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DISTRIBUTED SPATIAL PRACTICE, AS APPLIED TO THE ART OF EXHIBITION

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INTRODUCTION

This exploratory paper focuses on the spatial association between digital media and exhibition space, and how this relationship is mediated through curatorial design.

My research engages with various issues arising from the current situation which finds art operating across increasingly virtualized spaces of the contemporary museum. The interdisciplinary nature of this project focuses on the relationship of art to its institutionalized spaces and how this becomes particularly pronounced when negotiating the display or presentation of new media artworks today. The technologized interface between physical and virtual spaces has consequence upon how communication and meaning are culturally negotiated, and how viewer participation is socially organized and experienced through the medium of the exhibition. In practice, how might these relationships be designed?

In order to bring some specificity to the discussion of these broader concerns, I will draw directly upon the practice-based research undertaken through my curatorial project, Remote (http://www.remoteexhibition.com/).(1) The analysis of the exhibition's mixed reality (2) installation will lead to a discussion of how ideas related to distributed aesthetics and networked culture were interpreted and translated through spatial practice. As a result, the project can be viewed as a demonstration of how the nature of the digital domain transforms an understanding of the exhibition form itself as the interface between informatic and physical spaces.

The paper has been structured to address a number of considerations directly associated with the Remote project, including:

1 How the exhibition's central tropes of transcription and transposition were translated through the spatial practice involved the project's curatorial design;

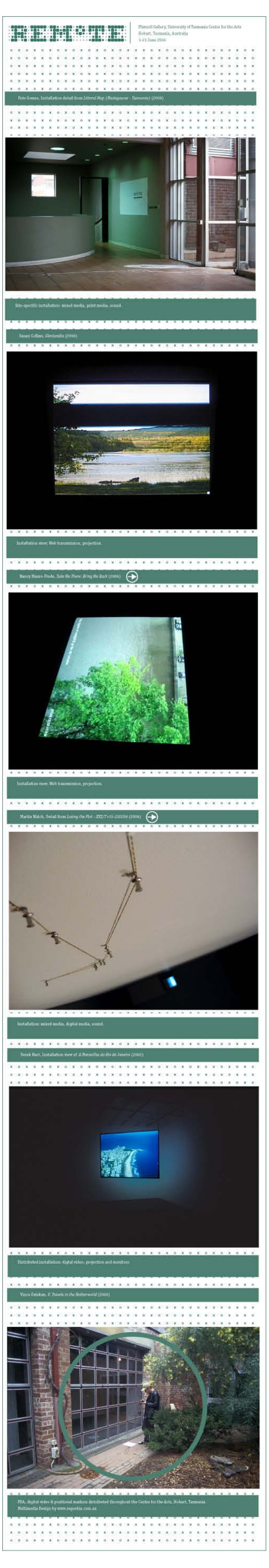
2 How the background context provided by site-specificity, distributed aesthetics and interactive narrative influenced the resulting exhibition as an interpretation of distributed spatial practice; and

3 How curatorial design was applied towards realizing the installation. Therefore this short paper will focus specifically on a detailed description of the strategies employed in determining the exhibition of one particularly illustrative artwork, *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* by Derek Hart.

TRANSLATION OF THEMES TO SPATIAL PRACTICE 1

The curatorial proposal for this project entertained a telescoping of the relationship of the perceived, immediately experienced event and its transcription through various forms of representation and means of expression. The transaction between times and places at once immediately present (here, now) and simultaneously at a remove (absent, distanced) has been a recurrent artistic preoccupation since the modern industrialization of the production and dissemination of visual images. Thematically, the curatorial premise for Remote was inspired by the close, coincidental relationship in the mid-19th century between the invention of photography (which was in the process of being formulated concurrently across the Atlantic by the likes of William Henry Fox Talbot and Louis Daguerre, following upon the pioneering experimentation of Joseph Nicephore Niepce) and media communications (Samuel Morse's first electric-telegraph message, Cyrus Field's laying of the transatlantic cable). This relationship converges once again today in the tele-image: digital images relayed through the medium of the Internet.

The paradoxical interplay between distance and proximity underpins the thematic rationale of the exhibition, which guided the selection of representative artworks. The choice of an international cross-section of artists was initially determined by identifying the centrality of this theme to the concerns of their respective practices. Each of the artists who ultimately were included – Susan Collins (UK), Pete Gomes (UK), Derek Hart (UK/Tasmania), Nancy Mauro-Flude (Australia/Netherlands), Martin Walch (Tasmania), and artist-curator Vince Dziekan (Canada/Australia) – explore certain transpositional characteristics associated with the visualization of virtual space. Each artist negotiates their relation to the real world by employing a diversity of expressions that include screen and projection-based moving image work, webcast transmissions, site-specific installation and locative media. Collectively, their works demonstrate how the transaction between reality and virtuality might be constituted today when any firm sense of presence (real space) and immediacy (real time) is exacerbated by technologies that problematize notions of nearness and remoteness, such as the televisual, tele-communications and satellite navigational systems.


REM°TE
Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania Centre for the Arts
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia
3-23 June 2006

Pete Gomes, Installation detail from *Littoral Map (Madagascar – Tasmania)* (2006)

Site-specific installation: mixed media, print media, sound.

Susan Collins, *Glenlandia* (2006)

Installation view: Web transmission, projection.

Nancy Mauro-Flude, *Take Me There: Bring Me Back* (2006)

Installation view: Web transmission, projection.

Martin Walch, Detail from *Losing the Plot - ZTD/T+15-220206* (2006)

Installation: mixed media, digital media, sound.

Derek Hart, Installation view of *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* (2002)

Distributed installation: digital video, projection and monitors.

Vince Dziekan, *V. Travels in the Netherworld* (2006)

PDA, digital video & positional markers distributed throughout the Centre for the Arts, Hobart, Tasmania. Multimedia Design by www.superbia.com.au

An intensive on-site residency faciliated by the Plimsoll Gallery and the Tasmanian School of Art/ University of Tasmania in Hobart at the outset of the project's development in June 2005 supported preliminary research for the exhibition's planning. During this time, the inherent potential of the site and available gallery spaces were sensed first-hand and preliminary designs for the installation were explored. Crucially, the processes involved in curatorial selection and exhibition design – conventionally operating as separate, asynchronous stages in the project development process – were synthesised as part of the curatorial design approach. As a result, a strategy for how the curatorial philosophy would be realized was determined by designing (creating, accommodating, enacting) the contiguous meeting of different times and places. For while transcription involves technological mediation related to how specific artworks employed digital media through their application of multimedia communications, such as web streaming and technologies such as GPS systems, the overarching exhibition plan involved a translation of digital contents into real space - a transposition of virtual spaces with a subset of immediate, physical environments.

The curatorial design of *Remote* responded to the blending of real and virtual spaces (that is coming to be characterised as *post-digital*) and organized the exhibition as a far more open structure by not restricting the exhibition to the confines of the gallery. Conceived and expressed through the medium of the exhibition, Remote's scenography – understood as the exposition of curatorial thematics through spatial expression – drew upon the physical attributes of the Plimsoll Gallery as well as the distinctive properties of the local environment in which the gallery found itself. These ancillary spaces (passageways, gallery reception area, surrounding public spaces both internal and external to the Centre for the Arts building) were incorporated into the overall sweep of the resulting "distributed" exhibition. Most obviously, this approach capitalized on the architectual footprint of the particular site, accentuating both the physical properties as well as the social conditions which sees the gallery function within the immediate center, housing the premier art school in Tasmania, while also being publicly accessible to the greater cultural precinct. It was recognized early in the development process that it would not be particularly productive to attempt to configure a singular or unidirectional exhibition experience for a model visitor. Rather, multiple points of access and trajectories of viewing across a number of spaces influenced the resulting design strategy. In addition, the mixture of different locations, each with their own site-specific qualities, was factored into how each of the artworks were situated, as was the case of Hart's *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* which will be discussed in more detail. As this example will demonstrate, site-specificity not only entails an artwork's relation to its particular physical site, but also its context (such as proximitity to other works, its own multi-modal organization).

The means to effectively "mobilize" the viewer's interaction across the fullest range of exhibition spaces was supported in two different ways. Didactic material was designed to graphically communicate the overall exhibition scenography to the gallery visitor. In addition, as curator-artist I produced a locative media artwork (*V. Travels in the Netherworld*). Utilizing a hand-held device (Pocket PC), this interactive multimedia piece operated as a stand-alone, self-contained artwork that was woven into in the main inventory. The mobile device was available upon request for visitors. Using the artwork's own internal narrative structure, the viewer was compelled to locate graphic markers that were situated in five different locations distributed throughout the exhibition. Upon reaching each position, they were directed to play the predetermined media contents assigned to each location. As a result, the viewer was led on a route whose overlapping trajectory intersected with the path interconnecting with the dispersed collection of other artworks. Strategically, the five "nodes" that comprise *V. Travels* were placed in "transit" zones situated in between the fixed locations of the other works. For instance, the fifth node, featuring the media excerpt titled *TimeTravel2* was placed at the base of the staircase providing access between the ground floor and the first level of the building. This specific location connected the gallery with the main foyer of the Centre for the Arts. At the exhibition level, the strategic placement of the viewer-visitor at this point in space also set her on a course that interconnected with, for example, two of the three iterations of Hart's *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro*.

In adopting a form of distributed spatial practice, the exhibition drew fundamentally upon the movement and passage through and between the discrete elements that constitute each of the artworks as dispersed throughout both gallery and non-gallery environs. Operating as counterpoints to the enveloping sense of the exhibition as transitory, ephemeral, and contingent, these stationary, individuated instances of artworks provided anchors for distinct events, whether of a representational character (such as the continual updating of Flude's webcam imagery, the almost imperceptible refresh-rate of Collins' tele-images, and the suspended, semi-frozen quality of Hart's video footage) or spatially realized (the mixed media components brought together within Walch's gallery installation or Gomes' sprawling locative media work which meanders through interior and exterior spaces). Each of these different iterations afforded the viewer moments of concentrated, reflective punctuation in the midst of a continuous flow of data. By distributing the exhibition across a range of spaces in this way, self-contained artworks were encountered as "pauses" in the midst of passage (whether visualizing the movement of data through networks or the viewer's travel through space) and flow (reinforcing the formal qualities of streaming media or drawing attention to the aggregative effect that duration and juxtaposition across time and space has on the interpretive meaning of the work itself). Accordingly, the exhibition as a whole was experienced as an "itinerary" that, by definition, related highly focalized moments of engagement, connecting and collecting through the convergence of relationally constructed viewing or visiting paths and the active nature of migration between them in real space.

PAUSE & PASSAGE: SITE-SPECIFICITY AND THE FORM OF DISTRIBUTED EXHIBITION 2

The range of spatial practices available to contemporary artists and curators alike far exceed the purely architectural factors of gallery space. Today, this mediation increasingly includes the negotiation of an extended typology of spaces or sites incorporating a variety of modes of multimedia communication and networked environments. My approach to curatorial design applies investigative research into the implications of emerging digital cultures to contemporary art and curatorial practices, and examines how digital technologies are transforming the very art of exhibition. Curatorial design, as a practice-based approach to techniques of exposition and digital mediation in the context of the "multi-medial" museum,(3) shares a theoretical perspective with distributed aesthetics in responding to the far-reaching challenges of the network-like relations found in contemporary culture. As cultural production and the institutions that sustain it are increasingly infiltrated by digital technologies, network-informed curatorial design offers an update of *site-specificity*, which has its roots firmly set in the tangible relations that exist between object and its site of exhibition.

Broadly defined, the term site-specificity encompasses a wide range of artistic approaches that "articulate exchanges between the work of art and the places in which its meanings are defined." (4) The origins of this mode of practice takes firm root in Minimalist sculpture of the 1960s, which was premised upon establishing an unequivocal relationship between the material presence of the artwork and its physical site. The emergence of this line of artistic practice can be contextualized historically as part of a widespread preoccupation with the machinations of the "art system" during the period. As Boris Groys notes:

> Accordingly, the advanced art of this time understopd the individual act of art production as being originally regulated by a "system," as following a certain general rule from the beginning, and as being inscribed into a certain social practice even before its product was submitted to a definite social use.(5)

Initially characterised by a self-critical negotiation of spatially "grounding" the work *in situ*, site-specific practices were commonly preoccupied with the "presence" of the artwork. In this paradigm, the relationship of artwork to site was inseparable – an artwork could not be transposed or transported to any other site without its integrity as a work being compromised. An integral relationship is implied between the artwork's site of production and space of exhibition. This understanding gave rise to a host of artistic interventions that explored alternative environments for art, while also bringing added critical exploration of the role of the gallery itself, as illustrated by the emergence of various installation practices and forms of institutional critique. As Nick Kaye observes, "site-specificity presents a challenge to notions of 'original' or 'fixed' location, problematising the relationship between work and site." (6)

Most important to the continuing relevance of this approach, the application of site-specificity is not exclusive or restricted to the physical preconditions that are in operation between a work of art and its site of exhibition. Rather, as Douglas Crimp recognized when repositioning this concept within a postmodernist discourse, the spectator plays an instrumental role in this complex "ecology." Operating as an intermediary between the formal, internal relations of the artwork and the legitimating function provided by the gallery, "the coordinates of perception were established as existing not only between the spectator and the work but *among spectator, artwork and the place inhabited by both*." (7) By establishing (designing) the set of conditions for reception, the artist assigns meaning as a function of the provisional interrelationship between the art object, its site of exhibition, and the viewer's perceptual experience. As Crimp explains in his influential text, *Redefining Site Specificity*:

> Whatever relationship was now to be perceived was contingent upon the viewer's *temporal movement* in the shared space with the object. Thus the work belonged to its site; if its site were to change, so would the interrelationship of object, context and viewer. Such a reorientation of the perceptual experience of art made the viewer, in effect, the subject of the work, whereas under the reign of modernist idealism this privileged position devolved ultimately to the artist, the sole generator of the artwork's formal relationships.(8)

In her revision of site-specificity, Kwon recognizes that the artistic investigation of site never operates along physical or spatial lines exclusively but rather operates by being embedded within an encompassing "cultural framework" that is defined by art's supporting institutional complex. (9) Formulating site as more than place is crucial to making the conceptual leap of redefining the role of art under present day socio-cultural conditions. While not developing this point directly, she broaches an important correspondence between what she describes as a "nomadic" variation that has reinvented site-specific practices and the patterns of movement familiar to electronic spaces of the Internet:

> A provisional conclusion might be that in advanced art practices of the past thirty years the operative definition of site has been transformed from a physical location – grounded, fixed, actual – to a discursive vector – ungrounded, fluid, virtual.(10)

As a critical response to the cultural implications of developing network cultures, *distributed aesthetics* also entails a revised formulation of the relationship between form and media in order to understand the influence that new technologies such as interactive and networked media are exerting on both the aesthetic and social aspects of contemporary culture. Supporting the relevance of this approach is the need to address the paradoxical conditions of digitally mediated experiences: experiences that are simultaneously dispersed and situated, that combine synchronous and asynchronous features that take place (somewhere; sometime) across a continuum of real and virtual spaces.

The formulation of distributed aesthetics attempts to explain how different modes of perception and engagement develop in response to new social, cultural and technological conditions. In particular, as Darren Tofts writes: "the aesthetics of distribution are indicative of our changing habit of consumption as much as our changing conception of what art is and potentially can be in a networked world."(11) What characterizes these networked conditions and how might they be understood in aesthetic terms?

Distributable media have made a significant impact on contemporary aesthetic practices more generally because they offer the possibility of thinking differently about participation and how relationships between artwork and audience might be reconceived and reconfigured. Net art, social virtual communities, as well as interactive, networked environments offer highly individualized forms of engagement. They also redefine how the artwork might actually take shape. Increasingly ephemeral in nature, these forms demonstrate different ways that artworks might be conceived, configured, distributed and exhibited. These forms "have modified the spatial and temporal dimensions of what constitutes an art event and an experience of it." (12) No longer consigned to virtual spaces, digitally mediated practices influence how real spaces operate, to the point of challenging the institutional foundations upon which cultural production has long been premised.

An increased reliance upon participatory modes of engagement is a feature of many forms of digital communication, whether found in popular media or artistic contexts. The nature of this communication gives rise to a highly individualistic subject. This has significant consequence to the formal constitution of the artwork, since an inherent indeterminacy of the viewing experience of each work needs to be accounted for. Under these conditions, it is highly unlikely that any two viewers can be expected to have the same experiential encounter with the work, let alone be expected to experience every "trace" that constitutes the event structure of media-based artworks (whether the full "timeline" of a linear video, or possible combination of activations possible in an interactively constructed multimedia installation). An emphasis on the role of exchange is related to the exploration of alternative models of audience interaction. Whether for activating the contribution of the user through direct interaction, or as a feedback mechanism that gives shape to the viewer experience, this principle is familiar to anyone who has experienced networked contexts, from the internet to new media art installations. Exchange comes to hold a certain degree of primacy over the elements being exchanged, announcing a profound sense of the artwork's innate instability. Taken together, these qualities promote an appreciation of the contingent nature of contemporary cultural and aesthetic experiences, and move an understanding of the artwork away from conventionally established ideas about the art object (singular, original, consolidated) towards the kind of "post-object" art that is promoted by intermedia practices.(13)

The increased reliance upon participation and the role of exchange are also prevalent features operating outside of digital or networked cultures, and have become increasingly instrumental in non-digital domains. For his part, Nicholas Bourriaud's much vaunted championing of *relational aesthetics* reinforces the centrality of these principles in a broader cross-section of advanced cultural practice.(14) As encapsulated by Tofts: "The primal context of use in relational aesthetics resonates in the primacy of the user in distributed aesthetics. This confluence allows us to appropriate ideas from one form of offline art and adapt them to online practices." As will become evident in my discussion of how curatorial design was involved in the Remote exhibition, I explored this confluence in a reciprocal direction by drawing upon the distinct qualities of online practices and adapting them to an offline application.

In the context of site-specificity and its challenge to the conception of the art object, unity is not to be found in the reductive idealization of form. Rather, in the contemporary technologized context that gives rise to distributed and relational aesthetics, the artwork *results from*; it is a formative by-product of how techno-social networks are involved in the relay and dispersal of meaningful experiences through interaction with media and communications. The inadequacy of the term "artifact" is apparent when describing the artwork as a more amorphous entity, one that is openly subject to contingency and ecological conditions that integrate the artwork within a broader set of complex relations (with the artwork articulated as event structure, or as "end use"). The relevance of a distributed aesthetics approach might then be effectively summarized as:

> A continuous emergent project, situated somewhere between the drift away from coherent form and the drift of aesthetics into relations with new formations, including social (networked) formations.(15)

This drift, which can be likened to the slippery transitions involved in mediating between real and virtual, is recognized in the relationship between architectural space and narrative. Drawing upon the enduring influence of the architectural design of processional passage through space, Meadows develops this perspective as the basis of how architecture and interactive narrative share similar principles of interaction:

> Architecture might be said to be interactive because, if designed for such, it allows visitors to participate in the key steps of interactivity: observation, exploration, modification and reciprocal change.(16)

The artworks in *Remote* are assembled through the exhibition's connective tissue which induces the experience and encounter of art across a broader ecology of spaces. The dispersal of artworks across the different "dimensions" of exhibition space (artwork, gallery, exhibition) – and their realization as "nested" episodes or events within a larger complex set of relations – reveals the narrative structures that are more commonly associated with the screen-bound virtual spaces of multimedia. I propose that artistic and curatorial practice negotiates the tension between virtuality and site specificity by tracing this complex of relations aggregatively through the exhibition. The remainder of this paper will present a description of how curatorial design, as illustrated by its direct application to one example drawn from the exhibition inventory, takes into account this subset of ecological conditions.

CURATORIAL DESIGN: REMOTE EXHIBITION AND DETAILED EXAMPLE (DEREK HART, A MARAVILHA DO RIO DE JANEIRO) 3

The curatorial design of *Remote* expanded the scope of the exhibition environment. This strategy supported the idea of transforming the exhibition into what might constructively be considered an itinerary. Fundamentally, this conceptual shift drew attention to the contingent nature of the artworks presented. It also placed added emphasis upon the active agency of the individual viewer by encouraging an exploration of other spaces besides dedicated gallery space. These included "transit" spaces such as the reception area, foyer, and external environments such as the garden enclosure and courtyard.

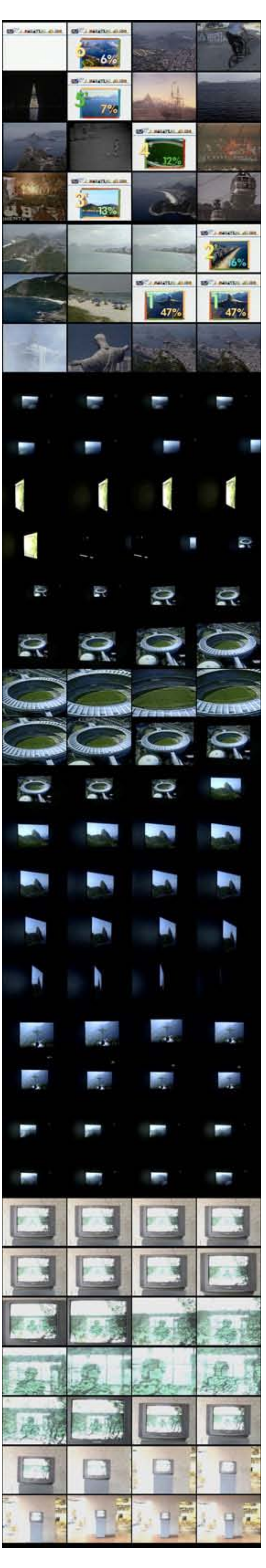
This peregrine quality of wandering or travelling is actualized through the particular organization of the exhibition. The distribution of artworks across a widened range of locations enabled them to operate, in effect, as nodal points of reference that collectively defined the exhibition proper. Assembled as a result of following an itinerant pathway, the exhibition's form provides the infrastructure that locates the viewer spatio-temporally at the juncture and disjunction of *here* and *there*, as well as dialectically between socially instituted pre-conditions and highly individuated, experientially contingent aspects of art.

The outline that follows illustrates some of the considerations involved in the direct transposition of a representative artwork from the inventory to the curatorial requirements of the exhibition. Given the limitations of this current text, I will restrict the discussion to the case of Derek Hart's *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* (2002-2006). (17) This work was extensively redeveloped for *Remote* as a product of the curatorial design process.

The main expression of the work involved its distillation into a single-channel video piece. Running over a duration of 12 minutes, the video presented a linear series of aerial sequences of the six most popular scenic locations in Rio edited from footage shot by helicopter under direction of the artist. This re-enactment was inspired by an original television survey and feature produced by Brazilian TV of the same name – which translates as the *marvel* or *wonder* of Rio de Janeiro. The artist initially conceived of the work as six separate projections. Presenting the locations simultaneously in this way would allow the work to be understood more directly as a continuation of the original survey in which viewers were able to participate by registering votes. For *Remote*, however, a single screen projection version was produced showing the six locations in the hierarchical order of the results of the public survey. This decision was determined by installation considerations, which presented a new challenge to interpreting the work in a generously apportioned space using a ceiling-mounted projector and hanging screen. With this mode of presentation, the work's more socially connected intention is not as pronounced. Rather, by adapting to the context of the show, the artistic focus was trained on the continuum of spatial relationships proceeding from artwork to gallery space, from virtual image to more phenomenological, sensory experience, wherein the helicopter's perspective became a body with vision suspended in the air, maneuvering in a space shared with the viewer.

This way of screening the work warranted a revised exploration of the artist's project to determine the most effective mode of presentation, projection method and technique. This reconsideration extended to other dimensions of the project that would not normally be immediately available to the viewer, and renegotiating these features helped contextualize the overarching artistic project. They included selected sequences originally screened on television and the uninterrupted source recording of the helicopter's entire flight. Both of these aspects of the work were more fully integrated as a result of the artist and curator entering into a process of collaborative development, which led to the work adopting a distributed model of exposition. Ultimately, it was decided to present the work as three distinct episodes in three different locations situated across the exhibition site:

- The presentation of the original video artwork as projection in gallery;
- The looped screening of the actual television feature (running time of 1:50mins) as shown on *TV Globo* in the gallery's reception foyer; and
- A monitor-based installation situated in the main public area of the Centre for the Arts showing extracted "out-takes" from the flight path over one of Rio's notorious *favelas* (running time of 5mins).(18)



The curatorial design process factored in a number of considerations that influenced the way in which a work was translated as part of its resulting exposition. These considerations were formal, architectural, spatial, and representational. I define formal concerns as the design pre-conditions that exist within the artwork itself. Architectural considerations, however, involve transposing the formal qualities of the artifact to the particular attributes of the physical environment (such as the way the space itself functions, lighting conditions, surface characteristics, and scale). Spatial composition relates to the arrangement of elements or components that make up the artwork within its immediate architectural setting. When combined at this level of gallery space, representational concerns are interpreted in terms of communication and visual language. Beyond the kind of design-based decision making that occurs at the level of artifact or gallery, the work's contextualization within the greater exhibition is negotiated by interfacing between the formal artwork or architectural conditions of gallery space and the set of spatio-temporal relations occurring within exhibition space.

For the purpose of this paper, I will briefly detail a series of factors that influence and guide the spatial translation of the curatorial premise of *Remote*. To this end, the reader is directed to the visualization that graphically represents this "complex" – encompassing *artifact*, *exhibition* and *museum* realms – which has been especially designed as an extension to this text.

The higher-level concerns of exhibition space are most clearly aligned with conceptual and dialectical objectives. Expressed through the act of exposition, these design strategies pertain to context, exhibition design, and resulting scenographic effects. Dialectical considerations involved the application of various codes which influenced the interpretive reading along with factors determing viewer engagement with the work. For example, the resulting adaptation of *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* drew upon a combination of both art/non-art and gallery/non-gallery conventions by presenting the work across mixed environments. For its part, the exhibition design operated as a multi-dimensional montage whose cummulative effect led to an enhanced, composite reading of the artwork. Through the spatial distribution of the three individuated episodes, relational connections were made across spatial divisions and contrasting types of spaces.

Museological and non-museological codes were juxtaposed. For example, the decision to display the video artwork as a hovering projection in the potentially boundless, expansive darkness of gallery space heightened the auratic qualities of the gallery-based presentation. This installation's "aestheticization" was in stark contrast to the monitor display presented at entrance to gallery. Complete with voiceover narration, the presentation of the appropriated television featurette offered a didactic, informational supplement that confused the boundary between "waiting" room and gallery space. Prominently located immediately outside the main gallery entrance, the visual language associated with "infotainment" (accompanied by Portuguese voiceover which reinforces this reading purely by tone of voice alone) provided a disconcerting entrée to the exhibition galleries.

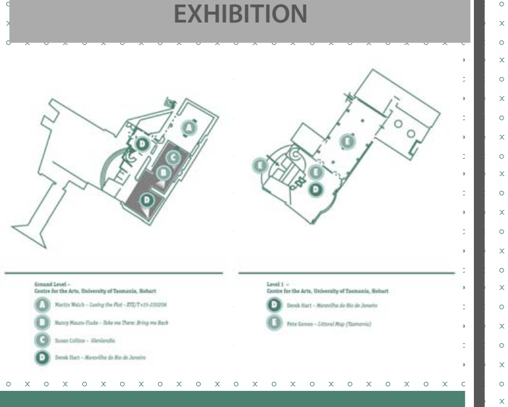
Finally, the exhibition scenography exerted its own contextual effects. In particular, the insertion of monitor and plinth in the central foyer of the Centre for the Arts, presenting the eerily suspended *favela* footage. was echoed by the viewer's experience of actually having ascended staircases from either the main public plaza or the lower gallery level.

In the context of these elements, the viewer must be prepared to be an active contributor to the work. First, this assumes an immediate participatory form in the viewer's mobility. Secondly, once each of the distinct instances of the work have been encountered, the viewer must be capable of reassembling these spatially separated instances into an aggregated narrative whole. Overall, the viewer's appreciation and understanding of the artist's conception were elaborated incrementally by every new encounter with each successive episodic component.

CURATORIAL DESIGN

[ARTIFACT – EXHIBITION – MUSEUM]

SPACES

ARTWORK	GALLERY	EXHIBITION
Artist: Derek Hart	**Site (1):** Plimsoll Gallery	
Artwork: *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro*	**Site (2):** Other: Plimsoll Gallery Foyer	
Description: Media: *Moving image, Video* Method: *Recorded, Gallery installation, Non-networked (standalone), Screened, Projected (frontal).*	**Site (3):** Other: Centre for the Arts Foyer	

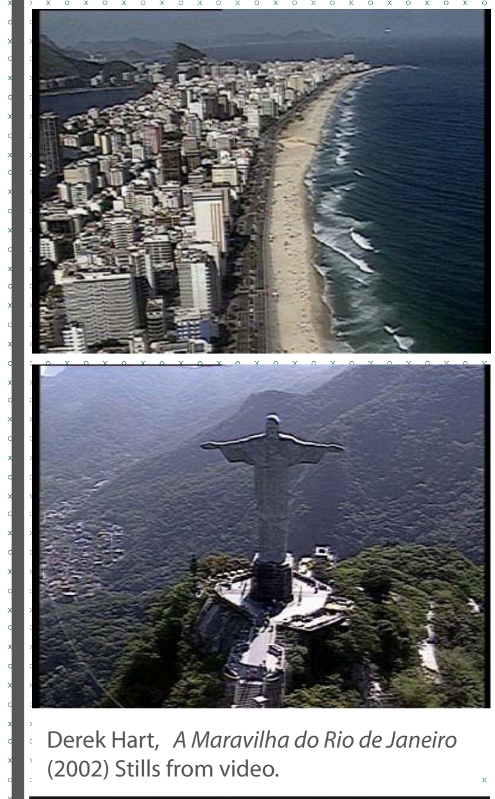
Ground Level – Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart
A Martin Walch – Losing the Plot – ZTD/T+15-220206
B Nancy Mauro-Flude – Take Me There: Bring Me Back
C Susan Collins – Glenlandia
D Derek Hart – Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro
Level 1 – Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart
D Derek Hart – Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro
E Pete Gomes – Littoral Map (Tasmania)

FACTORS

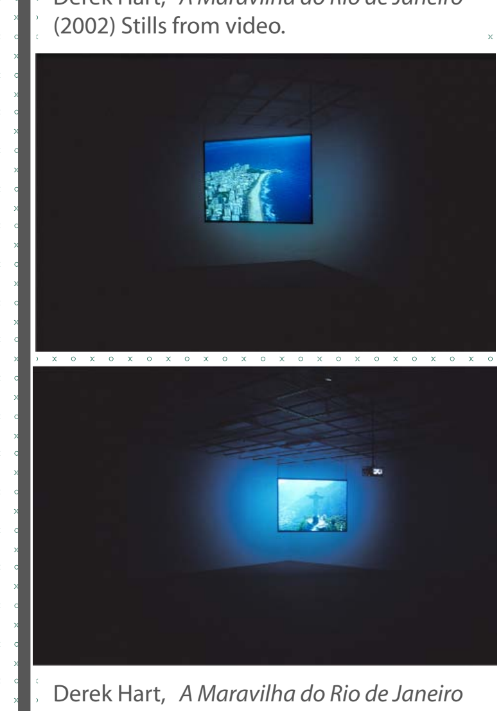
FORMAL

Formal Decisions:

Formal considerations related to determining methods of presentation for this screen-based artwork. Decisions involved the negotiation of projection in gallery space and determining effective presentation for monitor-based screening, which included choice of the appropriate type and "character"'of monitors and plinths used. The role of sound was also factored in to such considerations.



Derek Hart, *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* (2002) Stills from video.



Derek Hart, *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* (2006) Installation views; single channel video projection

ARCHITECTURAL

Architectural Considerations:

Given the multi-modal and distributed nature of the work, the architectural features of three separate and distinct environments were considered. For example, the positioning and relation of monitor-bound image to the wall operating as backdrop in the main foyer was addressed. Other design qualities and spatial functions similarly negotiated included the means of placing the monitor located adjacent to the main gallery entrance. The "black box" installation of the projected image took both aspect (relation of screen to room) and vantage (relation of image to viewer) of hanging projection screen into account.

The curatorial ambition intended to maximize the potential of each species of space (i.e. exhibition gallery, social spaces), Decisions were taken to exercise the potential of both controlled an uncontrolled environments.

Spatial Composition:

The "scenarios" along which each self-contained, iterative component would be encountered as the viewer moved between spaces were considered (i.e. entrance and exits; inside/outside gallery; upstairs/downstairs). Beyond predetermined viewing or sequential order, meaning was subjected to a more open reading or interpretation.

Representational Issues:

Curatorially, it was determined to frame the most "aesthetic" part of the work (projection of aerial footage), by presenting it in a manner (namely, onto a suspended screen situated in the centre of larger, empty cubic space) which utilized the preconditions of the gallery space itself to support its reading as a moving image artwork. This heightened "aestheticized" presentation was reinforced by its contrast with two other media pieces.

The inclusion of these works in unconventional, non-gallery spaces involved their display in manners associated with a more conventional, general form of public address or "info-tainment"' These works were tailored to take advantage of the characteristics of each respective space.

Sound was introduced as a purely atmospheric and emotive feature of the gallery-based work. In contrast, the monitor-bound works amplified narrative voice-over (implying the presentation of information) in one case, and as "noise", in the other.

DIALECTICAL

Dialectical Considerations:

The exhibition utilized both gallery and non-gallery codes. Works adapted themselves to a cross-section of available environments. As a result, *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* was transformed into a multi-modal, distributed artwork.

Museological and non-museological codes or conventions were utilized. These included heightening the auratic character of the gallery presentation of hovering projection in the potentially boundless, expansive darkness of gallery space. Didactic, informational supplementation was provided by including a monitor display presentated at entrance to the gallery, complete with sound (narration). This reinforced the boundary between "waiting" room and gallery space. An intrusive 'otherness' or "alien" quality was achieved by the insertion of monitor and plinth in the main foyer by blending the work into the architectural feature wall. As a result, contradictory readings resulted. Visual synergy was created between tumbling composition of *favela* district and repeatable character of brickwork. Disjunction of elements (virtual image, physical construction) was expressed by literally standing them apart.

Art and non-art codes were employed. This contrast is illustrated by contrasting the "black box" installation of new media artwork with display of media contents using familiar public communication systems.

Exhibition Design:

The spatial distribution of work operated as multi-dimensional montage. The combined effect of each individuated component's exposition contributed to an enhanced, cumulative reading of work. Connections between aspects were made across floor levels as well as through different, contrasting types of spaces.

Scenography:

Ascendance from the lower level to main foyer reinforced the presentation of *favela* footage.

The Portuguese voiceover that was an element of the work screening appropriated television footage, while untranslated was nonetheless immediately interpreted as enunciating a language associated with television infotainment. Prominently located at main gallery entrance, this presentation provided a disconcerting entrée to the exhibition. This quality was further reinforced by framing exhibition signage – which had been withdrawn to a recessed wall lining the internal gallery space – with the main entrance doorway.

The viewer's appreciation and greater understanding of the artist's conception were extended incrementally by each new encounter with successive episodic components. Taken together, these individual events comprise the total artwork.

CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

The redevelopment of this specific artwork as a multi-modal, distributed artwork can be appreciated as a means to direct and focus the exploration of networked spatial practice. Designed to explore the dimensionality of different places and times, *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro*'s hyper-linking and cross-referencing between separate but connected locales contributed to the transformation of the overall exhibition experience from its conventional installation in a distinct, enclosed, and clearly defined space. Instead by using the gallery itself more instrumentally to provide nodal meeting points in a wider network, the dispersed, inter-connected, and superimposed components are connected back to that space. The work promotes the mobility and agency of the viewer by linking distributed media contents and situates its narrative across the exhibition's wider ecosystem.

As broached in this short paper, the curatorial project *Remote* is indicative of the influence that the digital has had on matters involving curatorial design and the dimensioning of the exhibition form itself. Through the applied practice of curatorial design, and its concentration on the aggregative complex of relations that are synthesised by the exhibition form, these virtualities can be given material, media, or mediated expression.

ENDNOTES

(1) *Remote*. Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, 3-23 June 2006 (Artists: Susan Collins, Pete Gomes, Derek Hart, Nancy Mauro-Flude, Martin Walch; Curatorial Design and Locative Media: Vince Dziekan). The reader is directed to the exhibition website for additional information that will assist with contextualizing the remainder of this article: http://www.remoteexhibition.com/.

(2) Mixed reality (MR) commonly refers to the merging of real and virtual worlds to produce new environments and visualisations where physical and digital objects co-exist and interact in real time. Also referred to as augmented reality or augmented virtuality, the application of MR using display technologies, ranging from Cave Auromatic Virtual Environments (CAVE) and head-mounted displays through to hand-held computers, personal digital assistants (PDA), and mobile phones is becoming increasingly prevalent in the arts and entertainment industries (Source: Wikipedia < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed_reality/>). The term mixed reality is used here to draw attention to the curatorial intention of the exhibition to convolute the experience of real and virtual realities. This strategy involved the mixing of representational forms (such as real-time image transmissions and recorded photomedia) and spaces (utilizing both conventional, gallery-based installation and unconventional, site-specific locations) within the single exhibition.

(3) The reader is directed to Mieke Bal's broader cultural critique of modes of exposition involved in museums found in Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

(4) Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art – Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

(5) Boris Groys, "The Mimesis of Thinking," in *Open Systems, Rethinking Art c.1970* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 52.

(6) Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art – Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2.

(7) Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 154, emphasis added.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site-Specificity," *October 80* (1997): 88.

(10) Kwon, 95.

(11) Darren Tofts, " & beyond: anticipating distributed aesthetics," *Fibreculture Journal*, Distributed Aesthetics, no. 7 (2005), <http://www.fibreculture.org/> unpaginated source.

(12) Tofts, unpaginated source.

(13) In a contemporary context, Nicolas Bourriaud's "relational aesthetics" outlines a critical program for post-object art. As will be discussed in this paper, the artwork produced by Derek Hart for *Remote* exhibits characteristics associated with relational aesthetics. In addition, Pete Gomes' artwork *Littoral Map* is also indicative of such an approach translated through artistic production.

(14) Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (France: les presses du reel, 2002).

(15) Anna Munster & Geert Lovink, "Theses on Distributed Aesthetics. Or, What a Network is Not," *Fibreculture Journal*, Distributed Aesthetics, no. 7 (2005), <http://www.fibreculture.org/> unpaginated source.

(16) Mark Meadows, *Pause & Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative* (Indianapolis: New Riders, 2003), 174.

(17) Derek Hart is an English artist currently based in Hobart, Tasmania. *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* was directly inspired from his experience of living in Brazil. The author acknowledges the artist's invaluable insights into his creative process part of the initial collaborative development of the artwork for the exhibition itself and subsequently in the preparation of this text. Biographic information and artist statement related to this work is available as part of the exhibition website: http://www.remoteexhibition.com/artists/derek-hart/

(18) *Favelas* are Brazilian slums or shanty towns. A number of infamous *favelas* exist in Rio de Janeiro, even though the city itself does not legally recognize their existense. The artist's decision to present footage captured while flying over a *favela* during the filmed reenactment of *A Maravilha do Rio de Janeiro* (which involved the filming of the most popular, iconic and picturesque locations of Rio) introduces a form of social commentary to the work

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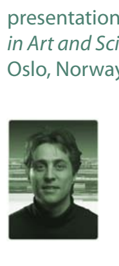
Vince Dziekan (Senior Lecturer and Deputy Head, Multimedia & Digital Arts) acknowledges his affiliation with Monash University, Faculty of Art & Design and the institutional support given to this research.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Vince Dziekan is Senior Lecturer in Digital Imaging, and Deputy Head, Multimedia & Digital Art at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. His current focus on curatorial design forms part of an ongoing interdisciplinary project negotiating the impact of digital technologies on curatorial practices and the implications of virtuality on the art of exhibition. Additionally, he is involved in current ARC (Australian Research Commission) projects with the SC::PE Photomedia Research Cluster at Monash University, and with The Omnium Project (University of New South Wales), including co-convening the Omnium Research Network. He has published in peer-reviewed journals, refereed conferences nationally and internationally, and recently delivered a keynote presentation at *NODEM 06 Digital Interpretation in Art and Science Museums and Heritage Sites* in Oslo, Norway.



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