

Walking Art: The Movement In-Between

¹ Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs & Space* (London: Sage, 1994).

² Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002), *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005), and *Radical* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009).

³ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 43.

⁴ Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

⁵ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 31.

⁶ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso Books, 2010); Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012); Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁷ Boris Groys, "Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation", trans. by Steven Lindberg, in *Documenta11 Platform: Exhibition. Catalogue* (Ostfildern-Ruit: HatjeCantz, 2002).

⁸ Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October*, 110 (Fall 2004).

⁹ Claire Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle. Where Are We Now?", in Nato Thompson, ed., *Living as Form* (New York: Creative Time, and Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2012), 39.

How does contemporary art happen outside the walls of the museum? The sets of actors, practices and relations supporting art with a capital A appear no longer as taken for granted as perhaps once they were. Within global economies of signs and space¹ many of the old certainties – aesthetic, institutional and practical – concerning what makes art come into being seem less clear-cut and our experience of them less secure. Due to an increased degree of entanglement between creative cultural activities and everyday practices, both the meaning and the experience of art once tied within the constraints of one particular space at one particular time begin to dissolve as they merge in other, more heterogeneous ways. Art 'happens' and, in doing so, opens, extends and moves its aesthetics to the outside, into the social realm of lived experiences like the art projects by Richard Long, Bruce Nauman, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton and William Pope L. show us. It is precisely this 'liveness' of art and its openness to the dimensions of the unpredictable that have led to the establishment of Nicolas Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' project during the 1990s. Drawing on the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,² Bourriaud, former co-director of the Palais de Tokyo Contemporary Art Center in Paris and current director of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts also in Paris, outlines a paradigm shift in which artistic practice is focused upon the social sphere of inter-human relations where "encounters are more important than the individuals who compose them".³ According to Bourriaud, in his interpretation of Guattari's concept of subjectivity as a network of relations (1995),⁴ relational art becomes productive of "everyday micro-utopias"⁵ wherein it can serve as a trigger for new democratic modes of collectivity including knowledge exchange outside mass media standardization of spectacle society and free interaction between the artist, the artwork and the viewer or participant.

Bourriaud's rather unilateral notion of relational aesthetics will appear on several occasions throughout our contribution. Though currently being critically reassessed by different scholars like Jacques Rancière, John Roberts, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester,⁶ it works from within of the fundamental problematic of the 21st century art and thus remains crucial for understanding the dynamics emerging at the interface between art and everyday practice, dynamics of the relational process in which "art becomes a life form, whereas the artwork becomes non-art, a mere documentation of this life-form".⁷ If art produces human relations outside the museum, then, as Claire Bishop puts it in *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, "the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why".⁸ Furthermore Bishop objects to the fact that many contemporary art projects find themselves in the logic of neoliberal structures, although some of them argue to expound the problems of it.⁹

Another important shift that needs to be addressed very carefully happens at both institutional level and at the level of practice or, better, use: in fact contemporary exhibitions are designed to break down the borders between art, technology, science and economy. In this regard Jan Jagodzinski offers a very valuable insight into the experience of visual art within what he calls “designer capitalism”.¹⁰ In the designer capitalism of digital information art meets the demands of the new media society where the visual, the material, and the textual have come together under the strategic imperative to put its aesthetic relationality to use. It seems that within the designed spaces of contemporary capitalist logic of productivity art becomes useful and practiced in a set of relations, wherein processes of aestheticization and commodification form and reinforce one another. Against this background, Bourriaud in his critique of capitalism does not go far enough, factually just substituting social relations for objects. As Jagodzinski points out by drawing on Stewart Martin,¹¹ this “does not escape the criticism that it is not *just* objects, but *also* social relations where capitalist exchange value occurs”.¹² Today’s art practices become paradoxically productive in a circulation process where life becomes art and “art becomes design, which is then integrated into everyday life”.¹³

Probably the most prominent example of how these fields become “symbiotically engaged with each other”¹⁴ is the influential dOCUMENTA exhibition which takes place in Kassel, Germany, every five years since 1972 (the first exhibition was in 1955). A brief insight into the art world of dOCUMENTA published on the official website at the end of its 13th edition (2012-2013) will suffice to demonstrate the complex relationality of contemporary artistic encounters in their involvement with the global mediated order of production. Echoing the relational turn in art theory, a variety of aspects characteristic of both “artistic research and forms of imagination” is being addressed in terms of “commitment, matter, things, embodiment, and active living”.¹⁵ The vision of an art exhibition “that is skeptical of the persisting belief in economic growth” is being encouraged, driven by a “holistic and non-logocentric vision” that recognizes “the shapes and practices of knowing of all animate and inanimate makers of the world, including people”. All in all, art as “ceaselessly posed in life” is being thought through the production of multifaceted experiences which “carried by the events, and by the singularities” are able to go beyond “the aporias of the subject and the object” towards more complex terrains where politics and art are inseparable within a “sensual, energetic, and worldly alliance”.

The conditions of this complex heterogeneity associated with art as lived experience are both unstable and open to change. Today, when art has become all too subsumed into everyday life – as leisure, entertainment and consumption – the critical task is not that of reasserting the autonomy of artistic activity in opposition to the capitalistic machinery of spectacle, rather that of art to become “furtively disruptive”¹⁶ within the designed spaces of its global mediated order. An integral part of this tension is that relational art is being confronted with the challenge of “breaking free of what appears, to be free already”.¹⁷ Influential exhibitions like dOCUMENTA

¹⁰ Jan Jagodzinski, *Visual Art and Education in an Era of Designer Capitalism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹¹ Stewart Martin, “Critique of Relational Aesthetics”, *Third Text*, 21.4 (2007), 369-386.

¹² Jan Jagodzinski and Jason J. Wallin, *Arts-based Research: A Critique and a Proposal* (Rotterdam and Boston: Sense Publishers, 2013), 128.

¹³ Ibid., 49.

¹⁴ Ibid., 20.

¹⁵ dOCUMENTA (13), <<http://d13.documenta.de/>>, 31 December 2013.

¹⁶ Ibid., 133.

¹⁷ Ibid., 204.

¹⁸ Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”, 70.

need to reflect on the conditions of their own possibility, which in turn might serve as a challenge of “contemporary art’s self-perception as a domain that embraces other social and political structures”.¹⁸ It is important to emphasize that the artists do not contribute to the political dimension of art just because they open up spaces for social encounter. What is really at stake is how those spaces activated through the participation of the viewers might be set into motion and become something else in their potential to create a previously unknowable and unthought-of world. In this context it is the capacity of the relational art to transform its own relations which might provide critical potential, and thus has to be taken into account with a view to the contingencies and uncertainties of its dynamic environment.

One of the spaces associated with DOCUMENTA (13) that has always been particularly interesting in terms of relationality is the old railway station in Kassel transformed in 1995 into *Kulturbahnhof* – a center for art, culture and entertainment. By accommodating a cinema, a gallery, a restaurant, event rooms and an open TV channel, *Kulturbahnhof* stands exactly for the kind of artistic and cultural production that in its involvement in contemporary “experience economy”¹⁹ is characterized through potentials of extreme ambiguity. If a work of art can find spaces that overcome the institutional constraints of the ‘museum art’ it becomes something else – a work of experimentation akin to a laboratory experience. Bishop addresses such cultural *modus operandi* as a direct reaction to the type of relational art produced in 1990s, “work that is open-ended, interactive, and resistant to closure, often appearing to be ‘work in progress’ rather than a completed object”.²⁰ This “perpetual flux”²¹ contemporary artistic spaces find themselves located in becomes especially expressive in the hall of the train station, in its transformation into an artistic “non-place” in Marc Augé’s sense (1995).²² Both connected to and interrupting currently effective power structures, *Kulturbahnhof* exists in a constant movement, a state of dynamic encounters between human bodies, consumer objects, media screens, works of art and other semiotic and material events, entities and practices. In this context, what we think is worth taking a closer look at is the capacity of an artwork to reassess its own aesthetic relationality – a frame of “dynamized and impacting forces” that are “by no means exclusively human”,²³ – as situationally contingent and thereby to raise the political question for art within the realm of what Jacques Rancière calls the “distribution of the sensible”.²⁴

Among a variety of works designed for *Kulturbahnhof* one particular art installation stands out, as it not only permits participation but operates with(in) the ambiguity of the train station’s dynamic framework itself. Performed for the first time in 2012 at DOCUMENTA (13), the experimental new media art work *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller is still one of the most popular artistic attractions of the train station. Participants, equipped with an iPod and headphones, are asked to follow the pre-recorded video and audio instructions, and then directed through the station by a set of happenings unfolding on the iPod screen. A variety of heterogeneous actors come to act during the walk, both on and off the screen, creating a series of performative and affective encounters. The

¹⁹ Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

²⁰ Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”, 52.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London and New York: Verso, 1995).

²³ Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 3.

²⁴ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).

dynamic installation designed literally not so much as a 'work' but as a "*walk* of art" becomes expressive only through and within movement. Aligning the dynamic space of the train station with the bodies of those participating in the walk through a small frame-screen of the iPod, Cardiff and Miller's installation questions the reductive idea of the frame reducible to the actual spatial parameters where "anything that appears within that frame has no relation to anything outside".²⁵

Through *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* where virtual and actual space, reality and fiction, bodies and things are opened up to dynamic and interrelated forces, the goal of our contribution will be to develop new ways of addressing relational art practices in which "the interhuman sphere"²⁶ can and must be linked to non-human agency without emphasizing the human vision as the only measure of the significance of the world. Following the instructions of the video walk we concentrate on three happenings, situations or frames that together create a "plain of composition",²⁷ an assemblage of moving and relationally transforming elements. Throughout our argumentation placed in the context of a range of non-representational theories that conceive art, space and movement in terms of relationality²⁸ we attempt to explore the manifold intensities of the art walk emerging from the in-between of its affective and performative dimensions. In so doing, we intend to follow Deleuze and Guattari's lead in identifying art as "a self-movement of the expressive qualities".²⁹

Between Media Frame – Space Frame

Okay ... turn the camera on, press the video button.
I am sitting here right now with you
in the train station in Kassel watching people pass by ...
(Janet Cardiff, *Video Walk*)

Taking its departure from the constituting power of the movement, the media installation by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller invites us to 'walk' art by pushing the play button of an iPod. The small mobile screen-frame with headphones opens an audiovisual file that shows exactly the same place we are located in with a series of disturbing variations commented on in a thoughtful narrative manner. A woman's voice (the voice of artist Janet Cardiff) gives us instructions. We watch things happen on the 'virtual' screen but feel the presence of the world being 'actually' unfolded because it is situated in the exact location the footage was shot. In following the moving images by simultaneously framing them as if we were behind the camera, a strange confusion of realities occurs. What is being represented within the frame becomes a characteristic of our movement. The video walk becomes expressive not only by giving us directions and, in so doing, aligning our movements with those performed on the screen, it also actively participates in the transitive dynamics of the semiotic-material space, *Kulturbahnhof*, to which it refers and also intensifies. The alternate reality of the train station unfolding within the iPod frame resonates with movements and dynamics of the train station performing itself in the 'here and now'. The dynamic intertwining of relations causes a fleeting and

²⁵ Brian Massumi, "The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens: A Semblance of a Conversation", *Inflexions*, 1.1 (May 2008), 33.

²⁶ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 25.

²⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Continuum, 2007), 266.

²⁸ See for example Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting and Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*; Massumi, "The Thinking-Feeling".

²⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, 149.

paradoxical experience of being caught in-between two potentially overlapping environments – one performative and one affective.

The performative situation of the video walk refers to the kind of relationality staged, in its specific orientation between the actual and the virtual movement. Bodies, actions, objects and events are not only shown on the iPod screen, they begin to function. The act of staging is neither meant to produce, nor to represent. It does not speak in the name of ultimate creation. What it does for sure is a continuous performance of connection and transformation coming to act again and again as a relational assemblage of unique articulation. Its performative orientation, though being partly staged and directed, still unfolds within various relations of becoming: the image becomes frame, the frame becomes movement, the movement becomes space.

Within this dynamic constellation a lot happens. Possibilities and potentialities of *Kulturbahnhof* are transformed in various ways as they get re-arranged within and through the movements of the video walk. First, the binary division of time and space becomes obsolete. The past and the future, the virtual and the actual, the material and the visual interrupt each other and merge in a set of differentiated actions. Secondly, the museal conceptualization of frame as fixed, immobile and awaiting the enlivening effects of human interpretation stops working properly as it just does not meet the demands of the art walk's situation. The iPod video acting as a frame in motion becomes a transitional passage between images and bodies moving on both sides of the screen and creates the very condition for the plane of the video walk's composition. The complex relationality emerging in-between the frame and its space might be described as the affective one where "art takes a bit of chaos in a frame in order to form a composed chaos that becomes sensory, or from which it extracts a chaoid sensation as variety".³⁰ In its technical and material connectivity it simultaneously extends and ruptures the visual experience by exposing the social construction of the frame as well as the spatial construction of the social. To echo Brian Massumi, the experience of this occasion is about "a strong sense of thinking-feeling qualities of movement".³¹ Through movements of bodies and things affecting each other the relation between actual space and its artistic vision is being recomposed, thus engaging a variety of actors in a set of differentiated and yet closely connected experiences.

³⁰Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 26.

³¹ Massumi, "The Thinking-Feeling", 33.

Between Affective Happening – Performative Happening

This video will be an experiment.
We are like those prisoners stuck in Plato's Cave.
We watch the flickering shadows on the screen.

Try to align your movements with mine.
(Janet Cardiff, *Video Walk*)

With these words Cardiff guides the visitor through the walk. She emphasizes the intimacy and the experimental character of this setting that she compares with the

prisoners in Plato's Cave. A place – from a pedagogical or philosophical point of view – we all should escape individually and at the same time collectively. Following our senses we think we perceive 'one truth' or 'one reality', because our knowledge and understanding of the world are structured by them. *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* tries to challenge these, maybe to the same extent that the pictures on the wall in Plato's Cave broaden our understanding of reality, as Susan Sontag claims.³² No matter if those shadows are flickering and give us the feeling to be unreal or unsure, the more we are perceiving, the more we can imagine. Sontag writes in "Plato's Cave" that pictures (photographs) show us what is worth looking at.³³ By looking at photographs we are following an ethic and grammar of seeing. The video walk provides us with a very special kind of grammar we want to follow in its relational movement. Walking through the main station and listening to the guiding voice we get confronted with a special kind of seeing. To take part in the walk means to relate ourselves to the art environment. An environment that our selves have to experience. In this way, each experience becomes both individual and collective. The artwork is not seeable until the visitor brings it to life. As a consequence of the participatory turn Suzana Milevska describes the fact that objects are becoming less and less important within social bonds. More and more important are the relations between subjects, although artists have to foster the audience to create the relations in an active manner. Milevska argues for participatory art and militates against interaction, "wherein the relations established between the members of the audience or between them and the art objects are much more passive and formal (usually directed by certain formal instructions, given by the artists, that are to be followed during the exhibitions)".³⁴ In *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* it seems that visitors are left to their own, however realising the collective power of the walkers and their relations is part of the artwork. Artist Teddy Cruz claims, that "[w]e lack the kind of collective sense of urgency that would prompt us to fundamentally question our own ways of thinking and acting, and form new spaces of operation".³⁵ While looking at the flickering shadows like in Plato's Cave, we feel separated from the others, because we think we perceive alone. But it is not only the talking about what we have seen to others, it is also the act of seeing and performing that binds us collectively. Already the fact of watching and walking with the video is experienced within a certain collective situation connecting visitors in unpredictable ways. Art is always open to different interpretations, especially when it comes to "the poetics of the 'work in movement'".³⁶ What we are interested in with regard to *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* is the active movement that creates a cycle of relations. Our interest echoes Bourriaud's concept of relational art that focuses participation and not interaction: "If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion, and that form of inter-human negotiation that Marcel Duchamp called 'coefficient of art', which is a temporal process, being played out here and now".³⁷ We are challenged by this new communicative situation, in which we feel at the same time alone and a part of a collective, what seems to be also symptomatic of contemporary

³² Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave", *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 2001 [1977]), 3.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Suzana Milevska, "Participatory Art. A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects", *eurozine* (2006), <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-06-02-milevska-en.html>, 30 December 2013.

³⁵ Teddy Cruz, "Democratizing Urbanization and the Search for a New Civic Imagination", in Thompson, ed., *Living as Form*, 57.

³⁶ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 22f.

³⁷ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 41.

³⁸ Kester, *The One and The Many*, 21.

socially engaged art.³⁸ We might perform the walk as individuals but at the same time, following the suggested steps through the halls of the station, we are moving along the movement itself, creating associations and aligning our movements with those of other participants affectively. The politics of this affective encounter is always a relational one. During the walk we begin to question the station with its structures. The past of the train station is being revealed in the 'here and now'. The group of 'walkers' finds itself in constant movement. It is a collective experience of an ongoing transformation, becoming performative and affective, collective and intimate. The people disrupt the ordinary business of *Kulturbahnhof* and broaden its time and space to a new political level. The walk as a happening intervenes in everyday life in order to expose the particular. Consequently, the relational dimension of the video walk increases its political potential. In this regard, as artist Teddy Cruz claims, "[t]o be political in our field requires that we commit to revealing conditions of conflict and the institutional mechanisms that perpetuate them".³⁹ Political art projects have to be strongly geared to everyday practices, therefore their creative work is focused on socio-political and economic approaches.

³⁹ Cruz, "Democratizing Urbanization", 61.

Between Visual Environment – Material Environment

Try to follow the image.

Now stop and watch ... Cut! Cut!

Let's continue.
(Janet Cardiff, *Video Walk*)

During the walk, the visitor is always confronted with virtual images on the screen as well as the movements of the people in the train station, hence the walk disrupts the 'usual behaviour' and challenges visitors to act throughout their walk according to directions given by the artist Janet Cardiff. All the time during the walk the visitors are thrown back into the past at the time of the Second World War and have to decide whether to follow orders and be obedient walkers or if they want to be 'disobedient' and concentrate their attention on something else. Each time the visitors have to interact with the iPod and they must negotiate their behaviour with 'non walkers' and the ongoing ordinary business at the station. These intensive moment(s) or sensation(s) of negotiating the 'here and now' are being activated affectively and lead us to a collective experience we did not recognize before. The dynamic relationality of the walk lets us walk with art in a movement where "the molecular is opened up, the aesthetic is activated, and art does what is its chief *modus operandi*: it transforms, if only for a moment, our sense of our 'selves' and our notion of our world".⁴⁰ The transformation of ourselves is provoked by the walk where we are always between the beginning and the end, always in transit between the virtual reality of the video screen and the material actuality of the station. Deleuze describes the power of the virtual through actualization as follows:

⁴⁰ Simon O'Sullivan, "The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking Art beyond Representation", *Angelaki*, 6.3 (December 2001), 128.

“By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is actualisation. It would be wrong to see only a verbal dispute here: it is a question of existence itself”.⁴¹ It is about changing and reflecting ordinary living. The actualisation of the virtual creates a liminal experience of the audience, which could act for a certain period of time. The big strength of the walk is thus not to show the audience what is possible in the material reality by achieving something, but to provoke the spectator to create. In this regard, as Bourriaud points out, “art, likewise, is no longer seeking to represent utopias; rather, it is attempting to construct concrete spaces”.⁴² Art, and we want to take this video walk as an example, can be seen as the space between the actual and the virtual. It provides us with a frame we, as spectators, are able to use and transform. The artists invite us to learn how to use a frame in order to “make them one’s own, to inhabit them”.⁴³ The walk does not guarantee a liminal experience, but there is the potential of a certain actualization during the walk, provided by the visual and the material environment, that has been self reflected in the video.

The visual or virtual reality unveils itself as a constructed reality by showing the spectator quick changes between day and night or sunny and snowy weather. Also at one point the female narrator reveals to the listener that the woman with the red coat down at the railroad tracks is herself. We move between different weather conditions, times and environments on the screen. So, for example, within the first minute of the video the short cross reference to the installation work “for a thousand years” (2012) performed in the Karlsaue in Kassel during dOCUMENTA (13). At the same moment the visitors are confronted with the history of the train station in Kassel from the 1850s when it was built till today, passing through the aftermaths of the Second World War. Since 1991 the train station Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe has been used for long distance train journeys and Kassel’s Hauptbahnhof is only a local commuter station. Many rooms in the building are now empty. During the war it was Germany’s most important station because of its location and also because of the closeness to the arms factory. Guided by the video the visitors have to engage artefacts relating to victims of the Second World War. Observing other participants of the walk and observed by ‘non-walkers’ the material world of the station comes to its fore. So the environment of the station seems to be perfectly fitting for giving the ‘walkers’ space for engagement. Following Bourriaud these social interstices provided by the open space are the key points for the spectators to act. “The interstice is a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system”.⁴⁴ The created space fosters communication and brings topics to life that were buried in the halls of the station and in people’s minds. Also Nato Thompson, Chief Curator at the New York based public arts institution Creative Time, claims in his concept of “living as form” that art has to be anti-representational, participatory and situated in the ‘real’ world.⁴⁵ Only then can art operate politically. The confrontation between the material and the visual environment is essential in *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* because the walk pushes us

⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 211.

⁴² Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 46.

⁴³ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 12.

⁴⁴ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 16.

⁴⁵ Nato Thompson, “Living as Form”, in Thompson, ed., *Living as Form*, 12.

forward to struggle with the environment we perceive through our senses. As Ronald Bogue suggests, “art, as the disposition of expressive qualities, is the active agent in the formation of territory”.⁴⁶ We experience a transformation of perception in an ongoing recasting of our spatial and temporal senses. That is why discussions about art is not about its value, but about “the sense of presence conveyed by the screen that takes its place”.⁴⁷ Discussions about art have always to deal with their spatial setting and what qualities they produce. So the question remains, how does this kind of walking art relate us to the non-human territory we are part of? Visual art is not just about human vision. The pictures on the screen are less important than the experiences they produce. Since modernity pictures have not been seen as identical representations of reality or truth. Pictures became increasingly a reference to objects. As W. J. Thomas Mitchell has pointed out, in contemporary visual studies it is not about what a picture means but what it wants.⁴⁸ We can use this thoughtful objection for our matter and ask what art wants. It is not about the representation of the train station in the video, it is about the relations between the material and visual environment of the walk and the spectators that what the walk is about is revealed. An experience of situations, made possible by relations to the uncanny historical heritage of the immediate environment.

The Practice in between

In conclusion, echoing Bourriaud’s claim of relational aesthetics, we have argued that contemporary art spaces are constituted through social relations. Outside of these relations the work of art has no existence. Every artwork is thus relational, enfolding within ‘the here and now’ of what Doreen Massey describes as a situation of “dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations”.⁴⁹ Relational art installations are therefore always unfinished. Their dynamic and situational unfolding, as well as the uncertainty about their political dimension, refer to manifold potentials of the contemporary post-modern world that, both in its affective and performative forms, becomes more and more “artificially fabricated”.⁵⁰ Also, Bourriaud’s description of relational aesthetics fails to engage the complexity and diversity of contemporary art works.⁵¹ It is not about what art is, rather how art as a practice comes to its fore. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari jagodzinski claims that “art creates by ‘breaking down’”.⁵² Consequently *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* should not only be seen as an art project that creates space for spectators to use, but also as a project that interferes with the ordinary structures of the train station. A walk that breaks down the station as a non-place, where people just pass by to go somewhere else, but a walk that transforms both the space of the station and the visitors walking art. Art as a walking practice at the Hauptbahnhof in Kassel reveals the unspeakable history of the Second World War. Within an undeniable spectacle of the art world, that maybe reproduces more neoliberal structures rather than putting them in question, Cardiff and Bures Miller

⁴⁶ Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting and Arts*, 20.

⁴⁷ Jacques Rancière, “Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics”, in Beth Hinderliter et al., eds., *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2009), 31.

⁴⁸ W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁴⁹ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 107.

⁵⁰ Philip Goodchild, *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* (London: Sage, 1996), 184.

⁵¹ See also: Kester, *The One and The Many*, 31.

⁵² jan jagodzinski, “The ‘Relations’ of Relational Aesthetics within Altermodernity: Revisiting the Case of Nicholas Bourriaud”, *etum - ejournal for theatre and media*, 1.1 (2014), <[http://ejournal.theaterforschung.de/index.php?journal=ausgabe1&page=article&op=view&path\[\]=23](http://ejournal.theaterforschung.de/index.php?journal=ausgabe1&page=article&op=view&path[]=23)>, 31 December 2013.

detach themselves as artists and set a walk in motion that emancipates itself from their creators. Although *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* was originally designed as part of DOCUMENTA (13), it is now still available and can be walked at the old train station in Kassel. The global event of the art exhibition helped to “established the political, ethical and collective possibilities that have led to the conjoining of politics and aesthetics in a political aesthetics”.⁵³ Against this background our second argument is that of relational aesthetics being not exclusively inter-human. The dynamics of Cardiff and Bures Miller’s video walk have shown a much more complex way of unfolding, a multiplicity of various actors moving and changing together, gathering moments and spaces of interconnection, opening up the expression of the artwork in complex and unpredictable ways. During the video walk the space itself becomes expressive as a condition for the unexpected. It performs affects and affects performance, directs the dynamics of the movement and transforms by rearranging its own frame, setting its own conditions into motion.

Finally, the video walk by Cardiff and Bures Miller exemplifies the relation between visual and material frame as increasingly blurred. With the establishment of new media art the frame does not disappear, the image itself becomes the frame, which evokes a reorientation of the actual-virtual relations between the art performance and its corporeal experience. Participants of all kinds – both human and in-human transform the space of the artwork and thus contribute to its being made. Yet, as the artwork is being negotiated by the participants’ ongoing movements, its space is itself constantly changing as it exists within a variety of dynamics and processes that exceed the limits of every single variation.

The experiences made by the walk were possible through human and non-human relations. This also means that the walk itself and its outcome is uncertain and precarious. The result cannot be foreseen, nor regulated. Maybe the walk is somewhat uncanny and more depressing than liberating. We are not able to certify explicit characteristics, but it expands our awareness of the world we are living in. We leave the last word to Claire Bishop, when she compares participatory art with democracy and emphasizes the similarities: “Participatory art is not a privileged political medium, nor a ready-made solution to a society of the spectacle, but is as uncertain and precarious as democracy itself; neither are legitimated in advance but need continually to be performed and tested in every specific context”.⁵⁴

⁵³ Barbara Bolt, *Heidegger Reframed: A Guide for the Arts Student* (London: Tauris, 2010), 126.

⁵⁴ Bishop, “Participation and Spectacle”, 45.