

Introduction

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The sensory awareness of the world is fundamental to art. Art is a world-making activity. The relationship between the sensory faculties and the formal practices of art always lead to the production of multiple worlds. This book explores this relationship between the real and the imagined, the material and the virtual worlds of art. It puts the sensory activity of world making into the heart of our understanding of the political. Given the rapid and profound nature of change in the world, we introduce a wide range of perspectives and concepts. In particular, we focus on the responses initiated by artists and an examination of the intersections between artistic practice and theoretical speculations. In the context of art, the essays in this book address current social issues such as the impact of migration, the 'war on terror' and global financial crisis as well as questioning the transformations produced by new forms of flexible labour and the digital revolution. The broad aim of this diverse collection of essays is to provide an insight into some aspects of the function of art in a globalising world. This is not to claim that art is now doing the work of politics but rather to see how art is a vital agent in shaping the public imaginary. The book addresses this in three ways. It outlines resistance to the politics of globalisation in contemporary art, presents the construction of an alternative geography of the imagination and reflects on art's capacity to express the widest possible sense of being in the world. In short, this book explores the worlds that artists make when they make art.

Art, politics and participation

One of the inspirational starting points for this collection has been Gerald Raunig's book *Art and Revolution*.¹ Raunig translated Deleuze and Guattari's terms deterritorialisation

and reterritorialisation, smoothing and striating, to redefine the conceptual framework for understanding the context and processes for the production of art. We extend this mode of addressing art from such a framework formed by the dynamics of displacement and reconnection. This perspective is vital because the world is becoming increasingly polarised. The emancipatory rhetoric of globalisation has been overtaken by the grim realities of precarious existence and the politics of fear. In the broad sphere of contemporary art some barriers have been broken. For instance, the incorporation of artists from almost every part of the world has challenged the Eurocentric modernist canon and undermined earlier racist classificatory systems. However, new divisions are appearing. Why is the power of so few artists so much greater at a time when the democratisation and popularisation of participatory processes is also at its zenith? Given the unprecedented cosmopolitanisation of the art world, why are 50 per cent of the artworks shown at Documenta 12 and the 2007 Venice Biennale produced by artists who now live in Berlin? Gregory Sholette quite rightly claims the vast majority of the artworld exists in a creative equivalent to what physicists call dark matter. That is, over 96 per cent of all creative activity is rendered invisible so as to secure the ground and concentrate the resources necessary for making the privileged few hyper-visible.²

In this context of gross inequality, where for one reason or another the overwhelming majority of art is ignored, devalued and rejected, it is necessary to develop a new approach towards the critical function of art. The radical aim is not to simply widen the aesthetic terms of entry and extend the art historical categories of reception, but to develop a 'subaltern' perspective on the multitude of artistic practices, rethink the conceptual frameworks for addressing the interplay between art and politics, and open up the horizon for situating the flows between the perceptual faculties and the contextual domain. This shift in approach and thematic understanding is also driven by transformations in the conditions of artistic production, the logic of cultural participation and the status of the image in contemporary society. The bulk of artistic practice now arises from a mixed economy of production.

Many artists now work in a collective environment and adopt collaborative methodologies. Even artists who prefer to work alone in their studio are outsourcing more and more of the technical production of their artwork. At a time when art is being subsumed into brand culture the hand of the artist is also becoming less and less visible.

The position of the public has also moved away from that of passive receivers of information towards a role as active co-producers and participants in shaping their own experience. The proliferation of images, the diversification of visual techniques and the incorporation of visual images into communicative technologies also produced a phenomenon that we define as the 'ambient image'. In this context the image is not just a pervasive element in everyday life, but its function has come to dominate other communicative practices. The boundary between the image and other forms of conveying information and knowledge is now blurred. As Hou Hanru argues in this volume, the institutions of art cannot exempt themselves from the prevailing economy of commodification and the society of the spectacle. However, he also observes that artists are deconstructing the conditions of visibility and creating images that possess a mysterious afterworld, what he calls an 'incarnation' of the fuzzy space between doubt and certainty. Lucy Orta also provides an example of her collaborative practice that demonstrates a joint commitment to both aesthetic experience and activism for social justice. This task is not pursued in a secondary or supplementary manner. Neither her art practice nor her political involvement is conducted as a belated adjunct to the other. Orta not only makes the point of combining her political aspirations into her artistic projects but also mobilises all the art world's infrastructure into the development of the artwork. Museums and galleries are therefore not just stages for displaying her art, but also organisations that can be coordinated into collective public action.

As critics and curators engage with artistic practices that have assumed a wider scale of public interaction or situated their artwork in the general urban environment, it becomes necessary to approach these artistic events and objects with a perspective that is more attuned to the process of public

feedback. To critically reflect on the effects of the 'ambient image' will require more than a critique of the institutional context of spectatorship. This will involve an examination of the image beyond the formalist and sociological paradigms that tended to construe it as a unique object that contained a specific message. By contrast, an 'ambient perspective' will note how the image is formed through a fluid process of looping networks, and proceed from the assumption that its social meaning has no certain endpoint. The logic by which the social meaning is connected to aesthetic experience becomes even more open-ended. Meanings can proceed in multiple directions and, while this enhances the democratic impulse in aesthetic participation, it also sharpens the ambivalence that has trailed in the wake of image. Plato never trusted images. He argued that they were primarily a means to distort reality and deceive people. In the present context of networks for both the global circulation and the corporatist appropriation of the image the task of critical interpretation is even more poignant.

Net activist and theorist Geert Lovink argues that artists are struggling to maintain their role as leaders in the 'Twitter revolution'; he also notes that curators are finding it difficult to develop tools to survey the vast visual material floating on the net. The first wave of net.art in the 1990s experimented with manually written HTML code of the then brand new World Wide Web. The aim of this work was to reverse and deconstruct the utopian communication design of the dotcom era. A decade later, the so-called Web 2.0 is popularised, corporatised and even more controlled. How do artists, critics and creative workers respond to the rise of blogs and social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace? Leading scholars in the field of new media Jean Burgess and Scott McQuire both claim that new conceptual models and methodological approaches are necessary to engage with the complex modes of public participation in the virtual environment. The question that recurs in these essays is, can we re-invent the spaces for creative intervention in digital culture?

Such questions have been at the forefront of artistic collectives. The core aim of Critical Art Ensemble, RTMark, The Yes Men and Institute of Applied Autonomy was to 'hijack'

the new media technologies that had been made accessible by global capitalism, and reroute them towards alternative modes of civic generosity, corporate unzipping, public revitalisation and general mayhem. These groups would organise media pranks that mocked the duplicity of universities and art institutions, exposed the hypocrisy of politicians and swarmed the websites of major corporations. But rather than using strategies that called for outright opposition and confrontation, these collectives developed new kinds of hit-and-run electronic guerilla tactics. Inspired by the writings of Michel de Certeau on the practices of reclaiming everyday life, these groups organised themselves along a flat and open structure, rejected the idea that they were visionary leaders who could spearhead the changes to come for the rest of society, and embraced the concept that utopia was an imaginative state that needed to be experienced in the complex layers of 'now time'. With ironic micro steps and a holistic vision of human freedom, they proposed that the potential for revolution was already in their everyday relationships rather than in a haughty manifesto for the future. From high profile interventions by 'The Yes Men into Dow Chemicals' and Union Carbide's reparations for the damages to the people in Bhopal for the 1985 chemical disaster,³ to countless acts of everyday resistance, there is now evidence that artists are incorporating the tactics of cultural activism into a broader reconceptualisation of the common good and the contest for public space.

In 1996 the curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud observed that artists had already developed sophisticated responses to the radical transformation of public space.⁴ This transformation had been generated by the rise of informal networks and social entrepreneurship, as well as the contraction of state support for public institutions and civic spaces. Amid these structural changes there has also emerged a new discourse on the function of creativity. Sociologists have taken a leading role in both promoting the innovations produced by cultural agents and protesting against the precarious working conditions that are endemic to this 'lifestyle'.⁵ The spread of this ambivalent perspective on creativity has also prompted a more nuanced awareness of the place of contemporary art in capitalist network. First, it has not only highlighted the

polarising and unequal distribution of rewards within the cultural sector, but it has also helped focus attention on the tendency to reduce the merit of artistic work to a narrow form of instrumental welfare benefit and immediate financial return. The instrumentalisation of art has proceeded at pace with the growing rhetoric that ‘everyone is now creative’.

Second, the dispersal of creativity into all aspects of everyday life provides a conceptual challenge. In the early parts of the twentieth century the formation of a creative industry was linked to the mass production and standardisation of culture. The critical discourse developed by Teodor Adorno from the Frankfurt School highlighted the extent to which the public was repeatedly duped. In the current context, the technologies of cultural dissemination have become more dispersed and the complicity between producers and consumers is far more interconnected. Hence, the role of the critic is no longer confined to exposing the means for manipulation and forms of deception. Critical thinking now requires more than showing how the public is the victim of false and distorted messages. This is not an entirely new step; rather it is a move from ideological critique towards a genre that gives more space to the interplay between the virtual and actual world. It is a genre that resembles the mode of writing that Taussig calls ‘fabulation’ and Latour calls ‘poetic writing’.⁶

Third, recognising that public consumption of dominant cultural forms is not an automatic sign the public imaginary is being dominated has also provoked the need for a more nuanced view of cultural agency. More recently, Raunig has argued that it is necessary to unpack the links between the dominant forms of cultural production and the processes of cultural participation.⁷ The conceptual frame proposed by Raunig addresses a cultural dynamic, formed by the double functionality of forces, that produces both disconnection between positions that are inside the system and feedback towards those outside it. From this perspective, it is possible to think in terms that exceed conventional and oppositional binaries. In the first section of this book we present a range of theoretical texts and accounts of artistic strategies that demonstrate critical engagement with the status of the image, the institutions of art and the spaces of public culture. The

approach most favoured by the contributors acknowledges complicities and seeks to work through the inherent contradictions rather than flee towards a utopian alternative. There is a move away from oppositional models of art and politics, with their clichéd declarations of protestation, towards modalities that explore the political through the ambivalence of a participative logic in art.

The geography of the imagination

One of the most persistent barriers to understanding the complex interpenetration of the cultural field and the process of hybridisation in cultural practice arises from the assumption that the local is somehow separate from the global. While the idea of the global has become a banal feature of discourse in contemporary art, and there is due recognition of its association with a decline in the purchase of national frameworks, the meaning of the local is increasingly positioned as negative. The global is usually associated with mobile forces and defined in opposition to entities or institutions that are firmly located in a particular place. The influence of ideas or values that are embedded in local places, therefore, are often set up as if to collide with more aggressive globalising forces.

The meaning of place has become a central issue in understanding contemporary art. To what extent is art bound to a place and how does this affect its capacity to address the world? In a recent article for *Artforum* the American art historian David Joselit asks: 'What is the proper unit of measurement in exhibiting the history of a global art world?'⁸ Joselit notes the nation is still the fallback framework for explaining the historical context of art. However, he rejects the view that the locus of art's belonging is confined to territorial boundaries. He proposes an alternative dual perspective. First, he focuses on the biography of artists. He astutely notes that artists are forever 'shuttling between their place of origin and various metropolitan centers while participating throughout the world'. He also aims to reinvigorate the avant-garde idea of an artistic movement as an organising principle for contemporary art. This idea is promoted because it combines the unifying process of a distinctive philosophical concept or aesthetic style, with the physical mobility of people and ideas

within a network.⁹ Hence, Joselit proposes that contemporary art can be mapped in relation to various movements that have assembled in a given place and succeeded each other in time.

We would contend that the unit of belonging in the world is bigger, more diffuse and in some sense also more place-based than another trans-territorial unit. The trans-territorial conception of globality in the art world still retains a fundamental faith in art as a generator of 'newness'. The artworld's attraction to the diasporic condition, an emergent cosmopolitan order and the challenge of globality, is repeatedly framed in an economy that translates the foreign into the familiar. This is the economy of metropolitan benefit, whereby the centre accumulates as the periphery donates. It is the same economy that reduces aesthetic practice to a machine that feeds the ever-hungry desire for novel forms and objects. This attitude towards art as a producer of different forms, new perspectives and more accurate representations of the world is a central element in the validation of modern culture. Hence, the dominant conception of modernism accentuates a specific idea of modern subjectivity. It retains the belief that artists have the ability to see the world anew, and to create objects of value. However, much of the motivation driving the recent re-evaluation of modernism and the growing popularity of contemporary art is sustained by the underlying belief that artists are the source of an ever-expanding supply of globally branded commodities and the trend setters for global fashion. The corollary to this is that the globalising appetite for contemporary art is showing a scant regard for the way art provides a form of place-based knowledge.

We argue that a different kind of worldiness is also in motion in the world of contemporary art. There are so many worlds within the art world that it is now impossible for a curator to be a global surveyor. Artists now literally throw themselves into extreme conditions, assume the role of mediators in complex cultural crossroads, give form to nebulous threshold experiences and create situations in which the imagination can take each participant into an unknown world. Between these worlds are the heavy extremities of unfulfilled hopes and the realisation of apocalyptic fears. According to Cuauhtemoc Medina, a curator and writer working in Mexico,

globalisation has not lead to the refinement of a cosmopolitan subjectivity—so that the peoples of the world are more sensitive towards each other’s needs and appreciative of their cultural difference—but on the contrary has heightened exposure to physical violence, economic instability and the disruption of social norms. Through the work of Theresa Margolles he sees an effort to explore the jagged interplay between the global and the local in its most visceral manifestation: the spilling of blood in the service of narco-trafficking. Margolles’s installation contain traces of the victim’s blood.¹⁰ Medina insists that Margolles’s art is not confined to an exercise in ethical meditation on trauma, or a psychological mourning of loss. The work, he declares, makes an attempt to relieve the pain, but it also directs our consciousness back into the hot sensation of violation. At this level of material confrontation Medina finds a compelling instance of the way artists have a habit of both putting their finger into the wound, and creating a more direct cartography of interconnection between the global and the local.

Ranjit Hoskote also explores the dialogue between local artistic practices and the wider discourses circulating in a global arena. He asserts that, despite the negative connotations of belatedness, the periphery is often a far more dynamic theatre of development than the centre. Danae Stratou’s essay addresses the general process of translation between sensory awareness of the external world and the creative process of image formation in the inner world. The movement between sensation and imagination is, she argues, a restless journey, and in the video installation *The Globalising Wall* (2012), it has prompted her and collaborator Yanis Varoufakis to explore the numerous walls erected either as a consequence of political hostility or as an attempt to thwart the movement of people.¹¹ Australian artist Callum Morton tackles the thorny of issue of deprovincialising the imagination of gatekeepers at the metropolitan art institutions. Working from two anecdotal references to Australian art that display a European curator’s disdain and a European intellectual’s dismissal, he exposes a legacy of guilt and envy lurking in the blind spot of the colonial imaginary.

The poetic essay by the Native American collective

Postcommodity zooms into the worlds that lay within words. The text is a reflection on the their installation *With Salvage and Knife Tongue* (2012), a generative video featuring American and Australian Indigenous people articulating lines of an indigenous empathic poem about the displacement of people.¹² Throughout this section of the book, contributors question the extent to which the local and the global are constantly interpenetrating each other and explore the need for a new conceptual framework that speaks to this process. They unzip the conventional hierarchy between local and global and assert that place really matters in art. As Hoskote argues, artists do not confine their imagination to their place of origin, and in order to capture the meld of the local and the global that constitutes the 'armature of place across our planet' he opts for a perspective that highlights regional flows.

Into cosmos

Cosmopolitanism is another concept increasingly adopted to address a wide range of functions. It is used to define the dynamics of cultural exchange between the local and the global and explain the agency of artists that are prominent in the global artworld, and also serves as an overriding frame for the space of contemporary art. Curator Nicolas Bourriaud claims that contemporary artworks are invariably translating local and global forms.¹³ Artists are seen as exemplars of a new global self.¹⁴ Biennales and festivals are seen as platforms for bringing ideas from all over the world into a new critical and interactive framework.¹⁵ These are contestable propositions. However, our concern in this section is not to expose the gaps in curatorial surveys, question the embodiment of a cosmopolitan subjectivity or even dismiss global art events as a cultural smokescreen for corporate capitalism. Rather than pursuing a polemical engagement with the structural balance between global opportunities and deficits, we seek to explore the aesthetic possibilities inherent in the cosmos of art.

Exploring the cosmos of art is not the same as the art historical surveys of the global art world. The ambitious surveys of artistic developments across the world, whether conducted by teams distributed across different regions or directed by a solitary figure who has sought to integrate

emergent trajectories and classify diverse practices into a new hierarchy, have stumbled before a fundamental problem.¹⁶ To have a total worldview of contemporary art is now impossible. Art is produced at such a rate and in so many different places that no one can ever see the whole. The events and horizons of contemporary art have become resistant to any totalising schema. However, by bringing into closer focus the elemental terms of globe and cosmos we seek to develop an alternative exercise in imagining the aesthetic forms of connection and being in the world. A simple distinction may help. In the most banal uses of globalisation there is very little significance given to the key term 'globe'. The world is treated as a flat surface upon which everything is brought closer together and governed by a common set of rules. Globalisation has an integrative dynamic, but a globe without a complex 'ecology of practices' would not have a world.¹⁷ A world is more than a surface upon which human action occurs. Therefore the process of globalisation is not simply the 'closing in' of distant forces and the 'coordination between' disparate elements dispersed across the territory of the world. As early as the 1950s Kostas Axelos made a distinction between the French term 'mondialisation' from globalisation. He defined mondialisation as an open process of thought through which one becomes worldly.¹⁸ He thereby distinguished the empirical or material ways in which the world is integrated by technology from the conceptual and subjective process of understanding that is inextricably connected to the formation of a worldview. The etymology of cosmos also implies a world-making activity. In Homer, the term cosmos refers to an aesthetic act of creating order, as well as to the generative sphere of creation that exists between the earth and the boundless universe.

Cosmopolitanism is now commonly understood as an idea and an ideal for embracing the whole of the human community.¹⁹ Everyone committed to it recalls the phrase first used by Socrates and then adopted as a motif by the Stoics: 'I am a citizen of the world.' Indeed the etymology of the word—derived from cosmos and polites—expresses the tension between part and whole, aesthetics and politics. In both the Pre-Socratic and the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, this tension was related to cosmological explanations

of the origin and structure of the universe. In these early creation stories the individual comes from the abyss of the void, looks up into the infinite cosmos and seeks to give form to their place in the world. It is also, in more prosaic terms, a concept that expresses the desire to be able to live with all the other people in this world. This ideal recurs in almost every civilisation. In the absence of this ideal materialising as a political institution, it nevertheless persists and reappears as a cultural construct in each epoch. This tension between the residual cosmopolitan imagination and the absent historical form of cosmopolitanism also appears to be a constant in the artistic imaginary. We claim that artistic expression is in part a symbolic gesture of belonging to the world. This wider claim about the perceptual and contextual horizon of art arises from the belief that it draws from ancient cosmological ideas and the modern normative cosmopolitan ideals.

For the Stoic philosophers in the Hellenistic era, the concept of cosmopolitanism was expressed in an interrelated manner — there was spiritual sense of belonging, and aesthetic affection for all things, as well as political rumination on the possibility of political equality and moral responsibility. Since the Stoics the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of cosmopolitanism have been truncated. By the time Kant adopted cosmopolitanism as a key concept for thinking about global peace, the focus was almost entirely on deprovincialising the political imaginary and extolling the moral benefits of extending a notion of equal worth to all human beings. Since Kant, the debates on cosmopolitanism have been even more tightly bound to the twin notions of moral obligations and the virtue of an open interest in others.

Cosmos, for our purpose, refers to the realm of imaginary possibilities and the systems by which we make sense of our place in the world. The broad themes examined by Jan Verwoert, Linda Marie Walker, Paul Carter and Barbara Creed — spirit, heart, empathy, mystery, void, vortex, universe — are taken as starting points for reflecting on art as a world-making activity. What sorts of worlds are made in the artistic imaginary? Can we grasp the cosmos of art if we confine our attention to the traditional methods of iconography and contextual interpretation? Is something else necessary?

Jan Verwoert revisits the art historical approaches of Warburg and claims that 'sympathetic animism' still provides a basis upon which we relate to art. Verwoert focuses on the function of radical empathy and the mediating role of the material objects of art. It is through these 'things', such as the marble of sculpture, that we establish a sense of connection. However, this experience of sharing is paradoxical. While we may have not participated in the shaping of the material into an aesthetic object, our experience of the matter of art inspires both an ethical and aesthetic sense of shared experience. From the artist's perspective the process of empathy and creative engagement with the world also proceeds through the material manifestation of an object such as a drawing or sculpture. This material form articulates a sense of solidarity with an external thing in nature. However, this act of aesthetic representation also refines the artist's attunement with and participation in the world.

Linda Marie Walker extends the recent investigations into the process of empathy to the ancient idea that aesthesis begins with breathing in the world, and the proposition that the seat of imagination rests in the heart. This is not a retreat into sentimental romanticism but a step towards overcoming the stultifying divide between thinking and feeling. Walker insists that our insight into the world-making activity of art is dependent on our capacity to train the imagination to find its place in the cosmos. It is from this perspective that we seek to highlight the aesthetic dimensions of cosmopolitanism. In fact, we will claim that the dominant emphasis on the moral framework and the disregard for the aesthetic process has constrained the scope of being cosmopolitan. Expressing interest in others or recognising the worth of other cultures are no doubt worthy moral stances, and necessary if we are to engage in any dialogue about what is possible in a world in which rival viewpoints jostle for space. But if this approach is defined exclusively in a moral framework, it also constrains the very possibility of being interested in others. In short, if interest in others is subsumed under the moral imperative of feeling obliged to respect others, then the possibility of an aesthetic engagement is subordinate to a normative order.

But from where does the impulse of conviviality come? Let

us take a few steps back to the idea that cosmos is an order-making activity. Cosmos is not just a counter to the condition of chaos, and an intermediary zone between the material earth and the boundless space of the universe, but is also the fundamental activity of making a space attractive for others. We suggest that a cosmos starts in the primal desire to make a world out of the torsion that comes from facing both the abyss of the void and the eternity of the universe. This act of facing is a big bang aesthetic moment, filled with horror and delight. Our aesthetic interest in the cosmos is therefore interlinked with the social need for conviviality. The everyday acts of curiosity, attraction and play with others does not always come from a moral imperative, but also from aesthetic interest. Do we possess a language that can speak towards the mystery of this interest? Art history, and the humanities in general, have struggled to develop a language suitable for representing the mercurial energy of aesthetic creation. The pitfalls of the two extremes—between either narcissistic mystical illusionism or empirical instrumentalism—is most evident in the contrast between Romanticism and Marxism. Verwoert argues that the deeper challenge is to overcome the obsession with authenticity and mimesis, and consider how empathy with nature leads to a form of ‘non-exclusive being in and belonging with the world’.²⁰

The aesthetic dimension of cosmopolitanism begins with the faculty of sensory perception and the process of imagination. We begin with the proposition that an act of the imagination is a means to create images that express an interest in the world and others. Imagination is the means by which the act of facing the cosmos is given form. Imagination—irrespective of the dimensions of the resulting form—is a world-picture-making process. Therefore, the appearance of cosmopolitan tendencies in contemporary art are not just the cultural manifestations of globalisation. Paul Carter also rejects the neocolonial vision of globality as a starting point for thinking about the cosmos in art. He begins his essay with Emanuel Swedenborg’s work *Heaven and Hell* and explores its influence on artists like William Blake.²¹ Carter claims that Blake’s understanding of imagination was drawn from a belief in the inheritance of angelic intelligence and a prophetic power to

look into the future. For Blake, poetic responsibility extended to both the infinite and the minute. The figurative representation of this micro-macro-cosmic correspondence is found in the image of the vortex. Carter claims that the artist is the revolver, the stirrer of the face of the water, always suspended between self-reflecting narcissism and insight into the deep.

Barbara Creed focuses on the divide between humanity and animals, while also discussing the way artists cross the frontier separating the material from the immaterial. Death is the paradoxical point that connects human with animal. Creed argues that many species of animals have demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of dying, death and grief. Some species even enact thanatosis or 'feign' death as a survival strategy. This form of 'playing' with death is suggestive of a fascination with the power of the void. Drawing from Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and Joseph Beuys's elaboration of the role played by the shaman as mediator between human and animal, life and death, Creed asks whether it is possible for the artist to enter the abyss and represent the way in which human and non-human animals encounter the void?

Creed observes that representations of the void appear in forms that connote both an expansive and intimate sensation. The abyss can be thought of as an encounter with the empty dark space beneath the ground and the void as the wide endless expanse that can engulf everything. Yet, this sense of the infinite that heads in two directions from the inside and the outside always starts from the body. The body both contains and is surrounded by the infinite. Hence, the appearance of the abyss in the microscopic details of everyday life and the awareness of the macro scale of the void produce a kind of ambient consciousness of being. Julie Rrap also noted that George Bataille's concept of the 'formless', which has been influential in the way we understand the relationship between body and ground in both surrealism and feminist art practices, was also a philosophical intervention that sought to cleave open the categories that distinguished visual perception from sensory comprehension.²² Bataille proposed a wider spectrum of awareness and an ambient perspective that challenged many of the fundamental postulates of subjectivity and knowledge. From this modality one is forced to think of the

subject not just as an omniscient ‘seeing-eye’ that represents the world that is ‘out there’, but as a sensory body composed of and surrounded by communicative matter.

The ultimate aim of this book is to expand our understanding of art by reconfiguring the debates on the politics of aesthetics within the imaginative sphere of the cosmos. It presents a focus on art that combines a wide range of theoretical, curatorial and artistic approaches. Collectively they examine artistic practices that are driven by the desire to capture the world in a single image, as well as the social impulse to construct networks that contain generative and competing viewpoints. Through the assemblage of diverse voices and perspectives we have also been forced to rethink the scope of key concepts. Cosmopolitanism is usually understood as both a descriptive term that refers to metropolitan situations in which cultural differences are increasingly entangled, and as a normative concept for representing a sense of moral belonging to the world as a whole. More recently, the concept of cosmopolitanism has been applied to the political networks formed through transnational social movements, and the emergent legal framework that extends political rights beyond exclusivist territorial boundaries. In its most comprehensive mode the concept of cosmopolitanism also assumes a critical inflection whereby it refers to the process of self-transformation that occurs in the encounter with the other.

Cosmopolitanism thus captures a diverse range of critical discourses that address the shifts in perspectival awareness as a result of the global spheres of communication, the cultural transformation generated by new patterns of mobility, the emergence of transnational social networks and structures, and the processes of self transformation that are precipitated through the encounter with alterity. However, the normative discourse on global citizenship does seem rather lonely and out of touch. Our hope is that by addressing the contemporary forms of aesthetic cosmopolitanism we can also reinvigorate both the sensory awareness and a more worldly form of belonging.

Notes

- 1 G. Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century*, trans. A. Derieg (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007).
- 2 G. Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 3.
- 3 See <<http://theyesmen.org/hijinks/dow>>.
- 4 Nicolas Bourriaud, 'An introduction to relational aesthetics', in *Traffic*, ed. N. Bourriaud (Bordeaux: CAPC Musée d'art contemporain, 1996).
- 5 L. Boltanski and E. Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. G. Elliott (London: Verso, 2007).
- 6 M. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); B. Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 225-48.
- 7 G. Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge*, trans. A. Derieg (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013).
- 8 D. Joselit, 'Categorical Measures', *Artforum* 51, no. 4 (2013): 297.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 V. Lynn, *Restless: Adelaide International 2012*, exhibition catalogue (Adelaide: Adelaide Festival Corp., 2012).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 N. Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, trans. J. Gussen and L. Porten (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009).
- 14 M. Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- 15 N. Papastergiadis and M. Martin, 'Art biennales and cities as platforms for global dialogue', in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, eds L. Giorgi, M. Sassatelli and G. Delanty (London: Routledge, 2011): 45-62.
- 16 H. Belting and A. Buddensieg eds, *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets and Museums* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009); T. Smith, *Contemporary Arts: World Currents* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2011); N. Papastergiadis, 'Can there be a history of contemporary art?', *Discipline* 2 (2012): 152-6.
- 17 I. Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, trans. R. Bononno (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010).
- 18 S. Elden, 'Introducing Kostas Axelos and the "World"', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006): 639-42.
- 19 G. Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20.
- 20 Jan Verwoert, discussion during keynote address, Adelaide Festival, 3 March 2012.
- 21 Emanuel Swedenborg, *De Caelo et Ejus Mirabilibus et de inferno, ex Auditibus et Visis* (*Heaven and its Wonders and Hell From Things Heard and Seen*), 1758.
- 22 Julie Rrap, response to keynote address by Barbara Creed, Adelaide Festival, 6 March 2012.