

THE REMAINS OF TOMORROW

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Everything in the Universe, throughout all its kingdoms, is conscious: i.e., endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception. There is but one indivisible and absolute Omniscience and Intelligence in the Universe, and this thrills throughout every atom and infinitesimal point of the whole finite Kosmos which hath no bounds, and which people call SPACE, . . . -- H. P. Blavatsky (1)

A partial view of a half finished wall of light gray bricks enclosing a corner space of the gallery, an anthropomorphic black wood cubical object, holding a small light reflecting on a printed glass, a wooden staircase object affixed to the wall, which steps on some pieces of a broken mirror and brick remnants. In the middle of the space, closer to the entrance there is a monumental sculpture with a photograph of the Palace of the Republic in Berlin which seems to be sinking in the right side, attached to a metallic structure, right across the space of the gallery there is another piece of white sheetrock wall, with a hole in one side and a black square box protruding from it. This is the intriguing and ambiguous landscape one can experience while visiting Air Garten Galerie, where 'Myths' is being shown, a three person exhibit in which I am participating.

Probably the fact that I am writing about the exhibition and the process around it allows me to take distance from my own work, to look at it under a different light. Isn't it specifically that what is most difficult for us artists? Being further away and look at the work as if it is not ours, as if it is somebody else's... I have been working on my piece for quite a few days in this space. Having to build my work around the other two artists' work has allowed me to question my own piece in relation to the others', my own convictions in relation to the others, my own world in relation to their worlds. Suddenly I realize this small gallery is a universe in itself, a universe under a process of transformation, which will engulf my work along the 2 others'. How would approach the making of this piece? We are little worlds within the whole world, within the universe... little microcosms that are part of a large macrocosm, according to an ancient Greek schema, we can see the same patterns reproduced in all levels of the cosmos. With Pythagoras, the discovery of the golden ratio and its philosophical conception called the Golden mean, the Greeks observed the golden ratio in many parts of the ordered universe both large and small. Philosophically, the Greeks were concerned with a rational explanation of everything and saw the repetition of the golden mean throughout the world and all levels of reality as a step towards this unifying theory. In short, it is the recognition that the same traits appear in entities of many different sizes, from one man to the entire human population. Gilles Deleuze writes about this, when he talks about film in his book *Cinema 1*, who specifies this infinitesimal relationship in frames in film:

'Framing is the art of choosing the parts of all kinds which became part of a set. It determines an out-of-field, sometimes in the form of a larger set which extends it, sometimes in the form of a whole into which it is integrated (...) The divisibility of content means that the parts belong to various sets, which constantly subdivide into sub-sets or are themselves the sub-set of a larger set, on to infinity. This is why content is defined both by the tendency to

constitute closed systems and by the fact that this tendency never reaches completion. Every closed system also communicates. There is always a thread to link the glass of sugared water to the solar system, and any set whatever to a larger set. The set of all these sets forms a homogenous continuity, a universe or a plane of genuinely unlimited content.' (2)

It is also very relevant to the theme of infinity the words from Pierre Klossowski in his book Nietzsche and the vicious circle emphasizes the centrality of the notion of Eternal Return (a cyclical notion of time and history), that we can also be read in the stories of Jorge Luis Borges, where the concept of infinity is also invoked, and in his "circular ruins" a man dreams that he dreams himself, he is condemned to go through the same history his ancestors went through. Borges creates always a perturbation of the real, the suppression of things being finite, this makes that when we read his fantastic tales, we are incapable of represent the idea of infinite. Along history this concept has created confusion and controversy, given its nature of the unreachable. The greeks couldn't deal with it and they would call it 'apeiron' or 'chaos'. Daniel Birnbaum, cites P. Klossowski's in the first page and in this last page of his book 'Chronology':

'The Eternal Return, as we saw, is a necessity that must be willed; only he who I am now can will the necessity of my return and all the events that have led to what I am'.(3) I tend to return - eternally - to the Eternal Return. This doctrine has been formulated in the following manner: the number of particles that compose the world is immense but finite, and, as such, only capable of a finite (though also immense) number of permutations. In an infinite stretch of time, the number of possible constellations must be run through, and the universe has to repeat itself. Once again, you will be born from a belly; once again your skeleton will grow; once again you will follow the course of all the hours of your life until that of your incredible death. Since everything is bound to return, nothing is unique, not even these lines, stolen from a writer (Borges) who in turn has pilfered the ideas from someone else (Nietzsche), who in the autumn of 1883 declared: This slow spider dragging itself towards the light of the moon and that same moonlight, and you and I whispering at the Gateway, whispering of eternal things, haven't we already coincided in the past? and won't we happen again on the long road, on this long tremulous road, won't we recur eternally?' (4) (5)

I start thinking about what kind of structures I will have to build to reflect on the fragmentary of the world, well, do I really need to build new structures or I could just use fragments as building units and, what kind of fragments, and the fact that these fragments will contain a complete world in itself while remaining indivisible, would this loop be the thread that could link the 3 pieces in the exhibit? Some of the qualities I have to focus on is that these constructions are temporary, and they should encircle ideas and platforms where to 'see' and contemplate the unseen, or unconsidered, the dark parts of the city. I am interested in issues of disappearance, -as that which falls away from view and puts pressure on notions of visibility and presence, cities affected by processes of indiscriminate building demolition, direct consequence of a market driven urban planning, economical real estate speculation, thinking through the idea of disappearance and erasure in processes of representation, my own gesture of erasing with acrylic paint paintings that I find in flea markets, the disappearance of the figure, like I prefer to present the absence to precisely talk about the human element, what was underneath? the covering with masking tape of any human figure in these paintings, those uncertainties about the corporeal object in representation and their implications for subjectivity, questions of the

ephemeral, the obsolete, the fugitive and transience of the architectural landscape, the dissolution of the thing that is the art object. Rather than assert absence as the consequence, I am interested in thinking about new configurations and how they emerge, new forms of articulating the void.

In the sense of articulating this void, the piece of Warren Neidich, one of the three artists in the show, a picture-sculpture as he calls it, proposes a new platform for viewing, present us with new tools for revealing what the blind spot hides from view. Ian Rand, the objectivist philosopher and writer said that 'an artwork, like language, is a cognitive tool, and that it functions as an imaginary world, which amounts to a special kind of microcosm' (6) Neidich is using photography as a cognitive tool in reverse, as a way of un-learning the world, enticing us to look at something we might have overlooked, that is oblique, skewed, distorted or optically illusory, those parts of the visual and cultural field that have been neglected, opening an old shuttered window for us to take a pick at. Peikoff (7) explains how the work of most artists in a culture "becomes a microcosm" that embodies the basic ideas of some consensus within the culture.

Neidich has wallpapered the back of one of these structures, the one with the hole and black box, with old magazine covers featuring famous people from which he has cut out the eyes using a scalpel, he has cut sharp incisions in their eyes. These cuttings connect his work to Gordon Matta Clark's, he is cutting through printed images the same way Matta-clark would cut through buildings, these cuts in buildings spoke to issues of decay and civic renewal, and Neidich's cuts speak about cutting through the past to see anew, considering how culture gets These walls are remnants, they have been removed from Neidich's own studio, used as a laboratory, where he has built a Merzbau-like construction of interiors and corridors he calls 'body-walls' after Bruce Nauman's 1971 works of the same. These walls are later cut through and transported, in this case to Air Garten, where they are reenacted as a fragment or partial object that calls up a partial memory of the original site specific work. Much like Robert Smithson Non-Site work that recalled through a fragment the Earthworks he had made elsewhere the body-wall fragment recalls the studio or the place of making inside the institutional space of the white cube. These two actions first the cuttings in the studio and later the surgical precise incisions of the eyes of this body-walls bring together the two trends of western vision first discussed by Rieger, the optic and the haptic. Vision as distant seeing and vision as body experience. This action of surgical precision on the eyes of this body-walls, allowed one to see through the walls and to surmount imposed limits, social and economical limits, historical limits, psychological limits. The container that is the artist's studio, which keeps the interior world of the private, is expanded and manifested. By making holes on these walls, by perforating them, the space itself and its inside order where these sculptures are placed is deeply transformed, having a deep impact on the viewer's perception of the space and the movement around the gallery. The gallery comes to reside in the sculpture just as the sculpture becomes a place of seeing for the visitor transformed into an actor. By creating these new openings, Neidich is offering us a new order of visibility

in architecture. I will summarize some of the key points we talked about after a long conversation we had about his work:

'The gallery becomes an outpost where sovereignty subjects the aesthetic object, performance or installation to the instrumental rationality, (Adorno) and the institutional understanding. Responding to the art market and the creative industries the gallery is no longer a space for the autonomous artwork by the autonomous artists. Instead it supplicates itself to the will of governance and becomes a place instead for its justification and advertisement; a place where branding is imagined. As such his work operates on two fronts. First, looping through Situationist strategies the body-walls are created. In the case of a body-wall made at Program Gallery, 2006, an alternative means through which to navigate the space was created. A built wall encircled the perimeter of the gallery and was mimetic for the white cube that it was situated in. Visitors became actors and performers in this hybrid space built 60 cm from the original wall which allowed for a single body to fit and move comfortably in it. The wall also contained various devices for seeing and viewing. The body-wall thus became a developmental space of the production of a twentieth century observer and this is what differentiates it from Nauman's work. It is not about measuring the body which it does anyway but instead about a series of stages in which the history of seeing is reenacted. However this is not a positivist history. It does not lead to a better observer with better sight/site. These walls are undone and reenacted as fragments in the gallery and what they view at Air Garten is the Palast de Republik falling down and coming apart. Like the Architecture of the Unconscious made famous by the Surrealists in which architecture reflected the actuality of the mind in its dream state this photography reenacts another type of form and a different set of physical relations. Relations that are not static orthogonal but instead curved and unbalanced. This ontogeny leads instead to a history of vision in the raptures of a series of seizures and ruptures. A vision very much at odds with institutional understanding which instead is constructed from a set of static laws and regulations scientifically observed, documented and realized. Both the body wall and its fragment are methodologies of resistance and difference.'

Neidich uses photography as a way of temporary dis-locating of a transient event: The dismantling of the Palais of Republik in Berlin, a metaphor or embodiment of the political dismantling since the wall fall in 1989. Designed in 1972 to be a Volkshaus - a house for the people and not a government building, In August 1973, excavation work began in preparation for the Palace of the Republic (Palast der Republik), a 180 x 87 x 32 metre steel-framed structure to be built on a reinforced steel concrete foundation. The building's architectural plans were provided by Heinz Graffunder and Karl-Ernst Swora. On April 23, 1976, just in time for the 9th Party Congress of the German Socialist Unity Party (SED), the multipurpose building was opened. The new structure's most distinguishing exterior feature was its bronze glass façade and as an ironic gesture it was this part the first one to disappear in the process of its demolition. Neidich plays the anthropologist, and shows us what is left from this palace, reduced now to the bare, and fragmented stainless steel skeleton, the supporting structure of the socialist system revealed in its vulnerable state of disorder. According to Clement Greenberg (5), the strength of photography--its illusion of transparency--was crucial in the activity of legitimizing post-object art, for it was the chief means by which performance and installation artists from the late 1960s and early 1970s artists' memorialized transient events, and that is exactly what Neidich does, he uses the 'transparency' of photography as a way of approaching transitory art forms, in this case the time based historical event of the process of the palace's demolition.

Now I will pay attention to the mirror part of the piece in the back of the photo-sculpture, and I start to think about what it means and how should I read it, this image of the mirror plays the role of a stage, a stage where society could be reflected? One of the cut out eyes is Clark Gable's, and it is not by a coincidence, is it that the artist wants us to assimilate the whole set up of the piece to the 'theatrical', and the assimilation of the piece to a stage. And to this purpose I will have to mention Michael Fried 'Art and Objecthood' **(8)** essay declaration against theatrics in art, he would say that the closer the piece is to theatre the farther away is from Art. And I have to say that I disagree, and that really successful art has been made using theatre modes, and this piece is a good example. The gallery as a stage, the world as a theatre, think about Pedro Calderon de la Barca, the writer from Spain from the sixteenth century, and his book The Great Theatre of the World. It can be read as metaphoric means to rationalize or question then the phenomenon by which photography is used. The mirror invokes movement from the viewer, a walk around the sculpture and the space. At the base of this process is the historical charge of the photograph, which delivers an unquestionable set of absolutist propositions that makes the viewer to take distance from states of continuous absorption. Attention to this staged situation is shared by the inter subjective play between viewer and object. Such interplay and many other practices were embedded in the situationists rituals. By replacing closed with open forms, we the viewers can be part of the stage, this is the performance of the new sculpture, it is the object once re-contextualized, which governs the system of movement around it, these sculptures are imbued with a new theatrical status.

What I observe in these works at the gallery, is that one way or the other they all make us experience time shifts. Time shifts are reality shifts in which the dimension of reality we know as "time" undergoes some kind of observable transformation. Time shifts appear to us in such a way that we can observe them in the form of experiencing the past or future in the present moment, influencing past or future events, experiencing loops in time, in which a sequence of events repeats or a form of a reality shift involving time. But what is the relationship of space to time? shifts in reality are necessarily shifts in time, and vice versa, since space and time are inextricably interconnected. Well considering the physics of Einsteins' Relativity of Time, time and space do not exist independently of one another... and when we think about the concept of quantum interconnectedness (as physicists studying the Theory of Everything bring together theories of the very large and the very small), we find that we have introduced concepts of "probable pasts" and "probable futures." **(9)** Quoting physicist Stephen Hawking from his book, The Universe in a Nutshell, "... we now realize that quantum theory implies that spacetime is filled with quantum fluctuations." **(10)** These quantum fluctuations require that we view the history of ourselves and our entire universe in terms of imaginary time, which can be topographically viewed as a small, slightly flat sphere which encodes all that occurs in terms of real time.

What all of this means in simple terms is that we are, in essence, experiencing what physicist Fred Alan Wolf describes in his book, Parallel Universes: The Search for Other Worlds **(11)**, "The future plays a role in

determining for us a basis upon which we may make decisions. But to do so, parallel paths to that future must also be real. If they are, the world is far more complex than we ever have imagined." Indeed! We can imagine ourselves selecting between an infinite range of possible space-time paths, while typically focusing our attention on only one or two different realities at any given time.

Now, that hole on the wall..., I feel the unstoppable urge to peep through that hole...I could say I expect to see almost what Alice experienced when she went pass through the other side of the mirror, another side of the real...By looking through the hole in the wall of Neidich's piece, I can see what it was the photo of the Palace of the Republic, placed across the gallery space, but now is slightly different, suddenly it feels much more real and I see a falling building, falling, and falling, and falling... this event gets magnified, it is possible for the palace to collapse, it may collapse at right this moment... Formally, it is difficult to differentiate where the sculpture ends and the photograph begins, I shouldn't even be making that distinction, we know that it is not one or the other, looking closer there are several screws perforating literally the image and the drywall attached to the back of it, as if they were a temporary remedy, a way to slowdown the process of collapsing, a re-medial gesture, a way of extending the time before the end, a way of extending history supported by a tiled mirror surface, magnifying the now pixilated space, back inside the piece.

These picture-sculptural installation give us a new time space dimension of the architecture of Berlin, as a social and historical sculpture, it functions as a philosophical model for an alternative urban structure, half way between a fragmented wall, a city billboard mock-up and a display board commonly used in exhibitions. The contrast between one side and the other materializes the tension generated by this already in the issues generated by advertising, the palace of the republic, and the political polemic. The pictures look monumental inside the space, and they emphasize the monument going down, being dismantled, as opposed to being demolished, like certain politically correct ethics have been followed for the architectural termination procedure. Warren's piece makes me think about the way he is making art, and how he manages the time space repertoire, he rescues images from the past and re-locates them in the present, he actually shows the availability of images and a method to sink them back into the world and embodying in them these new possibilities of 'resistance':

"The Redistribution of the Sensible, that distribution of the sensible resulting from artistic interventions taking place in the visual and cultural landscape, is therefore a call for the way that artistic production produces new forms of sensation, perception, attention and intelligence. If one believes the work of Gerrald Edelman and JP Changeux about the way epigenesis works on the pleuripotential and plastic brain then this alternative configuration of the cultural landscape has implications for how the gray matter of the brain will be materialized and in the end the process through which artistic networks will realize new possibilities for the mind and imagination. In other words autonomous artistic practice can be a form of resistance. Resistance is therefore fertile." (12)

In the case of Gaelle Boucand, the other artist in the exhibition, what is being re-located on time and space is sound and an old technological device.

Gaëlle's piece creates a soundscape by re-cycling an ancient apparatus that once serious now appears obsolete and ridiculous in its dysfunctional display. As Daniel Lima, the curator of the exhibition, mentions in the press release: 'The sound you can hear from the piece comes from an old radio device connected to a lamp that turns on at the same time and randomly during the exhibition time, the sound of the radio is the noise you hear when you are tuning in between two frequencies' (13), citing Gilles Deleuze writes in Cinema 1, the movement-image:

'There remains the 'out of field'. This is not a negation; neither is it sufficient to define it by the non coincidence between two frames, one visual and the other sound (for example in Bresson, when the sound testifies to what is not seen, and 'relays' the visual instead of duplicating it). The out-of-field refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present'.(14)

The picture that Boucand uses is lightened by an old lamp and 'is a photograph of "spreepark" an old amusement park in Berlin, Treptower park now it's destroyed and covered by the invasive plants, invasive plants are perceived as a form of resistance of the place to the failure of those utopias. The place comes back to life with the light and radio device, machines that are out of time now, obsolete, due to the quick evolution of technology so the device works like a relic or memory of an older technology like the picture that works like a memory of the amusement park. Those time shifts inherent to the capitalistic, urban and technological evolution of the 20th century inspire the practice of Gaëlle". Daniel Birnbaum, in his book 'Chronology' states:

"Should an artist who experiments with new means of communication conform to the universal convergence of all traditional mediums and indulge in the free manipulation of data representing sound, vision and kinesthetic sensations broken down to basic signals? Or is the proper reaction rather to insist on devices that appear utterly outmoded in a world of freely circulating information? Buchloh emphasizes the key role of the outmoded in the work of artists such as Huyghe, who he claims, endeavors to find ways out of today's "intensification of control". Through the deployment of obsolete devices inside the most developed forms of visual and spatial domination, Huyghe "mobilizes an allegorical counterforce" says Buchloh - "a sudden temporal and spatial break from the apparently invincible spell and hermetic closure that the languages of media technology, architecture, and design have established in the service of spectacle and commodity production" (15) *

On the day of the opening an artist friend from Los Angeles, gave me some feedback about the show, and about what she thought about the work in general being exhibited, she would say she had the sensation of being in the middle of a film, she said the work was like video stills from an interrupted video screening, frozen parts of a movie... That was very illuminating for me, I know the work is about process, and about movement, and about framing, and about playing with scale of objects, and mixing different scales together, for example an animal is placed together with a building of the same size, and these video stills which are made by framing space and the objects in that space, are part of this imaginary movie, framed into another imaginary movie, framed into a movie. And it is Gilles Deleuze who I need to cite to be able to get my point across, how the space of the installation becomes a cinematic space:

'Here it is by degrees of mixing that the parts become distinct or confused in a continual transformation of values. The set cannot divide into parts without qualitatively changing each time, it is neither divisible nor indivisible, but 'dividual'. Admittedly this was already the case in the geometric conception – there the dovetailing of frames indicated the qualitative changes. The cinematographic image is always

dividual. This is because, in the final analysis, the screen, as the frame of frames, gives a common standard of measurement to things which do not have one – long shots of countryside and close-ups of the face, an astronomical system and a single drop of water – parts which do not have the same denominator of distance, relief or light. In all these senses the frame ensures a deterritorialisation of the image. (...) (16)

These works have made me question how can we change the status of the object in art, the relationship to the presence of the viewer in the work and how all of these changes could resonate and reflect on the social and the political of the contemporary architecture, in how consciousness is shaped by culture, how the audience can complete the work by de-contextualizing the art object, expanding on the suggestion of an idea, exercising the audience's imagination, the use of appropriation, techniques of subtraction, erasing and camouflage to dismember moments, how the viewer is exposed to these new anti-social remnants, detritus from other spaces and past times, which generate at the same time an anti-social time, capable of reconstructing a narrative that is not told, a story that doesn't exist just yet.

'Myths' presents a cornucopia of remains and objects which were variously subject to a range of art processes in order to re-construct the uncertain relationships that might link forms, objects, images, and society. These three artists present pieces infused with nostalgic references suggesting an ambiguous narrative, they comment on a failed capitalistic conundrum, a truncated capitalistic enterprise, the tragedy of utopia. These artists interweave, in an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply etched realism in representing ordinary images together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from urban myths and tales. It is through fabulation, their current mode of free-wheeling narrative invention, that these works violate, in various ways, standard artworks expectations by drastic experiments with subject matter, form, temporal sequence, and fusions of the everyday, the fantastic, and the mythical, in renderings that blur traditional distinctions between what art is and what is not. They all share a desire to disorder the urban landscape, and are focused in practices of disruption, inside and outside the gallery space. They are aimed to introduce disorder in the experience of the artwork.

In my opinion, this exhibition might give the viewer the material for constructing a city, an imagined urban space distilled and manifested through specific images, objects and references presented devoid of hierarchy, but presenting a new chronology, although an specific image remains elusive, the audience is able to form a multitude of hypotheses but with no affirmation of a knowable conclusion. I experienced the growth of the work from the start, and I can say it developed and evolved through the space in a very organic way, structuring the show in an engineered way, other than constructed, giving emphasis to pathways and horizontal ways of moving around the space generated by these artistic propositions and blending in environments other than dividing them, creating an 'urban derive' within the space of the gallery. The urban material generated these new "modes of visibility". Hence, the viewer experiences different malleable landscapes, the picture-sculptures that point into a flattening out of reality (Neidich), the soundscape where sound has gone awry (Boucand), the installation where animals have become part of

architecture (Bajo), I know, I haven't talked about my piece in specific in this occasion, please stay tuned, I will talk about it in the next contribution...), in our effort to imagine the future city we elaborate a constant fragmentation of what we see and what we re-create. The image remains temporal and the subject elusive as the work negotiates this non-nostalgic and esoteric terrain, these works occupy a kind of limbo, a cultural no man's land, in-between time-spaces we occupy but pass by, the invisible ones we all share, where we might re-construct the cities we don't remember yet, the cities we haven't dreamed about just yet, those ones inhabited by the world's imagination.

'MYTHS', Warren Neidich, Gaelle Boucand, Elena Bajo
Air Garten, Berlin Sept 8 – Oct 4, 2007

Notes

- (1) H.P Blavatsky, 'Many bodies but one soul' [[Vol. 1, Page]] 277
- (2) Gilles Deleuze, 'Cinema 1, The Movement-Image' (University of Minnesota Press, 1996) p 18
- (3) Pierre Klosowski, Nietzsche and the vicious circle, Trans. D.W. Smith (London: Athlone Press, 1997) p 57
- (4) From Nietzsche's Thus Zarathustra, quoted in JL Borges selected non fictions, ed Eliot Weinberger (London Penguin, 1999) pp 117 F
- (5) Daniel Birnbaum, 'Chronology' (Lucas & Sternberg, New York, 2005) p 11
- (6) Ayn Rand, 'Atlas Shrugged' (Dutton, New York, 1971)
- (7) Leonard Peikoff, 'Objectivism, the Philosophy of Ayn Rand' (Dutton, New York, 1991)
- (8) Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood'
- (9) Cynthia Sue Larson, "Reality Shifts, When Consciousness Changes the Physical World", ebook
- (10) Stephen Hawking, The Universe in a Nutshell (Bantam Book, Random House, New York, November 2001)
- (11) Fred Alan Wolf, Parallel Universes: The Search for Other Worlds, (Touchstone, New York 1988)
- (12) Warren Neidich, Tulca 2007, catalogue, Galway, Ireland
- (13) Daniel Lima Press release, Myths, Berlin, 2007
- (14) Gilles Deleuze, 'Cinema 1, The Movement-Image' (University of Minnesota Press, 1996) p 14
- (15) Daniel Birnbaum, "Chronology" *Benjamin Buchloh "Control, by design" ArtForum, September 2001, p163
- (16) Gilles Deleuze, 'Cinema 1, The Movement-Image' (University of Minnesota Press, 1996) p 16