"These things are fun and fun is good."

-Dr. Seuss

University of Alberta

Preventing Predictions: The Political Possibilities of Play and Aesthetics in Contemporary Installation Art and Works by Carsten Höller and Gabriel Orozco

by

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for my perpetually playing mother

Abstract

This thesis analyzes contemporary participatory installation art, play theory, especially Johan Huizinga's seminal *Homo Ludens*, and the aesthetic theories of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* and Jacques Rancière's *Politics of Aesthetics*. *Ping Pond Table* 1998 by Gabriel Orozco and *Test Site* 2006 by Cartsen Höller are studied to illustrate how play and the aesthetic can become political by repositioning the contemporary 'viewer' as an active and playing participant in the artwork, prompting an awareness of the matrix of power between audience, artwork and institution, and by creating the possibility for dynamic social roles. This thesis, like the artworks it examines, invokes a conception of play as a vital construct of culture rather than simply the domain of childhood imagination. Overturning the dominant concept of play and reinstating play in adult life becomes a political act because it engages adults in liberated, creative thinking that challenges traditional, consumer-driven, practical and thus 'constructive' behaviours.

Key words: Installation Art, Participation, Play, Relational Aesthetics, Contemporary Art, Orozco, Höller, Bourriaud, Huizinga, Rancière, Politics, Art History, Tate Modern

slide now. we all fall
a square pond, with green around
free play array

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Introduction

In the last forty years, large, and even imposing, three-dimensional artworks have confronted and enveloped audiences in the enormous exhibition spaces that have accommodated them. Installation art that requires audience participation has become a prominent, significant and fascinating contemporary artistic practice. The isolated and autonomous sculptural object is no longer a primary focus for many artists, critics, curators and institutions; the aesthetic *experience* is now the focus. This thesis examines contemporary installations that engage viewers' bodies in novel ways that instigate a sense of play. It considers the theoretical and historical situations that have motivated contemporary artists, curators and institutions to turn towards playful and participatory installation art and the implications thereof.

While installation art and participation in art have been the subject of several recent publications, such as Claire Bishop's book *Installation Art* (2005) and the volume she edited called *Participation* (2006), the significance of play within contemporary installation art has received little attention to date. More specifically, play theory has not been comprehensively cross-pollinated with contemporary theories of aesthetics and participation in art to uncover the potential political possibilities extant in contemporary aesthetic experiences that are predicated on play. The significance of play as a component in the practise of contemporary art, specifically installation art, will be explored in this thesis. The conjecture is that the open structures of play and installation art enable the mobility of social roles and therefore creates the possibility of political critique.

Chapter one of this thesis considers the history of installation art, play theory and participation in art (active versus interactive work) and establishes the

contemporary situation of installation and participation in art. Since the 1960s artists have re-conceptualized aesthetic experiences. The minimalists, influenced by phenomenology, considered how the body of the viewer interacts with objects and the space that contains and surrounds them. The Situationist International (SI) and Fluxus artists considered how viewers can become involved in the process or situation of art making through active participation in the production process.[1] Sometimes the result of SI and Fluxus artworks and interventions was not an object at all, but rather a collective experience. Both the SI and Fluxus strove to dissolve the boundaries between art and life in an often ludic manner. The increasing emphasis by artists on a more active aesthetic experience effectively shifted attention away from the art object and transformed the viewer from a passive body into an active body. In this way, diverse movements like Minimalism, Fluxus, and the SI critiqued the art object and invited active viewer participation in the aesthetic experience. Allan Kaprow and John Cage created works that were open texts; they functioned as instructions that provided opportunities for viewers to complete the works and thereby become actors and collaborators. Performance artists also invited viewers to participate, introduced temporality, and made co-presence an integral aspect of art. The ephemeral quality of these works is reiterated in participatory installations.

Chapter one also introduces key play theoreticians, such as Johan Huizinga who discusses art as play in the seminal text *Homo Ludens*,[2] Friedrich Schiller who considers the play factor in art in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, and psychological understandings of play. With respect to these theories of play, I consider the political impetus to play and its outcomes.

Chapter two critically examines how curators and changes in the contemporary art institution, specifically Tate Modern, have accommodated installation art and play. It considers the museum's relation to both pedagogy and public space and how the museum attempts to maximize individual participation. It questions how and why institutions and curators are organizing exhibitions that welcome play and participation.

Offering free admission, Tate Modern attracts an unparalleled audience; on average four million visitors flood through Tate's doors every year. Some critics argue that these massive crowds dwarf the artworks themselves. They regret the loss of the somatic, contemplative and contiguous relation to artworks and resist the large-scale installations that institutions like Tate Modern embrace. Granted, the size and number of visitors to Tate Modern does affect the experience of art; however, as Tate Modern curator Jessica Morgan writes

> it seems oddly perverse to insist on an experience of art as limited to a certain scale or to a particular type of observation. The 'publicness' of the museum, has after all, historically been at the heart of its mission, and though we may occasionally lose one form of artistic experience, surely there is the potential for others.[3]

The many people that visit Tate Modern introduce as many possibilities. In the space of the large public art institution, like Tate Modern, contesting views can meet and make such alternative thinking possible.[4] Art institutions can share the attributes of other public spaces such as the library, the community centre, the laboratory and the academy for informed, intelligent and curious discourse.[5] The museum can also act as a stage, wherein institutional public space is constantly transformed by audiences who act as central players and performers.[6]

Chapter two also discusses Nicolas Bourriaud, whose 1998 book *Relational Aesthetics* develops a theory of aesthetics (relational aesthetics) that takes into account

the prominence of participatory art practices in the 1990s. He argues that artworks that involve the audience are political because they create interstitial spaces and micro-communities in which people interact with one another; these inter-subjective relations provide a much-needed opportunity for people to communicate with one another in a concrete way that contrasts with the increasingly abstract exchanges of a technocratic society. This allows for more intimate forms of exchange, akin to the contemplation of an art object but more interaction than usual in large institutions. This chapter examines Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics and puts it in relation to the theories of Jacques Rancière.

Inspired by Joseph Jacotot (1770–1840), Rancière's theories are predicated on the principle that "all people are virtually capable of understanding what others have done and understood [...]. Equality is not a goal to be attained but a point of departure, a supposition to be maintained in all circumstances."[7] Rancière considers the distribution of the sensible as the unequal distribution of privilege among the roles that individuals occupy in society. Rancière says that the police function is to oversee and maintain the stasis of the places of the roles in society.[8] When this supervision is interrupted the *political*[9] sequence begins that allows a properly anarchic disruption of function and place, a sweeping destabilization of roles and their permissible actions.[10] "A community is political when it authorizes forms of subjectivation for the uncounted, for those unaccounted for."[11] According to Rancière, politics is always possible, but not imminent.

For Rancière art can become engaged in the political because the aesthetic presumes equality and enables people to step outside of their prescribed roles, causing a destabilization of roles, a redistribution of the sensible. The aesthetic experience is an

active one, not a passive one, which all people are capable of having and which allows people to imagine political configurations that are otherwise inconceivable. Through the aesthetic people can question the prevailing social distribution of roles and the way that society allocates power and authority.[12] They can be the voice of "floating subjects that deregulate all representations of places and portions,"[13] thus destabilizing normative functions and behaviours. The political implications of the aesthetic can be adapted to other situations.

In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière argues for the blending of all art, in opposition to modernism's assertion that each art should have its own form and autonomy. This means that art does not need to adhere to any particular content that distinguishes it from the everyday. The preoccupation, based on rules, with making objects correspond to appropriate forms of representation — which assures art's alterity from non-art — is abandoned. Premised on an axiom of equality, in *the aesthetic regime of art*, which follows the ethical regime of art and the representational regime of art, the various hierarchies of the other regimes are abandoned and "the absolute singularity of art"[14] is asserted. This creates a paradox because any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity is destroyed. The aesthetic regime of art "simultaneously establishes the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself."[15] With the absence of representational norms comes endless confusion between art and non-art.[16] In the aesthetic regime of art, art is defined by its very identity with non-art.[17] That is, art as such ceases to exist because everything becomes artistic. This implies the equality and anonymity of the beautiful, which is latent in the simple and ordinary.[18] For Rancière, "the ideal of art becomes the

conjunction of artistic will and the beauty or poeticity that is in some sense immanent in everything, or that can be uncovered everywhere."[19]

Rancière's position on politics and aesthetics is useful in this thesis as a complement to Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics, which presupposes a political aspect to relational art without defining what the exact political programme of the artworks is. According to Rancière, the absence of a political narrative that guarantees the political meaning of an artwork presents the condition of possibility for the political because it opens the work up to the virtual rather than something specific and practical in human experience.[20] In this thesis Rancière is used to clarify Bourriaud's theory by offering an explanation as to how participatory artworks that are premised on equality create, but importantly do not guarantee, the possibility of a political situation. Although neither Rancière nor Bourriaud advocate art that engages directly with politics, they both suggest that there is a relationship between art and politics, which they address in their understandings of the aesthetic. The variety of artists and the accompanying variety of approaches they take in *Relational Aesthetics* ensures that no one approach towards the political can be characterized within Bourriaud's understanding of relational art; therefore, despite Rancière's rather critical stance on Bourriaud, it would seem that relational art maintains the spaces of possibility that, for Rancière, enable the political to emerge within and through the aesthetic.[21]

Traditionally, aesthetics is disinterested rather than embodied, and contemplative rather than participatory. Both Immanuel Kant and Schiller discuss play and the aesthetic as non-utilitarian. For Schiller, play is rational and sensual. According to both Schiller and Huizinga play must also be free, and therefore not constructive. Like the aesthetic, play occurs outside of ordinary life. Although play has not been

addressed with the seriousness of the aesthetic in philosophy, it can be as utterly intense and absorbing as the aesthetic. For Carsten Höller, play and the aesthetic occur outside of the useful; however, Höller is putting play and use in relation to the museum, from which they are traditionally excluded. This exemplifies a new contemporary understanding of the art museum, where contemplativeness and disinterest are more standard than play and use.

Chapter three considers two installations, Gabriel Orozco's *Ping Pond Table*, 1998, and Höller's *Test Site*, 2006, as specific demonstrations of the political potential of play and the aesthetic in contemporary participatory art installations. *Test Site* is a series of five large slides that were temporally installed in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern as the seventh instalment in the Unilever Series.[22] *Ping Pond Table* consists of a square lily pond surrounded by four semi-oval ping pong table pieces that was part of the *Common Wealth* exhibition held at Tate Modern in the fall of 2003 and curated by Jessica Morgan. This chapter examines how artists like Höller and Orozco take up theories of play and the aesthetic and refer to the history of both installation art and participation in art. These works have been selected for detailed analysis because they demonstrate the internationalization of contemporary art, illustrate the theory of relational aesthetics, and specifically address play. The political aspects to these works are subtle and open. Rather than being obviously didactic they operate politically by creating playful social situations for viewers to participate in that introduce many possible outcomes.

These works challenge the role of 'viewer' and suggest a potential reformulation of the contemporary 'viewer' of art as a participant rather than a spectator. These works challenge the term sculpture as it is historically defined by using media not traditionally

associated with sculptural practices, introducing viewer participation, interaction, inclusion and play, and negating the monumental, commemorative and figurative function of sculpture within the art institution. In *Ping Pond Table* and *Test Site,* viewers are attracted by the materials, engaged in the activities they perform with the materials and potentially surprised by the works' location within artistic institutions. This undermines the art object's autonomy and results in activated, interactive and embodied participation that challenges modernist conceptions of medium-specificity and the subjects' primarily non-corporeal aesthetic experiences with art. These works probe the inviolability and permanence of the art object and suggest transitory collaborative aesthetic experiences involving active participation and embodied interaction as an alternative.

The play-element in both *Ping Pond Table* and *Test Site* is contingent upon participation but significant in its own right. The playful imperative in these works is non-utilitarian. In this way these works are radically opposed to the capitalist work ethic, much like the *dérive*, a favorite play form of the SI.[23] Collective play was an important component of the *dérive*. This parallels Bourriaud's discussion of the micro-communities created through participation in art. Whereas the SI attacked the institution of the art gallery (and of art as such), Höller and Orozco seem to work symbiotically with it. The active participation imperative in these works necessitates a novel mode of interaction in art institutions that incorporates play and movement. The implication is that play becomes a meaningful form of communication and discovery, a valuable process of understanding that transcends the way in which the concept of play is often dismissed as frivolous and childish.

Although play is to some extent being embraced by museums like Tate Modern, I plan to demonstrate the value and importance of play as a political issue independent of institutional interests through my exploration of the theoretical, philosophical and artistic interest in play. Considering the participatory aspect of installation art, in conjunction with the theory of relational aesthetics and play theory I argue that these two playful works are political and representative of larger shifts and innovations in contemporary art practice that respond to globalization, environmental concerns, the proliferation of social media, and the abstract exchanges of capitalism. Play and participation in contemporary installation art have the potential to be political because (1) they create tangible forms of interaction amongst audience members – a form of exchange outside of capitalist exchange, (2) play and participation can induce the awareness of oppression and inequality and their potential eradication and (3) the forms of play and participation experienced incite creative thinking that operates outside of societal norms and structures.

Argument

The aesthetic and play operate through a purposeful purposelessness that distinguishes them from the rest of the world.[24] In the realms of both play and the aesthetic, roles become destabilized and vacillate, which disrupts the distribution of the sensible. Despite their purposeful purposelessness, both play and aesthetic experiences can generate meaningful outcomes; however, it is crucial that the outcomes remain open because at the moment when the possibilities become predetermined or predictable both play and the aesthetic are hindered and the political potential of play and the aesthetic is evaporated. Play and the aesthetic can be considered as means to

eschew the predetermined quality of lives framed by rigid social hierarchy and repetitive work.

This argument proceeds by setting up the contemporary situation of installation art, considering the history of play, examining theories of participation (with special attention to relational aesthetics), examining the nature of play, looking at the players in contemporary art institutions, and conducting two case studies.

Notes

1. Even though the SI and Fluxus are both concerned with play, their approaches are very different. These differences are discussed in Chapter 1.

2. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1944) (London: Routledge, 2003), 165, 169.

3. Jessica Morgan, "Turbine Höller," *Test Site*, ed. Jessica Morgan (London: Tate, 2006), 12.

4. Charles Esche, "Temporariness, Possibility and Institutional Change," *In the Place of the Public Sphere?,* (Berlin: B Book, 2005), 133. While the art institution makes certain kinds of experience possible, it also makes others impossible. Walter Benjamin addresses this situation in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in his discussion of older modes of art that were not made for mass reception. See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"(1936), *Media and Cultural Studies: Key works*, 2nd edition, eds. Meenakshi Gigi, Douglas Kellner (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005) Part XII, 29.

5. Esche, 138.

6. Morgan, *Test Site*, 13.

7. Jacques Rancière, *Le Maître ignorant (*Paris: Fayard, 1987), 229 cited by Peter Hallward, "Politics and Aesthetics: An Interview in Angelaki," *Angelaki* 8.2. (Aug. 2003), 192.

8. For Rancière *police* refers to all the social and political forces that determinedly attempt to maintain things, activities and people in their proper functions and places. John Kelsey, "The Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Artforum,* (March 2007): 264.

9. Rancière writes that, "If 'politics' has a meaning, and a meaning that applies to everything we seek to elaborate as specifically political, for me its meaning is just this: there is a whole that constitutes itself other than as a collection of existing parts. For me, this is the only condition under which we can speak of politics. Which doesn't stop there being states, communities, and collectivities, all of which operate according to their different logics. But we must distinguish this very specific form, where the capacity for power is attributed to those who have no *particular* ability to exercise it, where the accounting of the whole is dissociated from any organic conception, from the generality of forms of assembly, government, and domination." See Rancière in Hallward, 198.

10. Hallward, 192.

11. Rancière, in Hallward, 198.

12. Hallward, 192.

13. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 99–100 cited by Hallward, 192.

14. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 23. In the "ethical regime of art," artistic images are considered on the basis of their utility to society. This regime equates the role for the artist to craft and labour. In the "representational regime of art," art operates with its own rules and is separated from and elevated above common craft. This regime corresponds to an elevated and newly bourgeois status of artists. See Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics,* 43.

15. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics,* 23.

16. Hallward, 193.

17. Rancière, in Hallward, 206.

[18] Rancière refers to Stéphane Mallarmé's "ordinary" splendor, which implies the anonymisation of the beautiful. See Rancière, in Hallward, 205.

[19] Rancière, in Hallward, 205.

[20] Christopher Collier, "Part 6: Jacques Rancière vs. Nicolas Bourriaud," (9 Feb 2010) <http://christophercollier.blogspot.com/2010/05/part-6-jacques-ranciere-vs-nicolas.html> (16 Aug 2010).

[21] Rancière considers Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics to be an ineffective moral revival in the arts. See also page 66 of this thesis and Collier's "Part 6: Jacques Rancière vs. Nicolas Bourriaud," op. cit.

[22] For an overview of the other Unilever Series projects in the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern see Morgan Falconer, "A space odyssey," *Art Review* (October/November 2005): 12-15.

[23] Rancière, in Hallward, 205.

[24] *Purposeful purposelessness* is John Cage's term for the paradox that explains art; art is created as an intentional frame that draws attention to life, but the art in itself is without a practical purpose and the experience of it is non-intentional. John Cage, "Experimental Music," (1958) in Cage, *Silence* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 12.

Chapter 1: Installation Art and Participation

Installation Art

The term *installation* as a nomenclature for a type of site-specific three-dimensional art emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and continues to be popular today.[1] To varying degrees, installations create total environments that refer to their architectural surroundings, envelop viewers and drastically affect spatial perceptions. The total environments that installations create have been widely discussed in the history of art of the late twentieth century; however, an involved and extensive investigation of how viewers participate and play in installation art has hardly been discussed.[2] With artworks like *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table*, which so obviously address issues of play and fun, it is useful to study how and when play began to intersect with installation art. This chapter considers the related histories of installation art, participation in art and play in art to understand how past artistic practices and concerns are manifested and modified in current participatory installation art that addresses itself to play.

Although installation art is a relatively new term, the genre has arguably always existed. Citing the caves of Lascaux, Mark Rosenthal in *Understanding Installation Art* says that installation art has "always been with us," despite the seemingly revolutionary appearance of installation art in comparison with painting and sculpture.[3] In the Baroque period, artists like Giovanni Bernini created elaborate three-dimensional sculptures that specifically addressed their surroundings and took the spatial and lighting configurations into special consideration, much like later installation artists.[4] Many modern and contemporary artists who practice installation art explicitly acknowledge the effects of the actual context of physical space that surround artworks

in a way that may have been taken for granted in the past. As employed in this thesis, installation art is defined in the manner in which it came to be known during the mid to late twentieth century: a type of site-specific artwork that may incorporate painting, drawing, sculpture, and collage in a three-dimensional form that requires audience interaction.

The genealogy of the hybrid form installation art is both complex and extensive.[5] Marcel Duchamp's *Mile of String* from 1942, in which he strung string across a room full of surrealist paintings for the vernissage of a surrealist exhibition organized by himself and André Breton, can be considered an early instance of installation in the twentieth century. The string affected the quality of the space and made viewers' access to the artworks within the space difficult. This work intervened in the space, creating confusion and playing a "behavioral game with the viewer's physical movements."[6] *Mile of String* and Duchamp's Dada legacy in general can be considered significant precursors to installation art.   After Duchamp's example mid-twentieth century vanguards, such as the minimalists, considered how their works' placement in the exhibition space influenced viewers' experiences of the works. This created an important shift in how exhibitions are organized and displayed; rather than the curator directing and deciding on how artworks are displayed in given exhibition spaces, with minimalism and especially with installation art, artists expanded their roles within exhibition spaces by specifying precisely how they intended their works to be visually *and* corporeally experienced by viewers.

Necessarily, the spatial reality of where artworks were exhibited became significant. During the 1960s many artworks were no longer easily transportable from one space to another; they were now intimately connected to the spaces of their

display; they were *site-specific*.   While both installation art and land art are typically considered site-specific, installation usually refers to interior works and land art usually refers to works exterior to gallery and museum spaces. However, in both land art and installation the artwork is intimately connected to and dependent on the site in which it is displayed. In her book on site specificity, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Miwon Kwon considers site specificity as a tactic to "resist the forces of the capitalist market economy, which circulates art works as transportable and exchangeable commodity goods."[7] Site-specific artworks cannot be easily purchased because they are so closely linked to their sites and they typically exist in pre-owned spaces that affect and interact with the artwork itself; however, unless an installation is fixed permanently in a space it becomes a form of cultural capital that circulates from one site of exhibition to the next. In relation to the substantial debate about the removal of *Tilted Arc*, 1981, from the Federal Plaza in New York, the post-minimalist artist Richard Serra famously and unequivocally stated that "to remove the work is to destroy the work."[8]

Site specificity continues to be a concern for several artists working today who create artworks for certain spaces and think that moving the artworks from their intended spaces irrevocably changes them. The Unilever Series in the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern is a case in point. Few of the projects conceived for the massive and sparse space would have been possible in another venue; they were designed as one-time temporary installations in the unique location of this museum only. There are numerous complex political and aesthetic implications related to site specificity for *Test Site* in particular that will be thoroughly examined in Chapter 3; as in all site specific

works, in *Test Site* meaning is created within the specific context of its dramatic exhibition space.

Installation operates in dialogue with the architecture in which it exists, positing an interrelation between architecture, social experience, the body and its physical surroundings. The architectural context of installation art is crucial because it is already layered with meaning and history.[9] Kristine Stiles writes that "the interchange between architecture and the body is always social and political"[10] because architecture contains and thus controls and directs the movements of the bodies that occupy the space it demarcates and creates. Minimalist artists focused attention on the space of the architecture surrounding their works by eliminating the traditional sculptural pedestal that designated the sculpture as art and physically and symbolically separated it from its context. Similarly installation art is not separated from its setting with traditional framing devices; the frames often get very large or the room itself becomes the frame.

Installation art is characterized by its fluid combination of unique original and readymade objects that consist of a wide array of assorted materials. Stiles writes, "in installation art, the juxtaposition of carefully selected elements and materials can evoke powerful and moving impressions with minimal means."[11] Prior to the coining of the term *installation art*, Dada, Surrealism, Fluxus, Arte Povera, Minimalism, and Land Art combined materials outside of those typically sanctioned for use in art. This signalled a breakdown of the categorical imperative of medium-specificity as advocated by modernist critics Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried in favour of an intermingling of all media.[12] Installation artist Ilya Kabakov states that "the installation medium continues to make people nervous today."[13] Margarita Tupitsyn attributes this

nervousness to installation's all-encompassing challenge to orthodox art[14] through its consistent tendency to fluidly transition between traditionally distinct media.

In 1966, Fluxus artist Dick Higgins coined the term *intermedia* to describe "a new site of artistic activity 'between the media.'"[15] The intermedia materiality of installation works that emphasize embodied spectatorship and activate and engage viewers on a multi-sensory level requires a rejection of the modernist aesthetic ideals of disembodiment, medium specificity and art-object autonomy. Long before installation's eager acceptance of medium melanges the innovative German composer and essayist Richard Wagner, in his book *The Artwork of the Future*, first published in 1849, beckoned artists to overcome the boundaries of medium specificity and to replace subjective egoism by expressing the artistic desire of the people.[16] Wagner developed the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork) in which the artist might combine any artistic means, including architecture, music, dance, theatre and the visual arts, to create a "synesthetic environment."[17] According to Boris Groys, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* accomplished for Wagner the unity of different artistic genres, artists among themselves, and artists and the people.[18] This idea both defines and pre-empts the emphasis on authorship and medium specificity associated with modernism and foreshadows the contemporary emphasis on participatory artworks that seem to diminish the artist's authorial grip.

Michael Fried, in conjunction with Clement Greenberg, unequivocally denounced and denigrated minimalist art because of its disregard for medium specificity and art-object autonomy. Both Fried and Greenberg espoused that each medium should remain pure. For Fried visual apprehension of specific art objects took place instantaneously and the interactions between artwork and viewer were independent of

context; surrounding contexts did not factor into the experience of art. The frame separated the artwork from its surroundings and solidified its status as a form of art, not as a practical useful object. In contrast, minimalist sculpture and contemporary installation art interact with their environments and their viewers in a temporal and often ephemeral way that centres on duration.

The movements that preceded installation art, such as Land Art, Arte Povera, and Minimalism, demanded a different mode of interaction from viewers. Phenomenological theories, particularly writing by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, influenced many artists of the 1960s. Artists took up Merleau-Ponty to deconstruct the mind/body dichotomy and to suggest that bodily experiences were aesthetically significant. It follows that some of their work necessitated bodily interactions formerly unheard of in art institutions; many of these works demanded that the viewer's body be transformed from passive visual apprehender into active investigator by making viewers perambulate around sculptures in order to perceive the shifting effects of light and shadow on the surfaces of sculptures.[19] Likewise, the contemporary 'viewer' of installation art does not experience art only through visual apprehension, but rather he/she is immersed in a multi-sensorial experience that counters the passive and disembodied viewership closely associated with modernism. Contemporary participatory artworks, like *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table*, implicate the viewer's physical body in the artwork itself. These works rely on the ground laid by the artists of the 1960s and 1970s to challenge ocular dominance in the definitive move away from the primacy of visual experience. The scale and form of installation art defies passive spectatorship and results in the participation of activated viewers.[20] Installation artists explore viewers' responses,

which are deeply affected by culture, socialization, physical context, education, and diverse other factors.[21]

In *Installation Art*, Claire Bishop discusses the significant implications of minimalist installation as discussed by Rosalind Krauss in her book *Passages in Modern Sculpture*.[22] Bishop writes:

> [Krauss's] argument reflects the way in which Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the interdependency of subject and object came increasingly to acquire an ethical and political tenor in the years following 1968: the multi-perspectivalism implicit in installation art comes to be equated with an emancipatory liberal politics and an opposition to the 'psychological rigidity' of seeing things from one fixed point of view.[23]

Bishop is reiterating the political ramifications of installation art beyond institutional critique. She is suggesting that installation art can be associated with emancipatory politics because it resists the fixedness of perspective that previous art genres rely on. In contrast, installation liberates viewers from an instantaneous predetermined outcome and introduces open ephemeral interactions between artworks and their viewers, who become a part of the installation in moments of mutual presence. The temporality of these participations situates installation art outside of modernist tenets of art-object autonomy and instantaneous visual apprehension.

A Partial History of Participation

Participation in art can be traced to Happenings, Minimalism, Fluxus, the Situationist International (SI) and performance art.[24] These art practices introduced the possibility of time-based art and invited viewers to become actors and participants. In all of these practices, the artist and the audience were united in a particular location at a particular time. Viewers' presence became a necessary part of the often ephemeral art form, signalling a radical transformation of the modern separation of artists from their audiences.[25] Although collaboration was key in Fluxus, Andy Warhol's Factory and

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Guy Debord's SI, each 'group' had quite distinct projects. The aim of Fluxus is not synthesis of all artistic media, but working between media. The SI's aim was to make everyday life creative, rather than to produce a total work of art. Warhol's approach, as in the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, was a multimedia experience that is closest to the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In each of these very different movements artists had to relinquish their individuated and privileged position in relation to participants.[26] An examination of participation and play in these movements provides an understanding of the historical references to participatory artwork that Höller and Orozco present in *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table.*

Happenings constitute an important precedent to installations because, like installations, they operate between media and ephemerally within the interactive time that connects the work and the viewers. Allan Kaprow first coined the term *Happening* in the Spring of 1957; the first Happening is considered to have taken place in 1958.[27] Happenings occurred in and around New York City and describe a variety of then-new forms of theatre, which were generally more scripted than Fluxus events. Happenings shared a physical crudeness and roughness that "frequently trod an uncomfortable borderline between the genuinely primitive and the merely amateurish."[28] Happenings occurred in lofts, galleries and spaces for limited audiences, barring the later ones that were presented outdoors.[29] Kaprow succinctly summarizes the move off the canvas thusly:

> The pieces of paper curled up off the canvas, were removed from the surface to exist on their own, became more solid as they grew into other materials and, reaching out into the room finally filled it entirely. Suddenly, there were jungles, crowded streets, littered alleys, dream spaces of science fiction, rooms of madness, and junk-filled attics of the mind.[30]

This text describes Kaprow's own decisive move away from self-contained objects towards socially engaged events,[31] and emphasizes Happenings' fundamental connection to painting, sculpture and collage. Unlike the visual art in traditional media during the 1960s, Happenings also incorporated sound and sometimes even odour. Although some Happenings, like Jim Dine's and Claes Oldenburg's, were dramatic, Happenings differed from traditional theatre because they abandoned the plot and story structure with all their clichés of exposition, development, climax, dénouement, love, ambition, conflicts and revelations of character.[32]   Michael Kirby writes that the elements that traditionally present a cause-and-effect plot or even a simple sequence of events have been replaced in the Happening by a structure that can be called insular or *compartmented*.[33] The sometimes simultaneous parts do not relate to each other in a logical or sequential way that conveys information; each element of the Happening is discrete and isolatable with an *alogical* function.

Happenings increasingly developed innovative and insistent methods of forcing themselves into the spectator's awareness in a way that manipulated traditional audience-presentation relationships. Happenings were often predicated on participation, but more consistent in Happenings was a focus on the process of creation and the consideration of space. According to Kirby, Happenings do not necessarily involve audiences; spatial arrangement and control of and active contact with the spectators are matters of style; they do not constitute the form of the Happening.[34] However, Günter Berghaus writes that Happenings are "the art of participation." Citing Jean-Jacques Lebel, Berghaus writes that "Happenings are not designed to be contemplated by spectators but to force them into active intervention."[35] Happenings are premised on dialogue, the circulation of ideas (exchange) and collaboration between

subjects. As early as 1963 Kaprow's Happenings involved participation. For example, Kaprow's *Eat*, 1964, was a performance that relied on the interaction of participants and a rehearsed troupe with the aim of reawakening a "sense of communion and the miraculousness of food."[36]   Twenty visitors at a time, who had previously made reservations, entered a cave thinly covered with white paint and filled with the sound of trickling water. On a platform at the far end of the cave, on top of towers two girls sat motionless facing away from the audience. If asked, the girls would pour wine (white or red) into paper cups.   Hungry visitors were welcome to eat (or partially eat) apples hanging from the ceiling from strings, sliced bread with jam and both raw and flambé bananas (prepared by a girl with an electric hot plate). To access some of the food visitors had to climb ladders leaning against the walls of the cave. At the end of the hour long performance the twenty visitors who had wandered about through the cave were ushered out. *Eat* is a Happening that insists on active audience participation. Whether one adopts Kirby's or Berghaus' position on participation in the Happening, the primacy of the author as disseminator of ideas persists although the private idea of the artist is not necessarily conveyed with clarity to the public, which participates to varying degrees.[37]

Although both Happenings and Fluxus are generally characterized by a disordered aesthetic, a reconfiguration of audience-presentation relationships and a move away from medium specificity towards intermedia, the two 'groups' of artists are quite distinct. Fluxus was an international network of artists who often organized concerts or evenings of their performances, sometimes in New York but often elsewhere. They first began to work together in 1960, and named themselves in 1962. The members of Fluxus did not consider themselves a "group" per se but as

Owen Smith writes, "principally as adherents of an alternative attitude toward art making, culture and life."[38]   The history of Fluxus continues to be intriguing and compelling because of its complexity and diversity. Indeterminacy was a persistent element of Fluxus, which was most active between 1962 and 1978, and a part of the name Fluxus itself, which was coined in 1961 by George Maciunas as the title for a proposed magazine publication dedicated to publishing works by experimental, artists, writers and musicians.[39]   The term recalls the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who endorsed the principle of flux: "act of flowing: a continuous movement on or passing by…a continuous succession of changes."[40]

In 1963, Maciunas published the *Fluxus Manifesto* that put forward the group's goals via three variations on the meaning of the word *flux*.[41]   The manifesto declared a purging of bourgeois "sickness, 'intellectual,' professional and commercialized culture;" promoted a revolutionary living art, anti-art to be "grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals;" and a fusing of all the "cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action."[42]   The group's varied composition is an example of its aims; Fluxus performed collective activities (Fluxus festivals) with an assorted community of individuals that included visual artists, musicians, performers and the occasional chemist, mathematician and economist.[43]   Fluxus artist Dick Higgins codified nine criteria for the Fluxus enterprise: internationalism, experimentalism, iconoclasm, intermedia, the resolution of the art/life dichotomy, implicativeness, play or gags, ephemerality, and specificity.[44]   The international collective (with artists from America, the U.K., Japan, Germany, Korea, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, and Czechoslovakia) induced questions about the "nature of artistic inquiry, the relationship of art to society, and the role of innovation in the human enterprise."[45]   In

their simple, playful and humorous way Fluxus artists revealed a mode of attention to the ordinary.

Marcel Duchamp, associated with both Dada and Surrealism, and the American composer and teacher John Cage were both important influences on Fluxus artists. Unlike Duchamp who had "sought to problematize issues of art making," Cage sought "new directions to replace the old."[46] Cage considered the "imposition of mind and human will as the enemy of creation; art consisted in 'purposeless play,' charged with the imperative of 'waking us up to the very life we're living'."[47] Although Duchamp and Cage both had different desires, goals and backgrounds, their ideas converged markedly on two important points: "first, that artists are not 'advocates of high truth,' [and] second, that the effect of personality and taste should be removed from the art-making process."[48] Art historian Moira Roth has shown that Cage, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg's indeterminate positions in relation to the imposition of aesthetic or social readings from the outside arises from an 'aesthetics of indifference,'[49] in which 'amusement' and 'indifference' became positive values among a group of artists who were characteristically uninvolved in politics and uninterested in a vigorous defence of modernism.[50]

Play and participation were central to Fluxus practices. Fluxus performances generally emphasize and support human presence and enactment over the "*in-itselfness* of objects or the 'affective presence' of fine art."[51] In *Cut Piece*, 1964, Yoko Ono sat on a stage motionless after inviting audience members to cut off her clothing, which visualized and enacted viewers' responsibility in the aesthetic experience.[52] The intimate and multisensual work of Ono and other female artists associated with Fluxus invited viewer-participants to experience the body of the performer and to reflect on

their own bodies.[53]   Benjamin Patterson's *Whipped Cream Piece (Lick Piece)*, first performed during the Fluxus Concerts held at the Fluxhall/Fluxshop, New York City, 1964, called for any number of people, male and female, to lick whipping cream off of the body of a volunteer covered in whipping cream. This work confronted conservative sexual mores in the 1960s and performed consensual and mutual erotic play based on the "tactile, oral and erogenous conditions of all bodies."[54]

The play-element and interest in games and objects in Fluxus can be seen in Maciunas' many versions of altered generic ping-pong paddles: *Hole-in-the-Center Racket*, *Can of Water Racket*, *Concave Racket* and *Convex Racket*, 1970 (Figure 1). The altered ping-pong rackets underscore the idea that behavioural patterns can be redefined by changing familiar objects. The modified ready-made paddles confound the user and his/her body, "requiring its realignment with conceptually implausible behaviour as they upset physical and mental connections and conventions."[55]   The paddle remains recognizable but the player must reconsider the game because the skills demanded by the game and the patterns the players once performed must be adapted to the altered paddles, each humorous in its own way. Maciunas' changes insist that the player must learn anew and reinvent the mind/body orientations, movements and actions of the game.[56]   Maciunas' *Multicycle*, 1966, a 100-seater or 20-seater bicycle made up of adjoining bicycles is a playful reinterpretation of the single bicycle. It demands of cyclists new body balance, timing, rhythm, coordination and cooperation with other cyclists. *Multicycle* organizes the cyclists in a collective performance that challenges individuals to work symbiotically as a group, or fail collectively; "it sets the stage for participation and shifts individuation to aggregate or collective action."[57]

Figure 1. George Maciunas, Four Altered Ping-Pong Rackets (Left to right): *Hole-in-the-Center Racket*, *Can of Water Racket*, *Concave Racket*, *Convex Racket*, 1970. Commercial ping-pong rackets with mixed media, various dimensions. Courtesy of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection.

In the foreword to the exhibition catalogue *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, Kathy Halbreich succinctly summarizes the applicability of Fluxus to the study of contemporary art and art institutions:

> As the museum approaches the end of the [twentieth] century and is engaged in reassessing its functions, its aesthetic values, its very place in society, Fluxus offers a useful model for considering such issues. Anticipating the directions that many cultural institutions would seek some thirty years later, it embraced a scope of activities that were at once international, innovative, and interdisciplinary. Fluxus dared to eschew the dominant aesthetic currency of the day, dispensing with the heroism of aesthetics and the individual artist and with the hegemony of painting and sculpture. Instead it mass-produced art in small boxes and alternative places as it broke down the barriers between traditional artistic disciplines.[58]

Elizabeth Armstrong in "Fluxus and the Museum," points to the potentially ironic presentation of Fluxus in the museum given the fact that Fluxus intentionally and successfully positioned itself outside mainstream art institutions.[59] She writes, "thirty years later…museums are beginning to raise many of the same questions that have been asked by Fluxus artists, especially questions having to do with the nature of art and with previous cultural assumptions about artistic quality, value and meaning."[60] Thus, examining the history of Fluxus is apt in the study of contemporary installation artworks, such as *Ping Pond Table* and *Test Site*, which address the ordinary and the playful within the museum.

Performance art, which is greatly indebted to Happenings and Fluxus activities in the 1950s, originated in the 1960s (though it was not designated as a genre of art until the 1970s) and operated on the premise of co-presence between artists and audiences. The ephemeral immediacy of artists' performances reflected the "anti-commercial values of mid-century alternative cultures"[61] and effectively resisted the commodification of art by refusing to create tangible and lasting objects. Performance-based art also acted as a form of institutional critique because its exposition and the kinesis the works often demanded made its exhibition complex and challenging. Many performance artworks are undertaken in front of an audience that often participates, interacts and collaborates.

The performances of Cage, Carolee Schneemann, and Mona Hatoum, are examples of artworks in which audiences are a condition of the work itself. Cage's *4'33"*, originally composed in 1952, before the movement coalesced in the following decade, consists not of piano music but of the spontaneous and sundry sounds that emanate from the audience during the four and a half minutes of silence in the absence of the playing of any instrument.[62] In contrast to early staged photographic work that did not require an active audience, Schneemann's later performance pieces like *Interior Scroll* 1975 were premised on the co-presence of the artist and the audience, which comprised a crucial component of the artwork itself because performing the transgressive act of pulling a text from her vagina in front of an audience made the action more daring, memorable and impressive.[63] In the 1995 video performance/installation *Pull* (Figure 2) by Mona Hatoum the artist offers her hair to the viewer to pull on; the astute viewer realizes that the video projection is not pre-recorded but the face of the artist reacting in real-time to the physically painful

sensation that they are knowingly or unknowingly inflicting on the artist by pulling her hair, an action that is ostensibly sanctioned by the work's title *Pull*, which in conjunction with the long brown ponytail reads like an imperative to act. *Interior Scroll* and *Pull* play out gender roles and suggest eroticism and violence in relation to the female artists' bodies. In *Imponderabilia*, 1977 (Figure 3), performed at Communale d'Arte, Bologna, Italy, Ulay and Marina Abramović stand erect facing each other completely naked in the main entrance doorway to the museum, as though sentinels. For the duration of the performance, the audience must pass through the narrow space between their naked bodies, choosing to face either the female or male form, in order to enter the space of the museum. This, like Hatoum's *Pull*, literalizes the interaction between artist as performer and the audience as participant by establishing physical contact between actual bodies that are at once familiar in their representations of gender and strange in their uniqueness – the unique marks and forms that distinguish one male or female body from the other. The performance addresses the universality of the human form as well as the shame, awkwardness and crudity associated with public nudity and displays of both sexually explicit and suggestive behaviours. Abramović and Ulay use direct contact, risk-taking and sexual tension to push the boundaries of the acceptable and comfortable.

The emphasis on co-presence and interaction between the artists and audiences highlights the way in which performance art is a time-based and ephemeral medium. Stiles writes that performance artworks "announce that it is never enough to simply look at the object of an action without entering into a committed relation, a situation in which the object draws viewers back to actions completing the cycle of relation between acting subjects, objects, and viewing subjects."[64] Making time, presence and

action priorities helps performance art resist and possibly escape the commercialization and commodification that more object-based art forms are prey to.[65] Stiles focuses on the importance of subjective interaction in performance for its ability to increase the social, cultural and political importance and action of art, artists and viewers. The interactions between artists and viewers in performance art restructure the terms of the aesthetic exchange, because performance addresses the significant relationships between presentation, representation and reception in the formation of aesthetic meaning.[66]

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To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=1374777

Figure 2. Mona Hatoum, *Pull*, 1995. Live video performance and installation. Dimensions unknown. Courtesy of Christie's Fine Art Auctions.

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To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.sfmoma.org/exhibitions/306

Figure 3 Ulay and Marina Abramović, *Imponderabilia*, 1977. Photographic documentation of performance at the Galleria Communale d'Arte, Bologna, Italy. Courtesy of Marina Abramović and Sean Kelly Gallery.

From the outset Guy Debord, the leading theoretician of the SI, founded in the late 1950s, forcefully announced that the group wanted revolutionary change and global liberation from the confines of society and working life. The SI strove to destroy bourgeois values that support a pacifying culture that diverts the revolutionary and threatening aims of artists into "standard aesthetic commerce."[67] The SI sought to combine creative expression more directly with political agitation. As a filmmaker Debord developed the practice of "détournement", an inquisitive studio-based practice that involved appropriating and recombining pieces of film footage and dubbing politically subversive messages over the resulting filmic collage. Debord felt that this could revive the images' vitality by diverting them from their original intended use. Dérives, a repeated Situationist activity, consisted of novel encounters with the cityscape that countered routine. The SI's organized and extended strolls through cities are rooted in flânerie, theorized in the nineteenth century by Charles Baudelaire in *The Painter of Modern Life*.[68] Like flâneurs, the SI randomly wandered through a juxtaposition of dilapidated and wealthy districts, imagining and discussing the reality of inhabiting the various environments that they encountered. The randomness undermined the order of urban planning, of which the SI was critical.[69]

The spectrum of artistic practice from Happenings, Fluxus, performance art, the SI and installation reveals shared concerns of intermedia, temporality and politics, with varying degrees of participation from the hoi polloi. In each of these modalities the aesthetic experience is conceived of with the space necessary for the audience to interpret the artistic idea, which is presented as an open-form that encourages active participation. The spectator's participation becomes a meaningful and essential component of the artwork. According to Umberto Eco, the artwork's aesthetic merit

and validity is directly related to the number of different perspectives from which it may be understood and experienced.[70]

Play in the Visual Arts

Although a history and theory of play exists, play has never been considered mainstream artistic practice; it has existed on the periphery of the acceptable. Play has been present throughout the history of twentieth century avant-garde art; Dada, surrealism, Fluxus, and the SI all incorporated play in their practices. [71] These groups referred to the history of play in art, including Friedrich Schiller's discussion of the play factor in art in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1967), and Johan Huizinga's seminal text on play, *Homo Ludens* (*Man the Player*) (1944).[72] Schiller refers to the aesthetic impulse as the "play-drive," which combines the passive and active capacities of being to produce a unity of the rational and the sensual.[73] The play-drive unites the form-drive and the material-drive, reality with form, contingency with necessity, passivity with freedom and therefore makes the concept of human nature complete.[74] Schiller considers art as a place of freedom and play as a primary instinct and primary message-system, a means of communication.[75] Like Huizinga, Schiller was concerned with the many ways that play functions within human culture as a whole.[76] Schiller underscores that "man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays."[77] This suggests the importance of play in humans; however, Schiller also establishes a continuity between "our highest forms of aesthetic activity and our biological inheritance – between art at its most sophisticated and what he called 'material' place, whether this occurs in animals or in humans."[78]

In his introduction, and repeatedly throughout *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga refers to the aesthetic quality of play.[79] Huizinga considers play "not as a biological phenomenon but a cultural phenomenon."[80] Huizinga defines play as follows:

> Summing up the formal characteristic of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means.[81]

This definition is useful in understanding how play is being incorporated into contemporary installation art practices including *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* in particular.

Huizinga discusses art as play[82] and considers the formidable seriousness that can be expressed through play.[83] Huizinga focuses less on the plastic arts as play than on theatre, which he considers the best example of art as play. Despite Huizinga's overt reluctance to assimilate the plastic arts to the play-element, like he does with poetry and music, Huizinga does consider "play as the growing-point of art."[84] In other words, play is integral to the creative act. According to Stephen Nachmanovitch, author of *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, play is the root and foundation of creativity in the arts, sciences and daily life. He writes, "improvisation, composition, writing, painting, theater, invention, all creative acts are forms of play, the starting place of creativity in the human growth cycle, and one of the great primal life functions."[85] Huizinga argues that anthropology and other social sciences have neglected the "supreme importance to civilization of the play-factor."[86]

In the *Principles of Psychology*, Herbert Spencer explains that play is a discharge of surplus human energy.   Elaborating on Spencer's theory in *Children's Play and its Place in Education*, Walter Wood writes that

> inferior animals are obliged to expend their energy in fulfilling functions essential to the maintenance of life – search for food, escape from enemies. Man is free to a large extent from this dominion; hence a surplus of energy employed in the gratification of impulses which have no ulterior motive, but which are ends in themselves. And so the argument is young animals, freed by the protection of parents, play; children, similarly relieved from economic pressure, do likewise. Spencer, in his chapter on Aesthio-physiology, [also] gives us the physiological basis of the surplus of energy theory. He shows how nerve centres, disintegrated by action, are perpetually reintegrating themselves, and points to the tendency of ganglion cells to discharge. There can be no challenging this. It must be noted that neither Schiller nor Spencer is setting out to formulate a satisfactory theory of play; both are writing on aesthetics, and their purpose is to show how the aesthetic sentiments are derived from the play impulse.[87]

Wood is establishing a connection between play and the aesthetic on a biological level.

Karl Groos in *The Play of Man* (1899) considers play from the perspective of evolutionary biology, defining play as an "instinct whose function was to develop skills needed in maturity."[88] G. Stanley Hall, a contemporary of Groos, stated that 'tossing, swinging, and sliding' are 'laughter excitants' that activate and discharge a biologically inherited fear of height. For Hall, laughter and pain are connected; as opposite as our states of pleasure and pain are, their expression is not so dissimilar. "In some cases of immaturity, hysteria or extreme provocation, they are confused."[89] Sigmund Freud, discussing the affinity between pleasure and pain, especially in the case of children's love for repetitive play, proposed the 'death instinct' as a counterbalance to the 'sexual instinct' in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).[90] This acknowledges the fact that pleasure can often occur in spite of the fear and anxiety that can arise during its pursuit, which frequently requires one to step outside of comfortable and/or known roles or to subject one's body to forces that it cannot overcome.

Huizinga explains that because play is neither moral – not right or wrong – nor strictly physical or psychological, it must address itself to something else; he concludes that this is the "fun-element that characterizes the essence of play."[91] He goes on to characterize play as a voluntary activity, stating that, "play to order is no longer play: it could at best be but a forcible imitation of it. By this quality of freedom alone, play marks itself off from the course of the natural process. It is something added thereto and spread out over it like a flowering, an ornament, a garment."[92] Like art, "play is not 'ordinary' or 'real' life. It is rather a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own."[93] This focus on the non-utilitarian aspect of play rather than on something useful unites Huizinga, Schiller and Immanuel Kant. The non-utilitarian is the defining quality of art, according to Kant, for whom aesthetic judgments are disinterested – divorced from utility and morality.[94]

The history of play in art is full of references to Huizinga; Guy Debord and other members of the SI refer to him explicitly.[95] The SI incorporated his ideas into its own concepts of play. Significantly, the SI, whose political motivations situated them as radicals, always operated outside of the mainstream art system, which they strongly criticized. The SI, according to Libero Andreotti, "radicalized Huizinga's theory of play into a revolutionary ethics that effectively abolished any distinction between play and seriousness, or between art and life."[96] As aforementioned, eradicating the distance between art and life was also a goal of the Fluxus group. In their different geographical locations and with their different aims, Happenings, Fluxus and the SI critiqued art by using a process of play and chance to upset conventional understandings of it. These precedents, as well as the banal routines of work and institutions' need to attract and

maintain large audiences, have enabled play to become a mainstream practice in art today.

Why Play?

It is widely recognized that all young mammals share the impulse to play but in the Western world the necessity of play throughout life is not recognized as a need and biosocial necessity.[97] In *The Art of Play* Adam and Allee Blatner write that fun is an important value and that the motivation of children and adults to play is a natural phenomenon. Playfulness, imagination and spontaneity clash with seriousness, hard physical labour and unquestioning respect for authority and tradition, which were the defining values of the Western industrial age. Nevertheless, in our post-industrial age, social codes prescribe behaviour in adults that deprives them of the opportunity to make believe and role play. Personality functions best when it is expanding and/or integrating its roles.[98] The Blatners cite J.L. Moreno's observations about role playing:

> Social life has the tendency to attach a definite role to a specific person, so that this role becomes the prevailing one into which the individual is folded. Everybody is expected to live up to his official role in life – a teacher is to act as a teacher, a pupil as a pupil, and so forth. But the individual craves to embody far more roles than those he is allowed to act out in life. It is from the active pressure which these multiple units exert upon the manifest official role that a feeling of anxiety is produced. Role playing is then a method of liberating and structuring these unofficial roles.[99]

Constantly performing the same role leads to tiredness, boredom, psychic fatigue, submissiveness, and helplessness. Succour can come in the form of engaging in a role that contrasts with a previously enacted and assumed role.[100] The work and home environments of many people tend to mute emotions and demand high levels of self-control.[101] Non-competitive playing can reduce alienation in a busy, impersonal world because it enacts an enjoyable bonding force wherein the expression of the unique imagination and perspective of each individual is appreciated. Perhaps more valuable,

play fosters creativity, which empowers individuals and provides them with the skills needed to deal with ongoing changes in society.[102]

In adults who have learned to scorn the pursuit of pleasure, the fun of play is complicated and the pursuit of pleasure is often partially repressed.[103] Wholesome fun and unwholesome fun are not always distinguished from one another; fun need not be associated with irresponsible frivolity, destructive behaviors, or self-indulgent hedonism.[104] Adults may fear that playfulness will be deemed inappropriate, childish or 'crazy.' According to Sigmund Freud, "the opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real."[105] This reflects the idea that to engage in play is to risk becoming disengaged from reality and the agenda of Western progress and ritual self-improvement. Sanctioned forms of play in our culture tend to be dominated by sports and games based on competition and performance, not cooperation and shared goals.[106] Because of this, children may grow up disliking and/or fearing play because their play is corrected, restricted and compared with other children's play, which can result in teasing. When play is repressed people turn to other sources of enjoyment that can be detrimental to their social, physical and mental health, such as alcohol and drug addictions.[107]

In order to play one must be free from the inhibitions to play. Spontaneity is fundamental to play; it is even the essence of play. To be spontaneous means to transcend structure itself, question definitions and make redefinitions.[108] The Blatners write:

> Spontaneity involves a quality of mind, the active opening up which accompanies the thinking of a new idea or trying something [in] a new way. It involves thinking afresh, balancing impulse and restraint, and integrating imagination, reason, and intuition. Spontaneity is the process by which inspiration enters creativity. *It is more than mere impulsivity* because it requires some *intension* to achieve an aesthetic or constructive effect…Spontaneity also

may be understood as the *opposite* of habit, stereotyped thinking, neurotic compulsive rituals, or transferences (interpersonal patterns that mimic earlier experiences, rather than interacting with people and events in the here and now). In being spontaneous, you are open to how the present moment is different from the past, and how the people around you might be able to offer new and more rewarding experiences.[109]

Play, unlike work, is an activity done for its own sake, for fun.[110] This is not to say that the player gets nothing out of playing; is so, one would not play. The reward is the experience of the activity itself,[111] which helps balance overly materialistic tendencies in our culture.[112] The Blatners list several different expressions in which playfulness can occur, including, but not limited to, sliding, conversing, gaming, watching, exploring and sporting.[113] Just as taste motivates organisms to eat, and sexual tension and pleasure motivate organisms to procreate, play is facilitated by an "innate sense of fun that accompanies the freedom to explore alternative actions in the psychosocial context."[114] Play in adults is an active form that "freely allows the expression of intuitive and spontaneous elements, imagery and emotion, as well as reason. It is a way to integrate the richness of the subjective realms with the infinite varieties of interpersonal and objective experience."[115] As Friedrich Schiller emphasizes, play itself must be free; it must exist outside of any categorization and need not justify itself as therapy, education, personal development, art, or anything else constructive.[116]

Bob Black writes that "to be ludic is not to be ludicrous. Play doesn't have to be frivolous, although frivolity isn't triviality; very often we ought to take frivolity seriously."[117] Edward Hallowell and John Ratey consider play as a deep form of creative engagement, not as a silly and superficial activity.[118] "In play, you discover your talents and strengths. Play includes any activity in which your brain lights up and you get imaginatively involved."[119] Play enables authentic interchange between people that puts minds in a receptive and co-creative space as players share a pleasant and safe

intimacy for the duration of the play. Interrupting work cycles and habits is not just healthy, it is political because it can induce awareness of the domination inherent in work.[120] Such interludes convey a purposeful purposelessness akin to what Rancière suggests art also does in the aesthetic regime of art.

The Politics of Participation in Art

Theoretical, anthropological, sociological and philosophical writing underscore the significant political and artistic stakes in participation. As early as 1957, Marcel Duchamp, in "The Creative Act,"[121] stated that viewers complete works of art. Five years later, Umberto Eco defined open-works as "situations created by artists that involve members of the audience as participants or even partners in the art-making process."[122] Eco considers the open-work politically, in part because it expresses a pluralistic worldview.[123] In "The Poetics of the Open Work," Eco writes, "the notion of 'possibility' is a philosophical canon which reflects a widespread tendency in contemporary science; the discarding of a static, syllogistic view of order, and a corresponding devolution of intellectual authority to personal decision, choice and social context."[124] Eco considers the 'open' mode as a deliberate attempt to offer an image of the ontological and existential situation of the contemporary world.[125] Open works respond to the changing world as it is perceived by different observers and by them at different times. This highlights the importance of different viewers, indeterminacy, change and temporality in the open work. Open works present the reader with a great variety of potential meanings that can coexist without dominating one another. Presented with a multiplicity of possibilities, the reader can decide for himself/herself which approach to take in his/her interpretation of the open work.[126] For Eco, ambiguity is the "product of the contravention of established conventions of

expression: the less conventional forms of expression are, the more scope they allow for interpretation."[127] The ambiguity or indeterminacy of the open work is positive for Eco because it induces cognitive development and disrupts hierarchical, fixed and pre-ordained conceptions of orders and the cosmos.[128] The open work of art is without necessary and foreseeable conclusions and posits that the viewer's "freedom functions as part of the *discontinuity* which contemporary physics recognizes, not as an element of disorientation, but as an essential stage in all scientific verification procedures and also as the verifiable pattern of events in the subatomic world."[129] Eco cites Heisenberg's uncertainty principle as an analogy to the open work because this principle also accounts for the possibility of complementary discrepancy and difference.

Although participatory artworks, which are indeed open works, rely fundamentally on the participation of spectators, they are still guided by the creative vision of the author. Eco writes that open works require the "*theoretical, mental* collaboration of the consumer, who must freely interpret an artistic datum, a product which has already been organized in its structural entirety (even if this structure allows for an indefinite plurality of interpretations)."[130] Therefore, participation does not enact an unqualified death of the author;[131] the primacy of the artist is retained because the outcomes of participatory works, though not clearly defined, are always circumscribed by the conditions, instructions and forms provided by the artist.

Stiles argues that through metonymy participatory art forms like performance, installation and video have the opportunity of acting directly upon actual cultural, social and political situations because metonymy links artists and viewers in direct real-time events and experiences.[132] Metonymy means that a part stands in for the whole; Stiles uses the term metonymy in her discussion of participatory art forms to suggest that

they meaningfully present the real, but in a small and manageable way. The political

force of these art forms is an immediate result of their direct connection that presents

human subjects doing real things to other actual human viewers in real-time situations

and contexts linked to the viewers.[133] Therefore, these art forms utilize co-presence,

temporality and ephemerality to produce politically-charged art that responds to

cultural changes, challenges and times. It is not explicitly political or didactic; rather the

political emerges because the participatory art presents possibility and plurality as

attainable not only in the museum, but also outside of it.

Stiles echoes Kabakov's argument about the provocative nature of installation,

arguing that installation art necessarily disrupts the art-historical divisions that

stylistically divide distinct movements because installation art emphatically asserts the

fluidity between mediums and styles.[134] In Stiles' discussion of minimalism as an

antecedent to installation, she writes that minimalist installation,

> overlapped with many apparently different ideological, philosophical and
> theoretical positions from Marxism to Structuralism, psychoanalysis and
> phenomenology. Minimalism (and its related developments from Conceptual
> Art to process art) also reflected the radical political positions of the New Left of
> the 1960s, which rejected the heroic, poetic discourses of Abstract
> Expressionism and existentialism, and emphasized communal anti-materialism.
> Broadly speaking, such concerns are revealed in the so-called 'poor' material of
> the Italian Arte Povera movement and exemplified by Jannis Kounellis's
> installation of twelve live horses in the Galleria L'Attico in Rome. Other
> examples include the many public installations by Buren, consisting of uniform
> stripes, the work of dissident artists in South America, Eastern Europe and the
> former USSR and the installation art produced by feminists and artists of colour,
> especially coming out of the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.[135]

Kounellis's installation of live horses can be considered political because it radically

fractures the division of inside and outside and agitates ideas about the nature of art by

taking the ready-made to an absurd intensity by nominating natural living creatures as

art. Clearly, Stiles is establishing a critical link between leftist communal political

agendas and early forms of installation art. The argument in this thesis is that this political impetus continues on in the works *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table*, which operate more subtly than their precedents in the 1960s and 1970s. The reason for the less overt political nature is responsiveness to the cultural times of their production. Installation art has always been sensitive to the political, cultural and artistic climate in which it is generated. During the 1960s and 1970s installation artists resisted the commercialization of galleries; however, by the 1990s even alternative art spaces were increasingly institutionalized. Although Höller and Orozco might seem to operate apolitically, the open forms of their art suggest political possibilities.[136] The fact that Höller and Orozco's installations are in the Tate Modern is significant, but their placement in such a public and prominent institution should not necessarily render them politically inert.[137]

One of the most prominent contemporary theorists to discuss the aesthetics and politics of participatory installations, like *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table*, is Nicolas Bourriaud. In *Relational Aesthetics*, he considers several 1990s artists who "take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space."[138] Bourriaud claims that "the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist."[139] Thus, Bourriaud is focusing on social relations, what can happen in the interchange, in the present, not the future. Instead of the artwork being an encounter between a viewer and an object, relational art produces intersubjective encounters. Through these transient encounters, meaning is elaborated *collectively*, rather than in the space of individual consumption.[140] "Art's 'sociability' is the principal

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'object' or 'work' of so-called relational art; all art's 'objects' are subordinate to this social or relational dimension: 'what [the artist] produces, first and foremost, is relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic objects.'[141] These artworks create social interstices in which people come together to participate in a shared activity; the audience is envisaged as a community. Relational aesthetics "[consists] in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt."[142] Bourriaud implies a democratic tendency in relational artworks because each visitor is invited to participate equally; he writes:

> The exhibition situations presented to us by artists such as Gonzalez-Torres, and today Angela Bulloch, Carsten Höller, Gabriel Orozco and Pierre Huyghe, are governed by a concern to 'give everyone their chance,' through forms which do not establish any precedence, *a priori*, of the producer over the beholder (let us put it another way: no divine right authority), but rather negotiate open relationships with it, which are not resolved beforehand.[143]

Although the artist is the creative force that drives the aesthetic experience, this quotation underscores that the experience of relational art is not just about the artist. Beholders may become associates, co-producers and protagonists. Addressing the critical reception of Bourriaud's theories is essential to a comprehensive reading of *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* as participatory artworks that forge a political and interstitial community of players.

Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" is a critique of Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics. Bishop writes that the artists that Bourriaud discusses do indeed create relations among gallery visitors; however, she suggests that relational aesthetics does not go far enough because it does not investigate the type and quality of the relations created. Bishop wonders

> how we decide what the 'structure' of a relational art work comprises, and whether this is so detachable from the work's ostensible subject matter or permeable with its context. Bourriaud wants to equate aesthetic judgment with

an ethicopolitical judgment of the relationship produced by a work of art. But how do we measure or compare these relationships? The *quality* of the relationships in 'relational aesthetics' are never examined or called into question... If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what *types* of relations are being produced and for whom?[144]

Bishop writes that today it is our task to "analyse *how* contemporary art addresses the viewer and to assess the *quality* of the audience relations it produces: the subject position that any work presupposes and the democratic notions that it upholds, and how these are manifested in our experience of the work."[145]   Bishop discusses two artists (Liam Gillick and Rirkrit Tiravanija) because "they seem [to her] the clearest example of Bourriaud's argument that relational art privileges the intersubjective relations over detached opticality."[146] Bishop explicitly states that the idea of considering the work of art as a potential trigger for participation is not new; she cites Happenings, Fluxus, 1970s performance art, and Joseph Beuys's declaration that "everyone is an artist" as historical precedents. She emphatically states that many critics can safely consider the art of Thomas Hirschhorn and Santiago Sierra to demonstrate better democracy than the art of Gillick and Tiravanija. This is because Hirschhorn and Sierra's art is distanced from socially engaged public art projects and presupposes the collaborating subject's ability for independent thought, which is a prerequisite for political action.[147]

In response to Bishop's article, Gillick wrote "Contingent Factors," which was also published in *October*. Gillick's very biting and personal attack on Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" does little to elucidate, elaborate, or update Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*. Rather, the whole article reads like a flustered defense of Gillick's own practice, an attempt to garner support and sympathy from the reader and an advertisement for his writing. Despite the very obvious self-promotion of

Gillick's essay on Bishop, he indicates an interesting correlation: the increasing commodification and marketing of critical art discourse has occurred alongside the renewed interest in and popularity of Bourriaud's decade-old *Relational Aesthetics*. What is also good about Gillick's article is that he corrects the facts that Bishop has incorrect, especially about Bourriaud and the context in which *Relational Aesthetics* was written.

> *Relational Aesthetics* was the result of informal argument and disagreement among Bourriaud and some of the artists referred to in his text…[it] was written as a response to the artists whose work it discusses. It was part of a process of critical distancing by the author in order to separate himself from the implicated, early role he had played as curator of many of the group exhibitions in which these artists may have been involved.[148]

Gillick also recognizes that antagonism is a lot more complicated than Bishop suggests.

In relation to the histories discussed in this chapter, the following chapter addresses the politics of contemporary art institutions and the players therein that seemingly embrace playful and participatory installations like *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table*.

Notes

[1] "installation, *n.*" *Oxford English Dictionary Additions Series*. 1993. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 23 May 2010 < http://dictionary.oed.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/cgi/entry/50118225?>.

[2] Claire Bishop's *Installation Art* (New York: Routledge, 2005) emphasizes the importance of participation, but it does not extensively account for play in contemporary installation art. *The Art of Participation* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, 2008), the exhibition catalogue for the exhibit of the same name contains essays about contemporary participation in art; however, it does not address play specifically.

[3] Mark Rosenthal, *Understanding Installation Art: From Duchamp to Holzer* (Munich: Prestel, 2003), 23.

[4] Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* 1647-52 created for the Cornaro Chapel in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome is an excellent example of one such early installation. The window above the gilded bronze rays illuminates the scene below and the variations of the sun's rays in turn lend movement and dynamism to the scene. There are sculpted figures of the Cornaro family in opera boxes flanking and framing the dramatic ecstasy of St. Theresa and the angel. Evidently, the work is not just the sculpture, but rather all that is contained within the extravagant colonnaded altar is meant to work together to embody the spiritual experience of St Theresa and to enact a similar experience in viewers. For his part, Alex Potts considers Neo-Classical figure sculptures of the Enlightenment and early nineteenth century to be "installation-conscious." See Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 4.

[5] Important precedents to installation include, but are not limited to, Dada, assemblage, Happenings, Pop, Fluxus, Minimalism, Land Art, Arte Povera, Process Art, and Conceptualism.

[6] Rosenthal, 61.

[7] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 12

[8] Richard Serra, "Tilted Arc Destroyed," *Art in America* 77.5 (May 1989): 34-47. Richard Serra shared this firm stance with several other minimalist artists, including Donald Judd who purchased 340 acres (1.4 km²) of desert land near Marfa, Texas with the help of the Dia Art Foundation to display large-scale work by him and his contemporaries. In this environment the artists maintained control of the display of their works and experimented with the possibilities for interaction both indoors and outdoors.

[9] William Malpas, *Land Art in the U.K.* (Kent: Crescent Moon Publishing, 2007), 95.

[10] Kristine Stiles "I/Eye/Oculus: Performance, Installation and Video," *Themes in Contemporary Art,* eds. Gill Perry and Paul Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 208.

[11] Stiles, 205.

[12] The importance of mixing media is understood as an explicit denunciation of modernist medium-specificity, which was advocated by Michael Fried and Clement Greenberg. For a critique of blurring the distinctions between media and combining different media see Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 12-23.

[13] Ilya Kabakov, Margarita Tupitsyn & Victor Tupitsyn, "About Installation," *Art Journal* 58. 4 (Winter, 1999), 62.

[14] Ilya Kabakov, Margarita Tupitsyn & Victor Tupitsyn, 64. "Orthodox art" refers to art that is understood in modernist terms of separation, which are based on medium-specificity and autonomous art objects. In installation art objects are not considered singular and isolatable (as they are in the modernist paradigm); they are meant to be experienced together in relation to one another.

[15] Elizabeth Armstrong, "Fluxus and the Museum," *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Janet Jenkins (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Walker Art Center, 1993), 15.

[16] Richard Wagner, *The Art Work of the Future*, trans. W. Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 78, 80.

[17] Rosenthal, 25.

[18] Boris Groys, "A Geneology of Participatory Art," *The Art of Participation*, (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, 2008), 22.

[19] Alex Potts points out that viewers have always circumnavigated sculpture, in Alex Potts, "Installation and Sculpture," *Oxford Art Journal* 24.2 (2001): 8-10.

[20] Bishop, *Installation Art*, 11.

[21] Stiles, 208.

[22] Rosalind Krauss, "The Double Negative: A New Syntax for Sculpture," *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 243-288.

[23] Bishop, 54.

[24] Although the SI is critical of art as such, their aesthetic practice is both participatory and playful.

[25] Groys, 19.

[26] The SI was not an artistic movement but rather a small group of international revolutionaries who were instrumental in the political radicalism and counterculture that came to a head during the French student and worker strikes in May 1968. For an overview of art in the context of May 1968 see David Hopkins, *After Modern Art 1945-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 161-162.

[27] Kaprow's first public work was not called *a* Happening but *18 Happenings in 6 parts* (1959). Michael Kirby, "Happenings: An Introduction," *Happenings and Other Acts*, ed. Mariellen Sandford (London: Routledge, 1995), 2.

[28] Kirby, 3.

[29] Kirby, 3.

[30] Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings* (New York: Abrams, 1966), 165.

[31] Stiles writes that Kaprow's move towards socially engaged events was engendered by Piet Mondrian's social aims. Stiles, 184.

[32] Kirby, 4,

[33] Kirby, 4.

[34] Kirby, 14.

[35] Jean-Jacques Lebel, "Theory and Practice," *New Writers IV: Plays and Happenings*, ed. John Calder (London: John Calder, 1967), 34. cited by Günter Berghaus, "Happenings in Europe," *Happenings and Other Acts*, 352.

[36] Darko Suvin, "Reflections on Happenings," *Happenings and Other Acts*, op. cit., 287.

[37] Kirby, 4.

38 Owen Smith, "Fluxus: A Brief History and Other Fictions," *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, op. cit., 24.

39 Smith, 24.

40 Hopkins, 105 citing George Maciunas, *Manifesto* (1963), Offset on paper, 8 ¼ x 5 7/8. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection. Reproduced in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, 24.

41 Maciunas, *Manifesto*, op. cit. The manifesto reflects Maciunas' interest in the constructivist avant-garde of the 1920s; these goals were by no means shared by all of the Fluxus 'group.'

42 Ibid.

43 Smith, 24.

44 Smith, 30.

45 Kathy Halbreich, "Foreword," *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, 11.

46 Smith, 30.

47 David Hopkins, 41 citing John Cage, "Experimental Music," *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 12.

48 Smith, 30.

49 Hopkins, 60 citing Moira Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," *Difference / Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 34-35. Moira Roth writes that the 'Aesthetic of Indifference' appeared in the early work of Johns, Rauschenberg, and in the Cage/Merce Cunningham music and theatre experiments: "all used neutrality as their springboard. These artists made and talked about an art characterized by tones of neutrality, passivity, irony and often, negation." See Roth, 35.

50 Roth, 36.

51 Kristine Stiles, "Between Water and Stone," *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, 85.

52 Stiles, 81.

53 Stiles, 79.

54 Stiles, 85.

55 Stiles, 86.

56 Sitles, 86.

57 Stiles, 86.

58 Halbreich, 11.

59 Armstrong, 16

60 Armstrong, 16.

61 Stiles, "I/Eye/Oculus: Performance, Installation and Video," 183.

62 Rudolf Frieling, Boris Groys, Robert Atkins, and Lev Manovich. *The Art of Participation*, op. cit., 82.

63 Kristine Stiles, "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions," *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979*, ed. Paul Schimmel (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 296-297.

64 Stiles, Ibid., 230.

65 Stiles, Ibid., 234. As a condition of the category, quite often performances are experienced by us later as photographs and videos, not as first-hand unadulterated experiences wherein the audience encounters the medium of the artist's body in a direct subject-to-subject relationship; the photographs of performances become the commodities that the performances themselves cannot be.

66 Stiles, "I/Eye/Oculus: Performance, Installation and Video," 186.

67 Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations," (July 1957) *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 34.

68 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964).

69 http://members.chello.nl/j.seegers1/situationist/bib_debord.html

70 Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (1962), trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3. Eco will be discussed later in this thesis.

71 Dada and Surrealism reanimated the paraphernalia of childhood and sought the return to child-like states; both Dada and Surrealism created toy-like objects and used game-like strategies. See David Hopkins, "Dada and Surrealism in Play," <http://www.h-net.org/announce/show.cgi?ID=174599>. George Maciunas marketed Fluxkits through the mail, which included a wide range of objects made by other artists such as graphical scores for events, interactive boxes and games, journals and films. Guy Debord designed a board game entitled *Le jeu de la guerre* (Paris: Société des Jeux Stratégiques et Historiques, 1977). Libero Andreotti, "Architecture and Play," *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, 239.

[72] Guy Debord, "Architecture and Play," reprinted in *Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, eds. Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (Barcelona: ACTAR, 1996), 53-54. Debord underscored that a passion for play, influenced by Huizinga, forcefully fuelled the SI's theories of architecture and drift. See Andreotti, 238.

[73] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, eds. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 139-141.

[74] Schiller, 103.

[75] Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, "Introduction," *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, op.cit., clxxxvi

[76] Ibid.

[77] Schiller, 107.

[78] Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, clxxxvi-clxxxvii

[79] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1944) (London: Routledge, 2003), 12.

[80] Huizinga, 9.

[81] Huizinga, 13.

[82] Huizinga, 165, 169.

[83] Huizinga, 145.

[84] Huizinga, 169.

[85] Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin 1990), 42.

[86] Huizinga, 10.

[87] Walter Wood, *Children's Play and its Place in Education* (London: Kegan Paul, 1915), 13-14 cited in Roy Kozlovsky, "A Short History of the Slide," *Test Site*, exh. cat., ed. Jessica Morgan (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 45.

[88] Kozlovsky, 45 citing Wood, op. cit., 23.

[89] G. Stanley Hall & Artur Allin, "The Psychology of Tickling, Laughing and the Comic," *American Journal of Psychology* (1987): 6 cited in Kozlovsky, 45

[90] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), vol. 18, 37 cited in Kozlovsky, 46.

[91] Huizinga, 13.

[92] Huizinga, 7

[93] Huizinga, 8.

[94] Fried, Greenberg and other theorists are indebted to Kantian aesthetics. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1987): 190-192.

[95] In the first *Internationale Situationniste*, Guy Debord refers to Huizinga. See *Textes et documents situationnistes, 1957-1960*, ed. Gérard Berréby, (Paris: Allia, 2004), 24, 114-115. Debord refers to Huizinga in "L'architecture et le jeu," *Potlatch* 20 (30 mai 1955): 155, 158 reprinted in Guy Debord, *Guy Debord présente Potlatch (1954-1957)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996). In *Potlatch* 21 (30 juin 1955) an excerpt from *Homo Ludens* on the nature of the grand potlatch ceremony appears. See *Guy Debord présente Potlatch (1954-1957)*, 172-173. It is interesting to note that internationality, congregation and exchange are integral to both the potlatch ceremony and relational art. Debord used palindromes among other techniques that Huizinga described as deeply playful. Debord and other SI members marshaled Huizinga's conviction that play and freedom are essentially intertwined in a radical political direction. Hector Rodriguez, "The Playful and the Serious: An Approximation of Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*," < http://gamestudies.org/0601/articles/rodriges> (25 May 2010).

[96] Libero Andreotti, "Architecture and Play," *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, 215.

[97] Ashley Montagu, "Foreword," in Adam Blatner and Allee Blatner, *The Art of Play* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1988), 7.

[98] Blatner, op.cit., 37.

[99] J.L. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?* (Beacon, NY: Beacon Press, 1934), 325-326 in Blatner, op. cit., 37-38.

[100] Blatner, 38.

[101] Blatner, 39.

[102] Blatner, 41.

[103] Blatner, 24.

[104] Blatner, 24.

[105] Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," (1908) *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), 437.

[106] Blatner, 123.

[107] Blatner, 159.

[108] Blatner, 23.

[109] Blatner, 23-24. Authors' emphasis.

[110] Blatner, 28.

[111] Bob Black, "The Abolition of Work," 1985, revised in 1991,
<http://www.inspiracy.com/black/abolition/abolitionofwork.html> (6 February 2010).

[112] Blatner, 163.

[113] Blatner, 29.

[114] Blatner, 35.

[115] Blatner, 164.

[116] Blatner, 171. Schiller, 215.

[117] Black, op. cit.

[118] Edward Hallowell & John Ratey, *Delivered from Distraction* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), 266.

[119] Hallowell & Ratey, 13.

[120] For a detailed explanation of the structures and cycles of domination in work see Black, op. cit.

[121] Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," (1957). *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, eds. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), 138-140.

[122] Rudolf Frieling, Boris Groys, Robert Atkins, and Lev Manovich. *The Art of Participation*, 10. For more see Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work," in *The Open Work*, 3-4.

[123] Al Larsen, "Participation, Reciprocity and Generosity in Art: On Open Work by Umberto Eco," 5 Sept. 2009 < http://distributedcreativity.typepad.com/reading_group/2005/10/post.html>.

[124] Eco, 14-15.

[125] Eco, 10.

[126] Daniel Robey, "Introduction," *The Open Work*, x.

[127] Robey, xi.

[128] Eco, 13.

[129] Eco, 15.

[130] Eco, 11-12.

[131] In 1968, Roland Barthes theorized the birth of the reader at the cost of the death of the author. See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-148.

[132] Stiles, 185.

[133] Stiles, 185.

[134] Stiles, 185.

[135] Stiles, 203-204.

[136] According to Claire Bishop, the very designation that something is art is political. Art's placement within "art institutions" is also political. For more see Claire Bishop, *Installation Art,* 11.

[137] This discussion continues in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[138] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods & Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002), 113. For Bourriaud, the innovation of nineties art is "not any style, theme or iconography," but "the fact of operating within… the sphere of interhuman relations." Bourriaud, 43. 'Relational aesthetics' is a theory of the emphatically *social* constitution of contemporary art; of the extent to which art has become, more immediately and above all else, a matter of its social constitution. Bourriaud states this repeatedly. "Art is the place that produces a specific sociability." Bourriaud, 16.

[139] Bourriaud, 13.

[140] Bourriaud, 17-18.

[141] Bourriaud, 42.

[142] Bourriaud, 112.

[143] Bourriaud, 58.

[144] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 65.

[145] Bishop, 78. Author's emphasis. "Bishop has since developed her critique of the reception of relational art practices and the criteria used to evaluate their 'value', arguing that art criticism increasingly relies on the criteria of artistic self-effacement and an overtly political register that champions social responsibility and an ethics of collaboration in relational art practices." See Anthony Downey, "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics" *Third Text* 21.3 (May 2007): 273-274. Bishop writes: 'There can be no failed,

unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of collaborative art [in these forms of art criticism] because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond. While I am broadly sympathetic to that ambition I would argue that it is also crucial to discuss, analyze and compare such work critically as art.' See Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,' *Artforum* (February 2006): 180.

[146] Bishop, 61.

[147] Bishop, 77. Rancière is also critical of explicitly political art because it undermines the subject's ability for judgment because it tells the subject the message rather than leaving the subject free to devise his/her own interpretations. See Rancière, "The Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Artforum,* (March 2007): 258.

[148] Liam Gillick, "Contingent Factors," *October* 115 (Winter 2006): 96. Gillick cites Chantal Mouffe in *The Democratic Paradox* in which she writes "this tension between democracy and liberalism should not be conceived as one existing between two principles entirely external to each other and establishing between themselves simple relations of negotiation. Were the tension conceived this way, a very simplistic dualism would have been instituted." See Gillick, 95. Alongside Gillick's chastising of Bishop for being a neotraditionalist who stridently upholds distinctions about where art should be and what art is in institutions, Gillick frequently contrasts critical writing from exhibition catalogs and newspapers. He reminds readers of the higher standard that academic journals are considered to uphold and accuses Bishop of failing to meet the rigorous research standards and seriousness of critical writing. However, Gillick employs, perhaps ironically, the type of uncritical sensational writing that he derides Bishop for using in a scholarly journal like *October*.

Chapter 2: Participation and Play in the Contemporary Art Museum: Changes in Institutions, Curatorial Practice, and Artists' Roles

Changes in contemporary artistic institutions and curatorial practices have made participation and play in installation art possible and even prevalent. What transformations have the contemporary artistic embracing of play and participation had upon the evolving roles of curators, artists, museums and their publics? In contrast to the SI, who criticized and remained outside of the mainstream art system, Höller and Orozco seem to be relying on Huizinga, and others, in a way that is complementary to the dominant art system; in these and other installations there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between curators, artists, and art institutions. This chapter questions when and how play and participation started becoming acceptable in mainstream artistic practice and how mainstream practices, museums and audiences have changed so radically in response to changes in the economy and technology. Can play sustain its destabilizing political effects even as it becomes conventional, or do the political implications of play become diluted and disarmed as play is absorbed into the mainstream?

The Public(?) Art Institution

The art institution offers a public space of exchange between artworks and people. This exchange can be active, as in the participatory forms of installation that are the topic of this thesis, or they can be passive while still informing critical consciousness. The museum, the sanctuary of precious objects and distinguished art, the emblem and epitome of human conquest and achievement, a place apart from everyday life, was long a place reserved for quiet contemplation, not child-like jubilation and bodily titillation.[1] In *In the Place of the Public Sphere?* Simon Sheikh notes that "historically,

the art institution, or museum, was of course, the bourgeois public sphere par excellence, a place for rational-critical thought and (self)representation of the bourgeois class and its values."[2]   Play in museums seems to counter arguments and claims for seriousness, quietness and contemplation in the observance of art. Why is playful and boisterous behaviour now being both prescribed and adopted by art institutions?

In the seminal study *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, 1990, by Pierre Bourdieu of the relationship between level of education, social standing and relative sense of ease within museums, Bourdieu concluded that higher education and social standing corresponded with greater ease within art institutions.[3]   Striving to belong or at least not be noticed, lesser educated and lower class people, who tended to feel uneasy in museums, adopted modest and quiet behaviour in both imitation and respect for other more educated or higher class patrons.   From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the museum upheld social stratifications and hierarchical class structures. Does the current trend towards institutionalized play, demonstrated by artists like Höller and Orozco, make museums more welcoming environments for all levels of education and all social classes? Have historical factors and influences, such as the breakdown of categories in art, helped break down the boundaries formerly held in place in the museum? Have the multiple forms of play experienced in daily life that have metamorphosed into the carefully prescribed manifestations of play found in the contemporary gallery world significantly affected the silent and pensive mode of visitors in museums? Has the playground infiltrated the museum or has the museum simply become a different form of playground?

Bourriaud's focus on the participatory aspects of relational artworks implies a democratizing effect that suggests that the under-art-educated may derive as much

pleasure from the experience of participatory relational art as the art-literate because the works create communal experiences between visitors seemingly independent of social class structures.[4] A specific discussion of who is on the receiving end of relational art is conspicuously absent in *Relational Aesthetics*. Bourriaud compares the audiences of relational art to the audiences of performance art because the meetings that the works prompt occur within factual time, not a monumental anytime. In this way the work manages its own temporal structure and the artist summons audiences to appointments.[5]

 Certainly, publics are not all the same. Does relational art draw a more diverse set of people into the contemporary art institution?   In "Aesthetics in a Time of Emergency," Malcolm Miles highlights that it is problematic that the encounters that Bourriaud envisages are "likely to be restricted to the existing publics for contemporary art."[6] He writes:

> For some members of this set of publics, the experience of art may be predictable, located in the contemporary equivalent of modernism's value-free space as constituted by the sites in which such art was and is shown. If, as Bourriaud seems to claim, art differs from the ever-present noise of mass media, and has a ludic aspect, it achieves this by its separation from the wider world. But could the ludic not be present there as well?[7]

According to Miles, the ludic installations referenced by Bourriaud are neither novel nor politically significant experiences for the art publics who have remained attuned to the trajectories of modernism and postmodernism. Museum visitors who have not been incrementally initiated into the world of contemporary participation in art and forms of installation art may feel a much stronger political effect from experiencing the ludic elements of participatory artwork; ironically, as Miles states, they are not likely to be the ones participating.[8]   Finally, Miles questions the autonomy of relational art, as a ludic realm separated from the supposedly non-ludic mass-media static,[9] destabilizing

Bourriaud's claim for the autonomy of relational art and the heterogeneity of the ludic from life. Miles believes that the ludic should be present not only in art but also in life; thus he is critical of Bourriaud for supporting the realization of play in art museums alone. This is insufficiently political for Miles, who implies that there should be a merging of art and life whereby life can be creative and ludic even outside of the museum. Jacques Rancière writes that spectators may need to be told that, "in the space [of the museum] they are about to enter, they will learn anew how to see and to put the flood of media messages that usually captivates them at a distance."[10]

In "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," Claire Bishop is critical of Bourriaud's disinclination to define which publics he is referring to. She wonders how we decide what comprises the 'structure' of relational work and whether this can be so easily detached from the work's ostensible subject matter and context.[11] Bishop is critical of how Bourriaud equates aesthetic judgment with an ethicopolitical judgment of the relationships produced by artworks because he does not provide the necessary and rudimentary tools for how to measure and compare these relationships.[12] Bishop writes that "the *quality* of the relationships in 'relational aesthetics' [is] never examined or called into question." *Relational Aesthetics*, which makes the claim that relational artworks produce human relations, does not address the logical question of "what *types* of relations are being produced and for whom?"[13] The identity of Bourriaud's public remains problematically ambiguous.

Specific examples of participatory playful installations, such as those held at Tate Modern, demonstrate that these installations are experienced by a wide demographic range of visitors. This is in part due to Tate Modern's mandate to be a very open and public institution. Its mission, as determined by the 1992 Museums and

Galleries Act, is "to increase public knowledge, understanding and appreciation of art;"[14] "the driving force behind Tate Modern [is] a passionate desire to make more of Tate's artworks available to the public."[15] To facilitate this and welcome as many visitors as possible, admission is free.[16] In its first year, 2000, Tate Modern welcomed 5.2 million visitors and has since then maintained a very high volume of visitors, a total of 20 million in its first five years.[17] In "Reaching Out," part of a retrospective about the first five years of Tate Modern, Jon Snow writes that "for the community, for art lovers, and the wider public beyond, Tate Modern stands as a testament to the reality that museums are no longer just repositories for artefacts; they are sites of experience, education and enjoyment, where the mind is engaged as much as the eye."[18] Tate Modern provides a comprehensive interpretation and education programme that is intended to provoke dialogue and open-ended enquiry, reflecting the belief that artworks do not have self-evident fixed meanings.[19] Tate has an online programme that reaches many people who never actually visit the building. Tate's website strives to demystify modern and contemporary art and to entice a wider public. Tate's community programme is an introductory programme both to art and to the institution itself that is aimed at local community groups and organizations who may be new to using galleries and museums as resources and therefore need more encouragement to visit.[20] Tate attempts to mount displays and exhibitions that provide returning visitors with new experiences without alienating newcomers. Snow writes that the dimension and endless stimulation that Tate Modern offers contrasts markedly with both the home and the workplace.[21]

The Right Honorable Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport from 1997 to 2001, and current Director of the Clore Leadership Programme,

discusses the political significance of Tate Modern, commenting that the diversity and range of visitors is and has been remarkably wide. He writes, "wander into Tate Modern on an average day, and take a look at the way that young and old, black and white, rich and poor, tourist and non-tourist all mingle in a manner that would previously have been regarded as impossible for a major museum or gallery."[22] Smith is referring to the social stratifications which museums used to enforce, though rarely explicitly, in the twentieth century, and which he praises Tate Modern for overcoming. Responding to arguments that 'greater access inevitably means impoverishing the art' and laments about the loss of 'stillness' in museums and galleries, Smith argues that "access and excellence go together hand in hand, and that it is pointless to have one without the other;" the vastness of the Turbine Hall fascinates because of its scale and happily absorbs the huge crowds that visit Tate Modern.[23]

In her review of *Common Wealth*, an exhibition at Tate Modern that addressed themes of community, play and participation and which featured *Ping Pond Table* and Höller's *Frisbee House* (Figure 5), *Guardian* writer Laura Cumming derogatorily contrasts the experience of Tate Modern with the MoMA (the Museum of Modern Art) in New York. She writes:

> Nobody goes there [Tate Modern] for the silence. Or to see a single show, still less to study a single work for hours on end as they do at MoMA... Tate Modern, an entertainment complex so vast it can absorb half of London and its offspring and keep them occupied on a rainy day with all its opportunities for strolling, snacking, gaping, buying, gossiping and meeting the rest of mankind, just isn't that kind of place.[24]

Cumming goes on to say that, 'Playtime' would be an ideal theme for an exhibition at Tate Modern. She dismisses *Common Wealth* as play and declares that the vivid catalogue essay by Richard Sennett suggests that the show is all about play and nothing else. Cumming seemingly mourns and laments the transformation of "the museum as

shrine, the masterpiece as sacred and the viewer as passive worshipper" and opposes "the art museum as a vast common ground, a land without borders where all cultures meet and the mind is quite free to roam."[25] Cumming is correct in noting that works like *Ping Pond Table* and *Test Site* (which was not part of *Common Wealth* but which was also exhibited at Tate Modern) do not generate the quiet reflection traditionally associated with museum-going; they invite a new and important model of interactive experience that induces play and amends the relationship between the art object and its onlooker.

In his discussion of Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Project*, which occupied the Turbine Hall in 2003, James Meyer states that he is opposed to what he perceives as the diminishing returns of an art world dominated by 'spectacularisation,' expansionism, massive crowds and ever-larger artworks (as exemplified by, but not limited to, Tate Modern's Turbine Hall).   Meyer explores how installation's increasing dependence on the experience of size has obfuscated the "phenomenological and critical ambitions of an earlier period, even though many of the contemporary practices are invested in staging acts of perception."[26] In "Size Matters" (2000), Robert Morris identifies what he calls a pervasive "Wagner effect" in current artistic practice that demands aesthetically awesome situations.[27]   The Wagner effect, produced by "massive, unwieldy, [and] dizzyingly costly" art, is "aimed at servicing the upper echelons of a would-be ruling class who, in their driven generosity, demand those vast and sanctified spaces of the museum as testimony to the importance of their class and self-congratulatory public service."[28]   In contrast to the Mozart effect, "which makes even rats smarter," the Wagner effect dumbs down or numbs down "with a massive, swooning, mystical aesthetic awe"[29] that, according to Meyer, does not induce awareness or provoke

thought. Meyer cites Briony Fer's description of today's installations as "exhilarating" and "melodramatic" and Susan Stewart's reminder that "aesthetic size cannot be divorced from social function and social values."[30] Meyer argues that Richard Serra's sculptures, which have both demanded and inspired enlarged museum spaces, have become a major attraction in contemporary museums because their size makes a significant impact. Gigantism, demonstrated by Serra's largest works, and Eliasson's *Weather Project*, "points to an instrumentalization of the phenomenological tendency itself, within a scenario of unrelenting global museological competition."[31] Today scale is no longer keyed to nuanced spatial relations with one's body; the somatic scale has been overwhelmed by ever-larger museums filled with ever-larger artworks.

Tate Modern's imposing architecture, which is the result of the renovation and transformation of the old Bankside Power station, attracts visitors who may be new to modern art but who have come to marvel at the space and the architecture. The building helped initiate a process of regeneration across the north of Southwark; new housing, shops and workshops have emerged out of what had previously been a derelict area.[32] Tate Modern is lauded for educating millions about the importance and enjoyment of modern and contemporary art, for making difficult art popular and for bringing people in who would have otherwise claimed to have no interest.[33] Smith highlights the political dimension of this process:

> In finding the thrill of understanding and cherishing the contemporary, the new, the difficult, the cutting-edge, the awkward in art, it is but a short step to taking this to the wider world and society too. Sharpening the sense we all have of adventure and difference, whether it is in aesthetic perception or in social understanding, is a profound contribution to the way we think and act. The beginning of such perception can come from a visit to this exciting, innovative, [and] challenging place.[34]

John Holden, Head of Culture at the independent think tank Demos, which generates ideas to improve politics and policy, and give people more power over their lives, considers Tate Modern to be "creating public goods: greater confidence in public spaces, social interaction among members of the public, trust in public institutions, and national and local pride. "[35] In this sense, Holden argues, "Tate Modern is an embodiment of democratic values, and its Cultural Value extends into the sphere of the (small-p) political."[36]   This conjecture is too simple;   although Tate Modern's programmatic obligation to provide accurate, accessible and stimulating information about its collection and displays to all visitors does seem to successfully embody democratic values, such as common good, diversity, equality, liberty, and patriotism,[37] can an art institution in fact be democratic and if so, how?   Do large attendance numbers necessarily indicate that people agree with and support an institution's operations and policies? If, as Jonathan Beller suggests in "Kino-I, Kino-World,"[38] there is a corollary between attention or interest and accord, then perhaps the large number of visitors to Tate Modern indicates widespread approval. However, might the large numbers to Tate Modern be indicative of its populist model rather than a truly democratic impulse? Could the large numbers be a result of the successful marketing of Tate Modern as a tourist destination in a city with international appeal?   Impressive attendance does not indicate that an institution is run democratically; attendees do not necessarily have a say in how the institution is run simply because they arrive en masse.

In "The Tate Effect," T.J. Demos considers the contradictions, multiplicities and paradoxes that Tate embodies, especially its transition to increasing dependence on private funding that has been problematic, resulting in conflicts of interest and anti-democratic features.[39]   The reality of public-private funding has mixed effects that

challenge curators who can only ever work ambivalently with it.[40] Nonetheless, Demos writes that even though Tate Modern represents diverse interests and constituencies, "curators of education and minor programming have a fair degree of autonomy and freedom to introduce challenging, diverse, and critical content into the museum's cycle of shows and activities."[41] Demos is sympathetic to the institutions' overt reliance on wealthy donors and corporations, suggesting that maybe museums need to commercialize to survive; however, Demos objects to publicity masquerading as generosity and the transformation of museum-goers into "loyal Tate consumers" through the popularization of elite tastes via the money-making enterprises – bookstores, restaurants and cafes – that surround Tate's free spaces.[42] Ultimately Demos concludes that Tate's democratization is yet to be realized and that in order to be achieved many complex and ongoing negotiations need to occur between ambitious curators, conservative trustees, board directors, artists, art historians and the museum's many publics.[43] Supporting Tate's democratization means accepting the diversity and contradictions of the institution, which in turn creates the possibility for the critical and open dialogue that is essential to democracy.

Curatorial Strategies

How have curatorial strategies and roles changed to make interactive and play-oriented works possible? Curatorial practice, as a form of critical intervention into culture, adds meaning and value to the making of art; necessarily, there is interdependence between curators' and artists' practices. Popular interactive and sometimes playful exhibitions, including some in the Unilever Series at Tate Modern, have garnered considerable fame and repute for their curators. Since the 1990s there has been a noticeable global rise in curatorial prestige. The tremendous rise in the

popularity and reach of group exhibitions has enhanced the respectability of the phenomenon of curating by emphasizing the curator's special ability to develop themes and probe ideas by juxtaposing artworks.[44] The term super-curator has been coined to refer to very powerful curators such as Bourriaud and Francesco Bonami, whose celebrity can at times supersede the identity of the artists and the work they present. In the recently published book *Issues in Curating*, the curator as 'jet set *flâneur*'[45] is closely linked to the quickly-mounted rash of international biennials that have recently developed, which have created a culture of the curator wherein artists are collected as raw material[46] and displayed within the context of the exhibition conceived of as a 'total artwork' (*Gesamtkunstwerk*).[47] John Miller writes that this privileges the curator's subjectivity and naturalizes the outcome of the exhibition form as an organic extension of the institution's framework, which produces an illusion of curatorial inspiration and genius.[48]   International exhibitions organized by powerful nomadic curators entail power-shifts with serious ramifications.

Relational aesthetics certainly has an international slant; the curators of relational art tend to combine the international artists cited by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* in group exhibitions.   Anthony Downey questions whether relational aesthetics, in terms of its practice, originates in actual artistic activity "or in the increasingly ascendant patterns of contemporary curatorial practices – practices, it should be observed, that are largely developed within the context and demands of market-led, publicly funded institutional priorities."[49] Curators who select artists with seemingly no regard for geographical boundaries appear to organize exhibitions around inclusivity while simultaneously promoting a subjective ideology and securing for themselves a substantial position in the institutional superstructure apparatus.[50]

Benjamin Buchloh writes that the curator functions as "an agent who offers exposure and potential prominence [to artists] – in exchange for a moment of actual practice that is about to be transformed into myth/superstructure."[51]   Curatorial discourse elevates curatorial practice from the invisibility of the job to a prestige comparable to that enjoyed by artists.[52] In this sense, the meaning the works have independently does not determine an exhibition's meaning so much as the relationships *between* the artistic positions that the curator creatively combines.[53]

Tate Modern curator Jessica Morgan's strategies for curating shows around community, play and participation, such as *Common Wealth*, emphasize the importance of relations and exchanges among the artworks, not each individual artwork's specificity. Morgan emphasizes what the artworks share: the "subversive potential of an aesthetics of the everyday, of the incomplete, or of the work-in-progress."[54] For Morgan the incomplete works, which comprise the exhibition *Common Wealth*, are symbolic of larger structures of production. Morgan is adamant that the exchange between the viewer and the contemporary artwork does not complete the work; it remains incomplete because of the plurality of meanings possible in the multitude of possible exchanges.   Morgan writes: "the plurality of meaning suggested by this incompletion is not, however, akin to a vague openness but critically constitutive of social and economic systems."[55] For Morgan the open exchange between the work and the audience is an almost utopian alternative to the exchanges in the economic system of late capitalism; Morgan advocates quality and meaningful exchanges that are neither predetermined nor vague, which she suggests those of late capitalism to be. These experiences provide an alternative model of exchange that is different from exchange in a market economy that is characterized by the efficient trading of securities,

commodities, derivatives and other financial instruments.[56] This different concept of exchange incorporates the importance of relations and exchanges in the artwork. However, in *Common Wealth* Morgan does not address individual artworks in their specificity but assumes that her general discussion of the artworks as a unified exhibition somehow subsumes and conveys the artists' positions.[57]

Politics of Relational Aesthetics

Does the democratic impulse, which ostensibly compels Tate Modern, necessarily transmit to the artworks which it exhibits? More specifically, are the relational works that Bourriaud discusses democratic and politically significant? Here Bourriaud, the critiques of his work and how Rancière can provide a resolution to the problems in his theory are discussed. In "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics" Downey reflects on how Bourriaud considers relational art practices' relations of exchange, social interplay and inter-subjective communication as political activities. Downey writes that for Bourriaud they are political because

> relational art practices not only focus on the 'sphere of inter-human relations,' a realm that is an endemically political sphere to begin with, but also give rise to the conditions within which unprecedented inter-human relations can be articulated….Relational art is not so much about artists taking up political causes per se – an act that can be seen merely to co-opt the political mileage to be had in a subject and rehearse it via art practice – as it is a vision of art reflecting and *producing* inter-subjective relations and imbricating those relations… Any examination of the politics of relational aesthetics is engaged not so much in an examination of political content as it is with the politics of social formations.[58]

Downey's adept reflection here supports both Rancière and Bourriaud's stipulation that art not be explicitly involved in particular political or ethical causes; Downey, moreover, emphasizes that the politics of relational aesthetics is wrapped up in questions of the inter-subjective relations that the artworks stimulate.

The principal critiques of Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics are that (1) it does not specify who the audience is, (2) it does not discuss context, (3) it does not provide evidence of the political effects of relational artworks, and (4) it does not comment on the quality of the relationships (i.e. their duration, intensity, and scope). These critiques notwithstanding, Bourriaud's theory merits serious discussion; it is no mean feat to "reconsider the schema of contemporary art criticism and, perhaps more momentously, to define a 'movement' of sorts that has come to delineate a prominent body of work and artists working in the 1990s."[59] The theory put forward by Bourriaud remains an important site of discussion in art criticism today. Partly this is because of Bourriaud's prominence as a curator and partly it is because there is a definite participatory and collaborative impetus in contemporary art that focuses on art for its ability to prompt or facilitate communication and community-building.[60]

There is often not much to see in relational art; the interactive (political) value, which Downey refers to as the use-value, of an artwork "tends to be advocated over its value as a contemplative (aesthetic) object."[61] Downey considers Bourriaud's emphasis on functional and relational concerns to be both the most promising and problematic part of his thesis.[62] Bourriaud argues that

> the present-day social context restricts the possibilities of inter-human relations…The general mechanisation of social functions gradually reduces the relational space… The automatic cash machine has become the transit model for the most elementary of social functions, and professional behavior patterns are modelled on the efficiency of the machines replacing them, these machines [in turn] carrying out tasks which once represented so many opportunities for exchanges, pleasure and squabbling. Contemporary art is definitely developing a political project when it endeavours to move into the relational realm by turning it into an issue.[63]

Bourriaud is suggesting that artists working in the relational realm address and correct for the disappearance of opportunities for social bonding in the age of globalism and

'supermodernity.'[64]   For Downey, Bourriaud's suggestion that the intentionality of artistic practice and its reception in the sociopolitical sphere has an ethical effect is problematic because Bourriaud does not demonstrate this effect. *Relational Aesthetics* does not communicate a causative and convincing analysis of the politics of the socially inter-subjective encounters that it so zealously proposes; it only suggests that they respond to, and perhaps substitute for, communicative and interrelational ruptures and failures in contemporary society.[65]   Downey writes that *Relational Aesthetics* "assume[s] a transitive relationship between artist, artistic practice and audience – wherein which intentionality, materialisation and reception are somehow viewed as socially unified and politically structured."[66]   Bourriaud uses terms such as 'conviviality, democracy, dialogue and politics' without enough consideration and qualification to substantiate relational aesthetics in a neoliberal, globalised and service-based economic milieu.[67]   This is unfortunate because the effectiveness of the political arena seems increasingly compromised and it appears that "aesthetics (specifically the interdisciplinarity of contemporary art practices) is being ever more called upon to provide both insight into politics itself and the stimuli for social change."[68]   This is a good thing for Downey; however, he is skeptical that relational aesthetics effectively responds to this call because of the openness of Bourriaud's politics. Downey's analysis is valuable because it focuses on the tension between the aesthetic and use, which contemporary artists, like Höller, address.   Rancière helps address the openness that Downey finds problematic.

The desire for a politically and therefore socially responsible art also appears in Rancière's response to a question concerning relational aesthetics.[69]   Rancière locates an "offspring" of contemporary art in the part of modernity that "asked art to suppress

itself, [in order] to become a real form of life."[70] He writes that at the beginning of the

twentieth century the idea that painters do not paint their paintings on canvases any

more, but rather frame new forms of life had a kind of intensity, especially with the

Soviet revolution.   According to Rancière,

> relational art is a kind of late offspring of that tradition; sometimes it becomes a
> parody of that tradition. Of course, we should not simply make fun of relational
> art, say it's just 'telling people there's nothing to see in that gallery, but we can
> discuss.' However, the manifestation of relational art has been very weak.[71]

Rancière considers relational aesthetics as an ineffective moral revival in the

arts, rather than a thorough critique of and solution to alienating sociality and hierarchy.

Rancière is interested in observing the effects of an intervention, its reception by the

publics it creates, and the political position or programme, if any, that it states or

implies. For example, Rancière asks, "Is co-produced art an enactment of direct

democracy?"[72] A generalized discussion of relational works fails to establish the political

nature of the works because each artwork induces different relations among audience

members. For Downey, the use-value of relational art – the way people relate to one

another in new situations – is essential to its political power. Because Bourriaud does

not produce the data or evidence of the political mechanics and repercussions that he

argues are present in the intersubjective encounters of relational aesthetics, Downey

considers Bourriaud's argument to be weak(er).   However, Bourriaud is attempting to

account for a broad range of artistic practices, which is indeed an immense task.

Bourriaud attempts to address the politics of relational works generally when works

must be considered in their specificity and within the context in which they are

exhibited.

Like Downey, Morgan also asks that the exchanges between audience members

and works of art be more critically examined than in Bourriaud's treatment, arguing that

the significance of participation, vital to much contemporary work, should be treated with scepticism.[73] Morgan writes that "Bourriaud isolates the social within the exchange of the artistic encounter in relational art, arguing that it forms a 'social interstice' that eludes capitalist economic status, an argument that is attractively utopian but inherently unrealistic."[74] Simple involvement of the audience is

> not enough to assume a vital or direct relationship to the work of art...*How* the exchange or participation takes place must be carefully framed, so that the interaction itself brings about awareness not only of the pleasure or discomfort of social interchange but [also] a consciousness of the workings of a larger political, economic or psychological framework as evidenced in these relations.[75]

Morgan is complicating Bourriaud's correlation of relational aesthetics with politics, highlighting the need to consider the quality and context of audiences' participation. Morgan believes that the possibility for agency within works of art is fairly limited and that "there is little place for the significance of social relations as brought about through participation in any such estimation of a critically viable work."[76] Morgan states that "an acknowledgement of the role of context, not merely as a source of reference in art, but as a determining force in the meaning of objects,"[77] is missing from a theory of relational aesthetics, which is based entirely in social interaction.

Buchloh identifies two determining issues facing contemporary objects in the field of sculpture: (1) "sculpture is positioned within the institutions of the bourgeois public sphere, as an object either in the museum or in the mythical domain of the 'public space,' where it claims to assume all of the traditional functions of the 'monument' and pretends to enable acts of simultaneous collective reception and historical commemoration;" and (2) "sculpture is positioned within the equally mythical but more powerfully 'real' dimensions of the culture-industry of spectacle, the world of industrially produced 'objects' and 'signs,' and as such it operates in the field of

ideological interpellation."[78] Buchloh, though sceptical of use-value in art, does not

completely abandon the notion of usefulness in art; he states that "if artistic production

gives up altogether the idea of use-value, it abolishes its own inherent potential to

induce dialectics within the realm of cultural history, thus producing mere facticity

incapable of initiating further development."[79] Thus Buchloh is open to usefulness in art

but he is not as convinced as Downey who focuses on inter-human relations as the basis

for the political impact (and thus use) of relational aesthetics. However, even with use-

value the experience of the art situation can be considered apart from the utilitarian,

especially as it takes place in a gallery. Rather than focusing on the use-value or on the

quality of the relationships between viewers, which is not demonstrable and therefore

problematic (as Bishop, Morgan and Downey correctly argue), we can focus on the

aesthetic experience itself.[80]

How do the forms of social exchange in relational aesthetics, pre-eminently a

theory of art as a form of social exchange, critically address and relate to the forms of

capitalist exchange?[81] Can relational art's form resist the exchange-value form, and if so

how?[82] Stewart Martin in "Critique of Relational Aesthetics" writes that "*Relational*

Aesthetics can be read as the manifesto for a new political art confronting the service

economies of informational capitalism – an art of the multitude."[83] Martin considers

relational aesthetics theory in Marxist terms, understanding that in *Relational Aesthetics*

Bourriaud argues that "relational artworks involve a refusal of commodity fetishism: a

reassertion of social relations between 'persons' *against* social relations between

commodities."[84] In *Postproduction* Bourriaud writes that artists would logically seek to

rematerialize and give shape to what is disappearing: the most basic functions of our

daily lives which are abstracted and transformed by economic globalization.[85] Relational

artists do not strictly produce objects, which would fall into the trap of reification, but mediums of experience, which restore the world to us as an experience to be lived.[86] "Since the economic system gradually deprives us of experiences, modes of representation must be invented for a reality that is becoming more abstract each day."[87] Bourriaud writes that "by offering small services, which model the service economy rather than the industrial one, the artist repairs the weaknesses in the social bond."[88] This underscores both the need for and the use-value of relational art as opposed to exchange-value. Miles states that the encounter provoked by the artist through the relational artwork, is "not an invitation to festivity but a visualized critique of a society in which excess of things is the sign for a lack of connections between people."[89] Although Bourriaud acknowledges that audiences are drawn into ludic work like participants in festivities, he argues that "the aura of art no longer lies in the hinter-world represented by the work" so much as in "the temporary collective form that it produces by being put on show."[90] Martin suggests that the collective forms of relational art, which are full of diverse possibilities, overcome the alienation of social relations and are connected to a politics of anti-capitalism because they suggest an alternative to the marketing and related alienation of social relations within the capitalist system.[91] Thus, critical theory and practice of contemporary art must critique the dialectics of social exchange in capitalist culture, which are based on exchange-value, and on commodity fetishism, to which the art object is linked.[92] Relational art attempts a reimagining of the connections between people, which might equate to the relations of social production and economic exchange.

Rancière opts for a thoroughly open approach to art, an approach that does not predict the political outcomes of artworks but rather indicates that the political viability

of works exists in the radical openness of the possible outcomes. That is, the political capacity of the work of art and the emancipation of the spectator depend upon the deliberate refusal to expect certain possibilities and to predict specific outcomes. "Emancipation is the possibility of a spectator's gaze other than the one that was programmed."[93] "Emancipation is also knowing that one cannot place one's thinking into other people's heads, that one cannot anticipate its effect" (on viewers who are presupposed to be imbeciles).[94] Rancière writes that anticipating a political effect negates the possibility of the effect. "An art is emancipated and emancipating when it renounces the authority of the imposed message, the target audience, and the univocal mode of explicating the world, when in other words, it stops *wanting* to emancipate us."[95]

Rancière is deeply critical of critical art, which is didactic, premised on hierarchies and founded on a "sense of sensible heterogeneity that feeds the political energies of refusal from isolation of the work of art;"[96] instead he calls for "an art of the possible." For Rancière, it is fundamental to explore the "possibility of maintaining spaces of play; to discover how to produce forms for the presentation of objects, forms for the organization of spaces, that thwart expectations."[97] Rancière argues that the principal obstruction of artistic creativity and political creativity is consensus: "inscription within given roles, possibilities, and competences."[98] As such, Rancière thinks about the politics of aesthetics in open terms, not in terms of artistic intentions leading to pre-determined outcomes or effects.   Rancière's open position with respect to artworks, and the hope that openness breeds political possibility, echoes Bourriaud's approach. Both consider aesthetics as a realm wherein possibilities that are restricted and/or forbidden by social confines and structures are permitted and often even

encouraged. Political and communicational possibilities emerge in the space of possibility and play opened by forms of aesthetic engagement.

Rancière observes that art and politics can no longer be considered as two separate and well-defined entities. Rancière explains that

> an artistic intervention can be political by modifying the visible, the ways of perceiving it and expressing it, of experiencing it as tolerable or intolerable. The effect of this modification is consequent on its articulation with other modifications in the fabric of the sensible. That's what 'aesthetics' means: A work of art is defined as such by belonging to a certain regime of identification, a certain distribution of the visible, the sayable and the possible. Politics, meanwhile, has an aesthetic dimension: It is a common landscape of the given and the possible, a changing landscape and not a series of acts that are the consequence of 'forms of consciousness' acquired elsewhere. 'Aesthetics' designates this interface. But this interface also signifies the loss of any relationship of cause and effect between 'representations' considered artistic and 'engagements' considered political. At the heart of what I call the aesthetic regime of art[99] is the loss of any determinate relationship between a work and its audience, between its sensible presence and an effect that will be its natural end.[100]

There is no "trouble-free passage between an artistic mode of presentation and the determination to act."[101] The belief that the 'raised consciousness' engendered by art can provoke political action is no longer tenable.[102] Rancière is critical of the unsound deduction that an artist "who presented the hidden contradictions of capitalism would mobilize minds and bodies for struggle."[103] Explaining the present pairing of aesthetics and politics, Rancière writes that we can no longer isolate art and politics into separate independent spheres. Instead, Rancière emphasizes how they interact and the importance of this interaction.

Rancière underscores that "the very idea of art – the aesthetic experience – as defining a specific sphere of experience" was conceived under the banner of equality spoken of by late eighteenth century philosophers Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel and Friedrich Schiller.[104] This equality is "neither equality in the general sense nor the

equality of revolutionary movements" but the "equality of all subjects, the definition of a form of judgment freed from the hierarchies of knowledge and those of social life…that in other respects govern sensible existence."[105] For Rancière, aesthetics is fundamentally rooted in equality and the neutralization of hierarchies, which complements and helps clarify Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics.

Just as Rancière argues that it is necessary to dismiss the opposition between politics and aesthetics, he argues that for emancipation to begin we must "dismiss the opposition between looking and acting and understand that the distribution of the visible itself is part of the configuration of domination and subjection."[106] The "distribution of the visible" refers to that which can be said or shown in society, that which is permitted to be visible rather than invisible. This, of course, is determined by the regime that structures and maintains hierarchies in society. According to Rancière, "critical art intends to raise consciousness of the mechanisms of domination in order to turn the spectator into a conscious agent in the transformation of the world;"[107] however, exploited people "have rarely had the need to have the laws of exploitation explained to them."[108] Rancière says that critical art "borrows the connections that provoke political intelligibility from the blurry zone between art and other spheres" [109] and that critical art that attempts a thoroughgoing subversion of prevailing ideologies, existing values and political structures is superficial and ineffective. "The politics of aesthetics involves a multiplicity of small ruptures, of small shifts, that refuse the blackmail of radical subversion."[110] The political operates through a purposeful purposelessness, which is aesthetic in nature and detached from use. It is an "in-itself" experience that is not confined within certain parameters nor expected to fulfill certain criteria. Therefore, extrapolating from Rancière's views, relational art prompts an

aesthetic experience with a political effect that cannot and indeed *should* not be anticipated.

However, if we ask relational works to demonstrate politics, in speaking generally we can say that they address power relations in an alternative way, a kind of anti-capitalist diffusion, wherein audience participation creates the potential to distribute creative input equally and widely. In contrast to the forms of exchange in capitalism, where power transfers are unidirectional and concentrated, in relational art reciprocity is presented to the audience as attainable, something they can share in; the artist relinquishes absolute control over the art by de-emphasizing the autonomy and significance of the art object in favour of focusing on the *relationships* between artworks and audiences and even audience members amongst themselves. In this way the potential can be harvested from the artwork as a sum of relations or interactions; it does not forever reside within the singular art object alone. Despite its limitations, Bourriaud's theory remains decisive for the study of contemporary participatory installations.

Institutional Changes: Playing in Tate Modern

Any cultural practice embodies contradictions; it is a question of identifying rather than resolving those that operate in the contemporary art museum. There is both an aesthetic and a practical motivation for embracing play; the activation of spectators might be considered a strategy to attract more patrons and thus generate more income. Designating an active role for museum-goers makes their presence necessary; subsequently they feel significant and included. Tate Modern, the venue of *Common Wealth*[111] and the Unilever Series and where Bourriaud currently works, has featured participatory installations and provides a relevant case study to track the emergence of

play as a growing force in the halls of high art. In *Common Wealth* there is a marked trend towards the playful in the works that address communality and what it means to be in common. The participatory works in the exhibition reveal the disparate nature of the collective and optimistically facilitate "potentially productive plurality."[112] The numerous game-based works vividly and clearly demonstrate this; lacking any obvious rules, participants must reach a common consensus, which at the same time allows for the proliferation of individualistic desire, in order for the game to be played.[113] In the participatory works that encourage psychological reflection, the "self-examination becomes part of a social exchange rather than remaining a private reflection."[114] Introspection occurs alongside cooperation and an opening to others.

The participatory aspect to works like *Test Site*, the sixth instalment of *The Unilever Series* in the Turbine Hall, and *Ping Pond Table* can be novel to museum-goers who are primarily accustomed to relatively stationary viewing rather than active participation. While the novelty of participation in the art gallery setting can be fun for viewers, the works *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* literally address games, play and amusement. Significantly, these works engage viewers' senses beyond the strictly visual, and create interstitial moments of play and childlike wonder that operate outside of normal adult consumer and political relations.[115] Can the artworks or the reactions to them significantly affect the distribution of the sensible through the aesthetic experience in the museum? Once something free like play is institutionalized are its political effects also minimalized or altogether annihilated?

Increasingly (and perhaps detrimentally), institutional activities comply with the marketing of culture.[116] In "The Academy and the Corporate Public," Stephan Dillemuth notes the irrefutable necessity of corporate money to sustain cultural production within

the public sphere[117]: "the artist, the art institutions and finally most of cultural life come to depend more and more on corporate money, taste and influence."[118] Tate Modern relies on its sponsors to help mount ambitious exhibitions and to sustain and develop its programmes. Unilever, a multi-national corporation that produces every kind of household item, is of course the funding source that makes The *Unilever Series* possible.[119] Tate is obviously grateful (and indebted) to its sponsors who increasingly enable Tate to serve a broad community in new and exciting ways; however, what are the implications of a globalized corporate identity enabling such public access to artworks? There is a legitimate concern that corporate sponsorship can commodify, 'brand' and co-opt art. Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics suggests that relational artworks can successfully enable a critique of corporate globalization.

In "Temporariness, Possibility and Institutional Change," curator and writer Charles Esche discusses institutions' need to respond to the effects of changing technologies, collapsing geography and the increasingly decentralized sense of subjectivity that Western art audiences are experiencing.[120] Institutions also need to respond to changes in the way artists are working, the expectations they have of the institutions they work with as well as changes in the broader political and social framework.[121] Institutions like Tate Modern – a good example of an institution that has focused on increasing its accessibility – attempt to provide each visitor with an equal opportunity to take part in the dialogue. In 1980, artist Vito Acconci wrote in *Artforum* magazine that "a gallery could be thought of as a meeting place, as a site where a community could be called to order, called to a particular purpose."[122] Esche underscores the importance that the purpose be open; anything must be possible. Esche writes that a positive remaking of art's relation to the social must be rooted in

temporariness or provisionalism: projects or programmes that are always up for negotiation and alteration. He suggests that "possibility" should be used as an organizing ambition that permits new social and individual imaginings which create "the conditions for thinking things otherwise than they are now."[123] Esche echoes Bourriaud's view when he writes that ideally within the unfixed group of a gallery-going public, a temporary confluence of spatial, temporal and relational coordinates, possibility is tangible in the here and now with these particular people.[124] Esche urges art institutions to be political in a direct way by addressing and thinking through the consequences of our free market economy, its accompanying policies and its extreme ideology. Esche recognizes, however, that the institution must have courage to do so; funders must also be persuaded to forego the touristic impetus for art museums in favor of advancing creative thinking and intelligence in society.[125]

Architecture can be a strong directional and organizational force in a museum; it can reorient its functions and shift its identity. The levels and spatial boundaries that architecture creates also function to plan and control the movements of crowds through space.   At the same time, effective art museum architecture can provide a terrain wherein audiences feel liberated and free to try out different roles or identities and to create their own paths of adventure and discovery. The art museum becomes a kind of "adult playground,"[126] where temporary roles are tried out and juxtaposed but still connected with the much more codified possibilities and rigid structures of daily life. Ideally the architecture provides an effective frame in which the exhibited artworks engage the imagination and encourage people to return for new and different experiences.

Common Wealth: Artists' Roles

In *Common Wealth*, the catalogue for the 2003 Tate Modern exhibition of the same name, Morgan suggests a democratizing effect in the works of the celebrated international contemporary artists in the exhibition, including Höller, Orozco, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla. *Common Wealth* was Tate Modern's first contemporary thematic exhibition aimed at increasing the public profile of both established and emerging contemporary artists. In *Common Wealth* the artists especially considered the role of the audience in the production of a thought-provoking, participatory and enlightening collective experience. The five artists, who all work within a loosely-defined sculptural realm, were selected because they directly engage with questions of social and material exchange and persistently question the potential limitations and opportunities offered by the process of public presentation.[127] The works explore the potential use-value of contemporary art as a means for thought, change and communication.[128] *Common Wealth* considers the reception of art and the communities of co-presence that artworks can create in view of a diminishing number of concrete and meaningful communal relationships in society. The name of the exhibition raises questions like "what constitutes the common or communal and how and by what system do we define wealth?"[129] The exhibition's title suggests that in some, perhaps inconspicuous, way, artistic practice might contribute to public prosperity, or alternatively reveal its "inherent paucity."[130]

In the exhibition reciprocity is examined though the presentation, exchange and communication of knowledge, games and experiences that connect the artists and audiences in processes of shared experimentation. The process-based art, which focuses on collaborative or de-centered productivity – group work as opposed to

individual action – examines what type of common ground the art museum might offer, and the accompanying ethical consequences involved.[131] The exchanges are symbolic of exchanges in social, material and economic systems of daily life; they function as a form of critique of commodity encroachment on artistic practice (initiated by artists in the 1960s and 1970s) and of the abstraction and commodification of social relations, for instance through internet-mediated sociality, which have become even more prevalent and pervasive since 2003.

This exhibition focused on both the aesthetic experience and art's capacity to develop a collective or communal experience in opposition to the autonomy of artistic experience. Many artists do not consider themselves object-makers, but rather instigators of processes which centrally involve audiences. Although Rancière is opposed to predicting outcomes, it is interesting to investigate what potential communality can be achieved. Morgan has written that philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy has questioned the underlying philosophical assumptions of individualization, which, he notes, is more vociferous and insidious since the post-Socialist rise of strongly individualizing consumer-rights culture.[132] Individualization, according to Nancy, betrays a deep mistrust of the 'we' and a denial of the primacy of the collective.[133] Nancy considers the communal nature of existence and concludes that ideas such as 'being with,' 'being-in-common' or 'being-with-each-other' "comprise a far more logical metaphysics than the implausible idea of a singular ontology, which is rooted in the idea of individualization."[134] Morgan considers Nancy's conception of the 'common' the best characterization of the work in *Common Wealth*, an exhibition that encourages doubts about assumptions of cohesiveness in normative definitions of community, and sees the political potential of 'being-in-common.'[135] The artists in *Common Wealth* question the

universalizing assumptions of totalizing Western economic systems and strategically reflect a desire to acknowledge multiple points of view.[136]

Conclusion

Play and participation are infiltrating the contemporary art institution, at least partially, in response to transformations that capitalism has brought to the concept of art and its 'public' institutions. The decisions of curators and directors to incorporate play have incited the comparison of museums to entertainment complexes, sites of cultural distraction and amusement. However, it seems that the art museum retains a specific, conscious and intellectually critical experience. Although the open forms of installation art seem to contrast markedly with the forms of politics understood in a narrow sense (protests, elections, referendums, campaigns and debates) and while the museum remains complicit with the market, museums and curators' treatment of play also transport play from the childish realm into the 'serious' adult realm and this suggests political motivations and ramifications that have implications beyond the physical boundaries of any particular museum. The complexities and contradictions of the contemporary art institution, and the 'relational' artworks it exhibits, create politicized spaces that rearrange roles and deconstruct social stratifications through individual and communal aesthetic experiences and a rethinking of the artwork as both the tangible physical object *and* the indeterminate interaction with its audiences.

Notes

1   "museum, *n.*" *Oxford English Dictionary Additions Series*. 1993. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 23 May 2010 <http://dictionary.oed.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/cgi/entry/00319052>.
2   Simon Sheikh, "Introduction," *In the Place of the Public Sphere?* ed. Simon Sheikh (Berlin: B Book, 2005), 12-13.
3   Pierre Bourdieu, et. al., *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 3-13. Jacques Rancière, though sensitive to issues of class, is opposed to this type of analysis because it is predicated upon an analysis of what are presumed to be static social stratifications. For more see Jacques Rancière, *Le Maître ignorant (*Paris: Fayard, 1987), 229 cited by Peter Hallward, "Politics and Aesthetics: An Interview in Angelaki," *Angelaki* 8.2. (Aug. 2003), 192.

4 Nicolas Bourriaud, "Relational Aesthetics," *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 168.

5 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods & Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002), 29.

6 Malcolm Miles, "Aesthetics in a Time of Emergency," *Third Text* 23:4 (2009): 429.

7 Malcolm Miles, 429-430. Immanuel Kant famously discussed the perceived need for art and the aesthetic to be separated from other realms. For more see Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).

8 Miles, 429.

9 This is a reference to the "ever-present noise of mass media," referred to by Miles, cited in Note 7 of this chapter.

10 Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London: Verso, 2007), p 28.

11 Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 65.

12 Bishop, 65.

13 Bishop, 65. Author's emphasis. Simon Sheikh writes: "we cannot talk of art's spaces as a common, shared space we enter with equal experiences – on the contrary, the idea of the neutral spectator has been dissolved and criticized, and the identity of the viewer has been specified and differentiated by both art practices and theories since the 1960s." See Sheikh, op. cit., 7.

14 Jon Snow, "Reaching Out," *Tate Modern: The First Five Years* (London: Tate, 2005), 13.

15 John Holden, "The Cultural Value of the Tate Modern," *Tate Modern: The First Five Years*, 37.

16 Right Honorable Chris Smith, "The Political Impact," *Tate Modern*, 17. "Some of the reluctance in other parts of Government reflected a fear that museums were an entirely middle-class interest, and that public money would be used to subsidise those who really didn't need it. My argument was precisely the reverse: that free admission would enable many more people to come, who couldn't when charges were in place, and that it would broaden out the range of people visiting." (Smith, 17-18) "Tate Modern demonstrated, within weeks of its opening, that both parts of my case were true. And within a year and a half, free admission for all national museums was a reality, and visitor numbers to all museums where charging had been removed went through the roof. The policy was a huge success, and the way the public took to Tate Modern in its early days had a decisive influence on the wider decision. The very success of the gallery, however, has brought its own problems. The wear and tear on the building, the press of visitors trying to get into the café or restaurant, the need for more gallery assistants – all of this flows from the extra-large number of visitors. The £6 million I had allocated rapidly began to look rather inadequate for the enormous task now required. Ultimately, however, this was a problem of success rather than of failure. Tate Modern made a convincing case to Government about the value of free admission." (Smith, 18)

17 Smith, op cit, 17. As the novelty of the opening wore off, numbers tapered to 4 million in the subsequent years. In the five years since its opening, Tate Modern has "drawn attention to a previously undeveloped area of London and has created 1,000 new jobs, generating £26 million per annum for London as a whole. It has become a new landmark for the capital, and its programme and architecture have won international acclaim." *Tate Modern: The First Five Years*, op. cit., back cover.

18 Snow, 13.

19 Snow, 14. Tate's education program does not only target the 400,000 children that visit each year, but also the teachers themselves, imparting pedagogical tools for them to use in their classrooms. In addition to its schools programme, Tate Modern offers its adult visitors a comprehensive series of talks, study days, courses and conferences.

20 Snow, 15-16. The programme is aimed particularly at those who have social, cultural, educational or financial disadvantage, which has limited or even excluded their previous participation and involvement in art. Participants have included people with learning and physical disabilities, elderly people and mental health groups.

21 Snow concludes his discussion of Tate Modern by saying, "my sense is that everyone who ever steps inside the building feels something of that stimulus. It's a feeling both of belonging and of connection, of extension and of reaching out into new experience. It's hard to beat." Snow, 16.

22 Smith, 17.

23 Smith, 18-19.

24 Laura Cumming, "Anyone for ping-pong?" 9 Nov 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2003/nov/09/1> (25 Aug 2009).

25 Ibid.

[26] James Meyer, "No More Scale: The Experience of Size in Contemporary Sculpture," *Artforum International* 42.10 (2004): 223.

[27] Meyer, 226 citing Robert Morris, "Size Matters," *Critical Inquiry* 26. 3 (Spring, 2000): 482.

[28] Morris, op. cit., 482.

[29] Meyer, 226.

[30] Meyer, 226.

[31] Meyer, 226.

[32] Smith, 19.

[33] Smith, 21.

[34] Smith, 21.

[35] Holden, 36.

[36] Holden, 36.

[37] Snow, 13.

[38] Jonathan Beller, "Kino-I, Kino-World," *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. N. Mirzoeff (New York: Routledge, 2002), 62.

[39] T.J. Demos, "The Tate Effect," *The Global Art World, Audiences, Markets, and Museums*, ed. Hans Belting & Andrea Buddensieg (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 256.

[40] Demos, 257.

[41] Demos, 262.

[42] Demos, 262.

[43] Demos, 264.

[44] Paul O'Neil, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," *Issues in Curating: Contemporary Art and Performance*, eds. Judith Rugg & Michèle Sedgwick (Bristol/Chicago: Intellect Books, 2007), 15.

[45] Ralph Rugoff, in Paul O'Neil, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," *Issues in Curating*, 19.

[46] Patricia Healy McMeans, "Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance," [Review] *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, Spring 2009, <http://www.raintaxi.com/online/2009spring/rugg-sedgwick.shtml> (25 August 2009).

[47] John Miller, "The Show You Love to Hate: A Psychology of the Mega-exhibition," *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. B.W. Ferguson, R. Greenberg & S. Nairne (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), 272.

[48] Miller, 272.

[49] Anthony Downey, "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics" *Third Text* 21.3 (May 2007): 271.

[50] O'Neil, 19.

[51] O'Neil, 19 citing Benjamin Buchloh, "Since Realism there was…" *L'Exposition Imaginaire: The Art of Exhibiting in the Eighties* ('s-Gravenhage, SDU uitgeverij, 's-Gravenhage: Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, 1989), 96-121.

[52] Beatrice von Bismarck in O'Neil, op. cit. 20. According to Miller, the curator as meta-artist is built upon the work of artists linked to institutional critique, such as Group Material, Julie Ault, Louise Lawler, Fred Wilson, Judith Barry and others working in the US in the 1980s. See O'Neil, op. cit., 22.

[53] O'Neil, 22.

[54] Jessica Morgan, "Introduction," *Common Wealth*, exh. cat., ed. Jessica Morgan (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 24. Morgan has also written extensively on participatory art forms in publications such as *Parkett*, *Artforum*, *Art Review*, *Grand Street* and *The Art Newspaper*.

[55] Morgan, 26.

[56] "Exchange," *Investopedia* < http://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/exchange.asp> (16 February 2010).

[57] Artist Daniel Buren is particularly hostile towards the tendency for large-scale exhibitions that treat individual artworks as 'fragments' and 'details' of the exhibition in question. He is critical of curators who profit from the occasion to publish their own thesis in the form of an exhibition catalogue essay. See Daniel Buren, "Where are the Artists?" *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist*, ed. Jens Hoffman (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2004), 26. In thinking about the potential for an antagonistic relationship between curators and artists, it is important not to refuse the possibility of a thematic cohesion between artworks. For more see O'Neil, 24, 26.

[58] Downey, 268-269.

[59] "To this we could add a discussion around the extent to which 'aesthetics' and 'politics' have been necessarily divided into an antagonistic rather than complimentary relationship." Downey, 275. This issue was raised in Sarah James, "The Ethics of Aesthetics," *Art Monthly* 284, (March 2005): 7-10. Drawing on the work of Jacques Rancière, James observed that aesthetics and politics have been imbricated from the outset. On Rancière's theory, James notes that he "claims that the so-called modernist narrative

misses the point. Whereas it sees aesthetics as the constitution of a sphere of autonomy which has subsequently collapsed in the last decades of the twentieth century, in fact, the terms that it opposes have been tied together since the beginning of the aesthetic regime of art. Crucially, Rancière argues first that in this regime the definition of a specific aesthetic sphere does not withdraw artworks from politics. On the contrary their politicality is linked with that separateness and, second, that the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere is not the autonomy of artworks. When this representational regime of art collapses, artworks are merely defined by their belonging to a specific sphere. But that sphere has no definitive boundaries; the autonomy of art is also its heteronomy." See James, 10. James' discussion here reiterates Rancière's explanation of the aesthetic regime of art, which insists upon the absolute singularity of art without, however, providing the necessary criterion to determine the basis of this singularity. Singularity means the quality that distinguishes the aesthetic from other realms. See Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 23.

[60] Bourriaud considers art's communicational capacity to be a means for creating micro-communities in contrast to the abstract relations prevailing in society. Bourriaud thinks that social relations are being increasingly mechanized, that concrete opportunities for interaction among people are being eliminated. He considers machine-mediated interaction as abstract; he cites the automatic teller replacing an actual human bank teller as an example. See Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, op. cit., 16-17.

[61] Downey, 272.

[62] Downey, 268.

[63] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, op. cit., 16-17.

[64] Marc Augé defines supermodernity as three basic transformations of the current world order: an acceleration of history, a spatial shrinking of the world and an increase of individuation. All these developments form the condition of supermodernity. See Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1996), 80.

[65] Downey 273-274.

[66] Downey, 274.

[67] Downey. 275.

[68] Downey, 275.

[69] Downey, 273.

[70] Downey, 273 citing Jacques Rancière interviewed by Truls Lie, 'Our police order: What can be said, seen, and done.' First published in *Le Monde diplomatique*, Oslo, 8 November 2006 (Norwegian version). Available at: <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-08-11-lieranciere-en.html> (accessed 3 February 2010).

[71] Ibid.

[72] Miles, 430.

[73] Morgan, 24.

[74] Morgan, 24.

[75] Morgan, 24. Emphasis added.

[76] Morgan, 25.

[77] Morgan, 25.

[78] Benjamin Buchloh, "Gabriel Orozco: The Sculpture of Everyday Life." *Gabriel Orozco*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000), 69. Relational aesthetics is not object-centered though *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* are heavily dependent on objects.

[79] Benjamin Buchloh, "Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham," *Neo-Avant-garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2000), 198.

[80] The aesthetic experience is not identical to the quality of the relationships between viewers. Although the former depends on the latter, other factors affect the aesthetic experience such as context, intensity and duration. The point here is that the aesthetic experience, while dependent upon the relationships between viewers, is broader; it encompasses more factors and would exist even if the works were viewed without relations developing between viewers. The relationships between viewers are not everything, as Bourriaud suggests.

[81] Stewart Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics," *Third Text* 21.4 (July, 2007): 376.

[82] Martin, 376.

[83] Martin, 371.

[84] Martin, 376.

[85] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Lukas & Sternberg, 2007), 26.

[86] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, op. cit., 26.

[87] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, op. cit., 26.

[88] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, op. cit., 37.

[89] Miles, 425.

[90] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 61 cited in Malcolm Miles, "Aesthetics in a Time of Emergency,": 424. Bourriaud is focusing on the experience that the work creates within its viewers – its exhibition value – as opposed to a meaning intrinsic to the work.

[91] Martin, 386.

[92] Martin, 386. Rancière argues that today the critique of the market is a "morose reassessment" that actually hinders the emancipation of minds and practices, in spite of its stated aims. He writes that although these critics of the market call for subversion, they ultimately declare it impossible, which in turn decimates all hope for emancipation. See Rancière, "The Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Artforum,* (March 2007): 263. Notably, the work that Bourriaud promotes is not explicitly aimed at critiquing the market but rather at the instantiation of another way of relating to one another.

[93] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 267.

[94] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 258.

[95] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 258. Author's emphasis.

[96] Rancière, "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art," *Participation*, op. cit., 84.

[97] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 263.

[98] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 263.

[99] The aesthetic regime of art is premised on an axiom of equality that disbands old aesthetic hierarchies from the ethical regime of art and the representational regime of art. In the aesthetic regime of art, the singularity of art is asserted; however, this singularity cannot be defined. As such, the forms that establish the autonomy of art are identified as the forms that life uses to shape itself. See Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 23.

[100] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 259.

[101] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 269.

[102] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 258.

[103] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 259.

[104] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 258.

[105] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 258.

[106] "The Emancipated Spectator," (2004) cited in Jacques Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 264.

[107] Rancière, "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art," op. cit., 80.

[108] Rancière, "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art," 83.

[109] Rancière, "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art," 84.

[110] Rancière, "The Art of the Possible," 267.

[111] *Common Wealth* was held October 22 – December 28, 2003 at Tate Modern in London. The featured artists hail from Europe and Latin America.

[112] Morgan, 24-25.

[113] Morgan, 25.

[114] Morgan, 25.

[115] Though of course play has a long history of commodification, in toys, board games and more recently video games.

[116] Stephan Dillemuth,"The Academy and the Corporate Public," *In the Place of the Public Sphere?* ed. Simon Sheikh, op. cit., 103.

[117] Dillemuth, 110.

[118] Dillemuth, 109.

[119] In February 2004, Unilever and Tate won the *Arts & Business Champion of the Year* award for The *Unilever Series*. Past and present sponsors of Tate include Ernst & Youngs, Aviva, The British Land Company PLC, UBS Warburg, Barclays and PLC. See for more information about Tate's funding. <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/tatereport/2004/business/funding.htm> (10 January 2010).

[120] Charles Esche, "Temporariness, Possibility and Institutional Change," *In the Place of the Public Sphere?,* 132.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Vito Acconci, in Philip Auslander, *Performance:Crit Concepts V4* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 191.

[123] Esche, 122. Höller also expresses an interest in introducing moments of instability and confusion into both his life and his work that permit multiple possibilities. See Carsten Höller, "Kinshasa Rumba Brazzaville," int. with Nicolas Bourriaud, *Altermodern* (London: Tate, 2009), 130-131.

[124] Esche, 122-123.

[125] Esche, 128.

[126] Esche, 132.

[127] Vicente Todoli, "Foreword," *Common Wealth*, 9.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Morgan, 15.

[130] Todoli, 9. Morgan discusses the significance of the term 'common wealth' at length in *Common Wealth*. See especially 21, where she writes that 'common wealth' has been used to mask the concentration of wealth and power behind the language of democracy.

[131] Morgan, 16.

[132] Morgan, 16.

[133] Jean-Luc Nancy, however, is still concerned to preserve the singular within the collective, rather than eliminating it as in previous forms of communitarian thinking.

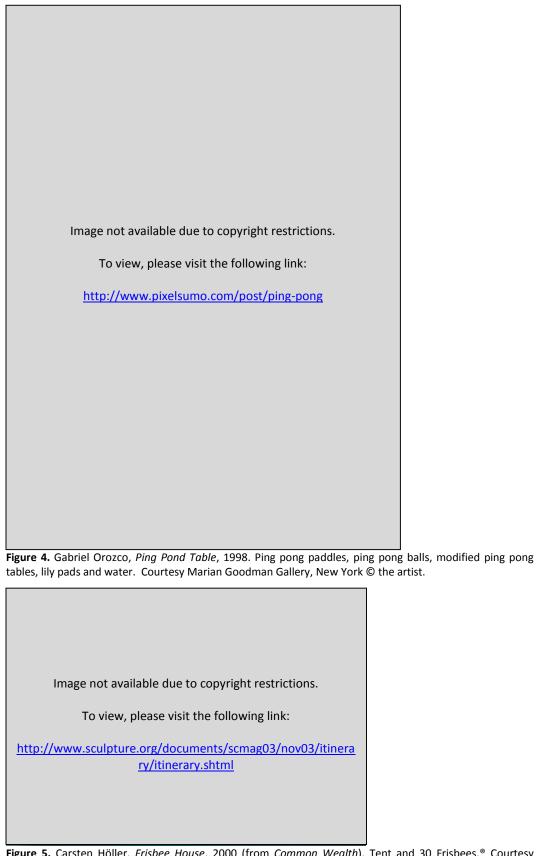[134] Morgan, 16.

[135] Morgan, 16.

[136] Morgan, 21.

Chapter 3: Two Case Studies: Höller and Orozco

This chapter considers the issues of play and its functions, the aesthetic and its implicit political dimension, and relational aesthetics with regard to participation versus spectatorship. Building on the arguments raised in the first two chapters concerning the politics of play and participation, an examination of the contemporary art institution and the influence of curation is extended to two case studies: *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table*. A detailed description and analysis of the two works sets the framework for a discussion of their operation in a dialogue with the history of sculpture, installation, relational aesthetics, participation, politics and play. The role of the specific museums and curators in these two installations is considered in the context of how 'viewers' participate in and are activated by *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table.* The critical and popular reception of these installations provides insight into their consideration as art with a political dimension in the absence of an explicit political programme. This chapter examines the manner in which these works animate serious institutions with playful installations, their ability to actively incorporate the viewer, and how they ultimately constitute what Rancière calls an 'art of the possible.'

Orozco, in *Ping Pond Table* and Höller, in *Test Site*, use material in dialogue with historical sculpture, Dada, minimalism, Fluxus and Arte Povera. *Test Site* is constructed in stainless steel and Makrolon, a clear plastic material. These materials echo minimalists' use of industrially fabricated materials that erase all traces of the artist's hand, utilizing materials not traditionally associated with 'high' art.[1] Visually, Höller's use of steel and plastic in *Test Site* operates in dialogue with industrially fabricated sculptural works by Donald Judd, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Richard Serra, and Tony Smith as well as architectural projects by Buckminster Fuller, Frank Gehry, and Frank Lloyd

Wright.[2]   Höller's use of industrial material is practical; he harnesses steel for its strength as a load-bearing material. Indeed, viewers' willingness to enter the *Test Site* slides is contingent upon their trust in the strength and structural integrity of its materials; faith in technological and industrial competency makes *Test Site* viable.

In contrast to the wholly inorganic, industrial construction of *Test Site*, Orozco combines organic materials and living matter with ready-made objects in *Ping Pond Table*. The lily pads and water add a biological delicacy absent in the sinuous metal of *Test Site*. Orozco's inclusion of organic living matter and water in *Ping Pond Table* recalls the Arte Povera movement, which introduced the use of 'poor' materials to suggest the availability of artistic endeavour to anyone, rich or poor.[3] In *Ping Pond Table*, Orozco harnesses the latent poetic potential of ordinary objects that surround us daily and comprise our environment: ping pong balls, ping pong paddles, ping pong tables, water, floating lily pads, and casual and competitive games. However, the material components of *Ping Pond Table* do not complete the work; viewers, or in this case players, are needed for the work to be activated and thus completed.[4] Instead of standing still and quietly and contemplatively looking across at something, viewers engage with *Ping Pond Table* and *Test Site* in more interactive, embodied, playful and phenomenological ways.

Image not available due to copyright restrictions.

To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.pixelsumo.com/post/ping-pong

Figure 4. Gabriel Orozco, *Ping Pond Table*, 1998. Ping pong paddles, ping pong balls, modified ping pong tables, lily pads and water. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York © the artist.

Image not available due to copyright restrictions.

To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag03/nov03/itinerary/itinerary.shtml

Figure 5. Carsten Höller, *Frisbee House*, 2000 (from *Common Wealth*). Tent and 30 Frisbees.® Courtesy Schipper & Krome, Berlin, © the artist

Image not available due to copyright restrictions.

To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler/photos3.shtm

Figure 6. Carsten Höller, *Test Site*, 2006. Stainless steel and Makrolon. All *Test Site* photos by M Leith, A Dunkley, O Leith, S Drake, M Heathcote, J Fernandes © Tate Photography.

Image not available due to copyright restrictions.

To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler/photos3.shtm

Figure 7. Carsten Höller, *Test Site,* 2006. Stainless steel and Makrolon

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To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler/photos3.shtm

Figure 8. Carsten Höller, *Test Site*, 2006. Stainless steel and Makrolon

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To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler/photos3.shtm

Figure 9. Carsten Höller, *Test Site*, 2006. Stainless steel and Makrolon

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To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler/photos3.shtm

Figure 10. Carsten Höller, *Test Site*, 2006. Stainless steel and Makrolon.

Image not available due to copyright restrictions.

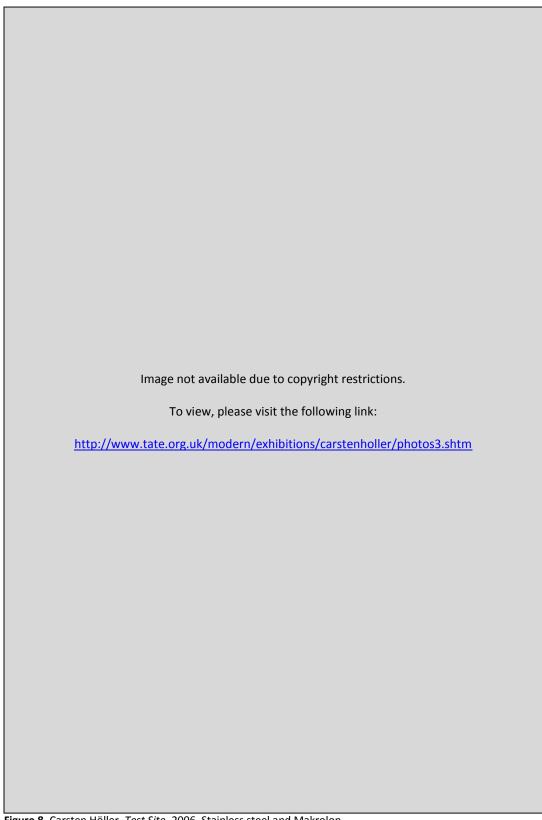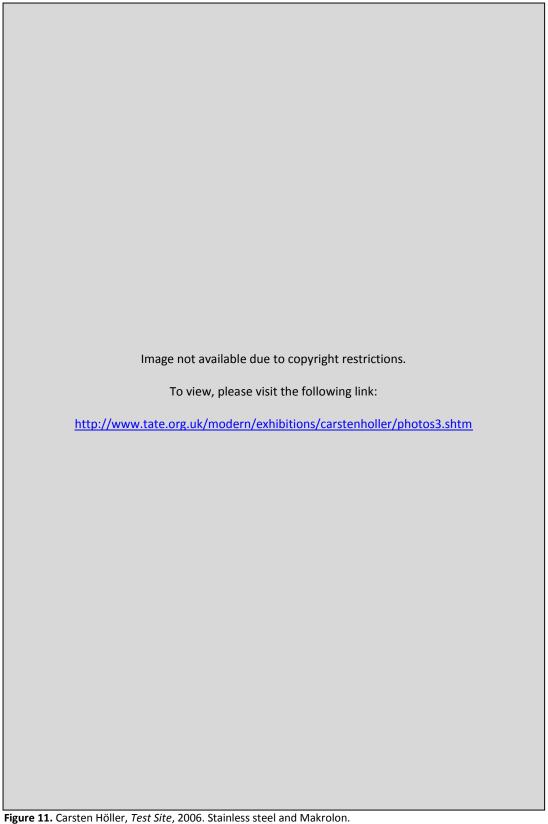To view, please visit the following link:

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler/photos3.shtm

Figure 11. Carsten Höller, *Test Site*, 2006. Stainless steel and Makrolon.

The size of installation artworks like *Test Site* and *Ping Pong Table* determines what type of space can accommodate them. The size and industrial quality of the material of *Test Site* appropriately coincide with the expansive sparseness of the Turbine Hall, the very unique and challenging space for which Höller's site-specific installation was commissioned. In his discussion of the projects that have occupied the Turbine Hall since the beginning of the Unilever Series, Morgan Falconer describes the enormous Turbine Hall, at 155 meters in length, 23 meters in width and 35 meters in height, as "more like a covered boulevard."[5] The Turbine Hall is an ideal venue for large, memorable, high impact exhibitions. Since the beginning of the popular Unilever Series in 2000, artists have started to explore different aspects of the complex space, which includes a long slanting ramp at the west entrance, and a bridge that bisects the middle of the hall.[6] Höller concentrates the slides near the middle of the hall, near the bridge and takes successive advantage of the height of the Turbine Hall; the tallest and longest slide begins near the ceiling, on the fifth floor, while the other slides depart from the fourth, third and second floors with all of the slides arriving under the bridge. The length of the hall, however, is void of slides and other objects which could obstruct sightlines and/or distract from the slides. This lets viewers perambulate and observe the work (and the sliders) from different perspectives.

Höller uses materials to engage viewers in an interactive and participatory way. Both the size and choice of materials dictates how viewers interact with these works. The massive size of Höller's *Test Site* dwarfs the human body and challenges the viewer's capacity to apprehend the work in its totality.[7] As installed, *Test Site* eschews the carnivalesque style of theme-parks by maintaining much of the sparseness of the

hall and by creating sinuous curves that are formally, architecturally and phenomenologically interesting.

Test Site is a both a proposal and a showcase for Höller's innovative and ground-breaking approach to alternative transportation that minimizes environmental impact. Höller advocates the use of slides as a pollution-free way to navigate urban environments; slides can be used to connect different floors of a high-rise structure or to commute from a building to a courtyard or public plaza.[8] The Turbine Hall project is for Höller a proposal, a grand advertisement, or even propaganda for the future use of slides in our everyday landscape and architecture. Test Site is an example of and a step towards the inclusion of slides in architectural projects of the future. The title of the non-anthropomorphic and massive metal slides refers to the experimental nature of the work itself as a testing of a new mode of transportation, engaging the viewer in a new relation to the work of art – relational aesthetics.

Test Site, which was conceived specifically for Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, demonstrates how intimately connected slides can be to the architecture in which they exist and from which they emerge. Tate Modern has notorious circulation problems: long lift lines and an escalator that mysteriously skips past the second floor. As such, it is a perfect place to demonstrate the practicality of slides. Curator Jessica Morgan writes,

> placed conveniently on each gallery level, a fast journey is guaranteed and with no unwelcome stops at another visitor's behest. Aside from the decidedly unidirectional nature of the slide, it is in all other aspects highly practical: safe (arguably more so than escalators, lifts and stairs), fast, compact, accessible and even environmentally friendly.[9]

The grand and ambitious Test Site project addresses the question of scale and spectacle[10] and amounts to nothing short of a "re-evaluation of the accepted forms of

descent in architecture."[11]   In scope, Höller's project is the largest to occupy the Turbine

Hall. Tate Modern, exceptionally prominent and public, seems to be the ideal venue for

presenting the argument that slides should be incorporated into architecture as a

practical means of transportation.

        In Höller's work there is an apparent tension between the purposeless and the

purposeful. That is, there is both an aesthetic experience at play *and* a utilitarian

function, which is discordant with the Kantian definition of aesthetics, which does not

leave space for an artwork to be both aesthetic and useful. For Höller, the *Test Site*

slides illustrate the tension between aesthetics and utility because they present the

opportunity for an aesthetic experience and practical locomotion; however, the two

modes of *Test Site* do not occur simultaneously.   In the museum context, the slides are

playful and act as a model for how they might be put to a practical use outside of the

museum. As a temporary installation within Tate Modern they do not actually function

as a primary form of transportation within the museum because they are a high-impact

installation that indeed addresses Tate Modern's circulation problems, as Morgan aptly

states, but they do not solve the problems because they do not become permanent

fixtures within the museum. If installed permanently outside or for that matter within

the museum they function primarily as transportation and play devices, no longer as

aesthetic objects of contemplation because they are interested, embodied and

participatory. This evident tension is indicative of how some contemporary artists and

theorists, such as Rancière and Bourriaud, are thinking through the model of aesthetics

proposed by Kant.

Creating Experience

Orozco plays with the dimension of time; for him, good art creates real-time experiences.[12] In discussing the politics in his work, Orozco states that

> they talk about the museum and the spaces for art, but what for me is more important is the time for art. Of course, time and space are connected. But if you think about it, a museum, which is a space for art, doesn't guarantee that you are going to have a real-time experience with art. Maybe the space is too crowded, or the work is simply bad. There are many reasons that we can go to a museum and not have an art experience. I think there is something about generating the time for art for ourselves, in the world, that generates a situation in which the poetic—or the artistic, or the aesthetic, or the political, or whatever you want to call it—happens in real time in the spectator. That is why it has been important for me to try to erase identity, or the cliché of identity – not to show myself—because that will limit the perception of the identity of the person who is doing that. I try to make the body representation more like an empty space to be occupied rather than to represent my culture or my ethnicity or my sex or whatever, and in doing so generate this space in which anyone who is looking at it can be the one who made this, and find identity in that experience.[13]

Possibility, specifically Orozco's conviction that possibility is necessary for the 'real-time' art experience, resonates in this passage. For Orozco, it is important to generate a new experience in the viewer that is unique to that viewer's consciousness and situation at that moment. It is for this reason that Orozco attempts to depersonalize his art, so that it can affect anyone and everyone without addressing any specific gender, race, or sexuality. Likewise, the aesthetic experience does not address any of these factors. Orozco's intentions, as expressed above, strongly emphasize the openness of an individual's experience in contrast to a specific and predictable outcome. Orozco calls attention to the discrepancy between the expectation of an art museum as a place to experience art and the actual experience of art – a transformation that does not necessarily occur within a designated space per se, but rather within the individual who allocates the requisite time and opens him/herself to the aesthetic experience. Orozco

tries to empty the artwork of predetermined meaning, creating the circumstance by which any viewer can generate his/her own personal relation to the artwork.

The *Test Site* slides can be considered in light of the artistic practice of experience creation. The artist, instead of creating an isolated object, forges an *experience*; this "signals a fundamental shift in the way in which the meaning of an artwork is understood: from a level of intention, expression or content to a dimension of effect and experience; from what an art work 'says' to what it 'does.'"[14] Citing the work of Bruce Nauman – most notably the series of corridors he produced between 1969 and 1974 – Oskar Bätschmann has deemed the modern and contemporary artist a 'creator of experiences.'[15] Dorothea Von Hantelmann has written that *Test Site* creates an experience that forces us to confront ourselves, and especially our physical selves, more than the artist: "The sculptural object, in other words, becomes a tool to explore and experiment with our selves…This operational dimension is crucial: the work seduces us to act upon ourselves."[16] Although the artwork makes certain experiences more possible than others, the artwork is not inscribed with a meaning from the outset. In *Test Site* the emphasis is not on content, narration and opinion; it is on the artwork's performative potential to transform reality and to create immediate and exciting effects and experiences in viewers who act as participants in the work rather than as spectators. Höller's slides produce affective transitional moments that prompt us to communicate with an often concealed side of ourselves, not with the subjectivity of the artist. The visitor's experience becomes the meaning of the work of art and the art object becomes a device to transform us.[17]

Art's transformative potential here is directed towards a reconfiguration of values, in the words of Rancière, a reorganization of the sensible.[18] The slides negotiate

the politics of the playground within the museum but because of the timed ticketing system, no one slider gets to dominate the slides as is often the case on the playground. Because each slider is subjected to the same formal elements and physical dimensions of the slide, there is no privilege among visitors. The value that the slides try to inculcate in visitors to Tate Modern is play, and more specifically, the value of play in its combination with the aesthetic and the importance of play throughout life, not just in childhood.

According to Von Hantelmann, the museum is a place where values and ideologies are represented in artworks, enabling a "mental and physical experience, [by which] values can be acquired, embodied and therefore become effective."[19] The *Test Site* slides generate a moment that is all about one's self-referential relation within the museum, "the place where our most differentiated ways of relating to objects and their symbolic meaning are displayed and cultivated."[20] Höller's slides intervene in the museum display because they strive towards a subversion and reorganization of precisely the values that the museum has historically cultivated – values such as control, discipline and the regulation of individuals through norms, central organization and architecture.[21] The slides are a thought experiment that proposes ecstasy and euphoria in opposition to the museum's mechanisms for organization, control and rationalization. Despite this overt subversion, Höller's slides continue an essential project of the museum: the development and cultivation of self-understanding through experiences.[22] The focus of the experience is not self-control or composure, however, but self-abandonment and fun. Bodies are subjected to a familiar, yet other, sensorial regime that reinterprets the relations between "art and sensation, technology and pleasure, movement and liberation."[23]

The play and visceral enjoyment, which *Test Site* induces, does not preclude the possibility of reflection afterward. Herbert Marcuse has said that "entertainment may be the most effective mode of learning"[24] because amusement, pleasure, indulgence and gratification are so ubiquitous and thus familiar in contemporary society. *Test Site* demonstrates Höller's deep interest in the idea of fun, which he says is "so understandable, but so strange, so parasitic, and at the same time so important, so much of a guide in terms of taking decisions."[25] *Test Site is* entertaining, an example of participatory 'spectacle-as-art' and the museum as an entertainment zone.[26] However, Höller's Turbine Hall project is intended as more than simple diversion. Höller has frequently discussed his "interest in non-utilitarian, seemingly useless, senseless and unproductive ways of thinking, feeling and being, such as devotion and exaggeration." The purposelessness of the slides has value, apart from any practical function of transportation. Höller is interested in the altered state – overwhelming, immersive and disorienting – that the aesthetic experience can induce. There is affinity between play and the aesthetic, which, in Höller's thinking, both exist outside of the practical, and yet which can be incorporated into a practical transportation device. For Höller, the aesthetic is a question of technological innovation, playfulness and the environment. The overwhelming innovation and production synonymous with advanced capitalism makes projects like *Test Site* possible; environmental responsibility, technology and fun can be combined in the contemporary situation. If fun is the "collapse of aesthetic distance, the total integration of the spectacle and life,"[27] then perhaps the synergetic and harmonious integration of fun, technology and environmentalism is a dynamic form that transports us across distances without necessarily insisting on aesthetic distance. Höller believes that transportation can be artistic, practical, fun, and responsible.

Whereas play has come to be an accepted, and even necessary, aspect of art, fun is often considered irresponsible and childish, ignored by academics and adults alike. In *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno discusses fun in two ways, as a "socially mandated and mass-psychology-conditioned pseudo-pleasure of the culture industry" and as "real pleasure, uncritical and affirming."[28] Adorno derides the genre of the Happening because in its attempt to blur the boundaries between art and life the semblance character of art is destroyed, which potentially moves art into positivism and the sphere of affirmation.[29] Arguably, Höller wants art to be a positive synergy of the aesthetic, fun and transportation; for Höller, *Test Site* and more generally slides as public transportation accomplish this.

In *Test Site: Source Book*, Höller gathered materials to support and demonstrate the many potential possibilities and scope of ideas associated with the slide and sliding. Early twentieth-century Paris-based writer and scholar René Daumal discusses a 'curved' sense of duration, vertigo and repetition in relation to his youthful experimentations with the sudden onset of death, induced by intentionally inhaling carbon tetrachloride.[30] Daumal's description of the experience is uncannily close to the effect of sliding. Höller uses the conclusion reached by Stephen Jay Gould in *The Panda's Thumb* to suggest that sliding is part of our cultural inheritance.[31] Roy Kozlovsky provides a history of the slide that reveals that the slide was only recently integrated into playground and entertainment activities; as such its technological evolution is relatively young.[32] Through the recurring form of the spiral in nature – DNA, shells and hair – and the coil in architecture and graphic design, Höller makes an argument for the arabesque: that the repeating geometric forms and physical experience of the slide are manifest in all aspects of our biological and cultural world, and that slides echo the magnificent

patterns of the natural world. According to Höller, we have yet to fully appreciate this

potential and significance.[33]

The process of sliding produces a mental and physical displacement, in which

we experience a different, non-utilitarian, absent-minded and barely accessible side of

ourselves (instead of a rational and reflective side). The slides produce the loss of stable

ground and thus the phenomenon of vertigo, a somatic effect that occurs when the

liquids in the vestibular system in the inner ear continue to move after an abruptly

halted rotation around one's bodily axis, which produces the illusion of movement even

after the body has stopped moving. Vertigo indicates a failure in the coordination of

world perception and the self and reveals the limitations of our sensible orientation.[34]

Vertigo – whether purposefully induced or not – can create pleasure, but also fear.

Though the altered state of feeling, being and existing experienced by the sliding

individual is not enduring, it is powerful because it has a transformative impact – if only

momentarily – on the person who subjects himself to the experience.[35] Slides engender

an exploration of the world with the body and the senses.

Höller is not only interested in slides as a means to improve our egress, but also

for their ability to induce the physical experience of vertigo and abandonment. The

slides subject the visitor's physical body to the effects of a natural constant – gravity –

that is beyond both our control and doubt. Von Hantelmann writes that "there is an

interesting pairing of will and powerlessness at play when the visitor approaches the

work. He or she actively decides to become passive, to be moved and manoeuvred by

an object."[36] Milan Kundera, in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, describes vertigo as

the "insuperable longing to fall."[37] Höller states:

> the slides offer the passage from one state to another. In the 'in-between,' one
> must, however, accept to abandon oneself, to let oneself go, in order to find

oneself a few minutes later in another world, in another condition. Between the two states, vertigo and the feeling of the unknown briefly resurface. These are the conditions indispensable to knowledge and creativity, the motors of life… [The slides] induce a sense of bodily euphoria – a mixture of bliss and senselessness that releases us from the gravitational certainty of everyday life.[38]

The spiral slide is unlike any other form of commonly used pedestrian circulation because the circular descent submits to "the longing to fall" and twists the straight downward force of gravity. Höller surmises that daily sliding can have a transformative effect on our behaviour because it injects a regular dose of exhilaration, joy and lack of control. He argues that sliding on the way to or from work interrupts the drudgery of commuter travel and that sliding undertaken as a routine activity can subtly and positively affect our outlooks.[39] The thrill of giving in to the vertigo currently experienced only at the playground and fair would alter perspectives and cause people's roles to become destabilized; artisans, warriors, rulers and philosophers would all slide (equally) as children do. *Test Site* is the first inquiry into the possibilities and results of slides-for-all.

The Slide: A History

The earliest textual or pictorial accounts of slides (for both amusement and emergency) date between the late 1860s and the early 1870s.[40] Slides were subsequently developed and manufactured as identical means for inducing pleasure and fleeing danger.[41] Kozlovsky connects sliding and the pleasurable sensation of the kinetic subject to advancements in the scientific method and to Enlightenment philosophers who discovered that bodily movement is associated with freedom and happiness. The popularization of the slide depended upon the proliferation of sites for kinetic amusement, such as playgrounds and amusement parks.[42] Slides, at once theatrical and voyeuristic, complemented the opulent designs of amusement parks and provided a

thrilling ride and a delightful spectacle. Theorists devised ever darker and more

complex explanations for why modern subjects would "submit their bodies to the

tantalizing sensation of mechanized sliding."[43] The French philosopher Roger Caillois, in

theorizing the meaning of what he called 'vertigo machines,' opposed the mechanical

argument that suggests that the motion in the semicircular canals of the ear accounts

for the attractiveness of vertigo; for Caillois, "play was foremost a cultural activity that

was irreducible to the physiology or psychology of the individual."[44] Caillois considered

the attraction to vertigo more like Kundera's later description than the physical

explanation offered by scientists.

In *Man, Play and Games* (1958), Caillois classified games into four universal

categories: *agôn* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (simulation) and *ilinx* (vertigo).[45]

Caillois was especially interested in the capacity for turbulent motion to momentarily

destabilize perception and inflict "a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid

mind."[46] Vertigo has a ritualistic function according to Caillois; it induces a trans-like

state as a "means for initiation into the bonds of collectivity."[47] In the transition to

modern civilization, the violence and seduction of cultures of the mask and vertigo were

substituted with the "rational and constructive pairing of competition and chance."[48] To

accommodate these innate and turbulent impulses, modernity mechanized vertigo by

introducing it into amusement parks, fairs and playgrounds.[49] The success of the slide as

a playground apparatus that induces repetitive kinetic pleasure helped naturalize

policies of play by insisting on play as a "biologically inscribed essential human need."[50]

Reception of the Works: Viewers' Comments

Because installation emphasizes first-hand experience, it is interesting and

important to consider spectators' feedback. In response to *Test Site*, some were thrilled

and pleased; others were horrified. Some claimed to have been injured, while others expressed indignation that they should have to wear protective gear. *Test Site* provoked strong reactions, both negative and positive.

Many of the viewers' comments focus on practical issues, such as waiting queues and protective gear. When *Test Site* first opened, there were fears that gallery-goers might hurt themselves. Many visitors commented on the initial lack of safety measures, such as landing mats and protective gear, and the subsequent enforcement of them. *The Guardian* writer Francesca Martin wrote that the installation "is not for the faint-hearted."[51] Even Höller acknowledged that the slides could be hazardous, stating, "you have to learn how to use them."[52] Sliders of the tallest slide were provided with sack cloths to quell concerns that heavier people, particularly those donning acrylic, might be burned by sliding too fast.[53] Some viewers commented that they were required to wear elbow protectors and baseball type caps, which had a hard top and usually fell off along the way. Although some thought the elbow protectors were needed for the bumpy descent, one viewer thought the protective safety gear spoiled the fun.[54]

Höller's slides captured the imagination of the public. The gallery was packed during school holidays, which made getting free timed tickets for the slides necessary. Many viewers reported that the slides actually made them feel like they were kids again.[55] Some sliders could only describe their experience with sound: "Wee!" said one slider, which suggests that the experience was entirely embodied, rather than contemplative.[56] Rachel Cooke, in her review of *Test Site* for *The Guardian*, entitled "Is it really all it's cracked up to be?" said it welcomed viewers to a new cultural

revolution.[57]   Cooke hailed the slides as amazing, whizzing, zippy structures, with reasonable queues.   She wrote,

> More to the point, [the queues] are not sullen. The effect of the slides is transformative. They make people smile, and it's contagious. Even those at the end of the longest queue look almost beatifically happy at the prospect of what lies ahead (a five-second pull on their internal organs followed by the thwack! of butt on mat), queue or no queue. One older man is standing at the bottom of the slides watching people land. He is wearing a raincoat, but there's nothing sinister about him. 'Don't they whizz down?' he says, turning to me. They sure do. He looks how I feel: chuffed just to be here. 'I don't slide myself, but you don't have to. A vicarious thrill is enough.'[58]

The older man's comment illustrates how the performative and play aspects are not simply experienced by the slider, but also by an audience that bears witness; the transformative moment often occurs from a distance and the work is enlivened by the relationship of perspectives and the transference of desire that comes from a voyeuristic moment.

The installation's showmanship was not unanimously crowd pleasing.   Some considered *Test Site* just average, and "less visually effective than when the slides are coming in and out of windows of a building."[59]   One viewer commented:

> The tubes are great sculptures, but something makes me feel uncomfortable when I look at the crowds and think about how 'having an experience of a live time,' (bungee jumping, skydiving etc.) escaping the real, 'getting away from the grind' has become a common theme from holidays to art now.[60]

The issue of whether the sensational art experience that occurs within the museum retains its non-identity from the entertainment experience that occurs outside of the institution resonates with many visitors.   Indeed, many visitors asked whether *Test Site* was art or not and questioned why the undeniably exciting, hurtling, and frightening silver ringlets were in the Tate Modern at all.[61]   One critic said:

> In attempting to appeal to new audiences, great cultural institutions risk losing their integrity…And while the argument over what counts as art is notoriously

subjective - only a few calculations of light and sound distinguish Carsten Höller's current slide-rides at Tate Modern from a theme-park ride.[62]

The difference between a theme-park ride and *Test Site* dissolved for one viewer who commented that, **"**Höller's slides just showed [Tate Modern] at its worst: the whole place turned into one big tedious, shouty, fractious, queuing experience."[63] One of the harshest reviews, by Jonathan Jones, a self-declared vertigo-afflicted critic, states: *"Test Site* is not a work of art by any objective measure, and Carsten Höller is not an artist."[64] This conservative comment suggests a rejection of art's long history of relation to everyday experience; for Jones, the issue of safety seems to overwhelm an aesthetic appreciation. He could not comprehend what "possessed everyone" to behave like "over excited children," to suspend their judgement and trust Höller and his slide manufacturer before sliding down from the top of Tate Modern. Jones rescinds some of his criticism, deeming *Test Site* both the "final folly of a populist museum" that has turned itself into a "chic fairground" and the best of the Unilever Series so far because of its "unresolved satirical ambiguity" and the dark illogic of Höller's playfulness. Jones' seemingly contradictory review of *Test Site*, which criticizes its populist appeal while celebrating its satirical twists and turns, elucidates some of the reactive complexity and multiplicity of responses inherent to participatory artworks and large-scale installations in general.

Feasibility

Höller asked General Public Agency (GPA) to conduct a feasibility study exploring slides as transportation within the public realm. The project was informed by the trans-disciplinary concern that "play as a spontaneous, non-age specific activity is being designed out of city life."[65] Part of this reason is that play is predicated on fun, whose close ally is risk. In the study, GPA writes that

it is no coincidence that our bodies produce adrenaline when we have fun and when we are in danger. Places that are fun can potentially cause accidents; people affected by increased adrenaline, serotonin or endorphin levels may fail to notice the hazards around them or the hazard that they present to others.[66]

A prevailing concern for safety which is allied to an effort to curb liability puts us in danger of eliminating play and denying its importance. According to GPA, one of the most powerful arguments for slides is that they provide people with an everyday way to smile and laugh.[67] Slides inject pleasure and adrenaline into the monotony of a city experience constituted by an urban design philosophy that does not necessarily discourage play but a normative behavioural policy that relegates and restricts it to designated areas, such as playgrounds and amusement parks. Slides may also contribute to current governmental 'place-making' agendas that strive to create a sense of marketable identity. These benefits notwithstanding, slides clash with the static stability of the concept of public space and present many challenges that require resolve and experimentation.

The incorporation of slides into architecture would transform the public realm into a cityscape that privileges free fun for all ages and sectors of society over risk aversion. The new form of public realm would also question "whether the provision of such unadulterated fun would encourage a more respectful attitude towards the slides than the vandalism that most public realm 'improvements' attract."[68] *Test Site* is the actualization of a feasibility study within a space that guards against vandalism and (ideally) predisposes people to open their minds to new (and perhaps radical) ideas and ways of being. This emphasis on possibility recalls Rancière's call for an 'art of the possible,' an idea premised on multiplicity that works in opposition to the strict outcomes predicted and desired – if not demanded – of critical art. Rather than presupposing outcomes, the art of the possible encourages the development and

cultivation of multiple, varying interpretations, outcomes and opportunities. Curator Philippe Vergne says that he likes to think of the exhibition like a movie, with visitors as the protagonists. "Each protagonist activates the exhibition as he or she goes through it; thus, there is always the possibility of multiple conclusions."[69]

The Slide in Architecture

Technological innovations have overcome the main problems that slides present in architecture; however, slides have not been readily incorporated into architecture. Kozlovsky explains that the difficulty in incorporating slides into modern architecture was not a resistance to functional elements nor diagonal movement but a question of the relationship between body and mind, movement and reason. "Perhaps sliding was deemed too strange to be assimilated into architecture, since it positioned subjects in an awkward, compromised position, where they were too aware of their corporality, rather than their rationality."[70] Or, perhaps the slide's association with the playground, the amusement park and disaster made the slide "illegitimate, infantile or grotesque to an architectural discourse that found its legitimacy in reason."[71] If the slide becomes acceptable in the context of contemporary architecture it would reinforce the environmental ethos of the day and demonstrate that green building is anything but austere and bucolic.[72] It would also help destabilize existing social roles and conduct by extending the use of what has traditionally been considered a child's play thing to people of all ages.

Höller advocates including slides in architecture to disrupt mundane routines of business activities and induce a "voluptuous panic"[73] in the action of sliding. Höller's slides suggest an alternative functionality in architecture and disrupt the utilitarian focus of societies geared towards ever-increasing economic productivity. More than just

being fun, the slides provide a release, a moment of selfish return to childhood bliss, an activity that occurs outside of normative consumer relations. However, Höller's architectural intervention requires the "courage and taste for mobility,"[74] that not everyone has. An extended amount of time will likely have to pass before Höller's architectural slides are adopted by the mainstream as a form of descent that replaces and/or regularly supplements elevators and stairs. Although, some rich, creative, chic, eccentrics, like Miuccia Prada, may be keen to adopt Höller's sliding as a part of daily life,[75] *Test Site* was contested within the creative sanctuary of the modern art museum, so it is unlikely that it will soon become enormously popular and widespread outside of it .

Höller's slides ingeniously repair the schism between form and content, conveying practical, playful and aesthetic function. Why shouldn't passing in and out of buildings be a fun and joyful experience? Why would we want to repeat the process thousands of times, leaving our private and personalized spaces to go out into the public sphere without a ritual more gratifying than the barring of windows and the locking of doors? What if doorways were replaced by slide holes? If slides revolutionize the urban architecture of the contemporary city might they also transform the urbanite from a rushed, stressed and distracted person into a calm, pensive and relaxed person? Slides can connect buildings, creating transitional spaces between the inside and outside, allowing independent structures to function less as individual architectural objects and more like a city-museum where the various parts work symbiotically to create a network of play, much like the one conceived of by Constant Nieuwenhuys called *New Babylon*. Constant's visionary architectural project, which came out of the SI and was developed between 1956 and 1974, imagined a future ludic society, in contrast to a utilitarian

society, where a "dynamic labyrinth" symbolized both social and architectural utopia. *New Babylon* was premised on "unitary urbanism" instead of "functionalist and dehumanizing urbanism," imagining an "architecture of play and [the] transparency of human relations."[76] Because architecture so completely surrounds people, contains crowds and defines spaces, its ability to shift perspectives and augment self-consciousness should be seriously considered and utilized. Necessarily, the slow pace of change in architecture inhibits related transformations in society. Realizations and models like *Test Site* and *New Babylon* should thus be widely developed to act as pressure points that force the fissure of tradition.

Ping Pond Table: A Discussion

In *Ping Pond Table* Orozco deliberately adjusts the historic and Olympic sport of ping-pong, which like all games was created over time within a "particular culture that had a specific vision of the world and a way of ordering the universe."[77] Ping-Pong was first played by British officers in India and South Africa with balls carved from bottle corks, paddles improvised from cigar-box lids and 'nets' made of books set across the center of a table.[78] In the 1880s British engineer James Gibbs brought the game – then called *Gossima* – to the United States. Other names for the game were *Flim Flam*, *Whiff-Whaff* and *Whip-Whap*. The game came to be named "Ping-Pong," in the hope that it would be the only sport to be named after the sound it makes: the ball bopping the table and the paddle.[79] Orozco writes that

> every time a game evolves – chess, billiards, cricket or basketball for example – it represents a moment in time, and a way of understanding time, as well as a way of comprehending landscape, for example, or the universe. [Games] are the symptoms and models of the thought of the time. So it is not just the games that I am interested in.[80]

Orozco has not created a game without rules; the rules in Orozco's games just need to be discovered and agreed upon by each set of players, who are free to create a new game through the process of modifying the rules of the already-modified game table. The (likely, but not necessarily) four people playing *Ping Pond Table* have to, in the words of Orozco,

> start a dialogue to understand the phenomenon of the situation: the table, the new elements and the new systems of physics; starting from that point they need to generate new rules. These are not rules in the sense of being repressive, but rather a system of playing or activating the geometric, physical structure of the new game.[81]

It is ironic that to play one must be free but to play a game one needs rules. The above quote by Orozco highlights this nuance and significantly distinguishes rules from repressive structures like laws and social norms that function to maintain people's roles and places in society and which are preexisting rather than developed by participants themselves. Rules are an essential component of games that enable the temporary fluctuation in social roles – a moment apart from others – associated with play. Just as you cannot play ping-pong without a ping-pong ball, you cannot play *Ping Pond Table* without discussing and agreeing upon rules with the other players; a negotiation of a social contract defines a state of play. The elimination of the original rules, which Morgan and Orozco suggest are culturally specific, renders them banal. The injection of new rules into the old game perhaps revitalizes the boundaries of play while the organic structure of the game induces a reflection on contemporary relations to nature and how we comprehend the universe.[82]

The situation in which the players need to invent new rules – and by turn necessitate a rejection of the existing ones – is political in the sense that it permits flux instead of static and predetermined rules that narrow the space for agency among the

specific individuals playing. It is also democratic because the rules are devised, implemented and mutually agreed upon by the players. Abandoning the established rules transforms the game into a feedback mechanism that allows for participant input. This participatory transformation is at the heart of relational aesthetics, redrawing the notions of authorship, audience and art object in different ways.

In discussing his game based works, Orozco is apt to state that participation is very important; however, it need not be physical participation. Mental participation is just as important. Orozco says "the spectator is also an activator."[83] Spectators in live public events (like games or sports) are also participants in the game, if it is defined as a situation with its own rules, definitions and structures that players and spectators agree upon and adhere to. An analogy is the FIFA World Cup and the way the audience forms an emotional border that contains and prescribes the game play by contributing noise and energy that influences the rhythms of play on the field.[84] Of course, players of Orozco's games play for themselves because of interest, not to demonstrate finesse to spectators or to compete against one another. If you choose to play it is because you are curious to see how the game works and to then maybe think about it. Those watching participate by looking and also by thinking about this new game, the history of games, geometry, physics, landscape, nature and politics.[85]

Orozco has been interested in sports and geometry most of his life. His photographic works, like the *Atomist* series in 1996 and the ones he showed at the Gwangju Biennial in 1994 or 1995, feature geometric figures and patterns applied to sports photographs.[86] Two parameters that Orozco likes to include in every work are the "organic, the specific body doing something, and the geometric, the platonic or the abstract, mechanical and instrumental repetitive action on the same object. The

confrontation of the body and the mechanical is very important."[87] In *Ping Pond Table*

the geometric shape of the square pond is juxtaposed with the formless water that it

contains.

When Morgan asks Orozco if his artworks that are structures or systems – of

games, physical laws, and mappings – are a deliberate comparison to the structural

pattern of systems of circulation, money, commodities and power, Orozco responds that

> we always create from specific systems, patterns, mappings, memories of our
> culture. We generate from that starting point… You always look at things from
> your memory's point of view, and when you are looking at this different thing,
> which is new, but also connected with that memory, that is when you start to
> revise and rethink values and systems and emotions, and your geometry and
> theology.[88]

Orozco deeply appreciates that games and the memory of games are closely attached to

perceptions of space, social space and time. Because memory is different in function

and contents for all individuals, games take on an intimate personal meaning that is also

social in nature, since games are usually played by more than one person.

According to Orozco, his transformation of the ping pong table demonstrates

that the rules of any game are inevitably subject to change as a function of their

temporal and cultural situation. *Ping Pond Table* is an unfolding or reconstructing of a

geometrical system that generates revisions that result in a game that is topologically or

socially different.[89] *Ping Pond Table* is his attempt to "unfold the geometry," to "expand

some possibilities that were hidden or contained" and "flatten some of the social

ornamentation that gets attached to the game – in terms of competition or cultural

communication or recreational banalisation."[90] Orozco believes that flattening these

objects socially creates new fields of play that then begin to build themselves up anew

and develop different social situations. The works should be used as "instruments [and]

platforms for thinking."[91]

I try to create different levels of meaning, so that the works are instruments that function on multiple levels. I try to retain that potential in the original object – which itself is already the result of so many other things; it is not an 'original' ping pong game for example. I take it from one starting point, a point in time where there was this type of ping pong, and I unfold it and make a different game. But it is already charged with historical notions of space, time and the social landscape. Then I recreate the game, making a new 'original,' beginning again, transforming our memory for a possible future game.[92]

Material concerns, which are manifest in *Ping Pond Table*, are very important to Orozco. He says that in "every work the first concern for [him] is a connection with what the material is, and that [this concern] starts a process of analysis and posterior synthesis in which [he] arrive[s] to a situation with the same object, without losing the essential characteristics, if we can say that, of the object and material itself."[93] *Ping Pond Table* retains the functions of its materials but in a new configuration to each other and the players. The simple but significant modification that renders familiar objects new recalls Maciunas' altered ping pong rackets (discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis). The important but modest (and perhaps humorous) modification elucidates Orozco's interest in the antispectacular and the everyday, which recalls the complex simplicity of Felix Gonzalez-Torres' piles of candies and Rancière's call for the equality and anonymity of beauty.[94] Rancière argues that one thing should not be considered more beautiful than any other thing because there is no criterion to establish this difference in the aesthetic regime of art. This is not unlike the mode of attention that Fluxus gave to the ordinary, an aesthetics of indifference in which amusement and indifference were considered positive qualities.

Rancière and Orozco's interests intersect in the principle of equality, and the possibility that art can work democratically. Rancière's position that preordained outcomes and expectations should be denied opens up the aesthetic situation to anything and everything, which is compatible with Orozco's interest in participation, the

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open-form and the everyday – the beautiful which can emerge out of the ordinary.   If

carefully considered, the apparent simplicity of *Ping Pond Table* gives way to a myriad of

poetic and aesthetic possibilities.   Orozco has said that people often forget that he

wants to "disappoint." [95]   He uses the word "disappoint" deliberately.   He says that he

"want[s] to disappoint the expectations of the one who waits to be amazed," that only

then the "poetic can happen." [96]   In this instance poetic may refer to the aesthetic

experience that is apart from the everyday and that operates with elegance and

simplicity.   The poetic can transmit a message with an economy of means; it is unusual

in its capacity to unite form and content in a delightful way that makes the words more

meaningful as they are combined together than they are individually.

In *Ping Pond Table* Orozco sets the form, but not the rules, which are created by

the players. *Ping Pond Table* invokes the terms of poetry: the form of the table stands

in for the patterned verse structure that rhythmically flows under the language of the

poem.[97] Unlike in the poem, where the form imposes rules, in *Ping Pond Table* the rules

emerge organically from the players.   In both, the form and content combine to create

the rhythmic pattern and aesthetic of the work.   Moreover, poetry operates through

sound, which is an important component of ping pong. If played in a fury, the game can

have a loud and explosive rhythm; however, the game's rhythm is inevitably interrupted

and ended with the distinct and peaceful pop sound of the ball rebounding off the

table.[98]

The spare elegance of *Ping Pond Table* is similar to haiku, which also features

nature imagery; often water and ponds are present.   In haiku the nature element is

always integrated with human thought and presence.   In the little space of haiku the

words and form can come together synergistically, such that the combined meanings

and symbols of the words communicate a more intricate and delicate moment of contemplation in their haiku permutation than individually. In the modest (in comparison to *Test Site*) *Ping Pond Table* players can use the form of the modified ping pong table provided by Orozco to develop and forge the terms of a new game, which can become a meaningful aesthetic contemplation on the social and the political.

At some moment in the game there should be contemplation in spite of the action of playing. Orozco sets up the conditions for contemplation, which are centred on the aesthetic experience of beauty and poetry, which in this instance are both personal and communal. Orozco is not really thinking about use and art like Höller, who overtly considers the relation between the two. *Ping Pond Table* is not a practical variation on a game but rather a means to spur contemplation more than fun. Although *Ping Pond Table* can be entertaining it remains quite distinct from entertainment, which has an intellectually limited scope, because of the mental effort involved.

Ping Pond Table, being far smaller and less controversial than *Test Site*, generated considerably fewer public comments, which were mostly very positive. Even Laura Cumming, the reviewer who dismissed the majority of the *Common Wealth* installations, had nothing but praise for Orozco, whom she called a "poet among conceptual artists, [and] a charmer among lead-brained dullards."[99] Cumming said that his kinetic sculptures in *Common Wealth* turn the show around and "raise its game from quite trivial stakes."[100] In his work, play was a good thing, not a bad thing. She enjoyed watching players take *Ping Pond Table* both seriously (professional teams have devised complex new rules) and as lightly as the bouncing balls.

Although the forms of *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* are open for the viewers to interpret and interact with, each artist still has a goal, albeit not a circumscribed goal.

Orozco expresses an interest in improving the modality of competition in the world; playing with someone else generates illumination and something interesting. Orozco writes that

> competition does not have to be aggressive; it does not have to be conquering, [or]repressing the other. It can be a way of playing around, enjoying the fact that you are transforming reality with someone else for the good of both parties or of three parties. So when you abolish the ideas of power, you can get into a dialogue with someone who is a competitor or a rival, but in a way so that you need that rivalry in order for your ideas, your understanding of the world, to grow.[101]

Orozco's reinterpretation of competition aligns with the origin of the word competition that was first used in the first Greek Olympics to mean to strive with or together. Competition can be positive when it gives up the idea of suppressing and conquering the other and embraces the idea of enjoying and playing around with the other, trying to get the right movement and trying to challenge one another to surpass themselves. The game is not binary; it does not imply one against the other. *Ping Pond Table* allows for more than two. Orozco considers the space between two or more people to be very important – the space where art is happening. He writes that "a system of exploitation suppresses this third space of dialogue. This happens in art also. So it is this more than two that makes the world rotate. Games and competition are schematic. But the world is not a game."[102] Orozco is thinking about art and play together and considering the relation between them as political, just as Bourriaud does.

The Playing Audience: The Aesthetic Experience (Not the Object)

The emphasis in *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* is on visitors' participation and play filled experiences that reveal changing roles for curatorial practice, artists, art museums and their visitors. In discussing art works like *Test Site*, Höller has said that he has become the producer of experiences rather than objects that can be shown in the

context of a traditional museum or gallery.[103] He writes that "[his] objects are not really

meaningful without the viewer having a personal experience with them."[104] He is not

actually trying to produce an autonomous and static object but a "personal experience.

That is, something you can take home and do something with, instead of some kind of

constructed meaning extractable from the art object."[105] Höller describes the significant

shift from a focus on the object to a focus on the experience as representative of his

interest in bringing ideas out of the pure art context and into a more real-life context

that is based on experiences. Focusing on the intangible experience, rather than the

object, also helps resist the fetishization and commoditization of the art object.

Höller notes that he is interested in the idea of entertainment and fun from a

theoretical viewpoint:

> I believe that it is something that we tend to underrate. It is a very, very strong
> driving force in our lives, and I have an almost dictatorial relationship with my
> desire for fun. I think this is interesting enough to go into a more research
> approach towards this and to manipulate my own desire for fun and try to bring
> it on another level, more conceptual.[106]

Test Site, as experiment, is a manifestation of Höller's investigation of fun. For Höller,

the eerie aspect of fun is its invisibility: "it is something that doesn't have any form at

all."[107] The projects *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* address the invisibility of fun, build

the visibility of fun and provide forms for fun. In spite of the drastically different forms,

Test Site and *Ping Pond Table* share a vital concern: getting people involved (in fun).

Meaningfully, the experience of play occurs in a site traditionally reserved for

contemplation, not a site of play like an amusement park or playground. Thanks to their

location within the museum, *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* enable an intellectualization

of play. Morgan writes:

> Where else could one be given the opportunity to introduce the slide into the
> workings of a public building with a guaranteed participative audience of

millions? A conversion in architecture could never be achieved by the quiet incursion of the small-scale project. But, viewed from this perspective, the Turbine Hall can be seen as a relatively minor platform, a modest beginning for the wide-scale transformation of behaviour, and most of all, experience, proposed by this project. In our critique of the spectacularisation of culture, therefore, it is important not to dismiss en masse all works that aim to operate on such a public level and in a manner other than the mode of phenomenologically oriented critique. As Höller's *Test Site* will prove, there is a transformative effect in the exhilarating, joyful, disorienting, vertiginous experience of sliding.[108]

Morgan's comments address the significance of *Test Site*'s location within the Turbine Hall: the potential impact that play can have when featured prominently on the public scale of Tate Modern.

The significance of the aesthetic experience in *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* unites these two different works that foreground play as a means through which contemporary art can affect viewers who become participants. In both artworks the experience, which is at once individual and collective, is the driving force behind the work's politics; activated spectators whose participation is crucial come together in moments of interaction (visual, aural, physical and verbal) that challenge the isolation, alienation and mechanization of contemporary socialization and whose individuality enables possibilities (for interaction, action, and critique) to proliferate beyond the strict prescriptions of so-called critical art. For Bourriaud, art that addresses itself to the social embarks on a political project. Both *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* achieve the aims of relational artworks: they involve audiences in a way that allows for concrete communications and the formation of ephemeral micro-communities, which creates intimate exchanges between visitors. These relational works address power relations in an alternative way that emphasizes the *relationships* between artworks and audiences and even audience members amongst themselves rather than the art object, which is not considered to be autonomous in an art of participation.

Relational aesthetics addresses artworks that operate in the sphere of interhuman relationships. *Ping Pond Table* represents a clearer example of a relational artwork than *Test Site* because players must discuss the game with one another in order to play. Nonetheless, in *Test Site* sliders interact with one another in the queues and share tales of their experiences, both in real-time as well as online after their visits to Tate Modern. In a game involving *Ping Pond Table* players have the opportunity to develop more extended relationships, form teams, and discuss strategies – to learn anew a familiar game and laugh together as they learn. Learning can be enjoyable but it can also be frustrating. As such, games often reveal aspects of a person's character that are otherwise not made obvious – how they learn, how they react to disappointment and excitement, how they win and how they lose. For example, a game of Monopoly® might bring out the spite and malice in a seemingly benevolent person. In this respect, the quality of the relationships among players depends upon the duration of the game, how well players know each other from the outset and the nature of the game (whether players engage competitively or cooperatively, whether points are kept and a winner and loser is declared). Observing strangers oscillate between the emotions experienced during play may bring pleasure but also discomfort. Conversing with other sliders who have already taken the plunge down Höller's giant metal tubes may be reassuring, or it may reinforce and intensify the terror and trepidation one might experience before submitting oneself to the course of the silver ringlets. Watching a game of *Ping Pond* occur before engaging in a game oneself may be reassuring for reticent players because they can learn from the players, borrow their strategies, consider their rules and be comforted by their mistakes. Because *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* are experienced within the public space of the art museum, specifically Tate Modern, there is an element

of performance and a consciousness that one's actions are being observed by other visitors. Taciturn and shy visitors may feel too self-conscious to play publicly. Visitors who are courageous enough to play confront any complacency they may have felt about art or life.

The encounters between visitors (who are strangers) occur without expectations, plans, intentions and known conclusions. When going to a museum like Tate Modern you can encounter *anyone*; the encounters are open to ambiguity – "potentially productive and transformative, as well as offering multiple possibilities for resistance, struggle, alliance, desire, support, and the assertion of agency."[109] Through chance encounters relationships are forged, existing subjectivities may be transformed, knowledge is exchanged and power relations are negotiated.

As Morgan cautions, the political effectiveness and programme of relational aesthetics must be treated skeptically. Do the social exchanges actually repair the lapses in the social bond to which Bourriaud refers or substitute for them? How do these exchanges escape the capitalist system and how are they complicit with it? The exchanges create an alternative to social exchanges that are premised on the exchange of money for goods and services; however, it cannot be said that the exchanges between visitors completely eschew the exchange-value system in that they continuously create social capital, which is a critical component of the mass entertainment industry. In their own right, the social relations that result from relational works are non-utilitarian; like the aesthetic, they occur within a realm that is without purpose. They do, however, prompt relationships that do not occur every day between strangers. Richard Shusterman writes that art creates and reinforces group solidarity because of the sharing of communicative pleasures; the intensity of the

aesthetic experience is heightened when there is a sense that we are sharing something meaningful and communally engaging in potent meanings and visions of beauty.[110]

This playful art is deceiving in its simplicity. Both of these works make the case for play as a significant activity in its own right, an aesthetic activity with a purposeful purposelessness. Past the exhilaration and titillation that these projects offer is a possibility for the reconceptualization, reorganization, recombination and reconfiguration of the societal roles assumed and performed by museums, viewers, artworks, curators and artists. *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* insist upon participation, interaction and play and instigate different relations to the art museum, which becomes not only a place for introspection but also an entertaining and socially-engaging space. These works operate in the play-realm that promotes the free oscillation of roles and prompts interactivity and sociability which in turn lend the works a political dimension insofar as they suggest a possible reordering of the social hierarchy.

Just as Dada, Surrealism and Fluxus did earlier in the twentieth century, Höller and Orozco explore the relationships between pleasure, entertainment, amusement, art and political awareness. *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* try to merge art and amusement. Rancière argues that there is a complex negotiation between art and politics; separation between realms formerly considered distinct is no longer possible. Adorno and Max Horkheimer insisted on the meaning and cognitive import of art, dismissing and denigrating mass culture produced as entertainment by industry for the people with the disparaging phrase "the culture industry."[111] Adorno and Horkheimer were not, however, critical of all popular art, which if produced by the people could positively induce pleasure. Shusterman argues that the misguided opposition of pleasure and knowledge rests on false assumptions that equate experience with passive sensation

rather than activity and that considers all pleasures uniform and shallow. Shusterman behooves us to question the dogma that trivializes pleasure, which he argues has a crucial, vital, wide-ranging and enhancing role in our lives.[112] Artists like Höller and Orozco demonstrate an awareness of the contemporary imbrications of boundaries and categories, which are no longer clearly resolved, by combining play and aesthetics in a way that provokes politics and pleasure.

Conclusion

Rancière writes that "politics exists when the figure of a specific subject is constituted, a supernumerary subject in relation to the calculated number of groups, places, and functions in a society."[113] This means that certain subjects in society are given more important and permanent roles than others; the others are considered extra, temporary and less important. As such, their function, possibility and visibility become obfuscated. Rancière is against such static roles that are prescribed by society and that are premised on inequality. In bringing play to the fore, *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* rearrange, but do not necessarily permanently equalize, the distribution of the sensible. The slides threaten the supposed seriousness of a society that determines what is permissible to say or to show. The slides are of course allowed to be seen and experienced; however, they are a model of mass transportation only within Tate Modern's very special walls. So much of what society allows to be shown/seen is entertainment and indeed Höller's giant metal tubes are entertaining. But, the slides do more than entertain; they wage a battle against passive spectatorship and enable a different kind of experience in the museum. They are more than superficial throw-away amusement in a world of "answering machines, one-night stands and fast food;"[114] the slides present the opportunity for communion and joy – unadulterated, innocent and

unfettered. They suggest that play-filled aesthetic experiences occur both within and beyond the sanctified space of the contemporary art museum. They propose a different kind of aesthetic experience that interrupts the expectations of the art museum that have developed throughout its history and suggest that fun, games and play are worthy of consideration, engagement and experimentation. Freud, Orozco, Höller, Huizinga, Schiller, Spencer and the Blatners all bring a rather serious approach to issues of play, which they recognize and celebrate for its common situation outside the rigid structures of everyday reality. Like the game and the aesthetic, play is a world unto itself, one which generates its own meanings and experiences. Orozco and Höller attempt to initiate transformations in society without making prescriptions; both artists inspire significant aesthetic experiences without dictating their outcomes, creating playful installation art that beckons visitors to temporarily abandon the static forms, structures and roles of society.

Notes

[1] Since the widespread acceptance of minimalism as a 'high-art' movement, the use of industrial materials, manufactured according to an artist's specifications — though not necessarily by an artist — has become more common.

[2] The physical continuity and flow of *Test Site* strongly resembles buildings like Wright's Solomon R. Guggenheim in New York, Gehry's Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, and the Guggenheim in Bilbao.

[3] Claire Bishop explores the relationship between contemporary installation art and Arte Povera throughout Claire Bishop, *Installation Art* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[4] Since there is such a multitude of diverse interactivity with the works (i.e. each viewer or group of viewers interact with the works differently), it is problematic to use the word 'complete' in the case of both *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table*.

[5] Morgan Falconer, "A space odyssey," *Art Review* (October/November 2005): 12. The dimensions of the Turbine Hall are from: Tate Modern, "Unilever Series: Anish Kapoor," n.d., <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/kapoor.htm> (7 Nov 2008).

[6] Falconer, 12.

[7] Although the size of *Test* Site greatly exceeds the size of a human body, viewers can relate their bodies to the work by using the slides.

[8] The exhibition catalogue for *Test Site* contains a feasibility study for the use of slides as a means of public transportation in a sector of London, which is discussed later in this chapter.

[9] Jessica Morgan, "Turbine Höller," *Test Site*, exh. cat., ed. Jessica Morgan (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 13-14.

[10] Höller radically undermines the tradition of contemplation in the observance of art by working with the pragmatic and operational character of the artwork to create a fun experience.

[11] Morgan, 15.

[12] Benjamin Buchloh, et. al., "To Make an Inner Time: A Conversation with Gabriel Orozco," *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 191.

[13] Gabriel Orozco in Benjamin Buchloh, et. al., op. cit., 191.

[14] Von Hantelmann, *Test Site*, op. cit., 29.

[15] Oskar Bätschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict Between Market and Self-expression* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1998), 120.

[16] Von Hantelmann, 23.

[17] Von Hantelmann, 33.

[18] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, (New York: Continuum, 2006), 65.

[19] Von Hantelmann, 34.

[20] Von Hantelmann, 23.

[21] Tony Bennett discusses the museum as an institution wherein objects function as props or tools for a "civilizing ritual for the individual that serves an internalization of control and self control." Von Hantelmann, 34 citing Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995).

[22] Von Hantelmann, 34-35.

[23] Roy Kozlovsky, "A Short History of the Slide," *Test Site*, op. cit., 52.

[24] Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies of the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 66-67 cited in Philippe Vergne & Olukemi Ilesanmi, "Conversation Part 1," *Let's Entertain: Life's Guilty Pleasures* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2000), 24.

[25] Carsten Höller, "Carsten Holler: from Conrad to the heart of disco," *New York Times* November 18, 2008. Available online <http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/visual_arts/article5174749.ece> (4 May 2010).

[26] Morgan, 13. Because there is both participation and spectatorship at play in *Test Site* the term participatory 'spectacle-as-art' is appropriate even though both traditionally and in Debord's definition spectacle is something that one watches rather than participates in. At the same time, *Test Site* seems to be straddling the two positions of contemporary sculptural practice according to Buchloh, which are outlined on page 67 of this thesis.

[27] Erica Weitzman, "No *Fun*: Aporias of Pleasure in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*," *The German Quarterly* 81.2 (Spring 2008): 193

[28] Weitzman, 193 citing Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota P, 1997), 103.

[29] Weitzman, 193.

[30] Morgan, 14. Höller's reference to Daumal is appropriate in consideration of the title of Daumal's literary journal, *Le Grand Jeu*, which he founded with three friends and which explicitly expresses an interest in games and Daumal's concern for altered states of mind (especially via drugs), which Höller suggests can be compared to the temporary states experienced during sliding.

[31] Although Höller is not likely supporting the Lamarckian viewpoint, Gould's conclusion that "Lamarckism, though hard to defend in biological terms, seems to characterise cultural evolution, whose impact is felt far more rapidly than any biological change," reveals Höller's reason for including this selection. See *Test Site*, 15.

[32] Morgan, 15.

[33] Morgan, 15.

[34] Von Hantelmann, 21.

[35] Von Hantelmann, 22-23.

[36] Von Hantelmann, 21.

[37] Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 60.

[38] Höller in Chantal Pontbriand, "Carsten Höller: Vertigo: The Kairos in the Work," *Parachute* 121 (2006): 56.

[39] Morgan, 13.

[40] This does not necessarily mean that slides were not used until the mid nineteenth century; however, it does suggest that the act of sliding was not a meaningful social technology in discourse until this time. Roy Kozlovsky, "A Short History of the Slide," *Test Site*, op. cit., 39. citing Josef Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (London: Methuen ,1903), 243-244.

[41] Kozlovsky, 39. Because the slide requires no prior training, it is an appealing escape mechanism from gravity-defying technologies such as the high-rise and the airplane. In 1899 the *Boston Daily Globe* reported that, based on an experiment, slides provided faster rescue from burning buildings than firemen

using ladders. "Something New in Fire Escapes in Boston," *Boston Daily Globe*, 20 August 1899, 21 cited in Kozlovsky, 50. Drawbacks to the slide as an escape plan include the fact that slides require more space than ladders (prompting the invention of the spiral slide), the open bottom of slides provides easy and unwelcome entrance from the street, and it is difficult for one slide to provide access from different levels of a building.

42 According to Judith Adams, the amusement park constituted an escape from the swelling pressures of crowded, dingy urban areas, increased mechanization and the drudgery of regimented industrial. The amusement park's lack of moral or educational pretence, however, challenged Victorian morality and Progressive reformers who advocated useful and educational leisure activities. Kozlovsky, 41 citing Judith Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), 41.

43 Kozlovsky, 43.

44 Caillois discusses vertigo-inducing rides and activities such as tobogganing, skiing, swings, slides and amusement park rides 'vertigo machines' in Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* (1958) (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 2001), 170 .

45 Caillois, 12.

46 Caillois, 23.

47 Kozlovsky, 43 citing Caillois.

48 Kozlovsky, 43 citing Caillois.

49 Kozlovsky asks: "Is the slide then a modern safety valve for pacifying turbulent and atavistic instincts inherent in human nature, or rather the opposite, an attempt to construct a new consciousness to accommodate the gyrating forces of modernity itself?" See Kozlovsky, 44.

50 Kozlovsky, 45.

51 Francesca Martin, "It's a slippery slope at the Tate," 24 Jan 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2007/jan/24/art.news1> (5 Nov 2008)

52 Carsten Höller, in Martin, op. cit.

53 Ibid.

54 The experience of fun is related to the possibility of danger or injury, according to Freud. Freud is previously referred to in this thesis in Chapter 1 p. 33 and Chapter 1 n. 90. See Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), vol. 18, 37. Although at least two injuries were mentioned on *The Guardian* website, there were no officially reported injuries. These claims, however, do propagate *Test Site*'s purported threat of physical menace.

55 "The Unilever Series: Carsten Höller," 24 March 2007, <http://www.artrabbit.com/events/event&event=450> (29 Nov 2008)

56 Rachel Cooke, "Is this really all it's cracked up to be?" 14 Oct 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2007/oct/14/art1> (5 Nov 2008)

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Laura Cumming, "Kings of comedy," 15 Oct 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2006/oct/15/art1> (5 Nov 2008)

62 Mark Lawson, "The pimp in the cathedral," 27 Oct 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2006/oct/27/arts.dance> (5 Nov 2008)

63 Viewer comment at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/search/users?search=carsten%20holler> (5 Nov 2008)

64 Jonathan Jones, "The verdict on Carsten Höller's installation at Tate Modern," 9 Oct 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/culturevultureblog/2006/oct/09/theverdicton1> (22 Nov 2008)

65 "General Public Agency Feasibility Study," in *Test Site*, op. cit., 3.

66 "General Public Agency Feasibility Study," 6.

67 "General Public Agency Feasibility Study," 6.

68 "General Public Agency Feasibility Study," 29.

69 Vergne, "Conversation Part 1," *Let's Entertain: Life's Guilty Pleasures,* op. cit., 27.

70 Kozlovsky, 51.

71 Kozlovsky, 51.

72 Kozlovsky, 53.

73 M.B., "Carsten Höller: une voluptuese panique," *Connaissance des Arts* 644 (December 2006): 60.

74 Pontbriand, 60.

75 In 2000, Höller made a slide for the offices of Miuccia Prada in Milan. For more see Tate Press Releases," 16 Jan 2006, < http://www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressreleases/2006/ tm_carston_holler_16-01-06.htm> (4 Dec 2008)

76 Simon Ford, *The Situationist International: A User's Guide* (London: Black Dog, 2005), 74-78.

77 Gabriel Orozco, "Gabriel Orozco: Interviewed by Jessica Morgan," *Common Wealth*, exh. cat., ed. Jessica Morgan (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 43.

78 Michael Rosen, *Balls!* (Plain City, OH: Darby Creek Publishing, 2006), 63.

79 Rosen, 63.

80 Orozco, 43.

81 Orozco, 43.

82 Orozco, 44.

83 Orozco, 44.

84 During the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, the popularity of the vuvuzela, a two to three foot long plastic device that is blown into to produce a monotone note around B♭ and that is a fixture in South African football culture, stirred controversy between fans who celebrated the device for making the enthusiastic auditory participation of fans possible and broadcasters whose presentations were affected by the persistent buzzing of many vuvuzelas. Some players also complained that it disrupted their sleep while off field and their concentration and communication while playing. BBC Sport, "World Cup 2010: Organisers will not ban vuvuzelas," 14 June 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/world_cup_2010/8737455.stm> (17 Aug 2010)

85 Orozco, 44.

86 Orozco in Benjamin Buchloh, et. al., op. cit., 177.

87 Gabriel Orozco, "Gabriel Orozco in Conversation with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh," (2004) *Gabriel Orozco*, ed. Yve-Alain Bois (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 111.

88 Orozco, *Common Wealth*, op. cit., 44-45.

89 Orozco, 45.

90 Orozco, 45-46.

91 Orozco, 48.

92 Orozco, 48-49.

93 Orozco, *Gabriel Orozco*, op.cit., 108

94 Bourriaud extensively discusses Felix Gonzalez-Torres' works as precursors to relational art throughout the first half of *Relational Aesthetics*. See *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods & Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002), 49-59. See also page 5 of this thesis.

95 Yve-Alain Bois, *Gabriel Orozco*, op. cit., back cover.

96 Ibid.

97 In the free verse poetry practiced by most poets since the early twentieth century, the traditional verse and rhythm structures are abandoned.   Instead poets seek to invent their own rules, like in *Ping Pond Table*, in which the form emerges organically from the content, and vice versa. Orozco is invoking poetry to emphasize its distinction from prose, which is usually more practical and functional and less playful than poetry.

98 The title of *Ping Pond Table* is a twist on "pong," a language distortion used in poetry called antisthecon, a general term for changing of a word's spelling, which may cause confusion and hence a pause to consider the meaning. See "antisthecon," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* in "English Language Reference," 2010. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oxfordreference.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/views/SEARCH_RESULTS.html?y=0&q=antisthecon&x=0&ssid=539797871&scope=global&time=0.287723181527369> (11 Aug 2010).

99 Laura Cumming, "Anyone for ping-pong?" 9 Nov 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2003/nov/09/1> (5 Nov 2008)

100 Ibid.

101 Orozco, *Common Wealth*, 49.

102 Orozco, 49. This recalls Freud's dictum that "the opposite of play is not that which is serious but that which is real." The game exists in its own reality that does not coincide with the world's reality; the game is a world onto itself.

103 Carsten Höller, "Kinshasa Rumba Brazzaville," int. with Nicolas Bourriaud, *Altermodern* (London: Tate, 2009), 132.

104 Höller, *Altermodern*, op. cit., 132.

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[105] Höller, 132.

[106] Höller, 132.

[107] Höller, 133.

[108] Morgan, *Test Site*, op. cit., 15.

[109] "Intersections 2010: Encounters, Situating "Relation" in Communication and Culture," n.d.,
<http://www.comcultgsa.com/intersections/> April 8, 2010.

[110] Richard Shusterman, "Come Back to Pleasure," *Let's Entertain: Life's Guilty Pleasures*, (Minneapolis,MN:
Walker Art Center, 2000) 35.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Shusterman, 41.

[113] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, op. cit., 51.

[114] "Screaming Yellow Honkers," *The Simpsons.* Fox, Los Angeles.   21 Feb 1999.

Conclusion

In the introduction to *Installation Art*, Claire Bishop attempts to define the murky term 'installation art.' She clearly states that installation art differs from traditional media because it

> addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space…Installation art presupposes an *embodied* viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. This insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristic of installation art… The spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the work.[1]

This thesis considers the position of installation art that is participatory in nature within the contemporary art setting. In the playful installations *Test Site* and *Ping Pong* the artists rely upon the spectators' sensorial participation and immersion in order to create meaningful aesthetic experiences that address both the individual and the interstitial community that develops by and through the artworks. The significance of interhuman relations in contemporary art is addressed most famously by Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1998 book *Relational Aesthetics*, which suggests that the focus of contemporary artists must be on redeveloping and nurturing social bonds, which have lapsed in an age of digital media that replaces human contact with machine-mediated processes and semblances of real-time interaction, such as Facebook, MySpace, email and text messaging.

This thesis argues that through a purposeful purposelessness the experience of the aesthetic and play within the art museum address the distribution of roles in society. It is crucial that the outcomes of the aesthetic and play, which are meaningful and pleasurable, must not be presupposed, as in critical art, but left open to possibilities as varying as the individuals who constitute the temporary communities incited by the artworks. Play and the aesthetic temporarily disturb the social hierarchy and interrupt

the drudgery and repetition of work. By constructing the forms that encourage play-filled aesthetic experiences for audiences and by contributing innovative ideas to increase creative and introspective thought in society, artists critique, and ideally improve, the modalities of the societies and communities in which they exist. Höller's *Test Site* is a good example of an artwork that attempts to fashion a new mode for society, specifically a new form of egress, exhilaration and enjoyment that can be incorporated into existing urban architecture. In addition to being a means of practical transportation, the slides have the added benefit of inducing pleasure and a physical experience distinct from those of everyday life. Orozco's *Ping Pond Table* suggests an alternative to capitalist competition, which minimizes self-determination and choice. These artworks represent just two instances of contemporary art in a technocratic society and provoke questions about the future of art (and its distinction from entertainment) in a society that increasingly encourages and enables leisure and amusement.

Given the incentive to draw visitors, museums must remain competitive with not just one another but also with other sites of diversion and entertainment. Because the museum is not a place where ethics are suspended and because many people have a heightened awareness within museums, they are spaces marked off from the everyday, where visitors expect to have intense experiences that are at once pleasurable and meaningful. The museum has the challenge of providing an open-ended, challenging and thoroughly engaging experience that is not gimmicky and controlled.[2] Obviously, the museum must acknowledge the larger environment and culture of mass media, commercialization and amusement – the comfort, gratification, exhilaration and indulgence of malls and theme parks. The museum must negotiate this

realm to remain relevant; but it must do so without becoming populist or losing critical perspectives and aesthetically valuable experiences.

Whereas *Ping Pond Table* attempts to improve the modality of competition with antispectacular means, *Test Site* engages in the largeness and spectacle that has become such a part of museological competition. In contrast to *Ping Pond Table*, *Test Site* emphatically overwhelms the somatic scale, demonstrating the trend towards high-impact, dizzying and immersive installations. *Ping Pond Table* is more about frustrating the expectations of viewers who come to the artwork with the expectation of being overwhelmed. For both artists the question of the body's confrontation with the mechanical is important. In *Test Site* bodies temporarily combine with the organic shapes within the inorganic structure of the slides. In *Ping Pond Table* the players use geometry to navigate the playing surface, which is both living and inert. The emphasis in both works is on the interaction between the art object and the participant; it is a question of art as experience, and not as autonomous (and commodifiable) art object.

The argument of this thesis proceeded by situating contemporary installation art within a historical context of performance based art and sculpture, considering the history of play, examining theories of participation (with special attention to relational aesthetics), examining the nature of play, looking at the players in contemporary art institutions, and conducting two case studies. *Test Site* and *Ping Pond Table* are by no means representative of the broad range of contemporary artistic practices; however, they are two different examples of how artists are working with play in contemporary art institutions to deliver pleasurable, communicative and aesthetic experiences to visitors. Just as the adult does not need to resist playing, the museum does need not to resist entertaining. Pleasure can occur alongside an intellectual and socially-engaging

aesthetic experience and the political can occur in spite of an apparent lack of a political

agenda. Impelled by the aesthetic and play, the frustration of expectations produces

the potential for the political.

Notes

[1] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), p. 6.

[2] Philippe Vergne, "Conversation Part 1," *Let's Entertain: Life's Guilty Pleasures* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2000), 23.

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