POINT OF DEPARTURE:

Poeticising and Following

DESIGN TICKET 2

VALIDITY SUBJECT TO USE

ZONE OF TRAVEL:

What if the design of art in public space were to mobilise those who encounter it to renew the art of their everyday lives?

poeticising

ROUTE

poeticising following

following

THE MELBOURNE TRAMWAYS

mobilising

In the 1950s and 60's the Melbourne Metropolitan Tramway Board, under the leadership of Major General Sir Robert Risson, was faced with increasing pressure to erase the tramways systems from Melbourne's streets to make way for the free-wheeling travel of the combustion-engine-powered private automobile and bus. The majority of tramways systems around the world were forced into closure by the dominant cultural logic of the time ("tram lines got in the way of car traffic, so we got rid of them" however Melbourne's remained - the only system to do so in Australia. Risson exercised bold leadership on the issue by extending the existing network of routes through the city; by cementing the tramway tracks into the surface of the otherwise asphalt streets at no expense to roads authorities or civic councils; and by producing a public awareness campaign, including the commissioning of promotional films, to inform the public of what he believed to be the advantages of tramway travel for the city of Melbourne and its residents. Risson's efforts served as a critique to the progressivist myth that more roads and automobiles would lead to greater freedom of mobility.

The Major General's style of leadership was conveniently satirised by local press of the time as an extension of the military-like operations from his past, as if he conceived his object as gaining ground against an enemy. Yet Risson's charter could also be read to be to the contrary: rather than conceiving of his object within aggressive oppositional terms as if aspiring to conquer new territory or acquire power at the expense of an other, his charter consolidated the presence of the tramways on its already existing ground, continuing to mobilise their potential within their self-prescribed limits. With the benefit of hindsight that tram travel ritualistically offers, facing toward the direction we have just come from, we might recognise Risson's ability to imagine the potential of tramways for this city not as a system which excludes alternate transportation options but one which implicitly embraces its co-existence with others in a heterogeneous conception of the street and its potential life-forms.

TRAMWAY MOMENTUM

The initiatives of Risson indicate sensitivity toward the existing momentum of the tramways, as if his own managerial tactics followed their particular logic of movement. In the late 1990's tramways are re-emerging as a vital from of urban transportation for the 21st century with new systems being built in cities all over the world³, including their re-instatement in a part of Sydney. The same tramway momentum which Risson seems to have been attuned to - the back and forth reiteration upon same tracks, the bi-directional structure of the tram itself, the day in and day out doubling back upon itself in order to proceed - is now returning in an arc of wider orbit with tramways being re-created in the increasingly environmentally-conscious and efficiency-driven world of the late 20th century, over a century after tramways were first conceived and built as systems of transportation.

The industrial culture from which tramways have emerged, the culture of contradictions which also legitimated the post-war claims of obsolescence for the tramways, has been dominated by a directional momentum quite different to that of the tramways. In contrast to the encircling, re-iterative momentum that characterises the tramways' daily passage and its century old history, the cultural logic of industrial modernity has proffered a linear developmental momentum. Standardisation, functionalisation, multiplication and expansion are qualities that have given momentum to the progress of modern social life as we know it, constructing an industrial culture that has positioned an active conception of production against a corresponding passive (but necessary) conception of consumption. Alternatives to this production-oriented dynamic - to this teleological momentum of modern rationality have so often been subsumed within the forward march of industrial progress that erases the pre-existent in order to chart its relentless course toward the new.

Transportation and communication vehicles of the industrial era predominantly developed as agents for the productivist program of imperialist modernity, incorporating a developmental momentum of one-way flowing agency. Industrial culture has been established through the meta-layering of such linear agency, productive power that inherently reproduces itself as it extends its reach outward: one machine exerting the agency to produce another machine which in turn exerts the agency to produce

reiterating

a product (machine) which again in turn exerts agency over a given task. This exponential chain of productivist dynamism has been what Marxism has traditionally characterised as the driving momentum of the modern capitalist industrial complex, the characteristic which tramways bear a strangely ambivalent relationship toward.

amplifying

AN OPERATIVE LOGIC OF MOVEMENT

amplifying

A productivist, linear dynamic is dependent upon an open horizon towards which it can expand and impose its claim. It is dependent upon an 'outside' that is disordered and 'other' to the internalised, ordered structure of itself. Traversing the industrial cultural route from the old to the new, from antiquity to the modern, has been marked by the detritus of superseded technologies abandoned along the way, the sorts of ruins which so fascinated Walter Benjamin early in the 20th century.

Rather than proceed with a focus upon a future place, time or technique, tramways have always operated within the existent horizon of the urban environment, repeatedly following their prior moves en the routes of their construction. The fundamental structural integration of tramways with the most basic shared site of urban life - the street - has always ensured that tramways could never acquire structural autonomy: tramways are structurally dependant upon weaving into a network with complimentary forces. To ventilate and amplify the pulse of urban life rhythms, the developmental movement of tramways has been fundamentally engaged in *dialogue* with the forces of the city.

Tramways are propelled by their own "operative logic of movement" which constantly revisits itself, re-tracing its former passages, drawing out new journeys from the old route, extending the unfamiliar from the familiar. This operative logic of non-linear movement enables tramways to be read across the grain of industrial culture, against the track of teleological momentum that underscores notions of progress and deterministic technological development. Tramways provide a local urban "source of metaphors for those who know that [wo]men invent their own meanings," a source from which we might mobilise non-linear approaches toward generating the design of art in public space.

Through amplifying the logic of tramways movement, moving back and forth in dialogue with the forces that present themselves, we might come to know an art of design practice relevant to the generation of artwork that can engage in increasingly complex experiences of public space.

DERAILMENT

7

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 sets about moving to known destinations.

A tracking vehicle mobilises effects of tracking, recreating the passages it traverses, re-iterating and reinventing, repeating and renewing. A tracking vehicle undertakes its movement with a reflexive awareness of its context and its own performance, renewing knowledge of former moves in the performance of immanent moves.

Traces of a tracking vehicle might be followed reiterating performance features of the Melbourne tramways. Where as the tram commonly releases sand affront of its wheels to aid traction in braking, traces of a tracking vehicle might be found in the temporary form of other substances intermixed with the sand to invoke interpretative derailments. Perhaps on a fine spring day an indigenous blue pigment might be evidenced lining the tracks of Melbourne, making opaque the manner in which the shimmering steel surface of the tracks reflect the optimism of potential paths of travel unfolding under an infinitely open sky. Or a passing summer shower might momentarily transfigure the existing network of the city's tracks, transforming marzipan crystals lying dormant in the cavity of the hot tracks into a film of rainbow-coloured substrate. Or the darkest of winter's days might bring forth a flood of blood-red waters through the veins of the city, the vectors upon which the city and its inhabitants are enabled to move and be moved.

As an afternoon sun retreats trails of flour dust might be scattered over the track's surface,

bringing a new lightness to the interwoven patterns of passage as the evening darkness renders our travels simultaneously less visible and more readily available to alternative trains of thought. Tracking tracks of flour. Trails of pigment. Rainbow lines. Flour tracks.

INTENTIONS IN DESIGN

If tramways can be understood according to their articulation of a spatio-temporal field via the repetitive re-instatement of multiple interwoven tracks, industrial modernity can be understood from a Marxist framework as unfolding along a temporally graduated axis in a static and flat spatial field, propelling itself along a straight un-ending track. The notion and practice of design as we have come to know it emerged as a vehicle of the linear momentum of industrial culture, distributing the qualities of an instrumentalist dynamism complicit with the rationalist thought with which it developed. Following from the Latin origins of the word 'designare' - to mark out - design in post-enlightenment Western society has been understood in relation to the notion of intention, whereby actions are prefigured by thoughts which shape or influence the manner in which actions may be taken. In parallel with the rise of industrialisation and the division of labour, the core practice of design emerged as the wedge creating a distinction between conceiving and making: between the construction of intent in the mind and the realisation of that intent in a realm of material presence. The design drawing, as the site of *marking out*, has provided the traditional apparatus through which the conceiver of design may convey their desire for the construction of their intentions by the maker of the design. This is the fundamental teleological rationality that characterises traditional post-enlightenment notions of design: the precedence of a thought which is followed by an action informed by that thought.

Melbourne's tramways have themselves been brought into being by the intentions of design. They too are based upon the articulation of a prior intent, where a linearity of passage is established in the practice of design through having actions fall under a controlling route of intention. Intentions of design, or the condition of, as we might say, *having designs* on the future life-world, bring along all the

tracing

tracing

rational determination and sense of importance that desires may muster. Intentions bring about change at an incremental scale that corresponds to the magnitude of their conviction. Those possessed of intentions of design, of confidence in pursuing particular ends, do not always make it incumbent upon themselves to reflect upon the contextual value of their intent, for this risks tarnishing the illusions of clarity and certainty that can propel action through time. Grand-scale intentions line themselves up to bring about grand-scale change. Yet the common name of the steel rails which underlie the tramways - *tracks* - implies a status of existence which is much more dynamic and subject to small increments of dialogical change than the rails of steel are themselves, those linear lines of logocentric intent.

spatialising

INTENTIONS

spatialising

Repetitive paths of human or animal movement have in their most simple forms left a mark on the earth's surface as evidence of the flow of physical, gravity-weighted matter. The foot leaves an imprint in the softness of soil; the body punctuates a gap between the flora marking a space through which it may traverse. Informal passages of movement commonly retain the designated name of 'track' when the discernible identification of the passage of movement is dependent upon the actual impressions which prior passages have left behind them. The convergence of consistent desires of movement which negotiate a passage of travel in relation to the particularities of a terrain bring about an accumulatively inscribed passage, a well worn path which is dynamically elucidated by the traces of its use.

This dynamic development of a route of passage, of a track, where the passage is reinscribed and re-created with variation each time it is traversed, stands in contrast to the consciously conceived introduction of a new route: the result of a prior moment where the route is clearly and consciously marked out, that is, *designed*, with the intention of it acting as the site through which future movement *will* traverse. Despite this implication of name, Melbourne's tram *tracks* have been laid by design, singularly scribed in the acts of their conception and construction, much like the so-called tracks that guide the movement of curtains or characterise the organisation of recorded music on vinyl or compact disc. However unlike a strictly linear track, tram tracks guide a form of non-linear repetitive movement that is entwined within its context, crissing and crossing over itself in a networked collection of relations. Their existence is re-affirmed and re-inscribed with each new passage upon them; the originating intent which once precipitated their existence is constantly re-visited and recreated. The electric network of tramways that we traverse in Melbourne today holds similarity yet is also markedly different from the cable tramways which first commenced inscribing Melbourne in 1885.⁶

displacing

LOGOCENTRIC INTENT IN ART AND DESIGN WORK

displacing

The linear logic which has given *design* a cultural, disciplinary and professional identity around the notion of intention has paid little credence to the operations of design returning upon themselves, to the possibility of a reciprocating dialogue of return between actions and thought. Rationality seems not to have been able to trust how action may articulate an intent, how acts of making may inform thoughts and how thought itself might come into being through its making. Mobilised by its own binary logic, rationalism dismisses such differences of operative momentum as beyond reason, merely romantic; in doing so it sets up the necessary opposition to sustain itself. Within such a rationalist framework initiatives of design become conceived by parallel association with the linear directional quality of intentions, proceeding from conception in the mind to inception by the body in a one-way exertion of rational agency. Design practice is conceived of as a vehicle of linear agency, a vehicle through which the intent of an autonomous designing subject may be refined prior to being brought into action. Design knowledge is thought of as an objectifiable entity within such a conceptual frame; as a representation enclosed in the form of an object, a product, a heroic designer or a proposed process of design reduced to an abstracted static model.

Rather than consider practices of design in these terms, we might seek to understand a practice of designing through the dynamic interactive negotiations between thoughts and actions, seeking ways for us to embody our thoughts and reflect upon our actions.

This instrumental linear momentum underpinning design as an idea, practice and methodology, is shared by traditional notions of artwork in public space operating as a mode of representational communication. Public artworks have traditionally been developed under the commission of the governing civic collective, the monarch or state, the institutionalised religious organisation or under the patronage of the wealthy and powerful. Earliest examples of discreet "artwork" located in social spaces asserted a monumental presence:

"a monument in its oldest and most original sense is a human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds or events ...alive in the minds of future generations."

Traditional monumental artworks expressed their chosen values with the aim of establishing social respect for such values, if not imposing a hegemonic compliance, usually through the suppression of other public alternatives, and through an authoritative command of scale and labour and an extravagant use of material resulting in a grandeur only achievable under an institutional means of organising social power. Just as design practice traditionally privileges the rationally intelligible intent over the experientially sensible action, traditional monumental public artwork seeks to represent an intelligible value and truth behind the people and events from history which it seeks to memorialise, and convey that to its civic audience in a didactic manner. This is evident enough in Lenin's Plan of Monumental Propaganda launched in 1918, wherein he states:

"Short but expressive inscriptions should be placed in various significant places, on suitable walls or on special constructions. These should contain the most basic Marxist principles and slogans as well as, perhaps, tightly worked out formulations evaluating one or another great historical event."

This mode of representational memorialisation is also fundamentally linear; it proclaims the flow of an intelligible meaning from a signified centre of authority through a sensible signifier. theoretical constructions of Structuralist semiotics, a conceptualised referent or signified concept commonly precedes the employ of a material sign or signifier. In other words, Structuralism claims that a signified concept is made conceivable through reference to the sensible signifiers that give those concepts a symbolic existence within the order of signs.⁹ In the modern traditions of both design and representational artwork in public space, thought precedes action. The fundamental basis of intentionality characterises design, whilst the notion of reference characterises representational modes of communication. An instrumentalist view of design legitimates itself through pointing back to a source of intent. This is at the expense of engaging in the richness of interpretative possibilities manifest in the work of design via the qualities it simultaneously presents to the senses. Similarly, representational modes of memorialisation refer back to an event, object or personality in history - that is, to a centre of authority and source of accepted meaning. The emergence of modern abstract / non-representational artwork in public space attempted to remove this authoritative practice of denoting a fixed truth or meaning. Yet with a commonly formalist physical autonomy and abstracted figuration, the public is positioned as an audience of consumers and receivers of a gift for which they are left longing for an explanation of its authorial intent: asking why do I receive this? In this case, the authority of a socially institutionalised event, iconic object or individual personality is merely replaced with the authority of the individual artist.

'Good' intentions in modern art and design have never guaranteed outcomes experienced and regarded by others as positive; nor has the structuralist reduction of language to its claimed forms of universal significance guaranteed an uninhibited union of understandings. These mechanisms of rational ordering and control have come to be understood through the discourses of post-structuralism and post-modernism as selective myths, 'meta-narratives' which seek to homogenise an understanding of the world from a particular vantage point at the expense of enabling diverse ways of

DERAILMENT

8

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 specifiable dimensions. A tracking vehicle mobilises the layered iteration and reiteration of image, sound and text tracks over the tram-tracks of Melbourne. A tracking vehicle mobilises tracks of performance: tracks which are brought toward an ephemeral existence through their being performed en track with repetition, variation, forethought and chance.

A tracking vehicle traces diverse technologies of real or imagined existence and re-deploys them toward diversifying effects. In following the existing line of the track the vehicle reiterates the precedents upon which it traverses, re-affirming the physical spatial relations existent prior to its passage, yet it does so not through representing the existent or by constructing its simulacra. The performed track derails the claimed authority of preceding linear tracks and enables the flow of renewed poetic associations to traverse new tracks, cutting across the line of rationality. Tracks overlay tracks in dynamic repositionings: transposing, superimposing, juxtaposing, counterposing. Tracks are tracked, converging and diverging in renewed ways amongst streets and minds of Melbourne.

Perhaps traces of a tracking vehicle might appear in an ephemeral collection of words seen to appear and disappear in the ambivalent street-space between ground-level track and overhead cable. Imagine if the destination sign-box from the end of trams were removed from the tram's body, enlarged

and rotated 90-degrees to be parallel with the line of the track. Articulated with robotic intelligence and flat, double-sided electronic screens, such destination-like boxes could autonomously move between trams through-out the network, rendering words visible and invisible in direct alignment with their horizontal movement mid-air. Rather than visualising the vertical scrolling through place-names as we might expect of the tram destination sign-box, these autonomous screen-boxes might emit a perpetually horizontal line of words. T.e.x.t... m.o.v.e.s...a.c.r.o.s.s...t.h.e...s.c.r.e.e.n.s... in direct relation to the movement of the automaton screen itself, alluding to conceptions of the words being suspended in the central space of the street, their ephemeral presence only illuminated by the passage of the screens. Tram conductors might facilitate tactics for accruing words particular to the streetscapes. Combinations of words appear in succession, profound and controversial, denotative and non-sensical, new combinations and quotations of combinations. Perhaps grouped responses to the question: "what is 'M' for?" might for a time hang suspended in the street air illuminated as a screen passes their imaginary electronic location: **m**.e.l.b.o.u.r.n.e... **m**.o.n.e.y... **m**.u.m.m.y... m.o.n.s.t.e.r... m.a.n.i.a.c... m.o.n.k.e.y... m.o.n.a.d.o.l.o.g.i.c.a.l... m.i.n.e... m.u.c.k... m.o.l.l.y... **m**.e.l.d.r.u.m...

amplifying

TRACKS

amplifying

Rather than seeking to reduce a situation in the life-world to a predetermined plan of control, the tram conductors who ride Melbourne's trams practice a craft of facilitation. Whilst the occupation of tram conductors has become increasingly defined by their role in issuing tickets to passengers, conductors are also the custodians of particularly unique urban knowledge and skills, a type of situated knowledge and skill which by nature resists being easily represented, as it is brought into being by its beholder in a particular context. The task of the conductor does not require the exertion of blind agency onto a situation, rather the conductor enters into a dialogue with each passage en route, orchestrating relationships between the multiple forces at play in any moment with the expressions of voice, hand and body embellished with only a hand-held ticket punch and a round-the-shoulder leather conductor's bag. The conductor negotiates the relations of convergence and divergence of

forces en route; the forces of movement amongst the street's traffic of other trams, motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians; of the roads traffic communications system of lights and signs; and the forces of the street's people themselves.

We might consider the *craft* of conducting to be rising and falling in responsive negotiation with the rhythms of such forces; in flowing with the tram's movement; in meeting the expectations and anxieties of the passengers aboard whilst anticipating their provisional departures and arrivals with beckoning and cajoling, persuading and informing. Conducting, at its best, mobilises practices of sociability amongst the street's inhabitants: it draws individuals out from the narcissistic pleasures and defensive fears maintained in protecting personal space toward a higher level of interactive social engagement. Rather than perpetuate lack of interest in matters of the collective as an individualistic orientation does, the craft of conducting mobilises the actuality of our collective and individual lives and subjects them to contestation and potential agreement, to differences of belief and to the sharing of goodwill. Perhaps for the conductor we are but momentarily situated together, traversing a collective passage that is constituted simply by the networked connections of different passages, as Melbourne conductor Roberto D'Andrea describes:

"We see something happen, and because we're an innocent person draped in our costume we can have a go back at that situation unlike the police can or any other disciplinary body, we can actually have a go back in very human terms. ...A very quick one....The Palestinian bloke in the Iraq / US war that...walked in the tram with a rubbish bin right, he had half a dozen cans of VB [beer] down below, he has some pita bread, tomatoes, in a big rubbish bin, he rolled up on my tram at night, on the quiet West Preston's at night, plonked it down with me, and he's had a map of the world and a bunch of flowers. Now he gave the flowers to me Greek driver Kim, he gave me the map of the world, he talked about his malaise in respects to things Palestinian and the crisis that was going on in another part of the world, but he was very sad with it, and he was a bit intoxicated. So he's really expressing in a sad-ish type of way what was going on. He felt comfortable in the tram and he just rode up and back and up and back, so much so that I had to convince him that on our last trip we were heading for the depot and this might be his last best chance to go home, from whereabouts he lived, you know what I

mean. And you extend that out to all sorts of scenarios and all sorts of people 'cause we're dealing with everyone." ¹¹

supposing

THE SUBJECT OF TRACKING

supposing

The tram conductor negotiates with urban forces to modulate the flow of passage in relation to the route traversed en track. The singular significance of the passage's flow is brought to reside in the relationship between the route and the conductor, between track and tracker, through embodying the flow of movement, through following. Whereas logocentrism stems from Descarte's notion of the intelligible mind being split from the sensory experience of the body - of the subject being removed from the object of study, the conductor embodies a historical subjectivity that is formed dialogically in relation to its context. Whereas the binary thought that underpins logocentrism leaves little opportunity for articulating understandings beyond the mutual exclusions of black and white, the subjectivity of the conductor follows the flow of forces, actively changing and changed by the dialogue en route. Both the conductor's subjectivity and the conducting situation come into being through their dialogical entanglement, enfolding into a momentum of their mutual becoming.

LEARNING AND KNOWING IN FOLLOWING

reiterating

According to Stephen Muecke, "following is 'tracking up', hunting, discovering a singularity. In the Aboriginal science of tracking, following someone's footsteps means to 'know' them. To walk exactly in their footsteps means that there is an imitation - not a reproduction - of the whole movement of their bodies." The practice of following a force, singularity, or dynamic momentum disrupts the convenient distinctions between subject and object, mind and body. Personal sensibilities are attenuated, given resonance and significance through seamlessly incorporating the negotiated modulations *en track* into mind and body. The form of negotiation involved in *following* the track creates all forms of sensibility, for it is the negotiation between what surrealist poet Andre Breton describes as two kinds of arrangement: negotiation between "a mind's arrangement with regard to certain objects" and the mind's "regard for certain arrangements of objects" 13.

In order to know of our sensibilities and extend the type of embodied knowledge and sensibilities that dwell within us, we reiterate ever renewed negotiations between self and other, between the arrangement of objects in the mind and the arrangement of existent objects prior to their presentation to the mind. Rather than impose the logocentrism of the mind upon the existent objects of perception, we might follow the modality, structure and momentum of the objects of our perception in order to experience, learn and know of them. By following the tramways of Melbourne we come to know its operative logic of movement by reiterating it: a form of experiencing, learning and knowing through miming rather than representing. Such is the structural nature of what Michael Polanyi has called *tacit* knowing, which he describes as characterised by a "correspondence between the structure of comprehension and the structure of the comprehensive entity which is its object". This is by no means the sort of 'objective' knowledge which science might pursue. Tacit knowing is personal knowledge, dynamic and immanent in its beholder, awaiting the moment of its practical performance.

To follow tacit knowledge - to pursue, track and perform it - is the means by which we come to know it, modulate and extend its effects. To follow, to repeat and to reiterate are not acts reproducing

the same, rather they produce an attenuation of difference. A collection of ideas emerging in Western philosophy about the empowering potential of following, miming, repeating and reiterating can be traced through the work of Stephen Mallarme, Walter Benjamin and Ludwig Wittgenstein amongst others. Jacques Derrida is amongst the contemporary thinkers who is popularly followed for this line of thought, as we may demonstratively reiterate by quoting his line: "Repeated, the same line is no longer exactly the same, the ring no longer has the same centre, *the origin has played*." ¹⁵

Through operations of following, reiterating and imitating, tracks are renewed, shifted in context, relationship and combination to *perform* a form of re-presentation without fixed reference. The personal *know-how* which enables operations of designing and everyday practices of living to be performed is a tacit knowing of how to 'make do' in different situations. The *art* of designing and everyday living is in the negotiated play of 'correspondence' which Polanyi describes; it is in what de Certeau informs us the ancient Greeks called the "ways of operating" through which we move and modulate our momentum. If we aspire to enrich personal ways of operating amongst those who encounter art, we will foster ways of knowing which, emanating from and immanent within the self, are potentially empowering for both the individual self and the social collective of self-creating selves. The life of art in the public realm might then be less about passive acts of appreciation and more about actions toward self-creation.

A DIALOGICAL MOMENTUM IN PUBLIC ART AND DESIGN

negotiating

Let us keep in mind an understanding of subjectivity that conceives of the subject actively engaging in their re-construction, in dialogue with their environment, when we consider that both design practice and artwork in public space can be understood from their own particular dialogical operative momenta which are distinguishably different from the teleological pattern of conceiving design practice according to an authoritative intent, or artwork according to an authoritative centre of meaning. Both design practice and artwork which resides in public space are subject to perpetually paradoxical forces that tend toward the outwardly opening and inwardly enclosing in dynamic variation.

Design practice needs to suspend its own production of limiting judgements in order to allow the receptivity to conceive of alternative possibilities. This requires the suspension of the sort of practices expected of Cartesian subjectivity that would authoritatively impose a teleological order upon a design situation. On the other hand, design practice is propelled by the operative need to harness sufficient focus in order to specify the materialisation of efforts in actuality. The dialogue which design practice constructs out of these forces is essential to the forming of conceptualisations that oscillate between remembered awareness of that which is conceivable, and the imagining of that which is yet to be conceived. The operations of designing are constituted by this dialogical flow of movement back onto itself by the implementing of action and the employing of thought; by converging upon a specific focus or singularity and by diverging outwards to appraise a general awareness. The rhythmic shifting back and forth in these dimensions expands and contracts the vortical flow of design practice's enfolding momentum, the operative momentum which entwines *performative* and *evaluative* aspects of designing in mutually dependant relation.

Art in public space is, on the basis of its relation to public space, propelled by the need to remain open enough to engage with the collective nature of the *public* space it inhabits and (re) constructs, engaging the constituents of that public with matters of collective relevance. On the other hand, in a pluralistic post-colonial society, public art is propelled by the need to acknowledge the particular localised differences within such a 'public'. Art in public space is in need of operating

dialogically between both these forces of inclusion and exclusion, rather than simply aspiring to be *either* all inclusive *or* of particular community relevance. The universalist aspirations of modern abstractionist public art to produce meaning for everyone too readily fosters alienation by remaining detached from its context of people, place and environment. Equally, the particularising aspiration to isolate the locally significant and accessible of much so-called 'community arts' under-estimates the memory and imagination of the diversity of peoples who experience their lives in relation to the same public space. The operations of art in public space, the ways in which art might be understood to exist in dynamic relation to a social context, shift in dialogical momentum through the dimensions of the local and the global; from the comforting privacy of home to the unsettlingly unhomely; from the remembered to the imagined; the conceivable to the inconceivable. The work of art in public space understood dialogically might come to be known and experienced throughout the duration of its existence in acts of negotiation by empowered urban actors rather than in the passive acts of an audience of spectators who are positioned by a work to defer the value of their own experience and knowledge in favour of a perceived external source of authority.

mobilising

DIALOGICAL DESIGN KNOW-HOW

mobilising

The objects of both design practice and artwork in public space need to negotiate the dialogical forces of their contemporary existence - not with the aim of reconciling them to a condition of stasis, but rather to be willingly subject to their dynamic variations. *Design* might then come to be known and experienced for its operative movement as a *verb*: active rather than passive, fluid and nomadic rather than solid and sedentary. Design practice might then not simply seek to assert an intelligible intention, but enable the initiatives of its construction to be constantly revisited and reflected upon in a recreative manner, dialogically. A design situation articulated dialogically cannot be reduced to static proportions, it can only be apprehended in its spatio-temporal momentum through its resonances and reverberations across time-space. Understood dialogically, the directional momentum undertaken in a

design situation is always called into question, as it is inherently the result of an engagement between two or more forces. A dialogical design approach does not impose a means of structurally ordering a situation, rather it draws out the implicit organisational qualities of the situation it engages with and is constituted in relation to. The teleology of rational logic is suspended in order that a responsiveness to the forces of a situation be enabled.

Such a re-thinking of design agency beyond the relationship of cause and effect requires that design practice more readily reflect back upon its own basis of operation, or as Donald Schon has described, embed additional loops of reflection into the operations of designing - operations of 'reflective practice'.¹⁷ A truly reflective type of design practice would be required to engage in the recreation of its own mechanisms of construction, not by simply producing representations of these mechanisms in order to conceive of them but by undertaking its own production of design constitutive by and demonstrative of the mechanisms themselves, as designs which are performed in designerly operation. Rather than seeking to capture knowledge of reflective practice through representing it, we may only mobilise knowledge of reflective practice *through its practice*. This requires design practice to embody the designing of itself, constantly re-inventing itself through extending the know-how of design, elliptically propelling forth a practice of *re-designing*¹⁸:

displacing

OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

displacing

The self-reflexivity inherent in a non-linear directional momentum characterises the dissolution of a distinct subject/object relation and makes apparent a convergence of the work of theory and the work of practice; a convergence of the critical work and its object of study; of the work of criticism and the work of art. In her examination of post-structuralist theories, particularly the work of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, Rosalind Krauss has articulated a notion of 'paraliterature' as a form of writing which is neither criticism *or* literature, but 'theories in operation" Based on a rejection of the structuralist formulation of signification operating in the symmetrical pairing of signifiers held back to

back with signified concepts and a rejection of the notion of an authoritative centre of truth which underlies the possibility of such structuring²⁰, this post-structuralist writing, according to Krauss "is 'about' its own strategies of construction, its own linguistic operations, its own revelation of conventions, its own surface"²¹. The paraliterary claims "that there is not, *behind* the literal surface, a set of meanings to which it points or models to which it refers, a set of originary terms onto which it opens and from which it derives its own authenticity"²².

David Carroll has taken this literary notion to the realm of aesthetics, describing paraesthetics as "an aesthetics turned against itself, or pushed beyond or beside itself ...not content to remain within the area defined by the aesthetic." What characterises the paraliterary and the paraesthetic, and what Anthony Vidler has added as the "paraarchitectural" is an ambiguity and ambivalence that enables a certain free-play. Traditional signifying surfaces are turned slippery, enabling an ambivalent sliding and uncertainty in moves which both relate to pre-existing codes, notations and representational operations whilst simultaneously calling them into question, enabling multiple trajectories to be traversed, new stories revealed within histories, new tracks mobilised upon existing routes. In rejecting former claims that reductively seek the enclosure of origins, centres and instances of truth, this form of practice opens out toward a consideration of effects and a proliferation of meanings.

A POETICS OF DESIGN PRACTICE

Practical design knowledge emerges in forms of sensible and conceptual apprehension for its beholder in the process of the designer engaging in active dialogue with design situations. A fecund understanding of design knowledge requires the development and use of tactics sympathetic to the nature of the pursuit, for the way in which we practically *know* design will determine the range of design tactics available to us, shaping the limits of possible design practices and effects. If we conceive of a *discipline* of design occupying a place at some point along a linear spectrum from the

reiterating

reiterating

arts to the sciences, or from art to technology, we continue to proceed in our thoughts and actions based upon the presumptuous conception that practical knowledge of design need be consolidated and enshrined within the unchanging identity of a fixed place. To pursue an essential identity for design practice assumes the suitability and desirability of conceiving design in the terms of science, in terms of rationalist enclosure. Rather than conceiving of art and science or theory and practice as mutually exclusive, we might pursue design for its inseparable ways of making sense at both experiential and conceptual levels.

Like the poetics of metaphor, design is practiced and perhaps better understood for its being predicated *between* ideas. As Paul Ricoeur has described:

"the 'place' of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*."²⁵

Rather than seeking the object of design knowledge through reductive patterns and structures which conveniently employ the procedures of rationalist operations, the object of practical design knowledge might engage in negotiations and modulations, responsively poeticising and following resonant depths, always inferring the allure of something unfathomable and non-essential yet knowable: pursuing something akin to Michael Polanyi's *tacit knowledge* which we *know but cannot tell*²⁶, a knowledge which escapes attempts to reduce it to static representable form.

By proceeding dialogically in relation to the situations of its operation, design practices are able to mobilise the inherent forces of a situation into re-creative ways, drawing out new expressive possibilities from within the existent and renewing possibilities for the public experience of art. Through enfolding poetic transpositions between object and subject in situations of practical encounter, design practices mobilise forth poetic figures that may yield creative design effects. Figures, like that proposed here by this project in the given name of 'tracking', reveal the dynamic capacity to organise the forces of momentum in the design encounter and their potential effects.

Through figures we are able to experientially sense, conceptually conceive and performatively act out corresponding plays of presence and absence that give creative organisational form to design activities and their potential effects.

DERAILMENT

9

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 objective knowledge. A tracking vehicle mobilises forth a poetics of practical know-how.

The dynamic network of traces of a tracking vehicle inscribe and reiterate cultural tracks of the city and its inhabitants, mobilising imaginary dimensions of Melbournian space-time.

A tracking vehicle might facilitate the articulation of image, sound and text tracks by inscribing and accruing them in the form of digital memory traces. A tracking vehicle might ritualistically perform its digital-data memory bank of tracks, tracking them, articulating a collection of immanent urban traces which defy being viewed in totality from afar but are perceived in the context of the vehicle's ongoing performance en track. The vehicle's capacity to renew the existent brings forth particular tracks of imagery, text and sounds in specific relation to the streetscape through which the vehicle might travel, such that the reiterated imagery, text and sounds are performatively emitted in corresponding relationships of variable convergence and divergence with the location of the vehicle and the speed of its movement. A tracking vehicle traces Melbourne as lived: absorbing, projecting, reflecting and repeating.

Suppose that the trace of a tracking vehicle were to be apprehended in uncanny modifications in the expected performance of glass window panels in regular service trams, vehicles which act as hosts to the temporary forms and ephemeral effects of a tracking vehicle. Perhaps randomly selected

window panels might be replaced with light manipulating electronic screens capable of illusions greater than we normally expect to encounter gazing inwardly or outwardly of the tram. Such electronically-charged screens might mobilise perceptual effects aboard its host tram, alternating in appearance between variable states of translucency and reflectivity, between light-emitting capacity and light-absorbing opacity.

The window screens might dissolve layers of imagery and text upon one another in relation to the streetscape context which the host tram passes through, reflexively operating in dialogue with the everchanging location and speed of the host tram. Imagery emitted through the screens undergoes transformations of scale, type and speed of movement relative to the travel speed and location of the host tram. The speed of moving imagery and text constantly shifts in an inverse relationship to the travel speed of the host tram. At slow travel speeds, the emitted images and text move at a rate of speed slightly less than what we would expect of a static off-screen reading, where the moving ball bounces upon the static letter-forms in correspondence to the rate of enunciation. When the travel speed of the host tram is at its greatest between tram stops the images undergo transitional movements at a significantly slower pace, drifting under the perpetual re-organisation of collected pixels that engender the vehicle's exterior and interior window surface with a digital fluidity of continuos morphological variation. In these large tracts of high speed travel the host tram's inward and outward appearance is characterised by the rhythms of movement across its surface, rhythms which are dialogically shaped by the image / text tracks already in existence in the vehicle's data bank and the vehicle's perceptual readings of the passage of its traversal.

Images of enlarged scale might be retained in a freeze-frame on the host tram's screen surfaces as it passes through the intersection of streets. The images that accrue in relation to particular intersections are carried across the perpendicular street with repetitively ritualistic appearance, establishing a dynamic collection of reiterated ephemeral appearances recurrent along particular vistas throughout the city. In addition to Melbourne's urban grid framing monuments along the axes that form its primary vistas - the war memorial, the church spire, the parliamentary building and the civic statue - the screens aboard host trams transpose alternate ephemeral imagery.

As the host trams trace their paths through the city, images on screens shift in scale in

response to the width of the adjacent street and the depth of its built facades. In the wider boulevards tracks of imagery are emitted in close-up views, availing the apprehension of their appearance from positions afar. In pedestrianised malls and the narrow, built up strip-shopping streets, image tracks are emitted in a full 'panoramic' scale that reveals intimate depths of detail when apprehended from a-near. As the host tram negotiates the urban fabric's corners the emitted imagery and text is stretched on screen, distorting to an exaggeratedly elongated appearance - a visual corollary to the distending outward pull of concentric force.

THE FIGURATIONS OF TECHNOLOGIES

Tramways mobilise an uncanny source of metaphors to utilise in the practice of designing art in public space in an era which predominantly celebrates electronic information technology, the rights of the individual, and the trans-geographic politics of the global market. Upon first embarking, tramways might appear to be more a manifestation of the mechanical, the social collective, and the geographic. Tramways first appeared in Melbourne driven by an underground system of moving cables powered by cable stations located at key points throughout the network - a system of mechanical relationships of power characterised by the uni-directional movement of the underground cables onto which trams would 'grip' in order to modulate their movement. This system of mechanical relationships became significantly modified with its electrification completed in 1930's, where what were previously pure mechanical relationships gave way to electrical relationships characterised by the omni-directional (path of least resistance) movement of positive electric current through overhead cables against which trams would negatively 'earth' in order to modulate their movement.

The shift from cable-driven operations to electric operations of the Melbourne tramways brought together an exemplary symbiotic incorporation of both the mechanical and electrical technological forms of operation bound in a dynamic relation of unison. These two realms of differing internal relations, procedures and movements are in perpetual tension and negotiation, interfacing

attuning

attuning

most evidently where the sparks fly, at the point of contact between what on the older class tram is called the 'pole' and the overhead electric cable. This is the point where the mobility of the tram and the immobility of the network is negotiated at its finest point of detail. In the contemporary context where the realm of micro-electronics manifests itself in increasingly multiple forms, where the omnidirectional movement of micro-electric current through which vast quantities of information moves takes on an omni-present pervasiveness, the tramways are yet again worthy of returning our attention to.

For most of the twentieth century mechanical technologies have had their corollary in linear modes of thought which proceed via a temporally oriented logic of causes and effects. Mechanical metaphors have been predominantly privileged to render understanding of the twentieth century urban condition in the West - the machine providing a model for much modern architecture and the automobile for Italian Futurist art. Similarly electric, but more evidently *electronic* technologies and their potential manifestations, are emerging in relation to non-linear modes of thought and operation. New knowledge is emerging from this dialogue as our metaphors of thought and experience are enriched with alternative objects of experience, and our enriched thought and experience makes alternative possibilities for our objects of technology.

The telegraph, telephone, television and telecommunications have yielded altogether different experiences of space-time and different experiences of social exchange at a higher level of abstraction. Our knowledge and understanding of social life and space-time has always been rendered apprehensible through metaphorical semblance, with a lack of distinction between the reality that we experience and seek to understand, and the styles of rationality, descriptions and actions that we employ to negotiate with that reality. The lack of a physical and visually readable dimension to electronic tellie-technologies has been radically re-contextualising our capacity to make sense of contemporary life experience, prompting alternative ways of orientating and taking action in the world. Since William Gibson's narrative imagery of 'cyberspace' fictively rendered an approach toward living with fields of information flow and exchange, our sense of physical place and linearist space-

time has been challenged. Accounts which give imaginable form to the physical formlessness of information flow grant us leverage in re-apprehending practical knowledge and in understanding our engagement with changing reality. It is no coincidence but rather an operative semblance that enables the articulation of such non-linear objects of thought like Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the lateral inter-connectedness in their idea of the 'rhizome'²⁸. As Simon Penny has remarked,

"the structural identity between the Internet and the idea of the 'rhizome' ... is a curious example of philosophy and technology travelling on parallel tracks". ²⁹

CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC SPACE

The dynamism and invisibility of the spatial system of electronic organisation and the sheer saturation and power of its circulation overlays the sedentary locations of the visible, physical spaces to which we have hitherto been more accustomed. The global mass-cultural experience of electronic telecommunications space - a space which might arguably be more readily accessed and shared than prior mechanical and physically manifested spatial forms is unquestionable in its effect upon the senses of proximity apprehended in relation to traditional spaces of collectivity, communication and shared occupancy. The public space of the physical city is but one of the dimensional realms of everyday experience, the architecture of routes, movements and exchanges within an electronic realm are another. Where, if anywhere, is public space to be found? Where, if anywhere, might art in public space meaningfully reside? Is it not the operational work of art that construct a public space?

approximating

AN INTERFACE BETWEEN DIFFERENT SPACE-TIMES

Efforts to generate understanding of this new spatio-temporality of experience may overenthusiastically embrace the potential metaphors of invisible inter-connectivity in an electronic spatial apprehending

apprehending

approximating

realm, pursuing possibilities for images and narratives of a new future that we might choose to yield. Yet to pursue a dematerialised world without relation to the materialised, a virtual world without relation to an actual world, would merely be perpetuating the linearism that discards the old in awe of the new. The interfacing relations between these realms is the site where spaces and times converge and diverge, where we might pursue the potential of richer, more complex and necessary forms of habitation founded upon dynamic movement and the unstable indeterminacy of perpetual negotiation. Such an interface might revisit the surrealist aspiration to "fuse the physical and the mental"³⁰.

This is precisely where our mechanical technologies and the physicality of the city are important, such that we can retrace our own teleology, our colonialism, progress and modernity and so re-instate in our memory the ways we have proceeded which enables our contemporary passages to bear relation to their context. Tramways situate a meeting of differing worlds, of the mechanical and the electrical, the transportative and the communicative, the personal and the social, the private and public. If electronic telecommunications fragment our apprehension of the totality into an explosion of pieces, denying us the capacity to rely upon the images of the whole that Cartesianism and Western representation has afforded, tramways offer potential routes through which to traverse new understandings. The binary logic which facilitated the formation of totalising imagery may be redeployed in relations between the mechanical and the electronic. For all its celebrated interconnectivity, we are aware that the digital foundation of electronic technology is no less than the electrical contact of the tram's pole to the overhead wire, simply on or off, positive and negative, 0 and 1. The exponential dimensions which the binarism of electronic telecommunications technology gives rise to are to be remembered for what they are, related to what still prevails as the spatial domain of the body in which the politics of life and death are ultimately played out. Art in public space needs to follow the precedent passage of our dominant mode of thought, of our technology and of our modes of inhabiting space-time, and to mobilise within this passage the potential of our imaginations, mobilising the modes of thought and technological possibilities which reveal greatest fecundity to understand the manifest implications of our prior, present and immanent socio-technological practices upon our ecological and cultural environment.

modulating

POTENTIAL RESONANCE OF ARTWORK IN PUBLIC SPACE

modulating

Art in public space might play a role in incorporating into urban life an alternative to the dominant teleological momentum that underpins our production-oriented culture, our modes of representational memorialisation and our conception of how we might bring about change through the practice of design. Through mobilising the non-linear from within the predominantly linear, art in public space has the potential to illuminate the extraordinary from the ordinary, fostering retention of collective memory and stimulating the collective imagination necessary to pursue a sustainable engagement with the urban and the global environment. This demands that our memory be firmly contextualised, that our art in public space not be about bringing supposedly 'great' new art to people but about developing ways that enable people to make art bear meaningful relation to themselves, incorporated as a part of their own living experience, memory and imagination.

DERAILMENT

10

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 a deterministic or evolutionary technology. A tracking vehicle mobilises possibilities for the critical revaluing of technologies in specific space-time settings.

A tracking vehicle draws upon mixed technologies, demonstrating new, old, traditional and speculative ways of doing in variable combinations.

A tracking vehicle might mobilise tricky appearances whilst a host tram is momentarily stationary at the city's standard tram stops en evening routes, transforming the dark surfaces of the city into ephemeral surfaces of light. Surfaces proximate to the host tram's travel might be brought under the illumination of imagery projected from the vehicle: facade surfaces of city buildings left unmarked by the street's commercial and civic lighting; the adjacent walls of laneways that are left dark to the eye and soul; the patches of asphalt remaining black in the evening's vacant carpark allotments; and the thick underside of canopies formed by tree. Sharply focussed laser beams of pixilated light emitted from the stationary host tram might traverse any available paths of possibility till they reach a suitable surface: bouncing off reflective building materials to climb great heights above street level; piercing obscure vistas from afar, momentarily extending lightness toward the night's most distant darkness.

Acoustic traces of a tracking vehicle might connect a digital bank of sound recordings aboard host trams, attaching at ear height upon the interior of tram windows a flat interactive screen through which travellers may traverse tracks of different stories, sounds and acoustic effects bearing varied relation to the streetscape through which the tram moves. Voices of a past or future are heard, utterances are recalled and stories muttered at tram stops and intersections, the lost evening bell toll heard together with the intimacies once shared between friends in a Victorian manner.

Perhaps a host tram might be the carrier of exterior-fitted sound projecting cones, distributing sound laterally into the city, punctuating adjacent architectural volumes with resonance. Acoustic traces of past inhabitance and the interventions of musicians might tune architectural volumes like instruments, folding sound back into the street. Laneways abruptly echo, utterances are recalled and stories muttered at tram stops and intersections as tracks of sounds enfold the city with reverberating nuances blurring the distinction between the body of the city and bodies its inhabitants. Tracks might bring lightness near and unveil the darkness lingering within. Tracks play tricks with space-time, the near and the far, provoking attention toward irresolvable problematics.

¹ Giovanni Impegora, director of Rome's Traffic Department, quoted in Privat, Pascal et al, "A Desire for Streetcars", *The Bulletin*, Feb 9, 1993, p.60.

- ² For example see: Blueprint for the Future, (16mm film) Crawford Productions for the Melbourne Metropolitan Transport Committee, Melbourne circa 1965; Citizen Tram, (16mm film) Crawford Productions for the Melbourne Metropolitan Tramway Board, Melbourne circa 1969.
- ³ Privat, Pascal et al, "A Desire for Streetcars", The Bulletin, Feb 9, 1993, p.60-61.
- 4 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, Nomadology: The War Machine, (trans. Brian Massumi), Semiotext(e), New York 1986, p.23.
- ⁵ Gerald Murnane, *The Plains*, Pelican, Melbourne 1984, p.104.
- 6 see Stephen Watson, The Melbourne Tramways: A Pictorial History, map published by Stephen Watson, Melbourne 1993.
- ⁷ Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Origin," *Oppositions* 25, Fall 1982, p.21
- ⁸ quoted in Catherine Cooke, Street Art of the Revolution: Festivals and Celebrations in Russia, Thames and Hudson, London 1990, p.12-13.
- 9 see Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics, Methuen, London 1977.
- 10 see Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1984.
- ¹¹ Roberto D'Andrea, (Melbourne tram conductor / driver), from Robert Robertson (presenter), *Ad-Lib Australia: Melbourne Tramways*, BBC Radio recording 1994.
- 12 Stephen Muecke, "The Discourse of Nomadology: Phylums in Flux", Art & Text 14, 1984, p.32.
- ¹³ Andre Breton, Nadja, (trans. Richard Howard), Grove Press, New York 1960 (originally published in French 1928), p.16.
- 14 Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, Anchor Books, New York 1967, p.34/5.
- 15 Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference (trans. Alan Bass), University of Chicago, Chicago 1978, p.296.
- 16 Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, University of California Press, Berkeley 1984, p.xix.
- 17 Donald Schon, Educating The Reflective Practitioner, Jossey-Bass, San Fransisco 1987.
- 18 The term 'REDesign' (Responsible Environmental DESIGN) was employed as the name of an incorporated association of interdisciplinary designers in Melbourne, 1990. The organisation held the charter of promoting ideas, responsibilities and practices necessary for the achievement of a sustainable future to other designers, of which the name served a major rhetorical role.
- ¹⁹ Rosalind Krauss, "Poststructuralism and the Paraliterary", *The Originality of the Avante-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1985, p.293.
- ²⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", *Writing and Difference*, (translated by Alan Bass), Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, London 1978.
- ²¹ Krauss, p.293.
- ²² Krauss, p.293.
- ²³ David Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard. Derrida*, Methuen, New York 1987, p.xiv.
- ²⁴ Anthony Vidler, The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely, MIT Press, Cambridge 1994, p.107.
- ²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1978, p.7.
- ²⁶ Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension.

- ²⁷ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, Ace Books, New York 1984.
- ²⁸ see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota 1987.
- ²⁹ Simon Penny, "Consumer Culture and the Technological Imperative: The Artist in Dataspace", in Penny, S. (ed), Critical Issues in Electronic Media, State University of New York Press, Albany NY, 1995, p. 73.
- 30 Anthony Vidler, "The Explosion of Space: Architecture and the Filmic Imaginary", Assemblage 21, MIT Press, Cambridge 1993, p.50. (my emphasis)