POINT OF DEPARTURE:
Narrating and Imaging

D E S I G N   T I C K E T   1
VALIDITY SUBJECT TO USE

ZONE OF TRAVEL:
What if the design of art in public space were to mobilise
different ways of experiencing and understanding urban life?

narrating

imaging

ROUTE

narrating

imaging

1

Tramways have a curious presence in the public space of Melbourne. When contemplating the city of Melbourne, the image of a tram is one which appears with frequency; the tram being popularly regarded as an icon of the city. Whereas other Australian cities erased tramways from their streets in line with the post world-war-two rhetoric of freedom and mobility of the individual, that rhetoric motivating the dreams of owning a home on a quarter-acre-block and one's own automobile, Melbourne managed to re-affirm its tramways system with improved infrastructure and service.

The tramways have come to foster an array of subtle perceptions of the streets of Melbourne, contributing toward the city's distinguishable differences from its Australian and regional counterparts. The overhead cabling provides a visual canopy of line-work, a net of cabling strung together that seem to threaten to yet resists enclosing the street; the mid-street tram stops punctuate street space with a visual and experiential sense of rhythm; the compilation of tram gongs, whirring compressors, rattling tram bodies and screeching steel wheels on steel tracks orchestrate a distinctive acoustic environment. Tracks felt under the foot of the pedestrian or under the wheels of bicyclists and motorists deliver unique tactile sensations; not least to mention trams themselves and the system's fundamental relations of movement which bring about an array of particular spatial sequences and proximities with temporal passages and punctuations. It is perhaps then not surprising that the collection of Melbourne experiences entwined about the tramways are commonly reduced to an objectified image of the tram itself, in an attempt to capture the character of Melbourne in a representable and reproducible form: Melbourne in a tram (can).

Sydney, the often regarded rival city of Melbourne, is popularly imaged relative to its harbour location and the panoramic views which it avails to the outward looking eye.   In contrast, Melbourne is popularly imaged by the smaller-scale interior views of its tram-lined streets, of *lived* space rather than elevated pictorial space.   Images of Melbourne which position the viewer within the volume of the city evoke the sort of stories that circulate as a means of differentiating Melbourne from its neighbour: *Melbourne is 'the more easy going and friendly '[1]; Sydney is "a shop window city"[2], 'a brash, bold and*

bright city'[3], for 'it all comes back to the harbour'[4].

storytelling

MELBOURNE VIA TRAM

The tramways animate a sort of consciousness for the inhabitants of an inward looking city deprived of spectacularly large scale vistas, reminding us that the metropolis in which we reside is in part an enlarged version of ourselves, like a living organism that comes to mirror our own collective attributes, whether revered or despised, valued or neglected.   More so than any other transportation or communication infrastructure, tramways are legible life-lines of the city, street level veins servicing the most basic metabolism of the urban fabric, punctuating space and time with a choreographic flows of human movement.

The tramways contribute toward facilitating the city's rhythms, responding to and enacting the pulsation of collective urban life. The movement of the trams themselves animate the momentum of Melbourne life, seeing the "day in" and the "day out", as a local artist once painted in large letters on the sides of a Melbourne tram.[5] The route of each tram through the network of the tramway tracks carves out a particular legibility of the city, facilitating particular ways of moving about and living in the city. As an environment characterised by its built construction, the city is a text of immense complexity interwoven with the various aspirations, fears and struggles that have brought it into being and the various permutations of possible experiences that it avails to those who inhabit it. The tramways' routes facilitate particular passages through the dense text of the city; particular routes traversed at particular times facilitating ways of experiencing the city, providing a path through which to read the city just as the lines in a book provide a route through the body of its written text. "Your gaze scans the streets as if they were written pages: the city says everything you must think, makes you repeat her discourse."[6]

Each route provides a type of backbone for the everyday performance of endless simple narratives, conveying something of the texture of endless stories of the city. Trams are forever

stitching together simple stories of urban experience, departing from different points and arriving at different destinations with infinite passages between the two, taking people from here to there with rhythms which come to orchestrate experiences of everyday life.

Despite the tramways providing an iconic (or can-like) destination for nostalgic sentimentality amongst Melbournians, they have by-and-large been managed and understood for their perfunctory performance as public transportation systems to be instrumentally employed toward that end.   We have come to understand the tramways as *intended* to transport people: *designed* as a 'people mover'. This is the story of the tramways that is affirmed around us - for it is undoubtedly true - it is the simple linear story made so easily legible for the certainty of its end point, for its rational purpose, providing the most elementary of explanations as to why tramways exist. Narratives that rationalise a purpose or intent tend to dominate discourse in a culture motivated by economic efficiency and competitiveness, including in the discourses surrounding design practice.

reiterating

CONVENTIONAL NARRATIVES OF DESIGN KNOWLEDGE

reiterating

Twentieth century attempts to develop and convey knowledge of design processes have also been subject to dominating narratives. Design, as a disciplinary domain of activity that has emerged from a Western industrial society, has generally been understood through either an attempted objectifying rationalisation of the process of designing, or through a mysterious and glorifying romanticisation of the process and the designer.[7]   The rise of interest in the rationalisation of design as a science, consolidated through the design methodologies movements of the 1960's, led discourse on design toward practices of standardising, systematising and reducing design-like practices in an attempt to obtain an objective overview of them such that they may be viewed independent of the designer's subjectivity.[8]

Invariably the processes of design that are being attemptedly described and theorised have emerged from the unquestioned desire to elucidate a temporal logic in design, a linear sequence of

actions and events that may be controlled by design and repeated by the controlled learning of designers. In its common narrative characterisations - such as the defining and solving of a problem; of analysing, synthesising and evaluating a situation; of generating a state of order from a state of chaos through planning; and of determining direction for the future - design has been modelled via the conceptual and communication methods of a rationalist design sensibility that presents the processes of design as somehow static and complete, a balanced trajectory upon a preordained track so orderly in its consistency that it obscures the very qualities of change, variability and dynamism which we might otherwise attempt to understand. The modern concept of 'design' has come into being dominated by its interpretation as *noun* - for its representation as product, an authoring designer and a reproducible and consistent process - even when the claimed intent of much design discourse has been to enlighten an understanding of a dynamic momentum described as a process: '*the* design process'.

Alternatively a romantic approach celebrates the intuitive and charismatic genius of the "designer" subjectivity which is claimed to be beyond the grasp of reason and communication.   Such an approach is too readily a target for accusations of mystification, and of evading the possibility of design knowledge being articulated, learnt and understood.   Maintaining ways in which understanding design might proceed from within the realm of the purely subjective only contributes toward removing the importance of design from its social context. It may well be in the interests of acquiring market advantage to bolster the capacity of design knowledge to be reified in the celebrated form of the 'name' designer, but of what use is such a heroic conception of design genius in enabling us to generate understanding of the design of art in public space? The public artwork of American artist Barbara Kruger has been echoing well beyond America since the mid 1980's provocatively announcing to all who notice: *"We don't need another hero"*.

TRADITIONAL IMAGES OF DESIGN KNOWLEDGE

The products of design activity have been long understood to comprise material artifacts and not simply words, just as the means of developing material artifacts has been understood to involve the formation of representations of intended artifacts. The designer works with images in mind and represented in material form to develop designs, and hence has commonly employed such techniques when attempting to convey to others what it is that the designer knows. A romantic conception of design celebrates its superior taste for beauty, "elegance of form"[9] and tautological truths resulting in a form of cultural connoisseurship that offers no reflective image of itself that may be shared to generate further social understanding, but only forwards the mythic image of genius, the portrait of the autonomous designer or the representation of designed object.

On the other hand, the reductive nature of rational attempts to gain an *overview* of design, an 'objective' scientific image or map revealing the essential and universal character of design from a position outside of the object of focus, have inevitably constructed enclosing and static conceptualisations of design. These static representational models of design process are always haunted by the prescriptive nature that their inherently enclosing limitations inevitably reveal, not to mention the questionable degree to which these enclosing abstractions hold any correspondence to actual designers' fluid practices of thinking and doing that come to be known as designing. The means of conceptualisation and communication employed to formulate a rational image of design, the articulating tools and instruments of representational language, imagery, modelling and notational schemes, have been engaged in such a manner that assumes the very object of their study - design - is divorced from the instruments which deliver its particular revelations, as if the lenses through which insight is gained have no bearing upon what is sighted, or the destination where we might find ourselves bears no relation to the vehicles by which we travelled.

The inherent limitation of modelling images of our knowledge of design activity is that such images establish a normative structure for an activity which in actuality negotiates situations which are ill-structured and ill-defined, or as Ritttel first described "wicked"[10]. If the greatest resource of design

knowledge is the capacity for it to bear productive relevance to indeterminate new situations, the act of determining the way that design activity acts upon its resource can only be enabling if such a determination does not preclude that which it sets out to describe. Design activity is most enabled when understood dynamically for it need not be bound by the objects that it articulates. Herbert Simon proposed - with a characteristically Modernist tone of righteousness - that design is "concerned with how things *ought* to be"[11]. Rather than maintain the fantasy that design could construct a condition of material or moral perfection, we might perpetually concern design with how things *might* be, forever making alternatives. For design is an activity that is self-creating and self-organising: it generates, creates and invents itself in dialogue with the production of its ever-changing objects.

We need forms for conceptually capturing design knowledge which minimise the degree to which they constrain the limits of what is conceptually acceptable or the degree to which they preclude the possibility of different objects of design and different styles of design thought and action. The style of our conceptual capture of design knowledge with which we operate will determine the nature of design operations available to us. It is only images and narratives of design knowledge that enable design activity to be perpetually *re-created* that will offer any promise as tools of practical use in yielding forth understanding of the know-how that comprises the unique object of design knowledge. Such images and narratives can in themselves be considered provisional and invariably diverse in their fecundity of use and their lucidity of generative power.

NARRATIVE

When particular narratives comes to dominate our understanding of the tramways or of the activity of designing, when our train of thought repetitively traverses the same track, we might ask ourselves what other conceptual possibilities are being excluded? What other ways of knowing might we also

practice? Like all narratives which present the order of a linear temporal sequence from amongst the multiple potential trajectories of life, the routes of the tramways and the discourses of design hold

potential for travels of less certain types, where the passage along the way perpetually opens towards variable situations and immanent directions rather than simply delivering to predetermined destinations. Stories - and tram routes - may invoke interpretations that diverge from the linear flow of the track. The non-linear communicative potential of the poetic story derives its powers from what is *unsaid* equally to what is said, constructing a space of interpretation as it proceeds, leaving an echo which constructs a space for its own resonance in the process of traversing its passage. Vertical readings of narratives are actively superimposed upon their sequential horizontal reading, creating:

> "an incessant play of potentials whose varying falls give the narrative its dynamism or energy: each unit is perceived at once for its surfacing and in its depth and it is thus that the narrative 'works'; through the concourse of these movements the structure ramifies, proliferates, uncovers itself - and recovers itself, pulls itself together"[12].

Whilst at the level of the most perfunctory spatial consideration we may well claim that tram travellers and readers may find themselves delivered to common destination points in the city or at the last page of the book, travellers and readers also construct different images and understandings of their passage. They bring with them their differences in histories and desires which inform the construction of a poetic space which is not determined or contained by the linearity of the systems in which they develop, but is given depth, volume and made habitable with interpretation. *Reading narrative* is a productive act, as is the speaking and writing of narrative: we "ceaselessly re-inject into narrative" what we have known and experienced[13]. We do not so simply nor passively consume dominant narratives or objects of production. Our acts of consumption and use are re-appropriations: we modify and vary, extend and undermine, making what we will from the lot that we've got.

evoking

IMAGES OF NON-LINEAR MOVEMENT

Just as narrative experience is not restricted to the delivery of linear sequences or end-points, tram travel and an urban existence proximate to a tramways system yields narrative experiences which not

evoking only move bodies to and from particular points in the urban landscape but also drift off the rails so to speak, weaving spaces of contemplation, reverie and serendipity. Situations encountered in relation to the tramways may evoke new associative trains of thoughts, emotions and actions that inscribe the resonant depths of our everyday apprehension of value in urban life. In addition to the linear representational direction of travel which the linear unfolding of a story and that of a single route of a tramline might offer, narratives hold possibilities for this more elliptical form of travel. The poetic potential of non-linear momentum casts thought and emotion into a spatio-temporal context that may be apprehended via a multitude of trajectories beyond the simple temporal succession of cause and effect, beginning and end. Such travels are more than simply connotative in opposition to denotative, or synchronic as opposed to diachronic, metaphoric as opposed to literal; for maintaining these binary oppositions is a perpetuation of the same mode of thought that has brought us to the end of the line with the romantic / rationalist opposition in our approach to understanding design knowledge.

DERAILMENT

4

A tracking vehicle departs from the tramways of Melbourne as we know them, renewing possibilities for the design of art in public space. This is not a vehicle that pursues causes of effects or ends from beginnings. *A tracking vehicle articulates an ephemeral architecture of space-time effects.* A tracking vehicle is concerned with negotiating variable movements of image, text, sound; with lightness, darkness, texture, amplitude and volume.

The negotiations of a tracking vehicle are mobilised through reiterative acts of orientating and maneuvering, narrating and imaging, poeticising and following, imagining and remembering. The prevalent momentum of a tracking vehicle at any moment is generated by a dialogical counter-posing of

one effect against another.

A trace of a tracking vehicle might be temporarily sighted in the interior lining of a regular service passenger tram. Removed of its traditional arrangement of seating, the inner body surfaces of the tram might be clad with the white vertical walls we expect of a modern art gallery. The sort of flat-bench seat that we find fixed against the tram wall might be centrally fixed at either end of the otherwise sparse cabin space in humble mimicry of those Meis van de Rohe like black leather and chrome bench lounges so often found in the international art gallery circuit, availing unsuspecting commuters the opportunity to poise themselves in new relationships of proximity as they face outwards toward the street.

Whilst the majority of the tram's windows might be clad with white walls, appearing as only a drawn blind from the tram exterior, a window aperture opposite each bench seat on both sides could be framed as a work of art. Perhaps the very picture frames of two paintings seminal to Melbourne's art institutions might be temporarily borrowed - complete with brass plaque picture title - framing nothing but the view back to the imaginary aura of Melbourne. **"Collins Street, 5pm" - John Brack, 1955; "Untitled" (Images of Modern Evil series) - Albert Tucker, 1945**: *one at either end of the tram recalling the streetscape imagery which these paintings call to mind for those who know them - Tucker's indeed featuring a 'W'-class tram. On the opposite side at either tram end might be a window aperture framing nothing other than the framing of the tram's own window trimming, with a sign fixed to the tram 'gallery' wall below in standard tramway's vinyl adhesive lettering:* **"A Tracking Vehicle" - some-body, immanent**.

A SYSTEM OF TRANSPORTATION

In his study on practices of everyday life, Michel de Certeau has noted that "in modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai.* To go to work or come home, one takes a *metaphor*".[14]   What might characterise one's travels and where might one travel if - in the context of considering the design of art in public space, we were to *'take'* the Melbourne tram and its tramways system as a metaphor? How might the tramways supply more than simply a set of rails upon which to run out a fleet of intentional ideas?   How might our metaphoric theme provide a network of connections which may be practically employed to evoke more than they might contain?   How might

tramways *transport* design explorations of art and an art of design, invoking a resonant depth to a new poetics of possibility?

THE TRACK

Whilst we know and refer to those rails of steel which so evidently underscore the tramways system as 'tracks', we are also commonly aware of their name-sake: the tracks that may be left by an animal, a human footprint or that of a moving vehicle.   In terms of linguistics rather than in the terms of engineering, the corollary idea of a *track* is understood in relation to the idea of the *index*.   A track such as the footprint of a human or animal impressed in sand can be understood as a type of sign which does not refer to a referent in the sense of denoting a relative meaning, but which refers to the physical entity responsible for producing such impression. As a type of sign that C.S. Peirce has termed the *index*, the track "refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that object".[15]

The *indexical track* is a trace providing evidence of that which caused it to come into being: an object and event of a prior time, a prior physical cause.   What if the tram tracks of Melbourne were able to accrue a trace of the social life which has transpired around them? Of course in actuality, the steel rails in the streets that we have come to refer to as 'tram tracks' have been manufactured by the modern industrial complex, performing in their physical capacity quite differently to the indexical track which embodies a trace of its own construction. The tram track is no more a trace of an event of physical causation than any other manufactured item, for all products of an industrial process are evidence of those processes that have made them. The tram track holds a physical presence with its smooth industrial uniformity and homogeneity, without aura or uniqueness. Yet if we change the focus of our attention, if we approach from different angles we might catch a previously undisclosed shimmer reflected in the tram track, an infinite palate of colour and texture. We might touch upon considerations of how the tram track not only provides the surface upon which trams glide to provide a form of physical transportation, but that tram tracks also avail a surface upon which we may transport ideas to provide a

means of social communication.

THE RAIL-TRACK

Whilst the idea of a track as a trace - that idea with which the tram track can be drawn into a metaphoric relationship - directs its focus toward the past, onto the prior event of physical contact which has brought it into being, the steel track of industrial fabrication is focussed toward the future, indicative of industrial culture's desire to move in the forward direction of progress, without hesitation.

Tracks of rail were first used in mountain mine shafts in the late middle ages to provide an even travelling surface reducing the resistance confronted by carriages carrying coal.   First made of wood, later of steel, these early tracks - ironically as it is - effaced the capacity for the moving vehicle to leave a trace of their movement by having its path of travel pre-determined upon a hard surface offering minimal friction, and therefore reducing the energy required to produce movement across the surface.   In 1826 rail tracks enabled the Newcastle locomotive engine to roll "regularly and progressively along the smooth tracks of the way, wholly unimpeded by the speed of its own motions"[16], unlike animal powered transportation which required the animal to expend energy to lift its weight in order to proceed forward.   Subsequently motivated by the desire to accelerate the speed of the mail delivery services[17], the railways were developed as one "machine ensemble"[18] with the conception of the rail and the locomotive being inseparably dependent upon one another.   This mechanical interdependence and physical correspondence between the rail and the locomotive, the track and its correlating object, was most announced in over-determined early engineering designs which insisted that physical contact surfaces must be available perpendicular to the rail's direction in order for propulsion to be generated. Early railway designs featured cog teeth impressed in the drive wheels of the locomotive and corresponding grooves along the length of rail, only to soon realise that the sheer weight bearing upon the locomotive's steel wheel transferred onto the rail provided sufficient traction to enable propulsion.[19]

Whereas the movements along rail-track traverse long passages of mono-directional flow, extending out to conquer new ground and deliver to new destinations, movements within a tramways network undergo much more humble passages back and forth. The tram-track is forever confronting its limits, returning the flow of movement back upon itself. Whereas the rail-track is tied to the linear trajectory of its emergence and use, the tram-track endlessly crosses back over itself unfolding the non-linear dimensions of potential movements.

figurating

figurating

MOVEMENT *EN TRACK*

In contrast to tracks of steel, their metaphoric counterpart or side-track so to speak, the indexical track, points backwards in a relationship of causality to the object and event which brought the trace into being.   As a trace of some prior event, indexical tracks are not representational as such; they do not offer a resemblance of a referent as does an icon or symbol, they are pointers that await interpretation. Isolated outside an act of interpretation, outside "a hermeneutics of the time of its making"[20], the indexical track, or *trace*, is devoid of any original meaning or source of validity. It does not signify the presence of an enclosed referent, idea or concept, but presents the *absence* of prior presence of an object or an event in space-time.

The direct physical contact that produces the indexical track produces an external correspondence of form and material transformation - of surface effect, but it does not transfer legitimate meaning through its signification. The indexical track operates like other forms of the index, like the linguistic shifters 'I' and 'you', 'this' and 'that', 'here' and 'there'. These personal pronouns and relative designations are dependent upon interpretation in their context of use to determine whom-what-where the use of these signs refers to.   Whilst they are capable of making reference outside themselves, this capability is entirely contingent upon the situation of their use.   Whereas the codes of representation suggests that the surface of a sign - that is the signifier, is to be excavated to reveal the presence of significance in its depth - the signified, the indexical track enables movement that *defers*

meaning onward in a flow of connections which never reach a determinate source of reference, truth or authenticity.

The index makes no pretension of enclosing a stable content within itself: it does not claim a sovereign identity. The index simply presents a slippery and arbitrary surface which openly awaits the moments of use and interpretation that provide its conditional capacity to enable communication in particular situations[21]. Forces at play in a situation come to manifest effects across the surface of the index, enabling interpretative movement from one thing to another, from one event to another, just as the inclusion of the shifters "you" or "I" enable the movement of reference between speaker and listener in a sentence.

A unitary conception of an objective domain of knowledge - like a 'scientific knowledge' which claims to stand outside and oversee the truth in its object - is only made possible through the representations of narrative and image which claim to refer to the inside from a position outside. The index disrupts this linear logic by operating according to its different economy, never reaching a claimed point or object of certainty as its defers movement endlessly onward. The economy of movement that the index mobilises shifts the validity of judgments from the causality that underpins 'objective' knowledges to an attention to "the time and place of enunciative agency"[22]. The index traces the possibilities for pluralistic conceptions of knowledge, accepting the possibility of diverse differences in understandings and the constructions of perspectives of thought and action. By following the movement of the indexical track we traverse the flow of limited and partial knowledges which we need not seek to represent in full but perform *en track,* moving as we unfold figures that lead us from trace to trace, track to track.

reiterating

THE TRACKS OF AMBIVALENT KNOWLEDGE

The flows of movement enabled by the index may be followed through acts of interpretation which trace the tracks of their own passage, acts which are brought into being through their performance. Such

performed tracks, indices which hold no thing in themselves but are the bearers of enacting relations, accrue a residual effect which accordingly resists being named and contained but lies immanent within its beholder awaiting to become enacted upon in practical situations of use. The tram conductor accrues knowledge of her craft through the experience of continually re-performing, extending and reproducing that knowledge; the Melbournian accrues knowledge of his residence through the range and depth of variety in life experiences in Melbourne; the designer accrues knowledge of designing through repeatedly negotiating indeterminate situations with thoughts and actions drawn from a repertoire of former encounters with design situations. These personal knowledges are formed through accruing a collection of networked relations between practical experiences: residual tracks of interconnection, repetitive passages, familiar paths and routes of performance - trajectories which thread together a network of variable combinations which are unforeseeable in totality but known through being performed, through acts of *making*.

5

A tracking vehicle departs from the tramways of Melbourne as we know them, renewing possibilities for the design of art in public space.   This is not a vehicle of global equivalence or universal significance.

A tracking vehicle mobilises possibilities for reinventing renewed identifications with Melbourne. *A tracking vehicle aligns its*

movements with the infrastructure and trams of Melbourne's tramways, seeking opportunities to mobilise departures toward ways of experiencing and knowing the dynamic complexities of contemporary urban living.

A tracking vehicle draws out nearness from what might otherwise be apprehended as remote and unveils the remoteness of that which we might assume to be near. A tracking vehicle is immanently mobile, ephemeral and dynamic as it re-traces modulations of movement, pattern and trajectory.   The vehicle mobilises a play of tensions between convergence and divergence, similarity and difference, placement and displacement, repetition and invention, continuity and discontinuity, the analogue and the digital. All that might comprise a tracking vehicle remains remote and beyond the enclosure of a totality: its potential elements are held distant from one another via the intervals that isolate the apprehended part from the imaginary unforeseeable whole; just as the nearness of a single tram is only ever apprehended in relation to the remoteness of the network of tracks; the network only ever known practically through traversing its routes and itineraries; Melbourne's tramways only ever known in relation to the other tramways of the world. A tracking vehicle mobilises renewed combinations within our networks of memories and imaginings, extending the resonant amplitudes of depth and the interwoven texture of its dynamic network of possibilities.

Traces of a tracking vehicle might be sighted emerging from cuts inscribed into the concrete surface between the street's double set of tracks, 'dead' centre of the street on four major arterial entry axes to the city's central activities district by the Yarra River.   From within each cut the length of a city block might emerge a thin visual screen, an electronically controlled double-sided light-emitting surface

through which images recollected and imagined in particular relation to the spatial history of Melbourne undergo variable relations of positioning and repositioning through their screened emission.

The outline profile in side view of such screens might visibly repeat at an enlarged scale the contour of the yellow safety ramps commonly seen at Melbourne's mid-street tram stops; strange buffers poised to negotiate immanent kinetic forces. Or perhaps in a gesture of carnivalesque inversion the screens might share the profile of a keel from an upturned 18th century sailing vessel, upturned ships afloat upon the artesian water plate that invisibly lurks underground, the keel's centring capacity no longer bearing sufficient weight or credibility, but revealed for all to contemplate.

The thin screen slowly glides back and forth within the length of its cut, rising and subsiding, emitting, absorbing and reflecting the organised light of imagery over the course of the day in synchronisation with the tides. The screens might syncopate prior movements of coloniser and colonised with the daily passages en track, strangely re-iterating axioms of the city grid and the rationalist sense of mind and body which created it whilst allowing the street to absorb it, engulfing it in repetitive sways of the tide, washing it in the land's waters, entwining it amongst the urban fabric's ever complex weave. Such screens whose movement are aligned with rhythms of the moon traverse relations of convergence and divergence with the patterns of urban movement, evidently occupying differing height, location and qualities of light in relation to the earth-sun cycles of urban movement, of peak hour passages, day entwining into night, activity subsiding into stillness. Such screens might provide a vehicle for diverse speculation upon the axes about which the city and minds of Melbourne are being re-made.

IMAGES OF MOVEMENT

forming

Whilst the tram tracks of Melbourne and the indexical track have a different type of materiality and linguistic operation to one another, these two types of track do share a relationship of interpretative tension. This is in part the relationship of a spatialised field of incongruent parallelism opened up by the figurative ambivalences and transpositions of poetic metaphor, the relationship which we have begun to trace *en route*, but it is also the relationship of experiential similarity. The steel rails which

forming

tram travel traverses have acquired such a name as 'track' for the means by which passages are brought into being via the rail element: an element which serves no purpose other than enabling the passage of an event upon its surfaces. Unlike the trace, the tram track has a positive physical and semantic presence: it communicates itself *to be* tram-track, metonymically standing in for the prior and immanent vehicles whose movement will traverse it - commonly trams, but perhaps also the movement of vehicles yet to be disclosed.

Standing upon a tram-track or train-track might be commonly expected to invoke images of the vehicle which may traverse it. However despite its constructed presence, the tram track remains a facilitator of movement, and a trace of prior and immanent movement. In this sense the tram track demonstrates the potential to operate according to both what we understand as the codes of representational signs *and* indexical signs; it is at once able to *enclose* and refer to what it is according to the name it has been designated - a tram track, as well as *mobilise* the idea of deferment that characterises the trace. It is this operative tension and ambiguity which avails the tramways such potential for poetic departures, as a source of symbolic reference and experiential encounters for exploring the potential effects of urban traces toward art in public space. The tramways enable us to conjure poetic images that are "imaginings in a distinctive sense: not merely fancies and illusions but imaginings that are visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar"[23].

Amongst all Melbourne's physical infrastructure the steel tracks of the tramways are of a particularly unique character. They are metallic threads to the garment of Melbourne, punctuating the adjoining spaces of the city fabric with stitches that provide cohesion between the urban elements whilst demarking their difference. The tracks are integrated within their context yet sufficiently detailed and noticeable in their effects to retain our awareness of the net they weave and into which we may willingly fall.

A SPACE OF THE TRACK

abstracting

Within the sweeping enclosures of Melbourne streets framed by the physical facades of buildings, the scores of tramways infrastructure and the movements that occur in relation to them orchestrate particular qualities within that public space.   This central space of the street, marked by the double section of tracks set in concrete strip amongst the street's asphalt surface and the matrix of overhead cabling, came to legally belong to the Melbourne Metropolitan Tramways Board (now the Public Transport Corporation), yet it has the quality and usage that suggests it belongs simultaneously to everyone and to none, a communal 'no-mans-land' that follows the contour of ground plane that is the artificial ground of the city. Imagine this spatial zone partly articulated by the rhythmic flow of trams carving a passage of tunnels through the street air, leaving a thin vertical wall of space at the street's centre where trams glide past each other in close proximity.   The content of this geographical space is characterised by the absence of permanent contents, that is, characterised by our haunting awareness of latent presences - akin to how the 'no-mans-land' between the trenches of a ground warfare scene are filled with the weighty reminders of mortality that we might expect to witness or imagine there.

The experience of tramways space is no longer so simply tied to the particularities of a fixed place. Tramways, like the other modes of physical transportation that fostered in industrial modernity - sea, air and rail travel - constructed an abstract sense of social space one step removed from the immediate experience of discreet geographic space. Similarly, modes of communicative transportation - the telegraph, telephone, television and telecommunications - construct a further abstracted sense of communications space yet another step removed from the social space of transportation. Communication and transportation spaces are not necessarily exclusive of other; moreover they tend to interweave paths of trajectory, blurring our capacity to distinguish between them.

An abstracted sense of space is characteristic of traversing indeterminate relations: we loose the capacity to claim certainty here or there. Yet enunciating the *movements between* enables us to grasp a sense of where we are at the moment, of apprehending what we meaningfully know as we use that knowledge.

The space which we can articulate relative to the tram-tracks of Melbourne can be considered not only as a space in which trams flow - not only a transportative space - but also a dimension of the type of abstract space in which we encounter one-another, a space within which the reverie of everyday life may be cast, an ill-defined space into which social fears, desires, memories and fantasies are reproduced. This space which in rationalist geographic terms is one carved by the physical presence of the city, is, with a leap of imagination, one which seems a fit point of departure to imagine this most unrepresentable of abstract spaces: the social space in which we as social beings live and engage in its reconstruction, the ephemeral social space of flows[24] where images and narratives of our perceived reality are formed, reproduced and contested, unanchored from what we have might have formerly understood as a space of fixed places, locations and identities.

The conception of such a social space, *public* space, is rendered a less than useful lever of knowledge if we attempt to enclose and represent it within a universalising image or meta-scale narrative.   As Henri Lefebvre has most convincingly conveyed[25], space is not a static entity or unchanging axis upon which the events of history are played out. Space, like time, is dialectical: space ceaselessly unfolds as the representation of space and spaces of representation turn in upon one another.   The enclosure that an authoritative representational mode of memorialisation presumes as its right is inevitably exclusive of differences that it may hope to contain within its collectivising intent. The inclusive aspirations of the idea of a public, of a collectively inhabitable social space are contradicted by the exclusions inherent in all acts of representation.   A public space is constructed and inhabited by forms of social exchange, whether transportative or communicative, in which the bond and division that simultaneously unites and separates one from another, the *same* from the *other*, is momentarily negotiated.

Contemporary public space is no longer simply a geographic location but rather it is a site of exchange where a public comes into being.[26]   The space of the public is a discursive realm experienced through this negotiation with limits, always provisional and ephemeral, repeatedly re-made

with each new encounter, underpinned by the contradictory tension between unity and difference. The idea of the public is itself a site whereby approaches toward making art are provoked to negotiate the political implications of art and design practices: where the commissioned placement of an artist's work in a position of publicity is questioned for who it empowers; where the narratives and images of art confront the limits of whom shares identifications with them; where the dominant values of one expression of unity is at the exclusion of another less powerful.

Despite the problematic paradox which negotiating public space entails, we might still be motivated by a desire to come to know and act upon the stories and images which are told to us and we tell ourselves to provide a sense of who 'we' are as groupings collected in unity and difference. We might still seek to apprehend a sense of the alterity between ourselves and our 'others'; a sense of our city and our lives in relation to it, of our national polity and the alternate social groupings within which we hold identifications; and to apprehend a sense of what we currently believe to be worth valuing and desirable for our particular lives. By negotiating and articulating provisional positions from our local experiences we engage in re-creating the horizons of our social imaginations and the depths of our cultural memories.

unfolding

unfolding

ALLEGORICAL MODES OF MEMORIALISATION

In order to recall that which we desire to remember, the construction of signs to represent meanings - the process referred to by ancient Greeks as *mimesis* - has come to play the most significant role in the modern organising of memory. Mimesis operates according to the practice of moving in a sequentially ordered manner from a representation to the object being represented: in the traditional art of memory developed by rhetoricians this was the movement in mind from a place of location to an image to be remembered; in linguistics this is the movement from signifier to signified; in the tradition of producing modern public art monuments this is the movement from art image to an event, artifact or person of reference. The memory itself which we might wish to retain is not produced nor reproduced through

mimesis, rather mimesis produces signs that claim to represent that memory. Mimesis produces memorials firstly, and may perhaps, if successful, evoke memories and meanings secondly. This directional line of logic, a *teleological* mode of thought, presumes that places and images may be directly matched together by writers and readers, producers and consumers, designers and users alike: it presumes that the effective apprehension of a sign will lead back directly to an authoritative, causal, symbolic meaning.

Modernist approaches to designing artwork in public space attempted to metaphorically substitute the art object itself for the referent, producing abstract works of art preoccupied with their formal qualities of material, construction, colour and space. Rather than enact the authoritative conception of mimesis, and rather than resort to autonomous formalist celebrations steeped in values of connoisseurship and hero worship, a renewed approach toward artwork in public space might acknowledge the diversity of experiences of narratives and images, working toward mobilising different ways of experiencing and understanding contemporary urban life.

The emergence of new transportation and communication technologies over the last two centuries has opened up new experiences of narrative and image that disrupted the linear relation between form / content and sign / referent with variable relationships between objects of our perception. Sea, rail and air travel radically changed the context in which objects might be apprehended, re-motivating objects in a new context to evoke new possible meanings. Film, television, and telecommunications practices similarly take elements from one context to place them in operation in a new context with variable effects. Collage and montage techniques have best capitalised upon this disruptive and regenerative potential to construct renewed possibilities from the existent condition of things. The techniques of collage / montage enable endless renewable combinations of fragmentary elements of the lifeworld to be mobilised forth in revealing relationships.

An allegorical approach disavows indifference between form and content to perform its content: allegory does what is says and says what it does through doing it. Narrative allegory:

"explores the literal - letteral - level of the language itself, in a horizontal investigation of the polysemous meanings simultaneously available in words themselves - in etymologies and puns - and in the things the words name."[27]

This is the potential role for a renewed approach to designing art in public space, a role which facilitates the development of rhetorical narratives and images which can work toward enabling the cultural re-production of multiple desires.   Consider it the renewal of tracks that may enable a diversity of departures: the reconstruction of poetic myths which may empower the desire for them to be experienced as reality. After all, as Emilio Ambasz has said, design is a myth-making activity, a self-organising way of making.[28]

Images and narratives will always be called upon to confront the day ahead, for such devices aiding the construction of meaning are indispensable to our communication.   Yet a different mode of memorialisation is called for to meet this task, a different means by which differences may be enabled to *move* yet also be known through approximate relations of similarity. The differences within our stories and images of collective selves provide an indication of the breadth of cultural values and opinion - values which we no longer need consider mutually exclusive but democratically negotiable in a pluralist society, a society of complexity and variety.

DERAILMENT

6

A tracking vehicle departs from the tramways of Melbourne as we know them, renewing possibilities for the design of art in public space. This is not a vehicle for the static, monumental memorialisation of memories or imaginings. A tracking vehicle mobilises dynamic movements from track to track. *A tracking vehicle traverses contingent lines*

of negotiation that are perpetually re-created between unity and difference, recreating memory itself in all its subjective manifestations.

Traces of a tracking vehicle might emerge from within the tracks themselves, from within the depth of the city's veins of steel whilst the day-lit life of consciousness subsides into the late evening's darkness. The veins might rise upward, thin steel strips released from their flatly forged line of travel to take on a springy contour; wave-lines of variable amplitude bunched together to randomly emerge from within different sections of streetscape, radiantly glowing in crimson-red tones, gently bulging, pulsating in the darkest of the night's moments. The depths of the tracks' contour that is released in the night's ambivalence are submerged by morning, re-instating the direct flatness of track yet provoking our memory to retain our knowledge of their alternate contour.

A tracking vehicle might renew tracks near and a far, traversing an endless connection of horizontal trajectories, tracing the divergent and convergent tracks amongst tramways systems about the world. Perhaps conductors of Melbourne trams might mobilise effects from temporarily being relocated aboard trams that traverse the veins of cities remote from the geographic location of Melbourne. By mobilising awareness of the similarities and differences between tramways of the world a tracking vehicle might contribute toward the revaluing of tramways as sustaining threads in the cultural, environmental and economic fabric of our cities. Melbourne connie's restorative narrative for Calcutta echoes poetic effects in Melbourne; Lisbon connie's tracks through Melbourne's colonial history induces new contours in Portugal; Melbourne connie traverses a path through Manchester's public that defers the end of the line in Melbourne; Melbourne tracks Calcutta tracks Melbourne tracks Lisbon tracks … .

1 Finlay et al *Australia: A Lonely Planet travel survival kit* Lonely Planet Publications, Melbourne 1994: p 686.

2 Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness,* Pelican, Sydney 1971 (first pub. 1960), p.40.

3 Barbara Whiter, *Sydney: Lonely Planet city guide* , Lonely Planet Publications, Melbourne 1991, p. 9.

4 Finlay et al , *Australia: A Lonely Planet travel survival kit* , Lonely Planet Publications, Melbourne 1994, p. 161.

5 "day in day out" was painted on a "w" class Melbourne tram by artist Alex Danko as a part of the Victorian Ministry of the Arts painted trams program of the 1980's.

6 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* , Harcourt Brace & Co, Orlando 1974, p. 14.

7 Richard Coyne and Adrian Snodgrass, "Problem Setting With Prevalent Metaphors of Design", *Design Issues* Vol. 11, No. 2, 1995, p.31-61.

8 For a noted example of the design methods movement, see J. Christopher Jones*, Design Methods: Seeds of Human Futures,* Wiley, London 1970.

9 A design student competition facilitated by The Design Institute of Australia (DIA) as recent as early 1990's cited "elegance of form" as a key judging criteria.

10 Horst Rittel, mathematician, designer and former teacher at the Hochschule fur Gestaltung (HfG) Ulm, developed the idea of deign confronting "wicked problems" in the 1960's. For a discussion of the contemporary value of his work see: Richard Buchanan, "Wicked Problems in Design Thinking", *Design Issues* vol . 8, no. 2 (Spring 1992).

11 Herbert Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial,* MIT Press, Cambridge 1969. (my emphasis)

12 Roland Barthes, "Structural Analysis of Narratives", *Image-Music-Text,* (trans. Stephen Heath) Fontana, Glasgow 1977, p.122

13 Barthes, "Structural Analysis of Narratives", p124.

14 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* University of California Press, Berkeley 1988, p.115.

15 C.S. Peirce quoted in: Stan Allen, "Tracks, Trace, Tricks", *Any,* May/June 1993 No. 0, p.11.

16 James Adamson, *Sketches of Our Information as to Rail-Roads,* Newcastle 1826, p.51-52, quoted in: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century,* Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1980, p.12.

17 Nicholas Wood, *A Practical Treatise on Rail-Roads, and Interior Communication in General,* 2nd Ed., London 1832, p.xii; quoted in: Schivelbusch, p.10.

18 Schivelbusch, p.19.

19 Schivelbusch, p.20-21.

20 Allen, p.9.

21 Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index", *The Originality of the Avante-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* MIT Press, Cambridge 1986, p.197.

22 Homi K. Bhabha, "Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt", in Grossberg et al (eds), *Cultural Studies,* Routledge, New York 1992, p.58.

23 Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* Harper & Row, New York 1971, p.226.

24 See Manuel Castells, *The Informational City,* Basil Blackwell, Cambridge, 1989.

25 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1991 (1st ed. 1974).

[26] see John Barrett-Leonard, "Thinking Through the Public", *Working In Public*, Artspace Visual Arts Centre, Sydney 1992, p.3-17.

[27] Gregory Ulmer, "The Object of Post Criticism", in Hal Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Port Townsend Washington 1983, p.95.

[28] Emilio Ambasz, *The Poetics of the Pragmatic : Architecture, Exhibit, Industrial and Graphic Design,*   Rizzoli, New York 1988.