Rethinking Marxism

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Setting in Motion

curated and edited by Susan Jahoda and Jesal Kapadia

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RETHINKING MARXISM VOLUME 18 NUMBER 4 (OCTOBER 2006)

Setting in Motion

curated and edited by Susan Jahoda and Jesal Kapadia

Setting in Motion is the title for the following collaborative and individual projects in film, animation, video, and texts. In curating these works we draw from Jacques Rancière's work on the politics of aesthetics. Rancière describes a logic that has situated and, paradoxically, grounded art's potential for disagreement or dissensus. Thus, as art becomes increasingly about issues described as occupying politics, it becomes less polemical. What is called for is a reshaping of the space that artistic practice occupies, enabling political art to be politically effective.

Together, these projects share an affective view of a global socio-political landscape, referenced through metaphor and fiction, perception, psychoanalysis, and corporeality. They address a broad range of content, utilizing diverse strategies—repetitions, reactualizations, restagings, and reenactments—within the genres of experimental, underground, and activist media.

As both curators and participating artists, we have included works that individually and collectively seek an alternative economy of vision. This imaginary reconfigures political artistic practice as embodied visuality, in relation to both history and contemporary culture.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Ayreen Anastas

Pasolini Pa Palestine*
Video, 51 minutes, 2005

Pasolini Pa Palestine* is an attempt to repeat Pasolini's trip to Palestine in his film, *Seeking Locations in Palestine for "The Gospel According to Matthew"* (1963). It adapts his script into a route map superimposed on the current landscape, creating contradictions and breaks between the visual and the audible, the expected and the real. The video explores the question of repetition. For Heidegger *Wiederholung* 'repetition, retrieval' is one of the terms he uses for the appropriate attitude toward the past. "By the repetition of a basic problem we understand the disclosure of its original, so far hidden possibilities." The project ventures a conversation and a dialogue with Pasolini, especially his *Poem for the Third World*. *Discutere* 'to smash to pieces' is the Latin source of dialogue, discussion. The piece does not criticize Pasolini, but reveals unnoticed possibilities in his thought and works back to the 'experiences' that inspired it. *Pasolini Pa* Palestine* was created in conjunction with the residency at Almamal Foundation in Jerusalem.

Video stills from 'Pasolini Pa Palestine' by Ayreen Anastas*

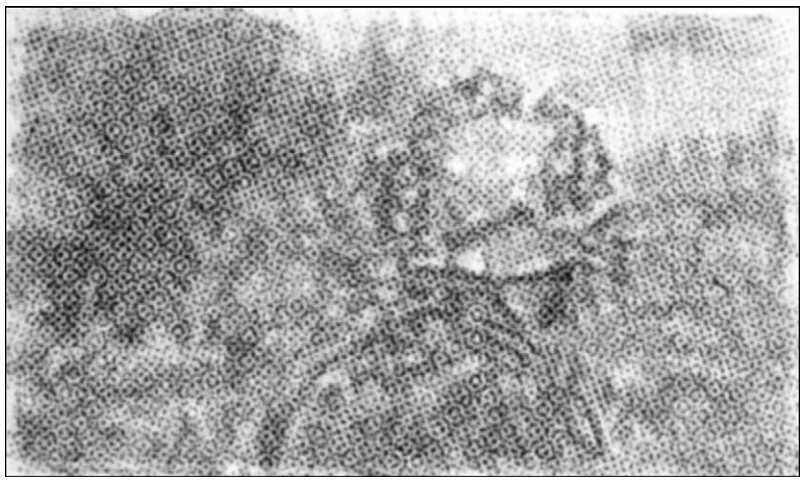
Ayreen Anastas was born in Bethlehem, Palestine. She relocated to Germany in 1989 for a DAAD scholarship where she studied architecture at the Technical University in Berlin until 1996. She is currently living in Brooklyn. She has taught at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, in its School of Architecture, since 1999, and is one of the primary organizers of the 16Beavergroup (www.16beavergroup.org), a loose artist community that functions as a social and collaborative space on 16 Beaver Street.

Anastas's recent artistic projects and exhibitions include *Pasolini Pa* Palestine,* filmed while at Almamal residency in Jerusalem in 2004 (shown at Homeworks III, Beirut 2005, and at Hebbel Theater, Berlin 2006), *m* of Bethlehem* (shown at Argos Festival in Brussels 2005 and at CCA Glasgow *In the Poem about love you don't write the word love* 2005), and collaborations with artist Rene Gabri (*By many means necessary, Camp Campaign, Artistalk, RadioActive, United We Stand*). Her practice engages with issues of public and political space, language, the everyday, and the question of Palestine.

Stephen Andrews

The Quick and the Dead
Looping animation, 1 minute 14 seconds, 2004

The Quick and the Dead is an animation based on the parable of Cain and Abel. It reinscribes the story using imagery from the current Iraq war.



Video stills from the 'Quick and the Dead' by Stephen Andrews

Stephen Andrews was born in 1956 in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. He has exhibited his work in Canada, the United States, Brazil, Scotland, France, and Japan. He is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, as well as many private collections. His work deals with memory, identity, technology, and their representations in various media.

Gregg Bordowitz

Three Poems for Rethinking Marxism
2006

Here and Now

Depressed by fatigue, apathy obtained
More was exhausted than our convictions
The defeat of dialectics occurred
The critique of authorial presence
I recall "institutional critique"
Critique was the operative idea
Opposition had clarity of stakes
Today we oppose the wars, most of us
And we deplore the current government
Yet a sense of unity eludes us
Leading to different problematics:
Analyze the nature of religion
Explore art's connection to belief

Art World After Party

Where men stand watching other men shoot pool
Women dance wildly around, ecstatic
The bar scene last night as a depiction
Rings within rings of ritual pleasure
The native observer worked at his drink
Bitter lemon mixed with grainy beer fizz
Where siblings negotiate jealousy
Friends are also affectionate rivals
Freud's Totem and Taboo in full effect
Some are pregnant, others alcoholic
Wealth has fallen to a fortunate few
Critical attention has graced few more
No one wants to credit the role of luck
When we need to be held everywhere we go
Constantly held by the caress of art
In a bar called the Emergency Room
A girl in flowered pants dances samba
The music was all dance hall, beats pounding
Each finds her own idiom on the floor
The gay boy amidst the women flourished
The conjunction of billiards and dance
Tactics and strategy. Dialectics
We need game as we conduct energy
In the gallery we find consumption
We hear testimony of enslavement
Recall that slaves require their masters' rule
Focus hard on the angles of physics
Spectacular molecular displays
Each of us particles, plus or minus
All charges can be reversed on contact
Adjust to the brightness of projectors
Video projection is the new norm
Light between the sacred and the profane
A universal distinction structures
Where mystery is not the founding cause
When awe is not enough to organize
We must inquire about beliefs to know
Elementary forms of religion
Art has never rejected religion

Rites and propitiations are its form
We believe that something higher drives us
We refuse to acknowledge our beliefs
Still we dance and play as if it matters
Emotions available as matter
Every artwork is a bloody relic
As every opening is a service
Recognize this now as holy wars rage
Recognize that the mind requires faith
Beliefs are sentiments. They're not ideas
Human animals produce their culture
We produce consciousness collectively
Our affects are matters of ritual
No one chooses their own dance idiom
Representation no longer exists
Where embodiment is the key concern
Instead of representing we perform
So we prefer actions to protests
Find humility in our offerings
Become aware of universals
Open. Open to being together
With all our antagonisms intact
Siblings, lovers, rivals, friends, particles
Empathy isn't chosen, it's structural
The object of hate is the same of love
When the other touches me. Yes or no
Where the object is the self we touch pride
Humility is akin to hatred
Good or bad, context determines passions
Good or bad, passions elicit morals
Sensations are the fundamental cause
Strange how thoughts develop intensities
Vague impressions and ideas co-mingle
Thinking and doing aren't identical
Lemon and beer introduced make summer
Dancing seems somehow connected to rain
There are no necessary relations
We're at an opening to celebrate
Desire writing to a chilling end failed

To Artists

Who does not wish to achieve grace through art
By grace we mean freedom and agency
To ensure in every motion pleasure
Remaining inwardly safe to play
To control the conditions of craft
The means of producing our own efforts
And spend our energies generously
Die worthy of our body's exhaustion
As laborers of all kinds still struggle

Gregg Bordowitz (born 14 August 1964, Brooklyn, New York) is a writer and film and video maker. His films, including *Fast Trip Long Drop* (1993), *A Cloud In Trousers* (1995), *The Suicide* (1996), and *Habit* (2001), have been widely shown in festivals, museums, and movie theaters, and broadcast internationally. His writings have been published in anthologies such as *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, Queer Looks, Uncontrollable Bodies, Resolutions*, and numerous publications and journals, including *The Village Voice, Frieze, Artforum, American Imago, Art Journal, Documents*, and October. In spring 2002, Bordowitz had his first solo museum show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. His book *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings 1986–2003*, was published by MIT Press in the fall of 2004. For this recent collection, Bordowitz received the 2006 Frank Jewitt Mather Award from the College Art Association. In addition, he has received a Rockefeller Intercultural Arts Fellowship and a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, among other grants and awards. Bordowitz is a member of the faculty of the Film/Video/New Media Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and he is on the faculty of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program.

Moyra Davey

PLAY

The following text was created for a group exhibition called ***Reality/Play*** *organized by Moyra Davey at Orchard (New York City), from June 4–30, 2006. This version has been slightly modified for* ***Setting in Motion****.*

When I told some friends about the idea for this show at Orchard several of them recommended Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, an erudite work about the centrality of play in culture. The most inspiring and ludic part of the book (for me) is a short passage concluding the author's introduction in which he cautions the reader not to expect from him expertise on every aspect of his subject. A writer, he maintains, must sometimes be a ''raider'' in fields insufficiently explored or studied, the desire to write overtaking the exigencies of learning. Huizinga explains: ''To fill in all the gaps in my knowledge beforehand was out of the question. I had to write it now, or not at all. And I wanted to write.'' This impatience, even urgency around writing that Huizinga alludes to, is a testament to the sustaining powers such creative work affords, and it is a form of sustenance inextricably linked to pleasure and forms of play.

Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text* says: ''The writer is someone who plays with his mother's body,'' I've long puzzled over that cryptic line, from a longer, even more cryptic passage in which Barthes talks about pleasure in relation to writing (and reading). He says this pleasure comes not from language, but from the *mother tongue*, thereby denying the symbolic of language and privileging the imaginary of the mother's body. In that same short paragraph he mentions, parenthetically, a psychoanalyst, three writers and a painter, all leads I could pursue if I wanted to decode the mystery of that line: ''The writer is someone who plays with his mother's body''. But I suspect the line is not meant to be decoded, and for now I want to write (even if I also don't want to . . .)

Writing (especially its beginnings) is a heart-quickening thrill precisely because it engages that area of anticipation and dread, desire and fear, the teetering on the edge of a gulf that Virginia Woolf described in relation to the novel. (Non-fiction was straightforward for Woolf: she started an essay with the certainty that ''sooner or later a net of words . . . would come down on the idea'' and allow her to compose her text, but a novel was something altogether more fraught, its outcome by no means guaranteed.) The gulf is the threshold moment of knowing that something might be created, plucked from non-existence, or not. It is also the moment where pleasure and gratification abut work, and the thrill has to do with putting something at risk, as in a game of chance. There is no desire without law, as Lacan would say.

But getting back to Barthes, here's one more thing, from a an interview he gave in 1977, that begins to inflect and illuminate the cryptic, poetic line about the writer and the body of the mother: "When we attach a lot of importance to certain networks of friendship it is because we're always trying to reproduce the utopia of a childhood space, that of the child playing around its mother. Ultimately, in an affective relationship, whether or not it's amorous, we always simulate a certain maternal space, a space of security which is, why not say it, a gift space." This evocation of a maternal radius extending into adulthood, into the grownup life of Barthes the writer, also suggests its reverse, the forceful pull backwards, reminding me of Melanie Klein, who said that all art-making is a form of reparation with the mother, and emboldens me to take (almost) literally Barthes' idea about writing and the body of the mother. Barthes via Klein leads me to intuit a space of loss where one can in turn lose oneself to a love of making.

What does all this have to do with an exhibition at Orchard (or for that matter, this project in *Rethinking Marxism*, Setting in Motion)? To close, this time via Winnicott: what matters in the play of children is "the *preoccupation* . . . the near-withdrawal state . . . akin to the concentration of older children and adults" (when they are writing, or taking a photograph or editing a video, for instance, and possibly experiencing that sense of unbounded time known as 'oceanic'). These notes, mostly on writing, but equally relevant to all forms of art making, literalize ideas around demand and play. They exemplify a certain kind of intense engagement and absorption that artists and writers avail themselves of, participate in, and on occasion find therein: pleasure, bliss, wonder, agency and perhaps a place that harks back to, conjures, the "space around the mother."

Moyra Davey is an artist and a photographer. She is the editor of *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood* (Seven Stories Press, 2001), an anthology on maternal ambivalence and the intersection of motherhood and creative life, and of *The Problem of Reading* (Documents Books 2003). She is a member of Orchard, a cooperative gallery on New York's Lower East Side, and a 2004-05 recipient of an *Anonymous Was a Woman* award.

Ashley Hunt

I WON'T DROWN ON THAT LEVEE AND YOU AIN'T GONNA' BREAK MY BACK (The Corrections Documentary Project)
Video, 31 minutes, 2006
With Xochitl Bervera of Friends and Family of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children; Corinne Curry of Human Rights Watch; Althea Francois of the Southern Center for Human Rights; Tamika Middleton of Critical Resistance; Malik Rahim of Common Ground Collective

I WON'T DROWN began with an invitation to travel to New Orleans as part of a delegation to investigate what happened at the Orleans Parish Prison during and after Hurricane Katrina. What came up was not only a botched and deadly evacuation of the prison, but a broader climate of racial tension and brutality throughout the state response to the disaster, as what had broken down were not only the city's infrastructure and services, but also the historical partitions that structure and ensure its racial and economic hierarchies, keeping people "in their place." This video chronicles how these hierarchies were maintained nonetheless through the rhetoric of law enforcement and imprisonment.

Video stills from 'I WON'T DROWN ON THAT LEVEE AND YOU AIN'T GONNA BREAK MY BACK' by Ashley Hunt

A Fortification of Race

Newspaper rack and debris at corner store

This morning I woke up in a curfew,
O God, I was a prisoner, too,
Could not recognize the faces standing over me,
They were all dressed in uniforms of brutality.

How many rivers do we have to cross,
Before we can talk to the boss?
All that we got, it seems we have lost
We must have really paid the cost.

(And that's why we'll be)
Burning and looting tonight,
Burning and looting tonight (to survive),
Burning all illusion tonight,
Burning all illusion tonight.

—Bob Marley, "Burnin' and Lootin'" (1973)

Rumor had it that prisoners had been left to drown in their cells. More stories flowed out of New Orleans in the weeks after Hurricane Katrina, about the subsequent relocation of thousands of prisoners (many of whom had been simply awaiting trial) to prisons throughout Louisiana, where they were being held incommunicado. As an artist and activist who has worked in New Orleans a good deal, I was invited to join a delegation to the city, along with organizers, service providers, and human rights lawyers. This essay is part of a body of work that draws upon my days there, media coverage of the storm, and previous experiences within activism and politics in New Orleans.

Upon my arrival in New Orleans, I spoke with the woman I'd be staying with to ask if she might need anything. She said we'd need water in the house; could I find some? This was my first introduction to the necessity now governing the city, but also made me think years back to an interview I'd conducted with a former New Orleans Black Panther. When I'd asked why she was an activist, she recalled long months of having the water cut off in her house, images of scraping change together with her daughter and hauling empty jugs to the water dispenser at a local store.

As I recalled this driving into a deserted city, it would be only the first similarity to strike me between social destruction of poverty and racism, and the destruction brought by Hurricane Katrina. Considering the processes brought on by the storm, accelerated by the storm, and enacted by the state in response to the storm, I soon began to see their collected effects as analogous to ghettoization: the manifold processes that go into transforming a community into a ghetto.

Median strip on Broad Street at Canal Street

First, Hurricane Katrina wiped out what little infrastructure actually existed to support New Orleans communities before the storm, just as ghettoization destroys infrastructure, more slowly but surely, whether by economic divestment and strangulation or by bombs and bulldozers.

Second, Katrina revealed that an aspect of ghettoization is immobilization: the freezing of people and cordoning them off in their space. This was revealed in the immobilization of residents who could not afford to evacuate the city, who were literally stuck in the path of the storm, others who not allowed to cross over bridges out of the city into white suburbs, the curfews established, and the sealing off of the city after the storm had passed.

Third was the criminalization that was deployed by the state and media to characterize the city's remaining survivors as lawless and pathological (under the general label of "looting"). This characterization acts as a racialization, assigning a radical Other-ness to a group of people and naming them as an immanent threat that, by their very nature, need to be quarantined.

Fourth, extending from this racialized characterization, this dangerous otherness attached to the ghettoized residents, is the authorization for the state to act with violence upon them, so both their quarantine and the armed patrols in their streets and houses seem to be normal, or, at least, not outrageous.

Finally, this militarization reveals the spatial relationship between the state and a ghetto as one of militarized territorialization. Each of the preceding processes also belongs to this territorialization, manifest either as overt military occupation, which in New Orleans included bits and pieces of every imaginable military, policing, and imprisoning force in the United States (prison guards from around the United States

were to be found in Louisiana), or indirect modes of occupation, such as antigang units, antidrug squads, extralegal policing squads, and public housing "safety" patrols.[1]

What this relation—enabled through racialization—might be compared to more generally is the *state of exception*, or *state of emergency*, the name given to any period of time when a state suspends its constitutional law: its obligations toward and respect for rights and protections (protections from state incursion), in response to a perceived danger. Giorgio Agamben has recently asserted that the state of exception is increasingly becoming the generalized condition of all states today.[2] In his writing about the "camp" (a close relative of the ghetto) as the definitive instance of such a space, he states:

> The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule . . . [in the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement . . .].[3]

That this "permanent spatial arrangement" is what "opens up" when the state of exception becomes the rule can be understood in at least two ways. First, the camp can be understood as a symbolic figure, wherein the camp is the total spatialization of a suspension of rights and a state without restriction. Second, in a more practical sense, it is one way we begin to see the state of exception manifest in our daily life, its first spatialization once implemented—not at all as an "exception" but as the beginning to the ruling principle to which we'll be submitted.

Collapsed house

This is why law firms of all political orientation have filed habeas corpus petitions for prisoners held incommunicado at Guantanomo Bay, including conservative firms: so as to prevent the state from opening up any such spaces in which people are rendered without rights and the state can act without limitation, what one such lawyer I've spoken with called a "legal black hole."

I would argue that this is precisely the rule and function of any ghetto, no matter what the justification for its implementation. More important, this was precisely the state's reaction to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans: suspending rights and lawfulness (of the state) in order to establish the "security" of the state; it prioritized the integrity of the territory as *state territory* and protected the private property of select interests, both prior to saving and protecting people who are, at least in legal formality, citizens of that state.

The permanent institution of the state of exception already built into all modern governments is the prison, where the processes of the ghetto are concentrated and their effects contained. Through the logic of public safety and "deprivation of liberty," prisoners (primarily people raised their whole lives subjected to processes of ghettoization) are stripped of all but a minimum of human and civil rights, and are used to satisfy any number of needs of the state.

In New Orleans, the refusal to evacuate the Orleans Parish Prison was a claim to such exception, where prisoners were accorded the status of vermin: to be contained rather than rescued or acknowledged as human beings; their containment valued over their lives. Only after it had flooded horribly did the sheriff finally evacuate, while beginning the immediate construction of a chain-link fence jail behind the city's Greyhound Bus station. Looking a great deal like the Guantanomo Bay prison, it continued support for the state of exception and the larger ghettoization of the city: a holding space for storm victims not regarded as victims, but rounded up by police and military for looting, curfew violations, and charges that can be understood as "poor laws."[4] In this way, rather than fulfilling their avowed civil function, prisons tend to function as ghettos of a ghetto, where the negligence and violence of ghettoization, and the responding social disorder and dissidence, are disappeared and the generalized criminalization of the ghettoized is accomplished.

As this condition was not only the response to a storm but was also the history of New Orleans, it brings to light what we see in communities throughout this country and the world, where more and more, communities and cultures are demonized and cinched off economically; surrendered of their rights and protections; categorized as immanent threats by virtue of the criminality or dangerousness projected onto them as their inherent "nature." Everywhere, under varied rationales, we see communities living under permanent states of exception: policed rather than served by the police; subjects of control, inspection, and detention rather than subjects of politics; for whom the state is a militarizing and surveilling force authorized by the discourses of the War on Crime, the War on Drugs, and increasingly, the War on Terror—all of which can be understood as post–Civil Rights era discourses of race-making, each of which is inherently raciological and racializing.

At this point, however, I should back up and say that none of this is really so simple, and it points to a certain inadequacy of the neat and tidy categories of race and class as they've been simplified in our popular and political discourses. Whatever authorized the social and political destruction of Katrina must have been much deeper and more complex than mere prejudice or derisive sentiment, as racism is generally located today, especially when we are asked to untangle race from class.

It is essential to point out that what fell away during Katrina was not just New Orleans's civil structure and infrastructure, but also the built and socialized spatializations of race and class hierarchy that are New Orleans's history (as they are of every place). Beneath superficial attitudes of racism is the ordering of space and experience—in the partitions of space, social habits and physical architectures—which are the major technology of how race and class continue to be regulated, hierarchized, and policed; the every day fortifications which control the racial Other and "keeps them in their place," of which the ghetto is just one expression.

Importantly, such spatializations are not only what *regulates* race, but are *how race exists*. As the theorists of spatial practices teach us that there is no social or political relation that does not have a spatial corollary or manifestation, it can also be said that such corollaries are not *additions to* a relation, but are in fact the very *location* of that relation—how and where that relation can and does take place. Since race is not a biological fact, but is a social fiction which is always in crisis, the building and territorializing of space is not only how race is "enacted" but is in fact how race *can be;* space preserves not only the proper ordering of race, but inasmuch as these structures are also symbolic, it maintains the illusion of race as a stable reality altogether.

Once Katrina wiped out the material mechanisms and practices that had kept the black and poor communities of New Orleans "in their place" for centuries, it took with it these symbolic markers of racial stability and control, leaving only the racial imagination, which, for its own stability and affirmation, needs to perceive the neat separation of one group from another; to perceive a *self* that is "safe" from that *other*, or deeper, simply *distinct* from its Other. What happens when the stability of the distinction between one racially based identity loses the terrain upon which it knows itself, sees itself as protected from its Other, and ultimately loses the markers that separate itself identifiably from its Other?

New Orleans District Attorney's Office with car

One place to look is to much of the hysteria that took place during Katrina, specifically the irrational fear throughout the outlying suburbs that hordes of ''animalistic black people'' were coming to rush over the bridges from New Orleans to loot and ravage entire white communities.[5] Or we can consider the untruths that the sheriff's and police departments themselves announced about marauding gangs of black youth in the streets, murders and rapes in the Superdome and Convention Center, none of which have since been substantiated as anything other than rumors, yet never explained.[6]

What was to account for these rumors spread by law enforcement themselves, beyond the possibility they had spread them to justify the use of paramilitary force or to garner extra resources? Both these explanations are likely but, alone, fall short, for they do not account for how predisposed the general public was to embrace such rumors, or how easily the rumors came to characterize the whole of the situation in New Orleans to the public that was audience to the disaster throughout the United States.

> [W]hen the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms. Allusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the ''native'' quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations . . . This explosive population growth, those hysterical masses, those blank faces, those shapeless, obese bodies . . . all this is part of the colonial vocabulary. (Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*)

Perhaps these examples were not only a mixture of strategic desire and paranoid fear of an unleashed, mythological ''black horde,'' which Fanon helps us to situate as a figure of the Western racial imagination. Perhaps, upon the disintegration of the symbolic structures that would ''hold back'' this racial figure, these were reifications of the catalogue of that imagination, unleashed in the very real form of hysterical hallucinations. In such a traumatic environment, the likelihood of such hysteria was real, and asks us to push past simple calculations of race and class prejudice, toward the breakdown of figures of knowledge that belong to a broader ordering of social life.

Katrina and its aftermath revealed not just an intersection of race and class as two separate things unto themselves, but rather, overlapping discourses that claim common as well as opposing objects, both producing a truth effect that categorizes groups of people as generally mad—a labeling that renders those labeled as less than fully human and illegible as subjects. Michel Foucault begins his *Madness and Civilization*:

> We have yet to write the history of that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbors, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness.

In the case of New Orleans, I'm not referring to the storm as having ''driven people crazy,'' although it certainly did. I mean madness as a limit line, a threshold which was exposed, on one side of which lies the figure of civilization, and on the other is

the projection of madness that Foucault describes as the ''constitutive outside'' of that civilization, against which ''civilization'' can know itself.

Foucault describes a socially produced split between reason and nonreason, where nonreason constitutes this othered outside, whereupon it is converted into an object of scientific inquiry, an inquiry that is barred from ever referring back to that original split or its social or political character, leaving its division already natural, unquestionable, a priori. He writes:

> What is constitutive is the action that divides madness, and not the science elaborated once this division is made and calm restored. What is originative is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason's subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, derives explicitly from this point.

In New Orleans, where we saw ''survivor'' written onto the bodies of some people (primarily white), we saw the figure of ''looter'' mapped onto others. This was by no means assigned only to people who'd transgressed private property law but was drawn in broad strokes onto swaths of bodies that appeared already to the racialized gaze of ''civilization'' as markers of the irrational, the uncontrollable, of chaos. While the former were recognized as civilization's own members, legible as citizens to be saved, the latter was split off, written out of this possibility by the projection of madness onto them—the madness which, in our society, is written through discourses of race, class, gender, and sexuality, producing them as Other, imbuing them with threat, chaos, disorder, the pathological, dishonest and simple.

This ''originative'' split is a discursive operation that distributes bodies respectively to one side or other: while on one side are the sane—people legible and audible as legitimate political subjects—on the other are the mad—people illegible, rendered silent, politically muted. Incapable of speech, they become instead subjects to a culture's discourses of truth, of its ''science[s] elaborated once this division is made,'' which cannot hear them but can only study them in monologue. Foucault continues:

> [O]n one hand, the man of reason delegates the physician to madness, thereby authorizing a relation only through the abstract universality of disease . . . [this] posits the separation as already effected, and thrusts into oblivion all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax in which the exchange between madness and reason was made. The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason *about* madness, has been established only on the basis of such a silence.

Media and political analysis were precisely such monologues during Katrina, the primary ''sciences'' taking the ''mad'' as their object, articulating their ''disease'' as crime. This mirrored the larger state of our society in which no longer a physician, but the police chief, warden, and district attorney are ''delegated to madness,'' thereby, shifting Foucault's terms, ''authorizing a relation to the mad through the abstract universality'' of *criminality and dangerousness;* projecting madness, but along with it, all that is wrong with or challenging in society. Put in the colonial context, Fanon continues:

"Military helicopter"

> The colonial world is a Manichaean world . . . the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil . . . The "native" is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values.

What looking to Katrina can push us to consider is a more careful read of this split between madness and reason, a concocted dividing line whose original split is barred from recognition, as it resembles, or is perhaps structurally archetypal to, the split that marks so many forms of subjugation which are explained through vocabularies of madness and irrationality. We can think of how this permeates the history of discourses of race, from supremacist texts that argue genetic bases for intellectual and moral inferiority of people of color, to more recent texts that have argued the same on sociological bases, to current discussions that blame stubborn, "nonassimilated" black culture and familial structure for their own poverty, such as those of John McWhorter of the Manhattan Institute.[7]

We could also trace the use of madness in the historical subjugation of women and policing of gender, wherein modes of resistance, intellectuality, self-defense, and rejection of gender codes are attributed to hysteria, or the "devil in the womb." Phyllis Chesler, for example, in her book *Women and Madness*, documents a variety of manifestations of this, including historical accounts of women confined to mental asylums by their husbands for having been disagreeable or unruly, resisting sex, being in the way of an affair, or any number of other ways of inconveniencing husbands and fathers.[8]

Another obvious place to look is discourses on queerness and non-normative sexual identity that construe same-sex desire as pathological. It was only in 1986 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its *Diagnostic and*

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), whereas the World Health Organization only ended its classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1992.

Add to these the production of the Other common to any historical case of genocide, and the dehumanizing rationales that have been operative in slave societies, and we have at least a partial list of such instances, one that begins to situate Katrina within long and varied histories of subjugation which are perhaps not so distinct in their mechanics. The state's response to Katrina expressed madness through the discursive figures of race and class—interwoven in a projection of madness, but also as an *expression* of madness (as Foucault wrote of the ''madness'' in ''acts of sovereign reason'') and ultimately, a *cause* of so much madness. Despite the sympathy that Katrina's images inspired, whether they could ultimately be read as human suffering is an important question, since they were understood first as racialized chaos and disorder. More than any overwhelming threat to private property or ''the rule of law,'' this perception of madness in the form of a racial crisis is why the state's response was definitively one of violence, territorialization, containment, and quarantine, excusing a generalized state of exception that is instrumental to the goals and processes of ghettoization.

This brings us to the final stage of ghettoization, which is no longer ghettoization. What follows is the final removal of the ghettoized, argued through racialization, authorized by the state of exception, and setting the stage for *gentrification*. Accordingly, right-wing think tanks, pundits, and blogs praised the ''unintended consequences'' of the storm as a much needed cleansing of the city's ''criminal elements.'' It takes no stretch of the imagination to consider what the benefit would be to the powerful interests of the city and region if these populations—perceived in their inhumanity as a scourge and obstacle to profits—were erased. Clearing the way for expanded tourism, breaking up one of the only black voting blocs in the state, and the redevelopment of eminent domain property lots, seized from those who cannot make it back to the city, are but three obvious motivations to consider.[9] And now the first post-Katrina census of New Orleans has been publicized, whereupon Ray Nagen's P-Funk predictions are sounding increasingly hollow.[10] The census reveals the city's black majority has dwindled from two-thirds to just fifty-five percent, while its

Public housing unit and boat at the Calliope Projects

median income rose by ten percent. Embedded more clearly in the interesting statistic that the number of households *without access to vehicles* has declined by more than half,[11] is a clear sign that Katrina has already made New Orleans richer and whiter, a disturbingly successful gain for those who envision a total cleansing of poor and black people from the city, wherein conditions of ghettoization lay the groundwork for gentrification, and meet ultimately with historical modes of banishment and exile from city gates.

It is a grim picture, but it is so far a grim history. If I were to offer hope, it would not be to first seek reform of the government or "enlighten" the racial vision of society. Instead, I see hope within the autonomous grass-roots organizing that has taken place in the city, stopping home demolitions, documenting police and jail abuses, creating independent media, and rehabbing houses so as to help bring back people who can't afford to rebuild.[12] Ultimately they are working on the principle that power is not uniform, unidirectional, or univocal, nor is it ever "completed" forever in its monopoly, which those who live with necessity, by necessity, already know. Hope is in the power that belongs to those categorized as mad, rendered illegible, muted, or in Ralph Ellison's terms, invisible (not in what is offered to them); it is in the ability of social movements to convert the energies and strategies already in the service of daily survival—and those used to subjugate them—into their own political power. "I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility," claims the nameless narrator of Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Despite the torment of his invisibility, he finds power and autonomy within it as well, while teaching us of the madness to be found in the position that claims a monopoly of reason. Recall the haunting passage of the story's prologue, in which arrogant insults flung at him by a white man summon the violent rage of a lifetime of racial attacks, so that he nearly slits the man's throat. "Oh yes I kicked him! And in my outrage I got out my knife and prepared to slit his throat." But in an epiphany of both his own power over this oppressor and the nature of that vision that renders him invisible, he stops himself, realizing that the man was, "as far as he knew . . . in the midst of a walking nightmare!" He continues:

> Then I was amused: Something in this man's thick head had sprung out and beaten him within an inch of his life. I began to laugh at this crazy discovery.

As James Baldwin describes whiteness as ultimately a dependent to its exoticized and demonized Other, or as Orlando Patterson declares the master a parasite living off the slave, rather than the reverse, the arrogance that valorizes domination is always a misrecognition of both itself and the dominated. It is always a distorted vision, blind to the power it invests in its Other, whereas the power and energy exercised by a dominant group becomes, in itself, a potential source of power to be amassed and organized by those subjected. Before political demands of legibility and recognition, voice and inclusion, there must be self-organization and self-definition, buoyed by the reminder that no dominated subject is precisely what an oppressor fantasizes that temporarily dominated subject to be. In the words of Ellison's narrator:

> It is incorrect to assume that, because I'm invisible and live in a hole, I am dead . . . Call me Jack-the-Bear, for I am in a state of hibernation . . . Please, a

definition: hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action . . . I believe in nothing if not action.

1. In New Orleans's public housing developments these mysterious police squads are called the "Safe Home" force, which to the (now former) residents of these developments was nothing short of cynical and a source of laughter.
2. I regard Walter Benjamin's assertion that "the state of emergency is the exception but the rule" important here as an expression of the latent desire of all states to be unrestrained, unaccountable, and totalitarian, and when not forced to do otherwise, will act accordingly. Hence, when Agamben states, "when the state of exception begins *to become* the rule," I distinguish this from Benjamin's assertion in that it is referring to the actual, practical implementation of constitutional law's suspension—fulfilling that latent impulse.
3. Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1998; also see Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2005.
4. For discussion of the history of class and criminal codes, see *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century,* by Peter Linebaugh, 2001; also see the ACLU of New Orleans's report on coerced plea bargains forced upon many arrested, exchanging guilty pleas for reduced sentences of community service, cleaning out the flooded jail and courthouse.
5. Although there's no way to categorize the intentions behind the fivefold increase in background checks for gun purchases the FBI documented in the month after Katrina, the only places people near New Orleans could buy guns were in the outlying, white suburbs. Similarly, the Chief of Police for Westwego County told National Public Radio that he'd authorized $18,000 in new weapons purchases to protect against looters in a town where there was no looting.
6. Despite the perception of the hurricane, for months after Katrina the last homicide officially recorded by the police had been on 27 August, two days before the hurricane hit. See Adam Nossiter, *International Herald Tribune*, 11 November 2005.
7. For an excellent recounting of this intellectual history, see Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: Race, Power, and the Blues in the Mississippi Delta*, Verso, 1998, or his forthcoming revision, Development Arrested: From the Plantation Era to the Katrina Crisis in the Mississippi Delta, 2007.
8. Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness*, 1972, 2002.
9. For a more thorough elaboration, see Mike Davis, "Gentrifying Disaster," http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID = 72&ItemID = 8992; and Naomi Klien, "The Rise of Disaster Capitalism," *The Nation*, 2 May 2005.
10. Gulf Coast Impact Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/gulf_coast/tables/tab1_katrinaK0100US2203v.htm; http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/emergencies/gulfcoast_impact_estimates.xls.
11. http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/gulf_coast/tables/tab4_katrinaK0100US2203v.htm.
12. Visit the Web sites for the Common Ground Collective (http://www.commongroundrelief.org), the People's Hurricane Relief Fund (http://www.peopleshurricane.org), Hurricane Autonomous Workers Collective (http://www.peoplesfreespace.org/hurricanerelief), and New Orleans Independent Media Center (http://neworleans.indymedia.org).

Ashley Hunt is an artist, activist, and writer who works with video, mapping, and installation to engage the ideas of social movements, modes of learning, and public discourse. His primary work of the past eight years has been the development of *The Corrections Documentary Project* (www.correctionsproject.com), which deals with the contemporary growth of prisons as central to today's wealth accumulation and racial exclusion. Hunt's work has been exhibited at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Atlanta, the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore, Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, as well as numerous grass-roots and community-based venues throughout the United States. Other writings can be found in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* (2005), *Sandbox Magazine* (2002) and at Artwurl.org (2003–present). He is currently a fellow at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, and lives in Los Angeles where he teaches at the University of California at Irvine.

Susan Jahoda

. . . of a worm in a pomegranate
Video, 15 minutes, 2006

Subjects organize their sense of *being* through time and space. Time and space are a complex weave of public impositions, socially instituted affects and representations, and an imaginary, shaped by its own unconscious rhythms. *. . . of a worm in a pomegranate* explores the ways in which subjects internalize, cohabitate with, and creatively experience institutional time and space in an attempt to negotiate agency. In one continuous video capture, light at dusk passes from one interior wall to another. This image provides the visual component of a nonsequential narrative that calls upon topics ranging from phantom limb phenomena to global warming.

Video stills from '. . . of a worm in a pomegranate' by Susan Jahoda

Susan Jahoda is an interdisciplinary artist, art co-editor for *Rethinking Marxism,* and professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her work includes photography, performance, installation, and video. She has been the recipient of grants and awards, including fellowships from the National Endowment and the New York Foundation for the Arts, and her work has been exhibited and published widely in Europe and North America. Current projects in video and sound explore how subjects can make claims for psychic and social belonging, in a location between time and space as constituted in and by the body, and time and space as situated in the world.

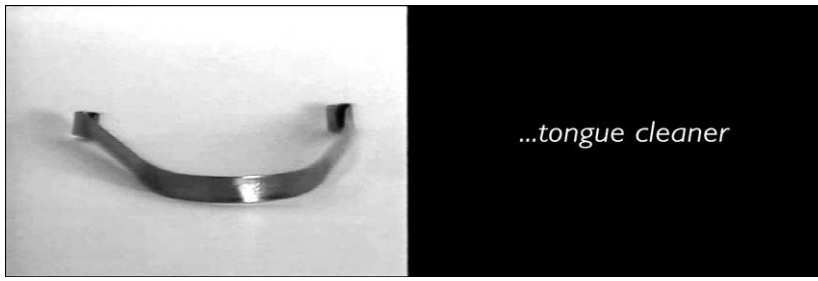
Jesal Kapadia

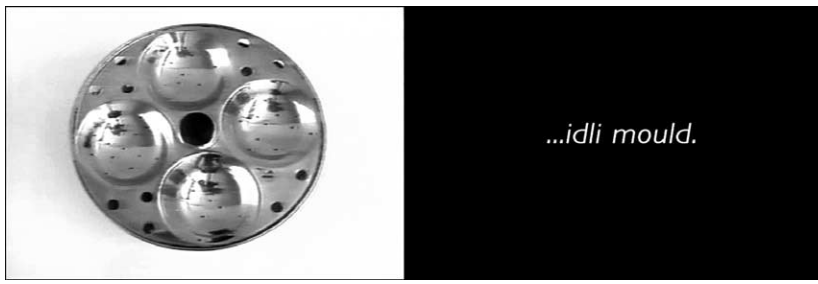
This is not a . . .
Video, 2 minutes 30 seconds, 2003

Probing the legacy of surrealism, particularly to Rene Magritte's famous painting *'Ceci n'est pas une pipe,' This is not a . . .* attempts to unravel the European avant-garde in the context of global diasporic circulations. The short video performs an ambivalent homage to three ordinary objects used commonly in an Indian household: a coconut grater, a tongue cleaner, and the idli-mold. These everyday instruments also border on the uncanny, displaced from their familiar context of use into a sparse white environment.

The soundtrack consists of three musical pieces, which are devotional love songs that have no connection with the everyday character of the 'not objects'. Do they invest the stainless steel objects with a sense of nostalgia, reverence, and even fetishistic desire, or is it that the text is ironic toward this disproportionate affective investment in the objects?

Video stills from 'This is not a . . .' by Jesal Kapadia





Jesal Kapadia is an artist from Mumbai, India, now living in New York City. Her work has primarily been in the genre of experimental video and digital print media. Using a tactical approach in developing her projects, the experience of migration with its effects on the human body, psyche, and imagination is what she questions and represents in her work. Drawing from moments in the history of the avant-garde, particularly surrealism, and incorporating ideas from postcolonial feminist theory, her work explores alternative modernities emerging in India and its diaspora.

Jesal Kapadia is also the art co-editor for *Rethinking Marxism* and a recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant for film and video artists. Her work has been shown at various venues: Experimenta '05 & '06 Film Festival in Mumbai, SENI International Visual Arts Festival in Singapore, Contemporary Arts Center in Lithuania, MIT's Media Test Wall at the List Visual Arts Center, Momenta Art in Brooklyn, New York, Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City New York, Vera List Center for Arts and Politics at the New School University, Art in General in New York and most recently at Artists Space, New York. She currently teaches at the International Center of Photography and CUNY College of Staten Island in New York City and Rhode Island School of Design in Providence.

Lin + Lam

Departure
Video, 48 minutes, 2006

Departure is a video essay that looks at the impact of modernization and foreign intervention through different modes of transportation. Shot from the exploratory perspective of a moving car, cycle, and trains, the video travels through three former colonial Asian cities: Taipei, Shanghai, and Hanoi. The transformation of a road, a bridge, and railways, shows an evolution of different powers marked by the promise of progress made by former occupiers and current builders.

In recognition of language hierarchies and the politics of translation, five women narrate the interrelated histories of these transforming urban environments in their native languages: Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, English, Shanghainese, and Vietnamese.

Video stills from 'Departure' by Lin + Lam

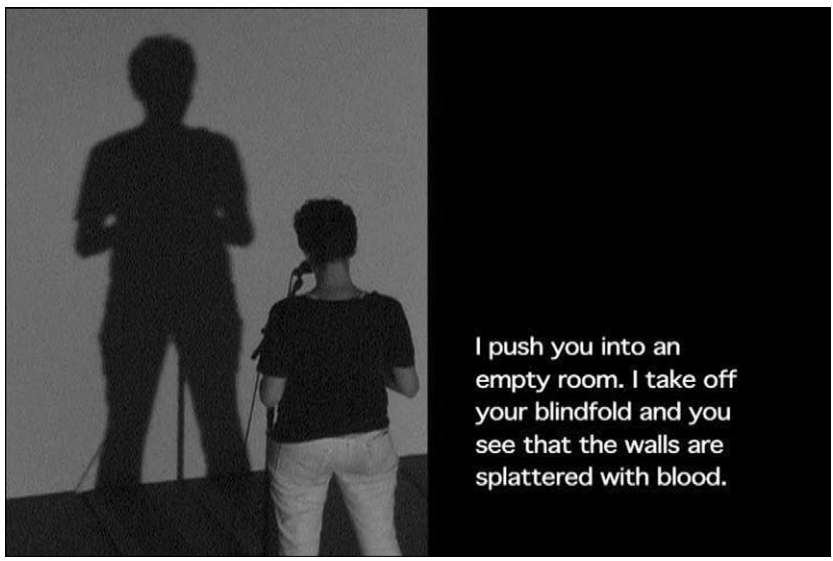
Through critical narratives, Lin + Lam's collaborative work examines how individual and national subjectivities are mediated and defined. For the past four years, they have produced work that has extended from researching questions of democracy and representation. They have participated in group shows at ARTSPEAK, Vancouver, British Columbia, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, the New School, New York, rum46 exhibition space, Århus, Denmark, and The Economist Gallery, Hong Kong. Their first collaborative video, *Departure,* premiered at the Asian Vision Competition of the Taiwan International Documentary Festival. In fall 2006, they will have a solo show at Gallery 456, New York, where they will present a mixed media installation that deals with propaganda and the relationship between the United States and South Vietnam.

Paying close attention to materiality, site, and the specificities of different media, Lin + Lam integrate their individual strengths and backgrounds. H. Lan Thao Lam uses photography, sculpture, and installation to probe the construction of history and lived places. She has received a Canada Council for the Arts Grant, H. L. Rous Sculpture Award, Owen W. Wilson Memorial Award, James Robertson Environmental Design Award, and Sully Corth Memorial Fund. She has taught at Middle Tennessee State University and Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. Lana Lin's films, videos, and installations have interpreted different cultural contexts, raising questions about translation and the processes of identification. Her work has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, in New York, as well as at the Festival de Femmes, Creteil, France, and the London Film Festival, England. She has been awarded numerous fellowships, including the New York State Council on the Arts, The Jerome Foundation, the U.S. Fulbright Foundation, and the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Umbria, Italy.

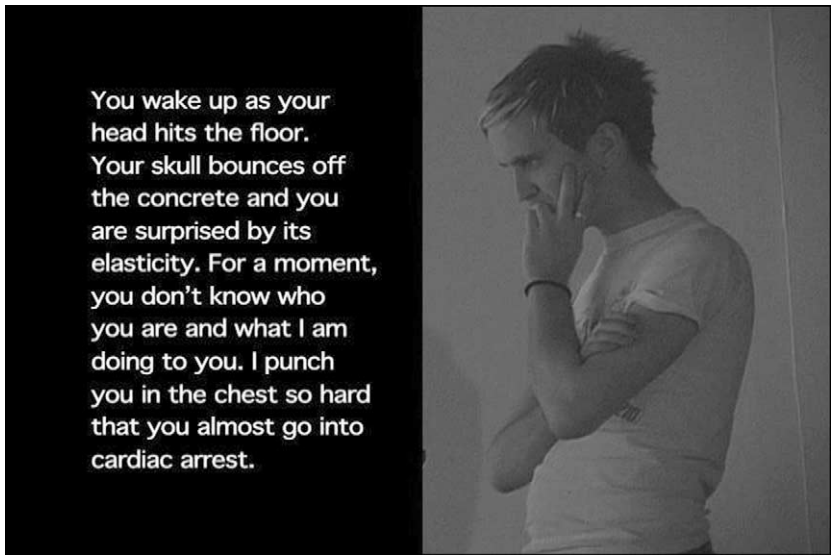
Ulrike Müller

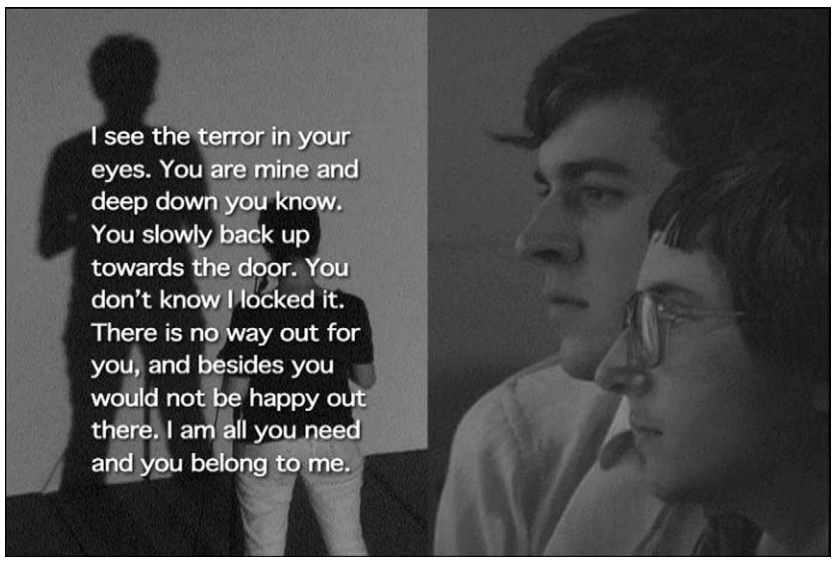
LOVE/TORTURE
Video, 6 minutes, 2005

LOVE/TORTURE performs a text about pain and pleasure—sexualized but not necessarily shared pleasure. It investigates emotional relationships and the contemporary subjectivities of media consumers. Confronted with both the bleakly simple (people are torturing and killing, people are being tortured and killed) and the utterly confusing (people are torturing and killing, people are being tortured and killed), this video proposes that viewers shift their attention to identify with the role of the perpetrator rather than with the victim.



Video stills from 'LOVE/TORTURE' by Ulrike Müller





Ulrike Müller is an artist currently living and working in New York. Since 2005 she has been an editor for the queer feminist art journal *LTTR* (www.lttr.org). Exhibitions, performances, and video screenings include Ridykeulous (New York, 2006), Diagonale, Festival of Austrian Film (Graz, 2005), and Mothers of Invention—Where Is Performance Coming From (Mumok, Vienna, 2003). The artist's book *Every little bit helps—Ulrike Müller: Two Audio Works* (2005, with essays by Bordowitz, Barbara Schröder, Lanka Tattersall, and Walter Johnston) is distributed by Revolver (www.revolver-books.de) Printed Matter (printedmatter.org).

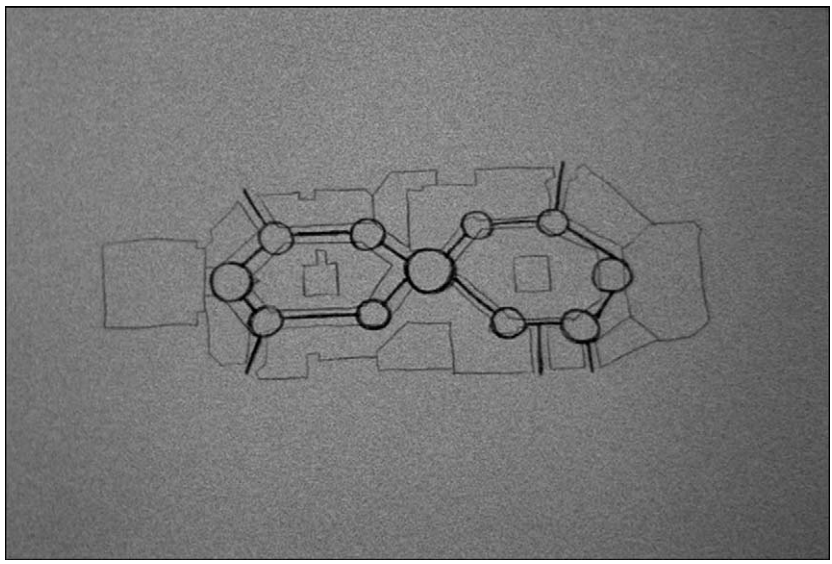
Jenny Perlin

Possible Models
16mm, b/w, silent, 10 minutes 45 seconds, 2004

The 16mm b/w hand-drawn film, *Possible Models*, begins by outlining a news story about John Ashcroft's announcement in June 2004 that a Somali immigrant to Columbus, Ohio (my home state), was charged with plotting to blow up a mall. The Somali, Nuradin Abdi, was arrested in November 2003, and held for more than six months before being formally charged. Ashcroft's announcement of this case came on 14 June 2004, a day before U.S. presidential candidate, Senator John Kerry, was scheduled to speak in Columbus. The film continues with three parts.

Part 1 describes the idealistic vision of Victor Gruen, designer of the first shopping mall in the United States, and his failed project of creating a better world through the construction of communities in the newly forming suburbs of the United States. Part 2 compares two megamalls: the Mall of America in Minnesota, which is the largest mall in the United States, with the hyper-megamall currently under construction in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This mall complex, called the Mall of Arabia, is part of Dubailand, a Disneyland-type complex that magnifies the possibilities of consumption and controlled experience beyond anything yet constructed. Part 3 addresses the current development of the ''Freedom Ship,'' a floating community of the wealthy that will slowly and continuously circumnavigate the globe. The Freedom Ship will take about three years to go around the world, and is a completely self-contained community, including schools, parks, casinos, malls, and an airplane landing strip and marina for residents' ships and planes. The Freedom Ship will dock off various countries around the world, so residents can go out and consume 'local' experiences and visitors can come and admire the floating city. The Freedom Ship is also a zone where the privilege of the wealthy means that their lives will no longer be subject to taxation. Finally, the film concludes with the continuation of the story of the Somali immigrant, the consequences of his escape from the brutal wars in his country, the new life he built in Ohio, and the possibility of what awaits him in the courts of the United States.

Video still from 'Possible Models' by Jenny Perlin



Jenny Perlin's 16mm films, videos, and drawings work with and against the documentary tradition, incorporating innovative stylistic techniques to emphasize issues of truth, misunderstanding, and personal history. Perlin's films and installations have been shown at the Rotterdam Film Festival, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Berlin International Film Festival, the Ann Arbor, Black Maria, and Images festivals, Pacific Film Archive, P.S. 1/MoMA, KunstWerke, Berlin, the Drawing Center, Centre d'art Contemporaine, Geneva, the Renaissance Society, Chicago, the Aldrich Museum, the Queens Museum, Galerie M+R Fricke, Düsseldorf, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, and Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam. Grants and fellowships have included an Arnold Foundation grant for independent film production in the Czech and Slovak Republics, two CEC/Artslink Grants for collaborative film and art projects in Eastern Europe (with Sarah Jane Lapp and Trebor Scholz), an Experimental Television Center Grant, and a New York State Council on the Arts grant. She is represented by Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam. Jenny Perlin was born in Williamstown, Massachusetts. She studied film and cultural studies at Brown University (B.A., 1993), completed her M.F.A. in film at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1998), and did postgraduate studies at the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York (1999).

Emily Roysdon

POW
Video, 1 minute 30 second loop, 2006

‘‘Do what?’’ speaks the collapsed subject. Rise again, midway through a tangible loop. Respond again to the textual transformation. Untitled/POW is a body forward meditation on repetitive movements and recurring powers. It draws a relationship between the ‘act of writing’ and the ‘out-of-frame’ forces that are given voice, as well as the ambiguous violence this tension enacts on the affected subject. Beginning in a cloud of palimpsest, the video enters a performative space that bears the remainder of inscription and erasure. Is the text effecting the collapse? Substituting for a body of control? Or, in fact, is it a revelation?

Video still from ‘POW’ by Emily Roysdon

Emily Roysdon is a Los Angeles- and New York-based interdisciplinary artist whose projects engage language and memory. Imaging collectivity and communicability as metonymic structures, her projects try to simultaneously exhibit ecstatic resistance and structural collapse. She is also an editor and cofounder of LTTR, a feminist genderqueer artist collective with a flexible project-oriented practice. LTTR produces an annual independent art journal, performance series, events, screenings, and collaborations. Roysdon's work has been shown at *Freedom Salon*, Deitch Projects, New York; MIT List Visual Art Center, Cambridge; Longwood Arts Project, Bronx; The Kitchen, New York; Art in General, New York; and Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania. Roysdon completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 2001 and an interdisciplinary M.F.A. at the University of California Los Angeles in 2006.

Jason Simon

Vera
Video, 25 minutes, 2006

Vera is an assisted self-portrait of consumption. The subject is a woman whose passions and compulsions are of spending and loss, taste and subjectivity. The video consists entirely of an interview in which Simon's questions are first audible, then excised, and Vera herself never leaves the screen. Along with *Production Notes: Fast Food for Thought* (1987) and *Paul Schrader's Bag* (1994–2004), Simon's work investigates relationships between consumption and our shared formations of the self.

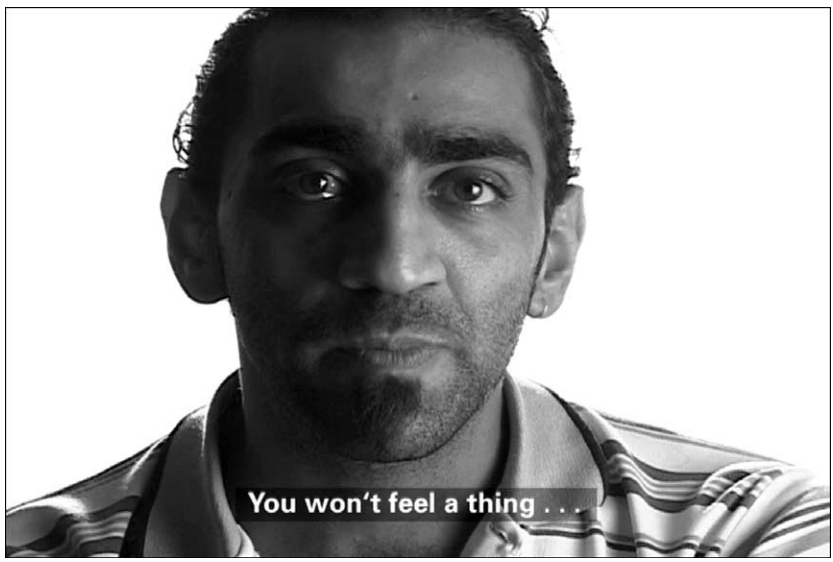
Video still from 'Vera' by Jason Simon

Jason Simon is an artist and film and video maker based in New York City. He is a founding member of the cooperative gallery Orchard and an associate professor of cinema at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York. He has shown his work in the Whitney Biennial and in solo gallery shows at Pat Hearn Gallery and American Fine Arts Co., and his writing has appeared in journals such as *Parkett, Purple, Springerin,* and *Frieze*. His films and videos are distributed by The Video Data Bank, First Run/Icarus Films, and some of his projects deal with advertising, art restoration, public address systems, and collecting. He is the recipient of grants from Art Matters Inc., The Polaroid Foundation, The Washington State Arts Council, and The New York Foundation for the Arts. He worked with Bill Horrigan at the Wexner Center for the Arts establishing the Wexner's Art & Technology lab, and has curated film and video programs in New York and abroad. Each summer he hosts the one-day, one-minute film and video festival in a barn in upstate New York with his partner Moyra Davey. *Vera* premiered at Orchard and in the exhibition "Capital (it fails now)" in 2006.

Speculative Archive (Julia Meltzer and David Thorne)

Talking oneself out of a corner out of the corner of one's mouth
Multichannel video projection, work in progress, 2006
Excerpts from *Syria Kubra,* video, 7 minutes and 30 seconds, and *May you choke on a peanut,* video, 3 minutes and 50 seconds, 2006

Rami Farah, a young Syrian performer, employs various modes of address (promise, threat, curse, joke, prediction, oath, lament, praise, recollection, premonition, declaration, harangue, conciliation, and so on) in order to speak to, with, or about those who govern, about being governed, and about the governing situation. The result is a small catalogue of the different ways one can speak and act as a citizen of a state in the face of international pressures and internal stasis.



Video stills from 'Talking oneself out of a corner out of the corner of one's mouth' by Speculative Archive

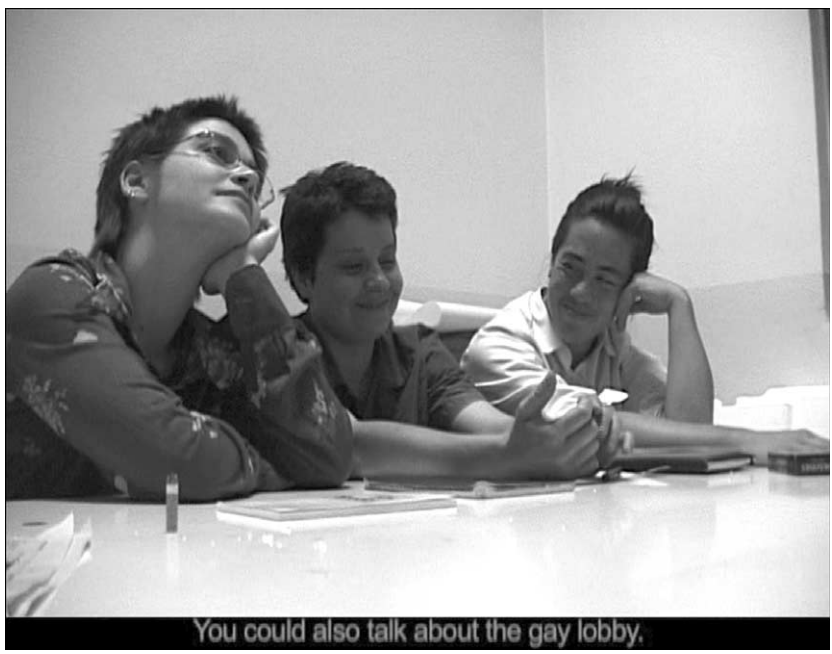
Julia Meltzer (b. 1968) is a media artist and executive director of Clockshop, a nonprofit production company in Los Angeles. For the past ten years she has produced media projects and documentaries that deal with social issues such as police brutality and the criminal justice system. Her work has been exhibited and broadcast at venues including Creative Time's Art in the Anchorage, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, Mass MOCA, Forum Stadpark (Graz, Austria), the Next Five Minutes (Amsterdam), and select PBS stations. She received her B.A. from Brown University and her M.F.A. from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She has taught video and digital media at Hampshire College and the University of California at Irvine. She is a 2004 recipient of a Rockefeller Media Arts Fellowship.

David Thorne lives and works in Los Angeles. His current projects include The Speculative Archive; the ongoing series of photo-works, *a certain interpretation based on a certain set of assumptions in order to take a certain position* (1991-present); *Boom!*, a collaboration with Austrian artist Oliver Ressler; and Scripts, a collaboration for Documenta 12 with Andrea Geyer, Sharon Hayes, Ashley Hunt, and Katya Sander. David is a 2004 recipient of a Rockefeller Media Arts Fellowship. He received his B.S. from The City University of New York in 2001, and completed his M.F.A in interdisciplinary studio at the University of California Los Angeles in 2004. Initial versions of *talking oneself out of a corner out of the corner of one's mouth* appeared in "Enemy Image," curated by Elena Sorokina at Momenta Gallery, New York, in September 2005, and as part of "I beg your pardon, or the reestablishing of cordial relations," curated by Andrea Geyer at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, New York, October 2005.

James Pei-Mun Tsang

Hospitality
Video, 15 minutes, single channel, color, 2006

Hospitality is an experimental narrative about the so-called origins of a political subject. It is scripted by a series of conversations that occurred in Milan, Italy, during the summer of 2005. In form this video refers to a basic scenario of identity and representation: Who is speaking, and for whom? Our claims throw into relief a turning point, which designates a 'before' and 'after' to the story.



Video still from 'Hospitality' by James Pei-Mun Tsang

James Pei-Mun Tsang is an artist and feminist organizer who lives in Los Angeles. His recent works involve collaborations with Marriage, Pilot Television, and SubRosa. In the past two years Tsang has toured performances throughout the United States, Canada, Western Europe and Mexico. He received a bachelor's degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2004, and he was a resident of the Fondazione Ratti in Como, Italy, in 2005.

Yates Mckee

Architecture, New Orleans, and the Specter of Ecological Justice

What is the status of experimental architectural discourse in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina? This paper contends that unless this discourse rethinks its own relationship to what Jacques Rancière has called ''the partition of the sensible,'' it risks lending itself to a process of mass eviction, effacing the claims of survivors in the name of greening the city's future: an aesthetically sophisticated but historically amnesiac image of ''sustainability'' haunted by the specter of ecological justice.

Epitomizing this risk is the book *New Orleans: Strategies for a Soft City,* the result of a studio and research project undertaken at the Harvard School of Design with the support of the Tulane Architecture Department in the 2004–5 academic year but published in December, three months into the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In the lead essay, entitled ''The Future of New Orleans,'' editor Joan Busquets describes the project as ''a complete reading of the spatial mechanisms at work in the transformation of the urban and territorial system of this singular deltaic space . . . Specific knowledge of the city will then help to interpret the process of giving it form, but above all it may contribute to understanding the why and how behind its reconstruction.''[1] As the phrase ''deltaic space'' suggests, the book positions New Orleans within an expanded scale of regional and ecological processes that are irreducible to—and indeed underlie—the physical structures of the city itself. Ecological expansion also means a historical deepening, a restoration of geographical and climatological memory that the city has lost. Indeed, the Katrina disaster was much more than a case of poor engineering or governmental incompetence: it resulted from an arrogant, instrumental way of conceptualizing the relationship of city and river that failed to attend to the inherently fluid topography of deltaic space. In other words, the elaborate hydrological infrastructures built during New Orleans postwar expansion provided a false sense of security, ignoring the basic ecological dynamics on which the city was originally based. This ''excessive faith in the mechanisms of engineering'' resulted in ''permissiveness in the urbanization of very low areas, such as the Ninth ward.'' ''Above all,'' writes Busquets, ''the flooding of low-lying areas points to the problems caused by forgetting the city's geographical conditions that cannot be overstepped and must be part of the urban order . . . The urban order must be governed by the geographical order.''[2] In essence, then, the hurricane demonstrated that the pre-Katrina city was poorly adjusted to its environment and that in its destruction lie the seeds of its ''sublime rebirth,'' giving it a chance at life based on a sustainable ''dialogue'' with nature rather than a defensive attempt to reverse its patterns and rhythms. Identifying and adapting to these dynamics requires historical reflection—no future without the past, in other words. The stakes of this task are significant for urbanism as a whole, especially for cities on *terra firma*, which, says Busquets, ''more easily lose the memory of their relation with the location and their seminal topography.''

Busquet's call for design to engage site-specific ecological memory may seem benign, but in its positing of geography as the essential foundation of urban life, Busquets unwittingly effaces the memory of those killed and displaced by the hurricane, vulnerability to which was unevenly allocated by race, class, and neighborhood.

Claiming to bypass the specific urgencies of the present, Busquets celebrates New Orleans as the subject of unitary historical trajectory. ''I do not intend to speak of the difficulties that occupied during the period of emergency . . . I refer to the city's urbanistic conditions and its intrinsic values. A specific climactic disaster must not entail the abandonment and discredit of one of North America's loveliest and most intriguing cities . . . New Orleans can and must overcome the tragic situation created. This will call for ambition and the application of the lessons that the city and its inhabitants have learned in the past. Only in this way can a solid future be constructed in keeping with its history.''[3] Busquets brackets ''the emergency'' of Katrina as a finite ''period'' in the overall life of the city, isolating it from both historically inherited dynamics of pre-storm inequality, and the ongoing emergency of the displaced survivors. By treating Katrina as essentially a problem of ecological ''values,'' he evicts black New Orleanians from the realm of historical representation, a precondition for their permanent material eviction from the future of the city itself. Indeed, with the exception of a short, pseudo-ethnographic profile of the ''King of Carnival,'' the studies in *New Orleans* present the city as if it were *already depopulated before the storm had even struck*.

Busquet's disturbing, though somewhat vacuous, appeal to ''intrinsic urban values'' is given an eco-vanguardist elaboration by Ilya Berman in her essay ''Fluid Cartographies and Material Diagrams,'' which meditates on the inadequacy of conventional architectural procedures when confronted with the fluidity and indeterminacy of New Orleans topography. Against ''the reifications of figuration'' that would fix the city as a static thing, the projects outlined in *New Orleans* partake of an ''evolutionary process'' within design itself, one that is informed by ''the deep ecological milieu from which the environment of New Orleans emerged.''[4] Yet, rather than a simple organic nature, the ''deep ecology'' to which Berman appeals is understood in Deleuzeian terms as a ''rhizomatic fluvial matrix'' and thus calls for radical diagrammatic strategies capable of layering and transcoding data and landscape, time and space, form and matter in experimental ways. For Berman, the diagrammatic is ''interpretative, transformative, and performative,'' a position she opposes to ''critical claims that all is representation—(as the poststructuralists would have us believe that cultural knowledge always precedes and filters our readings of unmediated matter).'' Berman thus positions herself as a species of architectural activist, deploying both scientific and formal rigor to ''disrupt habitual modes of envisioning the real'' that ''resist the ease of accessibility that accompanies images intended for simple consumption.''[5]

Yet Berman's dismissal of ''representation'' should disturb us—rather than an epistemological question of ''cultural filters,'' so-called poststructuralism concerns the unforeseeably mediated network of discourses, practices, institutions, and histories that mark our thinking and acting and implicate us, unevenly, in the world with others. ''Representation'' signals as an ethico-political attention to the

exclusions that govern the conditions of speech and response, the limits to who or what can appear at a given conjuncture. While motivated by a desire for justice, poststructuralism demands that we remain vigilant about our complicity in violence, even when engaged in the most conscientious of radical aesthetic and political endeavors. These are questions that *New Orleans,* despite its vanguardist vocabulary of vectors, fields, and rhizomes, utterly fails to ask, and so ends up defining the city as "a floating sponge, a semi-stable ecosystem supported by an intricately entangled biomorphic fabric, a woven living matrix." This definition is offered as "a backdrop to the current and future debates that will govern the rebuilding of New Orleans. And without this expansive reenvisioning of what we believe to know and understand about this place we will never produce anything other than the reinstantiation of habitual typological realities and mute development which we already know are unsustainable within this environment."[6] It is important to note that Berman conceives of the forces against which the eco-vanguard positions itself in primarily aesthetico-formal terms—insofar as they are maladjusted to the true biomorphological coordinates of the city, the "habitual typologies" and "mute development" that would make New Orleans unsustainable, rather than, say, the uneven allocation of environmental risk, spatial resources, and political power.

In its rhetoric of biomorphism, which effaces the *biopolitics* of Katrina, *New Orleans* unwittingly lends itself to the ethnic and class cleansing of redevelopment elites such as Joe Canizaro, a well-connected real estate mogul appointed by the mayor to chair the urban planning committee of the Bring Back New Orleans Commission, who notoriously remarked, "As a practical matter these poor folks don't have the resources to go back to our city just like they didn't have the resources to get out of our city. So we won't get all those folks back. That's just a fact."[7] Significantly, Canizaro is the former head of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the chief think tank and advocacy group of the New Urbanism, the design philosophy embodied by the planned community of Seaside, Florida. In its aesthetically traditionalist and suspiciously communitarian vision of the revitalized city, the New Urbanism is typically the scourge of vanguard design discourse, the other against which advanced, critical practice defines itself.

This position was explicitly taken in the March edition of *Artforum,* which featured a collection of "visionary" proposals by American and Dutch designers brought together by the dean of Tulane Architecture School Reed Kroloff, and Aaron Betsky, curator at the National Architecture Institute in Rotterdam.

Kroloff begins his introduction to the projects with a firsthand description of walking through the ruined landscape of an unspecified New Orleans neighborhood, which he characterizes as "spooky," "ghostly," and "almost dead," especially at night. "There's nothing out there. No lights. No people. No police, no sound, no horizon, no hope."[8] Yet the pathos of this wasted, indeed terrifying landscape provides the background against which he can pose the revitalizing vocation of architecture. Accepting that "New Orleans is going to be a mess for a long time," he writes, "this city needs bright visions to contrast with the bleak present that surrounds us . . . We need inspiration and innovation, glimpses into a promising and expressive future."

This visionary impulse is resolutely opposed to the New Urbanists, ''who would have us believe our only future resides in the past'' and who offer a ''candy-coated dream-version'' of the city that Kroloff denounces as ''quaint, predictable and market friendly.'' But despite the alarming success of the ''New Urbanist Svengalis,'' ''no one has offered an alternative to their toothache of a future . . . the projects you see here inaugurate an important dialogue. They bring fresh new vision to a city waiting to hear that its greatest days are not behind it, that it has an architectural future that will stride confidently beyond its past.''

Kroloff's raising the alarm about New Urbanism is important: it is indeed urgent to interrogate, especially as it is currently functioning in the discourses of New Orleans reconstruction. But in so doing it is crucial for us to think critically about why and in which ways we do so, lest we reproduce the worst aspects of the very thing critical architecture would claim to oppose.

The stakes of this criticality—or lack thereof—become evident in Aaron Betsky's article, which meditates on how architecture might contribute to the reenvisioning and reconstruction of the city.[9] Unlike *New Orleans,* Betsky frames his remarks with an explicit criticism of the politico-economic dynamics of the city, writing, ''The situation in New Orleans is only an extreme instance of the quandary in which arch in general finds itself—when the economic realities imposed on us by relentless market forces compel the proliferation of nonplaces leached of any individual or social meaning or coherence, how is architecture to respond?'' Yet, echoing Ilya Berman's claims to resist ''habitual typological patterns'' and Roof's denunciation of ''the sugar-coated future'' offered by New Urbanism, Betsky's main objection to ''market forces'' appears to be that it threatens to reduce the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of urban place—it is against this alienating privation of ''meaning'' that architecture finds its specific competence. Betsky acknowledges the importance of housing, but writes that ''the provision of adequate dwelling for the displaced is not an activity in which architecture can play a role beyond making sure the houses are safe and more or less aesthetically pleasing. Where, how much, at what price, and who will live there is currently being decided by politicians and no doubt real-estate interests.'' While Betsky's last point is in one sense true, in the name of realism he cynically takes the domination of the housing discussion by elites for granted, narrowly framing it as an unsavory technical part of the reconstruction process from which advanced architecture should be content to keep a distance. Rather than enter into the fractious, interested realm of politics, which he defines in advance as encompassing only professional politicians rather than citizens, architecture should contribute its efforts to a higher end—namely, remaking the architectural image and landscape ecology of the city itself. Betsky complains that ''no one seems to be asking why anybody would return to New Orleans in the first place. Every city needs its unique selling points and needs to attract investment. Old New Orleans was in decline. Katrina turned that gradual decay into catastrophe. Why *would* anyone come back?'' Not unlike Busquets, Betsky sees the disaster as an opportunity for urban ecological rebirth, and he proceeds unquestioningly to reiterate the claim that ''New Orleans is now clearly, in all likelihood irrevocably, one of the worlds shrinking cities . . . What is interesting is the fact that nature is coming

back in many of these areas ... The vast voids left by deindustrialization and depopulation are turning back into forest and field ... As cities still suburbanize, nature is returning into the inner city, and it can draw people back to these burned out cores. At the same time, old cities still retain legacies of past achievement ... and they need to retain historic character to become attractive again because of their density and their closeness to cultural amenities. And herein lie the elements for the rebirth of cities: new nature, old culture, and strong communities ... We believe these elements can also help New Orleans to transform itself into a successful Newer Orleans—a smaller, more compact, and more beautiful city that would use its natural setting and cultural heritage to enhance viable neighborhoods and attract both new businesses and new residents ... [For the exhibition *Newer Orleans: A Shared Space*] We asked firms to address the issues of how architecture could facilitate community, create an urban icon to house the city's cultural patrimony, and provide a way of connecting the city back to its landscape.''

Now community, cultural heritage, and landscape are terms that no one can simply oppose. The problem is that Betsky, while obviously having liberal tendencies,[10] takes for granted that the meanings of these principles are universally shared, disavowing them as sites of conflict over what Rancière calls the ''partition of the sensible'': the limits of what can be said, seen, heard, and recalled in a given sociopolitical configuration, and the resulting ''parts'' different social agents are assigned—including the poor, or the ''part with no part.''[11] Rancière's concept enables to understand the stakes of the ''right to return'' declared by groups such as the ACORN Katrina Survivors; this right unsettles the self-evidence of both political and physical territory, suggesting that the future of spaces is inextricably bound up with the conflicting ways in which their histories are marked, represented, and interpreted.[12] Inhabiting and displacing the ubiquitous mantra about the dependence of the urban future on a sense of the past, the right to return challenges Betsky's narrow demarcation of the politics of housing and his uncritical acceptance of the ''shrinking cities'' narrative, which in fact bears a disturbing affinity with the class-cleansing discourse of figures such as Canizaro and the self-fulfilling forecast by the Rand Corporation in April that half of New Orleans's pre-storm diaspora will in fact not return to the city.[13] Needless to say, in questioning such a position one should not be glib about the massive obstacles facing the return of displaced people, or the serious ecological and infrastructural issues to be dealt with in low-lying areas of the city. From the perspective of ecological justice however, the point is to recognize these as realms of political dispute and negotiation, rather than submit to them as demographic inevitabilities or as matters of sheer technical expertise to which designers should defer. Yet this is precisely what Betsky does, which permits him to conclude his essay thus: ''These projects seek to house a sense of community, attract attention and activity, and make the landscape visible. They propose a shared space, both physical and mental, around which the city could organize itself in a meaningful manner. And in so doing, they not only suggest an architecture for a newer Orleans but also a potential way for making all of us at home in an increasingly alien world.''[14] Alluding to the etymological tie that links the Greek *oikos* to the figure of the household, Betsky urges the ''housing'' of urban community, but only as an

eco-phenomenological horizon rather than as a *political* demand for the right to return and its corollary, a "Right to Housing."[15] Betsky's liberal ideal of "new" city properly at home with itself unwittingly commits an act of domestic violence, recalling Mark Wigley's remark apropos of Heidegger: "The house of metaphysics represses the violence that makes it possible."[16] Confronted with the often sinister appeals of deep-ecological rhetoric, the task of radical architecture—if there is such a thing[17]—would thus be to engage the specific claims, activities, and aspirations of displaced people struggling to "come home" to New Orleans while keeping watch over their own discipline's proclivity for both domestication and eviction.

1. "The Future of New Orleans: Summary of the New Orleans Studio and Consideration After Katrina," in *New Orleans: Strategies for a Soft City,* ed. J. Busquets and F. Correa (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University School of Design, 2006), 13.
2. Ibid., 16.
3. Ibid. p. 13.
4. Ilya Berman, "Fluid Cartographies and Material Diagrams," in *New Orleans*, 30.
5. Ibid., 29.
6. Ibid., 34.
7. Quoted in Mike Davis, "Who Is Killing New Orleans?" *The Nation,* 10 April 2006 (http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060410/davis).
8. Reed Kroloff, "A Newer Orleans: A Shared Space," *Artforum* (March 2006): xx.
9. Aaron Betsky, "Six Proposals," *Artforum* (March 2006): xx.
10. For an extended class critique of liberal social scientists' response to the disaster, see Adolph Reed and Stephen Steinberg, "Liberal Bad Faith in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina," http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID = 10205.
11. See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabrielle Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).
12. See http://www.acorn.org/index.php?id = 9703.
13. See Davis, "Who's Killing New Orleans?".
14. Betsky, "Six Proposals", xx.
15. Rachel G. Bratt et al., *A Right to Housing: Foundations for a New Social Agenda* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).
16. "The Domestication of the House," in *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997) 97–121.
17. Manfredo Tafuri famously admonished that, under capitalism, there can be no "radical architecture" but only a class critique of "architectural ideology" and its "hopes in design." Fredric Jameson has revised Tafuri's pessimistic position, arguing for a Gramscian sense of counterhegemonic "enclaves" tactically operating within the capitalist city. See "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology" in *Ideologies of Theory 1* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985), xx. Jameson's point is pertinent to the activities of the Common Ground collective (www.commongroundreleif.org), which has coordinated large groups of residents and volunteers to assist in the gutting and renovation of damaged homes in the lower Ninth Ward and other devastated neighborhoods at risk of being razed unless their dispersed communities can prove their long-term "viability." Without diminishing the importance of these efforts, it seems important for architects not to romanticize them as figures of bottom-up spontaneity, which could result in detracting attention from the longer-term, larger-scale constraints, mediations, uncertainties, and inequalities that mark the reconstruction environment in which groups such as Common Ground and ACORN are struggling to operate.

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