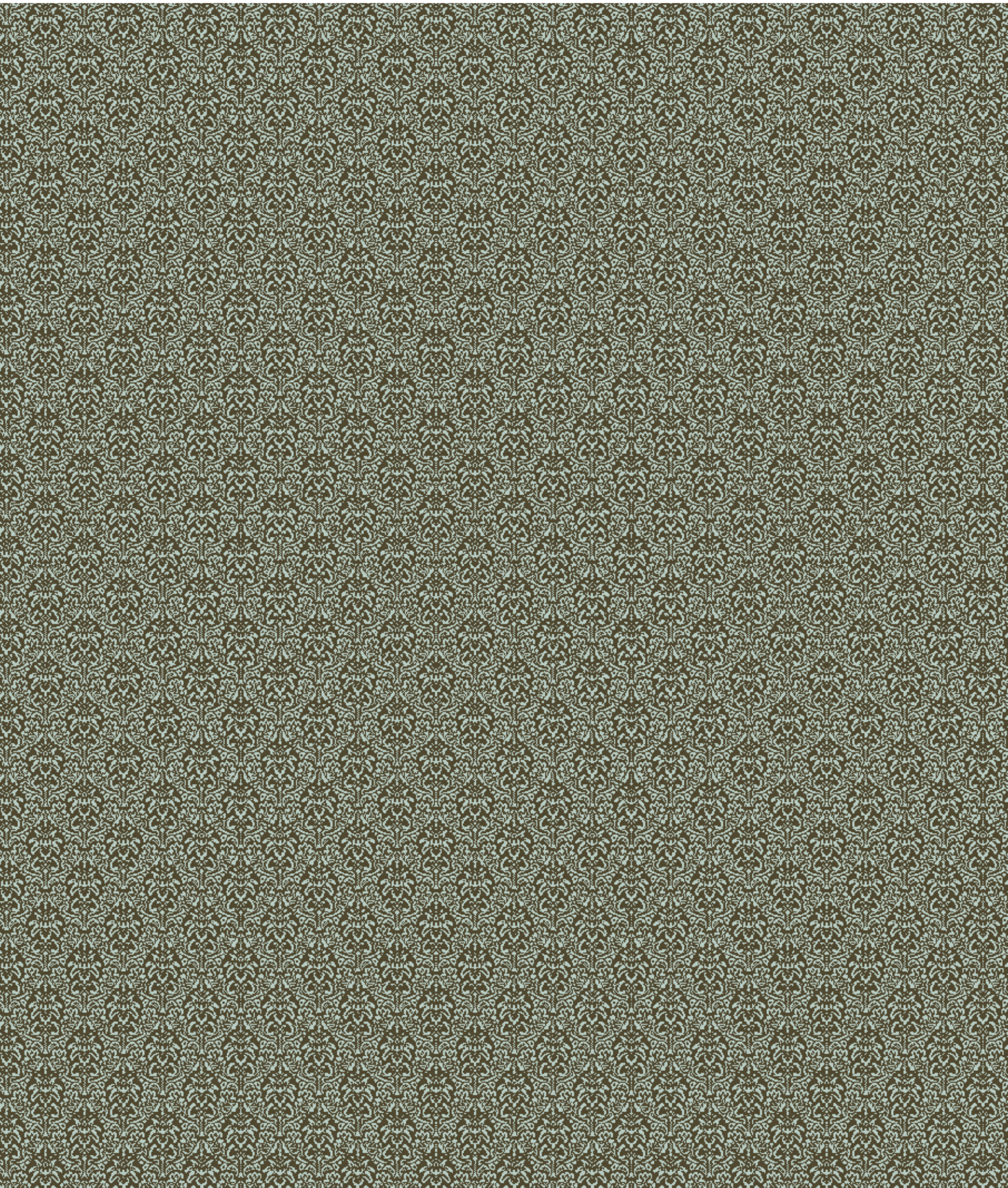


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# #17





# Editorial

Last fall I went to Rome again. I quite like it there. I like bringing my beliefs about the ancient city and project them onto the sites I visit. But reality is a battleground and often enough, other people's apprehension of it gets in my way. This time, the "genuine" trattoria I like to visit offered a menu in English. Unheard of before. Not that my Italian is any good, but that is not what is at stake here. As psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan observed, we project our world view onto the world to protect us from the gaze of the other. This very item totally disturbed my projection and I felt like I was moving in somebody else's play.

Traveling and tourism is now one of the largest industries in the world. But, like many others have noticed, we don't travel to get new impressions, we travel to get our ideas verified. Ideas can be rather oppressive, restaurants in various parts of Thailand have been forced to change from fork and knife to chop-sticks because that is what the tourist expects to eat with when in Asia.

In this issue of Merge, we deal with aspects of traveling cultures, a theme that was elaborated at a conference at the University of Skövde in November last year. Most of the texts published here were presented at that occasion. You can read about the interdependence between photography and reservoirs, about the nomadic art world, and about how performance studies can help to understand walks in the trail of Jack the Ripper. Read about distances in cyber space and why we don't really take vacation there. Also, you can follow a photographic journey to Pyramiden in the very north and another to Rockland county, USA. In addition to this you can read about fashion designer Hussein Chalayan and about the cooperation between graphic designer Gabor Palotai and architects Claesson Koivisto Rune.

Make our journey yours.  
Håkan Nilsson

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Pyramiden a ghost town in Swalbard

# GHOST AT 79°N

By Tyrone Martinsson

The archipelago of Svalbard is a no man’s land in the Arctic sea. Nevertheless, it had a strategic role both during World War II and in the cold war era.

According to the Svalbard treaty from 1920, the archipelago is governed by Norway. The main settlements in Svalbard are Norwegian and Russian. The debate between the two nations over who was there first is still a sensitive matter. Today, the Norwegians dominate Svalbard and the largest community, Longyearbyen, is a developed and modern settlement that lacks nothing in comfort. Tourism is one of the main economical sources on the islands. The coal mines are historically important employers, and mining remains one of the key issues regarding the Russian presence on Svalbard. Today, Barentsburg is the only active Russian mining settlement. The other larger mining settlement, Pyramiden, was closed in 1998. It is now a ghost

Having closed down the mining, Pyramiden is currently stripped of everything worth shipping as metal scrap. There are rumours of an intricate and complex economic distribution of the profit from the junk shipped out from Svalbard via Trust Ark-tigukols harbour in Barentsburg.

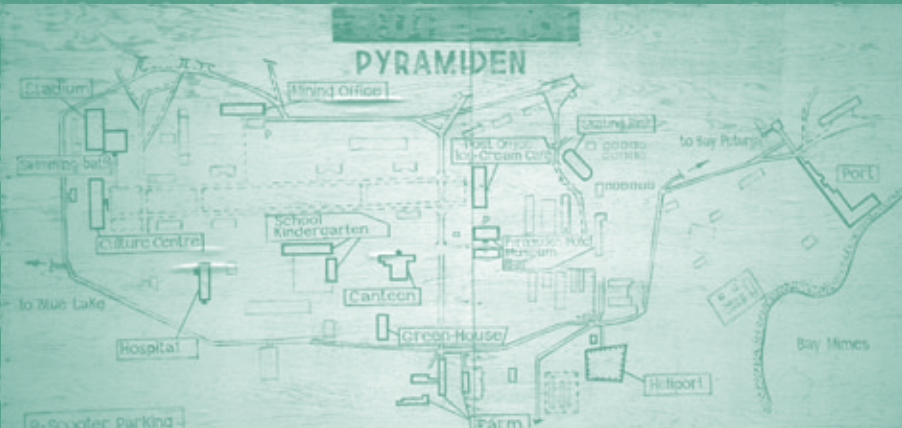
The mining company Trust Arktigukol is responsible for the Russian coal mining in Svalbard and started their exploitation of the area in 1956. Despite the location at 79° North, it became a quite popular establishment to work in. An estimated 1,000 people lived and worked there during its heydays.

In the 1970s, the mining settlement in Svalbard was undergoing Soviet-style modernisation and renovation. Many of the houses have lots of skilled wooden details. Grass had been transported from Siberia, which made the settlement look more and more like

There have been ideas of turning Pyramiden in to an archaeological laboratory, using a term coined by the American archaeologist P. J. Capelotti. The Arctic is a place where the natural destruction of human traces is a slow process. The old mining village could be studied for centuries, as it slowly is broken down by nature. Other (Russian) suggestions have been to resurrect the village as a tourist and research centre. For now it is a fascinating place, like an outdoor museum. It is a reminder of the former Soviet Union where Lenin forever is looking out over the village, towards the glacier in the distance, in front of Gagarin’s sports centre.

Pyramiden is a place that the perestroika never reached. When Russia became the modern state of today, blood could no longer be pumped out to the fringes of its former vast empire. The barren outposts suffered when the central government

**Pyramiden is a place that the perestroika never reached. When Russia became the modern state of today, blood could no longer be pumped out to the fringes of its former vast empire.**



town on the fringes of the former Soviet Union, belonging to Russia. Pyramiden is just one example of the many problems Russia has to maintain the outposts of its old borders. Modern Russia could not afford to maintain Pyramiden. At the same time, they need coal mining to claim their right to Svalbard. Thus, travelling to Pyramiden is to walk into a contemporary archaeological site that stands like a monument over a fallen empire.



Pyramiden is located in Billefjorden in Svalbard, and can be reached by boat or snow scooter. It is an abandoned Russian coal mining settlement. Today, it is a ghost town. As the boat slowly enters the harbour one inevitably comes to think of Tarkovsky’s movie “Stalker”. You are about to enter the “zone”.

a small village. The village was more or less self-sufficient and animals were kept in the farmhouse. In the 1980s, the village got a swimming pool and a sports centre. For a short while, it was even ahead of the Norwegian Longyearbyen.

After the establishment was shut down, the Norwegians wanted the Russians to restore the area and tear down the village. They tried to blow up some of the buildings, but since they were built for the arctic climate the attempts failed. The village was more or less locked down and abandoned. There are no restrictions on visiting Pyramiden, but the houses are restricted and it is not permitted to enter any buildings. The ghostly feeling in the village is reinforced by the silent emptiness.

The summer is illuminated by the midnight sun. Clouds and mist often sweeps through the Arctic landscape. The weather and light change fast and constantly reshape the views. One can only imagine the place in the dark and cold Arctic winter.

There is an uncanny feeling of being watched when you walk through the streets of Pyramiden. As if there is something out there. The silence of old industrial landscapes is difficult to grasp. At some parts of the village the fragments and traces of humans seem fresh and recent. As if the place was abandoned in a hurry.

changed its politics. The cold war Arctic frontier was confined to Barentsburg, where the final battle of the Russian presence at Svalbard might be played out over the coming years.





Architect, artist, filmmaker, designer: the boundaries between these diverse roles blur as Hussein Chalayan folds them one into the other. A self-styled ‘ideas person’ who forges unexpected alliances between clothing, imagery, built structures and technology, Chalayan is a thinker who refutes the premise that fashion and the other creative disciplines are separate entities. In fact, much of his output over the past ten years has brokered significant connections between them. As Chalayan builds bridges between the visual, the ideological, the invisible and the tangible, his designs challenge preconceived notions of what clothing can mean, contributing to and even setting the parameters for a new whole genre.

Although his followers see him as the proud father who presided over the birth of conceptual fashion, clothing per se has always been Chalayan’s unwanted child. Chalyan’s point of departure from conventional fashion was his use of clothing as a site of exploration, and his designs were created as expressions of concepts rather than garments made with only functionality in mind. As a result, Chalayan’s collections are characterised by a heightened sense of meaning, ‘an allusion to a more intense experience somewhere else, or the promise of a richer, wider horizon to be found. ‘He’s in his own world,’ said fellow designer Tristan Webber of Chalayan, ‘and you have to get into his world to understand his work.’

But Chalayan’s world, in comparison to the vast stranglehold of mainstream fashion, could be a parallel universe. Certain collections took clothing to a place where they morphed the body into alien silhouettes, such as Panoramic (autumn/winter 1998), which featured conical headdresses that distorted the model’s body shape. Designs such as the Remote Control Dress (Before Minus Now collection, spring/summer 2000), used digital signals to relay messages by a remote control device, highlighting the role that technology can play in transforming the fashioned body. Chalayan made garments that became metaphors of flight, such as the lightweight Airmail clothing (1999) that could be written

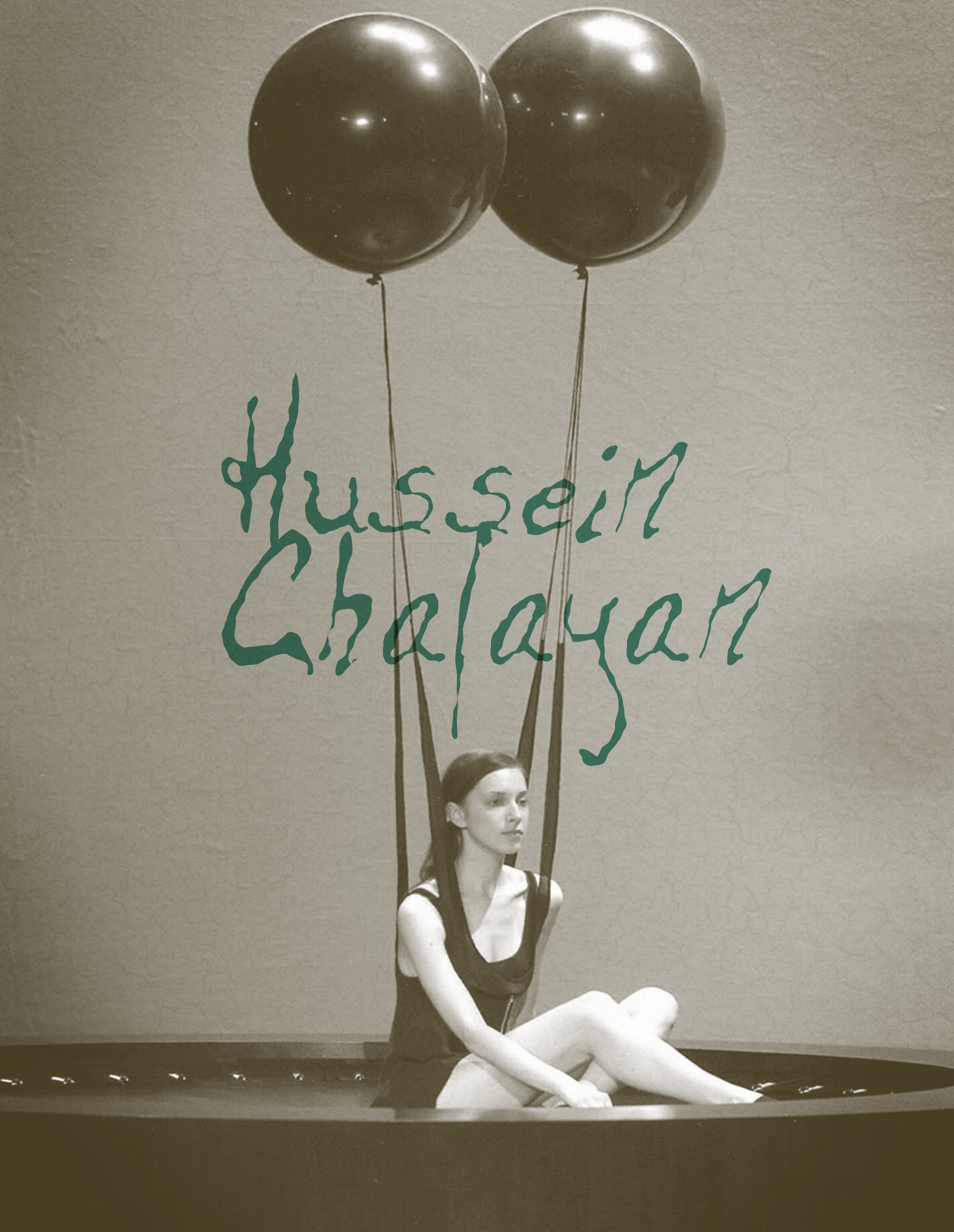
on, folded into an envelope, sealed and posted. The Echoform collection (autumn/winter 1999) included aerodynamic dresses with architectonic components that mimicked aircraft interiors, intended to amplify the body’s inherent capacity for speed. Perhaps the most striking of Chalayan’s garments where those in the Afterwords collection (autumn/winter 2000) designed with the potential to transform into pieces of furniture. The chairs featured slipcovers that could be worn as dresses, and they could be converted into suitcases by collapsing their frames. A round table transformed into an accordion-like skirt by removing a rounded disc from the table’s centre and pulling the inside edge up over the hips and attaching it to the waist.

Chalayan’s work seems to promote a convergence between the worlds of academia and the highbrow consumers who covet his clothes. ‘My work is not necessarily academic so I was surprised when a school of architecture used my work as a basis for student projects,’ he said. ‘They chose garments based on geography, identity and culture and asked the students to create an environment based on the clothes.’ Paradoxically, while mainstream forms like fashion have become of interest to academics, intellectual content became a source of intrigue for the informed public. ‘Academia is spreading beyond people who teach, and more members of the public are appreciating the intellectual meaning behind design,’ Chalayan explained, ‘which is something that the lifestyle media have tapped into. This is interesting, because wearing my clothes in a lifestyle context means that you probably know that there are concepts behind them but don’t necessarily have to understand them.’

Chalayan is not alone in forging axes between fashion, architecture, art and design; this interdisciplinary rapport is shared by product designers, architects, artists and academics. ‘Things have come a long way since Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark created the wearable habitations they called Parangolés,’ remarked British artist Lucy Orta. ‘Previously, only artists were producing work based on the congruencies

of these ideas but now designers and architects are engaging with them. Chalayan is unique in tackling heavyweight concepts and making them accessible to students as well as to a broader fashion audience.’

Chalayan’s cerebral approach, in an industry characterised by style over content and image over substance, functions as scalpel to peel back the superficial skin that clothing was once beleived to be. His vision of fashion, as an architectonic tool, as a metaphor of the body and as a cinematic device, takes shape at precisely the point where traditional definitions fail. ‘In many ways the clothes are bi-products of the concepts I work with, if not actually monuments to the ideas,’ Chalayan explained. ‘My work is not limited to clothes alone – it has the potential to engage with other aesthetics and bigger concepts.’ As Chalayan probes and dissects the fashioned body, the complex relationship between fashion, technology and architecture unfolds as an emerging rapport. He said: ‘I try and create a process that grows and expands as the collection develops. The idea is the epicentre of that process, because an idea can be realised in 10 million different ways. If you take an object as your starting point – i.e. deciding how to design a dress, make a coat, etc – it limits you. Initiating a process allows you to interact with several objects or with things like the environment, history or anthropology. As he engages with other disciplines, Chalayan produces a wide range of fresh ‘looks’, new silhouettes and body aesthetics. His garments provide room for self-fashioning and eschew the conformity of trend-based clothing. Yet, he is still a designer of real clothes. ‘I do produce clothes that create a new space for the body, but I am still making a garment,’ Chalayan explained. ‘There is a duality in my work because a few of my designs are made as showpieces purely to express an idea, while around 95% of the collection is designed with wearability in mind. It would be too contrived to expect people to buy the clothes just for the ideas behind them, and I don’t expect everyone to want to absorb their meanings. The showpieces inspire the wearable clothes, so the architectonics, the ideas and the issues they deal with are still present.’



Many of Chalayan’s garments are characterised by graphic elements that appear to echo architectural lines or have been constructed in shapes that bring built structures to mind. While this creates an aesthetic that is often described as ‘architectural’, Chalayan has never intended to mimic the structure and silhouettes of architecture in his clothing. ‘Describing my clothes as “architectural” is too simplistic, because there is a big difference between designing buildings and doing what I do, and I have never looked specifically at architecture for inspiration,’ he said. ‘One thing to keep in mind is that when fashion looks modular and structured people automatically call it architectural when it isn’t.’

Leading architects generally draw more inspiration from theories of space than they do from existing buildings, and Chalayan’s process is analogous to this approach. ‘My thinking is on a parallel with architects, sometimes I borrow concepts from architectural theory and apply them to something else,’ he said. ‘Of course, looking at those ideas as an outsider mean that they become looser, so I would describe these influences as architectonic rather than strictly architectural.’

Chalayan’s process mirrors the approach of the awarding-winning architect Zaha Hadid, also based in London. ‘When we designed the scenography for Charleroi Danses’ Metapolis ballet production we saw how fashion and architecture can communicate in response to the body,’ said Patrik Schumacher, spokesperson for Zaha Hadid Architects. ‘The way that Chalayan interlinks them in his work is genius. You can identify similar process in both Zaha and Chalayan’s work. For example, one technique we use is called “making strange” whereby we rotate, invert and distort traditional building proportions to create something more visionary. Chalayan seems to be “making strange” with clothing by restructuring proportions of garments to create something completely new and non-traditional.’

Like architecture, fashion is moving beyond traditional platforms, and, in Chalayan’s hands, it radiates to new ideological territories and a range of uncertain destinations. In The Fashionable Mind, Kennedy Fraser located the spaces of fashion where ‘... movies [are] made, books published, art exhibits mounted, critical columns turned out, dances danced, editorial policies formulated, academic thesis germinated, wherever people think, speak or create shared forms of expression.’ Chalayan’s quest for new platforms has enabled him to augment the meaning of his clothes by creating event spaces for them in the form of films, installations and exhibitions. These provide the garments with a visual framework that can be interpreted as a text and decoded cinematically.

Conceived as a long-term event space, Chalayan’s first shop opened in Tokyo in 2004, with an interior he describes as ‘a meeting between architecture and fashion, as well as a meeting of worlds’. Chalayan commissioned Block Architecture to explore the theme of ‘omnipresence’ in the interior architecture, and briefed them to reflect on being in two places simultaneously. As a result, the interior contrasts the Mediterranean gardens of rural Cypress with the hi-tech sensibilities of urban Japan. ‘I wanted to recreate the Cypriot landscape to give the space the flavours of a foreign land,’ Chalayan explained, ‘but also to bring the outside in. So I planted olive trees in the shop’s floor and hung clothes from a washing line just as they would outside a Cypriot home. The upper floor was inspired by the open-air cinemas in Cyprus where I watched films as a kid. Throughout the shop, there is a constant interplay between urbanism and ruralism, making you feel outside when you are actually inside.’

Fashion boutiques, like most other fashion spaces, are typically imbricated with fantasy and desire, and often heavily romanticised and imbued with fiction, fetishism and ideals. While Chalayan’s shop offers a dreamy escape from reality, the interior is so heavily suffused with memories of another place that it

seems to evoke nostalgia rather than generate fantasy. Chalayan wanted to make the link between the two sites as literal as possible, bringing in vestiges of air travel to evoke the journey between the two destinations. An airplane wing traces a long wall, with the wing’s flaps clipped open to provide shelving. The air-mail series of clothing is displayed nearby, and air-line trolleys were adapted to create shelving for the menswear.

Chalayan’s fascination with aeroplane travel culminated in his interactive menswear collection, Place/non-place. The collection was partially inspired by Marc Augé’s claim that airports are examples of transitional spaces dubbed ‘non-place’, i.e., areas built to facilitate the movement of people and information in and around urban space. Chalayan used Place/non-place as a catalyst for creating a temporary event space, attaching texts to the garments that invited the wearers to gather at London’s Heathrow Airport in May 2002, some 18 months after the collection was launched. Chalayan’s aim was to create an event that would designate a sense of space for those present. ‘My idea was that the clothes would become a means of creating an experience,’ he explained. ‘I was questioning whether holding an event in a particular space could turn a non-place into a place.’

Certain events, such as a meal, designate a sense of place by bringing people together for a specific purpose. When transacted outdoors, a meal functions as an event that can be uniquely detached from architecture. Likewise, the Place/non-place event was conceived independently of architecture, but was able to colonise space (which mirrors architecture’s main function) without using a built environment to do so. In effect, Chalayan succeeded in creating an ephemeral architecture without the presence of buildings – or even an architect.

As well as uniting wearers, Chalayan wanted to see how the Place/non-place garments had been transformed through use. ‘I designed the collection with

loads of inner compartments,’ he explained. ‘I wanted the clothes to have loads of pockets in them so that you could collect your memories and take them with you. Have you ever noticed how a cab driver has pictures of his kids in the car to remind him of his other life, as if he’s recreating his home environment around him? I wanted the wearers to turn up at Heathrow and talk about the lives that the objects in their pockets represent. Garments acquire meaning through use and the more memories they contain the richer life they have.’ Chalayan intended for such discussions to create a heightened sense of place and give more meaning to the surroundings, even if it would only exist as a memory afterwards.

Creating environments plays an important role in Chalayan’s process, and his architectonic ideas provide the glue that binds fashion and space together. Since indigenous costume, traditional dress and local styles are inexplicably bound to the environments they came from, clothing contains an inherent archaeology that makes them signifiers of culture and tradition. With this in mind, Chalayan’s Between collection (spring/summer 1998) brought traditional Islamic dress to his London Fashion Week catwalk. Chalayan sent six models onto the catwalk wearing black chadors of varying lengths and nothing else underneath, exploring the capacity of traditional dress to define and de-individuate the body as it concealed the wearer’s identity. The shortest chador exposed the model’s body from the navel downward, while another model roamed the catwalk in only yashmak. The veils enabled the wearers to gauge the audience’s reactions while remaining anonymous to the onlookers. ‘That part of the collection was about defining your cultural environment with your clothes,’ Chalayan explained.

An expert on the social significance of veiling, Fadwa El Guindi, supports Chalayan’s claim. ‘Dress form and behaviour,’ she wrote, ‘are not accompanied by withdrawal, seclusion, or segregation.’ Vision and mobility are among the essential concerns of Islamic dress, and the sense of privacy afforded by

veiling is comparable to the refuge of a building. Yet, even as veiling allows the wearer to wander freely, it regulates their behaviour in line with the codes followed by other Muslim women. Chalayan’s inversion of revealing and concealing juxtaposed veiling with contemporary modes of visibility, demonstrating the power that masking can provide for a wearer who wishes to see and yet remain unseen.

In Chalayan’s work, veiling is interpreted as an architectural device, and the veil itself is in many ways emblematic of the themes featuring in his work. The veil separates, conceals, defines space and demarcates cultural boundaries, but also evokes dualities and duplicitous meanings. Veils are uncoded, intractable and forbidding, while at the same time, dramatic, exotic and even enchanted. To Chalayan, a veil can function as both a boundary and border, and symbolise isolation and dislocation too.

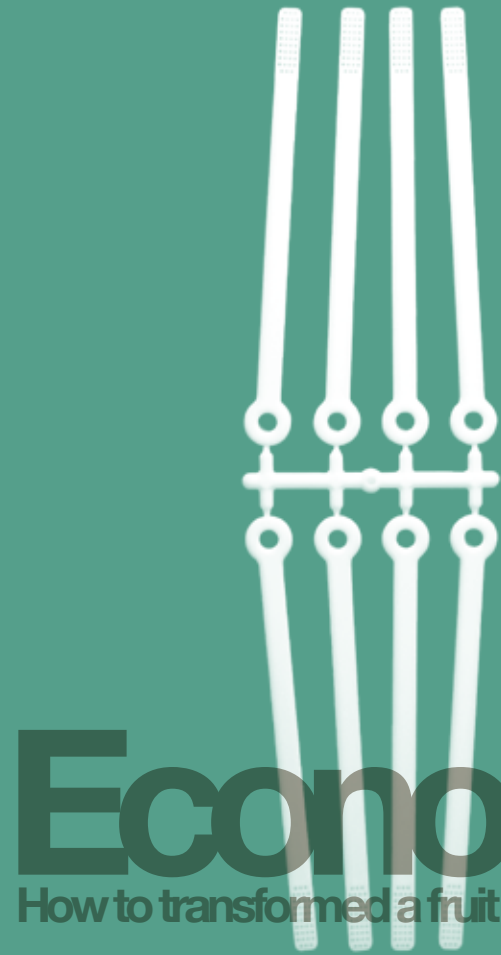
Hussein Chalayan

These sentiments came into play in Chalayan’s 2004 [ ] film, in which a character is veiled to indicate removal, detachment and disembodiment. The veil does not symbolise Islam, but belongs to a contemporary geisha, chosen by Chalayan to represent the restrained codes of behaviour he observed in Japanese society. ‘In Japan I was fascinated by how important aesthetics are and how unimportant emotional expression is,’ he recalled. ‘I was told that it is considered inhuman to express certain thoughts. I was surprised by how violent processes are completely hidden behind aesthetics – it’s as if confrontations or things that rouse angry feelings or disgust are proscribed completely.’

In the first of the film’s 11 scenes, the geisha struggles to see her reflection in a mirror through the veil covering her face. The camera cuts from the grisly image of a chef preparing sashimi from live fish and the passive gaze of the geisha. ‘This scene created an abstract situation where the geisha could not see reality,’ Chalayan explained. ‘She only removed the veil when she was served the finished sashimi, which looked very aesthetic. The veil could represent a built object like a screen or a wall, but here it created a coping mechanism that enabled her to accept the meal without being disgusted by the brutality of the chef on the other side of the screen.’ Chalayan considers this scene representative of processes that exist in the West, especially in media reports. He explained: ‘The media give us a disembodied experience of looking at events through a screen. It removes us from brutality by censoring and prefabricating the reports that we are supposed to interpret as reality. We participate in something we are not a part of without really thinking about what really goes on. Chalayan’s reflections on media spectacle revealed an insidious ideological force, which he is keen to expose: ‘We should look, and think, to really see life itself. Part of my work is about revealing the veiled processes that humanity chooses to ignore.’

Chalayan’s expression of contemporary narratives reveals one of his essential qualities: he thinks in visual terms. The distinctive oeuvre he pioneers and his uniquely interdisciplinary approach make him one of the most visionary designers of our age, and the impact of his work will never be taken lightly. As he embraces theories of architecture and forges fresh directions for fashion, Chalayan’s work continues to grow in appeal - especially to an audience with the confidence to wear clothing still heavy with the thought-processes behind it.

Bradley Quinn’s article was extracted from the book titled ‘Hussein Chalayan’ published by NAI publishers earlier this year. Copies can be ordered from the publisher’s website: [www.naipublishers.nl](http://www.naipublishers.nl).



# Economies of Scale

How to transformed a fruit bowl into a graphic icon

A collaborative project from two of Sweden's foremost design talents, graphic designer Gabor Palotai and architectural practice Claesson Koivisto Rune is an inspirational story that shows how two dimensional and three dimensional design can work together.

Radical exchanges are taking place between graphic design and architecture. Once regarded as disparate disciplines, practitioners in both fields share a common goal in shaping and structuring urban life, and creating signs and signifiers that provide metaphors of what the modern city should be. As architects try to bind people together within the built environment, they deploy surface designs and graphic motifs to signpost places where the exchanges of modern life take place.

The organisation of space has always been the essence of both disciplines. Architects and graphic designers alike are trained to counter problems of scale, give context to local surroundings, and adapt to the limitations of their materials. In their ability to ascribe meanings

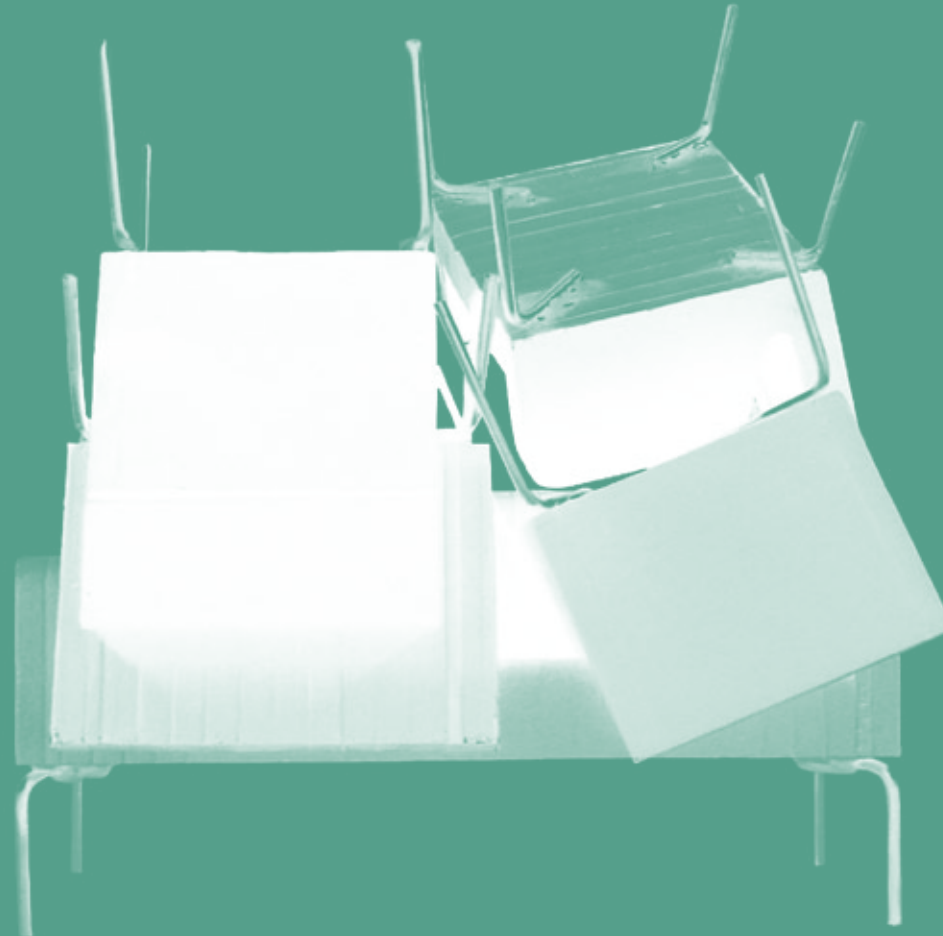
to spaces, graphics are almost a form of architecture in themselves. Graphic expressions decorate facades with trims and motifs, they fashion interiors, and play a pivotal role in creating an image for a building. Meanwhile, the role that graphics play in creating signage means that architecture's claim on urban space is challenged more and more.

Against this background, recent ventures between the award-winning graphic designer Gabor Palotai and several practices of award-winning architects have resulted in several forward-thinking projects. From his base in Stockholm, Palotai's distinctive, reductivist style has introduced a new graphic design language to Scandinavia's visual landscape. His typefaces are imbued with the kind of timelessness associated with classical architecture, the branding, exhibition designs, and corporate identities he creates makes his client's presence in the built environment even more concrete. Whereas most graphic designers in Scandinavia are motivated by simplicity and highlight the role of transparency in their

work, Palotai's style is practically forensic.

In a collaboration with Toshiko Mori Architects initiated in Spring 2005, Palotai created a striking graphic relationship between a pavilion Mori designed for the ICFF show in New York and the branding requirements of her client. Palotai conceived a logo that could function as an architectonic device.

Expressed as a two-dimensional form, it branded the pavilion graphically by creating a repeating pattern on the surface. Given a three-dimensional form, the logo took the solid shape of a building block for use in the pavilion's construction, able to be stacked and interlocked like brickwork. Closer to home, Palotai initiated a book project based on the architecture models produced by the troika of Swedish designer-architects known collectively as Claesson Koivisto Rune. Mårten Claesson, Eero Koivisto and Ola Rune established their design practice more than 10 years ago and have designed and built structures in Sweden, Germany and Japan. The trio



Over the years, the shelves of their studio have been filled with scale models of buildings, furniture, household objects, and abstractions of architectonic devices.

Discovering these artefacts on a visit, Palotai was intrigued by the dualities evident in the model.

has also designed furniture and household products for Swedish manufacturers such as Swedese, David design and Nola, and for Italian companies such as Boffi and Cappellini.

Over the years, the shelves of their studio have been filled with scale models of buildings, furniture, household objects, and abstractions of architectonic devices. Such models are important to all architects, because they answer questions about scale, proportions and volume, and attempt to fill the gap between visualising an object and giving it real form. Each model was once a part of a work in progress, and was subsequently catalogued and preserved as a marker of the finished artefact. In some cases the model is the only remaining trace of a project that has failed to materialise, serving as a poignant monument to a lost idea.

Apart from the presentation pieces, few of Claesson Koivisto Rune's models are slick and sleek. Crafted roughly from cardboard

or wood, cut whole from polystyrene, or constructed from empty plastic containers, metal hardware or pieces of debris, the sketch models seem to signal a return to a happy childhood. Like dolls-house furniture fashioned from scraps of wood and abandoned articles, the models are more than metaphors for real objects. They project human values, carry emotional content, and convey a sense of status. A model is created to project powerful ideas and images, yet remains physically diminished by the real object. It is made as a means of enabling perfection to be achieved, but it is rarely a perfect object in itself.

Discovering these artefacts on a visit to Claesson Koivisto Rune's studio, Palotai was intrigued by the dualities evident in the models and recognised their potentials to be more than representational objects. Earlier this year, Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg invited the architects to exhibit their models, and commissioned Palotai to art-direct and conceptualise the accompanying catalogue.

Subsequently, Palotai revisited the models and photographed each in black and white to highlight their roles as real objects rather than hybrid forms. Like turning a garment inside out to reveal the cavities and narrow passages hidden within the clothing, Palotai revealed sculptural silhouettes where there once appeared to be only concave shapes, and captured geometrical abstractions in forms intended to be strictly rectilinear.

The perspective Palotai gives them in the resultant book transformed a fruit bowl into a graphic icon, and a topographical rendering of a landscape into a richly textured relief. Indeed, giving the models visual space in environments saturated with markers, symbols and ciphers gives them impact far beyond architecture. As they communicate in a graphic language of their own, they create a spectral world where architecture no longer has the only claim to space.



# American Dreamer

location: rockland county, empire state.

artist: Trevor S Traynor

there are six chromogenic prints in the series.  
ea. piece is in its own edition of 5.

size: 24" x 24"

+ 1 wp and AP per photo.

presentation is c-print mounted to acrylic with sintra back.  
originals in color. (detail)





# This year we'll go someplace real !

- Some suggestions as to why cyber tourism never really took off. By [Peter Jakobsson](#)

Norrath, Rubi-Ka, The Metaverse; the space is allegedly unlimited, but the number of places are not. There is however a steady growth, and more places are continuously being created and squeezed in or attached to the existing architecture of the net. The building materials might seem a little disparate at first, but that's not something the visitors really notice, because these places are curiously opaque, more so than most real-world places. There is no gradual shift as you move from one place to the other, but a sudden complete transformation. The places seem to be discrete units, hanging by themselves, fixed in time and space. Actually, moving between them gives you very much the same feeling you get from flying.

Charter tourism had been around for a while when the first of these strange, yet mundane places took form in the seventies, but today, just as tourism, they are big industry. The 3D-modeled, high-definition-textured, visually stunning exotic places which will be discussed here are of course nothing but virtual worlds. Places on the net where your self-fashioned avatar is projected into the digital environments which you share with thousands and in some cases millions of users all over the world. The main focus of the text will more specifically be the sub-genre which goes by the unpronounceable acronym MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games). These differ from the so-called social worlds, not in the sense that they are less social, because people come to these places to socialize just as much as they do in any other meeting place, but because these worlds are also games. When the participants are not in town to replenish their energies and gossip with the other participants, they are out in the wilderness to search for treasures, hunt beasts and what have you, in order to gain points and rank in the virtual world.

## WHAT DRAGON SLAYING AND FAMILY VACATIONS SHARE

For a short while in the eighties and nineties it was really popular to talk about identity tourism in the same breath as you mentioned places like these, which at that time were called MUDs, MOOs, or MUSHes. Soon, however, the people who actually went to these places noticed that identity is a really messy thing to be messing with. The increasing attention which was given to the body as part of the shaping of identity let the critique of the free-floating cyber identity focus on the corporeal experience of cyberspace, and the obvious conclusion was of course: whether offline or online, having a body is something you'll have to get used to. In cyberspace some bodies, whether they are composed of text or images, are privileged and some are not, and what's more is that the Descartian divide between body and mind is never wide enough to let you leave the meat bag you were born with behind.

Identity tourism is however nothing unheard of in these places, it's just not as easy as some pictured it. Role playing has some similarities with what you'll experience at a rock festival or on the beaches in Ibiza. With no attachments and no one to hold you responsible, there is a carnivalesque mood to these places that tend to turn one or two things upside down. Most of the time however, this potential isn't realized. Apart from the other problems associated with identity tourism the virtual world travelers just don't seem to like it very much. Some possible reasons for this will be discussed further on. Virtual worlds can however be seen as places for tourism

in quite a lot of other ways. After all, the "betwixt-and-between" leisurely character of both games and holidays are too similar to be ignored. Both are activities which take place outside of the ordinary work week, and both are structured by an internal logic which differs in some ways from the routines of everyday life. That the spatial metaphor of virtual worlds easily lends itself to the traveling metaphor goes without saying.

Betsy Book has noted that social worlds also often are marketed as nothing but tourist destinations.<sup>1</sup> She also notes that while the "tourist gaze" is mediating off-line tourism, it is in a way even more important in the mediation of the virtual sign-post because we really can't perceive or interact with the sign in any other way than with our eyes. Finally she notes that while Disney World might seem like a prime example of the "hyper-real", it seems dreadfully real in comparison with the themed environments of virtual worlds. While all this seems to state the case for cyber tourism, there is also another side to this story.

## CAN YOU SHOW ME THE WAY TO THE TOURIST INFORMATION?

I myself once went to Port Atlantis, which is situated on the Planet Calypso, the first planet colonized by man (a little known fact).<sup>1</sup> The planet's currency, Project Entropia Dollars, has a set exchange rate against the US dollar, so there was no trouble getting some of the local currency before I even got there. After a brief chat with some fellow newcomers I left the arrival area equipped with some hundred dollars and the confidence that only money and (I realize now) a certain sense of detachment can give.

Unreal Tournament Model By Tor Lindstrand



At first I had a hard time navigating and making myself understood to other travelers, or colonists, as they, in keeping with the new frontier rhetoric of the Internet, prefer to be called. It might have been something with the gravitation but I seemed to move in a rather erratic and uncomfortable manner. The novelty of my new surroundings was however enough to keep my interest up and after a while I joined the other colonists in their doings. It was not long before it struck me that there wasn't really anything special to see for one such as myself, a tourist. There was a vast continent to explore, but where to go, where to start and why even bother? Was there really anything worth my while here on Calypso; was there anything I really had to see? Where was the Niagara Falls or the equivalence of the Uffizi on Calypso? Where could you buy the T-shirt "My brother went to Calypso and all I got was this pixilated T-shirt"? There were sign posts, but what they were signifying didn't seem to be very significant. Since many have not been to Calypso before, except of course for the people who live there (those crazy hard-core gamers), there is no Virtual Worlds: Calypso edition of Lonely Planet and it seems like places don't become tourist places because tourists come there. Tourists become tourists when they come to tourist places. The tropical islands, the real world replicas, the fun and the games don't work because tourism as such doesn't exist in the virtual worlds. The social construct of cultural and material practices of tourism is still waiting to be invented in the case of virtual worlds. For the moment the virtual needs off-line publicity, or at least off-world publicity, before it can become an online attraction. Naturally, this doesn't mean

that tourism in virtual worlds isn't possible, but we'll probably have to wait a while before people, things and values start to move more freely in both directions. The virtual is still not real enough to attract any serious attention. It is stuck on the wrong side of a long-time going dichotomy where the virtual is paired with other "Others" like fictional, unserious and unimportant. In time this will probably change as a consequence of both general attitudes towards the "virtual" and of future improvements in computer graphics and other presentation techniques. Other obstacles to cyber-tourism will however remain, and two of them will now be further explored: the worlds themselves and their inhabitants.

WE DON'T TAKE TOO KINDLY TO YOUR KIND HERE It was previously noted that the fact that the light-footed identity tourist still carries a heavy baggage doesn't necessarily mean that identity tourism is totally out of the question, but still, identity -tourism isn't that commonplace in virtual worlds as one might think and there are several reasons for this. One thing is that most participants don't seem to take lightly on people who play around in their game. The image of the tourist is looked down on, here as in probably few other places. The other thing is that most participants seem to find the very idea of tourism and leisure time, frankly, a bit boring. Instead they have real lives in these places, they get caught up and entangled in them; and soon find themselves quite rooted. E-bay made it possible for people to buy ready-made identities, potent avatars with already developed abilities, from other players who saw this

as a way of getting paid for their play. But it wasn't only the companies that administered the worlds who were outraged to hear that people were trading their corporate property, but many players as well. The players held the view that this newfound practice would lessen the responsibility one would feel towards the world and its inhabitants by making entry and exit much easier. A similar but more novel practice is the hiring of avatars. For a set sum a company will provide you with access to 50 avatars in various worlds. This, it would seem from the reaction in various forums, is even more frowned upon. Not only is the investment in your character lowered but the threat of the Leviathan is almost completely removed since if you lose one avatar you can always try another one. It is as Julian Dibbell noticed in one of his articles; it's reasonable for most people to assume that what goes on in these worlds is just make believe and fun, but for the people who live in these worlds the people who treat their on-line existence as fun and games are either newcomers or sociopaths.<sup>3</sup> Something which is the total opposite of the argument of some cyber theorists: namely that inconsistency, which by the old or off-line standards is judged as unserious or even hypocritical, gets an affirmative dimension in the new world.<sup>4</sup> To argue wholeheartedly in either direction would be a bit foolish and imply that you caught a bit of good old technological determinism. The medium isn't really the message. To study each of these worlds as a society or culture of its own gives a more reasonable view; and if we return to the planet Calypso once again some reasons as to why the participants rather get themselves a stable identity than fool around will be given.

## Virtual worlds are dangerous places to visit. I died seventeen times during my first hour on Calypso. Only by practice and hard work can you get around Calypso without the risk of being killed.

With the amount of time it takes to be good at a profession no Calypso, it is actually easier to change your job at 7-eleven for a job at your hamburger restaurant of preference than it is to change your line of work on Calypso. To think of changing location is of course never really an option because to change worlds means that you have to literally leave everything behind, including your body. You have to start all over again. These places aren't made for tourists; they are made for people to live in. Virtual worlds are dangerous places to visit. I died seventeen times during my first hour on Calypso. Only by practice and hard work can you get around Calypso without the risk of being killed and if you for any reason would like to change your identity, you have to start this process all over again. You can't just come and go as you please and think that the world will welcome you with open arms. You have to invest a lot of time and effort in order to take part of whatever the world has to offer. There aren't any guided tours. Filiciak<sup>5</sup> notes that we are constantly building our identity in the virtual world, which is absolutely correct, but that should not lead us to conclude that virtual worlders prefer changing identities or any kind of "floating" identities. Virtual world visitors don't spend time building their identity just to tear it down. They are constantly building a more stable and coherent identity, not a more liquid and contradictory one. They are making an effort to take

the leap from being "nomads" to being residents. Of course, you can also make various normative assertions about which of the states to prefer, but that is another argument. It would seem that places on the net aren't such prime examples of the postmodern condition after all, at least not those parts of the net consisting of the virtual worlds of MMORPGs. There are traces of what you might call a postmodern sensibility in these places but there are also strong tendencies in the other direction. This might be partly due to a "conservatism" of the worlds' inhabitants, but perhaps it is mostly due to conservatism of the builders and constructors of the virtual worlds. As was implied earlier, the atmosphere of the virtual places is highly dependent on the laws and the structure of the world. What is possible in one world is not necessarily possible in another world. The material aspects of the world, the code, decide in large part what kind of interactions will take place. That different kinds of tourism haven't taken off has only minimally to do with the medium itself and much more with the kind of places that have actually been built. The difficulties in moving from one world to another are of course important, but only one of the relevant factors. To be sure, the political significance of the tourist is also varying in the different worlds. In one world the tourist might be experienced as a threat to the community while in the other the tourist might par-

adoxically act as a countermovement towards the commoditization of the world. Apart from the topic of buying and selling avatars, the buying and selling of in-world items for real-world cash has been the most debated, both by the players and by the service providers, claiming that this practice takes away the "gameness" of the worlds. The tourist's ludic existence might unsettle this established order and might return the worlds into play spaces once again. The intrinsical value of play will be reinstated as opposed to the money-driven horrors of virtual capitalism.

<sup>1</sup>Book, Betsy, "Traveling through Cyberspace: Tourism and Photography in Virtual Worlds" (2003). <http://ssrn.com/abstract=538182>  
<sup>2</sup>The planet Calypso is part of the web service [www.projet-entropia.com](http://www.projet-entropia.com).  
<sup>3</sup>Dibbell, Julian, "A rape in cyberspace, how an evil clown, a Haitian trickster spirit, two wizards, and a cast of dozens turned a database into a society", The village Voice (1993).  
<sup>4</sup>e.g., Filiciak, Mirosław, Hyperidentities: Postmodern Identity Patterns in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games in "The video game theory reader", Routledge (2003).  
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.





Space and on-line travelling:

## What does distance mean on the Internet?

By Daniel Pargman

<sup>24</sup> Are you experiencing the whole wide world at your fingertips when you surf on the web? Surely not, that would be equivalent to “experiencing the whole ocean” while dipping you toe in the water. How then is distance constructed, enacted and experienced on the Internet? This is the question that unites all cyber-geographers of the world.

not as trendy as they were in the 1990’s, MUDs are the predecessors of the modern MMOGs and most of what is true for them is also true for their larger siblings. A note on terms is that while “virtual world” is more general than “MUD”, I will use both terms in the text below and they are often interchangeable.

### MULTI-USER DUNGEONS

What then is a MUD? A MUD can be seen as many different things. As a virtual world that can be explored. As a hypertext that can be traversed in an almost infinite number of ways. As an interface to a large database. Traveling in a MUD could thus be construed as traveling through a virtual world, as traversing a hypertext or as moving within a database. While regarding a MUD as a database is undeniably correct in a technical sense, it is difficult for a human being to grasp what it means to travel or move through a database. We are made for navigating physical environments, not logical environments. A MUD is a logical environment that has been disguised as a as a virtual world.

It is possible to divide MUDs into two categories, adventure MUDs and social MUDs. This text only deals with the former kind of systems. Adventure MUDs are most often set in a fantasy or science fiction environment and contain game elements.

Social MUDs did away with the gaming aspects and instead became purely social environments meant for socializing and programming. Some attempts have been made to use social MUDs for other, more “serious” purposes such as for example online learning. Despite a persistent interest in using virtual worlds for non-gaming instrumental purposes, it has always been the games that have drawn the larger crowds.

### RECREATING PHYSICAL REALITY INSIDE VIRTUAL REALITY

One of the most important and powerful characteristics of a MUD is the spatial metaphor. A virtual world gains much of its suggestive powers from the fact that the made up, fictitious world is created in the image of the real world. The spatial metaphor creates a context for interaction and we get much for free as the virtual world is “furnished” with objects we recognize from our real lives. Many of the rules in virtual worlds are modeled on the real world and these “explicit spatial metaphors allow users to transfer navigational skills developed in the domain from which the metaphor is drawn” (Dieberger 1995). When a new object is encountered in a virtual world, it is possible to fall back on our pre-conceptions and our intuitive understanding to make sense of the function and the workings of, for

example, a virtual room, a virtual tape recorder or a virtual weapon. Drawing on the same resources, we can easily understand what happens when we say, whisper or shout something in a virtual world. Our knowledge of how things usually work (Norman, 1988) can also be utilized to embed information in objects we are acquainted with such as notes, drawers, and bookshelves and so on.

Despite the fact that much can be won by letting virtual objects work in much the same way as their physical counterparts, there are no technical limitations to prevent things that are impossible in the physical world from being implemented in a virtual world.

Examples of popular MUD abilities that break against real-world limitations are for example the ability to join anyone anywhere in a MUD (comparable to teleportation). Moreover, many actions are possible in a MUD that we do not even have real-world terms for. The possibility to anytime see who else is present in the MUD and a “gag” command (effortlessly filtering away the utterances of a players who annoys you) are examples of such actions. There are furthermore no technical reasons to hinder the creation of invisible objects, to take command of another player’s avatar (Dibbell 1993) or why (something described as) a small cottage cannot be as large as ministry on the inside, complete with endless corridors and doors that lead to new corridors.

A MUD could feasibly be “structured” like an extremely confusing topsy-turvy wonderland – as some MUDs have been. The reason most MUDs are not is because they would then not be as easy to understand and navigate in. The positive transfer be-

tween real-world knowledge and the virtual world would be rendered worthless if contradicted often enough. Cherny (1999, p.34) refers to ChaosMUD, a MUD with a weird topology that was roughly based on the metaphor of a computer file system. It is significant that ChaosMUD died because it was not an amenable environment for people to live or play in. How much “should” a MUD resemble the physical world and how much can the image of the physical world be re-negotiated and “improved” upon? That is a matter of striking a balance between comprehension and power. “Explicit spatial metaphors allow users to transfer navigational skills developed in the domain from which the metaphor is drawn, but constraints of the metaphor may limit the efficiency of the user interface” (Dieberger 1995, my emphasis). Dieberger further extends this reasoning: *“Spatial concepts in user interfaces are often hidden for a reason: the spatial metaphor can be an obstacle to navigate efficiently. For example when navigating using a strict building metaphor one has to navigate the whole way from location A to location B. Similarly in a space defined by a folder tree navigation may require to move up to the root node and then all the way down to reach another node at the bottom of the folder tree. A quicker and more efficient way to get from A to B in these examples is a shortcut from A to B – for example by defining an alias in the folder-tree or by defining a magic door in the building example. These features allows to tunnel through the space in one step. This tunneling feature is a disruption of the spatial metaphor however as it connects two remote locations in a single step. The spatial separation of A and B normally has a reason – for instance to group related files into folders. The shortcut disturbs this organization. Note that while we have an accepted word for such a feature in the file space, we do not have one for the building structure. It should also be pointed out that this connection makes*

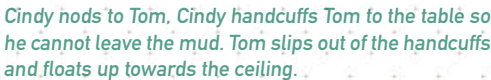
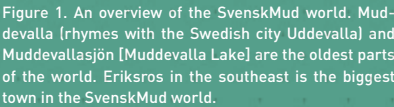
*the distance between A and B asymmetric – while A is close to B now (via the new connection) B is still as far from A as it was before, because both alias and magic door typically are one-way connections.”* / Dieberger 1995

In some MUDs the general rule is that what is useful in the MUD is permitted while real-world limitations are applied as far as possible in other MUDs. Although any limitations are arbitrary from a technical point of view, it is arguably the act of limiting limitless possibilities that makes the virtual world meaningful and possible to understand in the first place. It is only by restricting or forbidding instantaneous travel between arbitrary points in MUD that a relationship of variable distances within the virtual world can be maintained.

### MUDDIEN

> go west  
You’re standing on the path between the barn and the house in Warby. It runs in an east-west direction and leads from the street up to the chapel of the village. Towards north lies Warby’s venerable old school. Between the church and the school lies the small parish office. Towards south lies the office of the Cup Foundation. There are five visible ways from here: east, west, south, north and northeast.

The SvenskMud world consists of 6000 distinct places that the player can visit (these places are technically called “rooms” no matter if they describe indoor or outdoor locations). In the log above, my character moved from one of those rooms (the chapel) to another (the trail between the barn and the house). These two rooms are a small part of a world that has its own geography and that goes under the name “Muddien” (see figure 1 below).



A sense of the voluminous and intricate environment that the SvenskMud world constitutes (not to mention the work that has gone into developing it) can be gained by studying the annals of the SvenskMud Expedition Club. The Expedition Club was formed when some players together set out to explore the width and the breadth of the SvenskMud world. In the protocols from their first expedition they explored the island of Vagarö (in the northwest corner of the map). The description of their travails is quite voluminous and to some extent mimics the travel diary of a 19th century European explorer.

## RESTRICTED SIMULATIONS AND SIMULATED RESTRICTIONS, TRAVEL.

SvenskMud depicts a fantasy world, but a fantasy world that has its own internally consistent geography. This fantasy world makes allowances for an abundance of phenomena that does not exist in our world – like mythical creatures and powerful magic – but still goes to a great length to adhere to many of the physical laws of our world. The SvenskMud world is large and it is supposed to be far between one end of the world and the other. It is supposed to take time to cover such a distance. Players are meant to explore the world and practice how to find their way around. Players are furthermore meant to randomly bump into other players and chat with them (for example in pubs where they can also have a drink and heal damage they have taken). Apart from social MUDs, there are no ubiquitous commands available for players to instantly travel ("teleport") between different places in the MUD. One of the differences between SvenskMud – an adventure MUD – and a purely social MUD is

that while both make use of an elaborate metaphor of a spatial environment, SvenskMud forces the players to deal with the consequences to a much higher extent. Social MUDs tend to allow an unlimited number of shortcuts that allow players to get around (and undermine) the spatial metaphor. Dieberger (1995) noted that "spatial concepts in user interfaces are hidden for a reason: the spatial metaphor can be an obstacle to navigate efficiently". There can in other words be a conflict between adhering to spatial concepts on the one hand and effective navigation on the other hand. Effective navigation often has a higher priority in social MUDs and "teleportation" is often accessible to everyone in these systems. Spatial concepts are however not hidden in SvenskMud but are rather emphasized, because effective navigation has low priority in adventure MUDs. The priority is to create a consistent metaphor, an illusion of being in a "real" world that is open to exploration and interaction. Being able to teleport wherever instantaneously would collapse (virtual) distances and make space and the spatial metaphor increasingly meaningless.

The balance between adhering to a real-world spatial metaphor and pure effectiveness is also present in modern graphical virtual worlds. How large is a virtual world and how fast can you travel between one end and another? Different games have experimented with different trade-offs. An example would be to give you as a player the choice to set your character on "auto-pilot" while running between two cities (and while you yourself grab a quick lunch), renting a horse for in-game money to travel more quickly (while you make a cup of tea or

run to the bathroom) or paying up more for instantaneous travel through “teleport” gates. Another example is to force players to explore the map but then allowing them to use some sort of express service (a horse or flying) for travelling between “known” locations in the virtual world.

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is another area where there is a need to consider the trade-off between effectiveness and making the world simpler and more understandable. In social MUDs, a participant can usually say anything they want to any other character, no matter where in the world (where in the MUD) that character is. That is, they can "talk" even if they are not in the same room or even the same part of the virtual world. To be able to communicate in this way has a high utility and is comparable to universal use of cell phones (or perhaps telepathy). It is not very realistic in a fantasy setting though and also serves to collapse the meaning of distances and thus also the meaning of the (virtual) world. However, being able to communicate at a distance has such a high utility that is possible also in SvenskMud. In SvenskMud, this sort of communication has costs though. When you are out of "magic ability" you can not communicate "magically" with distant players until your ability has been "recharged". There is in all MUDs a need to express oneself in other ways than only through utterances. In social MUDs of the MOO type, all participants are free to "emote", e.g. to communicate feelings, gestures and non-verbal communication to other characters in any way they want:

In the example above, Cindy pretends to handcuff Tom to a table. The exact meaning is of course ambiguous but could be a way of jokingly saying "I enjoy your company and I don't want you to leave". The equivalent of emotes is called "feelings" in SvenskMud (or "soul commands" in equivalent English-speaking MUDs). Even though more than one thousand simple verbs (smile, nod, spit, jump) can be combined with almost two thousand adverbs (jokingly, respectfully, angrily, happily), SvenskMud feelings are severely restricted in comparison to the unlimited use of the emote command in a social MUD. Unusual actions such as handcuffing someone or floating up towards the ceiling are not part of the repertoire of possible actions that a player can perform in SvenskMud. The unrestricted use of the emote command allows characters to pretend to perform actions that are not "actually" happening in the game and/or that are not possible in the real world (e.g. pretending to float towards the ceiling, pretending to kill someone who is in the same room). Since also "pretended" actions that are uttered tend to be perceived as performatives, that is, as things that are actually happening (Cherny 1999), this would pose problems in light of the stricter adherence to spatial and real-world metaphors in adventure MUDs. These actions are consequently not permitted in SvenskMud, a decision that leaves the SvenskMud environment poorer of possibilities but also more realistic. Ironically SvenskMud depicts a medieval fantasy world full of (tightly regulated)

magic while most social MUDs depict an everyday modern environment (a sprawling house or a campus) where magic is used without abandon.

While unchecked experimentation has been conducted in MUDs where the cost of failure is low, commercial MMOGs are necessarily more conservative in implementing wild schemes or severe restrictions. The result in such environments is a compromise between what paying customers demand and what the environment "demands" (where the former often wins out for natural reasons). In many MMOGs, it is possible to have several parallel windows on the screen, e.g. one for communication between the player and the computer system (with descriptions of what the player, or opponents do and the effects of those actions), another for communication between the members of the player's guild and a third for communication between the player and others on her "buddy" list.

## TRAVELLING IN VIRTUAL WORLDS

This text has problematized space, distance and travelling in on-line virtual worlds. The most important point is that there exists a trade-off between power and comprehension in online environments, or more generally, in computer environments. As this is a problem that will not go away and can not be solved once and for all, we will continue to see innovative and interesting examples of how this trade-off is handled for many years to come.

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# Visualisation of Wildlife in the Global Economy

## Photography between Aesthetics and Science

By Árni Sverrisson

One of the phenomena that creates a sense of globalization in contemporary society is the possibility to transcend space and “erase distance” through images or footage from faraway places. The news are the most familiar form of this, but other genres can also be seen as globalizing in this sense. Wildlife photography, that brings exotic nature and wildlife to us, is a good example of this.

The production, showing, screening and viewing of exotic nature photography and film is obviously not a new phenomenon. As in the case of many other aspects of globalization, this practice and the chain of activities that constitutes it actually build on a long-standing tradition. However, technological developments of different kinds contribute to creating a sense of ubiquity, easy access and accelerated transmission of wildlife images. Along with many other similar trends, this in turn creates the appearance of global social connectivity.

Below, a few images are discussed in order to illuminate this phenomenon. As I move on, theoretical tools from different directions are brought together for this purpose. At the end I attempt to formulate a more general conclusion about the visualization of nature and wildlife in the global cultural economy. They are seen as shaped by a scientific/commercial/ cultural complex intimately connected with very different arenas of cultural consumption ranging from expensive adventure travel to ecological markets.

### Theoretical building blocks

The wildlife image production process can be seen as a hybrid between two kinds of production chains. Such images are, on the one hand, commodities like any other. They are made by professionals who need

to meet the cost of their enterprises, including an income for themselves. The distribution of these images is also a costly process. In the case of film, they are usually screened by large television companies, whereas still images tend to end up in magazines of various kinds and photo books, often published by large conglomerates. The increasing concentration of media power therefore tends to create a structure that enables the making and diffusion of particular types of images and excludes others.

On the other hand, images are special kinds of artifacts. They are intended to carry information, evoke emotions and even facilitate the understanding and communication of particular theories, world views and political ideologies. Hence, the connection between the “author” (movie director, art director, photographer, etc.) and the viewer/reader is basic to the understanding of image-making and distribution processes, but this connection is indirect and complex, both culturally and technically. In addition, this process is mediated by global corporations that structure the image business (for instance internet-based image bureaux), but in the end, these companies also depend on the connection between “markets” and “talent.”

It is possible to think of this connection as more of a two-way communication or even, a social interaction, than we have been accustomed to. This mutuality is mediated by technologies and interpretative frameworks that exist independently of the business side of things. However, they are harnessed and even exploited by what perhaps can be called the image economy. Similar considerations apply in other markets in which matters of taste are important: in certain food markets, for instance, and quality garments (i.e. fashion).

### Interpreting conventionally

Most markets and cultural fields embody conventions for identifying and rewarding excellence. Such rhetorics can be identified in wildlife photography as well, or rather, their visual counterparts. However, images are frequently embedded in text that suggests interpretational strategies that are not aesthetically oriented. Even when the text is absent or limited to short captions, images tend to be interpreted according to conceptual schemata that exist independently of particular pictures or picture collections and the visual practices that produced them. Let me provide a few examples.

Among the first five images that turn up in a search on the internet image bureau CORBIS, using the keyword “aggressive,” three show exotic animals (zebra, tiger, polar bear). The crop is more even as additional images are brought in but the animal content remains high – and exotic. A search with the keyword “peace” generates no animal image among the first 100. “Love” brings up a dog (with its master). “Ferocity” turns up many exotic animals (and images from comics) whereas in the results for “gentle” and “calm” animals are less in evidence. “Cute” will give you kids and puppies. Using a keyword like “wildlife” turns up a more balanced collection of images, many of which have no emotional description attached to them. Thus exotic animals and predators in particular seem to be interpreted conventionally as representatives of the dangerous side of nature.

Our interpretative resources are more complex than this, however. Most of us will for instance recognize the “meaning” of the image in figure 2. Most of us are able to put words to the feelings this image evokes. Some of us can theorize about a identifi-

able type of gaze or looking practice thus expressed. These cheetahs are probably just waiting for their evening meal to pass by close enough to be caught but this does not preclude the creation of an image of them that can be understood and talked about as an embodiment of important values.

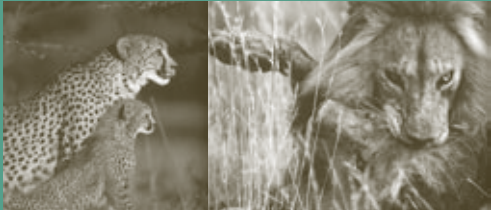


Figure 2. Cheetah, by Richard Du Toit, from African Wildlife in Action, PDP-publishing, Cape Town, 204, pp. 70  
Figure 3: Male Lions, Serengeti, Tanzania, by Mitsuoaki Iwago. From Serengeti: Natural Order of the African Plains, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1987, Page 190

A similar phenomenon can be observed in relation to Figure 3, which shows the conclusive moment of a fight between two lions. What does it really show? Aggression? Fighting for supremacy? Competing for food? Survival of the fittest? We do not know but yet, it is easy to create an interpretation and through that establish a relation with the image. This interpretative strategy creates an appearance of knowing nature by classifying it according to well-known terms. Relating to images in this way, i.e. constructing them as expressions of a sociality of sorts, closely modeled on our own, can also be found in the sciences, particularly in ecology, ethology and similar specialties. As Donna Haraway has convincingly shown, our scientific interpretations of primate behavior evolved hand in hand with human politics.

Thus, with the advent of feminism, behaviors and interactions were increasingly interpreted from a female point of view. The role of females in ensuring group cohesion has for instance attracted more attention whereas the dominant males of old have seen their power circumscribed, at least within scientific discourse, and increasingly, they were cast in parasitic roles.

Anthropomorphic image interpretation and analogous science practices suggest that the status of photographs as evidence or as “witnesses-of-truth” is somewhat exaggerated. The same can be said about the objectivity of the sciences of nature. Yet there is no reason to doubt per se that the lions and cheetah depicted above have existed and been aligned to each other as shown in the images. Further, and for different reasons, we can assume that their image was captured in protected wildlife reserves, and not, for instance, in the local zoo. The issue is rather that the reading of photographs with the conceptual tools learned as part of an urban industrial or rather, post-industrial, lifestyle are likely to gloss over most of the work that went into making them, select them from larger collections, place them in layouts, etc. and thus, conceal from us how the images we see are related to actual goings-on among “wildlife.”

### Elements of a theory of (visual) inscriptions

At this point I would like to introduce elements of Bruno Latour’s work. Most of Latour’s writing has been about science and engineering, including the role of images and other visualizations in these activities, but he has lately approached other topics, including the connections between art, science and politics. In an early article (“topofil de Boa Vista ou la référence scientifique - montage photo-philos-

ophique” in Raison Pratique n°4 pp.187-216), Latour argues that (empirical) science is a complex process that transforms or translates messy nature, a.k.a. as reality, into ordered inscriptions, mostly images (such as diagrams) accompanied by (explanatory) text (Figure 4) These products are what we are used to calling knowledge, but the status of knowledge requires something more, namely the establishing of reference that links images and texts back to nature, as it were, but a nature now named, measured and classified. This is how the credibility of models, theories and other abstractions, including visual (re)presentations, is established. Science is the practice of creating this movement back and forth, inscription and reference and (re)inscription and so on.

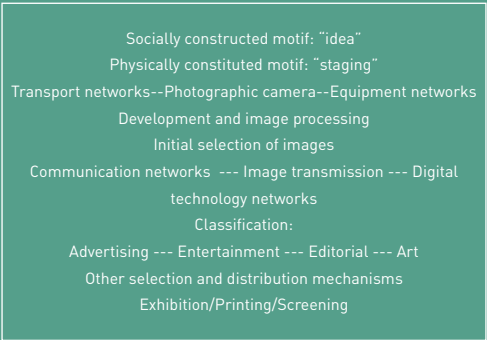
So far we are on familiar ground. However, Latour argues that we often assume too quickly that these processes are simple and straightforward when they are actually quite complex. Latour’s approach is well described by Lynch in a summary of the article mentioned above:

There is no paradigmatic gaze, no single moment of discovery, no ultimate confrontation between an object and a theory- or concept-laden interpretation. Instead, there is an assemblage of interventions inscribed upon diverse materials which are temporarily organized into an evidentiary chain, each link of which represents painstaking efforts to conserve, preserve, measure, encode and assemble what was “already there” in the wild terrain investigated (Michael Lynch: “A pragmatogony of factishes” in Metascience, 10, 223-32).

I showed above how one can interpret images readily according to established conventions, almost



without thinking, but in that case, we are also ignoring, or as Latour would say, making into a black box, the long and complex chain that connects cheetah and lions to us. This complex chain needs to be explicated, teased out and opened in order to understand wildlife photography. The production chain is outlined in box I below. There are several steps, and each of those steps actually assembles a large number of decisions that mobilize cultural and other resources and embed them in the image being staged, captured, processed or distributed. Technical decisions are mixed with judgments of taste and symbolic issues.



Box I: The photographic production chain.

Let me recapitulate. For Latour, the creation of reference through correspondence happens too quickly in science, let alone in wildlife photography cum natural history. Rather, translations are laborious and complicated as messy nature is ordered and inscribed into the flat objects beloved by scientists and other cultured people: pictures, pages, books, screens and texts about images. Further, in each step, nature or traces of it are not merely translated into new manifestations, new traces, but at the same time, this has to be done in such a way that any given stage refers to earlier ones, and in

particular, the one preceding it. Thus, a picture of a lion presupposes a lion, a negative or RAW-file, their development or processing, selection from among lion pictures, color adjustment, cropping and so on. In a sense, it is the same image that moves through this process, but from a different angle we can see how the process actually completely refashions the lions, or their visible traces, until a final image is presented to reader/viewers.

Translations and References

In the case of photography this translation process is complicated by the need to accomplish it according to the established conventions of photographic excellence and the specific, collectively maintained, criteria for what is great wildlife photography. The variety of the issues involved can be gauged from comparing the anti-image in figure 5 to those already shown or the images below: documenting wildlife is anything but a straightforward task.



Figure 5. Lions, Hluluwe, South Africa, by the author  
Figure 6. Elephant, by Jonathan Scott, From Dawn to Dusk, BBC Books, London, 1996, page 167

In addition, the translation processes involved take place on a global scale and involve people in many different roles, all kinds of image technologies and a large variety of social structures, conventions and styles. This context complicates the translation chain even further. In box II below, some relevant types of translation practice are listed. The list it not exhaustive, and more detail is possible. Some of

these translation practices occur at many different stages, not necessarily consistently. An example of this is the exercising of "good taste," a concept on which Pierre Bourdieu has based much of his economics of culture.

- Staging
  - Framing
  - Light
  - Judgements of taste
  - Other Techniques (Flash, Filters, Macro, Digital)
  - Placing and naming (Gombe, Serengeti)
  - Drama (Gore, Dust and Blood)
  - Sequencing and narrative
  - Aestheticization ("beauty")
  - Photographic aesthetics (colors, gradations)
  - Scientification (ethology, zoology)
  - Distinguishing "editorial" and "advertising" and "art"

Box II. Examples of translation practices.

Let me provide a few illustrations of these practices. Figure 6 is an example of how a very conventional image is made more attractive (and thus, marketable, within the processes outlined above) by using available light. From our point of view, however, it is no less important how the light underlines the tangible reality of the elephant: lines and creases are brought out, in a kind of visualized tactility, and we move closer to the natural reality represented to us by the image. This is one example of how the reference back to nature is created visually in wildlife photography.

In figure 7, naming and placing does the work of conviction for us: the image shows an identifiable individual presented to us almost as a person, whose existence, for that reason, we do not doubt. The Chimpanzee Gwekulo is, in other words, documented by the combination of names and image. Finally, by speaking directly to our instincts, Figure 8 dissolves completely for a moment the distance

between us and the African plains. The warm colors and the small gazelles being eaten combine with blood-smeared faces of the hyenas to accomplish this. This effect is enhanced by the dry prose of the matter-of-fact caption: "Although cooperative in the hunt, hyenas are voracious, noisy eaters, falling over each other to consume their prey within minutes of its death." Drama, gore and blood in the light of the low sun are combined with an evocation of the authority of science and the viewer is duly ensnared. The fussy outlines of moving limbs and heads enhance the effect even more.



Figure 7. From Daryl and Sharna Balfour: "Mahale Mountains" from Africa Geographic, March 2005, page 31.

Figure 8. Hyena eating by Mitsuki Iwago. From Serengeti: Natural Order of the African Plains, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1987, page 143.

Science, Technology and Aesthetics

As noted above, a scientific terminology and impassionate prose form an important part of the discourse that accompanies wildlife photography, in captions and elsewhere. This mixture of science, [conventional] aesthetics and increasingly sophisticated image technology is a central feature of wildlife photography networks, products and markets. Let me provide a few examples.

The first example of this symbiosis of science and wildlife photography is taken from the journal Behavioural Ecology (Figure 9). An image of a group of lemurs in their natural habitat (or what looks like it) was published on the cover. This selection was

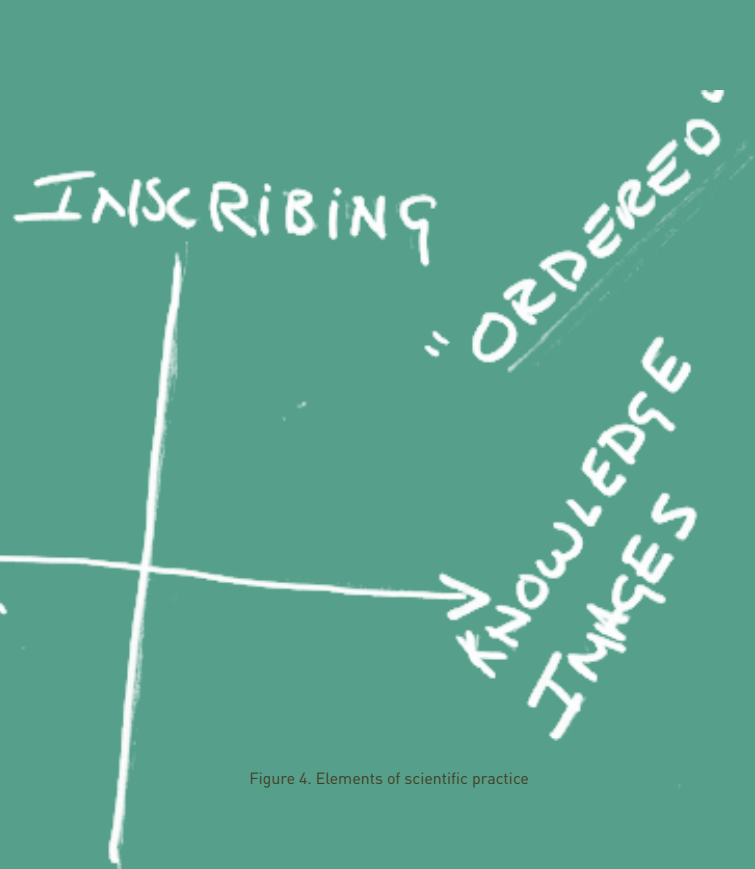


Figure 4. Elements of scientific practice

a propos an article about lemur group size that reports a study of the level of cortisone, a stress hormone, in female lemurs. In very large and very small groups, cortisone levels are elevated compared to intermediate size groups. The explanation is sought in the social situations that occur among members of such groups. In large groups, competition among the members of the group for food and other resources is keen, due to group size. Further, when food is found, a large group will finish it quickly. Very small groups have a different problem, however, in that they can be dislodged from food sources and generally have problems in assuring access to resources against competing groups. This theory is expressed in Figure 10 that might as well have appeared in a textbook on economics, underlining the intersections of social ideas and ideas of the natural.

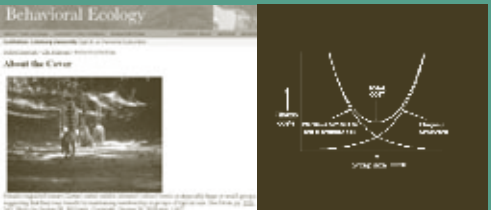


Figure 9. From a screen dump from Gothenburg University Library Electronic Journals Service created October 21 2005. Figure 10. Optimizing Group Size and Fitness Costs. From Behavioral Ecology, Advance Access Service, digital object identifier 10.1093/behco/ari025

This image is typical for the inscriptions that scientists make and the making of which Latour wrote about, in which nature is lifted out its messy, disorganized "natural" state, as it were, and ordered, explained and purified. As we have seen, the images of wildlife photographers work in a similar way: bloody hyena and gazelles become objects of contemplation and aesthetizing viewing practice in nice houses faraway from the heat, dust and smell in which the actual events photographed took place. Thus, wild-

life images appeal directly to us but the directness of their appeal is shored up by the artful creation and circulation of reference. This is accomplished with identifiable visual techniques in close interaction with the accompanying text that often describes aspects of the making if the images, what they, scientifically speaking, show, and, sometimes, how the photographer went about making them. This last aspect, convincing us that physically and concretely, wildlife images show what they purport to show, is essential to the whole enterprise.

Another instance of this close alliance between [conventional] aesthetics and science is expressed in numerous television shows, screened on channels such as Discovery and Animal Planet but also on main-line television stations such as the BBC. The BBC has been very important in the development of wildlife imagery, by screening nature programs for large audiences and by its BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year price contest. As technology has developed, web-based applications that complement the traditional TV medium have become increasingly prominent. Figure 11, from the BBC Science & Nature website, shows how it is possible to read about elephants, their diet, habitat, behavior, etc, see some typical elephant images and watch a small elephant video. While the website does not replace the TV productions [there is no web-TV option], it establishes and consecrates the idea of wildlife photography as an auxiliary to and based on science, through the very links that lead to it.

Yet, wildlife photography is not science. It makes different inscriptions and makes them in different ways. This aspect is also covered in the website which devotes large sections to "life behind the lens" material, in a narrative mode that has become familiar in DVD publishing, for instance. An example is shown in Figure 12.



Figure 11. From the BBC Science & Nature website. Screen captured Nov 14 2005.



Figure 12 Detail of a screen dump from the BBC Science and Nature website, Nov 14 2005.

Thus the creation of reference through revelation of how the inscriptions were made, which is, after all, one of the cornerstones of the scientific canon, is also deployed by TV personnel and photographers in order to validate their claims to providing a window into the world.

However, we would be missing something essential if we saw websites of these kinds as mere mirrors, and bad ones at that, with diffuse and low resolution versions of great imagery available elsewhere in forms that do justice to the skills of photographers. The image, important as it is, is part of a larger network, and the material form of the image: book, screen or something else, is subordinated to this network. In this instance, the website is an entrance to a much larger chain that we can, as it were, follow to a position "closer" to nature. Eventually, that voyage leads some people all the way to physically relocating themselves to places where animals can be viewed in the flesh, with the added realism of heat, humidity, sound and odor, at which point they are likely to lift their own cameras and create their own visual inscriptions ... This brings us back to the issues outlined at the outset.

### Concluding: Global Production Networks and Translation Chains

It has been argued throughout that in order to understand wildlife photography it is necessary to consider the mechanics of the production process itself. So far, we have been able to establish the following:

- Photographs embody conventional notions about wildlife, realism etc.,
- In virtue of this, they create an illusory reference to a known "reality,"
- This reality is held to exist somewhere else (and hence, it can be traveled to),
- This reality appears as a manifestation of the collective beliefs of consumers,
- However, the reference is created through a carefully orchestrated process,
- This activity is guided by a rich set of cultural resources mobilized by photographers,

- Central among these resources are the sciences that frame photographic practices,
- Contemporary media logics as understood by photographers are important as well.
- All these resources are materially and technically embedded in wildlife images.

Yet, it would take several books to go through each step in the translation/production chain and analyze the translation practices brought into play in each stage, how reference to earlier stages is created and painstakingly maintained, and a convincing image presented to viewers, which they in turn can interpret according to their own lights, after more or less schooling in ecology, ethology, zoology and other relevant specialties, including the technicalities of (great) photography.

Thus we seem to end up with a paradox: Understanding wildlife photography entails more than analyzing the impressions or emotions that images generate and yet, gathering, systematizing and analyzing all the available and relevant information about all the different stages in the process in which they are produced is impossible. The approach suggested by Latour can therefore become somewhat difficult to practice. At the same time, knowing is about selecting data and abstracting the relevant patterns from it, and therefore, about forgetting and avoiding excessive detail. This calls for modes of analysis that summarize central features of wildlife photography as a production process, but avoid reducing it to a mere mirror of the world.

Further, we have been able to observe in this particular instance how global production and marketing networks merge with translation networks fashioned by cultural practice and conventional aesthetics, in the context of, inter alia, printing and publishing, ecotourism, photo-safari and trophy hunting. Economics are mediated by culture and culture is mediated through economic considerations. Aesthetics and commerce presuppose each other. In this sense, the global economy can be conceptualized as an array of global translation networks that mix and interact and together form a global translation engine.

I believe it is most productive to analyze the global translation engine in this case as an identifiable aesthetic-scientific regime that shapes the global production chain and global markets for wildlife images and connects to the larger context of ecotourism and park management in the South. Pursuing this strand further is likely to lead to discourses of a different kind, exemplified by Harrison White's theory of markets as rhetorical constructs that arise in and keep together networks, and by Bourdieu and his ideas of the reverted economics that apply in cultural fields. Yet, it is possible to bring into this kind of discussion the insights exemplified above:

- images are practical intersections of materiality and sociality,
- as inscriptions they shape interpretative and rhetorical practices
- these practices have a material and technical base in photography
- translation takes place in complex and extensive sequences or chains,
- reference to science and concepts of nature are essential for these chains,
- Chains merge in networks with a global reach that shape global culture



Figure 13. Photo by D. Balfour. From Daryl Balfour (2004) Practical Wildlife Photography, African Geographic, Cape Town.

### More?

<http://www.ensmp.fr/~latour/> has many of Latour's central works in electronic form.

### Photography

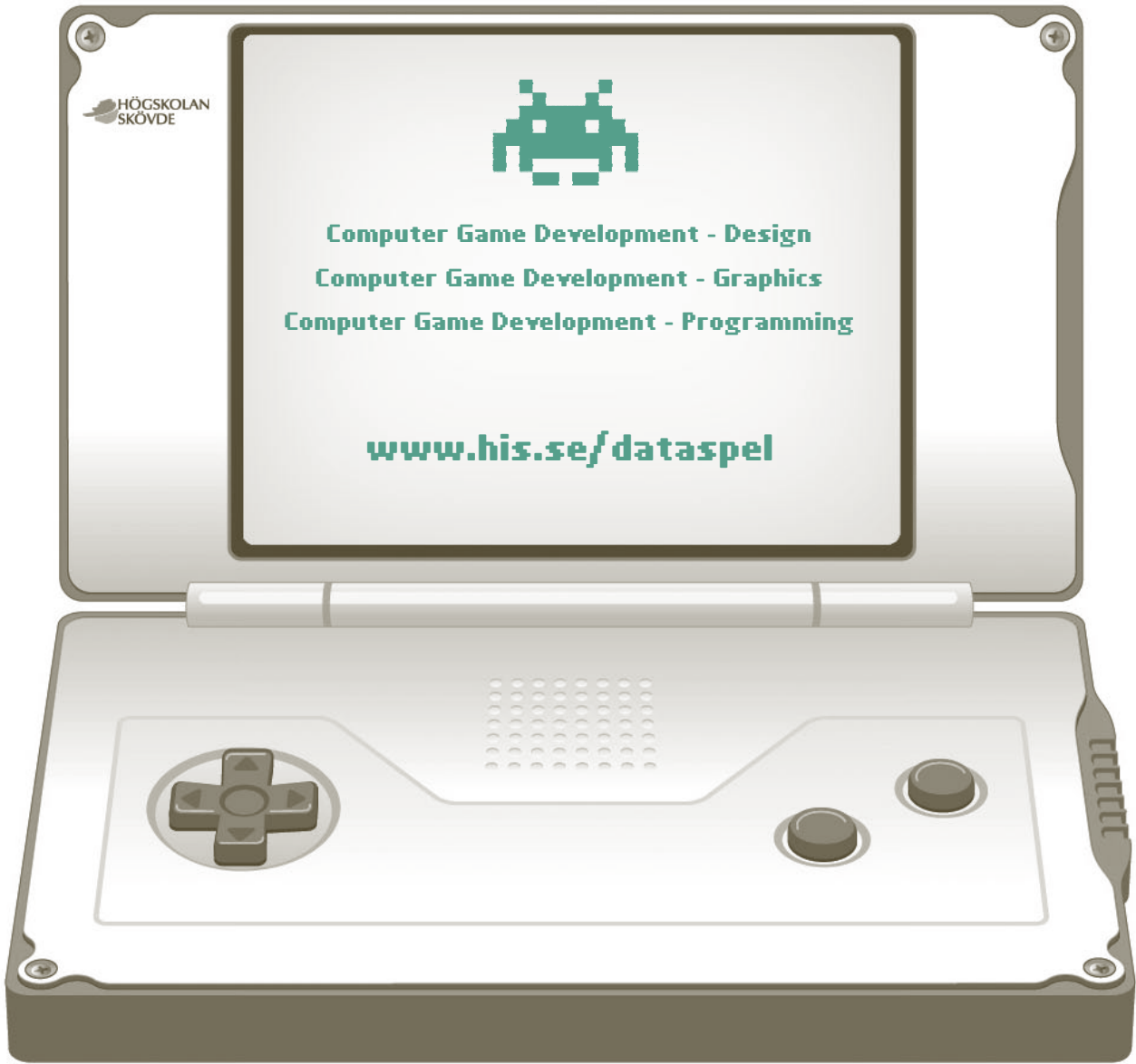
<http://www.naturephotographers.net/> and other similar sites provide different but instructive examples of the aesthetic-scientific regime discussed above. <http://www.jonathanangelascott.com/> and Scott's Dawn to Dusk offer inside views and more pictures. One of the best. Daryl Balfour (2004) Practical Wildlife Photography, African Geographic, Cape Town, is an example of how photographers think about their images. <http://www.africa-geographic.com/> is informative but extremely slow. However, there are numerous fast websites (located in Europe or the US) that publish the kind of photographic images discussed here and reflections about them. CORBIS is always an option, of course, as well as the BBC.

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The photographs in this article were originally published in colour

## Create & Animate the Future Playground





# Setting the Crime Scene:

Aspects of Performance in Jack the Ripper Guided Tourist Walks  
By Rikke Hansen and Chris Wilbert

World cities like London have long been, and are increasingly, sold as places of tourism and leisure – spaces of attraction not just in terms of particular events and places, but also in terms of their urban culture. As such tourist London can be thought of as a massive conduit of flows of riotous forms. Firstly, we can think of differing kinds of tourists, from local day-trippers from the south of England and beyond, to international weekend city-break tours, and longer-term round-the-world tourists taking ‘time out’ to do temporary work to pay to get to the next destination. We can also think of the constant flows of migrant workers to work in service sectors, as porters, dishwashers, cleaners and hotel maids throughout the city. Moreover, we can also think here of the smells, tastes, and sights that are displayed, narrated, consumed, transformed; a fusing together in often new ways of products from around the world for locals and tourists. And of course seemingly circulating in all directions is that most abstract of ma-

terials – money – without which few if any of these pleasures are to be consumed. As such we might follow the geographer David Gilbert in seeing that: ‘tourism has played an under-recognized role in the shaping of the modern city as a place to be seen and experienced’. Here we consider one aspect of tourism. That is how the increasingly popular guided walking tours in and around London are shaping and perform the city in ways that are perhaps less physical, more mobile and transient than many other tourist-based developments, though ones that are no less material and certainly not without effects. London may also be characterised as a multifunctional tourist-historic city, where tourism and leisure overlay and overlap with the commercial city and the historic centre. As such London also has many spaces that are connected through acts of violence of the past made present in the now. Indeed, it can be argued that London, like other cities – but in perhaps more concentrated ways – has

its own spectro-geographies, being populated by ghosts, the murdered, their perpetrators and so on. It also appears increasingly the case that publics convene around some of these sites of violence or representations of violence and disaster in themed historical museums, guided walks, or other sites, as tourists. Various terms have been developed to describe this convening or the places of trauma where convening occurs. We have heard of dark tourism, tragic tourism, thanatourism, fatal attractions and traumascapes. Yet, all these terms seem to imply that these spaces of trauma, violence and death are the opposite of everyday spaces, that their attraction may lie in their being exceptional spaces far removed from the everyday. However, this may not quite be the case.

Walter Benjamin argued in his essay ‘The Storyteller’ that modern urban life has seen a process of exclusion of death from everyday life in Western societ-

ies. Yet, we might counter this by arguing with Mark Seltzer that in Modern media-saturated societies we see more a process whereby sights of dying and death have flooded the perceptual fields of the living since the late nineteenth century. That we are confronted everyday by images of violent crime, death, dying, disaster, sometimes to uncompromising and deeply uncomfortable degrees in what Seltzer terms an emerging 'wound culture' or pathological public sphere'. If we accept Seltzer's idea that mass media and their audiences are increasingly focused on representations of trauma - where people publicly confess their sufferings, or where events are re-dramatised or fictionalised - we might also argue that touristic convening around sites of death and disaster is more a continuation of everyday public convening around media sites. We see this convening for example, in syndicated confessional shows such as those of Oprah Winfrey, Jerry Springer, and the many generic copies of these around the world. As such, tourism spaces and practices may well be added to those other selected spaces (of television, cinema, the art gallery or museum) where it is permissible, even desirable, to publicly display death in imaginary, tangible, or virtual forms.

But let us also not be too quick to judge here, as this public display and the convening around sites of death and disaster is not necessarily to be condemned as a negative move, at least not in a knee-jerk reaction, as there may be more going on in these varied processes than at first meets the eye. Tourists, or at least some tourists, may be making more active use of media forms in their convening. That is, they are not just passively consuming media, but using knowledges gained from television and cinema to make sense of sites they visit in more complex ways than is often to be seen in mainstream discussions (and judgements) of tourism.

#### MURDERS, TOURISTS, WALKING.

Jack the Ripper guided walks in the east end of London, which visit the actual scenes of the crime of five prostitutes murdered during the late summer months of 1888, are one very popular site of convening around crime scenes. These walks are by far the most popular guided walks in London with estimates of up to 100,000 people a year going on them. Yet, like many aspects of urban mass tourism, these walks are often viewed as a form of passive consumption by tourists of places and the knowledges distributed by guides, guidebooks, and other media. By contrast, in recent years London has witnessed a blossoming of literature celebrating walking the city. Here it is variously claimed that individual walking is the prime tool for getting to know the mood of the city, its mythologies, for getting in touch with its ghosts, hidden histories, and for making new linkages between pasts and presents. Iain Sinclair has been foremost amongst these writers with books such as *Lights out* for the Territory and *London Orbital*. But more recent forms also include Stephen Smith's adventures into 'urban speleology' - the exploration of man-made underground structures - in his *Underground London: Travels Beneath the City Streets*, and the magazine *Smoke* amongst many others.

This psychogeographical-historical influenced literature may at first appear to have very little in common with guided tourist walks - the former being dedicated to the aleatory and individual experience of drifting through (or beneath) the streets of London - the latter usually (or at least in comparison) viewed as involving stage-managed sites, and regulated group audiences moving passively through city spaces. There is unquestionably a political dimen-

sion to some of the literature on drifting that runs from Surrealists and Lettrist-Situationists. (However, whether we wish to see Guy Debord's proclamation in his 'Exercise in Psychogeography' of 1954 that: 'Jack the Ripper is probably psychogeographically in love' as political, rather than simply offensive, is open to some debate). This aside, it may also be argued that the recent abundance of literature on urban wandering and alternative urban histories of London has to some extent emerged out of tourist London's guided walking industry. As such, we might more cogently view these Jack the Ripper guided walks as having more likely helped stir interest in the walking literature so current in London today.

At first this claim may seem paradoxical. We are used to thinking about so called 'high culture', or a vanguard of new middle class 'taste-makers', being at the forefront of cultural change, with discoveries or tendencies only subsequently moving into 'popular culture' in a somewhat poor and constrained idea of a democratisation of taste and experience. Here we would like to suggest that the trajectory of such cultural movements may also flow other ways - perhaps from popular culture to high culture - or may in fact be caught up in webs of meaning-making which are more complex than one that situates change within a hierarchical system.

#### LANDSCAPES OF MURDER AND THE CRIME SCENE

Jack the Ripper guided tourist walks emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as part of a general movement away from heritage focused on royalty, aristocracy, and elite political figures and more on events of popular culture of London. Interestingly, it seems that an Australian living in London was the first to person to start such walks in the 1960s. As already stated, these guided walks are currently the most popular walks in London. Indeed on some summer nights five or six groups of up to 60 people can be seen moving through the areas of Spitalfields and Whitechapel where the murders occurred.

Such guided walks are relatively easy businesses to set up. They require little initial capital except for what might be called micro-media advertising in tourist maps, hotels, or other tourist hotspots. What these guided walks do require is knowledge by guides of the murder scenes, as well as an ability to entertain or hold the interest of an audience. And of course what is most needed is the public landscape of the murder scenes. However, this landscape that acts as the stage for the walks is also shared with many other people doing many other activities, which points to ways in which walks are always liable to random events that may impede them and disruption by other actors. Indeed, warnings about this potentiality of disruption are often made by tour guides at the start of walks. Such warnings may partly function to encourage the group to bond and stay together, implying that we are going into a 'risky area' that also emphasises the myth and thrill of the 'crime scenes' to be witnessed. Moreover, while the tours are time-managed, there is only one guide on each walk and of course this guide does not speak all of the time; much of the walking entails people roughly following the guide between different points where attention is drawn to specific features or a story is narrated. So even though these walks are regulated, this regulation is also fairly loose as the stage is open and tourists have a lot of time to chat to each other, to see other things not necessarily connected with the focus of the walks and view aspects of the city they might not otherwise see or normally think of as sites of attraction.

It can therefore be argued that the city-spaces of Whitechapel and Spitalfields are stages for perfor-

mances of differing historical and spatial narratives by a variety of walking tours and guides. In these performances the walks do not always follow a chronological path from the first murder to the fifth, some miss out one murder site, as it is away from a cluster of the other four, yet these walks still take sequential, linear forms. But all these tours work through the city using recognisable existing or 'authentic' traces of late nineteenth century Whitechapel and Spitalfields to dramatise their story. The tourists almost always lose any sense of orientation as the walks move around narrow streets, reverse on themselves, head down underpasses, or move through some of the few existing narrow alleyways. Here, the old and the new are mixed in ways where the new also points to the old. So we walk up Brick Lane, a place known for its Bangladeshi community, and their 'Indian' and 'Balti' restaurants, the latest in a long line of immigrants who settled in this area. We are directed to long gone pubs, one marked by an old wall sign converted now into a restaurant, where a victim of the Ripper supposedly drank. We view Huguenot housing in Spitalfields, linking to other migrants from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and also to recent processes of gentrification. On some of the smaller guided walks we move down old Victorian pedestrian alleyways, are shown a faint Star of David on a wall, a supposed marker of another migrant group that passed through the area and who were one of the main occupants in the late nineteenth century. We wander around the outside of churches, are shown iron grills in recesses in walls put in, we are told, to stop thieves hiding in the dark, this part of the city in 1888 being unlit off the main streets at night-time. Also included, of course, are places that are thought to be the real sites of the murders. All the time we, as tourists, are deliberately, yet subtly, encouraged by the guides to be lost in spaces that to a great extent lack the specific 'image repertoire' of signs that indicate points of attraction and direction that characterise mainstream tourist areas of the city.

And yet of course much has changed in Whitechapel and Spitalfields since 1888 and few obvious buildings and streets from that time survive. Proximity of these areas to the City of London has recently brought huge changes to the area through processes of gentrification. Prior to this, the areas suffered destruction by bombing during World War Two and saw subsequent building of cheap social housing and de-industrialisation. Lucy Lippard argues that where traces have disappeared in places where traumatic events have occurred we fill the blanks with our own experiences, associations, and imagery. But in this case it is the guides who are there to aid us in filling the blanks and uncovering the traces of the historic city, the sites of murder and the many layers of history that seem to obscure them. In some cases the performances by guides can be likened to the role of a detective: describing the murders, contextualising the crime scenes and the lives of those who died, and elaborating arguments on the murderer's identity. And like detectives of crime fiction some of the guides give the impression that the city can be mastered through their observational knowledge. So, what the walks also draw attention to are the complex interconnections between the mass media of cinema, television, and literature, and the spaces of trauma around which tourist and media audiences increasingly convene.

#### MEDIA AND JACK THE RIPPER MURDERS

Tourist sites, such as those of the Whitechapel murders are intimately connected to mass media forms. Moreover, from the very outset the absent figure known as Jack the Ripper was intimately tied to rep-

resentations in popular media, and the treatment of the murders in many later film and television adaptations rests heavily upon early media representations.

Public fascination with the Jack the Ripper murders in literature (and in the then emergent cinema) began soon after the murders of 1888. Marie Belloc Lowndes' popular book *The Lodger* appeared in 1912. Silent movies also used fictional representations of the Ripper, though not all alluded to the murderer by the 'Ripper' name. One of the first films focusing directly on the Whitechapel murders was Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lodger* (1926), the first, though by no means the most successful, of many adaptations of Lowndes' novel. More recently we have seen further merging of factual and fictional figures in cinematic forms such as the detective Sherlock Holmes seeking Jack the Ripper in *A Study in Terror* (1965). Also noteworthy is the film *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971) that merges the Jekyll and Hyde myth (which was running in a west end theatre at the time of the murders) with Conan-Doyle's theory that the Ripper murderer was a woman. Most recently we have of course had the Hughes Brothers adaptation of Alan Moore's graphic novel *From Hell* starring Johnny Depp (2001).

In addition to cinema representations regular television debates, documentaries, fictionalised dramatisations and books about Jack the Ripper reproduce interest in, or at least background knowledge of, these murders and the murder sites in the east end of London. One of the latest is crime fiction author Patricia Cornwell's claim that the painter Walter Sickert was the Whitechapel murderer.

What can be seen in these media forms is a process of layering, a mingling and sedimenting of representations within the mythology surrounding Jack the Ripper, that is somewhat complex. What occurs in and through this layering process is a kind of inflation of the landscape of murder's scope, a re-imagining and performance of it in these different media, reproducing it as a global product in which the anonymous murderer, and his victims, emerge from, and back into, a distributed locale. Within these mediated landscapes the story of the Ripper is circulated into ever more diverse mystery fictions in film and novels. Walking tours therefore become indivisible from media landscapes, whilst fact and fictions multiply, are re-sorted by the guides and 'Ripperologists' and then fed back into mass media formations.

This increasing interest in death, murder, war and disaster, that such dark tourism practices are part of, takes place against the background of a more generalised media focus on history and memory. Andreas Huyssen, amongst others, has noted that in recent times it has become clear that to talk about memory is to speak about audio-visual representations of events through television, cinema, radio, and the internet. Moreover, he argues that recent films, such as Schindler's List and other memory projects around the holocaust: 'compel us to think of traumatic memory and entertainment memory together as occupying the same public space, rather than to see them as mutually exclusive phenomena'. Therefore, we see that entertainment and trauma are marketed in the same ways and to the same groups of people. Following on from this we argue that Jack the Ripper walks might be thought of as forming a part of a wider theatricalization of experience in which certain cultural memories are circulated, acted out and performed in the streets of the city and beyond in media flows.

#### EXPERIENCE ECONOMIES

In its broadest definition the concept of 'performance' implies that the site of production, in this case of the tourist product, coincides with the site of reception. Hence one reason why work associated with the service sector is at times described as 'performative labour.' The products of such forms of labour do not exist prior to their consumption but are directly created through the meeting of producer (performer) and client/consumer (audience). This general description allows us to think of tourist-performances not simply as a set of activities shaping the holiday experience but as a concept describing a shift in the relationship between guides, sites and tourists.

Jack the Ripper walks work as a kind of street theatre - with the stage, however, stretching far beyond the actual street itself. Such examples of 'fatal attractions', or traumascapes, we claim, may be thought of in performative terms - as something being 'acted out', rather than merely being 'represented' within tourism and different media forms. The important point is the way such 'acts' rarely take place on one single stage, but happen in the interplay between several different stages on which cultural memories are played out, thereby shaping the meaning-making processes at play within these walks.

What we are suggesting is that tourist-performances cannot simply be described in terms of 'on location' encounters, but are created through the complex intertwining of cultures, bodies, images and texts. This may at first seem to run counter to the above description which implies that 'performance's only life is in the present'. However, we extend this notion of performance beyond the here-and-now to suggest a more general theatricalization of experience, which sees people's pastimes, hobbies, and wider aspects of everyday life increasingly constructed as events in which the participants become more and more like audiences in situations that are being performed. Thinking through Jack the Ripper tours in terms of performance and theatricality is therefore to take spectatorship seriously, to view it as a complex, at times very active involvement, influenced by mediatization and audience processes which take place outside the actual walks. In other words, what we are interested in looking at here is how the construction of spectatorship in one context - that of the media - may shape the audience formation in another - that of the murder sites.

So, the question which needs to be raised is not if but how media technologies and cinematic representations change the way such walks are experienced. When asked, it seems very few tourists remember when or where they first heard about the Jack the Ripper figure; yet most of them refer to some form of popular fiction or documentary programme when discussing their knowledges of the murders. These media-based knowledges are also evident in the questions posed to the guides, which tend to centre on data collected from so-called 'representational files'. This concept is used by the sociologist Chris Rojek to describe the ways tourists order, gather, and introduce knowledges from outside sources into other spaces. More specifically the term illustrates how tourists 'drag' certain references from films and other media sources into the spaces where they are engaged in tourist activities in order to make sense of them. In this case what tourists appear to do is to 'drag cinematic files' (here we need to think of dragging computer files on a desktop to get this metaphor) into the performances of these walks, asking questions concerning the significance of certain 'plots' or 'props' featured in the films. In these

performances the image-spaces of the media intersect with the practices of tourist-audiences on the ground and change the ways experiences are produced in the tourist-historic city. These processes are rendered even more complex by the fact that the distinction between guide-as-performer and tourists-as-audience is not as stable as one might expect. Tourists also 'perform' and become actors to be looked at by local people as they move through the city.

Some tourists obviously also visit other Jack the Ripper tourist sites in London, such as The London Dungeon or Madame Tussauds - both of which contain recreations of Jack the Ripper murder scenes. This becomes evident as tourists wear or carry memorabilia from these places of attraction - and again we can draw attention to the earlier claim that certain spaces of the city are connected through representations and practices of violence. Moreover, on most of the walks the guides continually use occasions when tourists ask about cinematic representations to distance themselves and the walks from the 'myths' pushed forward by film and other Ripper media. For example, this occurs when guides point out that the recent film *From Hell* was shot away from the 'authentic' location on a film set in the outskirts of Prague. This distancing of the walks from cinematic representations can also be seen in the ways some guides explain how the ubiquitous London fog - which is a background for nearly all Jack the Ripper films - was based solely on cinematic myth-making. Indeed, on occasions where people appeared to ask too many film-related questions some of the guides become visibly and verbally annoyed. Of course this annoyance likely emerges from the frequency of the same kinds of questions from tourists. Yet, it also seems as if the guides perceive many of these tourists to be rather passive consumers of media. So, by situating the walks in opposition to other supposed 'inauthentic' accounts of the Jack the Ripper story the guides inadvertently show how meaning is created through difference. Meaning-making takes place between concepts, not within them. This does not just mean that Ripper fact requires the existence of Ripper fiction to become 'authentic', but that the 'true' story narrated by the tour guides also has to draw on fiction in order to evoke mental images in this interplay between media, history and site. For example, in reply to a question regarding the significance of the top hat often associated with the Ripper's silhouette, one of the guides said that the murderer was more likely to have worn a deerstalker hat 'like the one Sherlock Holmes wore'.

It has been noted by Walter Benjamin in his well-known 1936-essay *The Work of Art in Age of Mechanical Reproduction* that mechanical reproducibility plays a vital role in the formation of audiences by allowing the media product to 'meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a photographic record'. In other words, image-production is no longer linked to a particular place through a singular existence; rather, the reproduction and recycling of images allows an event to be experienced outside the location of its original presence. In contrast to this claim some recent commentators have suggested that our desire (or at least vague interest) for engaging with the 'authentic' or 'original' setting or landscape in practices such as tourism may in fact be fuelled by the proliferation of cinematic and photographic representations. In short, it has been claimed that there is something that can be termed movie induced tourism, where people see a film and this then sometimes induces a desire to visit a location depicted in a film. While recognising this may partly be the case, we would suggest that



such desires for original settings cannot merely be reduced to simple cause-and-effect - of tourists just visiting sites because they have seen them in movies - but involve complex processes of the 'dragging' of images, symbols and associations from files of media representations onto other geographical sites, bringing about a re-negotiation of tourist spaces via tourism practices.

And yet, claims that tourist knowledges are produced by the media do not necessarily differ much from the seemingly opposed claims regarding tourists quest for 'authentic' landscapes or film sets. Both views leave very little space for the agency of tourists. As we stated earlier, the point to consider here is not simply if tourists draw on mass-mediated knowledges when making sense of the Ripper murders (how could they not?), but how these different media knowledges are brought in to use and re-negotiated in these encounters. So, while most of the questions posed to the guides have their origin in filmic myth-making, they are exactly that - questions - and not cinematic representations passively applied to the site. Here, film-based knowledge comes to stand for more than a simple way into the story, but takes on

the role of a 'tool' which tourists use to navigate within the maze of signifiers that make up the sites. This is also evident in the conversations between tourists while walking from one spot to another. These 'gaps' in the storytelling give people the opportunity to further discuss amongst themselves the relation between the information presented to them by the guide and the different versions of the Ripper story which they have encountered in the past.

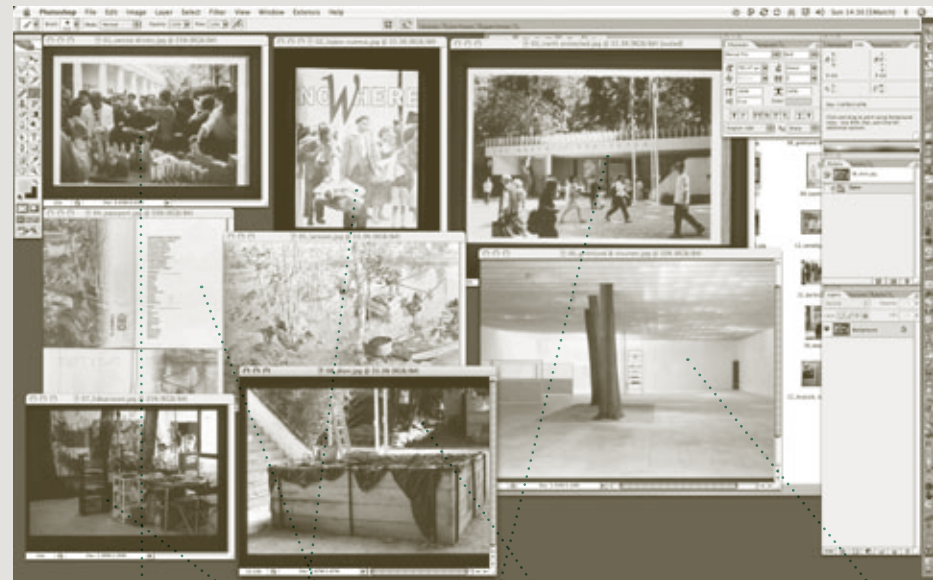
As such, it can be argued that guided walking tours are not necessarily to be seen as passively consumed experiences by audiences somehow compelled to visit actual landscapes of crime scenes through seeing movies or televisual representations of the murders. Instead, more complex and subtle processes are at work in these walks in which some of the audiences are often quite active and make use of media representations in negotiating meanings of the sites and places of these walks.

One postscript to this argument adds a little more to the practices of these tourist walks. This involves the occasional, but telling, lack of reflection in many of these walks by audiences and performers. For ex-

ample, on some of the most popular walks the guide tells the audience that residents in the building outside of which Annie Chapman's body was found on 8th September 1888 charged a penny for people to look at the crime scene through their windows. Even after her body was removed, the guide explained, people were still charged money to see the place where the corpse was found. It seems that apart from monetary inflation not much has changed since then and that the current walking tours may in fact be described as an extension of this trade. However, what has changed is that such stories of voyeurism and spectatorship have now themselves become sufficiently fetishised so that they may also be 'dragged' onto the tourist scene, along with other representations. What one might hope for is that this fetishisation may give rise to questions regarding the role of spectatorship itself, leading to a more critical engagement with the ways the media increasingly feeds back on itself in highly problematic ways.

# The Nomadic Art World

By Charlotte Bydler



(IMAGE: Reception drinks at the Nordic pavilion, the 49th Venice biennial, 2001) The establishing shot is from the opening of the Nordic pavilion at the 50th Venice biennial (2001), where party people push their way to grab Bellini drinks from a table. This crowd makes up the (not-so-)new nomadic art world, in the postmodern vernacular. Favourite epithets for these people are nomads, traveling circus, cosmopolitans, even flâneurs - roaming the white cube or even the "nowhere" of the universal art space. The more mobile, the better, is the bottom line. So if these are the nomads, of what tribe are they, and what loyalties do they honour? There is of course a serious gap in conditions of mobility within the art world. "Manifesta - the European biennial" was designed as a nomadic biennial with a mission to bridge the divide between east and west Europe. But the eastern part of Europe still waits for its turn to arrange a Manifesta - like refugees or guest workers not trusted, but welcome as an aesthetic expression, a signifier of universality. Looking at Rogelio Lopez-Cuenca's "NoWhere", a sticker work picturing anonymous refugees for the first Manifesta biennial, is it a critical work or just cynical? (IMAGE: Rogelio López-Cuenca, NoWhere, sticker for the first nomadic Manifesta - the European biennial, 1996, in Rotterdam.)

I want to contrast this press photo-idiom, for the less lucky nomads, with the image of the Nordic pavilion at the Venice biennial as a safe haven. In 2001, the Finnish artist-curators Tommi Grönlund and Petteri Nisunen had the pavilion decorated with the words "THE NORTH IS PROTECTED". (IMAGE: "THE NORTH IS PROTECTED", the Nordic pavilion

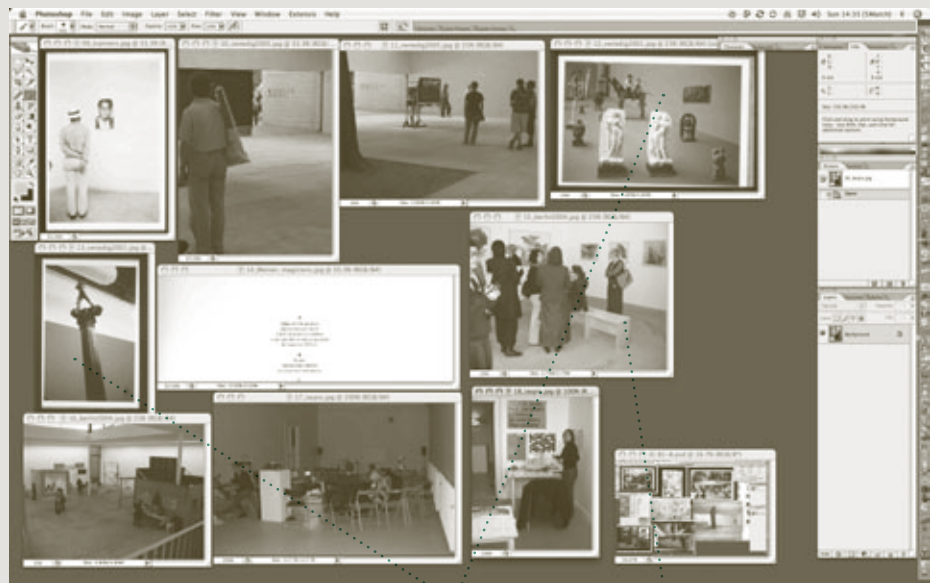
at the 49th Venice biennial, 2001. Curated by Tommi Grönlund and Petteri Nisunen) The national flags of Finland, Norway, and Sweden seem to signify deliberately that the art space of the enclosed Giardini di Castello, where the first national pavilions are located, is not only protected but reserved for people with their papers in order.

As the above should indicate, the nomadic art world hasan often unsurprising aesthetics and image repertoire. Of course, the framework was set several decades, if not a hundred years, ago: the Nordic pavilion is what it is - that is, white, austere, rectilinear, strictly modern, functional, and it has its indoor tree trunks as a reminder of the love of nature, like any patent tourist image of the Nordic countries. Grönlund and Nisunen may have denied it, but their intentions do not change the general aesthetics of their exhibition: blond, high-tech, and no frills. The foregrounding of "genuine" materials and the fresh airiness of the space have, I argue, much to do with the image of Scandinavia that has been proposed since the heydays of national painter Carl Larsson - appropriately enough represented with a reproduction in the Swedish passports. (IMAGE: Passport with reproduction of Carl Larsson's 1896 watercolour "Crayfish") Larsson's idyllic, leisurely outdoor and (anti)modern scene with its family values is perhaps a strange choice for a passport which connotes mobility. But at the same time it is reassuring, and it is unlikely that more urban, contemporary and mobile associations (like Lopez-Cuenca's refugee artwork) could serve as desired national imagery. Even if, metaphorically speaking, Grönlund & Nisunen's Nordic pavilion

had nothing but tree trunks left of the white birch trees in Carl Larsson's painting, nomadic art travels with a luggage of stereotypes, just like the passport. (IMAGE: Tommi Grönlund & Petteri Nisunen, Anders Tomfén, Leif Elggren, Carl Michael von Hausswolff: the Nordic pavilion at the 49th Venice biennial, 2001)

This Nordic stereotype is a language which has been used before and after this Venice biennial, and it will surely persist. In 1997, the Nordic Pavilion was formed around the theme "Naturally artificial", to underline both the Nordic countries' traditional connection with nature and the mythological foundation of this liaison. (IMAGE: Henrik Håkansson, Out of the black, into the blue, from "Naturally artificial", the Nordic pavilion at the 47th Venice biennial, 1997) Henrik Håkansson's butterfly farm in the Nordic pavilion perhaps conformed to the idea of a Swede's love of nature, but the insects themselves shed their national identity as they left their dark cocoons in the pavilion and flew out in the blue. Further, the exhibition included artists with a less obvious connection with Scandinavia, like Mark Dion, to avoid the national casting that pavilions encourage. (IMAGE: Mark Dion, "Raiding Neptune's vault (a voyage to the bottom of the canals and lagoon of Venice)", from "Naturally artificial", the Nordic pavilion at the 47th Venice biennial, 1997)

Nomad artists have a hard time trying to escape the national grid which is put over them and their artworks alike, even without national categorization in pavilions. Participation in biennials is usually arranged through each of the nation-states' cultural



budget; an invisible but understood selection principle. So artists with passports connected to lousy cultural budgets must try something else. Thus, you would expect to find Congolese artists in the Belgian pavilion, because a former colonial power has traditions, stipends, and obligations directed to ex-colonized. This postcolonial reason is also couched in Luc Tuymans' contribution for the Venice biennial, in 2001. Where else would you expect the radical gesture of referring to colonialism if not in the Belgian pavilion? (IMAGE: Luc Tuymans, "Lumumba", from "Mwana Kitoko", a suite of oil paintings, the Belgian pavilion, the 49th Venice biennial, 2001) (The same holds true, I add, for the British, French and US pavilions.)

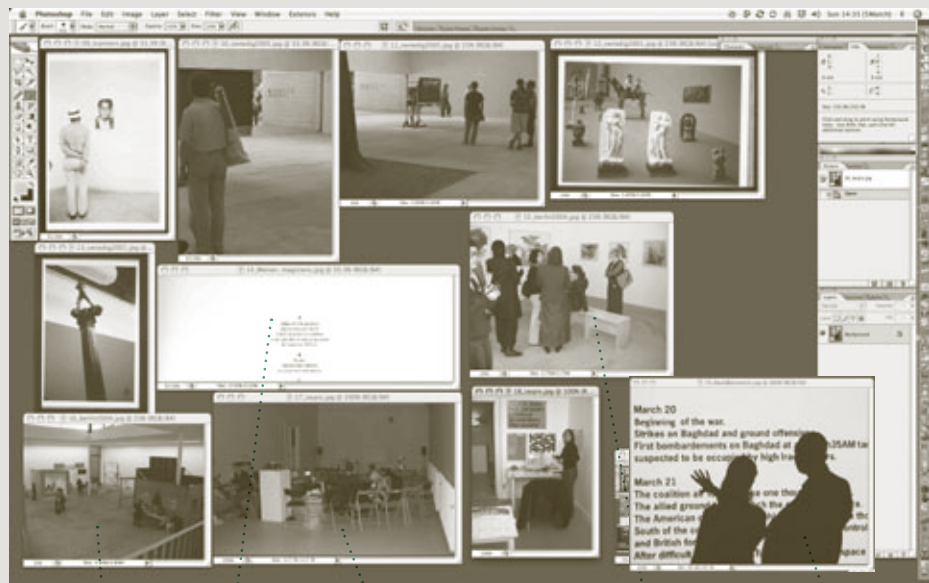
The art world has been held out as a model for peaceful and creative collaboration by people as diverse as Marshall McLuhan and Queen Victoria's Prince Albert. Visual art is supposedly a universal language, because it "speaks" through the universals of the visual world independently of conventional words. This is not the place for arguing against this mimetic art concept, but the art world is of course as conflict-ridden as any other space in the world – which was clearly visible (and legible) at the opening of the Nordic pavilion at the 51th Venice biennial in 2005. The curatorial concept, signed Åsa Nacking, was the democratic- and appropriately nomadic-sounding "Sharing space, dividing time". The artists from Sweden, Norway, and Finland were meant to take the exhibition space in possession each in her or his turn – a true experiment with the exhibition format. Now, this arrangement managed to alienate the Finnish participant, and the pavilion

opened with the two remaining representatives. Especially spectacular in the austere stripped pavilion was the holes from the removed letters that formed the clearly legible word FINLANDIA nearby NORVEGIA and SVEZIA. (IMAGE: Interior of the Nordic pavilion at the Venice biennial, 2005, featuring artists Miriam Bäckström & Carsten Höller (Sweden), and Mathias Faldbakken (Norway). See vaguely the word "FINLANDIA" on the wall.) In effect, what happened was that the artist refused to be a mobile, flexible, and nomadic piece in the exhibition and claimed her own space. Finland's representation was perhaps already nomadic, in the sense that the three countries usually take turns in organizing their collective representation. Now, it turned out that even this nomadic presence was negotiable. Aesthetically, this exhibition may have collapsed, but it successfully demonstrated working conditions in the nomadic art world.

Generally speaking, placing a number of objects together in an exhibition implies that they have important properties in common, such as a certain kind of artistic merit, value, theme, or relevance for a certain discussion. The aesthetic conundrum in negotiating the biennial exhibition space is in this respect a little odd, since several curators or parties – those appointed nationally as well as the artistic leader who is centrally appointed by the biennial foundation – are involved and no single one has the upper hand in the total outcome of the selection process. This is a prime example of a general problem in what we can refer to as nomadic art's value. Consider Harald Szeemann's project as an artistic leader for the 49th Venice biennial in

2001: "Plateau of Mankind" was the theme for the entire aperto section of the biennial. Within this, his "Plateau of Thought" formed a section that looked something like the "Magicians of the earth's" effort to insert "world art" artworks in the midst of the contemporary artworks one usually expects to see in the international biennials. (IMAGE: "Plateau of Thought", 49th Venice biennial, 2001: Harald Szeemann's composition of yakshis, bodhisattvas, nkisi figures, folk art, etcetera on a pink and green space) (IMAGE: "Plateau of Thought", 49th Venice biennial, 2001: Harald Szeemann's composition of Auguste Rodin sculpture on column)

The project is sympathetic: we are meant to appreciate the artworks presented on the slope without named artists in the same way that we look at the Rodin sculpture. The difference between the works is of course enormous, and I do not merely think of the column here –Szeemann must have inserted that one as a critical gesture against putting art on a column. Further, the purportedly neutral non-space of the modern art museum that is usually signified by white walls is here negated by "childish" colours: pink and green. However, whereas the anonymous pieces on the pink slope seem randomly selected to make the point of aesthetic generality, the Rodin sculpture travels with insurance. Its value and identity are guaranteed by museum collections, investments, the bibliography on his work and person, and not least the curators and art historians who have made it their life to be Rodin experts. The point I want to make is that despite efforts to experiment with the presentation, artworks do not easily escape from the strictures



of the artist's biography. Look at Lawrence Weiner's contribution to the "Magicians of the earth" catalogue, "Réponse à la question: 'Qu'est-ce que l'art?' (1989). (IMAGE: Lawrence Weiner, Magicians of the earth, exhibition catalogue, Réponse à la question "Quest-ce que l'art?", 1989.) All the artists in the exhibition were invited to give their own definition of "art" in this democratic gesture. The responses were printed in the catalogue together with the general presentation of the artists – including their biographies. Instead of stressing the present exhibition context and marking a clean cut without philosophical claims, artworks, artists, and art definitions alike informed each other in a rather overdetermined fashion.

The traveling audiences, artists, and artworks transported from one biennial to the next one, imply the question whether there is a more or less agreed upon (or common, genuine, authoritative, etcetera...) interpretative context for this art world. Take an installation view from Berlin, with work by for example the Vienna-based group A room of one's own; clothes by Paris- and Berlin-based Bojan Sarcevic, and Berlin-based artist Bert Neumann's Western-style stage set for the play "A woman under the influence" (2000). If the artists are difficult to identify geographically, what could not be said for their individual artworks, even less the composition of all these within a spectacular exhibition? (IMAGE: Installation view from the KunstWerke venue for the 3rd Berlin Biennial, 2004.) A dry pragmatic view on art's possibility to come across as a message is exemplified by the innumerable guided tours seen at the major art biennials.

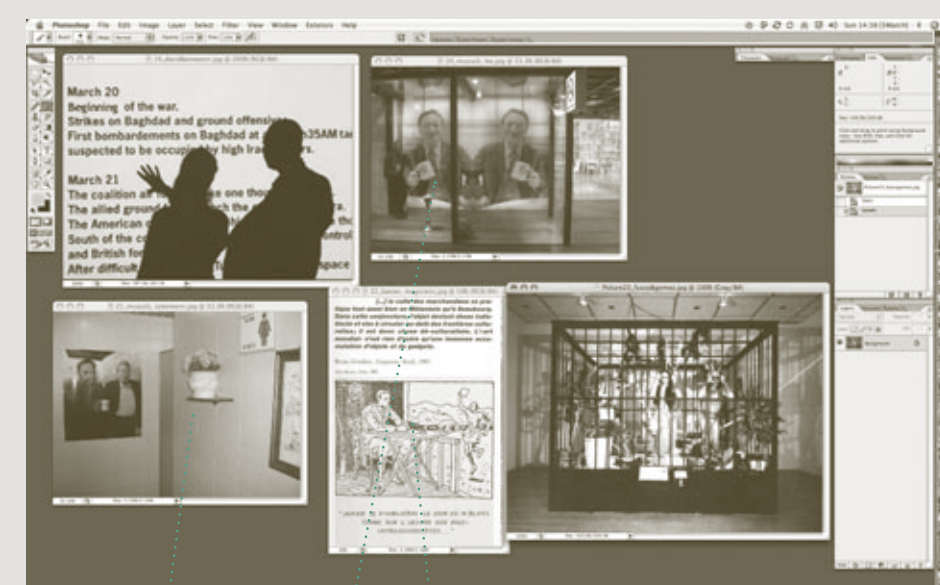
(IMAGE: Guided tour of the 3rd Berlin Biennial, KunstWerke, curated by Ute Meta Bauer in 2004.) Instead of relying on the "universal language of art", the audience is referred to a tutored pilgrimage to the ideal art world. The tour guide's mediation of interpretations becomes authoritative – and why not?

The international residencies and studio programs have become naturalized as a pillar of the nomadic life style in international arts. For years in a row, artists may roam between residencies in cities like Los Angeles, Seoul, Berlin, or less well-known cities. The unremarkable corridors in such places host an impressively international lot, and often offer Babel-like cultural experiences. The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden), founded in 1996, which incorporates the International Artists' Studio Programme in Sweden (IASPIS) has meant much for the inclusion of Sweden within this network of artistic exchanges. (IMAGE: Gridthiya Gaweewong, "Spread the words", project at IASPIS (2002), from the homepage <http://www.iaspis.com>) Gridthiya Gaweewong, a Bangkok-based curator, had a stipend to work in one of the studios for a period in 2002. She invited fellow curators and people at alternative, artist-run spaces in Stockholm and London (such as After Shopping, Konstakuten, SOC, and United Net-Works) to share their experiences in a workshop; an artistic practice that if anything seems to further nomadic ways.

Now, despite the nomadic exterior, the studio programs are highly structured networks. Much more than random nomad roaming, these networks can

be likened to a national railway with their fixed stops and timetables. Two months here, then off to some other exhibition and residency over there. It could even be argued that there are first to third class rated seats on the ride: these programs tend to be funded by "sending countries". The performance of each exchange partner is frequently evaluated, considering how popular and beneficial they are to the applicant and invited artists. Cultural policies underpinning the residency programs are thus highly nation-state based, and benefit citizen artists. Within this system, exchange and border passing plus work permits run smoothly even between old antagonists like Cuba and the USA. This nomadic art world operates in conformity with the demands of what David Harvey has called "flexible production"; artists appear just-in-time to deliver like any other guest worker, and disappear again when the stipend runs out. The geo-aesthetic diversity is real, but so is the social homogeneity. In addition to a passport in order, artists need a reasonable command of English and very modest social ties. Rather up-coming young and single artists, than a family breadwinner. And the real travelers in this context are, of course, the curators.

The nomadic curators, with bonus miles galore, are excellent examples of the flexible labour situation – forever traveling, and anxiously anchoring their positions internationally. (IMAGE: Catherine David, artistic director of Documenta X, 1997, and Okwui Enwezor, artistic director of Documenta 11, 2002.) Photos show the curators at their best, as cultural critics in the political sphere, typically referring to their work as a "platform" rather than an



“exhibition”. But a platform is also a stage, albeit temporary, which should lead us to ask: for whom? Artistic practices tend to turn into a non-stop seminar, where a nomadic position needs to be qualified and localized. In this context, the older distinction between “local” and “global” perhaps turns into a question of budget for traveling.

The stardom attached to the curatorial position has spawned its own genre-critical gestures. Young-woo Lee, one of the most important curators on the Korean art scene, was the artistic leader of the Gwangju biennial in 2004 – and simultaneously featured as an artwork in the biennial. (IMAGE: MUZUCK, photo-installation within “The Club”, by co-curator Tanja Weingärtner) MUZUCK was found in a section titled “The Club”, something of a meta-commentary on the exhibition as a whole. In a glass-enclosed smoking area in the lobby, the artistic leader was portrayed holding a cigarette in one hand and a mug printed with a non-smoking sign and the word MUZUCK. Any feeling of mutual artist-curator sympathy vanished in view of a second MUZUCK:ed person: Harald Szeemann. The grand old man, epitomizing the curator-star, looked out from a poster smoking and holding a similar mug in the bathroom area nearby. (IMAGE) These pieces are perhaps immature as critique: invited artists show work under a pseudonym and point a finger to the superior (the general director). However, MUZUCK speaks clearly about (the lack of) accountability in this geographically distributed cooperation over art. What are the checkpoints? The artistic leader can not gag an invited artist. It is even possible that he would be flattered by the implied comparison with the star Harald Szeemann. The critique of artistic leadership of the art world system thus plays on the tension of peer-rivalry.

(IMAGE: Comics from Glen Baxter, “Atlas” (1983), reproduced in the “Magicians of the earth” catalogue. The white Baxter colonial adorned in tropical helmet exclaims: “I will never forget the day when Mblawi stumbled across the postimpressionists”. The quotation above compares the art world with the cargo cults found in exotic places: is not the art world just like any old anthropologist’s society centred on a cargo cult? De-culturalized, this “world art” is nothing but an immense accumulation of objects and gadgets. However the nomadic art world, it is often claimed, spreads a “western art concept.”) Surely, photo is preferable to folk art, but the object is more or less redundant in this art world. The exchange on the other hand, the value judgments passed around, are crucial. And this process is not “western”.

Remember the connection to the museum safety vaults: some pieces are more successful in linking up with these museum shrines, museums that are in themselves like cathedrals on a pilgrimage route with artworks lending them their fair share of aura and relics.

But who owns the so-called relics of this culture, with its mixed blessings born from colonization and Enlightenment, and relocated in present-day academia? Both attraction and actual admission to higher education, cultural sponsorship and stipends in, say, Paris or London, match patterns laid down in earlier colonial enterprises. And of course, the major cultural institutions that can display the marvels of the world are located not in Lagos or Havana, but in New York, London and Amsterdam. The relics in the reliquaries however do their best to look back. In their performance “The couple in the cage (Two undiscovered Amerindians)”, Seattle et

al. places (1992-), Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco enact an aspect of the bitter strives that are fought over claims to “ownership” of the Enlightenment – in the sense of placing oneself in a genealogical or causal connection to the development of Enlightenment, and its subsequent spread through the world. The artists present themselves to the audience within the museum context as passive zoo specimens or museum objects in their cage. Raw material is transported; it does not travel, to the cultural centers. And cultural labour is in a similar position vis-à-vis this context. Traveling and cultural tourism is one thing; being invited to linger, or to return (repeatedly), or yet to settle and to claim recognition for one’s contributions as a cultural worker, are quite different matters.

When it is time to grow up and get a (proper) job, the artist-nomad turns into a common cultural worker, who is expected in general to return to the local. It turns out that the art world, which prides itself for its nomadism, has a highly simplistic view of cultural contact. However, aesthetics in this “nomadic” art world is more ecumenical than interpretations in art reviews and history books reveal. Where are the breaks in a nomadic culture centered on art; like in a cargo cult turned on to a vaguely defined object? Who is interested in tracing differences, hybridity, dissent and breaks, when smooth homogeneity opens the way to the superbowl arenas of the art world?

If we think of Enlightenment as a European contribution, we have to place Sweden together with Cuba and Mexico on an equal footing as exterior to this “Europe”, and as late-comers to the party.

## Visualize and Design the Future Media

The study program Visual Culture and Media Design at the University of Skövde departs from Hypermedia Studies – the studies of new media. The focus is on narration and new media, understood from contemporary issues in Visual Culture put into a historical perspective.

The program has a practice-based foundation where theory influences the practice of media design. The aim of Visual Culture and Media Design is to create theoretically informed practitioners in the vast field of the media and cultural industries.

