. 2000. Dada's solipsism. *Documents 19*: 16-19. Lastly, see Ball's term for his sound poems "verse ohne worte" in: Ball, Hugo. 1996. *Flight Out of Time: Dada Diary*. Trans. Ana Raimés, ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, California: University of California Press., 45.
8. Krauss, Rosalind. 1979. Grids. *October 9* (Summer): 50-64., 55.
9. Dickerman, Leah. 2003. Dada gambits. *October 105* (Summer): 3-12., 8.
10. Ibid.
11. Rubin, William. 1968. *Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage*, ed. William Rubin. New York: Museum of Modern Art., 11. Rubin's characterizes Dada's "life attitude" as "nihilism," "anti-art," and "anti-bourgeois."
12. Dickerman, Leah. 2003. Dada gambits. *October 105* (Summer): 3-12, 9.
13. Ibid., 9.
14. Huyssen, Andreas. 1986. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, and Postmodernism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press., 146. Note that Huyssen is slightly altering a term used by the Frankfurt School philosopher Herbert Marcuse, and which is also used by the philosopher Jurgen Habermas in his essay "Modernity—An Incomplete Project."
15. Molesworth, Helen. 2003. From dada to neo-dada and back again. *October 105* (Summer): 178-81., 178.
16. Ibid., 180.
17. Ngai, Sianne. 2012. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press., 189. According to Ngai, this is "the labour of teachers, artists, and information workers (the "immaterial" or "virtu-ousic" labour foregrounded by Italian neo-Marxism)" (189,300).
18. Ibid., 1.
19. Ibid., 175. Furthermore, the binary couplings of "work and play, occupational and cultural performance, material and immaterial labour" are mapped out by Ngai in her chapter "The Zany Science" 174.
20. Ibid., 19.
21. Ibid., 7.
22. Dickerman, Leah. 2003. Dada gambits. *October 105* (Summer): 3-12., 6.
23. Ngai, Sianne. 2012. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press., 8.
24. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October 105* (Summer): 166-177., 169.
25. Ibid., "traumatic mime" 169. For Foster's reference to Karl Marx's statement in *Grundrisse*, see 175.
26. Foster, Hal, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, and David Joselit. 2011. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, and Postmodernism*. Vol. Second Edition. New York: Thames & Hudson., 137.
27. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October 105* (Summer): 166-177., 175.
28. According to Foster "hypertrophy" is a Dadaist term. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October 105* (Summer): 166-177., 169.
29. Ball, Hugo. 1996. *Flight Out of Time: Dada Diary*. Trans. Ana Raimés, ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, California: University of California Press., 65.



June 12, 1916.

30. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October* 105 (Summer): 166-177.,169.

31. Ibid. Foster makes a similar claim about Ball's dialectic.

32. Huelsenbeck, Richard. 1988. Dadaist manifesto. In *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology.*, ed. Robert Motherwell. Second ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press., 40.

33. Ngai, Sianne. 2012. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press., 30.

34. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October* 105 (Summer): 166-177.,169.

35. Ball, Hugo. 1996. *Flight Out of Time: Dada Diary.* Trans. Ana Raimés, ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, California: University of California Press., 66.

36. Ibid., 54.

37. Ibid., 56.

38. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October* 105 (Summer): 166-177.,170.

39. Ibid., 168. Benjamin's passage is central to Foster's own aphoristic montage.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid. same passage from Walter Benjamin's "One Way Street."

42. Huelsenbeck, Richard. 1988. Dadaist manifesto. In *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology.*, ed. Robert Motherwell. Second ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press., 40. I put "progress" in quotation marks as a means of recalling Benjamin's use of the word in aphorism "Angelus Novellus" in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations: Essays & reflections.* New York: Schocken.

43. Demos, T.J. 2003. *Circulations: In and Around Zurich Dada.* *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 157.

44. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October* 105 (Summer): 166-177.,169.

45. Adorno, Theodor W. 1983. *Prisms.* Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Samuel Weber. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press., 240.

46. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October* 105 (Summer): 166-177.,175.

47. Doherty, Brigid. 1997. "See: We are all nearas-thenics" ! or, the trauma of dada montage. *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1): 82-132., 128.

48. Doherty, Brigid. 1997. "See: We are all nearas-thenics" ! or, the trauma of dada montage. *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1): 82-132., 90.

49. Ball, Hugo. 1996. *Flight Out of Time: Dada Diary.* Trans. Ana Raimés, ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, California: University of California Press., 67.

50. Leah Dickerman "Dada." Brill, Dorothee. 2010. *Shock and Senseless in Dada and Fluxus.* Studies in visual culture. New England: Dartmouth College Press., 78.

51. Brill, Dorothee. 2010. *Shock and Senseless in Dada and Fluxus.* Studies in visual culture. New England: Dartmouth College Press., 79. And, as stated before, the phrase "sociopathologies of the soldier" see: Dickerman, Leah. 2003. Dada gambits. *October* 105 (Summer): 3-12.

52. Ngai, Sianne. 2012. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press., 12.

53. For Ball's remark see: Foster, Hal, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, and David Joselit. 2011. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, and Postmodernism.* Vol. Second Edition. New York: Thames & Hudson., 135. Furthermore, see Leah Dickerman article for a brief reference to Ball in relation to the sermon: Dickerman, Leah. 2003. Dada gambits. *October* 105 (Summer): 3-12., 3.

54. Demos uses the term "geopolitical dislocation" apropos exile and Zurich Dada. Demos, T. J. 2003. *Circulations: In and around zurich dada.* *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 157.

55. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October* 105 (Summer): 166-177.,175.

56. The term "zoological nationalism" Demos gets from Roman Jakobson's article on Dada. See: Demos, T. J. 2003. *Circulations: In and around zurich dada.* *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 147.

57. Ibid., 148.

58. Demos makes a similar claim. Ibid., 149.

59. Hacking, Ian. 1975. *Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press., 92. Hacking quotes Ludwig Wittgenstein's Tractatus.

60. Demos, T. J. 2003. Circulations: In and around zurich dada. *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 149. Demos also argues for the hybridity of Ball's language model.
61. *Ibid.*, 158.
62. *Ibid.*, 147-148. Ironically, both Demos and Jakobson claim that Dada is structurally homologous to the burgeoning scientific phenomenon of relativism.
63. Ricoeur, Paul. 1970. *Freud and Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press. This is Ricoeur's terms to refer to the "school of suspicion" (that is, Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud) that looked at consciousness and everyday ideology with profound suspicion.
64. Demos, T. J. 2003. Circulations: In and around zurich dada. *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 149.
65. For Lacan, we repeat traumas in order to control our "missed encounter with the real." Foster, Hal. 1996. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press., 132.
66. For a magnificent discussion on the differences between the "symbolic" and "iconic" in relation to aesthetics see: Krauss, Rosalind. 1998. *The Picasso Papers*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
67. Demos, T. J. 2003. Circulations: In and around zurich dada. *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 149-150.
68. *Ibid.*, 153.
69. *Ibid.* Here, Demos deploys the terms "hybrid" and "reflexive" to refer to Ball's language games.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.* Here, too, Demos uses the term "organic unity: and "linguistic essentialism."
73. Buchloh, Benjamin. 1982. Allegorical procedures: Appropriation and montage in contemporary art. *Artforum*. September 1982., 44
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*
76. Foster, Hal. 2003. Dada mime. *October* 105 (Summer): 166-177., 174. Ball's statement is quoted in Foster's essay.
77. Quoted in: Brill, Dorothee. 2010. *Shock and Senseless in Dada and Fluxus*. Studies in visual culture. New England: Dartmouth College Press., 45.
78. Dickerman, Leah. 2000. Dada's solipsism. *Documents* 19:16-9.
79. *Ibid.*, 16.
80. *Ibid.*, 17.
81. Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. United Kingdom: Routledge & Kegan Paul., 58.
82. *Ibid.*
83. Ball quoted in: Foster, Hal, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, and David Joselit. 2011. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, and Postmodernism*. Vol. Second Edition. New York: Thames & Hudson., 136.
84. Ball quoted in: Demos, T. J. 2003. Circulations: In and around zurich dada. *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 149.
85. Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. United Kingdom: Routledge & Kegan Paul., 58.
86. Foster, Hal, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, and David Joselit. 2011. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, and Postmodernism*. Vol. Second Edition. New York: Thames & Hudson., 136. Also my use of the term "Mallarméan flesh" is a riff on Rosalind Krauss' discussion of the "carnality of the signifier's flesh" in relation to Mallarmé. *Ibid.*, 114.
87. Demos, T. J. 2003. Circulations: In and around zurich dada. *October* 105 (Dada): 147-158., 154.
88. Foster, Hal, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, and David Joselit. 2011. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, and Postmodernism*. Vol. Second Edition. New York: Thames & Hudson., 137.
89. Ball, Hugo. 1996. *Flight Out of Time: Dada Diary*. Trans. Ana Raimés, ed. John Elderfield. Berkeley, California: University of California Press., 64.
90. Lyotard, Jean Francois. 2004. *Libidinal Economy*. New York: Continuum.
91. Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations: Essays & Reflections*. New York: Schocken., 212. My ital-

ics.

# Toulouse-Lautrec's Medical Inspection: Observation in the 19th Century Parisian Brothel

By: Natalie Camarasana

The cultural climate of 19th century Paris saw the stratification of public spaces based on their degree of accessibility to the bourgeois public. Some spaces welcomed both men and women from all respectable echelons while others, often entertainment venues catering to male consumers, required a special membership among their creative clientele. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec is a well-known participant in the circle of post-impressionists who sought out exclusive locals such as brothels and cabarets, finding in their resident performers and licentious characters a source of fascination and inspiration. Yet Lautrec's choice of context in a number of oil paintings from the 1890s reaches far deeper into the forbidden world sought by his male contemporaries. In the *Medical Inspection*, Lautrec shares his privileged point of view as witness to one of the most private functions in the Parisian brothel: the pelvic examination for venereal disease. Alongside Lautrec's exclusive observation of this event, a far more ubiquitous kind of surveillance is also implied – the government regulations enforcing these routine inspections on female sex workers. Present in this complex dynamic of observation is the gaze of the 19th century viewer, a spectator of Lautrec's vision of the state mandated inspection. These multiple levels of looking are met by Lautrec's female subjects who engage the viewer's gaze in an uncomfortable tension between desire and disgust. How does Lautrec complicate looking? While focussing on his *Medical Inspection*, I will attempt to explore this question in the context of 19th century male anxieties surrounding surveillance over female sexuality, and the spread of the syphilis infection. Toulouse-Lautrec's position as an observer can be located within particular cultural movements and artistic circles that would have informed

his manner of viewing. After his enrollment as a student in the studio of Fernand Cormon in 1882, Lautrec was quick to insert himself into the avant-garde fringe culture that included cabaret goers, performers, and other marginal characters of the Montmartre entertainment district. His participation in exhibitions at the Salon des Artistes Indépendants and Les XX, an avant-garde society of exhibiting artists founded in Belgium, helped solidify his membership in these circles. Lautrec's own style drew increasingly from the dominant form of Naturalism and the tendency in both painting and literature towards the candid representation of everyday experiences.<sup>1</sup> The dispassionate glances of the working class in Manet's work, and the devices used by Degas to orchestrate viewers' points of view informed Lautrec's manner of representing this new world.<sup>2</sup>

Lautrec's penchant for representing 'la vie moderne' led him to seek out urban characters inhabiting spaces farthest removed from those of bourgeois society. Lower class labourers, performers, and prostitutes are included in his representations of café-concert and music-hall life. Lautrec was also known for spending much time familiarizing himself with the sitters and milieus that he represented. He plotted his details carefully, the result of which was "an art charged with innuendo."<sup>3</sup> It is no surprise, then, that during the creation of his brothel images (largely between 1893-1895) Lautrec lived for weeks at a time at the Rue des Moulins brothel where he enjoyed the acceptance of its resident prostitutes and became a favoured lodger. It is likely that the brothel community acted as a reprieve from the social tensions and insecurities he experienced elsewhere as a result of his alternative lifestyle and physical appearance, Lautrec's genetic disorder having brought about his diminutive stature and other health related complications.<sup>4</sup> In navigating a world of entertainment geared towards male tastes, Lautrec reaches for the feminine space of the brothel living quarters, arriving as client in search of services, but also as a friend

seeking comfort and companionship.

In her article, "Modernity and the spaces of femininity," Griselda Pollock examines the range of settings commonly represented by male and female painters in the late 19th century.<sup>5</sup> Patterns emerge as she considers the feminine, domestic spaces depicted in the works of Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt - dining rooms, bedrooms, balconies, and private gardens contrast sharply with the bars, dance halls, and brothels in the works of Manet and Degas. It is inevitable that female painters experienced a very different modernity than male painters who often delivered representations of a version of contemporary life accessible only to male revelers and 'impure women.' Pollock aptly notes that it is by way of these 'fallen' women that many artists asserted their dominance: "it is normal to see paintings of women's bodies as the territory across which men artists claim their modernity and compete for leadership of the avant-guard."<sup>6</sup>

While the brothel is mentioned by Pollock as a space accessible to male artists, she does not consider the inner rituals and private living quarters of the brothel which, ironically, parallel the feminine domestic occupied by 'respectable' ladies. Men were not permitted in brothel living quarters in which routine and reality competed with the performative and saleable images of women sold to visitors. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, however, does gain access to this feminine space and takes refuge therein, remaining not only for sexual favours but for the comfort of friendship.

A mutual sympathy between Lautrec and his subjects likely stemmed the artist's honest and non-sensational portrayals of daily life in the brothel. His images of prostitutes relaxing or lounging in bed present the women as humans capable of intimacy and of a complex interiority, an approach that differed greatly from that of his contemporaries. While it is likely that Lautrec was one of the few artists with whom Degas chose

to share his brothel scenes, Lautrec's paintings of women in this same space have none of the suggestiveness that Degas evokes in his gritty monotypes. The harsh black lines and smudged faces of the prostitutes in Degas' work liken the women to wild creatures caught in the predatory gaze of a male voyeur. While Lautrec's own gaze hangs in a precarious balance between wealthy male consumer and considerate ally, he depicts brothel living quarters as feminine spaces free of their usual male clients. This manner of representing prostitutes in a way that set him apart from his contemporaries,<sup>7</sup> but also connected him to them as a member of an avant guard circle with special insight. Having gained access to the daily lives of prostitutes Lautrec was witness to some of the most private moments within the brothel, including the routine medical examinations.

Lautrec's *Medical Inspection* shows two women waiting for a routine examination for venereal disease. The prostitute on the left has slumped shoulders, knocked-knees, and a downward gaze that suggests resignation to a degrading routine.<sup>8</sup> Looking past the women a room is visible, perhaps one of the many exotic-themed rooms at the Rue des Moulins. It is a place of sexual transaction recalling the perceived necessity of the regular medical tests. Both women hold up their clothing in preparation for their encounter with the medical examiner - the prostitute on the right appears to have lifted her transparent chemise over her shoulders in a mildly uncooperative attitude. The lifted chemises can be seen as a superfluous action - as intended only to reveal the women's exposed thighs and to lend them a greater vulnerability.<sup>9</sup> The pale whiteness of the exposed bodies contrasts sharply with the strong, vibrant orange that covers most of the background, except for the dark blue-green clothes of the woman on the far right, who is likely the *dame de maison*. Lautrec uses a bright orange pigment to compose the brothel interior: it becomes a phenomenological space, which, as Griselda Pollock argues, makes use of visual

cues to refer to other sensations and relations between bodies and objects in a lived world.<sup>10</sup> Lautrec heats the brothel interior with his use of colour and renders it menacing despite the languid, relaxed postures of the women in line. Charles Baudelaire also observed the use of colour as an element of threat in contemporary images of prostitutes, noting how these 'macabre nymphs' are often depicted in a 'foggy and gilded chaos': "Against a background of hellish light, or if you prefer, an *aurora borealis* – red, orange, sulfurous-yellow, pink..., against magical backgrounds such as these, which remind one of variegated Bengal lights, there arises the protean image of wanton beauty."<sup>11</sup> Such pigments create a push and pull between the space and the waiting prostitutes: the bold and antagonistic room actively repels, while the women remain the passive objects of the viewer's gaze. The complementary colours, blue and orange, further highlight this strain in emotional state.<sup>12</sup>

Lautrec's carefully selected angle of observation into this scene also informs his looking. Two preparatory sketches of his subjects show his thoughtful consideration in selecting an appropriate viewpoint. *Two Semi-Nude Women* reveals the scene from a different angle than the *Medical Inspection*. From this perspective, we do not see the women's faces we glimpse only the slumped backs and partly exposed buttocks of the women in line. *Blonde Prostitute* in turn, shows the blonde woman viewed from a three-quarter frontal pose. Lautrec ultimately represents the scene with the women shown in profile, an angle that best evokes the seriality of a line-up and a 'waiting to be called next' – much like a commercial product awaiting inspection for quality control. The profile angle also reveals the women's facial expressions which, although relatively illegible, function with posture, clothing and context to convey a complex emotional reality. The viewer is thus given access to the nuances of a scene that only Lautrec has the privilege to witness.

Lautrec's observation of the intimate, private space of the brothel is rivaled only by the implied surveillance of the 19th century French state and the gaze of the medical examiner. Although these 'gazes' are not made explicit and the actual medical exam is not depicted, their presence is felt nonetheless. A controlled system of surveillance of prostitutes through registries and mandatory pelvic examinations was instituted in France in 1810.<sup>13</sup> Female sex workers were required by law to register with the police as *femmes soumises* in order to continue their practice, while other apparatuses of surveillance such as the *maisons de tolérances*, or French brothels, were used in the regulation of female sexuality. In restricted spaces of brothels, registered prostitutes worked under the management of a *dame de maison*<sup>14</sup> who was complicit with the task of supervision as she had the most contact with the soumises and participated fully in the commerce of prostitution.<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note, then, that in Lautrec's *Medical Inspection* the woman who appears to be the *dame de maison* has her back turned. Neither she nor the prostitutes engage in any kind of active looking. The male gaze is granted free rein, be it from the medic, the pervasive state policy, the artist Lautrec, or the male viewer.

The regulation of female sexuality in 19th century Paris resulted from contemporary perceptions of the prostitute as not only a moral threat, but a sanitary threat.<sup>16</sup> Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet's canonical 1836 text *De la Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris* advocated for the confinement of prostitutes in medically supervised brothels in hopes of stopping the spread of syphilis.<sup>17</sup> With new focus on public health after the cholera epidemic of 1832, increased pressure was placed on state intervention in medical policing: prostitutes should be subject to a system of surveillance lest the health of the social body be compromised.<sup>18</sup> In viewing Lautrec's *Medical Inspection*, the extent to which, as Griselda Pollock notes, "social spaces are policed by men's watching women"<sup>19</sup> becomes increasingly apparent.

The gaze of the doctor performing the inspection is not far from the scene Lautrec that reveals, nor is the highly problematic nature of the mandatory exam. It was taken for granted, for instance, that all prostitutes would unreservedly give male medical practitioners permission to inspect their bodies for venereal disease in the name of health and safety. These inspections, moreover, were not carried out primarily for the well-being of the prostitutes, but for the protection of their clients and the other innocent victims of prostitution – that is, the wives and future children of the married men who frequented brothels.<sup>20</sup> There was also a double standard concerning vaginal exams administered on prostitutes versus those performed on 'respectable' ladies. The idea of unlimited access to women's bodies for medical inspection was not condoned across all social classes; upstanding women did not immediately grant medical practitioners their trust, and many pains were taken to ensure privacy during doctor-female patient interactions.<sup>21</sup> A popular illustration of a medical examination reproduced in a French gynecology textbook demonstrates an appropriate method of inspecting a 'respectable' female patient. Here, touching is privileged over looking. The doctor diverts his gaze and the woman's body remains fully clothed. It is certain that less propriety was granted to prostitutes, due especially to the insistence of some physicians on the use of the speculum during inspection.<sup>22</sup> The exhibition and exposure of the female genitals during examination is not necessarily desexualized. It is, as Terri Andra Kapsalis argues, "subject to an erotic based on vision, knowledge, and discovery."<sup>23</sup> Lautrec appears to be sensitive to this: while he unmasks the alluring façade of brothel activities, he does not show the examiner nor the examination itself. This kind of exhibitionism would have been brutally intrusive and dehumanizing.

The multiple levels of looking implicated in Lautrec's *Medical Inspection* are further complicated by the female subjects presented as both desirable and diseased. The prostitutes are in-

escapably associated with the threat of sexually transmitted infections, a reality that would have been a sensitive subject for frequent brothel visitors including Lautrec, who died of complications from syphilis in 1901. Lautrec depicts the women in his images as humans, desexualizing them as they enter a standard medical procedure. At the same time, he affirms their status as products as they await inspection before purchase. T.J. Clark mentions that at the root of Parent-Duchâtelet's pro-regulationist stance in relation to prostitution is the fear that "if [the prostitute] were not analyzed, counted and controlled then she could circulate freely in society, spreading disease and confusion."<sup>24</sup> Would it have been reassuring for the 19th century male viewer to see the prostitutes 'pre-screened' like a commodity item sanctioned for use? Or would this image have been unsettling by recalling the very real risk of exposure to sexually transmitted infections? The painting's obvious connection to venereal disease would not have been lost on Lautrec's contemporaries; Degas is reported to have said of Lautrec's *Rue des Moulins* paintings: "They stink of syphilis."<sup>25</sup> Related to anxieties over the diseased prostitute is the feminization of the syphilis infection itself, which, as Mary Spongberg explains, draws on a long history in Western medical discourse and visual culture that pitted women as the source of venereal disease.<sup>26</sup> Even before medical authorities had linked venereal disease to sexual intercourse, promiscuous women were taken to be the source of the disease as well as its carrier, while men were seen as its victims.<sup>27</sup>

If Degas' images of prostitutes were of terrifying realism in their revelation of the 'dark side of Paris,'<sup>28</sup> Lautrec's representation of the routine inspection for syphilis calls forth a more palpable social fear – one that was relegated to the fringes of representation in visual culture. The *Medical Inspection* is disquieting because it reveals a kind of female nudity that Lautrec's male contemporaries, in all likelihood, would not have wanted to see. The vaginal inspection involved a kind of looking reserved for the medical practi-

tioner alone. Although the brothel client would not typically seek out this 'medic's gaze,' Lautrec places his viewers in a such way position where they see the women they purchase for sex from a different point of view. Would Lautrec's friends and contemporaries, with whom he shared his paintings, have therefore admired the work as avant garde or daring?<sup>29</sup> Would others have envied his exclusive access to this scene and the daily routine of the brothel community? In contrast to the sex workers' reality, Lautrec has the luxury of pursuing his work without catering to any clientele. What is at stake for him artistically is instead linked to innovation, competition, and personal interest.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *Medical Inspection* maps the complex system of observation and surveillance in the Parisian brothel while in fact revealing very little. The image is not sensational as the viewer sees nothing of the examination itself. Yet in its implied associations to venereal disease Lautrec's work is provocative enough to have induced anxiety in his male contemporaries. The women standing in line, as potential transmitters of the infection, are given ambiguous identities as both sex-objects and human test-subjects. As a witness to Lautrec's privileged vision of this state-mandated surveillance, the viewer must negotiate layers of medical, pictorial, and client observation, giving further credibility to the idea that "looking at looking is perhaps the best theme of Lautrec's art."<sup>30</sup>

#### Notes:

1. Richard Thomson et al., *Toulouse Lautrec*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 18.
2. Ibid., 22. Lautrec, like Degas and others, often arranged viewer angles as stemming from the positions of the spectator in his paintings. This, and the cropped figures on the edges of his canvases beyond the field of vision, implied a privileged and 'located looking,' and granted the viewer a certain membership in the painting's

narrative.

3. Ibid., 22.

4. Bernard Denvir, *Toulouse-Lautrec* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 144.

5. See Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*, Griselda Pollock (London: Routledge, 2003).

6. Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 247.

7. Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 195.

8. Charles F. Stuckey, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, paintings (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1979), 235.

9. Ibid.

10. Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 252.

11. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life: And Other Essays*, ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 37.

12. Stuckey, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, paintings, 19.

13. Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: the Body of the Prostitute of Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997), 36.

14. Thomson et al., *Toulouse Lautrec*, 406.

15. Kristina Oldenburg, "All the prostitutes may be made subject to supervision and the spread of disease infinitely reduced': Implications of Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet and William Acton's regulatory proposals," (masters's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2006), 74, [summit.sfu.ca/system/files/iritems1/2313/etd2128.pdf](http://summit.sfu.ca/system/files/iritems1/2313/etd2128.pdf).

16. Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, 37.

17. Oldenburg, "Implications of Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet and William Acton's regulatory proposals," 1.

18. Ibid., 25. It should be noted, however, that systems of control over femininity were not limited to the prostitute, but extended to include women of moral upstanding as well. Griselda Pollock notes that "femininity should be understood not as a condition of women but as the ideological



forth of the regulation of female sexuality in a familial heterosexual domesticity ultimately organized by the law." See Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 259.

19. Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 258.

20. Oldenburg, "Implications of Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet and William Acton's regulatory proposals," 27.

21. Terri Andra Kapsalis, "The pelvic exam as performance: Power, spectacle, and gynecology," (PhD diss. Northwestern University, 1994), 29, ProQuest (9433865).

22. Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, 39. In 1833, medical practitioner and researcher Philippe Ricord insisted on the use of the speculum to view the cervix during regulated medical inspections, claiming that it was impossible to determine if a woman suffered from venereal disease without this device to aid in looking.

23. Kapsalis, "The pelvic exam as performance," 2.

24. Timothy J. Clark, "Olympia's Choice," in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, Timothy J. Clark (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 105.

25. Denvir, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, 172.

26. Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, 2.

27. *Ibid.*, 3.

28. Clark, "Olympia's Choice," 101.

29. Thomson et al., *Toulouse Lautrec*, 411. During his lifetime, viewership of Lautrec's brothel paintings was largely limited to friends and contemporaries with whom he shared common interests.

30. Stuckey, *Toulouse-Lautrec*, paintings, 26.

# Mughal Painting: Selective Appropriations and Explorations of the “Other” in Occidental and Oriental Ambits

By: Katia Fernández

The reign of Akbar, ruler of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century, was characterised by policies of universal tolerance that fomented the development of a unique artistic style formed in syncretism. Akbar's own interests in various religions, as well as the arrival of Portuguese Jesuits to his court in the 1560s, resulted in an evolving interest in European artistic traditions that was further developed in the reign of his son Jahangir. As explained by Art Historian Gauvin Bailey, “the Mughal arts wholeheartedly embraced and openly appropriated Western styles and techniques.”<sup>1</sup> In this manner, leading researchers in Mughal art such as Milo Beach and Gauvin Bailey have explored the extent of European presence in Mughal art and culture. While mostly focusing on the allegorical aspects that were taken up by Mughal artists, these researchers have demonstrated connections between Mughal art and Flemish, Dutch and English early-modern artworks. However, within Mughal art, there are hints of another less explored means by which European styles entered India through a secondary source — that of Turkish commercial trade routes.

Art of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century not only shared stylistic features with other Islamic art such as Persian or Arabic, but also presented Western European qualities absorbed through its turbulent political, religious and economical history with the Republic of Venice; competition between both commercial magnates dated back to the fifteenth century. Renaissance Venetian art, in turn, encompassed one of the most unique artistic styles in Europe; a characteristic feature being the borrowing of

Orientalist aesthetic features of Middle-Eastern provenance, that were acquired through a reciprocal commercial and cultural trade with the aforementioned Ottomans. Thus, by considering Beach and Bailey's research as a theoretical frameworks, this essay explores the direct impact of European artistic traditions in Mughal painting and analyses its shared formal qualities with artwork of Venetian and Ottoman nature. Consequently, alternative European traditions in Mughal art may be considered. This essay equally considers Edward Said's *Orientalism* in an analogous exploration of the Occidental “Other” in a Middle-Eastern context, in contrast with widespread Western notions of the Islamic “Other” mainly propagated through Venetian Orientalist art.

In a 1980 article on the Mughal painter Abu'l Hasan, Beach notes a similarity between the painting *Jahangir Receiving Sheikh Sa'di in Audience*, and the depictions of Turks by the fifteenth-century Venetian painter Gentile Bellini. While Beach states that Bellini was “not the specific inspiration for Abul' Hasan's figures, the resemblance is extraordinarily close.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the type of portraiture found in Mughal miniature paintings in the age of Akbar and Jahangir presents a very close stylistic similarity to fifteenth and sixteenth-century Venetian aesthetic explorations of the Islamic “Other.” The Islamic “Other” may thereby be understood as a generalised and imaginary representation of the Middle-East — a stereotype built on Western notions of exoticism. Although it is difficult to draw a direct aesthetic connection between India and Venice, an examination of the comparable features between both stylistic traditions is nonetheless merited. The main point of stylistic convergence thus occurred in the Ottoman Empire, which had close mercantile connections to both Venice and India. Therefore, by considering the extensive commercial exchange that occurred in the two main ports that connected East and West in the early modern era — Venice and Istanbul — a secondary understanding of the flow of Eu-

ropean styles within the Asian continent may be realised. The analysis of Mughal art reveals the prevalence of European influences found after the arrival of Portuguese Jesuits and points to the shared characteristics with Turkish paintings that had themselves been simultaneously informed by Venetian Orientalist paintings in the previous century.

As explained by N.M. Farooqi in his book, *Mughal-Ottoman Relations*, unlike the Mamluks or the Turks, the Muslims in India remained isolated from the Islamic world until the consolidation of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The negative regard that Babur, founder of the Mughal Empire, had towards the Ottoman Empire was broken by his son Humayun, who towards the end of his reign in the 1550s had “the opportunity to establish formal relations with the Ottomans.”<sup>4</sup> Akbar was not as interested as his father in developing diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire. However, with the imminent arrival of the Portuguese in Indian waters, both the Ottoman and Syrio-Egyptian governors assumed a protective stance over all Muslims, including those of an Indian provenance who were travelling for Hajj and commercial purposes.<sup>5</sup> Even when this new shift in cultural attitudes seemed to promise improved relations between the Mughals and the rest of the Islamic world, diplomacy soon died down with Akbar’s own disputes with the Ottoman Empire. Still, commerce flourished in the sixteenth-century and thus provided an initial link between the Mughals and Europe (through the Turks and Mamluks) before the arrival of the Portuguese Jesuits at Akbar’s court. Commerce in Istanbul allowed for cultural traditions to be exported into both Europe and Asia. As Can Kerametli writes, the artistic features of Turkish art “in the field of paintings and miniatures may be summed up as the meeting of the Eastern and Western painting schools.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the characteristic fifteenth and sixteenth century Turkish style can be explained by the unrestricted interaction and communication between both schools and “the widespread

availability of display.”<sup>7</sup> The collision of Eastern and Western artistic schools allowed for new aesthetic studies in Occidentalism in Turkey, just as explorations in Orientalism developed in Venice.

In order to explore the selective appropriations of Turkish styles in Mughal art, a study of the Mughal Empire’s relationship with Venice must be performed as well. Due to the increasing development of diplomatic relationship between the Mamluks from Syria and Egypt in the fifteenth century, Venice’s trade routes expanded; consequently, the city became the primary commercial hub for Oriental spices and luxury goods in Europe. The extensive commercial exchange between Venice and the East resulted in the city’s own appropriation of Oriental elements — as reflected in its architectural and artistic spheres. In this manner, Venetian Orientalism — understood as the adoption of Islamic elements into the city’s artistic atmosphere and a fascination with the exotic Eastern world — was reflected not only in the city, but in its art as well. In paintings created by the Bellini workshop, such as the series of the *Life of St. Mark*, the Islamic world is generalised within an imagined representation; for instance, Mamluks, Egyptians and Turks are depicted without clear distinctions in Mansueti or Carpaccio’s paintings. The ambiguity of these representations of the Eastern world reaffirms Venice’s artistic vision of the East to be fantastic, exotic and ultimately imaginary. The Bellini workshop took Oriental elements and readapted them to a context that would be comprehensible for their Venetian audience. In other words, the transformation of “the Islamic world into a Venetian vocabulary” allowed for “familiarity and attraction to the Orient seen through a Venetian filter” on an aesthetic level.<sup>8</sup> The generalisation of the Islamic “Other,” with his white turban and beard, was a sixteenth-century signifier for the Oriental man, which then became a stigmatised representation that would be expanded and retransmitted across Europe over the course of the century.<sup>9</sup>

In the late twentieth century, Said's foundational discourse on *Orientalism* revolutionised the construction and reception of the Orient through Western perspectives.<sup>10</sup> Even when Said's studies have been questioned and debated, his work has ultimately laid the basis for a postcolonial critique of Orientalism. Thus, while today the concept of Orientalism and the monolithic notion of a culture have been discredited, in the early-modern period Middle-Eastern artists adopted these Orientalist traits developed in Venice, and the rest of Europe, as part of their own art. In other words, the Islamic "Other" began to represent itself as such. This is revealed in Mehmet the Conqueror's own interest in importing Italian painters such as Gentile Bellini to his Ottoman court, as well as in Akbar's similar stance in the sixteenth century. By inviting the Portuguese Jesuits to his court, Akbar helped introduce his painters to "a vast number of engravings of the work of [Italian] artists ranging from Michelangelo, Raphael, and Taddeo Zuccaroto Dtirerand Martinde Vos; oil paintings donated by the great aristocratic families of Rome; and even a Portuguese painter."<sup>11</sup> By adopting a similar diplomatic and artistic stance as Mehmet II, Akbar allowed for a triangular and anachronistic connection amongst Venetian, Turkish and Mughal art that would be equally developed in the art produced under the reign of his son Jahangir, in the subsequent first quarter of the seventeenth century. For instance, while Bellini looked at Eastern paintings such as the *Portrait of Mehmed II* by Synan Bey in order to produce his own *Portrait of Sultan Muhammad II*, Abu'l Hasan's painting *Jahangir Receiving Sheikh Sa'di in Audience* simultaneously seemed to indicate a derivation from "European studies of Muslims" like Bellini's.<sup>12</sup> This double page illustration depicts the inner circle of Jahangir's court on the right, as well as a group of Muslim holy men, the thirteenth-century poet Sa'di and a fifteenth-century Ottoman Emperor greeting Jahangir on the left. The figures do not belong to a single overall time period; their anachronism indicates "an imaginary court scene, presented as if it were historical reality,"

similar to the anachronistically ambiguous Venetian scenes of the *Life of St. Mark*.<sup>13</sup> The left side of the painting reveals the use of European artistic techniques such as chiaroscuro and, more importantly, the depiction of the Turkish "Other" in a comparable manner to the one explored by the Bellini workshop. Beach indicates that "few other Mughal artists were interested in this technique to this degree, and the handling of the Turk... alert us to another source for Abu'l Hasan's style."<sup>14</sup> This alternative source may be identified in Venetian studies of the Islamic "Other"<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Abu'l Hasan's attitude towards the Turk presents comparable stylistic qualities to depictions of the Islamic "Other" in Venetian art, which as previously mentioned, derived its explorations of the 'Islamic' Other from Turkish portraiture like the work of Sinan Bey. Here, the hypothetical triangular connection between all three styles may be identified.

Abu'l Hasan's work also seems to evolve from earlier Mughal studies of European art by artists such as Kesu Das, who "closely reproduced the figures and composition of the original engravings" that were brought to Akbar's court, "carefully emulating their spatial and modelling effects."<sup>16</sup> For instance, Kesu Das emulated the graphic qualities of engravings made by Phillip Hall; these copies were greatly praised in Akbar's court as well as by foreign travellers. French traveller Francois Bernier states that Mughal artists "imitate[d] so perfectly articles of European manufacture that the difference between the original and copy [could] hardly be discerned"<sup>17</sup> Kesu Das' painting *The Crucifixion*, for example, is a remarkable exploration of European artworks that belies its Indian origin. In this regard, Bailey elaborates on the imitative nature of the Occidental work made by Mughal painters such as Kesu Das, explaining that the artists "used the foreign pictures as models for technique and style, and quoted individual figures or compositions out of their original context, including poses, motifs, and costumes, as well as limited spatial effects such as primitive modelling, Breughel-like

flocks of birds on the horizon, and the device of suggesting space by making background figures smaller."<sup>18</sup> These techniques, visible in *The Crucifixion*, are undoubtedly equally explicit in the Venetian painter Giovanni Bellini's own *Crucifixion*. Bellini's painting proves to be one of the most strikingly similar paintings to Kesu Das' in its formal composition, thus raising the question of the Mughal painter's sources. The cross at the very foreground of both paintings acts as an almost violent presentation of Christ crucified. Here, Kesu Das uses similar Christian allegorical elements such as the skulls and bones, the halo and stigmata of Christ, and presents a cityscape in the painting's background. The contrast between the foreground and background thus suggests an exploration of different modes of depth and perspective, in contrast with the rather flat qualities of earlier paintings.

In contrast, later artists such as Abu'l Hasan produced "masterly Occidental works of their own inspiration" which still strove to emulate European styles within a pictorial context that was inherently Mughal.<sup>19</sup> The content and meanings of European paintings "were translated into the pictorial language of the Mughals" in the same way that the Venetians translated images of the Islamic "Other" into their paintings.<sup>20</sup> In regard to Venetian Orientalist painting, Paul Wood argues that "by assimilating the exotic — and threatening — to the familiar, the all-too real threat of the Islamic "Other" could be negotiated and absorbed at the level of the imagination."<sup>21</sup> This precise concept may equally speak of Mughal attitudes towards the Occidental "Other". The selection, translation and assimilation of European elements, artistic conventions and pictorial realism into Mughal paintings allowed for a syncretic style that disrupted the threatening presence of Europe within India.<sup>22</sup> Just as "Venetian artistic Orientalism depended on a relatively limited repertoire of images, some representing quite distant 'translations' of some actual, originary observations," Mughal art equally took a selected group of European artworks and created

a world in the Occident based on them.<sup>23</sup>

The sixteenth century in Mughal India was thus characterised by a syncretic style that incorporated Middle-Eastern and European qualities. The painters in the courts of Akbar and Jahangir took wide advantage of the resources that were made available to them by the Jesuit missionaries, thereby reproducing Western techniques and adopting these techniques to images of their own thematic interests. Thus, through the analysis of Venetian Orientalist paintings and its correlation with Turkish art in the previous centuries, alternative sources for Mughal artists may be considered. Milo Beach's suggestion of this in regard to Abu'l Hasan's painting *Jahangir Receiving Sheikh Sa'di in Audience* raises the question of different sources for Mughal art other than Dutch, Flemish and English studies. The explorations of the Islamic "Other" propagated by Venetian Orientalist art were equally adopted in Middle-Eastern aesthetics. In other words, similar Venetian attitudes of depicting anachronism, imagined settings and representations of the Islamic were equally utilised in Mughal art along with the inclusion of the now Occidental "Other". Mughal art therefore reveals a connection to a Turkish art, which concurrently referenced Venetian Orientalist paintings in the fifteenth century and, in consequence, also reveals the variety of European styles that infiltrated Mughal art and culture.

#### Notes:

- 1 Bailey, Gauvin Alexander. *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America: 1542-1773* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2001), 112. Bailey explicates that Western styles were welcomed in the Mughal Empire "to a far greater extent than in China or Japan," where the Jesuit missions also arrived.
2. Beach, Milo Cleveland. "The Mughal Painter Abu'l Hasan and Some English Sources for His Style." *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 38 (1980), 16

3. Farooqi, Naimur Rahman. *Mughal-Ottoman Relations: A Study of Political & Diplomatic Relations between Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire, 1556-1748* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, 1989) 15
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, 17.
6. Kerametli, Can. "Turkish Miniatures in the 16th Century." *Antika, The Turkish Journal Of Collectable Art* 4 (1985) in *The Topkapi Palace Museum web*
7. Ibid.
8. Schmidt Arcangeli, Catarina. "'Orientalist' Painting in Venice, 15th – 17th Centuries" Venice and the Islamic World: 828 - 1797 : Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris, October 2, 2006 - February 18, 2007 ; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, March 27 - July 8, 2007. Ed. Stefano Carboni (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), 138
9. Wood, Paul. "Art in Fifteenth-Century Venice: 'An Aesthetic of Diversity'" *Locating Renaissance Art*. Ed. Carol M. Richardson. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007) , 229
10. Sapra, Rahul. *The Limits of Orientalism: Seventeenth-century Representations of India*. (Newark, DE: University of Delaware, 2011), 11
11. Bailey, Gauvin Alexander. "The Indian Conquest of Catholic Art: The Mughals, the Jesuits, and Imperial Painting." *Art Journal The Reception of Christian Devotional Art* 57.1 (1990), 25
12. Beach, "The Mughal Painter Abu'l Hasan" 16.
13. Ibid, 11.
14. Ibid, 16.
15. Ibid, 16.
16. Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions*, 119
17. Bernier in Sapra, *The Limits of Orientalism*, 160-161
18. Beach in Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions*, 114
19. Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions*, 119
20. Koch, Ebba. "The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors." Ed. Christian W. Troll. *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*. Vol. I. (New Delhi: Vikas, 1982), 8
21. Wood, *Art in Fifteenth-Century Venice*, 243
22. Bailey, "The Indian Conquest of Catholic Art,"
23. Wood, *Art in Fifteenth-Century Venice*, 245

# Sensitive Networks: The Material and Aesthetic Implications of Vision, Visibility, and Surveillance in the Built Environment

By: Nicholas Harvey-Cheetham

Life in 21st century Western society generates wakes of information. Sending an email, carrying a phone, using a credit card, or unlocking a door all create data that can be, and is being, observed, recorded, and analyzed. Surveillance scholars John Gilliom and Torin Monahan suggest "information societies are necessarily surveillance societies."<sup>1</sup> We live in a surveillance society. In this paper, I investigate the ways in which surveillance technologies intermingle with the built environment and I explore the material and philosophical implications of this condition. I argue surveillance is a necessary function of contemporary architecture and a fundamental component of contemporary subjectivity. I will develop this argument by investigating post-9/11 security culture and by examining technological, architectural, and institutional surveillance infrastructure. Drawing on the work of French theorist Paul Virilio, I will apply the concepts of vision, screens, and surveillance towards an understanding of contemporary subjectivity. I argue that networked surveillance architecture in the 21st century creates an ontological imperative: to be seen is to be. Before investigating the contemporary state of surveillance, I will briefly explore its historical relationship to architecture. French thinker Paul Virilio suggests that a critical function of architecture is that it "protect[s] against all glances."<sup>2</sup> An innate power of the built environment is its ability to selectively control the direction and intensity of human vision through apertures, barriers and vantage points. These take the architectural forms of windows, walls, and towers. By limiting and privileging access to certain spaces, the built environment regu-

lates the movement of bodies as well as gazes. Architecture's potential to control visibility and mobility make it a primary mechanism through which human beings assert power over one another. The oft-cited example of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, by way of Michael Foucault, remains the clearest example of this principle.<sup>3</sup> I argue that contemporary architecture retains its original power to regulate the movements and perceptions of bodies. However, the mechanisms through which architecture achieves these effects have been radically transformed by information technology.

Digital surveillance architectures are an extension of the optical and spatial efficiency of the panopticon and of architecture's innate abilities to control visibility and movement. John Gilliom and Torin Monahan define surveillance as "monitoring people in order to regulate or govern their behavior."<sup>4</sup> We live in a condition of ubiquitous surveillance, where complex digital, material, institutional, and technological architectures monitor human beings. In this context, I define architecture as a designed system or structure that shapes social relations — one that is primarily concerned with, and shaped by, spatial and material dimensions. My use of the term surveillance architecture refers to the union of information technology, recording equipment, and the built environment. I argue that contemporary architecture is now complicit in a condition of constant and complete surveillance. This system is best understood within the context of American national security culture, neoliberalism, and the commodification of identity-based data.

In 2002, in the aftermath of September 11th, the US government created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which incorporated 22 government agencies and, as of 2012, employed over 230,000 people. The DHS is one of several government agencies that rapidly developed surveillance architectures under the rhetoric of national security. One architectur-

al and institutional manifestation of this practice was the creation of a new type of building called the fusion center. Fusion centres are law enforcement buildings and data processing facilities specifically designed to gather, store, and analyze information about security threats. They also facilitate collaboration and information sharing between law enforcement agencies. In 2012, there were 77 official, DHS-sponsored fusion centres.<sup>5</sup> These centers tapped into existing surveillance infrastructures and personal identity databases to investigate not only the threat of terrorism, but also all crime in general. Torin Monahan and Pricilia M. Regan note that “fusion centres illustrate trends in the asymmetry of visibility after 9/11.”<sup>6</sup> While the internal purpose of the centers is to remove barriers to information and facilitate collaboration between government agencies and private security firms, their existence and function is often observed from the public view. I argue that fusion centres represent the material and symbolic union of architecture and surveillance technology. Not only are these sites designed to support the novel programmatic function of monitoring human beings, but they also enable the recruitment of any networked building into a global surveillance architecture.

While the proliferation of architectures of surveillance intensified after 9/11, Monahan notes that this period was merely an acceleration of processes already in motion. Security culture was already a part of the social and spatial arrangement of American life. Writing about Los Angeles in late 1980s and early 1990s, Mike Davis identifies that “the defense of luxury lifestyles is translated into a proliferation of new repressions in space and movement, undergirded by the ubiquitous ‘armed response.’”<sup>7</sup> Davis notes that architecture and surveillance had already begun to fuse with police infrastructure, creating a networked security apparatus that preceded DHS fusion centres. These “emergent liaisons between architecture and the American police state”<sup>8</sup> took the form of residential rooftops

painted to aid aerial surveillance, panoptic shopping centers, and “ever-growing databases on suspect citizenry [that] have become the central neural system for the vast and disparate, public and private, security operations taking place in Los Angeles.”<sup>9</sup> Davis’ work illustrates that security culture and the conflation of architecture have a long history in the United States.

In addition to a 21st century culture of security, the power of surveillance architecture grew, in part, because of widespread consumer adoption of internet-enabled devices, GPS, and photographic technology. These technologies support a participatory panopticon, wherein users consciously and unconsciously submit to surveillance and enter into surveillant relationships in order to gain access to technology. For example, cell phones transmit user-specific location data, even when they are turned off. Personal information is translated into the built environment as data that moves through cell phone towers. Cameras monitor peoples’ movements through the built environment. Companies collect this information in order to better market their services. Carrying a GPS-phone creates a digital map of one’s movements, which can be stored indefinitely. These “information systems act as social architecture, compelling participation into surveillant relationships.”<sup>10</sup> At fusion centers and other data processing facilities, disparate surveillance can be combined in order to create profiles of individual people’s movements, communications, and purchases. For example, in many North American cities, roads are embedded with sensors that monitor vehicle traffic.<sup>11</sup> Taken alone, this surveillance information holds little meaning about an individual. But if combined with video images, cell phone calls, bank purchases, and/or health information, a detailed profile of an individual can emerge. “When technological surveillance is incorporated into spaces and infrastructures, it increases the amount of data available for social control functions and capital accumulation imperatives.”<sup>12</sup> Once aggregated, networked surveillance radically



enhances the power of the built environment to 'see' human beings and therefore to regulate their behaviour.

The architectural spaces within which these linkages happen are largely obscured from public view but it is significant to note that buildings exist for the sole purpose of storing, organizing, and analyzing surveillance information. They were designed for this function. The buildings house data processing facilities or the bureaucratic infrastructure of government agencies. While these architectures of surveillance have developed unprecedented powers of rhizomatic vision, they remain opaque to the outside gaze. The United States is one of the most aggressive countries in the world with respect to the surveillance of its own citizens.<sup>13</sup> The headquarters of the National Security Agency presents itself as an obscure, impenetrable black monolith. A Canadian building currently under construction for the Communications Security Establishment Canada — "a federal agency that spies mainly on foreigners by hacking into their computers, reading their email and intercepting their phone calls"<sup>14</sup> — is taking a different approach. Rather than shutting out the world, this surveillance agency will be housed in a building of transparent glass. But this transparency is only an architectonic illusion and does not reveal the internal function of the organization. The private sector also offers the illusion of transparency. Google offers an online virtual tour of their data centres,<sup>15</sup> but the information contained on the stacks of servers remains hidden. There are the spaces which store and analyze fragmented images of every human being who has ever used a cell phone, computer or credit card. Ronald Deibert, et al. demonstrate that "our 'private' information now traverses through cables and spectrum owned and operated by numerous private and public institution located in numerous legal jurisdictions."<sup>16</sup> Buildings exist for the sole purpose of storing, organizing, and analyzing surveillance information.

Gilliom and Monahan assert that surveillance "distills complex and changing situations into stable and useable images."<sup>17</sup> Paul Virilio posits that technology will create "a ubiquitous eye that sees everything at once."<sup>18</sup> I argue that contemporary surveillance architecture fulfills Virilio's prediction. Disparate nodes of architecture are linked and endowed with sensory abilities for the purpose of monitoring and controlling human beings. William G. Stables suggests that, not only are we entering a time when "the 'observer' is likely to be a computer system, a video-cam, a drug-testing kit, or an electronic scanner of some kind," but we are also entering a state of permanent visibility. "Images are recorded and not forgotten."<sup>19</sup> This is the vision machine in action. Virilio also develops a nuanced understanding of the screen as a surface upon which images appear. In *Lost Dimension*, he writes that screens, previously "devoid of depth, become a kind of 'distance,' ... a visibility without any face-to-face encounter."<sup>20</sup> In English, the word screen takes on an additional meaning relevant to surveillance and security culture. Screening selectively allows passage through or into another space. Screens sort bodies. This function of the screen is inherently architectural, leveraging both visibility and mobility. Screens act as boundaries and as portals. Historical vision machines like video cameras mimic the mechanical function of the eye (iris, retina, optic nerve, etc) and perceive from a disembodied vantage point. Contemporary surveillance operates more like a skin, as an extended bodily screen that limits access to a privileged interior while simultaneously preserving its sensory power. Hille Koskela further develops the confining potential of video-surveillance technology. She suggests that controlling male gaze extends through screens and cameras into the built environment, turning the city into a giant panopticon.<sup>21</sup> Koskela suggests that the built environment and the perceiving camera are best understood as a single networked entity, united for the purpose of bodily control.

Surveillance creates a strange doubling of the body by, as Virilio writes, removing “individuals and pictures from social context[s and] translating them into ‘data’ that can be analyzed in a discrete form, exchanged freely and recombined to provide a seemingly objective representation — or ‘data double’ — of individuals.”<sup>22</sup> Virilio posits that the dominance of the vision machine will eradicate the significance of space. He condemns architecture to the same fate, claiming that when “deprived of objective boundaries, the architectonic element begins to drift and float in an electronic ether, devoid of spatial dimensions, but inscribed in the singular temporality of an instantaneous diffusion.”<sup>23</sup> In contrast, I argue the vision machine enhances and enriches the physical dimensions of the built environment by overlaying social, temporal, and vectoral information. When joined together in the form of surveillance architecture, these spatial and visual infrastructures create a rich field of multi-sensory perception that exponentially enhances the power of architecture to monitor and regulate bodies.

Virilio postulates with astonishing prescience — he was writing in the late 1980s — a time in which all distance will be obliterated in a relation of instantaneous, yet mediated and mechanized, communication. In predicting a time in which objects perceive with unseeing eyes, Virilio quotes artist Paul Klee: “now objects perceive me.”<sup>24</sup> This phrase identifies a crucial doubling of perspective inherent in the optics of a vision machine. Virilio is concerned with the implications of this “splitting of the viewpoint, the sharing of perception of the environment between the animate (the living subject) and the inanimate (the object, the seeing machine).”<sup>25</sup> His fear steams from an anxiety about experiencing a sort of cyborg parallax, in which his senses are at once his and not his own. I argue that there is another type of optical doubling created by the vision machine. While surveillance architectures and their associated technologies fulfill Virilio’s prediction, it is the self in addition to the viewpoint that is fractured. Human beings under

surveillance are perpetually in double vision. Two self-images hang in asymmetrical balance, one digital and one corporeal.

This optically fractured self is best understood in the context of fear and insecurity. Mo-nahan argues that a new kind of citizen is being constructed by the rhetoric of homeland security: the insecurity subject.<sup>26</sup> This fear comes in part from the doubling of self-image produced by surveillance architectures. Michael Foucault writes, “the idea of *dangerousness* mean[s] that the individual must be considered by society at the level of his potentialities and not at the level of his actions”<sup>27</sup> (original emphasis). People must now be concerned about the potentialities of their monitored self. This environmental anxiety produces the insecurity subject. In *The Administration of Fear*, Virilio introduces the concept of an information bomb that “comes from instantaneous means of communication and in particular the transmission of information. It plays a prominent role in establishing fear as a global environment because it allows the synchronization of emotion on a global scale.”<sup>28</sup> Virilio argues that the acceleration of daily life and the proliferation of monitoring technology create this climate of fear. In addition to a fear of terrorism and bodily injury, the insecurity subject also suffers from an ontological fear.

To exist in this world is to live with a digital silhouette. Surveillance architecture reduces the body to fragments of data and shimmers of identity. Vincent Mosco shows that “the drive to use communication and especially the new media of cyberspace to expand the commodification process now includes personal identity.”<sup>29</sup> I argue that is no longer possible to live in the contemporary Western world without generating a wake of monitored data. To move, purchase, communicate, work, and occupy space all provoke surveillance from the unblinking vision machine. I argue that this condition, rather than being existentially distressing, is a vital component of how people understand themselves in the 21st

century. One cannot fully exist in the present moment without an accompanying data-self. Even if that self is produced through morally suspect surveillance practices, it is an ontological imperative. We are watched therefore we are. If a 'data-double' does not exist in the databases of the Department of Homeland Security or Google, it means one of two things: that a person is radically marginalized from society or that they do not exist. Surveillance architecture has played the role of Echo opposite the mass-Narcissus of hypermodernity. Preoccupied with the shimmering reflection of new technology, we are oblivious to or unbothered by the echoes our presence provokes.

I, following the lead of Monahan and other surveillance scholars, argue that the current widespread surveillance architectures are a product of neoliberalism. The American government increasingly sought to gather information about its citizens in the name of national security. Similarly, in the private sector, the widespread proliferation of Internet-enabled technology led to the commercialization of personal identity. Data has value for marketing purposes and to regulate potentially threatening bodies. Thus, it is in the best interests of both government and industry to facilitate and collaborate in the development of widespread surveillance architecture. While the current condition emerged from a morally ambiguous context, I argue that surveillance technology and its integration in the built environment is not necessarily a negative condition. "Imperatives to collect, share, analyze, and act on data increasingly shape the activities of public institutions, private companies, and individuals. The capabilities of new media technologies simply augment this particular drive, which is unchecked or under-regulated in most domains, and the realm of national security is no different."<sup>30</sup> While the current condition emerged from a morally ambiguous context, I argue that surveillance technology and its integration with the built environment is not necessarily a negative condition. One possible form of

resistance is to re-imagine the context of dominant surveillance architectures. I will briefly present three alternate frameworks for understanding the vision machine: as a sensitive network, as a portrait gallery, and as a one-to-one real-time map of the world.

In her book, *Moving without a Body*, Stamatia Portanova introduces the potential "to capture, store and manipulate movement, abstracting it from the body and transforming it into numerical information, a data flow that can be used to activate further physical or mental, technical or creative processes."<sup>31</sup> One example of the sensory potential of buildings is a residential space equipped with motion sensors. While ostensibly designed to detect intruders, this technology can also function in positive ways, such as activating lights for a benign individual. The home senses presence within itself. The home senses presence within itself. Dialed into a wider sensitive network based on architecture enhanced by interconnected information technology, it can respond altruistically to human stimuli. The power of these sensitive, sensible networks lies in their ability to precisely locate, and respond to, a body in time and space. This sensitive network extends Virilio's concept of the screen as skin, granting it further sensory powers that mimic the human body. He notes, "even my skin finds an echo in screen interfaces. The surface of the body becomes an emblem of my finitude."<sup>32</sup> Cameras become eyes. Sensors become skin. Data centers remember and learn like a brain. Each building becomes a node in a responsive, responsible nervous system.

Monahan argues "Surveillance functions in a polyvalent way to mediate and regulate interactions among people, organizations and the built world."<sup>33</sup> While the dominant opinion of this process is negative, its inherent mechanics do not necessarily run contrarily to human liberty. While this sensing network may share some similarities with the body, it still converts images into the language of binary digits and pixels.

Technologies treat the human body as a quantity that can be monitored and converted into dots.<sup>34</sup> This act of translation may help to mitigate some concerns about privacy, casting the sensible network as a benign stranger. Luciana Parisi goes one step closer towards granting this type of system sentience, describing “a world in which algorithms are no longer or are not simply instructions to be performed, but have become performing entities... [they] construct the digital spatio-temporalities that program architectural forms and urban infrastructures, and are thereby modes of living.”<sup>35</sup>

Another alternate imaginary of security culture and surveillance architecture casts data centers as grand portrait galleries. The network has constructed profiles of nearly every citizen in the Western world. The word profile connotes a social media identity as well as a criminal description, but an alternate reading of “profiling” instead suggests portraiture. Citizens are captured in silhouette, not for the purposes of profit or control, but instead in the context of the gallery: for display, contemplation, and celebration. Re-imagining government surveillance as a mass curatorial exercise may seem like a naïve proposition. But I argue that it is a vital form of cognitive resistance. There are physical buildings that store the screened lives of billions of people. These are public spaces in that they store copies of the public. A potential future of surveillance architecture involves the liberation of these images. The third re-imagining of the contemporary surveillance condition involves the possibility of developing a one-to-one, real-time map of the world. In theory, a state of total surveillance would render a perfect double of all territory and terrain. Virilio would argue that such a map would complete the process of space/time compression, obliterating both dimensions. I argue that such a technology is not as far-fetched as it sounds. In essence, this is the project of Google and other technology companies: to index all the worlds’ information and represent it in real-time. Every person would become embedded within a

universal map. Jeremy W. Crampton, building off of Heidegger, argues that “mapping is not just using a map, but also... a constituent part of being-in-the-world.”<sup>36</sup> In this sense, surveillance, in combination with geo-architectural information gathering, becomes a form of global cartography and of personal identity-production.

In conclusion, I argue that we already live within a sensitive network, under constant surveillance. Moving, communicating, purchasing, and living in the contemporary world create wakes of data that are captured, controlled, and monetized by government and corporate entities. Architecture and the built environment have fused with information technology, personal recording devices, and communication infrastructures to create a network that can sense and perceive. High-powered data processing sites combine disparate sources of information to create digital profiles of individuals. This condition approaches a state of total surveillance, exponentially increasing the ability of architecture to monitor and regulate human bodies. Despite clear infringements on privacy and on the body, the public remains largely complicit in this reality. While the political ramifications are troubling, they should not overshadow an exploration of the philosophical implications of this condition. Nor should they obscure the potential benefits of an architectural network endowed with the abilities to sense and perceive.

#### Notes:

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33. Monahan, *Surveillance in the Time of Insecurity*, 8.
34. William G. Staples, *Everyday Surveillance*, 11.
35. Luciana Parisi, *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics, and Space* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), ix.
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# I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE: The Effects of Colonial Heteronormatization and the Nuclearization of the Native Family Unit on First Nations Sexuality

By: Cherie Sommer

In late 2012, inspired by my seminar class on Northwest Coast art, I set out to diversify my tastes and understanding of Contemporary Native art. With so much of what my professor, Charlotte Townsend-Gault, considers to be Native-art-as-usual motifs, it was a shock to enter contemporary Native artist Nicolas Galanin's show *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE: Fine Wood Working* at the Trench Gallery in Vancouver.

Immediately upon entering, I found myself drawn to the back corner of the gallery space. Well, more so, the huddle of confused female attendees intensely considering something that I couldn't quite yet see. There, perched on a pedestal and enclosed in a glass box, was a carved wood version of the male masturbatory icon: the Fleshlight. Not knowing what it was, the irony of the piece's title, *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE: Fine Wood Working*, was lost on these women. For me, having spent several years of my life attempting to open my own sex toy retailer, the nature of the Fleshlight was inseparable from male sexuality, pornography, and the thought of "Finally, a sex toy just for men!" So as the other women discussed what it *could* be, I blurted out "It's the Fleshlight! The sex toy!? Isn't that awesome!". Their faces tightened.

Obviously, my delight in the piece could not be hidden. But what was the lineage to Galanin's concept? And how had our sexuality become so disconnected from what it was? Certainly, to address this, the clue was hidden in Galanin's juxta-

position between this piece and the other across from it: a literal non-Native man sitting on a chair carving another Fleshlight entitled *White Carver*.

As nations and communities have become intoxicated by the same *Youtube* videos, music and film icons, the proliferation of social networks such as *Twitter* and *Facebook*, the differences between and the forces that *made* us have become increasingly disguised. These globalizing aspects are especially visible in terms of sexuality; Yet, what exactly are the terms of this sexual melting pot? This paper will attempt to trace a lineage of sexuality, as displayed in Nicolas Galanin's recent exhibition *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE*, to the heteronormative and desexualizing nature of colonialism on Native communities. By addressing heteronormativity and desexualization practices during colonial times, we will see that as the Native cultural practice of kinship was being replaced by the nuclear-family model, modes of sexuality altered as well, manifesting itself as sexuality-as-usual: heterosexual, monogamous, and within the bounds of "Holy Marriage." It will also address the binaried relationship between Galanin's pieces, asking whether this is a direct effect of colonization, or more readily a visualization of a globalizing world schematic.

## Setting the Groundwork

To fully understand the impact of Euro-american colonization on the mental, physical, and sexual health of First Nations communities, it is appropriate to first discuss the measures that they took to implement their own discourses onto the Native body. As scholarship progresses, there is no doubt that the effects of early Christian Missionary programs and Residential schools have been extremely detrimental on First Nations communities; of which the longlasting generational effects have been linked to suicides, violence within the home, incest, and sexual abuse. Under the Indian Act of 1876, Canadian law stipulated that Native people were under the

“care” of the Government. Native children were placed in Residential schools with limited access to basic resources, force-fed dogmatic religion, and often suffered mental, sexual, and physical abuse from their “caretakers.” And rather than the five hours of academic instruction that “regular” children received, Native children only received two and of which, with a limited English vocabulary for some, much was poorly understood. The remaining time of their day was devoted to agricultural and trade training, creating the *perfect* National cheap labour source.

With an approach of “muscular Christianity” in Residential schools, Canadian missionary and governmental programs sought to completely rid the Native population of their “Indianness.” In 1945, an American official saw Canada attempting to, “[enable] the extinction of the Indians as Indians is the ultimate end of Canadian Indian policy.” Part of getting the “Indian” out of the “Indian” was the colonizers’ desire to reshape Native sexuality and matrimonial practice. In *It Is a Strict Law that Bids Us Dance*, Arthur Ray discusses the shock by missionaries who witnessed traditional Kwakiult matrimonial practice; among matrilineal groups... traditional marriage customs gave the impression that young girls were being “sold” for the goods exchanged when the marriage pledges were made and the unions celebrated... Even more shocking to them was that some Native women engaged in prostitution to raise money to pay for the family-sponsored potlatches.

As the colonizers took over First Nations land in North America, a dramatic shift occurred in the social structure of their communities, homes, and ultimately, bedrooms. In Mark Rifkin’s 2011 book, *When Did Indians Become Straight?*, he addresses how as Euroamerican bodies colonized North America through violence and Missionary programs, Native communities lost their sovereignty and were embedded into sexual discourses and categories that were not their own. By implementing a plan of “detrrib-

alization,” Euroamerican colonizers grossly used Residential schooling to “regulate social interaction between the sexes” by keeping them separated (only under strict regulations could they speak to their own siblings of the opposite sex, if at all), and attempting to rid Native children of any ties to their culture’s sexual discourses, courting methods, and practices.

As Mark Rifkin outlines, the restructuring of entire Native societies came with the implementation of a Euroamerican focus on the nuclearized family. By shifting the family dynamic from communities to father-mother-child units, Native people were forced apart; in cultures where interaction and oral histories taught by Elders is essential to identity creation, separation by vast distances is an unsettling notion. Certainly, part of this process was to deterritorialize First Nations communities, thus easily facilitating new land ownership, exploitation of resources, and assimilating Natives into the mainstream.

Early depictions, in both art and photography, of the “Native” were very often made in Eurocentric nuclearized family unit. Photographer Edward Curtis recreated the stale and archaic conditions of the “noble savage” over and over. With his 1929 piece, *Family Group Noatak Etriptychkimos*, one sees the smiling faces of the perfect Native family unit: a father-mother-child, not unlike Joseph-Mary-Jesus family unit. While most of Curtis’s large body of work focuses on portraiture of individuals, of the few families that he depicted, most are of the Father-Mother-Child triptych.

By othering Native social, sexual, and community practice in language (by using the term “kinship” to denote a difference), Governmental bodies sought to fully immerse the Native body into a Capitalist family construction and dissolve traditional Native family ties. Kinship sought to use family as a means “to retain larger family ties that provide financial, social, and emotional support.” Certainly, by shattering the

family with Residential schooling, further destabilized kinship ties and histories. Kinship, according to Rifkin, codes the Native “as aberrant or anomalous mode of (failed) domesticity when measured against the natural or self-evident model of nuclear conjugality.” Relocating and deterritorializing Native families forced them to depend on smaller and smaller social networks, ultimately limiting the Natives’ choice of partner for sexual and emotional fulfillment.

The making of a heteronormative and monogamous Native body is fundamental to colonization. While it is difficult to find much scholarship on the making of the heterosexualized and colonized body, much recent scholarship has been devoted to Two-Spirit and LGBTTQ First Nations. Discriminatory language like the term “berdache” to denote sexual othering of homosexuality, cross-dressing, or transgendered bodies, further evolved the colonizers’ aim to “detrribalize” and institute capitalist and religious terms of the nuclear-family unit.

By addressing this, it becomes clear that projecting a nuclear-family model onto the Native body excludes and further others peripheral sexualities and orientation. This Native body and family unit must be heterosexual, or, as a homosexual Native body, it must be used for the sole purpose of objectification, abuse, or profit. Arthur Ray quotes a Residential school interviewee: “I was first sexually abused by a student when I was six years old, and by a supervisor, an ex-Navy homosexual when I was eight. Homosexuality was prevalent in the school. I learned to use sexuality to my advantage.” While abusing the victimized homosexual body, the Euroamerican colonizers simultaneously dismissed and vilified recognition of homosexual and transgendered peoples within Native culture, namely the Two-Spirit population.

So what exactly was pre-colonial and pre-Christian sexuality? Makka Kleist, in her essay entitled “Pre-Christian Inuit Sexuality”,

describes the way in which the Inuit peoples approached sexuality; “In our pre-Christian culture sexuality was considered a necessity to the body, as much as food and water, and hence we didn’t have so many taboos or hidden agendas regarding sex.”<sup>1</sup> Kleist then further delves into a story about an outsider being welcomed into the bed of a man’s partner; suggesting that sex was a comforting method, used to convey trust and as a welcoming practice. This story illustrates the drastic difference from Christian narratives concerning the sexual body, wherein matrimonial monogamy is about procreation, sex is not for pleasure, and certainly is not a necessity to well-being.<sup>1</sup>

#### Examining a Selection of Artist Nicholas Galanin’s Work

With a Tlingit/Aleut First Nations background, the Sitka-born (Alaskan) Nicholas Galanin uses a variety of artistic mediums and methods to express concepts of contemporary Native identity, discrepancies in Western/Native art vernaculars, and growing issues of colonization and globalization. A look at one of his earlier pieces, *Killerwhale* is indicative of Native-art-as-usual motifs and production. When speaking of his work and its subsequent departure from Native-art-as-usual, Nicholas Galanin says the following:

*But I was sitting down for an interview and I was discussing a piece of work. It was a copper mask that I created for the exhibition and the copper mask was a customary Northwest object I suppose, I noticed the interviewer was really prodding certain types of questions out of me like “tell me about the spirituality of this piece...” and blah blah blah. And I just kind of realized that there was nothing from my experiences injected into that work. I felt like it was more of a study of my culture’s history and the aesthetic process of creating that type of work as opposed to anything that was relevant to my experiences. That’s a pretty common thing in that side of the art world;*



the conservatism and romanticism that follows a lot of indigenous culture. About that time, I felt like I needed to be honest with my experiences and my voice and my work.<sup>2</sup>

A globalized attitude and binaried approach is particularly evident in *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE*. The name itself implies an outside perspective, an othered now doing the othering. While it may be part of a shock value narrative, the disjuncture between the naming and the globalized feel of his most recent works is palatable. His popular 2006 piece shows a spilt image of Princess Leia mirrored against the more traditional image of a Hopi Native woman; the iconic Princess Leia hair looks tight and neat as juxtaposed against the messy knot of the other woman,<sup>1</sup> yet their faces look remarkably alike. The name of it is what is intriguing; Galanin called the piece *Things Are Looking Native, Native's Looking Whiter*. For Galanin, the illustration of binary juxtapositions between Native and White seems to be one of his greatest themes.

With *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE*, Galanin has taken a mass produced object, the Fleshlight, and has given a Native voice to it by reworking it from the slippery pink texture of the toy's plastic to a traditionally carved Native wood version; the irony of doing so shows us the *disturbing* nature of White<sup>1</sup> culture and sexual expression. By placing it within an enclosed glass box, on a white pedestal no less, Galanin is also commenting on the fetishization of Western fine art and gallery practice. Yet, when one sees the juxtaposing piece, a non-Native (Caucasian) man carving another Fleshlight entitled *White Carver*, the anger in Galanin's binary shines through. When asked about the two pieces, Galanin said that the carved Fleshlight symbolizes "The colonizer's penetration into Native community and culture."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, as one looks at how the carved surface of *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE* very closely resembles veins that could be on an actual vagina, the heterosexual positioning of the piece leaps out. Perhaps what is most in-

teresting about his wooden Fleshlight is that it depicts a vagina (which only a heterosexual penis would penetrate), rather than one of the other more sexually ambiguous Fleshlight models (i.e. nondescript, anal, mouth). As well, the very nature of a looking at a representation of a Fleshlight is gendered. Rather than the more *universalized* terms of a dildo, not all women (or even all men) know what it is, making it an inside joke.

With titles like *Things Are Looking Native, Native's Looking Whiter* and *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE*, it's hard to know if Galanin is attacking binary discourses or emphasizing them for the sake of it. In a continuation of his series *The Imaginary Indian*, Nicholas Galanin's *The Curtis Series* places us within this disjuncture of the sexualized and stylized nude. Titled after the ethnographic photographer Edward Curtis, who was discussed earlier, Galanin's *The Curtis Series* draws on the *posed quality* of the former's work. With pin-up lighting, the photographed woman strikes us with her nudity, and yet more shockingly, with the romanticized Native-art-as-usual mask that disguises her identity. What is so interesting is that this work uses a non-Native woman and Chinese-mass-made mask to illustrate that there is no "supposed" Aboriginal identity; the juxtaposition of varied social imaginaries shocks us into questioning their naturalization. With this series, it seems as if Galanin wants to discuss identity in more globalized terms; sexuality, identity, and mass consumption are global phenomena that affect both the producer and the consumer (regardless of location). The Chinese-made mask shows us the globality of Western and Native identity production; the consumption and commodification of Native art is now part of a global discourse and up for reinterpretation.

Nicholas Galanin's *I LOOOOVE YOUR CULTURE* also nods to the evident failing of the nuclearization of the Euroamerican and Native family units. As divorce rates rise yearly and reproduction rates decrease in First World countries, the

disillusionment of the nuclear-family model has become clear. While some sex toys may aid relationships, the alienated nature of the Fleshlight and lack of partner-driven activities to be performed with it suggest an inherently lonely user: alone in his apartment watching pornography online.

To thread his artistic argument, Galanin often utilizes sexualized themes to shock the viewer into seeing cultural binaries and points of difference; he uses his relative youth and *alternative* viewpoint to address what Native-art-as-usual motifs cannot. Yet, it seems that by his attempts to be an artist-as-transgressor, Galanin more aptly points to global narratives of sexual alienation, loss of intimacy, and the destruction of kinship and the family unit. While his work does address these issues, as argued before, the *postcolonial*<sup>1</sup> framework of heteronormativity and even the very dissolution of the nuclear-family points to the existence of these discourses on the Native body throughout colonialism. His work points to Western versus Native binaries, but also shows the globalizing trends of identity production and sexual expression. Examining both the long history of desexualization practices on First Nations communities, by means of missionary and governmental programs like Residential schools, and Galanin's interpretation of modern Native sexuality (in terms of binaries), reveals global trends towards alienation by means of disappearing intimate family and kinship bonds.

#### Notes:

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