POINT OF DEPARTURE:
Imagining and Remembering

DESIGN TICKET 4

VALIDITY SUBJECT TO USE

ZONE OF TRAVEL:
What if the design of art in public space were to mobilise
a network of different trajectories in the collective urban imagination?

imagining

ROUTE

remembering

imagining

4

remembering

TRACKS

In addition to the scheduled travels of passenger service trams, the tramways of Melbourne are routinely circulated by three so-called *'scrubber'* trams whose purpose is to remove foreign obstacles and debris from the track. These yellow painted scrubber-trams did not come into existence with the singular intent of performing this task but were in fact originally built as service trams operating upon the Sydney tramways prior to being de-commissioned in the 1960's. If these trams could recount or repeat the life experiences which have transpired around them they would have much to reveal. Through their re-location, shifts in purpose and seventy year-old age, these trams - along with many others - have borne witness to many an event, carried many a soul, their cabins resonated many a story. Nowadays the scrubber-trams roam about the Melbourne system day and night, their drivers informed via two-way radio transmission of troublesome sections of track, slippery and sandy areas, or track obstructed by branches and leaves. By applying rotating brushes and vacuum suction, the scrubber-trams keep the tracks of the network clean.

It is curiously paradoxical that what we refer to as '*tracks'* - suggestive of an entity whose existence is self-evidently a trace of movement, an event or phenomena - should in the form of tram tracks actually have the traces of everyday life that transpire upon them removed. Whereas the notion of a track evokes the inscription of traces that signal toward the physical cause that brought them into being, the tram tracks of Melbourne are regularly removed of traces. Through the ritualistic cleansing of the tram tracks, the scrubber-tram erases the possibility of everyday traces of life retaining a presence on the track. The tram track is maintained by and large in its originary form, retained for its industrial uniformity, its sheen and anonymity of surface. When contemplating the possibilities of the '*track'* in Melbourne, we are caught within a paradoxical tension between pursuing the word-image '*track'* that has us imagine the *possibility of indexical reference*, and confronting the *negation of this possibility* by the impressionless uniformity of our actual tram tracks. The interpretative possibilities of the track have us ceaselessly oscillate between possibility and impossibility, affirmation and negation, expression and repression, presence and absence.

returning

The very fact that the hardened steel tram-tracks of Melbourne do not physically accommodate signs of everyday life lends us the possibility to render them capable of mobilising rhetorical traffic. Just as the scrubber-tram's act of erasing hindrances to the timetabled service trams' travel-path enables free-flowing tram traffic, the very *presence* of the tram track that represses the scope of interpreting indexical signs also enables us to poetically maneuver toward the *absences* which underlay it - not toward the presence of absences that characterises the trace as a type of indexical sign, but rather toward the absence of absences.   The fact that the tram track *evokes traces* yet in actuality *denies the possibility of accruing traces* provides us with the freedom of scope to imagine and remember *traces which are not there.* Rather than pursue the actual interpretation of tracks / traces as signs signalling a singularly contingent moment of physical causality, the presence of the tram track unveils endless imaginative possibilities for the poetic transpositions of *other* tracks, traces and tricks. To speak of and act out the articulation of these imagined absences - to *track* them - is to trace a rhetorical figure which mobilises the possible effects of this condition of absence, "not absence as the opposite of presence" - as Peter Eisenman outlines:

> "rather absence *in* presence [for] any site contains not only presences, but memory of previous presences and the immanence of possible presence"[1].

Unlike a representational figure, Eisenman continues, which:

> "represents a thing in its absence ... a rhetorical figure contains its absence, that is, contains its open-endedness".[2]

The city is commonly inscribed in little signs of life, or rather, signs of deformation and decay that signal the absence of former life. The stone step worn to a concave contour with wear, the wooden railing moistened and polished by the repeated touch of hands, the porous pavement imbued with stains of various substances, the patina discolouration of copper roofed building - these are common examples of urban traces of movement, signs indicating the physical passage of bodies and matter across surfaces over time. These traces do not tell of the city's past "but contain it like the lines of a hand"[3], they *signal* without specifying.

reposing

Signs that point to a past life are often revered in the twentieth century due to the very inability of modern industrial materials to absorb signs of social and environmental existence in the passage of time.   With surface qualities of uniformity, hardness and low porosity, highly processed industrial materials that have shaped the twentieth century city like steel, glass and aluminium, are significantly harder wearing than their pre-industrial counterparts and are consequently less impressionable to traces. Contemporary commercial acumen has not overlooked the nostalgic longings of consumers for a return to matter that shows signs of former life, and so has easily been able to produce diverse techniques to bring about the *appearance* of former life by wearing down surfaces.

 It is ironic that nostalgic longings for the past should be met by the opportunistic construction of artificial-aged appearance value whilst the historical integrity of authentically aged use in Melbourne's trams is met with the impulse to put the past to death. Melbourne's oldest electric operated, timber bodied 'W' class trams that have carried Melbournians since the 1920's are imbued with traces of the life that has transpired via them. Yet these trams continue to be reduced in operative fleet size and subject to operational modifications - like the removal of conductors - which threaten to deny their historical integrity and contemporary value. The discourse of modernity favours forgetting these 'relics' as if forgetting is a prerequisite for generating the new.

transposing

MEMORY, MATERIAL, FORM

transposing

In the twentieth century we have become increasingly accustomed to obtaining access to information, knowledge and evidence of the past through the circulation of print-based media, film and television; through public collecting institutions, and more recently through interactive electronic communications media.   These mechanical and electronic forms of reproduction and dissemination have been articulating a form of invisible architecture which modulates the social space in which we live, shaping the means by which the memorialisation and reminiscence of information transpires. This ephemeral architecture is characterised by the mechanisms which structure the (re)production, circulation and access to information.   We are unable to exempt ourselves from the dynamic and diverse forms of mediation that structure an immaterial architecture that both *creates* the possibility of acquiring information and communication and *controls* the scope of communication possibilities through its mode of memorialisation.

Traditional urban architecture has most fundamentally dealt with the matter of its existence, articulating spaces, programs and possibilities in relation to gravity, the body and environmental elements. The physical architecture of the city has not only absorbed traces of the past through use, but also by design. The communal surfaces of the city's architecture, particularly built forms most related to collective or civic functions, have been traditionally modulated with select iconographic decoration emerging in dialogue with the local cultural practices of theological or mythological dimension. The surface of the architecture has served to retain and reiterate the foundations of cultural information deemed significant, serving as a site in which to re-inscribe valued information into the fundamental matter of the city such that it may be repeatedly inscribed in the urban inhabitant's memory. Carried over to the successions of generations, these surfaces of inscription accrue and decay to consolidate the dynamic context of cultural fabric, stitching together shared experiences of identification between urban dwellers through which meaning may be constantly reproduced.

Whereas decorative architectural imagery is incorporated into the performative operations of the city's built form, accruing a dynamic significance over the course of urban events, motivations to commemorate the achievements and losses of empire have produced a more aggressively assertive

mode of memorialisation. Through asserting a physical autonomy from functional built form, the colonial monuments common to Australian cities - the equestrian statue and figurative sculptures of 'civic' personalities - became discreetly identifiable and able to be named as 'works of art'. From this first degree of separation from the use-function of the city's fabric followed the emergence of the autonomous modernist artwork usually understood as 'sculpture', which consolidated the civic valorisation of 'art' in the public environment as some '*thing'* which could be readily framed as an autonomous entity: isolated economically as a discreet budget item; identifiable visually and experientially by the spectator as a thing of *art-value* in relation to the *non-art* (use) value of the material fabric of the city; and localisable as a physical object whose dimensions may be conceived sympathetic to a range of predetermined sites awaiting to be enhanced by 'art'. The conception of an autonomous 'art' in relation to the city parallels the relation of jewels to the body, icing to the cake, crown to the king.

Over the last two decades 'high' art discourse and practice has explored the relation of the work of art to its 'framing conditions' through seeking ways in which site-specific qualities of the artwork's context could be "incorporated into the work itself"[4]. Yet simultaneously the local government authorities facilitating the civic possibility of 'art in public space' or 'public art' programs have by and large remained too institutionally cumbersome to redress the assumptions of their own framing conditions. From the outset, 'art' is predominantly delegated a discreet identity / function by local civic councils that immediately institutionalises its separation from the other streams of managing urban functions and services. As an additional discreet discipline within the matrix of disciplinary divisions, the 'art' produced through the civic council facilitation system becomes typically emblematic of its conditions of generation. The manner in which civic authorities *designate* sites, budgets and artists to conjoin to make 'art' in the city actually inhibits the very possibility of challenging art forms and effects emerging that might pursue a deeper level of integration with the physical, historical and cultural fabric of the city, and with the memory and imagination of different formations of public groupings. The uncritical assumptions underlying civic council facilitation practices inevitably function to frame the

institutionalised conception of what is regarded as acceptable 'art' for the city.

Whilst civic programs purse 'art' as an object of interest in their attempt to redeem a role for the urban core and rejuvenate the social collective who might inhabit it, social practices are actually being organised upon alternate axes of information flows, rather than simply retaining traditional lines of exchange in the realm of geographic places. This flirtation with art that desires to reconstruct a presence for the traditional public spaces of the city runs parallel to the emergence of spaces and times of new dimensions in which public groupings are forming and affecting new forms of collective sociation.

attending

TOWARD IMAGES

Mass-media forms of communication have played a significant role in breaking down the geographic boundaries that have traditionally framed public spaces. Television, radio and popular print press construct groupings of publics through the expansive contact they establish with and between an audience who share the same information about the world. The dispersion of once consolidated urban form fuelled by the private automobile has also varied the sites at which individuals may collectively gather to communicate. Privately owned and security controlled shopping and entertainment complexes have now emerged as spaces for collective experience which deceptively simulate part of the traditional role of public space.

In both mass media communication forms and enclosed shopping complexes, individuals are united by their shared experience but denied the full right to participate in that experience, denied the right to speech that may be heard.[5]   Mass media forms have typically been of a broadcast mode, dispersing a one-way message from a centralised position of power. Systems of mass distribution delineate immaterial dimensions to the cultural space in which we may perform, collecting together mass public groupings that share experiences, information and accrue collective memory in anonymous, impersonal ways.

"Publics are reflexively constituted in forms of communication which relativise authorial coherence, so the 'voice' of that communication becomes less that of specific authors and becomes more that of the mode of communication in itself; or more precisely the phenomenological stance of the implied reader of that mode of communication."[6]

The audiences within these realms are positioned such that the sense of agency in their own lives is framed as the ability to choose, an either / or option which inhibits the possibility of rejecting the entire system of rhetorically imposed choice.   You may choose between switching from one channel to another, shopping here or there, attending toward this image or that image.   When individuals act in the world with a homogenous consistency, they cease to encounter the reality of others, becoming, as Hannah Arendt has described, "imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience, which does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times."[7]

Guy Debord articulated the rise of mass media technologies that simultaneously united people together whilst alienating them from themselves, through the concept of the *spectacle*. In his influential 1967 '*Society of the Spectacle'* Debord argues that the spectacle "is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images"[8], a social relation which establishes and maintains power whilst paralysing the retention of historical memory. The loss of historical memory in modern mass-media society has produced a flat equivalence between the information we obtain from diverse sources, between the images that we encounter through different forms of presentation. Erasure of the traces of the past induces a cultural sense of vertigo, "a world without memory, where images flow and merge, like reflections on the water,"[9] where we lose that sense of a being grounded by a context of true reference, a 'reality' that meaningfully precedes us and to which we can contribute and expect to exist beyond our own mortal existence. Twentieth century mechanical and now electronic reproduction has seen "the collapse of the referent in morality, history, nature, religion, cities, space"[10] such that our awareness of the physical space of the city folds inward with the saturation of imagery, making it potentially more complex to differentiate between actuality and representation (or between the 'real'

and the 'reel', as a piece of street graffiti spray painted on a Melbourne inner city wall proclaims: *surrender yourself to cinema - more real than reel.)* The contemporary space-times in which we find ourselves are simultaneously of material / sequential and immaterial / synchronous dimensions, both real and metaphorical where no line between imagination and fact is absolute.

PAST / PRESENT

In the quenchless pursuit of the new the program of modernity has deployed a forgetful relation to history, banishing the past in order to proceed in its linear manner toward the imagined future perfect. The perpetual replacement of the once new with the now new in the commodity chain has us forever forgetful of the past that has just vanished. As Debord comments:

m e m o r i a l i s i n g

> "The precious advantage which the spectacle has acquired through the *outlawing* of history within society, is above all the ability to cover its own tracks - to conceal the very progress of its conquest of the world, its power already seems familiar, as if it had always been there. All usurpers have a shared aim: to make us forget that *they have only just arrived.*"[11]

In order to re-think the forward march of the commodity cycle, Walter Benjamin sought to revitalise memory from its sleep not by nostalgically seeking to return to the values of the past but by igniting a consciousness of the past in relation to the present, "a reminiscent present where the past is neither to be rejected not to be reborn, but quite simply to be brought back as an anachronism"[12]. The past is configured in renewed ways always relative to the present. The tensive temporal relation that fosters remembrance is crystallised in what Benjamin calls the *dialectical image* that does not reconcile contradictions but retains an ambiguity between the pull of memory and the accepted impossibility of restoring the past.

apprehending

apprehending

If we desire a means by which social collectivity may be gathered toward a platform of values based upon principles of democracy and equality, and if we desire the basis in which urban living offers the possibility of living in physical adjacency to others, how might we work toward enriching shared social spaces with the differences of value that gives them their colour, their depth and vibrancy? How might new social spaces be created to meet the changing values that continually re-shape urban life?

As urban experience becomes increasingly characterised by fragmentary moments mediated via different communications technologies, there remains a desire to restore the formerly operative order that has enabled us to orientate and know of relative positions and options in the urban environment; that will to totalise an image of the city projected upon a flat spatial field within a continuist conception of history[13]. Counter reactions to unified, rationalist perceptions of the city which have explored interiorised, poetic constructions of urban experience - for instance Baudelaire's *flaneur* and the Situationist's *derive* (or drift) and *detournement* or psychogeography - opened up avenues for reading the city in more fluid, contingent ways. Yet their struggle to slip beneath the excessive spectacle of signs no longer correlates with our contemporary conditions where the forces of urban and social exchange are as much invisibly hidden in the flows of information as they are evident in the geography of the city itself and the signs with which it is made. The contemporary work of art in public space might consider its contribution toward facilitating the development of ways to understand the character of our contemporary lives of citizenship in a dialectical realm between the first order of space-times shaped by transportation and the second order of space-times shaped by communication.

If the potential of art to be social is its capacity to communicate - *to teach, to move, to delight*[14] - to act and be acted upon within the realms of social exchange, how might the work of art act toward mobilising social relations amongst individuals who may or may not otherwise be drawn into such relations? What might characterises the relations that individuals could share through negotiating an encounter with art? How might forms and effects of art emerge which engage those who encounter them in the dialectical reverberation of these space-times that we inhabit, drawing together *different*

relations to those collected by existing immaterial forms of mass mediation and the material forms of physical proximity?   What new forms of social collectivity might emerge?

If we attempt to articulate the type of social relations which we may desire to form relative to art in public space we confront the limits of prematurely attributing a prescriptive sign to that which we hope to refer.   Any normative projection of who constitutes a community or public according to an essential criteria risks disabling the actual identifications which we continually practice in order to move, to work and to live in renewing social contexts.   According to Claude Lefort, public space "has the virtue of belonging to no-one, of being large enough to accommodate only those who recognise one another within it and who give it a meaning, and of allowing the question of right to spread".[15]   Notions of 'community' and 'public' are of little actual use if conceived and used as pre-given categories, rather they might be best understood as always provisional and shifting entities forever being re-constructed by social actors in relation to available modes of social exchange.   Perhaps we might work toward an art that enables dynamic processes of forming and transforming collective social entities, enabling individuals to participate in multiple partial identifications with multiple social groupings.

DERAILMENT

14

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 representing a particular conception of reality.

A tracking vehicle mobilises the re-construction of art in the urban imagination. *Rather than didactically claiming and designating that art is here or there, a tracking vehicle enables users of public spaces to find their lives meeting art.*

Perhaps the trace of a temporary form of a tracking vehicle might be unexpectedly evident punctuating the line of a major Melbourne tram service Route. A set of paired parenthesis - the Latin grammatical symbols - might be materialised in the form of curling tram track at either end of the number 96 route, at the corner of Acland of Barkly Streets in St Kilda and at the corner of Nicholson and Blyth Streets in East Brunswick. One hundred metres before either end of the line, the two sets of tracks that comprise the route converge into a single set of tracks. The very ends of the track might be temporarily lifted from its horizontal ground line to fluidly rise upwards, curling back on to itself to give the four metre tall line-drawn form of the parenthesis symbol in side profile. Both ends of the parenthesis could never be viewed simultaneously, yet the encounter with one end of the parenthesis always signals that a partnering pair of parenthesis marks might be found by following the line of the track.

The parenthesis bear no significance in themselves, they simply signal a relation, framing an inside relative to an outside, a line of track in a text relative to an infinite context. Taken from their literary context and emptied of a literary text, the parenthesis give rise to a conceptual relation, an axis of imaginary dimension between two points. The parenthesis frame a conceptual public space that belongs to no-one and everyone, occupied by subjective interpretation and social contestation. Perhaps this space might hold the moment of an unconsidered quip - a verbal slip from the unconscious revealing an unexpected lateral connection that hangs out of place in the air. Or the space of a beat missed in linear logic following the line of the track, when time seems to stand still until thought gets back onto track. That moment of being dumb-founded, caught unprepared, silently waiting for the cognitive

process to locate that which was just perceived into the existent order of intelligible structure. That moment of incommensurability, of failing to convert an overwhelming analogue experience in all its fluidity to a collection of discreet digital ideas or an objectifiable conceptualisation. The parenthesis at the end of the line unveil an imaginary slice through the material fabric of Melbourne and the lives that occupy Melbourne, prompting what the memory might recall and the imagination might bring to life.

TRACKS

If the operations of imperialist modernity have directed the traffic of civilisation down one path to the future, railroading a conception of progress through to an increasingly pacified chain of consumers, contemporary post-colonial sensibilities might seek to embrace the richness that a diversity of co-existing alternative routes can offer. With the benefit of contemporary wisdom, we might recognise that the unique tramways urban infrastructure which Melbourne has retained avails formative threads upon which an enriched diversity of urban fabric might be woven.

habitualising

Unlike pursuing a conception of who and where we are according to a representational map of Melbourne, a totalising image that portrays an overview or a 'master plan' of our city, we might continue to pursue the qualities of the tramways that enable us to acquire a dialectical sense of orientation according to the dynamic reiterative way in which we might continue to transport ourselves, affirming ways in which we move within the city and are moved by particular experiences of the city. Tramways mobilise this type of sensualised knowledge of the place that Melbourne might be, entwining together an inter-dependant network of experience, knowledge and space which is never complete or fixed but always coming into being, always unravelling on the move. Encountered via the tramways, Melbourne is apprehended simultaneously by the body and the mind in a seamless manner which enables pluralistic senses of the city to accrue in the urban dweller with a habitualised permanence. The tramways position us in the body of the city, aligned with its veins, incorporated in its metabolism, reiterating the city in our minds through the direct metaphoric experience of our urban actions.

Tramways induce a tacit means of memorialising the Melbourne we come to construct and know, a reiteration in the mind through the reiteration of bodily actions.

conceptualising

ABSENT TRACES EN TRACK

It is worthy of reminding ourselves again that the tramways yield such generative power not because they didactically teach us something of Melbourne but rather because the smooth surface of the track - devoid of actual traces or grooves to correspond with cogged wheels - paradoxically avails us of the capacity to *move*. From this surface we gather momentum, we gain just the necessary degree of traction to roll in poetic directions. By reiterating and re-investing in the tracks and the tramways we repeatedly renew the traction of our generative momentum. We are able to mobilise rhetorical figures which do not hold us to any particular line of track but which ceaselessly unfold to avail open-ended possibilities.

Whilst the actual steel tram-track or train-rail section holds a relationship of physical correspondence to the wheel which travels along it, the track/rail does not operate in linguistic terms as an index. Like the index, the track/rail operates "under the logic of metonymy,"[16] and points toward that to which it has a dependant relationship. The track exists for the vehicle that travels along it: the presence of the rail-road stands in for the absence of the train; the tram-track for the tram. But unlike the promise of the indexical track, the track/rail's metonymic relationship does not point backward to any particular object/event to which it might have an originating relationship of physical causality. In this sense, the track/rail is not brought into being as a negative or absent correspondence to a physical presence, for it has in itself both a physical and semantic presence.

The physical functionality of the track/rail surface is difficult to imbue with the trace. In effacing the possibility of operating as an index, the track/rail enables the sense of an alternative type of poetic track. The poetic trace/track operates on both the axes of metonym and metaphor - these axes serving to articulate a field of operation in the same way a rail/track articulates its zone of service. Whilst the

manufactured track/rail cannot directly operate as the sign of the index in a causal metonymic relationship, the very word-image '*track*' is so easily associated by metaphor with its indexical cousin. With the given name '*track',* the steel manufactured "track / rail" propels the travel of potential interpretations along the associative axis of *metaphor* to meet the indexical track, evoking interpretative association with the trace. At the same time the potential of interpretive movement along the *metonymic* axis of the indexical track leads to no-where, no signs of presence but only absence. Interpretive attempts to trace the causal origins of the track reveal no causal location; it could potentially lead to any-where in *effect*. The possibility of arriving at a prior object / event of causal relationship is entertained when efforts to interpret the word "track" are transposed via the metaphoric operation onto the indexical track, but this avenue of interpretation is not sustained when we are reminded of the presence of the manufactured steel rail/track. This simultaneous association with - yet denial of - the indexical track serves to doubly reinforce the lack of any embodied presence of origin or represented meaning in the index. The indexical track marks a trace of passage to and from a hopeful place of origin which is never to be found, like a reverberative movement of reciprocating convergence and divergence propelled by potential attraction and imminent repulsion. Jacques Derrida describes this reverberative quality as how:

> "the trace is produced as its own erasure. ... it belongs to the trace to erase itself, to elude
> that which might maintain it in presence.   The trace is neither perceptible nor
> imperceptible."[17]

Just as early 19th century railway engineers came to recognise that there was no need for the mechanical correspondence between cogs in the wheels of a locomotive and groves in the track/rail to enable sufficient traction for movement, the poststructuralist sensibility of Derrida proposes a movement that is not the linear mechanical correspondence of cause to effect, but is a movement from *effect to effect*, from *text to text* that produces difference never reduced to presence. The oscillating propulsion of interpretive travel attracted backwards toward origin (along the metonymic axis), and the

concomitant repulsion forward to the presence of the manufactured steel track and its word-image associations (along the metaphoric axis), serves to map out a field of poetic operation. This field presents a surface of poetic effects awaiting interpretative departures, resonating across the vertical axis of metaphor and reverberating across the horizontal axis of metonym.   As French philosopher Gaston Bachelard has elaborated in his phenomenology of the imagination, "the exuberance and depth of a poem are always phenomena of the resonance - reverberation doublet."[18]   .

MEMORY AND ARRANGEMENT

The organisation of space is of course also an organisation of knowledge. The placement of the body in a space inscribed with iconographic representations of knowledge is in parallel with the ways in which the mind might attempt to locate information such that it may be recalled for future use or contemplation.   Frances Yates has described how the classical art of memory, a practice notable in Europe from the middle ages through to the 17th century and developed out of the rhetorical tradition, sought means to memorise the encyclopedia of knowledge such that it could be recalled upon demand.[19]   This system of memorising was based upon the imaginary conception of an organisation of places, a series of loci with a discernible relationship between them. In these locations built in the mind would be placed iconic images representative of that which one desired to remember and retrieve. Based upon principles of order and arrangement of places, the knowledge stored in these loci could be recollected via revisiting the places in the mind.   Fundamental to practice of the classical art of memory was the use of striking human images - memory images of corporeal similitude capable of exciting the imagination. Whilst the location of the stored memory image is static, the art of memory is reliant upon the power of the memory image cited in the mind's eye to precipitate movement toward retrieving the knowledge desired.

registering

        The practice of arranging iconic images in imaginary places to incite memory directly parallels the collecting and arranging of imagery and objects in physical spaces to collate and incite an expanse

of knowledge. As Yates has noted, the art of memory was built upon in the 17th century as a basis to not only memorise the encyclopedia of knowledge but as an "aid for investigating the encyclopedia and the world with the object of discovering new knowledge"[20]. Francis Bacon, one of the intellectuals forging a new scientific method, was a well-informed practitioner of the art and had a gallery in his house designed for use in local memory, featuring figures of "beast, bird and flower" suggestively used as figurative loci for his own purposes of retaining knowledge in his memory.

All forms of concentrating objects of knowledge into a repository encounter the inevitability of organisational relationships.   At a most pragmatic level, attempts to acquire knowledge through the collection of artefacts, objects and imagery sought ways to place these items - literal objects from which knowledge is thought to be attainable - such that they could be repeatedly re-viewed and re-visited for contemplation. Systems of classification and taxonomical naming and labelling determine a set of re-traceable relationships between collected items by designating them a *place*: a physical location within the space of the repository - the cabinet of curiosity, library, museum or gallery; and a conceptual location within the body of knowledge to which these objects contribute. The conception and arrangement of *placements* constructs particular ways of thinking, learning and understanding that are implicitly grounded in certain ideological values and cultural codes, determining certain conceptions of historical time and cultural importance. In its most unquestioned optimism, practices of organising collected 'data' of culture are sustained by a "belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtapositioning of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world."[21]

Yet the benefits of retaining memory via a system that is like "a honeycomb in whose cells each of us can place the things he wants to remember"[22] is that the objects of memory are denied their dynamic inter-connectedness, "forced to remain motionless and always the same, in order to be more easily remembered ... [until] ... languished, disintegrated, disappeared"[23]. This direct correlation of a location to an image, an image or icon to a meaning or memory, constructs a representational system that draws upon the imagination to form the desired, *correct* image, but it inhibits the potential of the

imagination to extend itself further by reaching out beyond and evoking images of things which are not there.

Ramon Lull developed an alternative system of memorisation in the 13th century - to be later re-interpreted in the Renaissance - that introduced movement. According to Yates:

> "the figures of his art, on which its concepts are set out in the letter notation, are not static but revolving. One of the figures consists in concentric circles, marked with the letter notations standing for concepts, and when the wheels revolve, combinations of the concepts are obtained."[24]

The combinatory system of Lull extends the realm of reference beyond matching pairs of sign and symbol to a dynamic contextual network in which reiterative movements unveil renewed possibilities. Rather than seeking to elicit the designated memory of an conceptual object from a grid of fixed places, the combinatorial system establishes the performative memorialisation of structural procedures and principles of a network of connections which enable a unending play of evocative re-combinations, renewing the imagination in active engagement with memory.

mobilising

THE IMAGINATION

mobilising

According to Gaston Bachelard, "the imagination is not ... the faculty for forming images of reality; it is the faculty for forming images which go beyond reality, which *sing* reality"[25]. How might art unveil the human capacity to yield forth such resonance in those who encounter it? A traditional conception of art production and reception would have us distinguish between the productive imagination of the artists or designers who actively make art and the more passive interpretive imagination of the consuming audience who encounter or appreciate art. But if we resist this oppositional positioning of production against consumption, the active against the passive, we might make forms of art and induce artful effects which do not operate according the constructive coding and interpretive decoding of

representations. Rather than encounter art in such logo-centric terms which regard all manners of inscription as reduced to the secondary status of 'vehicle', the sensible material sign reduced to serve the intelligible signified referent,[26] we might follow the ephemeral forms of an art which is reconstructed in its effects by those who bring their lives toward it.

As both makers and users of public space we employ the "variable, fluid and diverse"[27] capacities of imagination to make sense of our experience. Imagination actively deploys variable relationships between unity and difference, it is "the place where the figurative meaning emerges in the interplay of identity and difference"[28], where a dialectical relation activates a bodily and conceptual awareness of the similarity in dissimilars. Our apprehension of moments of incommensurability, of confronting the limits to our cognition, is made possible via the imagination without reducing contradictions to a static condition of reconciliation. For the imagination is capable of capturing via dynamic images what is beyond the grasp of our rational cognitive faculties.

The manner in which representational modes of memorialisation implicitly make the authoritative claim that there exists a true meaning to be excavated underneath the sign do not engage the imagination to its explorative and re-creational potential. It is the ambivalence of rhetorical memorialisation which avails itself to the active oscillations of the imagination, which reach out and offer the generative potential for the imaginative construction of images which resound with depth and volume. It is in surprising moments *between* the incapacity of our styles of rationality to *place* an image and the bodily capacity to *incorporate* an image that the imagination is mobilised.

Of all qualities that might maintain our interest, curiosity and fascination, qualities which provoke us to both feel and think, would not the most sustaining be the peculiar quality of surprise? Surprise is a kind of ever dynamic quality with enigmatic and unfathomable depths, perpetually subsiding and re-emerging with the resonance that it brings to experiences of revelation. Surprise admits us "to an almost forbidden world of sudden parallels, petrifying coincidences and reflexes peculiar to each individual"[29], a world pursed by the painter de Chirico who:

> "acknowledged ... that he could paint only when *surprised* ... by certain arrangements of objects" ... for ... "the entire enigma of revelation consisted for him in this word: surprise"[30].

How might the potential surprises of art mobilise possible trajectories of the imagination? The Cartesian formulation of mind/body split and the Kantian separation of cognitive faculties between the *formal*, conceptual and intellectual domain of the mind, and the *material*, perceptual and sensible domain of the body articulates the imagination as a psychological faculty of mind. Yet again, if we move between such an oppositional conception we might maneuver toward an understanding of an *embodied imagination*, of a seamless imaginative engagement between bodily experience and conceptual cognition, where "the 'bodily' works its way up into the 'conceptual' and 'rational' by means of imagination"[31].

For Bachelard, it is images that stem from the fundamental substance of matter that provide the opportunity for the "profound and lasting ambivalences... which allows endless transpositions"[32] in the imagination. Tracing the flow of matter in body and mind mobilises poetic experiences where "the duality of subject and object is iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active in its inversions."[33] In discussing the sphere of disciplinary and social location of the work of Polish / American artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, Mark Rakatansky makes the point that Wodiczko's work 'circulates', "relaying, oscillating, resonating in the space between the 'subjective' body and 'objective' architecture" rather than residing in that between space. He goes on to explain that Wodiczko's work:

> "does not reside: it finds within a figural gesture a social abstraction, and within an abstraction (of the spatial, for example) a figural gesture. A gestic approach problematises both the figural and the spatial, finding the social and psychological relations of bodies and architecture - without residing in either of the two impossible extremes of a 'pure interiority' (subjective figuration) or a 'pure exteriority' (abstract spatiality)."

15

*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 representing conceptions of reality.   **A tracking vehicle performs in dialectical negotiation with the city; the city as it is inhabited, remembered, imagined and inscribed.**   A Tracking Vehicle's traverses tracks of imagery, text and sound acquiring a residual significance through their recurrent emission at particular places through vehicular techniques, building a form of ephemeral social architecture; an architecture of memory and imagination.*

A tracking vehicle articulates a language of space and time, temporary forms of expression in dynamic interaction with the city.   Its unpredictable movement and ever-changing accumulation and emission of networks of imagery, sound and text relays a montage of historical events, memories, fantasies and discrete narratives as though following the experiences of the city's dwellers; promoting experiences of the city which reveal the extraordinary potential in everyday life.

A tracking vehicle elides the tangible and intangible, the real and the illusory, revealing the re-constructed absence of the past in the unfolding events of the present. Perhaps a tracking vehicle may present a trace of anachronistic images recalled from the past at Melbourne's major urban intersections. Temporarily suspended twenty metres above street level from four portable telescopic poles at an intersection's street corners might be a digitally controlled horizontal surface, parallel to the ground plane with its square-cut perimeter directly mirroring the line drawn by the intersection of tram cabling and tram track below it. The surface might possess the capacity to alter its pixilated horizontal surface between two conditions: each pixel being able to appear black and opaque, allowing no light to pass through itself, or alternatively clear and translucent through which light may travel. To those on the street the surface might appear to hang overhead, a strange cloud canopy of darkness and lightness, a huge photographic negative through which the sun's rays pass in variable ways to cast images of light

and shadow on the asphalt and bluestone below, on the corner buildings and on all transient objects which move under its effects of projection.   Perhaps the light of day would give appearance to monotone images upon the surface drawn from real and imagined pasts. Images would appear on the surface itself in strangely negative or reverse priority of lightness and darkness to what we might expect, perhaps a direct trace of the light which affected a sensitive emulsion in a near or distant time ago.

THE FLOW-ON EFFECTS OF THE TRACK

The steel veins of tram track that trace their way through the body of Melbourne, like all our urban infrastructure, are emblematic of the process of urban settlement, of the colonisation of this land and its indigenous inhabitants. In only two centuries the urban development of Melbourne and its tracks have imposed new systems of relating to the land and affected new relations amongst people who reside within it, establishing the dominance of the sedentary social structures of the polis over the formerly nomadic social existence of the land's indigenous inhabitants. Whilst the tramways emerged from the colonising impulse to order and control they paradoxically demonstrate attributes of subversive resistance to the totalising, griding and numbering motivations from which they emerge and continue to operate in conjunction with.   Unlike main-roads or railways infrastructure which to varying degrees are *imposed* upon the indigenous contour of the land to chart paths of rational efficiency, tramways, as a result of their structural character, have been more sensitively stitched in a harmonious accord with the emergent fabric that has been grafted upon the land.

redeeming

Rather than traffic in a forwards-only movement or toward a singular conception of the future, the tramways internalise a regenerative momentum. Since the electrification of the system, individual trams have been able to not only consume electrical energy from the network of overhead distributed power in order to *motivate* movement, but an electrical generator-based system of braking has enabled the *de-motivating* of a tram's movement to produce electrical energy which is returned to the greater network of power.

Tramways, more than other infrastructure, are apprehended as *veins* of the city for this manner in which they are structurally integrated with the surface of the city and its rhythms. Rather than embody a one-way flow of imposing forces upon their context the tramways signal the possibility of a redemptive counter momentum that attempts to regenerate its own conditions of possibility.

THE STREET

Since the first horse drawn tram in 1884, the first cable tram in 1885 and the first electric tram in 1889, Melbourne's streets have come to incorporate over 220 kilometres of track[34] to make the network the fourth most extensive tramways system in the world after those in St Petersberg, Moscow and Vienna. With the transport revolution of the twentieth century the tram-lined streets of Melbourne developed as the dominant mixed-use urban space through which people and resources were inter-connected.

revisiting

Streets are "at once the product of design and the locus of social practice"[35] where the co-existence of urban forces intermix a diversity of activities, events and social exchanges that confront one another as planned and by chance. Streets have traditionally served as the most fundamental platform through which urban actors may *move:* providing not only a passage of physical movement but a means through which we may act out our lives and encounter one another, moving others and being moved by others through social exchanges. The streets are the ultimate spatial zone in which social action transpires, where the limits of all regimes of regulatory control are encountered and contested in an irreducible realm of bodily proximity. For the streets cannot contain stasis, they are transitional spaces where people, resources and things participate in the dynamic reality of the city.

Late twentieth century development has challenged the practice of making mixed-use of urban space with the introduction of large scale efficiency-driven specialised zones of use, such as the motor vehicle highway / freeway and the internalised under-cover shopping complex. In comparison to these homogenised zones of specialised use, the tram-lined street remains a rich everyday space of diversity, where the serendipity of convergent urban forces is more capable of occurring. Of all urban

sites, it is the street which has traditionally played the primary role in bringing together diverse social experiences in a public space where the character of living remains irreducible; as heterogenous and vibrant as the cultural practices which occupy it.   Street space provides a social platform which allows the diversity of social life to exist in a unifying context without reducing its elements to universalised constants or autonomous entities.   The space of the street is a geographical corollary to Henri Lefebvre's conceptual notion of the '*everyday*', as "whatever remains after one has eliminated all specialised activities"[36];   for the street enables "a set of functions which connect and join together systems that might appear to be distinct."[37]   The everyday is everywhere and no-where, an analogue ensemble of connections.   But we can no longer assume that the space of our everyday lives hold only geographical dimensions as a range of communication and transportation technologies now function to join us and our cultural systems together in ways which problematise distinction between the public and private realms.

American sociologist Richard Sennett argues that the rise of secularism and bourgeois life since the nineteenth century in the industrial West has led to an increased value placed upon *intimate* private life at the expense of impersonal public sociability.   The withdrawl from the streets to a focus upon intimate social relations within the most immediate and localised spheres of family and self has, according to Sennett, led to a narcissistic self-absorption that impoverishes the ability of individuals to act in the social domain.   The dominant cultural momentum pertaining to late industrial capitalism seductively promotes a quest to attain nearness in life through intimate sociability, promoting the individualistic belief that the most 'real' and significant human relations are between personalities. Sennett argues that this:

> "belief in direct human relations on an intimate scale has seduced us from converting our
> understanding of the realities of power into guides for our own political behaviour."[38]

The construction and privileging of the private realm of intimacy over the public realm of sociability breeds a fear of encountering the impersonal and engaging in the spaces of impersonal life. Given that

exchange is "the very essence of sociability,"[39] changes in the means through which exchange takes place changes the very character of sociability, and changes the very means through which social beings acquire senses of space-time.

MEMORIES

imagining

"It isn't that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past: rather, an image is that in which the Then and the Now come into a constellation like a flash of lightening. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the revelation of the present to the past is a temporal, continuos one, the relation of the Then to the Now is dialectical - not development but image, leaping forth. Only dialectical images are authentic ... images."[40]

Walter Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image not only illuminates a sense of temporality beyond a linear continuist conception but also signals the inseparable dialectic of imagination and memory, a dialectic through which we can ourselves be moved and provoke the movement of others. Our imagination, dialectically engaged by memory, reaches out toward the indeterminate and other, calling forth figures of our own construction. Memory, in its dialectical engagement with imagination, "retrotensively marks, disposes, and funds our engagements with the 'things' and 'events' of the world that thus stand forth".[41] Memory itself, the experience of remembering in all its richness, is beyond the digital representation of things that ought to be remembered but is the unique analogue experience of re-creatively undergoing the dynamic re-invention of the movements of life.

HOME

re-creating

In contemplative support of the retention of Melbourne's 'W' class trams, Melbourne cartoonist / writer Michael Leunig suggests that "more than ever we need these solid, simple, well-made old things which are ours: to hold us and to carry us and to deliver us safely home"[42]. Perhaps we never do *arrive* at

what might seem to be the safest, enclosing, stable sense of home, but we do perpetually negotiate provisional senses of the changing field in which we make identifications. Art in public space might no longer attempt to mark a 'home' for the city, for the artist or designer, nor might it model its conditions of operation on indifference and indeterminacy, nor on the *flaneur* who "is at home when he is not at home, ... and entity without past or future"[43].   The 'home' that we could make for ourselves in our approach to the design of art in public space, our 'home' of the city and of the 'art' that might exist with it, would not be made of a complete image totalising to the eye but would remain of a networked order, forever changing in its relationships yet accruing a performative, psychological permanency through its variable reiteration. His city is the collection of routes he has travelled. Her heart is lined with the silent tracks of her passage. Our breath rises and falls with every move.

16

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 private intimacy or privatised relations. **A tracking vehicle mobilises sociability, ephemeral urban encounters, never to be grasped in totality, only remembered in their absence.** *A tracking vehicle enables surprising networks of space-time to be experienced.*

A tracking vehicle operates upon poetic plays of presence and absence. Tracking operations yield the resonance and reverberation of certain patterns according to the cultural experiences particular to the individual and collective fabric of Melbourne. Tracking operations are elliptical in nature, operating both diachronically and synchronically - across and within the passage of time.   A tracking vehicle operates upon the metaphoric and metonymic potential of the tram-tracks of Melbourne, delivering an operation in the imagination which moves both backward and forward, evoking a field of suspended tension, where the momentum of tracking sings with resonance and reverberation.

Perhaps traces of a tracking vehicle might be evident through the form of human head-sized interactive telecommunications interfaces temporarily latched to a window of host trams, mobilising a variety of effects. These interfaces might enable a touch and sound sensitive visual and acoustic environment, a window to another time-space. The interfaces aboard different host trams might be synchronised such that when the trams pass each other travelling in opposite directions, the interfaces activate digital cameras, capturing an image rendered in life-scale on the opposite interface screen at the moment the trams glide past one another . It is as if the passing glance that one might seize as trams converge and rush past one another, that momentary catch of another's eye, might be rendered present in its absence, an indexical image of a passenger aboard another vehicle. The still portrait image of strangers unknown to each other are temporarily harnessed, life size as a reflection in the tram window with a strangely static resolution. These images of strangers travelling aboard passing trams might be

suspended, frozen still on the electronic screen for random durations, still.. Such telecommunications interfaces could enable travellers upon different trams travelling upon varied routes to share a deceptively intimate sense of nearness, momentarily uniting their discrete passages into a concurrent relationship. Fifteen seconds prior to the screen resuming its programming of various emissions, a prompt scrolls across the screen: "…. touch here if you wish to make contact…..".

[1] Peter Eisenman, "Architecture and the Problem of the Rhetorical Figure", *A+U* 87, 07, p.22. (my emphasis)

[2] Eisenman, p.20.

[3] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, Harcourt Brace & Co, Orlando 1974, p.11.

[4] see Rosalyn Deutsche, "Public Art and its Uses", in Senie, H. & Webster, S. (eds) Critical Issues in Public Art, Harper Collins, New York 1992.

[5] According to Michael Sorkin, "the effort to reclaim the city is the struggle of democracy itself." See his *Variations on a Theme Park*, Noonday Press, New York 1992, p.xv.

[6] David Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life: Public Drama in late Modern Culture*, Routledge, London 1993, p.136.

[7] Hannah Arendt , "The Public Realm: The Common",: in Nathan Glazer & Mark Lilla (eds, *The Public Face of Architecture: Civic Culture and Public Spaces,* Free Press / Macmillan, New York 1987: p12.

[8] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle,* Black & Red, Detroit 1983.

[9] Guy Debord, quoted in Iwona Blazwick (ed), *an endless adventure... an endless passion... an endless banquet: a situations scrapbook,* Verso / ICA, London 1989, p.95.

[10] Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness", *Yale French Studies No 73: Everyday Life,* Yale University Press, Connecticut 1987, p.9.

[11] Guy Debord, quoted in Blazwick, p.95.

[12] Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Supposition of the Aura: The Now, The Then, and Modernity", in Museum of Contemporary Art, *Negotiating Rapture: The Power of Art to Transform Lives*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1996, p.52.

[13] see Fredrick Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping", in Nelson & Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and The Interpretation of Culture*, MacMillan Education, London 1988, p.347-360.

[14] Jameson, p.347.

[15] Claude Lefort, quoted in Rosalyn Deutsche, "Alternative Space" Brian Wallis (ed), *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism (A Project By Martha Rosler)* Bay Press, Seattle 1991: p.65.

[16] Stan Allen, "Tracks, Trace, Tricks", *Any,* May/June 1993, No. 0, p.9.

[17] Jacques Derrida, quoted in Allen, "Tracks, Trace, Tricks", p.10.

[18] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* Beacon Press, Boston 1969 (first published 1958), p.xix.

[19] Frances Yates, *The Art Of Memory,* Routledge Kegan Paul, London 1984 (first pub. 1966).

[20] Yates, p.368 / 9.

[21] Eugenio Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes Toward a Contextual Reading of Bouvard and Pecuchet" in Josue V. Harari (ed) *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1979 [quoted in Douglas Crimp "On the Museums Ruins" in Hal Foster (ed) *The Anti-Aesthetic* Bay Press, Washington 1983: p49]

[22] Calvino, p.15.

[23] Calvino, p.16.

[24] Yates, p.176.

[25] Gaston Bachelard, *Water & Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter,* Pegasus Foundation, Dallas 1983 (originally published in 1942), p.16.

[26] As described by Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism", in Hal Foster, *The Anti- Aesthetic,* Bay Press, Washington 1983, p.87.

[27] Bachelard, *Water and Dreams,* p.45.

[28] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1978, p.199.

[29] Andre Breton, *Nadja,* (trans. Richard Howard), Grove Press Inc., New York 1960, (originally published in French 1928), p. 19.

[30] Breton, p.15.

[31] Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1987, p.xxi.

[32] Bachelard, *Water and Dreams*, p.11.

[33] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* p.xv.

[34] see Stephen Watson*, The Melbourne Tramways: A Pictorial History* (map), published by Stephen Watson, Melbourne 1993.

[35] Celik, Z., Favro, D., & Ingersol, R. (ed's), *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space,* University of California Press, Berkeley 1994, p.1.

[36] Henri Lefebvre, quoted in Alice Kaplan & Kristin Ross, "Introduction" *Yale French Studies* No 73, 1987 p.2.

[37] Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness", *Yale French Studies* No 73, 1987, p.9.

[38] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man,* Norton, New York 1992 (first pub. 1974): p.339.

[39] Sennett, p.311.

[40] Walter Benjamin, quoted in Didi-Huberman, p. 52-3.

[41] William H. Poteat, *Recovering the Ground: Critical Exercises in Recollection*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, p.163.

[42] Michael Leunig, "Goodbye, 816", *The Age,* 25 November 1993, p.15.

[43] John Lechte, "(Not) Belonging in Postmodern Space", in Sophie Watson & Katherine Gibson (eds), *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, Blackwell, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1996, p.103.