

Aesthetics: A Place I've Never Seen

L'oeuvre d'art, pour ceux qui en ont l'usage, est une entreprise de décadage, de rupture de sens, de prolifération baroque ou d'appauvrissement extrême, qui entraîne le sujet vers une récréation et une réinvention de lui-même.

Félix Guattari, 1992, 181¹

The white walls of the gallery become the page that must be read with both hands, if not the whole body's caress.

Mathew Jones, 1993

DELEUZE AND GUATTARI'S ETHICO-AESTHETIC PARADIGM

In his final work, *Chaosmose* (*Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*), Félix Guattari suggests that aesthetics might occupy a privileged position for a radical ethics in our *fin de millénaire*.² In principle, aesthetics has no more transformative power than philosophical thought, scientific knowledge or political action, but for Guattari it highlights a creative process necessary for ethical activity in all of these fields. It highlights an ethic of experimentation that can free us from the "fogs and miasmas" which obscure the creative possibilities of the future. Art, as such, does not have a monopoly on creativity. Guattari is not referring to institutionalized art but to an artistry or "puissance d'émergence" ("power of emergence") which traverses all domains (1992, 142/1995, 102). In short, his ethic is the creative production of the new. Consequently, his writing moves quite freely between poetry, psychotherapy, economics and ecology, fashioning new modes of practice and different ways of thinking.

This transversal conception of aesthetics is particularly obvious in Guattari's collaborations with Deleuze, where the movement of animals is discussed alongside the rhythms of writers and musicians, or where the behavioural patterns of

1 "The work of art, for those who use it, is an activity of unframing, of rupturing sense, of baroque proliferation or extreme impoverishment which leads to a recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself" (1995, 131).

2 I would like to thank Melissa McMahon for her thoughtful comments and suggestions on this paper and her assistance with French translations.

sub-atomic particles has no more or less significance than a film plot. In their separate vocations, as psychiatrist and teacher, similar assemblages of creativity emerge. At La Borde, the psychiatric clinic which Guattari helped establish in 1953 and where he worked until his death in 1992, functional roles were created throughout the day's activities, rather than determined in the context of the analyst's couch: "La cuisine devient alors une petite scène d'opéra: on y parle, on y danse, on y joue de toutes sortes d'instruments, de l'eau et du feu, de la pâte à tarte et des poubelles, des rapports de prestige et de soumission" ("The kitchen then becomes a little opera scene: in it people talk, dance and play with all kinds of instruments, with water and fire, dough and dustbins, relations of prestige and submission") (1992, 99-100/1995, 69). The seminar conducted by Deleuze at Vincennes in the early seventies was equally informal and experimental. With frequent questions and interruptions, discussions "would range from Spinoza to modern music, from Chinese metallurgy to bird-song, from linguistics to gang warfare.... The rhizome would grow" (Deleuze and Parnet xii, Translator's Introduction).³ Artistry, in this general sense, is concerned with creating new modes of existence.

Like many French philosophers, Guattari and Deleuze have also written specifically about fine art. Guattari has published articles and reviews on single artists and on the state of cinema, literature and the plastic arts. Deleuze has written major studies on the painting of Francis Bacon, the art and architecture of the Baroque, the history of cinema, and the literature of Marcel Proust, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, and Lewis Carroll. Deleuze and Guattari's small collaborative study on Franz Kafka specifically addresses issues of interpretation and expression in literature, and their larger collaborations include lengthy discussions of art and artists of all types. There is also a tendency, moreover, to make passing reference to an extensive range of painters, musicians, architects and film makers as they weave their creative rhizomes. Yet despite these transversal assemblages, which might seem to diminish the fine arts within a broader project, Deleuze and Guattari do not simply let the concept of "art" dissolve into an undifferentiated amalgam with other practices. In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (*What Is Philosophy?*) they demonstrate that art, philosophy, and science have different objectives and different limits which makes them irreducible to each other. While philosophy is concerned with the form of concepts, and science with the function of knowledge, art is concerned with the force of sensation (1994, 216/1991, 204). Which is to say, *thought* is not co-extensive with *knowledge*: philosophy thinks with concepts, science thinks with functions, and art *thinks* with sensations. These different planes of practice interfere with each

other, producing frames and interfaces which connect them. For example, philosophers create concepts of sensation, just as artists create pure sensations of concepts (as in the work of certain abstract painters like Mondrian and Malevich). But art does not *need* concepts in order to think. In other words, an artist can take a concept from philosophy, but only on the condition that it is recreated as a sensation. Painters think in terms of colours and lines, musicians think in terms of sounds and rhythms, sculptors think in terms of volumes and textures. When an art object uses a concept of philosophy or a function of science to prop itself up, it unnecessarily subordinates itself to another plane of activity. The artist's essential task is to create blocks of sensation, and "la seule loi de la création, c'est que le composé doit tenir tout seul" ("the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own") (1990, 155/1995, 164).

The emphasis that Deleuze and Guattari place on the autonomy of art often sounds quite conservative to those of us who associate this with the aesthetic idealism of late modernism, but at the genesis of modern aesthetics, the theory of art's autonomy has a more complicated dynamic. When eighteenth-century German philosophers such as Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant, and Friedrich Schiller began using the term "aesthetic" to designate a specifically artistic quality, they were moving away from the tendency in enlightenment thought to rationalize all of nature.⁴ Questions of aesthetics are separated from questions of epistemology (or aesthetics is given its *own* truth as in Baumgarten) so that the specificity of the beautiful in nature and art can be recognized. In other words, these philosophers were thinking of how art could stand up by itself. The philosophical consideration of art's autonomy at this point in history brings with it a number of basic changes in the understanding of high culture, which heralds a truly modern conception of art.⁵ In pre-modern societies the arts belong to *tradition*, that is to say, they are fixed memories of exemplary deeds and accomplishments. With the development of modern societies the arts are divorced from a direct embeddedness in definite social functions and contextualized as valuable cultural commodities worthy of accumulation in themselves.

4 Baumgarten initiated the use of the term "aesthetics" in this way. He goes beyond the previous use of the term "aesthetics" to designate the realm of sense perception towards its use in relation to artistic considerations by designating as "aesthetic truths" the non-conceptual appreciation we have of individuals, as opposed to "logical truths" which understand objects conceptually, but only at the expense of their individuality. The feeling of beauty is the paradigmatic form of "aesthetic" truth; see his *Aesthetica*. Also see Kant's footnote to Baumgarten in *Critique of Pure Reason* (66-67).

5 In this sense Kant is extending the modern conception of philosophy inaugurated by Descartes into the consideration of art. With modern or so-called Christian Philosophy ("Il n'y a même plus besoin d'un centre transcendant de pouvoir" ["There is no longer even a need for a transcendent centre of power"]) (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 162/1988, 129-30).

3 Deleuze reflects on the Vincennes class room in similar terms (1990, 190-91/1995, 139).

Deleuze also provides an explanation of his philosophy of teaching in *Vincennes ou le désir d'apprendre* (120-21).

Moreover, *novelty* becomes a constitutive requirement for cultural production. In other words, a demand for originality in modern art replaces the respect for origins in pre-modern art. But the aspect which is particularly relevant to an understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's ethico-aesthetics is the modern value of *autonomy*.

It is simplistic to reduce the notion of artistic autonomy to later modernist theories of *ars gratia artis* or self-referential formalism. The autonomy of aesthetic pleasure, which lies at the heart of the modernist crisis in culture, does not necessarily deny sociological or psychological factors, but it recognizes that the aesthetic is not just a derivative of such extraneous functions. This is helpful in appreciating Deleuze and Guattari's frequent attention to modernists such as Paul Klee, Jackson Pollock, Claude Debussy, and Samuel Beckett, who create abstract languages that have a certain autonomy from representational systems of reference. In these artists Deleuze and Guattari observe an engagement with the "new" as something which is essentially disruptive, rather than a desire for transcendence and aesthetic idealism.⁶ Furthermore, the disruption that they pose for Deleuze and Guattari is not explained in terms of a logical critique or subversion of tradition. Deleuze and Guattari clearly have no interest in participating in, or even reacting against, the avant-garde notion of dialectical Hegelian "progress" which is frequently used to contextualize the project of modernist abstraction. For Deleuze and Guattari the "new" is not simply the negation of something already known, but an encounter with something unthought. In order to understand how Deleuze and Guattari use this modernist notion of aesthetic abstraction, to treat art as both autonomous from other modes of thought and yet linked to a general power of emergence in all fields, I want first to briefly consider how Deleuze's theory of art might be related to Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.

As Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam write in their translators' Introduction to Deleuze's 1963 study on Kant, "It is difficult to think of two philosophers more apparently opposite than old Immanuel Kant, 'the great Chinaman of Königsberg,' and Gilles Deleuze, the Parisian artist of nomadic intensities" (Deleuze 1984, xv). Reflecting on the book ten years after its publication, Deleuze explains that it was a "book about an enemy" but Deleuze does not react or rebel against his enemy, he learns to love him even if it requires "all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that [he] really enjoyed" ("je l'ai fait comme un livre sur un ennemi ... il fallait

6 Deleuze's interpretation of artistic abstraction as a-signifying rather than transcendent is brought out quite clearly in his discussion of Christian art in *Logique du sens*: by depicting God in Christ, painters gave form a certain autonomy from an ideal order, planting the seeds of modern abstraction, "un germe d'athéisme tranquille" ("the germ of a tranquil atheism") (218-19/80). On this point also see Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 178-79.

passer par toutes sortes de décentrement, glissements, cassements, émissions secrètes qui m'ont fait bien plaisir") (1990, 14-15/1995, 6). In this sense, Deleuze is quite a traditional philosopher because he sees rich possibilities for opening up the past and finding loose threads in the fabric of philosophers who have been hemmed in by history.⁷ This critical approach is not a deconstruction of Kant as much as a willingness to encounter Kant and connect with him in a joyful or productive way. It amounts to a Nietzschean ethic of affirmation. The slave fears the past and asserts himself by reacting against it, treating it as a master discourse that must be negated. "This inversion of the value-positing eye," Nietzsche explains, "is of the essence of resentment: in order to exist, the slave morality always first needs a hostile external world" 1967, 39) Deleuze, on the contrary, subscribes to Nietzsche's master morality: "he can endure no other enemy than one in whom there is nothing to despise and very much to honor!" (Nietzsche 1967, 39). Deleuze's survey of Kant's three Critiques provides a clear explanation of the essential themes, a sensitivity to the problems which are being pursued, and an ability to extend Kant's concepts in a creative way.⁸ But we can draw out the aesthetic component in Kant's work more specifically by way of an observation that Deleuze makes in *La Logique du sens* (*The Logic of Sense*): "L'esthétique souffre d'une dualité déchirante. Elle désigne d'une part la théorie de la sensibilité comme forme de l'expérience possible; d'autre part la théorie de l'art comme réflexion de l'expérience réelle" ("Aesthetics suffers from a wrenching duality. On the one hand, it designates the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience; on the other hand, it designates the theory of art as the reflection of real experience") (1969, 300/1990, 260).⁹ Kant's theory of experience defines the term "aesthetic" in two distinct ways. In "The Transcendental Aesthetic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "aesthetics" refers to a science of sensibility or sense perception. In this context Kant deals with the possibility of experiencing sensible objects, and more specifically with how these are given to the subject in the *a priori* forms of spatial extension and temporal duration. The human capacity for sensation is defined as purely receptive or passive, and

7 Deleuze cites Hegel, a thinker who relentlessly hems in history, as the one philosopher too detestable for this treatment (1990, 14/1995, 6). For a discussion of Deleuze's ethic of affirmation and its implicit critique of Hegel, see Hardt: "we can see why Deleuze might choose not to address Hegel's master-slave dialectic directly, because the entire discussion is directed toward self-consciousness, toward interiority, a condition antithetical to joy and affirmation" (42).

8 In *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, published the year before *La Philosophie critique de Kant*, Deleuze assumes a more critical tone in relation to Kant. Given the subsequent importance of Kant to Deleuze's elaboration of a transcendental empiricism, I take his reproach of Kantianism in this earlier context to be an expression of Deleuze's desire to affirm and even identify with Nietzsche's voice in the process of writing a book on Nietzsche.

9 Deleuze writes about this same dualism in *Différence et répétition* (79-80/56-57, 68).

all experience can be anticipated as conforming to their *a priori* conditions of possibility.

In the *Critique of Judgement*, on the other hand, "aesthetics" refers to the faculty of judgement whose domain is feelings of pleasure and displeasure, not as conditions of possible experience but in order to respond to the variations of *real* experience that cannot be anticipated by conditions of possibility. This latter type of experience is discussed in relation to the appreciation of art, or more generally, to judgements of beauty and the sublime in both art and nature. Kant describes such aesthetic experiences as "disinterested" because there is no theoretical or practical interest in the object.

Deleuze argues that these two aspects of the aesthetic need to be reunited in some way, so that a science of the sensible can account for the conditions of real experience. It is the *real* that must be accounted for by metaphysics. This involves reconfiguring Kant's philosophical project so that the transcendental conditions become immanent to the real. They cannot be understood as if from the outside, as Kant attempted to do, nor are they directly accessible to experience or reducible to it. Deleuze argues that transcendental conditions must be experienced in the real events that they give rise to, though these conditions never actually appear in their totality, precisely because they have no actual totality. In this scheme of things, the higher form of aesthetic experience is continually diagrammed by the repetition of encounters with the real. Art works themselves become explorations of this transcendental realm of sensibility. In his early work Deleuze refers to this orientation in his philosophy as a "transcendental empiricism," and although Guattari uses different terminology, it is also this experimental dynamic that is outlined in his ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

Deleuze summarizes his aesthetic project with the following imperative: "Pour que les deux sens se rejoignent, il faut que les conditions de l'expérience en général deviennent elles-mêmes conditions de l'expérience réelle; l'œuvre d'art, de son côté, apparaît alors réellement comme expérimentation" ("The conditions of experience in general must become conditions of real experience; in this case the work of art would really appear as experimentation") (1969, 300/1990, 260). If we are only concerned with the conditions of possible experience, all experiences are predictable to some extent because they are always in the *a priori* coordinates of space and time. If, on the other hand, we refuse to consider conditions as determining what is possible, then the real becomes an arena for experimentation. This experimental dynamic is glimpsed, if not fully developed, in Kant's attempt to describe how aesthetic judgements are not regulated by one faculty or another but are brought into play by a free and unregulated operation of the faculties.

It is this possibility of a disjunctive use of the faculties that Deleuze extends, so that the critical project of metaphysics becomes a process of negotiation and invention rather than one of common principles. In the first two Critiques the

relationship between the different faculties is determined by one of those faculties: understanding legislates in the theoretical interests of knowledge (*Critique of Pure Reason*) and reason legislates in the practical interests of desire (*Critique of Practical Reason*). In the *Critique of Judgement*, however, there is a free and indeterminate accord of the faculties. In its presentations of feelings of pleasure and displeasure, aesthetic judgement only expresses a relationship between the faculties, it refers only to itself. It is at this point that Kant's metaphysical system begins to resemble the Deleuzian schema of ideas or concepts being developed from within a distribution of singularities.

Kant argues that the only pure judgements of taste are those which formally exhibit what he calls "free beauty" (1987, 76). His examples of free beauty include sea shells, flowers, linear ornament *à la grecque*, crystals and bird song. These instances are "free" because their form of beauty is independent of any interest we might have in them, and independent of any definite concept which might determine what the thing ought to be. Having disallowed its sources of subjective and objective determination, Kant argues that the judgement of beauty finds its coherence in the play of "shape," "composition," or "design" (71-72).

Melissa McMahon has given an analysis of Kant's account of the beautiful which brings it close to a Deleuzo-Guattarian conception of the aesthetic, and which I would like to draw on here. As McMahon argues, the "play" of the faculties in relation to the formal qualities of the aesthetic presentation open them both out as a "process" or "tendency," independent of its product of producer, subject or object (5).¹⁰ It is here, in Kant's attempt to elaborate a tendency or process in artistic form, that he prefigures the dynamic of aesthetic experimentation which Deleuze and Guattari delineate as an assemblage of percepts and affects. In order to demonstrate the significance of this dynamic in Kant's modern aesthetic, we need to be clear about what he means by formal qualities. Kant does not consider the stiff regularity of geometric shapes, nor the functional symmetry of organic forms as constituting beautiful presentations (1987, 91-95). Kant suggests that such forms are ultimately boring. They suggest a determinate concept which regulates their composition, making them static or else uniform in their movement. In the case of a square, a circle or a cube, for example, a mathematical measurement defines its coherence. With an organic form, which is to say any part that is organized within a whole, the thing is accompanied by an idea of its functional purpose which allows us to cognize all the parts in their systemic combination. To consider form rather as a dynamic play, with no conceptual resolution, would be to understand it as a perpetual self-preserving instability. In this sense, Kant's "beautiful form" approximates a Deleuzian notion of difference because it is endowed with an *internal* difference; difference which differentiates itself and affirms its difference without negation. Drawing

¹⁰ Also see McMahon in this volume.

out this point of convergence with Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, McMahon explains that there is "a paradox in the presentation of the beautiful, as the absence of a determinate concept entails both its singularity and its repeatability" (5). The beautiful's singularity means that it has an internal coherence which cannot be assessed in terms of a transcendent concept. We cannot, for instance, isolate something in the art work as inessential or superfluous by applying external criteria. The beautiful, as Deleuze says of the cinema, "is always as perfect as it can be" (1986, x; Preface to the English edition).¹¹ But the absence of a determinate concept also gives rise to an infinite succession of incomplete determinations. We do not know what an art work can do in advance because, unlike an organic thing, the beautiful brings into play all manner of things, contracting them in its own way.

This repeatable singularity of the art work brings us back to the conception of aesthetics developed in Deleuze and Guattari's paradoxical treatment of art and artistry. The singularity of art means that it stands up on its own and does not need to be propped up by science or philosophy, but it also opens it up to endless connections with other practices, including philosophy and science. The political import of these principles is pointed to quite clearly when Deleuze elaborates them in his 1962 study, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*). Deleuze explains that Nietzsche's "tragic conception of art" rests on two notions: firstly, an art work raises a world of artifice or objecthood, that is to say, it is a superficial body without a higher essence; and secondly, art excites an affectivity, or what Nietzsche calls a "will to power," which maximizes the desire to overcome the organism and unfold subjectivity in material expression (1970, 116-17/1983, 102-03). Or to put this another way, art has the power to recreate both the objective world and subjectivity in an ongoing dynamic of experimentation.

Throughout Deleuze and Guattari's writing on fine art, "artistry" is not circumscribed by the artist's studio or the museum. Deleuze and Guattari seek out and develop an aestheticism in all spheres of life. But with a certain amount of clarity, art itself discloses the procedures that will allow new subjectivities and "existential Territories" to be created in the coming millennium (Guattari 1992, 137-63/1995, 98-118). In the section that follows, I explore the transformative political power of art's autonomy, as it is elaborated in Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual assemblage of percepts and affects, by considering an installation project by the Australian artist and gay activist Mathew Jones. In other words, my research on Jones is introduced as an evaluator of Deleuze and Guattari's

artistic vitalism, prolonging their theory of aesthetics in order to spread out a conceptual plane for art-writing.

THE BEAUTIFUL BODY OF ACTIVIST ART

Mathew Jones has a reputation for withdrawing. In the face of activists who call for an audible gay voice he celebrates the elusive silences of homosexuality. At public lectures he retreats from the opportunity to speak, sending someone else to read his paper. And in artist's statements he often distances himself from the work, as if to avoid the role of authorial interpreter. Jones's critics have construed this "pulling out" as an act of arrogance or cool indifference (e.g., see Phillips and Baranowska), but it is much more complicated and perilous than that. Rather than establishing a safe distance, the withdrawal creates a turbulence in its wake. Twists and folds of matter are drawn out along the movement of bodies and this instability complicates any clear division between subject and object, speaker and audience, artist and art work, or active and passive roles. As Jones explains, "pulling out before cumming is not as safe as it looks" (1992). Jones's peculiar form of activism is generated around installation practices which evoke movements and sensual dynamics. By withdrawing from the scene, he leaves behind an art work that has a life of its own. It does not simply illustrate a pre-existing idea or intention, and it is not a static object designed for our passive contemplation. The art work stands up on its own and assembles itself in relation to the encounters that the installation-event precipitates. It is a body of sensation.

In a range of projects Jones has worked with different types of gay bodies: the ACT UP activist, the AIDS "victim," the dual-income-no-kids consumer. And in various ways he introduces the sensual dynamism of his style to these different corporealities. The project that I want to concentrate on in this study is an installation called *A Place I've Never Seen*, which revolves around the "erotic" body of gay pornography. To date, *A Place I've Never Seen* has been reworked and installed on five occasions, in four different countries.¹² A number of elements have changed in these successive displays, including the materials, the scale, and the composition itself, but the basis of each installation is a large braille text running around the wall of a gallery space, which describes a photograph of gay anal sex. Although this work is primarily about the "erotic" body of pornography, Jones traces the genealogy of *A Place I've Never Seen*

12. Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, February 1993; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, São Paulo, October-December 1994; Ace Art, Winnipeg, January-February 1995; Toronto Photographer's Workshop, Toronto, September-October 1995; The Clocktower, Studio 11, New York, December-April 1995 (under the title "Pornograph").

11. It should be noted that Kant defines the term "perfection" in a different way from Deleuze, using it to describe the geometric or organic unity which prevents the emergence of "beautiful form."

back to 1990,¹³ when he participated in an AIDS education survey. This survey and the subsequent education campaign posed the problems that were eventually addressed in 1992 by Jones's first braille installation, *To Be Illiterate Is to Be Blind* (Room 4, Linden Gallery, Melbourne, April-May 1992.)

Unlike *A Place I've Never Seen*, which is accompanied by a reproduction of the braille alphabet, the only introduction Jones offers for *To Be Illiterate Is to Be Blind* is an artist's statement discussing the relationship between two posters: an ACON (the AIDS Council of New South Wales) safe-sex poster and a USSR literacy poster. Both posters carry a very similar picture of a blindfolded man walking off a cliff. Jones became aware of this image when ACON used it in 1990 with the caption, "Pulling out before cumming is not as safe as it looks." This was part of an educational campaign which responded to a study "examining the thought processes that enable gay men to decide to have unsafe sex in a given sexual encounter" (Gold 3). The aim of this particular poster was to counter what was found to be a widely held misconception among gay men that withdrawal ensured safe sex. At a later date Jones discovered that the image used on ACON's poster was originally designed in the early 1920s by A. Radakov, and circulated in the context of revolutionary Russia with the slogan, "To be illiterate is to be blind: on all sides lurk failure and unhappiness." Jones's approach to the two posters is characterized by uncertainty. What does a blindfolded man walking off a cliff have to do with anal intercourse? Why did ACON appropriate an image from a USSR literacy poster? And why does being blindfolded make you illiterate? Or more generally, a problem which runs through a number of Jones's projects: what does representation have to do with desire? For Jones it is exactly this uncertainty — the indeterminacy of his desire's relationship with representation — that is being denied by these propaganda posters. ACON's intention is to create boundaries which educate and organize gay desire. Both posters call for scopophilic certitude concerning the limits of safety; to feel your way is to fail. Rather than anxiously acting against the uncertainty of the body, Jones reclaims tactility as a process to live by. He says, "put me on the other side of safe, dancing the chocolate cha-cha in the places that don't get a look-in" (1992).

The installation which responds to the artist's statement consists of a strip of nodules and coloured dots that run around one corner of the room at eye level. This band of blotches is the complication of two discourses, one visual and the other tactile. The swarm of yellow-orange and purple-grey dots corresponds with the types of visual charts used to test for colour blindness. And the raised nodules are the embossed language of braille, communicating the ironic message to those who read through touch that, "to be illiterate is to be blind — like love." The multitude of coloured dots confuses the systematic pattern of the braille, concealing the tactile message from those who privilege sight. And the optical

13 Jones traces this genealogy in his artist's statement for the exhibition in Toronto.

text only conveys the redundancy of vision anyway, because the purple-grey dots don't make up a hidden message as they would in regular colour blindness charts. The eyes fail gallery-goers who keep their hands in their pockets: stop it or you'll go blind! Appearing like a rash on the gallery wall, this is a text of corporeal indeterminacy. Meaning has to be constructed at close range, where borders and limits are always being undone by bodies that do not know where they stand or how they should feel.

In retrospect, *To Be Illiterate Is to Be Blind* can be seen as a rehearsal for *A Place I've Never Seen*. Extending the formal composition of the first braille installation, *A Place I've Never Seen* explores the indeterminate relationship of desire and representation by introducing tactile movement to gay pornography. The main formal modification in *A Place I've Never Seen* is to discard colour and use black-white tonal variation to complicate the message of the braille text. Appearing like the cross-section of a molecular substratum, the twelve centimetre high strip opens up a chaotic multiplicity along the gallery's imaginary horizon line. In fact it is a horizon line that no longer delimits distance or perspective, ground or background. It constitutes what Deleuze and Guattari, after Aloïs Riegl, call haptic-vision: "Haptique est un meilleur mot que tactile, puisqu'il n'oppose pas deux organes des sens, mais laisse supposer que l'œil peut lui-même avoir cette fonction qui n'est pas optique" ("it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs but rather invites the assumption that the eye itself may fulfill this nonoptical function") (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 614/1988, 492). Or to put this another way, the space opened by the image is "fascinating," in the sense that Blanchot writes about a depthless depth which we experience with a certain proximity but no measurable distance: "Mais qu'arrive-t-il quand ce qu'on voit, quoique à distance, semble vous toucher par un contact saisissant, quand la manière de voir est une sorte de touche, quand voir est un contact à distance?" ("But what happens when what one sees, although at a distance, seems to touch you in a seizing contact, when the way of seeing is a sort of touch, when to see is a contact at a distance?") (28/23). Some of the swarming spheres are raised nodules protruding into the space of the gallery, but they jostle with photographic and computer generated orbs which seem to reveal an illusionistic space beyond the room's existential coordinates.¹⁴ A booklet, posing as the exhibition catalogue, gives us a way into this fascinating band of activity by reproducing a copy of the braille alphabet and introducing the raised

14 In the first version, at the Australian Centre for Photography, the two dimensional dots are photogrammed hemispheres and the raised dots are plaster domes stuck to the surface of the photographic paper. Jones then digitalizes a cropped panoramic photograph of the first installation, and builds up the congestion of spheres with a computer graphics program to create a fifteen foot refrain that can be playprinted to the necessary length as the background for subsequent shows. In these later shows the plaster dots are replaced by polystyrene spheres of various dimensions.

nodules as the embossed language of the blind.¹⁵ So with the directions in one hand and groping the wall with the other, "viewers" are encouraged to actively insert themselves in the installation. But the decoded text complicates our sense of depth further, with irregular pronouns and a description which has no apparent beginning and end as it circles the circumference of the room. In a roundabout fashion, it evokes a sensation that is unphotographable, unrepresentable — passive anal sex.¹⁶ "this photograph you can't see his cock rammed huge hard lost in a place I've never seen, distended, wet with cum, the kid's thick white cream spewing hot and just their churning nuts bouncing that dude all the way to the root shooting."¹⁷

Jones maintains that this work is pornographic because it is designed to be sexually stimulating, but it deserves to be portrayed differently given that it avoids the simplicity of most pornography. Following Deleuze, we could call it "pornology" because instead of ordering and describing sexual activity, it explores how desire and representation work. It is still "porn" in that it still excites the body, but in such a way that interacting with the image itself becomes stimulating. We need to be clear with our definitions here because pornography is defined very differently by liberals, the moral right, and amongst feminists. Deleuze's understanding of pornography is associated with the feminist observation that certain forms of representation violently simplify the world and encourage the viewer to act in accordance. As Deleuze explains, pornography exists to be grasped readily; everything is "reduced to a few imperatives (do this, do that) followed by obscene descriptions" ("On appelle littérature pornographique une littérature réduite à quelques mots d'ordre (fais ceci, cela...), suivis de descriptions obscènes") (*1989b*, 17/1967, 17). Deleuze puts forward the idea of a pornography in order to recuperate the images of sex and violence that are

15 The braille alphabet catalogue accompanied the first installation of the work in Sydney and the Toronto exhibition. In the New York installation the braille alphabet was stamped onto tissues that were strewn around the room. In other manifestations of this work no decoding key was offered to people who do not read braille.

16 It is unrepresentable in the sense that it does not conform to a concept that creates a distinction between subject, image and object — a concept of representation.

17 The description itself varies, partly to suit the length of the installation and the local language. Sydney: "this photograph of my lover's cock lost in a place I've never seen this photo of his arse of mine distended by cock wet with cum you can't see." São Paulo: "perdido nesta fotografia você não pode ver o pau dele perdido em um lugar que nunca vi distendido pelo pau úmido de porra este meu cú você não pode ver esta fotografia." Winnipeg: "lost in this photograph you cant see his cock lost in a place Ive never seen distended by cock wet with cum this arse of mine you cant see this photograph" (no punctuation). New York: "a photograph, up real close, or some guy's ass with some other cock up it, distended, wet with cum, unspeakable and lost to the logic of vision, half a hand cropped by a column of text, also meant to excite the body, drags across the skin raising pimply lumps." Toronto: quoted in the body of my text.

found in the writings of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and the Marquis de Sade. He argues that pornology produces an internal splitting of language such that it no longer functions to relate the reader to the world in a rudimentary way. "[I] est bien vrai que la littérature pornologique se propose avant tout de mettre le langage en rapport avec se propre limite, avec une sorte de 'non-langage' (la violence qui ne parle pas, l'érotisme dont on ne parle pas)" ("[It is] aimed above all at confronting language with its own limits, with what is in a sense a 'non-language' (violence that does not speak, eroticism that remains unspoken)") (22/22).

Critics of visual pornography who take their lead from Laura Mulvey's analysis of visual pleasure rely on the model of a scopophilic male-voyeur in command of the woman-objects being represented. The voyeur is said to internalize or conform to this abstract structure and then project it onto women in other contexts: pornography is theory, rape is practice. Mulvey explains that this voyeuristic relationship is constructed by disavowing both "the material existence of the recording process [and] the critical reading of the spectator ... in order to create a convincing world in which the spectator's surrogate can perform with verisimilitude" (18). Jones's installation challenges these pornographic conventions because it refers to its material construction and the movement of readers who cross its surface. The unsafe sex scene found in the text communicates Jones's desires, but it cannot be taken as a personal imperative by the reader because its complexity returns the audience to the act of decoding the braille rather than the act of conforming to its description. In other words, the material recording process complicates a voyeuristic relationship with gay sex. The first generation of gay activists could embrace homosexual porn as an act of rebellion. As Ethan Morden explains, "in the first days of Stonewall porn promised to be the most immediate source of gay independence, symbolically the unique defiance" (78). Jones, however, belongs to a generation that is more cautious of how gay culture is simplified and objectified by AIDS-related imagery, the clichés of the entertainment industry, and the postmodern taste for freak show perversity. Jones expresses gay desire as something that needs to make its presence felt without offering itself up as a spectacle.

The instrumental form of the catalogue, and the systematic pattern of the braille, suggest the need to interpret and analyze the installation. Jones notes how people move back and forth searching for the dirty bits, as if trying to dissect the bodies in the photograph (personal correspondence, May 13, 1993). In the end though, the work moves beyond this function and becomes sensuous in itself. Rather than impersonally objectifying something else, the text frustrates the pornographic desire for simple relationships with the world. The irregular use of possessive pronouns confuses subject positions, and the text begins and ends at the same place in the installation, leaving us to continually search for linguistic clarity. The audience is forced to stumble over their reading process. Orientations

are confused so that looking, touching, and reading correspond with a disjunctive body, trying to construct itself around the paradoxes of gay erotics.

As Nietzsche argues, art excites activity and "arouses the will," it therefore needs to be defined in terms of artists and creators rather than recipients (1967, 103-06). Perception is not passive recording, but enhancement and consecration. Traditional visual analyzes negate the movement involved in an interaction with porn, so that the meaning of the image can be derived from a pre-constituted subject structure. Jones withdraws from the clarity demanded by this type of pornography. His withdrawal does not enact the "cum shot" as a climactic moment when everything is visible; the moment when the spectacle of ejaculation measures out one body as active and the other as passive. Jones's withdrawal produces an image which is more like a sticky splotch that lubricates, but is also inseparable from the fluctuating contours of interacting bodies. The "sticky splotch" of *A Place I've Never Seen*, alongside the previous discussion of Kant's beautiful form, allows us to draw out the political dynamism of Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage of percepts and affects.

PERCEPTS AND AFFECTS

In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the sole definition of art is composition. And like Kant, citing bird song and the eccentric forms of "nature" as examples of beautiful form, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that perhaps the essence of art is given to us in the habitats carved out by animals.

Le *Scenopoietes dentirostris*, oiseau des forêts pluvieuses d'Australie, fait tomber de l'arbre les feuilles qu'il a coupées chaque matin, les retourne pour que leur face interne plus pâle contraste avec la terre, se construit ainsi une scène comme un ready-made, et chante juste au-dessus, sur une liane ou un rameau, d'un chant complexe composé de ses propres notes et de celles d'autres oiseaux qu'il imite dans les intervalles, tout en dégageant la racine jaune de plumes sous son bec: c'est un artiste complet. (174)

Every morning the *Scenopoietes dentirostris*, a bird of the Australian rain forest, cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler, internal side contrasts with the earth. In this way it constructs a stage for itself like a ready-made; and directly above, on a creeper or a branch, while fluffing out the feathers beneath its beak to reveal their yellow roots, it sings a complex song made up from its own notes and, at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates: it is a complete artist. (184)

The animal that constructs a house, or composes a territory, allows a pure body of sensation to emerge. This body of sensation is *pure* because it does not refer to the perception of an object, nor to the affections of a subject. The percept has been wrested from perception and the affect has been wrested from affection, so that the art work is an autonomous composition of sensation. Art defined in this

way, as a block of affects and percepts, has the power to create new functional assemblages that are not predicated on a concept of identity. The *Scenopoietes dentirostris*'s performance-installation does not constitute a perception of the rainforest, but the forest has entered into a relationship with the bird, such that the bird has passed into the forest itself. Nor does the *Scenopoietes dentirostris* express its affection for the forest itself. Nor does the *Scenopoietes dentirostris* create an indiscernibility between species that allows them all to pass into an enterprise of co-creation. The *Scenopoietes dentirostris*'s territory expresses the singularity of percepts which contract the landscape to produce an internal coherence, while also forming a repetition of affects that open onto the forest and even the cosmos in multiple ways.

When Jones wraps a ribbon of swarming spheres around the wall of a gallery he also carves out a territory. *A Place I've Never Seen* is a block of affects and percepts that allows gay sex to take on a life of its own within the installation. The braille text ironically refers to a photograph, but Jones actually gives us a percept of flesh, not a perception. He clinches the forces of anal eroticism in the autonomous framework of the habitat. Rather than giving us a window through which to perceive a body, Jones gives us a series of planes or sections which provides flesh with a framework. The body becomes part of the wall, defined by the dovetailing of different orientations: the hands, the eyes, the imagination. This scene of gay sex finds its support in the finite junction of the territory in which we participate. Accompanying this contraction of flesh in the installation's architecture is a dissipation of the habitat. The stark white expanse of the wall highlights the sovereignty of the molecular horizon, but it simultaneously infuses it with an inner light which beckons the braille to scatter itself across the dimensionless background. The forces that have been clenched by the intense band of movement threaten to spread like a rash across the walls, and the spheres bulge into the gallery, opening up the installation to envelop the outside in its compound. The audience becomes part of the work, and this expansion of the territory makes a whole range of unpredictable connections possible.

We can plot the rhythm of the habitat through a number of Jones's earlier projects to show how affects and percepts can be composed around a range of political problems. *Over My Dead Body* is the first of Jones's solo shows to explicitly deal with a political issue, but we can already see the dynamic of the territory operating in the pre-activist period of *Tableau Historique: Interior / Design*.¹⁸ In this early body of work, the rhythmic contraction and expansion of the habitat pivots on the motif of the fold, particularly as it appears in Rococo

18 George Paton Gallery, Melbourne, May-June 1988. Work from this period was also exhibited in a group show which toured Australia in late 1987, *Mirabilis: Post-Appropriation* (Cameleon Gallery, Hobart; Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane; George Paton Gallery, Melbourne).

architecture and design. *Tableau Historique* includes two painted chairs, a carved panel, and several large drawings. The two 1950s style kitchen chairs, with chrome armature and vinyl panels, have been inset with lunettes of Rococo paintings in the style of François Boucher and Jean-Paul Fragonard. The carved panel includes a Boucheresque inset within a sinuous gilded cartouche. And the drawings subtly link the scrolling lines of Rococo architecture, decoration, and landscape across a juxtaposition of vertical panels and stage screens. The pictorial space of Rococo art knots together natural form, architectural volume, and shallow design space to draw everything into a cosmos that endlessly folds one territory into another. In his early affection for the Rococo, we can see Jones's sense of form being related not to an essence or idea, but to a function of folding habitats. *Tableau Historique* animates the world with peristaltic turns and hysterical twists. The chaos contracts and expands through decorative furnishings and rhythmic territories that open back onto the surging surfaces of the cosmos.

Tableau Historique is primarily concerned with the fold which goes to infinity, but in subsequent work Jones attempts to localize the fold, or just give us a segment of its surface tension, in order to delineate specific territories for gay subjectivity. The projects that follow strategically generate new habitats for existence within the context of contemporary gay politics. *Tableau Historique* critiques the idea of measuring things out in relation to an ideal, while the work that follows explicitly focuses on the singularities involved in encountering the real and the habitats that cohere around them. As I have argued above, *A Place I've Never Seen* withdraws from a pornographic ideal and invents an experimental eroticism that functions as a perpetually mobile habitat. In the white canvases done between 1989 and 1991,¹⁹ Jones withdraws from the reductive discourse of gay identity, especially as it is expressed in ACT UP slogans such as "Silence=Death," and creates a space where silence is pregnant with new possibilities for subjectivity. The most developed installation from this period of work, *Silence=Death*, juxtaposes simplistic activist slogans with freshly primed canvases that have been stretched and stuffed to create enigmatic objects: a painting that looks like a piece of furniture, a body bag whose proportions would suit the death of art, a stretcher bed that would be impossible to lie on. The need

for political action in the face of the AIDS pandemic is expressed in these limp sculptural bodies. The objects grip the forces of the disease, gathering percepts of the situation: the loss, the silence of mourning, the need to do *something* even though all action seems dubious. The surfaces of tucked and folded canvas contract the chaos in a chilling way,²⁰ but they also open up a space for habitation and experimentation. As Jones explains, this interval or gap of silence is "like a place for me and other gay men — to fill up, to write in, or to keep empty" (1991, 1).

Jones's more recent projects tend toward a colourful and camp style rather than the cool minimalist aesthetic of the work done between 1989 and 1991. *Poof*, for example, fashions a comical response to the American trend in contemporary gay culture to identify as "Queer."²¹ Under the logo of a cartoon-esque "Poof" explosion, Jones installs a large cloud of dacron and paints the walls of the gallery bright pink. The involuted contour of the explosion is a simple affect; a zone of indetermination, a becoming imperceptible. The sickly pink interior is a simple percept; an intense vision of gay kitsch and its forces of clichéd identification. Resounding between the percept and the affect is the rhythm of a new body. It is a body of sensation which calls into question any easy definition of gay identity and opens up a space for experimental individualities. To take another recent example, *I Feel Like Chicken Tonight*²² withdraws from the ideal of a socially integrated homosexuality by carving out a territory for desires which remain unspeakable in queer politics. In this installation, Jones fills the gallery with flags and placards that might be used to display allegiances or incite a crowd, but who would wave these banners brandishing nothing but abstract patterns? He provides clues: "Chicken" is gay slang for adolescent boy; the designs are taken from the school ties used to string the pennants together; and the exhibit includes newspaper articles on pederasty illustrated with retouched photographs of ACT UP demonstrators bearing Jones's schoolboy emblems. For Jones, paedophilia gestures toward an ethic that is essentially incomplete, a politic without people speaking on behalf of others.

20 Jones compares the chilling silence of the white canvases with the ACT UP strategy of playing dead in public spaces: "I've seen this bureaucrat after she's dealt, deftly, confidently with our spokesperson in front of the TV cameras, stopped in her tracks as she turned towards her office by a couple of people lying down. A miniature die-in. And I saw that hurt, that registered, just her having to step around this dumb body, ... and that's what you're doing, when you're looking at these ... paintings" (1991, 1).

21 Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, May-June 1993; *Australian Perspectives* 1995, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, February-March 1995. In the Sydney version, sequin, glitter, and the theatrical architecture of the gallery's vestibule were substituted for the glitzy pink walls of the Melbourne version.

22 Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, October-November 1994; Artspace, Sydney, January-March 1995; Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, May-June 1995.

19 Early versions of the white canvases from this period appear in the following group shows: *Imaging AIDS*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, January-February 1989; *Moët Chandon Touring Exhibition*, national tour, 1990. A more substantial series of white canvases was developed for a touring solo exhibition *Silence=Death*: 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, May 1991; Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, July 1991. A selection of the works in *Silence=Death* were exhibited under the title *Over My Dead Body* at Artspace, Sydney, March-April 1991. A scale model of the Gertrude Street installation was also displayed at Microscope, Melbourne, May 1991. And a final series of white canvases, titled *What Is This Place?*, were produced for the *Australian Perspectives* 1991, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, August-September 1991.

Shortly before *I Feel Like Chicken Tonight* opened, ILGA (International Lesbian and Gay Association) lost consultancy status with the United Nations because of their affiliation with groups that advocate paedophilia. As Guattari remarked in the mid-seventies, paedophilia constitutes a sort of "Jewishness" [*Juiverie*] which provokes racist reaction, even within the gay community (1975, 14-15). In lieu of subjectivities that might activate them, the objects in his installation take on a life of their own. Eluding the world of guilt and justice, Jones turns its symbols into abstract a-signifying fluxes. He creates a body of sensation that unspeakable passions can occupy in flight.

THE COMMUNITY OF SENSUAL BODIES

Deleuze and Guattari's aesthetics cannot be reduced to a theory of the art object *per se*. They understand aesthetics to be concerned with the dynamic of sensible assemblages. As I have argued above, this approach has its genealogy in a traditional definition of the discipline as a "science of sensibility." And because of this, aesthetics is a recurring theme in Deleuze and Guattari's work which not only pertains to art objects, but it also introduces transversal linkages with ethics, ontology, epistemology, and historiography. They are "aesthetical" philosophers, primarily concerned with creative encounters that are not preceded by a concept of identity. As Guattari explains, "aesthetics isn't something that gives you recipes to make a work of art," it is a "speculative cartography" which constructs coordinates of existence at the same time as those coordinates are lived (1993, 240-41). When Deleuze and Guattari write specifically about art objects, their aim is to diagram the speculative cartographies laid out by artists and open these territories up onto other practices in the arts, sciences, and philosophy. Deleuze's two books on cinema, for instance, release those temporal structures "that the cinematographic image has been able to grasp and reveal" (1989a, xii; Translator's Introduction). This is not simply a history of cinema, but rather a taxonomy of cinematic habitats which resonate with concepts of being and functions of vision. To take another example, Guattari's article "Cracks in the Street" examines the territories of subjectivity expressed in three paintings by Balthus, and shows how these echo certain formations of subjectivity in music, fractal geometry and linguistics (1987, 82-85). In my discussion of *A Place I've Never Seen* I have attempted to map the operation of a territory, show how this opens onto new possibilities for political practice, and allow this aesthetic to resonate with the transformative power of sensual habitats developed in Deleuze and Guattari's work.

The concept of art itself remains quite nominal in this approach to art writing. The difference between art and non-art is unclear, which is to say, art does not have a determinate concept. But whenever an assemblage of affects and percepts appears, we have evidence of art differentiating itself as it develops an internal coherence of sensation. It is organized from within and, as I have demonstrated

in relation to the autonomy of the beautiful in Kant, this also implies that art can link up to all manner of things. Deleuze and Guattari's preference for animal examples in their discussion of aesthetics points to the problem of defining or classifying art. "We can not decide whether animals have painting," they confess in *Mille plateaux* because "there is little foundation for a clear-cut distinction between animals and human beings" ("Nous ne pouvons pas décider si les animaux ne font pas déjà de la peinture, bien qu'ils ne peignent pas sur des tableaux, et même quand des hormones induisent leurs couleurs et leurs lignes: même là, une distinction tranchée animal-homme serait peu fondée") (1988, 301/1980, 370). And in *Qu'est que la philosophie?*, they tentatively suggest that "l'art commence peut-être avec l'animal" ("perhaps art begins with the animal") (1991, 174/1994, 183). The hesitation that Deleuze and Guattari express in these instances is an indication that it is a false problem to try to define art in advance. Instead, they proceed by mapping the expanding territories of art wherever they might be encountered.

Nous ne croyons nullement à un système des beaux-arts, mais à des problèmes très différents qui trouvent leurs solutions dans des arts hétérogènes. L'Art nous paraît un faux concept, uniquement nominal; ce qui n'empêche pas la possibilité de faire usage simultané des arts dans une multiplicité déterminable. (1980, 369)

In no way do we believe in a fine-arts system; we believe in very diverse problems whose solutions are found in heterogeneous arts. To us, Art is a false concept, a solely nominal concept; this does not, however, preclude the possibility of a simultaneous usage of the various arts within a determinable multiplicity. (1988, 300-01)

Using the work of Mathew Jones, I have shown how a single art work can function as a determinable multiplicity. The dynamic territories that we find in his work draw together the pre-individual singularities of percepts and affects such that new subjectivities and existential territories might individuate themselves. The singularities provide an intensive consistency of differences in which new formations crystallize. We could say that the singularities precede a concept of activist art and a concept of gay politics, coming together in a spatio-temporal dynamic that allows these practices to be individuated in "new" or aberrant ways. This same principle of individuation can be related to the "simultaneous usage of various arts" in Deleuze and Guattari's work. Singularities are extracted from painting, music, architecture, cinema, and bird song as a "diverse problem" plots these singular points together in a "determinable multiplicity." In the process of writing about territories Deleuze and Guattari actually create their own habitats. The very nature of their collaboration also elaborates this process. It is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate the individual voices in Deleuze and Guattari's collaborations. They cease being "authors," or subjects of enunciation, in order to function as "temporary, transitory and evanescent points of subjectification."

The points of subjectification are not even what matters. What is important is the multiplicity which passes "between the points, carrying them along without ever going from one to the other" (Deleuze and Parnet ix, Preface).

Deleuze insists, "Dans ces conditions, dès qu'il y a ce type de multiplicité, c'est de la politique, de la micropolitique. Comme dit Félix, avant l'Être il y a la politique" ("As soon as there is this type of multiplicity, there is politics, micro-politics. As Félix says: before Being there is politics") (Deleuze and Parnet 24/17). Guattari has elaborated the political power of these fluxes that precede Being quite extensively in his commentaries on social institutions and revolutionary movements. In his 1985 collaboration with Toni Negri, Guattari explains that these habitats of singularities provide us with the basis for a truly liberatory communism. This habitat-communism has nothing to do with the collective barbarism of communist states, rather, "le communisme consiste à créer les conditions d'émergence d'un renouvellement permanent de l'activité humaine et de la production sociale par le déploiement de processus de singularisation, d'auto-organisation, d'auto-valorisation" ("Communism consists in creating the conditions of emergence of a permanent renewing of human activity and social production through the deployment of processes of singularization, auto-organization, auto-valorization") (Guattari and Negri 11).²³ It is no longer a matter of the universality of man, or the sharing of wealth, but "de la manifestation du singulier comme multiplicité, comme mobilité, variabilité spatio-temporelle et créativité" ("rather of manifesting the singular as multiplicity, mobility, spatio-temporal variability and creativity") (26). The politics of multiplicities does not function prescriptively nor representationally. The task is not to legislate rules for "correct" behaviour, nor to identify with someone and speak on their behalf (even if you call that person "I"). The micro-politics of the habitat works through the experimental formation of communities which can stand up by themselves without a transcendent ideal or determinate concept. The installational multiplicities of Mathew Jones are directed toward the production of these communities of singularities. They liberate desires which have not been reduced to social castes, sexual rituals or political practices. Desire consists of the singularities which overflow us and constitute us outside of ourselves, unlike sexuality, which is already specified. As Guattari argues, "desire is everything that exists *before* the opposition between subject and object, *before* representation and production" (1979, 57). The liberation of desire, rather than the liberation of sexuality, produces transversal connections that recreate existence as the singularities of real encounters are actually lived.

23 Michael Ryan's translation of this text (*Communism Like Us: New Spaces of Liberty, New Lines of Alliance*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1990) unfortunately deletes and distorts important phrases from the original French edition. My citations are translated directly from the French.

Art itself highlights this ethic of experimental politics. Jones's installation practice provides us with an example of art works which realize this in relation to issues that are obviously political, but the ethico-aesthetic paradigm also reverberates beyond preconceived notions of "art" and "politics." Given that the coordinates of this paradigm are plotted at the same time as they are lived, it is not enough for art writers to simply be the representatives of a politic that they find elsewhere, in art works or in political science. It is necessary for art writers to create their own aesthetic multiplicities and their own micro-politics. A micro-politics of art scholarship would involve constructing writer-subjects and art-objects in the process of plotting the sensual habitats that distribute images and concepts, exhibitions and history, performance and ideas. To write *about* art would be to actually pass into an aesthetic territory such that subject and object positions do not precede the habitat, but are extracted from it. In fact, it is no longer a matter of writing *about* art, but of writing *with* art, constructing concepts and identities through an aesthetic empiricism. Deleuze and Guattari do not simply use art works to illustrate the dynamic of artistry, they actually create themselves as aesthetic multiplicities. They distribute themselves in a community of sensual bodies. Guattari claims that "la véritable oeuvre d'art est le corps infini de l'homme qui se meut à travers les mutations incroyables de l'existence particulière" ("the infinite body of man moving through all the incredible mutations of any one life time is the true art work" (1977, 379/1984, 237). The subject becomes an artistic territory that is immanent to other artistic territories. Unlike theories of aestheticism that glorify the human subject, this is a pre-humanist aestheticism. It is an aestheticism which precedes Being and makes it possible.

Kant's attempt to theorize the autonomy of aesthetics at the dawn of modernity helps clarify the rigour with which Deleuze and Guattari approach the power of sensuous forms, but the sentiment of their aestheticism owes a great deal to Nietzsche, the artist-philosopher *par excellence*. Deleuze cites Nietzsche as the philosopher who gave him a taste for speaking through "affects, intensities, experiences, experiments": "Il [Nietzsche] vous donne un goût pervers (que ni Marx ni Freud n'ont jamais donné à personne, au contraire): le goût pour chacun de dire des choses simples en son propre nom, de parler par affects, intensités, expériences, expérimentations" (1995, 6/1990, 15). And in his early study on Nietzsche, Deleuze positions him as the philosopher who completed the project which "Kant trahissait en même temps qu'il la concevait" ("Kant betrayed at the same time as he conceived it") (1970, 59/1983, 52). Kant introduced the problem of how to critique faculties from the inside, where aesthetics would have a certain autonomy from enlightenment thought, but in *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Deleuze argues that it was Nietzsche who realized this project (104-07/91-94). Nietzsche is gripped by the need for a tragic submission to the forces of encounters, a need to become *immanent* and invent new possibilities for existence

from within life itself. Nietzsche is a thought-artist, thinking through what Deleuze calls a "method of *dramatization*" (1962, 88/1983, 78). It is in this vein that Nietzsche applauds art for its ability to magnify falsehood, to raise a world of pure appearance and open ended truth. It is art "in which precisely the *lie* is sanctified and the *will to deception* has a good conscience" (78). And it is this pre-human aestheticism which Jones's activism tenders so well; the body as an artistic territory, truth as a continually reconstituted fiction. The formation of a body, whether human, animal, or artistic, is a mysterious synthesis in a world where anything can happen and already is. The sensuous body of percepts and affects displaces all fixed notions of identity to make room for a rich community of creative intensities.

One should have more respect for the bashfulness with which nature has hidden behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties.... What is required ... is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words ... to be superficial — out of profundity. (Nietzsche 1974, 38)

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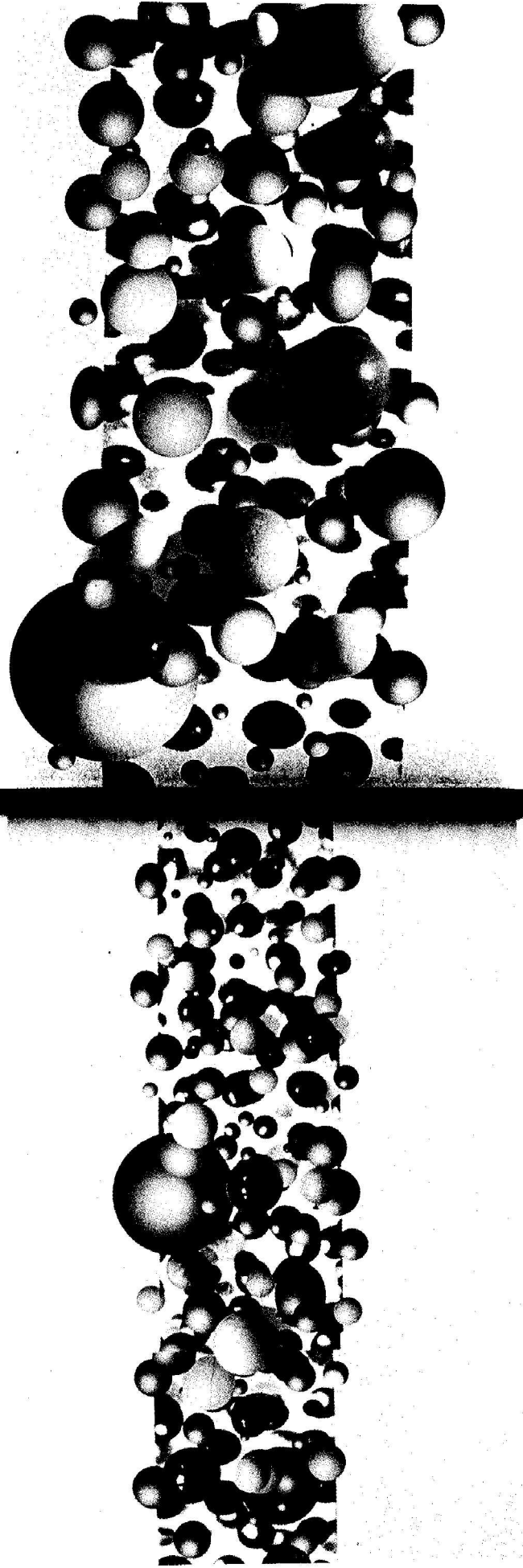


Image 1: Mathew Jones, *A Place I've Never Seen*. Winnipeg, 1995.

Image 2: Mathew Jones, *A Place I've Never Seen*. Winnipeg, 1995.

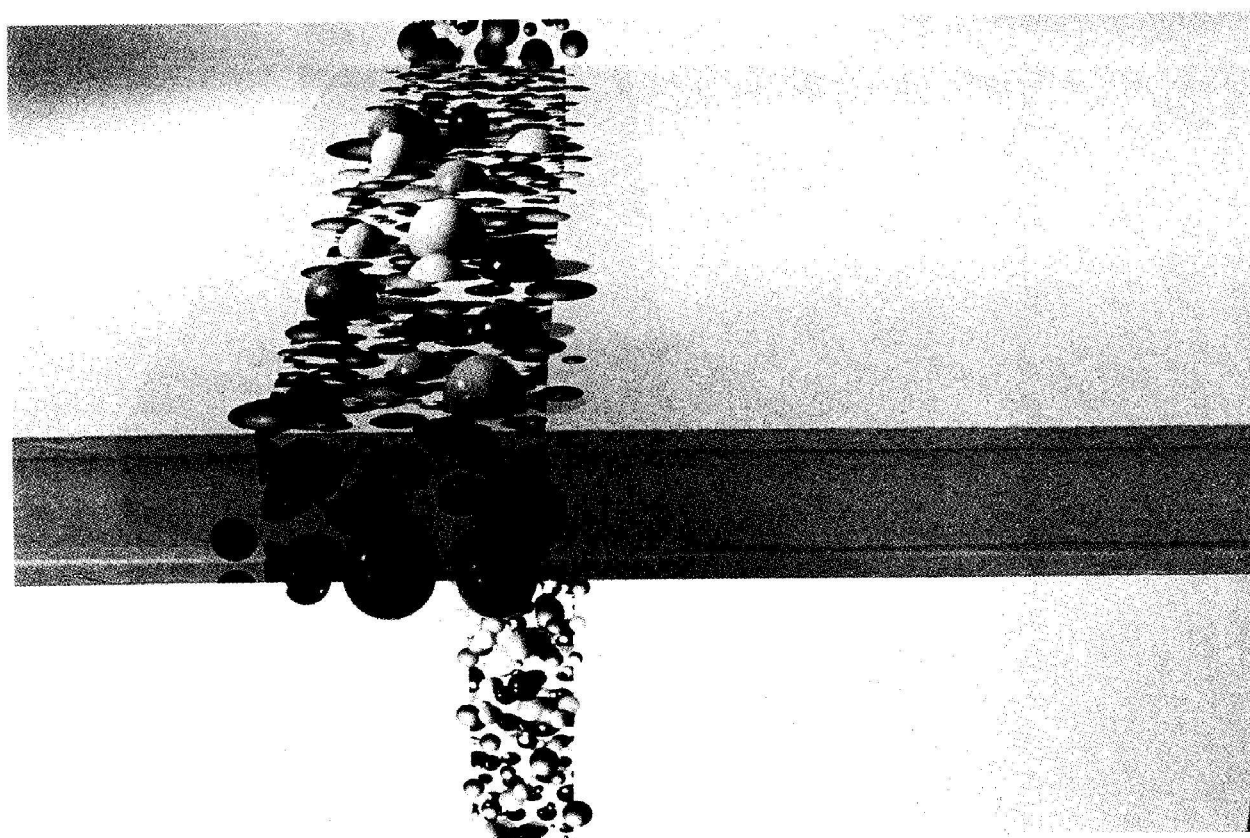


Image 3: Mathew Jones, *A Place I've Never Seen*. Toronto, 1995.

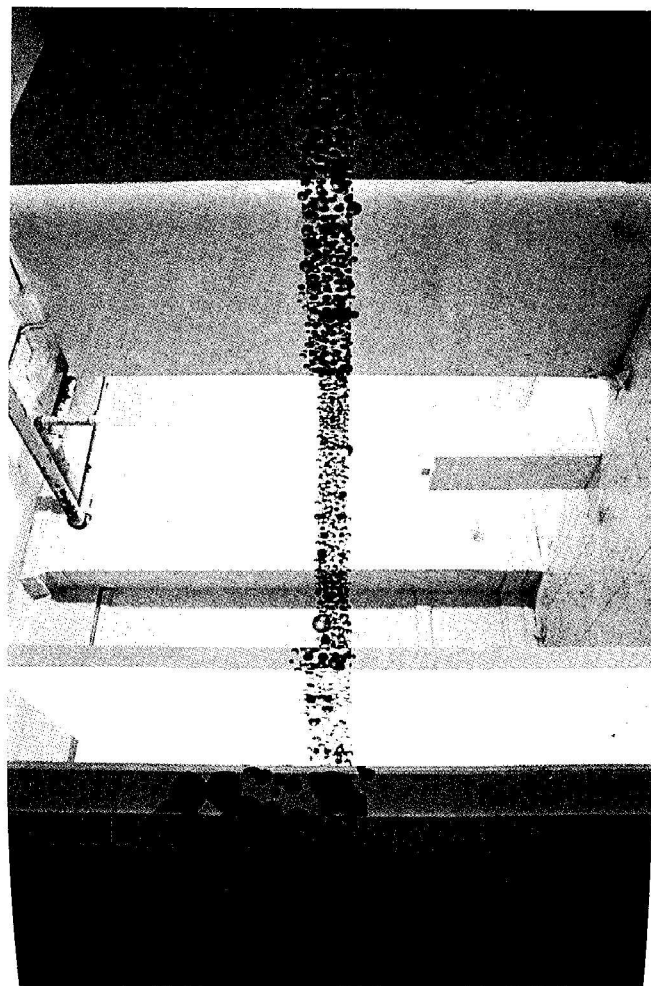


Image 4: Mathew Jones, *A Place I've Never Seen*. New York, 1996.