‘WATCHERS AND WEARERS’: AN INVESTIGATION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL ART AS A CYCLE OF PARTICIPATION

L SIMPSON

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LORENE SIMPSON

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Abstract

This thesis will consider the socio-political dimension of participation in art, the relationship between participation and socio-political comment, and how contemporary criticism has sought to frame that relationship. ‘Socio-political’ in this context is giving a voice to diverse groups of people who might not otherwise be heard. It is understood within a process described by Jacques Rancière as ‘dissensus’ which works upon the established framework of inclusion and exclusion operating in society. It is the idea that, by disrupting the borders and roles determined within that framework, a precluded other can set in motion the capacity to make the unseen visible and the unsayable audible. Disruption works through Rancière’s articulation of an ‘emancipated spectator’ as one who interprets and translates what is placed before them in order to produce meaning.

I will focus on the practice of three artists who have worked in external locations which may be seen as marginalised or contested: Hélio Oiticica, Francis Alys and Jeremy Deller. They have produced works in which participation exists in its broadest sense, as an act of sharing or taking part, and involve participation in open propositions, acts of directed performance or in a sharing of individual memory and experience. At the heart of these investigations is a ‘cycle of participation’ proposed by Oiticica. It points to different kinds of active spectator participation and is significant for art practices in which the art object and its mediation of autonomous aesthetic experience includes a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation.

These artists are concerned with making art politically but not with making political or activist art per se. They position aesthetic experience and politics as existing within the same discursive frame, mediating aesthetic experience to make plain issues of socio-political concern. Their practices operate through Rancière’s articulation of emancipation, proposing a space in which autonomous acts of aesthetic experience converge to set in motion a capacity to imagine the

world, and our relations to it, differently, rather than through medium specificity reflecting on different interests on the part of different constituencies.

It will be shown, through case studies, that the works by these artists were not created through a process of reciprocal creative labour, conversational exchange, negotiation and consensual dialogue as proposed in the relational art of Nicholas Bourriaud, the socially engaged practices supported by Claire Bishop or the collaborative processes and dialogical exchange promoted by Grant Kester. Furthermore, that art which reveals socio-political conditions that result in feelings of discomfort are as valid as those which seek to be ameliorative.

Another concern is to try and understand the reception of such works on their return to the gallery. I will consider the specificity of knowledge to be gained from the participatory event itself and that from encountering the work through documentation, reflecting briefly on the problems of controlling agency in regard to art with a participatory socio-political dimension.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS **page**

Introduction **1**

Chapter 1 **21**

Case Study 1

Hélio Oiticica – *Parangole* (1964-68)

Chapter 2 **43**

Case Study 2

Francis Alys – *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002)

Chapter 3 **65**

Case Study 3

Jeremy Deller – *After The Gold Rush* (2001/2)

Conclusion **87**

Appendix 1 **97**

The *Parangole*

Bibliography **101**

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will consider the socio-political dimension of participation in art, the relationship between participation and socio-political comment, and how contemporary criticism has sought to frame that relationship. 'Socio-political' refers here to politics in its broadest social sense as working on the conditions of life and intervening in them. I will focus on the projects of Hélio Oiticica, Francis Alys and Jeremy Deller. Each of these artists has developed art practices that relate to site/situation specific participation aligned with concerns for marginality and socio-political visibility. These are a set of practices in which participation exists in its broadest sense as an act of sharing or taking part, is multilayered, and which involve participation in open works, acts of directed performance or in a sharing of individual memory and experience. Another concern is to try and understand the reception of these works on their return to the gallery. My interest is in projects that have remained the works of the individual artist and that are exhibited and written about as such. These are works that do not set out to challenge the difference between object and process, between the work itself and experience of it, but bring many elements together.

In each of the three case studies to be considered, the artists worked in external locations that exist on the periphery of the institutional centres of the art world, located in communities or sites which may be seen as marginalised and contested either by virtue of location, displacement or environmental exploitation. Oiticica moved from the wealthy suburbs of Rio de Janerio to live in the Mangueira favela, joining the Samba school and immersing himself in the community and culture he found there. Deller journeyed to California for a year, leaving San Francisco to travel to the remote desert locations which exist on the periphery of the urban centre. Alys was invited to participate in the 2002 Lima Biennale and chose to make a place-based work on the dunes at Ventanilla in close proximity to the pueblo joven of Lima. The temporary nature of a large scale exhibition, such as a biennale, meant that Alys's engagement with place was time limited, whereas Deller and Oiticica's were not. The emergent works

exist in different locations subject to specific social, political and environmental concerns at the time they were made, and lend themselves to being interpreted within particular theoretical tendencies. Claire Doherty provides a useful point of departure in this respect:

> If we understand place as an unstable, shifting set of political, social, economic and material relations, and locality as produced and contested through a set of conditions that we might describe as situation, our experience of works which truly produce remarkable engagements with place will be characterised by a sense of *dislocation* – encouraging us no longer to look with the eyes of a tourist, but to become implicated in the jostling contingency of mobilities and relations that constitute contemporaneity. (Doherty, 2009:18)

I intend to explore the ways in which these practices, emerging in different cultural and political conditions, mobilise participation in their making and resolution, mediate aesthetic experience for both co-participants and spectators, and have the potential to set in motion a capacity to imagine the world differently.

Theory

Many forms of art practice now involve participation which may or may not exhibit performative, conceptual, dialogical, social and communitarian characteristics. Artistic practices that mobilise participation in their making and reception commonly fit into established categories of performance, installation or community art, and categories which are more socio-political and collaborative in their aims including activist, socially engaged and dialogical practices. The case studies included here do not fit easily within either the established categories or the collaborative practices.

Each of the artists represented is concerned with making art politically but not with making political or activist art per se. However, they all posit aesthetic experience and politics as existing within the same discursive frame, mediating

essential aesthetic experience not to mask, but to make plain issues of socio-political concern. The works I have included here share a capacity which Grant Kester takes to be central to the constituency of modern art: “the ability of aesthetic experience to transform our perceptions of difference and to open space for forms of knowledge and challenge cognitive, social or political conventions.”(G. H. Kester, 2011:11)

Socio-political in this context is the giving of a voice to diverse groups of people, communities and individuals who might otherwise not be heard. It is the essence of politics described by Jacques Rancière as ‘dissensus’, which is a political process capable of making the unseen visible and the unsayable audible. It operates through a disruption of the ‘distribution of the sensible’ by confronting the established framework of inclusion and exclusion which create boundaries and roles determining what is visible, audible, thought or done and by whom. Rancière defines this organising principle as the *police,* which is not used in the specific sense of police officers who enforce the law, except in so far as they exist within a core principle of the *police* that refers to any hierarchical social order. It therefore includes everything that may be seen to create hierarchies in the organisation of society. Rancière defines this as a “symbolic constitution of the social”(Rancière, 2001) and in the translator’s ‘Glossary of technical terms’, taken as being:

> first and foremost an organization of bodies based on a communal distribution of the sensible, ie a system of co-ordinates defining modes of being, doing , making and communication that establishes the borders between the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, the sayable and the unsayable. (Rancière, 2004:89)

In Rancière’s articulation of dissensus, he identifies a position in which the ‘distribution of the sensible’ distributes roles to those who have a part in the *police order* and denies a role to those who have no part in it. The *police order* also determines visibility and audibility. A person to whom no role is given, and has no part to play, is therefore denied visibility and their voice neither

understood nor heard denying them the title of political subject. Politics is the disruption of the *police order* defined by the 'distribution of the sensible' through the subjectivisation of those who have no part in it:

> The essence of politics resides in the modes of dissensual subjectification that reveal the difference of a society to itself. The essence of consensus is not peaceful discussion and reasonable agreement as opposed to conflict or violence. Its essence is the annulment of dissensus as the separation of the sensible from itself, the annulment of surplus subjects, the reduction of the people to the sum of the parts of the social body, and of the political community to the relationship of interests and aspirations of these different parts. Consensus is the reduction of politics to the police. (Rancière, 2010:42)

It is this precluded other that confronts the established order of perception to reconfigure it, and in so doing becomes a bearer of politicalness, intervening in the visible and sayable. The transformational possibility arising from such interventions may set in motion a capacity to imagine the world differently. It is this capacity that is important for art practices in which the art object and its mediation of aesthetic experience include a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation.

This form of interpretive spectator participation is intrinsic to Hélio Oiticica's *Parangole* (1964-1968), an open work in which discrete cape structures required activation by participating wearers, and became the work when entering a 'cycle of participation' with watchers. Watchers and wearers are key elements in the work's activation and reception. The 'cycle of participation' in the work is significant in so far as it points to different kinds of active spectator participation rather than an opposition between the active and passive spectator. Watching in this regard is removed from any notion of aesthetic contemplation associated with painting and sculpture. It is transformed into an aesthetic experience of encounter requiring different types of spectator participation. It is a position that can be understood through Jacques Rancière's formulation of 'emancipation'. Rancière challenges the oppositions of the passive and active spectator which intersect the

discussion of the relationship between aesthetics and politics. He proposes that the role of the artist is one based on a desire to 'produce a form of consciousness, an intensity of feeling, an energy for action' but at the same time assuming that what will be perceived, felt and understood is what they have put into their art. It is a presupposition of an identity between cause and effect. Equality between cause and effect is based on the difficult assumption by the artist that he understands the distance between himself and the spectator, and between his ideas, intentions, intensity of feeling or understanding of the spectator, so that it can be removed. The closing of this gap between two positions becomes predicated on a set of presuppositions which require the spectator to move from one position to another, from passive to active. Rancière places these oppositions within:

> a partition of the sensible, a distribution of places and of the capacities or incapacities attached to those places. Put in other terms, they are allegories of inequality. This is why you can change the values given to each position without changing the meaning of the oppositions themselves. (Rancière, 2007:270)

It is a set of oppositions which came into play when artists were seeking to prioritise social or political relevance in deciding the function of art rather than concepts of aesthetic quality. One way to politicise art was considered the activation of the spectator, which posits the idea that to be a spectator was to be passive. Rancière contends that emancipation begins: "when we dismiss the opposition between looking and acting and understand that the distribution of the visible itself is part of the configuration of domination and subjection." (Rancière, 2007:270). He argues that: "to look and listen requires the work of attention, selection, re appropriation, a way of making one's own film, one's own text, one's own installation."(Carnevale & Kelsey, 2007:256) Looking is therefore to be active. The act of looking confirms or modifies the distribution of the visible and hence interpreting the world is already a means of transforming it, of reconfiguring it. Rancière's proposition is that equality is the founding principle of emancipation and that an emancipated community is one of interpreters and translators. He

says that distance is the normal condition of communication in which the individual interprets and translates what is put before them in a way that is meaningful to them. In this way it is that mediating third term, art object, performance or event that frustrates equal undistorted transmission between individuals and which also means there can be no assumption of cause and effect. Collective power is therefore not the status of the members of a collective body, but a function of the power of translation and interpretation to produce a network of association and dissociations linking individuals; it is the principle of the emancipated spectator that is situated in what he terms the 'aesthetic regime of art'. At the heart of which is: "the loss of any determinate relationship between a work and its audience, between its sensible presence and an effect that will be its natural end."(Carnevale & Kelsey, 2007:256)

The consequence of the argument proposed here, concerning the active and passive spectator, is to consider its relevance to other kinds of spectatorship concerned with the act of looking at say an art photograph, painting or sculpture. In Rancière's articulation, the act of looking requires a work of interpretation and translation. This is not a matter of seeing in a certain way, it is the response of all our senses to the entire form of the work. It is a process of association and disassociation in which our encounters with the world are felt and measured. They are the same active and critical processes which mediate aesthetic experience throughout the arts, determining what we feel and how we are made to feel it, rather than emphasising what is represented and how that representation was achieved. It is the capacity to set in motion the expressive possibilities proposed by the work, which may or may not include imagining the world differently. In this way all acts of looking are considered active even where the response they elicit may be one of indifference.

The ideas of spectatorship represented by the watchers and wearers in Oiticica's 'cycle of participation' are also evident in the practice of Francis Alys. In *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) Alys mobilised and filmed participating volunteers in a directed performance in the act of shovelling sand, calling upon an audience of storytellers and translators to give the resulting video work meaning through

acts of interpretive spectator participation. Jeremy Deller's ideas of participation in *After the Gold Rush* (2001/2) are embedded in a concept of living history in which participation is a form of historical re-enactment, cultural memory, storytelling and treasure hunting. The resulting work comprised a guidebook, treasure hunt, music CD and piece of land. In common with the works of Oiticica and Alys, reception in the work is rooted in experience, addressing the individual to interpret and translate its meaning.

Claire Bishop in 2012, has echoed something which Oiticica articulated through his 'cycle of participation' in 1964 and which is recognisable in the works of Alys and Deller in 2002, that:

> Participatory art has the capacity to communicate on two levels - to participants and to spectators - the paradoxes that are repressed in everyday discourse, and to elicit perverse, disturbing and pleasurable experiences that enlarge our capacity to imagine the world and our relations anew .....and if that art is to be more than an event in the world and to become one removed from it then it requires a mediating third term – an object, image, story, film, even spectacle – that permits this experience to have a purchase on the public imaginary. (Bishop, 2012:284)

At the time Deller and Alys were engaged in the projects considered here, Nicholas Bourriaud was proposing a relational form of art. In his writings on *Relational Aesthetics*[1] he was proposing an art focused on the sphere of inter-human relations and concerned with the invention of models of sociability including meetings, encounters, events, collaborations, games, festivals and places of conviviality. Bourriaud describes the work of artists working within the sphere of inter-human relations as producing works that: "involve methods of social exchanges, interactivity with the viewer within the aesthetic experience being offered to him/her, and the various communication processes, in their tangible dimensions as tools serving to link individuals and human groups together."(Bourriaud, 2002:43) Bourriaud's writing is helpful on a number of fronts.

[1] (Bourriaud, 2002)

Communication is a key concept in his writings and its articulation reinforces the potential for aesthetic experience to transform into a model of communication. It recognises the aesthetics inherent in relational art by placing inter-human relations in the position of object. Secondly, that these forms open a space for communication, inter-subjectivity and interaction. Bourriaud's theories are based on the idea that art has: "always been a factor in sociability and has always been the basis for dialogue." (Bourriaud, 1998:18). He also claims that modern urban life diminishes social relations[2] and therefore relational art brings to the fore the problem of this diminishing world of sociability and as a result: "Contemporary art is definitely developing a political project when it endeavours to move into the relational realm by turning it into an issue"(Bourriaud , 2002:17) In this way he posits aesthetic experience and politics as existing within the same discursive frame whilst proposing art as a state of encounter in which meaning is elaborated collectively. He is proposing community in the form of micro-utopias, which are fundamentally harmonious, in which the participants all have something in common, a shared understanding that helps them to relate to one another. Oiticica's involvement with the samba schools of Mangueira, Deller's encounters with artists, storytellers and musicians in the Mojave Desert and the collective spirit of student volunteers recruited by Alys to shovel sand at the Ventanilla dune all exist within the sphere of inter-human relations. On first inspection, the works included here appear to operate within this relational sphere of convivial encounter. However, they contain encounters in which meaning is not elaborated collectively and which serve to disrupt the space of encounter. Whilst appearing to foster notions of community and sociability, the case studies will explore the ways in which they operated within the sphere of diverse communities creating space for antagonism and raising issues of difference, opposition and tension. Each of these works share a destabilising effect, a non-consensual coefficient

[2] This corresponds to the position of Zygmunt Bauman who describes the ways in which he perceives we have moved from urban spaces in which skills of civility were required to negotiate urban living to the construction of 'public but non-civil' spaces in which skills of civility are rendered unnecessary. His main focus is the architecture of the modern city and the ways those spaces have been constructed so we don't have to communicate with others.(Bauman, 2000)

that is a factor in the socio-political dimension of participation, one that creates a sense of unease and dislocation. They introduce diversity which then serves to disrupt harmonious ideas of togetherness, tolerance and belonging, making visible political, economic, social and faith based concerns.

An important characteristic of the socio-political dimension of participation is its ability to enable diverse groups of people, communities and individuals to find a voice. Grant Kester in his 2004 book *Conversation pieces : community and communication in modern art*[3] focuses on what he calls 'dialogical' projects, a range of projects that attempt to develop models of communication among diverse communities. The basic premise of these projects is the orchestration of collaborative encounters and resulting conversations. They are centred on processes of interactivity; of listening, dialogue, exchange and documentation. The resulting socio- political interventions are considered as creative acts in their own right. The dialogic property of the work becomes an essential component of that aesthetic experience. There are connections within the works discussed here to those described by Grant Kester as 'dialogical' that frame conversations about socio-political issues within the communities in which they are proposed or realised. Unlike the projects championed by Kester the works here are not communally engaged projects in so far as they do not propose solutions to problems through artistic intervention, but rather open up a discursive space that may frame socio-political consciousness. They are examples of socio-political participation in which any political impact is not easily identifiable or quantifiable, but they exist as projects in which art was done politically.

Claire Bishop has referred to the 'expanded field of post-studio practices' to describe a group of participatory art practices: "in which people constitute the central artistic medium and material, in the manner of theatre and performance." (Bishop, 2012:1) Bishop's focus is toward social context in which art is a collective, co-authoring and de-alienating endeavour and one in which participation is less concerned with a relational aesthetic than a politicised working process. Bishop emphasises the importance of the ideas, experiences and possibilities for

[3] (G. H. Kester, 2004)

constructive change arising from socially engaged practices. This emphasis on process is one common to the works championed by Kester. The aim of participatory art according to Bishop is: “to restore and realise a communal, collective space of shared social engagement.” (Bishop, 2012:275) In her book *Artificial Hells,*[4] Bishop has sought to move away from discussing socially engaged projects in solely positive terms focused on demonstrable impact and rather to emphasise the artistic status of the work. There are two main threads to this position. In relation to constructive social change she comments:

> The urgency of this social task has led to a situation in which socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important *artistic* gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond. (Bishop, 2012:13)

The other is a blurring between what is identified as socially engaged art practice and a reshaping of socially engaged initiatives as political and corporate agenda. She has questioned how participatory practices might be read as art in an effort to remove them from a focus on compassionate identification, consensual behaviour, demonstrable impact and aversion to disruption which:

> In insisting upon consensual dialogue, sensitivity to difference risks becoming a new kind of repressive norm – one in which artistic strategies of disruption, intervention or over-identification are immediately ruled out as ‘unethical’ because all forms of authorship are equated with authority and indicted as totalising. (Bishop, 2012:25)

She accredits Jacques Rancière with rehabilitating notions of the aesthetic and connecting it to politics thereby opening a space in which to discuss socially engaged participatory practice as art. She does so by: “emphasising the aesthetic in the sense of *aisthesis*: an autonomous regime of experience that is not reducible to logic, reason or morality.”(Bishop, 2012:18) These ideas follow Rancière’s writing on aesthetics in which he contends that rather than consider

[4] (Bishop, 2012)

ideas of aesthetic autonomy and socio-political life as distinct, they should be thought of as existing within an integrally related domain. This is useful as it foregrounds aesthetics, and above all aesthetic experience, to both context and politics, allowing a reframing of the socio-political dimension of participatory works.

The autonomy of our experience in relation to art suggests the possibility to set in motion the capacity to imagine the world and our relation to it differently. It is this transformational possibility that is suggested by Rancière's notion of dissensus; a disruption of the borders and roles in the structure of the 'distribution of the sensible' between the visible, audible and sayable by a precluded other. This equality opens up a discursive space that facilitates non-consensual dialogue foregrounding places, situations, context and politics. The notion of dislocation is essential to accepting that participatory art practices need not be consensual and art that reveals socio-political conditions, which result in feelings of discomfort, unease and disruption, are as valid as those that seek to be ameliorative. An insistence upon consensual dialogue, by its very nature, implies a dialogue between parties who identify with one another because they have something in common and their collective power is therefore the status of the members of a collective body through the capacity of aggregation. Membership of this collective is denied to those who oppose, hinder or disrupt the space of consensual encounter. Boundaries and roles are thus in place that determine who is included, and who is excluded, from the discursive frame. A space of exchange in which boundaries and roles are constantly being re-evaluated and challenged by participating individuals retains the tension between non-consensual dialogue and the possibility to set in motion a capacity for new ways of thinking that are inherently political. The collective power of non-consensual dialogue is the capacity to make anyone equal to everyone and to sustain political energy. It is through this lens that such works offer a means by which to explore cultural values of identity and to avoid the polarisation of individuals or groups whilst stimulating dialogue on issues of socio-political concern.

Historical Context

Much theoretical argument during the twentieth century centred on the imperative to move away from specific art objects and to transform spectators into agents of collective practice. The art object is defined here in a historical category as being painting or sculpture. This is aligned with a rejection of formalism and a conception of aesthetics concerned with modernism that were seen as unconnected to both context and political concerns. Many artists believed that traditional art forms, such as painting and sculpture, were not adequate to the task of engaging with the socio-political issues of the time and sought a more direct involvement with their audience. Physical involvement was seen as a precursor to social change. Strategies of disruption and intervention intended to provoke participants was one means to achieve this; constructive and ameliorative practices aimed at collective creativity was another. The Futurists devised provocative strategies for intervening in public space through events and collective experiences, whilst Dada artists sought to produce collective events and situations directed towards the dissolution of the individual voice in favour of the power of a communal one. The Paris 'Dada Season' of 1921 involved a series of interventions aimed at involving participants, including an excursion to the church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre which over a hundred people attended. Such strategies also sought to move beyond traditional art medium towards the merging of artistic genres in pursuit of this aim. The emergence of the Surrealists in the 1920's saw a reimagining of the normal meaning of ordinary objects and an emphasis towards free association and the unconscious mind. It is a tendency seen in the psychogeographic *dérive* of the Lettrist International and adopted by the Situationist International, who were also concerned with the construction of situations for the purpose of reawakening and preserving the feelings associated with life, adventure and liberation. Some artists believed that for art to energise a social constituency, it needed to shake off a perceived passivity associated with the contemplative aesthetic experience of art. It was a belief shared by Futurism's Filippo Marinetti, the Dadaist Tristan Tzara, Guy Debord of the Situationist International and Joseph Beuys, a member of the Fluxus group of artists amongst

others. Several strategies were adopted in pursuit of a transformation of the individual spectator into agents of collective practice, including those in favour of knowledge and action and those directed by action. In the first instance, the viewer requires a rational, distanced investigation of the image being presented to them, the aim of which is to make them conscious of the socio-political issue that gave rise to it and promote the will to act in order to transform it. In the second, the viewer is required to forego rational, distanced investigation in favour of vital participation. In either case, the aim of artistic mediation is to prompt the spectator to move from one position to another, to abandon their position as viewer to a position of action and one that restores their collective energy.

During the Cold War period, art was appropriated, to some degree, in support of the ideology of the prevailing political powers. Social realism and abstraction were part of the political and cultural strategies of the 1940's and 1950's to promote nationalist anxieties between the East and West. Depending upon the politics to be supported, artistic tendencies were recast in the image of the ideology and rhetoric they were being used to support or oppose. The tendency in the West, and America in particular, was to emphasise a form of painting that asserted individuality and was seen to support a free market economy. It was a form of painting, the formal characteristics of which, were described by the critic Clement Greenberg as being its flatness and a non pictorial two dimensional quality.[5] A shift towards this dominant form of American painting in the 1950's saw the emergence of alternative forms of artistic expression in response to, and rebellion against, its focus on formalism and aesthetic autonomy. The responses to it were art forms which worked upon issues posed by modern urban life, including the re-emergence of the body in the work and new forms of realism, including Minimalism, Pop Art and Fluxus. These practices were at odds with the view that modernist art should frustrate simplistic translation and communication and that its aesthetic required autonomy from socio-political values. For the opponents of this expression of modernism it was the perceived indifference of the specific medium to the experience of modern life that needed to be

[5] (Greenberg, 1961 revised 1965)

confronted. It was also to confront notions of the elitism of 'high art' over mass culture and to question issues of aesthetic quality over those of social relevance and the very function of art itself. New adaptations of already existing practices, including performance and conceptual art, assemblages, collages, ready-mades and installations, were all considered appropriate means to investigate these concerns of concept, analytical proposition and a shared sense of possibility. As a result, an increasing number of art practices began to diverge from those based on the creation of specific objects towards forms that included physical or perceptual interaction with the viewer and a related shift towards a durational, rather than instantaneous, experience. It was through these forms of activity, combined with situations to be participated in, rather than contemplated, that the impulse to overcome a perceived separation between modern art and modern life was pursued.[6] The involvement of the spectator was seen by some artists as a means to achieve this. They were proposing the notion of a new reality, as something which exists in lived space and promoting ideas of the everyday as being as worthy to be aware of as art itself. Artist groups such as Fluxus in the 1960's exploited the legacy of Dadaism through practices influenced by Marcel Duchamp and his persistent attempts to alter frames of thinking to give new meaning to everyday objects in the spirit of the ready-made. Fluxus work took on a variety of forms including music, dance, poetry, performance, film, publications, multiples and posters and was bound up in the concept of Concretism, which was also referred to as anti-art, or art-nihilism. George Maciunas, a leading figure of the Fluxus group explained this prerogative in the following way:

> The 'anti-art' forms are directed primarily against art as a profession, against the artificial separation of a performer from [the] audience, or creator and spectator, of life and art; it is against the artificial forms or patterns or methods of art itself; it is against the purposefulness,

[6] Joseph Beuys believed that it was possible to rupture the division between art and life in the context of a whole society. Beuys's ideal democracy was based on the notion that creative potential is universal and that every subject should be artistically educated, the fusing of art and life: "A total work of art is only possible in the context of the whole of society. Everyone will be a necessary co-creator of a social architecture, and, so long as anyone cannot participate, the ideal form of democracy has not been reached."(Beuys,1972:905)

formfulness and meaningfulness of art; anti-art is life, is nature, is true reality – it is one and all."(Maciunas, 1962:729)

This shift in the relationship between art object, spectator and artist was to establish participation as an ongoing trend in contemporary art practice.[7] These developments constituted a range of art projects that sought ways of making the spectator part of the work in a different way, developing different forms of experience and models of communication. They are rooted in a tradition of performance based art that developed outside of the traditional confines of the gallery and linked evolving forms of creative experience with socio-political activity. The emergence of collectives, happenings and performances increasingly replaced object with situation and event.

There are two moments located in the 1950's that I feel are illustrative of the way in which the socio-political dimension of participation was to develop and that are relevant to the case studies included here. The first is located in the 'action painting' of American Abstract Expressionism. Greenberg had provided a particular reading of Abstract Expressionism stressing formal values and aesthetic autonomy. Harold Rosenberg was to provide a very different reading from the other more canonical one by Greenberg. In 1952, Rosenberg used the phrase 'action painting' to describe a style of painting characterised by that of Jackson Pollock. It was predicated on the idea that the canvas was itself a field of activity which recorded the outcome of an event, that of the action of painting. The painting was to be a record of an immediate experience. The imperative was the act of creation and to attest to an authentic expression of individuality that required spontaneity and exploration of the unconscious mind. It was also aligned to questions concerning personal identity and experience in relation to the social condition. In his 1958 essay *The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,*[8] Allan Kaprow looks

[7] The evolving role of the viewer from spectator to participant is examined by Frank Popper in his book *Art- Action and Participation* (Popper, 1975). Popper charts the development in participatory art through the 1960's and 1970's that led the spectator "from the preliminary phase of perception, through game participation, autonomous behaviour, total participation and creative action, to the final possibility of full- scale creativity in its own right." (Popper)

[8] (Kaprow & Kelley, 2003)

forward into the environmental and performative possibilities arising from Pollock's painting: "Pollock, as I see him, left us at the point where we must become preoccupied with and even dazzled by the space and objects of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if need be, the vastness of Forty-second street."(Kaprow & Kelley, 2003:7) Kaprow is describing the threshold at which he saw Pollock standing. Of this threshold Jeff Kelley explains:

> It existed where the edge of the canvas met the floor (or the wall if the picture was hanging). Across the edge Pollock flung endless skeins of paint, each one reaching past the representational field of painting to encompass the space - no, the place - beyond it. Literally, that place was the artist's studio; metaphorically, it was the boundary of avant-garde experience and quite possibly the end of art. (Kaprow & Kelley, 2003:xix)

The second is the story of Tony Smith's car journey on the New Jersey Turnpike.[9] Its inclusion here is symbolic in so far as it expressed the liberatory possibilities of an aesthetic experience outside of the gallery and studio and in which territory was itself medium. Smith was pointing to a heightened sense of perceptual experience that he believed conventional modes of modernist painting and sculpture failed to represent. It was a sentiment shared in the 1960's and 1970's by the Land and Earth artists including Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, Richard Long and Ana Mendieta. It also serves to illustrate the acceleration of conditions already in place, through programmes to modernise and urbanise, which have been historically and spatially uneven. It was a developmental imperative for which the sign of the road marks an acceleration of migration by peripheral rural communities toward the central urban conurbations of the city and the creation of

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[9] "This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and yet it couldn't be called a work of art. On the other hand, it did something for me that art had never done. At first, I didn't know what it was, but its effect was to liberate me from many of the views I had had about art. It seemed that there had been a reality there that had not had any expression in art. The experience of the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized. I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art. Most painting looks pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it." (Wagstaff, 1966:19)

urban peripheries in the centre. Arjun Appadurai describes mass migration as part of a post-national order, one characteristic of which is Ethnoscapes:

> the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups of individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree.(Appadurai, 1996:33)

Such mass migrations have changed the social and cultural landscape of the developing world; the consequences of which are reflected in the context of the three case studies to be considered in this thesis.

The moment at which Kaprow stood at the threshold and Smith experienced the reality of the road, reasserted earlier ideas in which art was to leave the confines of the gallery and studio and enter the external landscapes of lived experience. Action is at the core of these ideas, including an active art form that also suggests a political imperative. Kaprow's response was to step across the threshold at which he had perceived Pollock to have been standing and merge art with everyday experience. Kaprow did not consider art as removed from daily life. He saw it as a social device with a political dimension and considered art as a participatory experience. He thought about art as a situation, an event, an action or an environment, rather than an object and is accredited with coining the term 'Happening' in the late 1950's.[10] Kaprow was suggesting a course of action in art that was related to everyday experience with an emphasis on exploration and experimentation.

My first case study will diverge from the North American/European context but closely follows the idea of action as being essential to the act of creation, whilst attesting to an authentic expression of individuality and an exploration of the

[10] In his 1959 work *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* Kaprow created an interactive environment and scripted the audience's participation. The audience were acting out a script but were doing so within the context of a contemporary art work in which the art object did not exist. This and events like it were to have a significant impact on the relationship between the artist and the viewer.

unconscious mind through lived experience. Hélio Oiticica was a member of the Neo-Concrete Group in Rio de Janeiro which assimilated elements of Dada, Surrealism and Fluxus but was also based on the introduction of a 'multi sensorial' approach to the art object and a shift towards the presence of the spectator in the work. It is from this Latin American perspective that this study takes its starting point, and then goes on to consider the socio-political dimension of participation as made visible in the projects of Francis Alys and Jeremy Deller at the start of the millennium. Alys's practice, informed by the cultural, economic and political history of life in the city, is one linked to socio-political critique and immediate experience, shaped by research and imagination and realised through multi-disciplinary modes of representation. The work of Jeremy Deller reflects an insistence to make work with a life outside the gallery. He has a curiosity about the everyday, the manner in which information is collected, learned, disseminated and adopted by people through history and contemporary life. Each of these artists has produced works that engage with place and relate to situation specific participation aligned with concerns for marginality and socio-political visibility.

Research Methodology

I attended major exhibitions of work by the artists included in my research and these experiences were essential to my understanding of their practices. As a consequence of the loss of Oiticica's archive, it now seems unlikely that another major exhibition of his works will be possible and I consider myself fortunate to have experienced *Hélio Oiticica: The Body of Colour* (2007) in addition to *Francis Alys: A Story of Deception* (2010) and *Jeremy Deller: Joy in People* (2012). I also consulted the writings of Alys and Deller and English Language translations of the conversations and writings of Oiticica. The websites of Deller and Alys provided me with access to images and video footage for *After the Gold Rush* (2001/2) and *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002). Ivan Cardoso's film *HO* (1979) gave me the opportunity to view original footage of Oiticica and his friends manipulating and showing how he intended *Parangole* to be inhabited and

displayed. I was also a spectator to Deller's work *Procession* (2009) and watched a Made-on-the-body-*Parangole* event at Tate Modern in 2007, which contributed to my understanding of reception in these works.

Hélio Oiticica's visibility has generally been in the context of Latin American Art and artists or his affiliation with the Grupo Frente (1954-1956), the Neo-concrete Movement (1959-1961) or his shared interest with Lygia Clark concerning ideas of the supra sensorial. The only solo exhibition of the artist's work during his lifetime was in 1969 at London's Whitechapel Gallery. It was not until after his death that interest in his work began to grow. In 1992 the Witte de With, Rotterdam held the first retrospective exhibition of his work: *Hélio Oiticica* and in 2007 the Museum of Fine Art, Houston together with the Tate, London held a large scale exhibition: *Hélio Oiticica and The Body of Colour.* In recent years, the interest in Oiticica has slowed, which on reflection is a function of two unfortunate events. In 2003 the Museum of Fine Art, Houston embarked upon an ambitious project, in collaboration with the Oiticica family, to restore Oiticica's works, catalogue his archive and present two major exhibitions of his work. Unfortunately, the project was never completed due to disputes between the partners and only the 2007 exhibition materialised. In addition, a devastating fire in 2009 destroyed an estimated 2,000 works representing some 90% of the artist's collection, including works that had been core elements in previous exhibitions. The bulk of the *Parangole* series is thought to have been completely destroyed, together with most of the artist's written archive of drawings, designs, notes, books and diaries. Only a small number of his original works and written archive are thought to have survived or be included in international collections. The availability or emergence of previously unseen works or archive materials is therefore unlikely. Whilst there is a secondary body of work concerning Oiticica, a great deal of it has not been translated into English. As I do not speak Portuguese, I have focused upon translations provided in the exhibition catalogues, a limited document supply from The British Library and English language journal translations. In the absence of a comprehensive list of the *Parangole* works I decided to compile my own from various photographs

contained within a number of different sources. As my interest is in the participatory dimension of the works I tried to identify their title, any collaborators in their production and the identity of their participants. The results are contained in Appendix 1.

I also experienced some problems during my research into Jeremy Deller's work *After the Gold Rush.* It is a work with low visibility and one about which very little has been written. It exists as one of his least cited, reviewed or talked about projects, even by the artist himself. In 2012 the Southbank Centre held the first mid-career survey of the artist's work: *Jeremy Deller: Joy in People.* There was also a one hour Culture Show special screened to coincide with the exhibition.[11] *After the Gold Rush* was not mentioned in the screening and did not form part of the artist's oeuvre in the three essays written to accompany that exhibition. The catalogue to the exhibition included six photographs and a cursory description of the project by Deller.[12] This seems an unusual situation given the rich complexity of the work and the fact that, as a project, it provides a good example of the artist's production methods and techniques. Indeed, there is much in this project that references previous works and those that came after. In the absence of substantive written material about this work, I focused upon the bookwork itself in an effort to try and convey some of the richness of its content, and therefore the reflections on it are primarily my own.

[11] Jeremy Deller: Middle Class Hero - A Culture Show Special. BBC Two, Friday 24th February, 19.00.

[12] "While I was there I wrote a guidebook to the state, which included a treasure hunt and a CD, and I also bought a piece of land. The tour is based around people, Californians: two former Black Panthers in Oakland, a burlesque dancer from the 1950s, and a Cuban exile with a shady past, among others. This was more of a guidebook to people than to places."(Deller et al., 2012:106)

CHAPTER 1

Case Study 1

Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) - *Parangole*, (1964-1968)

Hélio Oiticica's *Parangole* (1964-1968) developed as a result of many years practice based research and theoretical progression. Oiticica utilised chromatic experimentation and abstraction to explore the physical limits of painting and to extend it into environmental space. This insistence in Oiticica's work appears rooted in the reductive aspects of modernism and the non-objective art practices of geometric abstraction. Oiticica was heavily influenced by the work of Mondrian and his approach to spatial proposals which sought to move painting into its surrounding space and evoke emotions and feelings within the viewer.[13] The artistic gesture, as expressions of individuality and the unconscious mind, was also to be found in Abstract Expressionism. The canvas became an arena of activity and the marks on it a record of immediate experience. It was utilised not as representation but to explore issues of identity and experience in which the imperative was an act of creation rather than a finished object. This development in the action of painting itself was manifest in the work of Jackson Pollock. Oiticica accredited Pollock with having achieved one of the greatest syntheses of modern painting, that concerned with the structure of 'action painting'. Pollock's process of entering the painting to engage in the act of painting combined with his freedom of expression was seen by Oiticica as radical and one in which: "The action is the entire beginning of the genesis of structure, colour, and space; it is the 'generating principle' of Pollock's painting."(Hélio Oiticica, 1962:225) As discussed earlier, the performative act implicit within action painting was an important development in proposals for performance art and the 'Happenings' of Allan Kaprow. It signalled the possibility for the artistic gesture to move away from the representational field into 'lived space', beyond the structure of the painting and

[13] Mondrian's love of the dynamic rhythms of jazz and dance are echoed in Oiticica's immersion in Samba.

indeed the studio itself, suggesting a course of action in art that was related to everyday experience with an emphasis on exploration and experimentation. It was in relation to notions of lived experience that Oiticica made his transition from painting to colour-structure in space. He believed that colour had the capacity to trigger sensory experience and moreover to produce a vital energy or 'vivencias'. This notion of lived experience was understood to be the energy produced by the merging of invention with life and a word which the critic Guy Brett was to interpret as meaning 'life experience' and one that: "attempts to define a territory in which making and viewing art goes beyond mere formal play, towards another form of perceptive involvement."(Lunn et al., 2002:49)

As a result, Oiticica sought ways to liberate colour from the pictorial plane and to insinuate it into space, believing that this would increase the intensity of the encounter with the work. In a diary entry from 1960 he wrote: "when color is no longer submitted to the rectangle, nor to any representation of the rectangle, it tends to "embody" itself; it becomes temporal, creates its own structure, and the work then becomes the 'body of color'."(Ramirez et al., 2007:202) It is this notion of the body that signalled a transformation from pictorial representation to a life context and which would lead him to create objects that he considered not as sculpture but as architectural concepts evolving from the structure of painting. These active possibilities were already evident in Minimalism which had placed the body in motion. It had created a decisive move in the role of the viewer to that of a spectator in motion and a shift in the durational and qualitative experience of art encounters. Encountering a minimalist work the viewer is obliged to move around it in order to discover its changing form. Such works emphasise the movement of the spectator and not the art object. The combination of the active possibilities and the will to give direct expression to sensations within the structure of the work would inform Oiticica's practice and move it from one concerned with art as object to a multi-sensorial approach in which participation became its central focus.[14]

[14] Concerns with perceptive involvement were also shared by Oiticica's friend the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark. Clark was interested in the ways in which interaction with play objects and

It was a development that coincided with an invitation from the artist Lygia Clark to join the Neo-Concrete Group. The development of Neo-Concretism in Rio assimilated elements of Dada, Surrealism and Fluxus but was also based on the introduction by the artists of Rio of a 'multi sensorial' approach to the art object and a shift towards the presence of the spectator in the work. This approach is seen in the works of both Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark when the body becomes central to their practice. Oiticica adopted their term 'nao-objetos' to classify his constructed works which he considered not as specific objects, in the traditional sculptural sense, but as non-objects that were both non-representational and, importantly, temporal. Unlike sculpture, these structures were intended to be experienced by the viewer through a process of interaction. The work is activated by the movement of both the object and the viewer who is required to move around it and interact with it, as opposed to static contemplation of it. It placed the body in motion and it was the application of movement which created form in these works. This temporal dimension was to become an important aspect of the artist's ongoing developments. Writing in 1960 he articulated these developments in the essay *Color, Time, and Structure* in the following way:

> The sense of color-time has made the transformation of the structure indispensible. Not even in virtualized form, in its *a priori* sense of a surface to be painted, was use of the plane - that former element of representation - any longer possible. The structure then turns into space, becoming temporal itself: a time structure. Color and structure are inseparable here, as are space and time; and the fusion of these four elements (which I consider to be dimensions of a single phenomenon) takes place within the work. (Ramirez et al., 2007:205)

The first of these works was the *Nucleos* (1960-66)*,* a series of suspended structures. They consisted of coloured panels that were hung to form a series of

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manipulative sculptures could elicit more sensorial responses from spectators including sight, touch and smell rather than simply optical and tactile responses. She was interested in researching human interplay and group-dynamic processes and designed interactive sculptural objects that were applied as a means of discourse and communication.

chromatic paths. This allowed the viewer to move in, and pass through, a spatial experience of colour rather than static contemplation of the work as conventionally experienced in viewing sculpture or painting. Oiticica was seeking to create a direct experience of colour which, combined with light and reflection, would physically impact upon the viewers senses. These evolved into the *Penetrables* a concept of labyrinth type works that extended his earlier proposition into dynamic environments requiring participants to be experimental in their exploration, reflection and experience of those spaces.[15] The emphasis of these works was the creation of a dynamic environment for sensorial experience.[16] He also created a series of small-scale constructions and ready-made objects that he called *Bolides* (1963-67). The entire object was intended to be handled and their coloured and textured surfaces examined. By introducing this dimension to the work, he sought to research a physicality and energy that was grounded in the object's ability to mediate sensation and feeling rather than its own structure. They embodied the ideas of Neo-Concretism through the concept of non-object and primal experience.[17] The primal experience was considered to be in the discovery, or rediscovery of the work. Throughout the development of his practice Oiticica did not set out to challenge the difference between the work itself and experience of it. He framed 'lived experience' as artistic form mediated through the convergence of object and participant. It was

[15] Oiticica's *Maquette for Hunting Dogs Project,* 1961 brought together five labyrinth models with movable doors to create an idea for a public garden combining theatre, poetry and the visual arts. The idea was to create an environment conducive to the full perception of colour through the active movement of the viewer-participant and extended beyond the individual to the collective.

[16] In the environmental work *Eden (1969)* Hélio Oiticica created a floor layout of sensorial encounters including sand boxes, straw beds and cabins into which people were invited to climb and inhabit. How people used or inhabited the space and the duration of their encounter with it was entirely of their own making. The installation invited the participant to experience his idea of "creleisure", a combining of the words creation and leisure.

[17] In his 1928 *Manifesto Antropofago* (Cannibal Manifesto) (Andrade, 1928) the Brazilian poet and early member of the Brazilian modernism movement Oswald de Andrade points to the contradiction between the primitive and essentially European cultures which form the basis of Brazilian culture and the role of the primitive element (cannibalism) to assimilate the 'other'. It proposed that Brazilian assimilation of foreign innovation should not occur in a passive or reverent way but be motivated by a creative and primitive impulse. It has been reinterpreted in Brazilian visual and popular culture including film, theatre, music and the arts, and adopted by various movements including that of Neo-Concretism to encompass acts of appropriation and inclusion.

his preoccupation with the notion of this aesthetic state (mediation of essential experience, vitality and creative experience) that led to the development of the *Parangole.*[18]

Parangole **(1964 -1968)**

Parangole consists of a group of works in the form of colourful capes, banners, flags and tents. They are complex layered structures made up of fabric, netting, plastics, paint, images, poems and text. The *Parangole* capes were to be inhabited by participants who would move to the rhythm of dance music thereby creating an experience of colour in action. The bodily action of the participant would activate the cape revealing its structure and inscribed text and the participant would experience the form of the cape through its layers and textures. Together the participant and the cape would achieve fusion; a complete art work[19] and an embodiment of 'lived experiences'. Oiticica's intention was that the *Parangole* would be inhabited as architecture of the body and be integrated into lived space. They were not intended as costumes or props but as structures capable of flexible and changing forms. Decio Pignatari narrates the artist's intention of a complete art work in the film *HO* (1979):

> The Parangole wasn't something to put on a body just to be shown, the experience of wearing it to the person who is watching the other putting it on, or those who put things on at the same time are simultaneously experiencing multi-experiences; the body is not a support for the work, on the contrary, it is total incorporation. It is the incorporation of the body in the work, and the work in the body. I call it incorporation. (Cardoso, 1979)

[18] *Parangole* is a slang term meaning 'an animated situation and sudden confusion and/or agitation between people'.

[19] Oiticica considered the *Parangole* to embody the notion of a complete art work in a character similar to that of Kurt Schwitters "Merz", that is: "to define a specifically experimental position crucial to any theoretical or existential comprehension of his entire work"(Ramírez et al., 2007:296)

Production/structure

Oiticica situated his practice within the 'new objectivity' of the Brazilian avant-garde.[20] In his 1967 essay *General Scheme of The New Objectivity*[21] he characterised the creative and experimental experiences of Brazilian artists as being concerned with moving beyond the easel painting to arrive at the use of objects, the taking of socio-political positions and a tendency towards bodily, sensorial and thoughtful participation of the spectator. It encapsulated his own transition from 1950's modernist abstraction towards the formation of participatory propositions concerned with a sense of collectivism, playfulness and socio-political protest. It was: "The sense borne with *Parangole*, of collective participation (wearing capes and dancing), socio-dialectical and poetic participation (poetic and social protest *Parangole*), playful participation (games, environments, appropriations), and the proposal of a 'return to myth'." (Hélio Oiticica et al., 1992:114)

A decisive move in his formulation of *Parangole* came in 1964 when Oiticica was introduced to the School of Samba in Mangueira, a favela on the outskirts of Rio de Janerio. It was at this time that he went away from the affluence of the suburbs and the confines of the studio and gallery, as a means of extending his practice, and into the inhabited space of the favela. He was not simply a visitor to Mangueira, he chose to move there and to place himself into its culture, living and working there, making friends with the people he met and joining the Samba school to become a passista (solo samba dancer). He immersed himself in the community identifying within it a vital force of energy and vitality. He also recognised the pre-existing creative perceptive potential of the Mangueira individuals, as demonstrated by them, through the imaginative construction of their physical environment and their interpretation of the samba tradition in street fiestas, carnival and parades. Carnival embodies a street culture known for its

[20] In April 1967 the collective exhibition *New Brazilian Objectivity* was held in the Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janerio. It brought together the multiple tendencies of the Brazilian avant-garde around the ideas of New Objectivity characterised by Oiticica in his text to that exhibition entitled *General Scheme of the New Objectivity*, 1967.

[21] (Hélio Oiticica et al., 1992:110-120)

freedom of expression and vibrant, brightly coloured costumes which, combined with dance, provide a colourful spectacle. Oiticica would have recognised this visual dimension as an experience of colour in action, that ephemeral but essential element of his practice based research.

The artist was heavily influenced by the organic architecture of the favela dwellings and the spontaneity and imagination the people employed in constructing their community. The form of the shantytown and the ongoing development of its structure into homes through construction from found objects, together with the inventive and creative use of those objects, clearly influenced the artist's formulation of *Parangole*. Writing in 1964 he states that:

> First and foremost, the *Parangole* would be a basic, structural search within the constitution of the world of objects, a search for the roots of the work's objective genesis, its direct perceptual concretion. Hence this interest in popular constructive primitiveness, which only occurs in urban, suburban, rural landscapes, etc., works which reveal a primary constructive nucleus albeit one possessing the defined spatial sense of a totality. (Ramirez et al., 2007:296)

The artist is describing the constituent parts of structure akin to that of an evolving shantytown, rather than a finished object. The physical environments which constitute the favela are constructed from everyday objects and the detritus of modern life. Their structure is not dependent upon the individual objects themselves but on the form they take when added to other objects. Their form is temporary in nature and it is the transience of these constructions, and their insistence on continued labour, which makes them dynamic. It is these characteristics which the artist sought to encapsulate in *Parangole.* Writing in 1964, he was to make clear what he saw as the elements or objects he combined in his work, such as glass jars and coloured pigments, only becoming of interest in the context of a relationship that then becomes the work itself. He was to write: "Although I do use prefabricated objects in my work, I do not strive for a transposed poetics of those objects as ends to that same transposition; instead, I

use them as elements that are only of interest in terms of a whole which is the total work."(Ramirez et al., 2007:296) In the same way that the urban landscape of the favela is never completed and is subject to continual change, so too the *Parangole* oscillates between the object of the 'cape' structure and the 'work' when inhabited by the participant.

The Cycle of Participation

It was the elements of energy and vitality launching colour into action, and the perceptive interpretation and translation of the aesthetic experience, that Oiticica sought to embody in the structure of the work. The capes were intended to be flexible and changing forms, reflecting the precarious structures of the favela itself. He considered *Parangole* as environmental art and the act of spectator participation as being environmental participation. Writing in 1964, the artist expressed the view that ultimately every work of art is an initiation into the creative-perceptive structures of environments:

> The establishment of perceptual relationships between the *Parangole* structure experienced by the participator and other characteristic structures of the world of environments is signalled by the appearance of the "total-*Parangole*-experience", which is always activated by the subject's participation in the works and cast into the environmental realm as an attempt to decipher its true universal constitution through transformation into "creative perception". The important thing, now, is to attempt to determine the influence of such an action upon the participants general behaviour; might this be an initiation into the creative-perceptive structures of environments? (Ramirez et al.:298)

At the heart of this proposal for the 'total-*Parangole*-experience' is Oiticica's construct of the 'cycle of participation' in which watchers and wearers are key elements of the work. Guy Brett recalls Oiticica describing:

> The interflow between two modes of participation: 'wearing', in which the person explores, runs or dances in the cape for their own enjoyment, and 'watching', in which others absorb the projected method of this clothing utterance. Every cape had a raison d'etre, a relation to a person, place, feeling or thought. (Brett et al., 2004:61-62)

As noted in the introduction, the 'cycle of participation' in the work is significant in so far as it points to different kinds of active spectator participation, rather than an opposition between the active and passive spectator. It accords with Rancière's proposition that the act of looking is of itself active and works to confirm or modify the 'distribution of the visible'. Watching in this regard is removed from any notion of aesthetic contemplation associated with painting and sculpture. It is transformed into an aesthetic experience of encounter requiring different types of spectator participation that, in Rancière's formulation of the emancipated spectator, requires a spectator to interpret and translate what is put before them in order to give the work its meaning. It is through this 'cycle of participation' that Oiticica would develop his political proposal to give the *Parangole* socio-political meaning within a Brazilian context.

Relevant here is the political climate of Brazil during the 1960's and 1970's. It was characterised by oppressive military dictatorship which removed all constitutional rights, instigated censorship and culminated in the 1968 repression of student protests. Political activists faced the death penalty or life imprisonment if found guilty of revolutionary and subversive acts against the prevailing military junta. Faced with economic underdevelopment, social inequality, political repression and censorship, many artists in Brazil felt compelled to take socio-political positions in regard to the crisis. Oiticica's was the development of *Parangole* into a communicative model for action. The work provided an ideal structure for the creation of a model of communication through which to propose the possibility of change to the existing social order. This returns us to Rancière's notion of dissensus which allows us to propose the possibility for a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation capable of making the unseen visible and the unsayable audible. *Parangole* existed in a form capable of responding to

the particular political and social regime existing at the time, one in which information and communication were subject to censorship. It came into being from within the confines of a contested environment, not only characterised by poverty and the marginalised 'other' of Brazilian Society, but one in which the whole society was seen to be labouring under the confines of a repressive military dictatorship.

To understand this better, it is necessary to consider the form and limits of participation within the work. *Parangole* only comes into being when it is inhabited by the wearer, and the object of the cape only becomes the work when worn by the participant in an act of co-production. The activation of the *Parangole* is achieved through the medium of dance, and specifically Samba, at which point the work takes on the form of an 'open' work involving the participant in a form of co-creation.[22] Guy Brett described this intention in Oiticica's practice: "His drive was to make the physical form his art work took as 'open' as possible: open propositions aimed at making each person feel within themselves, through accessibility, through improvisation, their internal liberty, the path to a creative state." (H. I. Oiticica et al., 2007:16) Oiticica considered action to be at the core of these works writing that: "The work requires direct bodily involvement; in addition to dressing the body, it calls for movement and, ultimately dance. The very 'act of wearing' the work implies a transmutation of bodily expression by the spectator, which is the primordial characteristic of dance, its first condition."(Ramirez et al., 2007:298) Action here is manifest by the physicality of the participants, through the expressive actions of the dance and as an active political proposition. The participant could take on a playful stance or take on a more socio-political position through the unveiling or revealing of the various words and phrases contained within the structure of the cape including:

Liberty Cape

Beware of the Tiger

[22] Articulations of participation, with notions of 'creation' and 'creativity', have been the subject a great deal of writing on the forms of production and authorship. Umberto Eco in *The Poetics of The Open Work* 1962 addresses the nature of 'open' works being those where considerable autonomy is left to the individual in the way they experience the work.

Embody Revolt

On Adversity We Live

We are Hungry

Warm Ballot Box

This returns us to the 'cycle of participation' and the extent to which participation within the work becomes a kind of co-production and whether production and reception co-occur to the extent that reception is itself a form of production. The participants were mostly members of the Samba School and activation of the work through dance was a part of its structure. These wearers could therefore be seen to be performing an aspect of their own identity and culture. The performative aspect of the work was conceived as a collective experience and therefore each wearer in the work would also be able to see the expressive act of another wearer unfolding before them, which may in turn trigger a creative response or exchange. The wearer thus becomes a watcher and the act of production and reception co-occurs to make reception another form of co-production. External watchers were also included in Oiticica's 'cycle of participation'. These external spectators would interpret and translate the *Parangole* events according to their own experiences which may, or may not, have their roots in the culture of the favela and its Samba traditions.

I think it is important to note here that some contemporary writing has placed Oiticica's work in a group of art practices seen as: "appropriating social forms as a way of bringing art closer to everyday life"(Bishop:10) and whose emphasis is on the collective dimension of social experience. These interpretations are derived from Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of a 'relational art' which is focused on the sphere of inter-human relations and the invention of models of sociability that are generally seen as consensual and ameliorative. This may include meetings, encounters, events, collaborations, games, festivals and places of conviviality. These ways of exploring social bonds correspond to existing types of relations which the artist appropriates so that he can take forms from them. Whilst the

experience of dancing Samba may be thought of as a convivial social act of collectivism now, at the time Oiticica was structuring his proposition, Samba was positioned within the social 'periphery' and had a very definite position as a musical expression of urban Rio originating with the slave trade. The favela communities were the scene for a significant part of black Brazilian culture, and Samba was originally seen as the popular culture of the mostly black inhabitants of the favela. Moreover, the Samba schools were organised collectives who took very seriously the protection of their cultural heritage. *Parangole* developed as a result of the artist's direct involvement with the community, its samba dancers and his friends in Mangueira. He worked collaboratively with the residents of the Rio favelas and their Samba schools to produce events based around dance and the wearing of the *Parangole* capes. The sense of collaboration and co-production can be evidenced by Nildo of Mangueira's contribution to the *Parangole* series. As a resident of the favela, member of the Samba school and participant in the *Parangole* events he proposed the idea and the motto for *Parangole Capa 13* "*I Am Possessed",* 1967. This was an existing community who were performing an aspect of their own identity and culture. It was not a social encounter whose artistic form appropriated Samba to promote consensus and new forms of sociability. Oiticica wanted his practice to confront the suppression of liberatory possibilities and grounded it in Brazilian society at that time, labouring under political repression brought about by military dictatorship, social violence and class inequalities. His views on the function of art were aligned to the need for political reform and the role of cultural change in its achievement. He believed it was possible to create new perceptual behaviour through increasing spectator participation, thereby liberating the individual from the prejudices of social conditioning and making him independent in his socio-political behaviour. In 1968 he was to write:

> I must insist that the search here, is not for a 'new conditioning' of the participator, but an overturning of every conditioning in the quest for individual liberty, through increasingly open propositions, aimed at making each person find within themselves through accessibility, through

> improvisation, their internal liberty, the path for a creative state. (Oiticica, 1968)

We cannot know what form of experience the work had on the watchers and wearers, nor can we assume that their encounter with it changed them. However, it does posit aesthetic experience and politics as existing within the same discursive frame. Oiticica was not intent on making political art but he did have a commitment to making art politically. *Parangole* gave participants a voice with which to disrupt the 'distribution of the sensible' by confronting the established constitution of the social whose organising principle Rancière refers to as the police: "a system of co-ordinates defining modes of being, doing , making and communication that establishes the borders between the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, the sayable and the unsayable."(Rancière, 2004:89) The watchers and wearers, through Oiticica's 'cycle of participation', were able to confront the established order of perception by intervening in the visible and sayable to imagine their world differently to the prevailing oppressive military regime. The *Parangole* works mediated essential aesthetic experience not to mask, but to make plain inequalities, oppression and exclusion and also, for a moment in time, to engender joy and creative endeavour. It is a proposition that can be playful but also oppositional, whose relationship with its context acknowledges and calls upon the watchers and wearers to interpret and translate its meaning. Oiticica's proposal was a community of watchers and wearers whose collective power lay not in the transmission of his ideology but through their interconnectedness. This interconnectivity was intended to function within the environment into which the work was cast:

> One of the Parangole's features is implicit in the architecture of the "favela",one example of which may be seen in the organic quality of the elements that constitute its structures, their internal circulation and the external disjointedness of those constructions, there being no abrupt passages from "room to "living room" or "kitchen," only an essential definition of each part as it connects to the next part in continuity.(Ramirez et al., 2007:297)

It is an analogy that can be applied to the 'cycle of participation' through which the collective power of the work is achieved in an unpredictable and varied circuit of association and dissociations. It comes into being through Jacques Rancière's articulation of the 'emancipated spectator' that is situated in what he terms the 'aesthetic regime of art'; at the heart of which is: "the loss of any determinate relationship between a work and its audience, between its sensible presence and an effect that will be its natural end."(Carnevale & Kelsey, 2007) Rancière contends that emancipation begins: "when we dismiss the opposition between looking and acting and understand that the distribution of the visible itself is part of the configuration of domination and subjection." (Rancière, 2007) Rancière places this opposition of active /passive within the 'distribution of the sensible' which distributes capacities to one side and incapacities to the other. Once we accept his proposition that the act of looking is of itself active, and that to look confirms or modifies the distribution of the visible, then interpreting the world is already a means of transforming it. Rancière's proposition is that equality is the founding principle of emancipation and that an emancipated community is one of interpreters and translators. It is an idea represented by the watchers and wearers.

Socio-political censorship and protest

Oiticica's 'cycle of participation' proposes aesthetics and politics not as distinct but as existing within an integrally related domain. It is a proposition reflected in Rancière's writings on aesthetics and politics in which he argues that: "ideas of aesthetic autonomy and art's involvement in socio-political life need to be thought of as co-implicated rather than as distinct inclinations of the modern art tradition."(Ross, 2010:152) These are ideas reflected by Oiticica's own, whose aim was to enact in Brazil and elsewhere a:

> transformative perspective on the triple plane of ethics, society and politics by problematising the individual, social, cultural and political conditions and the alienated culture and aesthetic experience in an economically

> underdeveloped country: at the same time, by displacing the aesthetic experience of the world and of art and extending it out towards the quotidian, contingent and accidental aspects of lived experience "vivencia" – he hoped to give a participating subject.....the freedom to invent "his" world. (Carvajal et al., 1999:174)

He believed that in order to have an active cultural position it was necessary to be against everything that could be considered as cultural, political and social stultification or conformity, and that the spirit of such a stance could be encapsulated in the motto '*Of Adversity We Live*'.[23]

The *Parangole's* origin was in the life of the favela, its art in the structure of objects and semantics, but the work came into being through participation and its locus in transformational possibilities. It was a work created out of adversity and was about to face an antagonist, in the form of embedded cultural constructions of authority and identity, when it tried to move from the street to the museum. Reception of *Parangole* by the institutional art world was to be at *Opiniao65* at the Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro. Oiticica's intention was that the *Parangole* should be worn by his friends from the Mangueira favela and Samba school. However, despite having been invited to exhibit his work by the museum, the idea of these works combined with bodies, music and dance was to be prohibited by the directors of the museum on the day of the exhibition. Oiticica and his entourage were denied entry to the gallery and evicted onto the street. Undeterred, the group utilised the street beneath the museum and danced through its gardens. The directors' exact reasons for prohibiting performance of the *Parangole* in the gallery were not made explicit, but a number of theories might be advanced. The first being that, despite an invitation to exhibit at the gallery, its directors had no concept of the form of the work to be shown and in particular the interactive performative aspects that it entailed. Secondly, it made visible the Brazilian 'other', the predominantly black socially excluded favela dwellers and brought into conflict their street culture of samba and carnival with

[23] This is the motto he terms the rallying cry of New Brazilian Objectivity outlined in his 1967 essay *General Scheme of The New Objectivity*, (Hélio Oiticica et al., 1992:110-120)

high art traditions. There is no doubt, that at that time, it would have been unusual to see the inhabitants of the Mangueira favela inside the museum and as participants in an art event, wearing the *Parangole* capes, dancing samba, banging drums and playing musical instruments. It made visible a side of the city normally hidden or ignored and created a confrontation between the privileged cultural space of the modern gallery and the marginalised reality of the favelas and street culture.[24] Moreover, it emphasised the promises and the failures of an accelerated programme of modernisation within Brazil, one centred on industrial urbanisation and put on show the miserable reality faced by migrant workers, the poor and marginalised.

Oiticica had moved away from the confines of the studio/gallery seeking a more critical engagement with the world. He rarely participated in exhibitions, having only one solo show during his lifetime,[25] and did not seek a market in which to sell his work, thereby removing his practice from the traditional parameters of art patronage. This response can only have reinforced his views on the problematic nature of exhibitions. The directors of the museum had imposed a form of censorship that Robert Smithson termed cultural confinement: “Cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition, rather than asking an artist to set his limits. Artists are expected to fit into fraudulent categories.”(Smithson, 1972) The limits at stake here extended to restricting access to cultural memory. It was an act of enforcement within the ‘distribution of the sensible’ that is predicated on a series of oppositions which confer capacity and incapacity, dictating what one population can do and what another cannot. In *The Politics of Aesthetics*[26] Rancière calls these oppositions ‘allegories of inequality’, stressing that equality can only emerge when we understand that the distribution of capacity is part of the configuration of

[24] In 1994, at the instigation of artist Luciano Figueredo, the Paulista Samba Club was asked to perform *Parangole* at the Sao Paulo Biennial. The Dutch curator Wim Beeren shouted at the dancers to leave as they tried to enter the Malevich rooms rather than stay in the public areas of the gallery.

[25] Held at the Whitechapel Gallery, London in 1969.

[26] (Rancière, 2004)

domination and subjection. *Parangole* had set out to disrupt the 'distribution of the sensible'; to destabilise hierarchies that distribute roles and decide who has access to step over the threshold or pass between boundaries. When considering the notion of creative perception, Oiticica had questioned what the influence of experiencing a work like the *Parangole* might bring to bear on the environment in which it is cast and whether it might have an impact upon the behaviour of those experiencing it. Conflict and disruption therefore become part of that dynamic causing art to seek out new forms. In Oiticica's case, it was recognition of the communicative possibilities of popular culture to address a more expansive audience.

As he moved further towards popular cultural forms and as the Brazilian crisis deepened, his collaborations with other artists, intellectuals, poets, photographers and musicians increased. Oiticica and his friends would collaborate to design images, text, symbols and slogans of protest to be incorporated into or displayed on the *Parangole.* They also became participants in the *Parangole* as watchers and wearers, extending co-creation and the 'cycle of participation' into an environment beyond the favela. The idea of semantic protest was not only within the texts inscribed upon the works, but was also evident in their titles and dedications. For example: *Gilease,*1968 dedicated to Gilberto Gil and *Caetelesvelasia,* 1968 dedicated to Caetano Velso, both musicians and friends of the artist. They were members of the Tropicalia[27]movement and came to the attention of the cultural censors as a result of their supposed seditious approach to cultural nationalism. This resulted in their arrest, imprisonment and eventual expulsion from Brazil. Oiticica's *Parangole* banner declaring *"Seja Marginal, Seja Hero" (*Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero), inspired by the death of a local bandit Cara de

[27] The Tropicalist movement emerged around 1967 and like Fluxus comprised a loose grouping of artists, musicians, poets, film makers, writers and actors. Their strategy was towards cultural production which 'cannibalised' both local and foreign styles in a process of ironic appropriation, assimilation and recycling. It was a reaction against a protective/defensive form of nationalism and contrary to the notion that Brazilian culture should be defended from foreign influence. Its proponents saw it as a way to move away from cultural isolation leading to something that was more international but retained its own Brazilian characteristics.

Cavalo, had been displayed during a 1968 concert by Caetano Velso until the federal police confiscated it and closed the concert.

The potential of *Parangole* to transform into a model of communication was recognised and seized upon to vocalise the concerns and frustrations of voices that would otherwise have been suppressed or ignored in an environment dominated by violence and censorship. It was a form of the work which was not indifferent to socio-political issues as it was borne out of them. The principal wearers of the *Parangole* continued to be the dancers of Mangueira but now extended to the wider artistic community. Their events were not covert or hidden but nor were they made as part of a co-ordinated or party driven act of political protest, only as small gestures of revolt in a precarious situation. The 'cycle of participation' in the work meant that there could be no uniform transmission of meaning as everyone would experience the *Parangole* differently. Transformation was Oiticica's imperative and the *Parangole* experience was the mediating third term that allowed each person to be an active interpreter, rendering their own translation of that experience according to their own story. *Parangole* proposed the possibility to imagine the world differently.

The afterlife of *Parangole*

The *Parangole* comprises a set of works whose original form and vitality exists only in photographic documentation and from original footage in Ivan Cardoso's film HO (1979), that shows Oiticica and his collaborators manipulating and showing how he intended *Parangole* to be worn and displayed. In today's gallery environment, there are generally two forms of reception in the work. The first is the original works, or replicas of them, hanging as empty husks or faded objects on the gallery wall and the second through experience of Made-on-the-body-*Parangole* participatory events. In the first instance they retain that illusory quality of an unfinished object with none of their essential nature; that ephemeral thing that oscillates between object and the work, unable to exist as the complete art work in the manner the artist intended, requiring a physical living body to inhabit

them and bring them to life. Without this essential element they lack character and have none of the socio-political content needed to give them life. Susan Hiller reflected on this afterlife of the work and the ability to retain the vitality and efficacy it had during Oiticica's lifetime writing:

> Like fossilised carapaces, the remaining traces in museums ... lack personality, the most essential element in art practices that consciously emphasise the provisional nature of art and the interactive, performative aspects of aesthetic experience. Without their bodies, their persons, their personalities, it may be impossible to experience the effect ... intended, the promised transformation of ourselves in our ethical and social dimensions, by means of the aesthetic.(Hiller, 1992)

Hiller is pointing to that intention within the work in which:

> the bodies of other people were to become their own instruments of a secular revelation, to which not just eyes and cognitive brains but tactile, auditory, and olfactory sensations contributed. The intended effect was metamorphosis or mutation, the cumulative result an emancipation of the participants from aspects of their socio-cultural and personal conditioning. (Hiller, 1992)

The answer seems to lie in the second proposal in which they continue to live through the experience of Made-on-the-body-*Parangole* participatory events. These are events, usually in galleries, like the one I witnessed at London's Tate Modern during the 2007 *Body of Colour* exhibition. Guy Brett has explained how these events are intended to function:

> Out of a plain three-metre length of fabric of bright colour 'each person must build on the body a structure, uniting the edges and extremes with safety pins'. Oiticica stressed that each cape should be removable without disturbing the pins, so that it can be handed on to someone else, who will 'wear' it and activate it in a different way. He emphasised the desirability of participation by a heterogeneous public. (Brett, 2007)

At the Tate Modern event visitors were invited to make their own *Parangole* and then take part in a Samba dance event held in the Turbine Hall.[28] It was a colourful, vibrant and energetic affair, but within the context of a day trip to Tate Modern, it is unlikely that the encounter transformed the participants' socio-political and personal conditioning.[29] There is a tendency concerning the *Parangole* that privileges this physical experience of the work over documentation of it. This is as a result of a further privileging of the tactile and sensual nature of the experience they offered. In common with the event at Tate Modern, there is photographic documentation covering events, held during the artist's lifetime, that had nothing to do with their 1960's Brazilian context. For example, a 1972 'happening' in Spain at which the public made their own *Parangole*, New York subway riders wearing *Parangole* and *Parangole Cape 26*, being worn by Romero at the New York World Trade Building also in 1972. More recently, art historian Anna Dezeuze went so far as to try and capture the tactile and sensory experience of *Parangole* as part of her research practice. Over two sessions in 2002 and 2003, in collaboration with the photographer Alessandra Santarelli, she donned *Parangole Cape 7: "Sex, violence, that's what pleases me",* 1966.[30] Dezeuze describes how she ran and climbed trees on Hampstead Heath whilst Santarelli photographed the events. She was to conclude that:

> *Parangole* is based on each viewer's unique and often ambivalent experience, which no photograph can capture. Whether taken in the artist's lifetime or in the recent collaboration between Alessandra Santarelli and myself, photographs of people wearing the *Parangole* can only ever serve as complements – not replacements for the experience of the work itself. (Dezeuze, 2004:58)

[28] The performance in the Turbine Hall ensured a barrier was maintained between the public event and the galleries housing the permanent collection and those in which Oiticica's work was being exhibited, including the original *Parangole.*

[29] Watching the made-on-the body-*Parangole* event at Tate it is possible to reflect upon the apparent freedom and liberatory status of those taking part compared to those performing in 1960's Brazil. However, it is to do so with knowledge of their original context.

[30] Photographs of two young men from Mangueira, Robertinho and Jeronimo, depict their performing *Parangole Cape 7* at events in 1966.

She compared her own experience to that of Nildo of Mangueira claiming: "I would argue that he is no more "authentic" or "sincere" a wearer of the *Parangole* than I am."(Dezeuze,2004:58)

What is at stake here is not any suggestion of a lack of authentic experience on the part of anyone taking part in these events, rather my presence, and anyone who encounters the work through documentary traces, in the 'cycle of participation'. These post 1960's events sit within that sphere of *Parangole* described by Oiticica as collective and playful participation but not as socio-dialectic and poetic participation. Removed from their Brazilian context (or any context similar to it), they do not transform me in the way the 1960's photographs do. The aesthetic experience of the encounter with those photographs, affected me. Jeff Wall has summed up the importance of such aesthetic experiences:

> If you have experience, and feel it matters, then you can also have a sense of how you are being changed by the experience and your relation to it, as you go back away from art to your other obligations. These obligations are those that are addressed more directly by things like journalism, by the demand to improve the world. The experience of art changes and shapes your relation to those obligations. It could make you better equipped for meeting them, because you have become a different person, at least in part, through your encounter with autonomous art. (Wall, J. 2007:324-325)[31]

Amelia Jones has argued that whilst there is a specificity of knowledge to be gained from forms of participation described by Dezeuze, it should not be privileged over the specificity of knowledge gained through an encounter with the documentary traces of the work. Writing in relation to body art performances, she has said that it is her belief that these performances: "often become more meaningful when reappraised in later years; it is hard to identify the patterns of history while one is embedded in them. We "invent" these patterns, pulling the past together into a manageable picture, retrospectively."(Jones, 1997:11)

[31] Interview between Jeff Wall and Jean-Francois Chevrier, (2001), *Writing on Art.* In: Wall, J. 2007:pp313-329

Therefore, although spectatorship of the *Parangole* in a re-staged form, or through documentation, is very different to direct spectatorship of the work in 1960's Brazil, something of its dissensual potential remains, and to some degree, the spectator can continue to contribute to the 'cycle of 'participation'.

I think that *Parangole* is an important work as it illustrates the development of artistic post World War II thinking that transformed the painting into object and dynamic structure, reflecting on the perceived passivity and activity of the participator in each phase of development, culminating in the development of a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation. I also believe that the work can be read differently and one that can be better understood now. The *Parangole* demonstrated that there was no gap to be filled between art and life, they were already equal. The *Parangole's* origin was in the life of the favela, its art in the structure of objects Oiticica encountered there and its realisation through a 'cycle of participation' in which meaning is given to the work through a process of interpretation and translation. The gap to be bridged was that concerned with boundaries and roles. Oiticica's proposition approached this by opening an equal space of encounter that makes anybody equal to everybody and in which transformative possibility arises through Rancière's articulation of the 'emancipated spectator'. The *Parangole* experience was the mediating third term which allowed each participator to be an active interpreter, rendering their own translation to reclaim the story of Mangueira. The power of this work was to demonstrate the possibility for an artist to absorb the essence of environment through participation in it, and in so doing, create an art work that synthesises his experience and reflects the socio political tone of the project. It is an artwork that can be taken by the community and re-imagined as another thing, one that reflects their creativity and dynamism whilst also speaking to their own experiences and situation in the face of adversity, one of inclusion and also exclusion. It was also a project that emphasised a 'cycle of participation' in which the requirement for interpretation and translation by watchers opened a space to challenge socio-political conventions. It is through this 'cycle of participation' that the work has an afterlife.

CHAPTER 2

Case Study 2

Francis Alys (1959-) - *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002)

Francis Alys is a Belgian artist who lives and works in Mexico. As a former architect Alys, possesses a natural curiosity about city life, it's historical and cultural tendencies and the politics of urbanism. Consequently, everyday life in Mexico City, aligned with its social and contested political climate, has provided him with a fertile ground for creative experimentation. Alys's practice, informed by the cultural, economic and political history of life in the city, is one linked to socio-political critique and immediate experience, shaped by research and imagination and realised through multi-disciplinary modes of representation. He is an artist, performer of street actions, producer, researcher and story teller. The form of his work may include interventions, videos, animations, sound recordings, poems, paintings, postcards, doodles, drawings, plans, lists, objects and ephemera. This multi-disciplinary approach to his practice is one he shares with Jeremy Deller. Key to his practice is the distillation of each endeavour into an image or text that serves to portray the essence of the project. Typically Alys will distribute postcards bearing the title, text and image of the work as a succinct representation of the project. For example, *Paradox of Praxis 1* (1997) has attached to it the text *'Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing'* and the image of the artist pushing a block of ice around Mexico City. Sometimes the title of the work is sufficient to perform this task as in *Looking Up* (2001). In other instances the project can be imagined from its text. In *Barrenderos,* (2004), the text reads '*A line of street sweepers pushing garbage through the streets of Mexico City until they are stopped by the mass of trash'.* This is also a poetic device as it is an insightful and expressive means of reducing the work to the essence of the scene represented or imagined.

Poetic strategy plays an important part in Alys's practice, and in particular the use of allegory, in which the characters and events he portrays are to be understood as representing other things and which are constructed to symbolically express cultural, social or political meaning. The emphasis of the work is the gesture and not any kind of direct practical action. As a result, the artistic gestures in which he engages can seem absurd, futile or even heroic and often appear to require a disproportionate amount of effort for little or no reward. One trait of his work has been to confront the promises and failures of programmes to industrialise and urbanise in Latin America by revealing the unglamorous side of city life, its contradictions and precariousness, the plight of migrant workers, homelessness and poverty. Whilst his work is not explicitly political, he is concerned with the ways in which art may function to spark political thought or to rupture political stultification or apathy. Alys uses the lyricism of the work to construct a narrative that reflects on socio-political concerns in a way which requires active interpretation by the viewer according to their own cultural, social and political experience and situation.

When Faith Moves Mountains **(2002)**

In 2002 Alys was invited to participate in the Lima Biennale. The artist, in collaboration with the curator Cuauhtémoc Medina and film maker Rafael Ortega, chose to make a work that responded to the Peruvian economic situation following the collapse of the Fujimori dictatorship in 1999 and the ensuing turmoil. Reflecting upon the Peruvian situation, Alys explained: "It was a desperate situation, and I felt that it called for an "epic" response, a "beau-geste" at once futile and heroic, absurd and urgent. Insinuating a social allegory into those circumstances seemed to me more fitting than engagement in some sculptural exercise."(Francis Alys, 2002:146) The result was an intervention orchestrated by Alys on a dune at Ventanilla, outside Lima, and in close proximity to a shantytown of some 70,000 displaced rural people who migrated there during and after the civil war of the 1980's. *When Faith Moves Mountains* announces its intention in

its title, and was ascribed the motto '*maximum effort, minimum result*' by the artist. To this end, he equipped 500 student volunteers from the local university with shovels and asked them to form a line in order to move a 500meter long sand dune by ten centimetres from its original position. In reality the dune did not move nor was there any purpose to the action itself, no cause and effect.

Alys has described *When Faith Moves Mountains* as a social allegory.[32] He employed the device of poetic metaphor which proposes the artistic gesture as a means to reconfiguring the present, whilst utilising the absurdity of the action to disclose the cultural framework or context to which it alludes. Within the work he has continued his investigation into the programme aimed at modernising Latin America and more particularly with ideas of production, labour and efficiency. It is through the motto to this action that he frames the performance on the dune as a parody of the disparity between effort and result in much of Latin American life.[33] However, it is the '*when*' in its title that offers up the possibility of hope and transformation of the future through an action in the present. It negates the perceived futility of the task through its belief in the collective call for change. Cuauhtémoc Medina has reflected that: "Faith is a means by which one resigns oneself to the present in order to invest in the abstract promise of the future."(Francis Alys, 2002:146)

This work speaks to transformative possibilities and the capacity of an artistic gesture to address or intervene in socio-political problems, be they practical or ideological. What also appears important here is the symbolism of the performance and its mythic quality to ignite the imagination and be transformed into a story that survives the event itself. The work alludes to the impossibility of the task, but points to the possibilities of collective effort to achieve something

[32] (Francis Alys, 2002)

[33] It is an action which may be seen to share something of the mimetic dimension of the historical avant garde which mimes the productive and efficient world of modernity, not to embrace it but to mock its utopian dimension. It is a critique in the spirit of the avant garde which is proposing not what can be but what is.

mythical that might otherwise be thought of as unattainable. He created a spectacle that lent itself to storytelling and moreover to active interpretation.

Production/structure

Once Alys has conceived a project he begins a process that includes writing. Alys's writings bear a resemblance to the flow diagrams produced by Jeremy Deller to map the apparently unconnected fragments of any given project prior to its realisation. They take the form of diagrams, lists, and notations concerning his primary concepts of investigation such as time schemes, efficiency, productivity, development and modernity. Within these documents Alys notates projects, traces connections between works and raises questions posed by those works. These mappings suggest the form of the work to Alys and prompt the artist to produce objects, drawings, paintings and collaged images aligned to the project. He will also collect all manner of ancillary documentation related to a particular project including e-mails, faxes, notes, diary entries, photographs and ephemera. This combination of documentation with the diagrams, drawings and paintings may eventually form part of an installation of the final work together with video footage, slide projections, photographs and sound recordings of interventions.

Performance also figures strongly in Alys's practice. This may be a performance by him or the scripted performance of others. These performances often employ poetic strategies such as allegory to separate the image from its intended meaning. It is a term used to describe *The Loop* (1997). My copy of the postcard text for this work reads: '*In order to go from Tijuana to San Diego without crossing the Mexico/ United States border, I followed a perpendicular route away from the fence and circumnavigated the globe heading 67º South East, North East and South East again until I reached my departure point. The project remained free and clear of all critical implications beyond the physical displacement of the artist'.* Realisation of this work involved Alys travelling by plane for twenty nine days, around the globe, tracing a line between Tijuana and San Diego without crossing the Mexico/United States border. The work alludes to

the obstacles faced by illegal migrant workers as imposed by the Unites States government. A similar device was used in *Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River* (2008) whose descriptive text is: '*On 12 August 2008, a line of kids each carrying a boat made out of a shoe leaves Europe towards Morocco, while a second line of kids with shoe boats leaves Africa towards Spain. The two lines will meet on the horizon'.* It was a poetic gesture alluding to the possibility of attempting to close the Strait of Gibraltar. The use of the poetic device is further enhanced in the seemingly futile tasks Alys assigns himself and through the motto '*Maximum effort, minimum result'.* One of the best examples being *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes doing Something Leads to Nothing)* (1997), an action in which the artist pushed a block of ice around the centre of Mexico City for more than nine hours until all that remained was a puddle of water. There is also a concern with storytelling in Alys's work which is akin to the creation of a myth or fable, such as in *NarcosSalinas* (1995) in which the artist allegedly carried a painted figurine of Mexico's former president Carlos Salinas, carved from a rock of cocaine, in his pocket from Mexico City to New York. There is no evidence that this event ever took place.

When Faith Moves Mountains may be seen to share the performative characteristics and poetic strategy of these earlier works. It utilises allegory to present an image of a group of people attempting to move a mountain whilst its meaning alludes to the circular politics of Latin America. Its motto is illustrated in the futility of the labour engaged in the intervention. The action and the title of the work provide a story of hope, and propose a transformation of the future through an action in the present. It is a work in which the artist appears to privilege the poetic and mythical over the political backdrop in which it was played out. The narrative of the work is constructed through the interpretive reception of the audience and loaded with references that they find to be meaningful. In this way, the point of the work is not simply the performance, but the affect of the work itself.

In order to better understand the relationship between performances and affect, it is necessary to think about the form and limits of participation within the work as

they relate to site and situation specificity, and also the experience of reception within it. When speaking about the working methods deployed by Alys in his projects Medina has said: “Alys’s works have involved collaborations or interaction with collectives, the members of which may appear either as the participants of an experience proposed by the artist or as a character in a staged anecdote that is used as a means to shake off political passivity.”(Medina et al., 2007:103) The writer Claire Doherty characterised the performative act of Alys’s geological displacement on the dune as exhibiting properties of situation-specific rather than site-specific projects; works in which the: “impetus of place, locality, time, context and space, rather than a fixed, physical notion of site” are of concern. (Doherty, 2009:13) Conversely, writing in the Phaidon Contemporary Artist series on Alys in 2007, Jean Fisher framed this project as: “a collaboration – a working together – between the artist, the critic, the filmmaker, the volunteers and the local people in a spirit of free will and conviviality, a sharing of a space of existence”(Fisher, 2007:110)

In order to fully consider this question it is useful to explore the production of the work through the fifteen minute film *When Faith Moves Mountains (making of).* (F Alys, 2004) The video was produced and filmed in collaboration with Medina and Ortega. The film opens with Alys surveying the dunes around Lima in an attempt to locate a site on which to stage the intervention. The 500 volunteers co-opted for the project were engineering students from the local university. In the film we listen to the testimonies of four students engaged with the project. We are never told their names, the nature of their role in the project or whether they understood the artist’s intention in the work. We learn that Alys and Medina go to the university on a recruitment drive having already conceived of the project and the manner of its production. It is apparent that the students understand this to be an art project and that pressure to volunteer comes from the university and through friendship groups. On the appointed day the students are transported by coach to the location, given project t-shirts and shovels and directed to climb the dune in single line. We hear instructions being shouted to the students as a helicopter films overhead and the students descend the dune flicking sand before them as

they go. They then disperse. We are given no indication by the volunteers how they felt about this project. In what brief testimony exists, the students seem to be ambivalent about the shantytown accepting the existence of the urban poor as a reflection of the reality of Latin America, and migration a consequence of urban expansion. It is a characteristic of Lima and therefore, very much a part of their everyday life. It was intended that the students who participated in the event would then pass on the story of their day on the dune in an oral tradition, but there is no testimony that they did so.

An initial consideration is the site of the displacement. In the film we observe Alys and Medina scouting for a location. They are surveying the skyline, the height and shape of the dunes in the landscape and what can be seen from each location i.e. a municipal dump, urban landscape or shanty dwellings, photographing the result at each stage. The final location is a nicely symmetrical dune that could be said to resemble a mountain from which there is a view of shanty dwellings. It is a choice that can be seen to frame a situation rather than being site-specific. We can also infer that the artist was not concerned with the direct involvement of the inhabitants of the shantytown but was focused upon a site to make concrete his conceptual ideas.

Participation and Reception

It is clear that collaboration existed only between Alys, Medina and Ortega. These three were involved in the project's conception, planning, execution and documentation, each playing a part and accredited with the act of production. In addition, the project utilised participation in a number of ways; firstly the physical co-opted and directed participation of 500 engineering students to shovel sand, and secondly the intention that those who participated, witnessed it or collaborated with its production, would create stories of the day the dune moved. The intention was to create a fable or myth that exists in the retelling, thereby adding a further participatory dimension to the works structure.

To understand participation within the context of this work is also to consider the forms of reception in it and to determine whether production and reception co-occur to the extent that reception is itself a form of production, as in the case of Oiticica's *Parangole* works. The first point here is to recognise that this was not an inclusive collaboration between all the parties. Only Alys, Medina and Ortega had any real control over the production of the event on the dune. The students were presented as an unidentified crowd with no apparent affiliation between them other than being connected to the University from which they were recruited. In this regard they could not be considered as a nascent community, rather a collective brought together to perform the directed act of shovelling sand on a dune. The experience of the participants is unknown beyond their scripted performance and therefore we cannot know what, if any, insight they gained from their experience. They participated in a physical activity but did so with no evidence of informed perceptual involvement. It is therefore possible to suppose that the students were acting collectively and voluntarily to make art and had been co-opted by teachers, tutors and friendship groups simply to that end; to enact this idea to move a dune. We can argue the convivial and collective nature of the encounter by the students in coming together to make the work, but not that they were performing an aspect of their own identity and culture, rather the scripted intervention of the artist.

Another intention for this project was that those who encountered the event would create stories about the day the dune moved and that this would be an iterative process. The potential here is for the storyteller and the listener to be configured in the same way as the watchers and wearers in Oiticica's *Parangole* works in which the two parties shared common ground and, in so doing, production and reception co-occurred. Grant Kester has explained that in dialogical art practices: "the experience of reception extends over time, through an exchange in which the responses of the collaborators result in subsequent transformations in the form of the work as initially presented". (G. Kester, 2013) The intention that the duration of the work would be extended both beyond the day of the performance and its exhibition at the biennale was made clear by Medina who claimed:

> The truth is that the people who took part felt totally involved. And the fact that it took on such a huge dimension means that it will generate one story after another. And the story will be passed on like an oral tradition. And later the ones who were there will tell the freshmen coming in. That way a meaning will be built up of an event that lasted a day but will live on for who knows how long? (*When Faith Moves Mountains (making of)* 2004)

It is a reference to the student participants implying that the storytelling process would communicate their actual experience in the project and that the telling and retelling of those experiences would extend the duration of the work. This process would unfold over an unknown period of time and each time something would be added to the work. However, beyond Medina's claim that the participants felt involved, and would be compelled to tell the story of their day on the dune, there is no testimony to frame either their experiences or its translation and telling as a story. In the absence of any means by which to test this intention, the act of participation in the work becomes limited to the performance on the dune. The participating student volunteers were an anonymous labour force used as props in an orchestrated performance to illustrate futile labour whilst being held up as evidence of collective possibility. Without their participation, the work could not have been made, but their experience was not essential to the conceptual interpretation of the artwork when shown to its Biennale audience. The work does not privilege the experience of the individual in the here and now but relies upon interpretation over a different period of time. Alys created a temporary collective that exceeded the role of the individual and the final work visualises their collective labour. Their participation in the displacement was an end in itself; it was the performance and resulting film of the action on the dune.

A great deal of emphasis in participatory discourse has been centred on the importance of the experience offered by the performance or intervention, particularly in socially engaged or dialogical practices. Indeed, as we have seen in the afterlife of *Parangole,* the direct experience of the event is privileged over the aesthetic experience of the person who watches the film or views the photographic or other documentary evidence of the action in a gallery, in a book

or on-line. In this case, it should be remembered that the work was commissioned for the Lima Biennale and the intervention on the dune did not form part of the exhibition programme, suggesting that it was not intended to have an audience on site but as a situation presented in the gallery.[34] What appears important here is the symbolism of the performance and its mythic quality rather than the intervention itself. The work alludes to the impossibility of the task, to collective effort and community, to the urban poor and the economic and political climate of Latin America. It does not tell a particular story but one that could apply equally to anywhere that migration creates displacement and urban poverty. Alys is concerned with demonstrating a social allegory. It is the lyrical quality of the images it presents that stands between the artist and the viewer to mediate the latter's interpretation of its meaning and to set in motion the capacity to envision a different view of a given situation. According to Alys:

> *When Faith Moves Mountains* attempts to translate social tensions into narratives that in turn intervene in the imaginal landscape of a place. The action is meant to infiltrate the local history and mythology of Peruvian society (including its art histories), to insert another rumour into its narratives. If the script meets the expectations and addresses the anxieties of that society at this time and place, it may become a story that survives the event itself. At that moment, it has the potential to become a fable or an urban myth.(Francis Alys, 2002:146)

Alys is a visual storyteller.[35] The narrative of the work is constructed through the interpretive participation of the audience and loaded with references that they find to be meaningful. It is an important aspect of the work and of which Alys has said:

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[34] Some artists extend the participatory component of their work to include such direct encounters. Thomas Hirschhorn's work *Bataille Monument* 2002 at Documenta 11 involved visitors taking a taxi ride provided by a Turkish taxi firm that was contracted to ferry visitors to and from the site.

[35] Alys: "What I try to do really is to spread stories, to generate situations that can provoke through their experience a sudden unexpected distancing from the immediate situation and can shake up your assumptions about the way things are, that can destabilize and open up, for just an instant – in a flash – a different vision of the situation, as if from the inside."(Medina et al., 2007:40)

> Only in its repetition and transmission is the work actualized. In this respect, art can never free itself from myth. Indeed, in modern no less than premodern societies, art operates precisely within the space of myth. In this sense, myth is not about the veneration of ideals –of pagan gods or political ideology- but rather an active interpretive practice performed by the audience, who must give the work its meaning and its social value.(Francis Alys, 2002:146)

Alys is proposing what Jacques Rancière has termed a community of storytellers and translators in which spectators: "play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story".(Rancière, 2009:22) This returns us to Rancière's articulation of the emancipated spectator in which distance is the normal condition of communication and in which the spectator interprets and translates what is put before them in a way that is meaningful to them. In this way: "It is not the transmission of the artist's knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect." (Rancière, 2009:15) In this case, it is the film and story of the event on the dune that operates as the mediating third term and which frustrates equal undistorted transmission between spectators. It is the same mediation of aesthetic experience that exists within Oiticica's 'cycle of participation' in which the act of looking confirms or modifies the configuration of the visible, and in which interpreting the world is already a means of reconfiguring it. Rancière's proposition that an emancipated community is one of interpreters and translators is represented by Oiticica's watchers and wearers and by Alys's storytellers and translators. In both cases, the collective power to imagine a transformation of the world, and our relation to it, is constructed through a network of associations and dissociations linking individuals.

This act of interpretation can be influenced according to the experience of reception in it. Art historian Amelia Jones contends that social and personal contexts for a particular performance might be better understood when

reappraised after the event itself. The aesthetic experience of the students will include their direct participation in the event, but may then be changed by their subsequent viewing of the film, an encounter with the documentation of it and their subsequent interpretation of the event and their participation in it. Thus the work is treated in a discursive and critical manner. This is particularly pertinent in the case of Alys's practice since he will typically display all manner of material together to form a work. This documentation may serve to illustrate his process of planning and making, and its presentation may change each viewer's encounter with the work. It is an observation made by Mark Godfrey in the catalogue to Alys's 2010 exhibition *A Story of Deception*:

> "The proliferating preparatory material functions... to open up the potential readings of each piece. A viewer might encounter a phrase in a note that seizes his or her imagination, yet since there is so much material, it is quite unpredictable what some viewers will attend to and others ignore."(Alys et al., 2010:13)

A good example of this may be seen in the artists 2004 work *The Green Line (Sometimes doing something poetic can become political, and sometimes doing something political can become poetic).* This included a re-enactment of an action from his 1995 work *The Leak,* in which he performed a walk through Sao Paulo carrying a dripping can of blue paint. This work was a commentary on the 'action painting' of Jackson Pollock and an extension of that action applied to the space beyond the confines of the gallery, transforming the city into canvas.[36] The work was presented as photographic documentation of the action together with the empty tin of blue paint hanging on the wall. The *Green Line* involved the artist in the action of walking through a city carrying a dripping can of green paint. However, in this performance, the artist walked through the municipality of Jerusalem loosely tracing the 'Green Line' that runs through the city. According to Alys, the re-enactment of the earlier work was: "adapted to the task of

[36] Many of Alys's intervention involve walking and his political and lyrical exploration of urban spaces can be linked to the strategies of the contemplative *Flâneur* and the psychogeographic *dérive of* the Lettrist International.

resuscitating the memory of a historical partition"(Alys et al., 2010:143) Alys then screened the footage of the intervention to a number of Palestinian, Israeli and international viewers. They were asked to reflect upon the Israel – Palestinian conflict and comment upon his action. Their reactions were recorded and made available alongside the video documentation when the work was exhibited. Both of these works involved a performance in which the artist walked through a city carrying a can of leaking paint but each had a different context. The viewer encountered each work differently, including the title of that work, medium and accompanying documentation, and their reading of those works would be informed by their own subjectivity and experience.

We cannot know what form of experience the work had either on those who witnessed the event or viewed it through the various media presented in the gallery, books or internet. Nor can we assume that those who encounter the work had their opinions changed by it. However, it does raise questions as to what constitutes the work, points to the diversity of those who encounter it and highlights the way in which different material forms and modes of presentation have the potential to open a discursive space of encounter within Alys's practice. It also posits poetics and politics as existing within that same discursive frame, proposing the possibility for a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation to set in motion a capacity to imagine the world anew. It is related to the ideas of the 'cycle of participation' proposed by Oiticica.

Ideas and affects generated for participants and viewers

When Faith Moves Mountains was produced at a time when the focus of many participatory art works was to promote consensus and give rise to collaborations and new forms of sociability. They were de-alienating endeavours framing ideas of community and collectivism committed to constructive social change. At the time Alys made *When Faith Moves Mountains* the critic Nicolas Bourriaud was using the term 'relational aesthetics' to describe a form of art being produced in the 1990's that took as its: "theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions

and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space."(Bourriaud, 2002:14) Bourriaud argued that urban life was responsible for diminishing social relations, declaring that: "the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real."(Bourriaud, 2002:13) He was proposing that all manner of social encounters represented aesthetic objects in which meaning would be elaborated collectively, creating new forms of sociability. The structure of these works were seen as opening up a space for exchange and conviviality in which micro communities would come into being, thereby producing inter human relations. As a consequence, Bourriaud understood relational art to be developing a political project by making social relations an issue. Jean Fisher situates this work within that discourse and one in which the displacement of people and the resulting conditions of urban life are symptomatic of 'a fundamental void of meaning in the structure of polity'. She claims that the work opens up the: "conditions of a new thought of the political understood as 'conviviality' or the founding moment of community"(Fisher, 2007:112) at which moment the potential arises for a collective claim for change. She suggests that the motivating force behind *When Faith Moves Mountains* is an essential sharing of existence, if only momentarily, in a spirit of conviviality:

> initiating and uniting community as a shared experience of a thought, from the group of mostly engineering students who participated in the event at the site, to the people of the pueblo joven who took it upon themselves to protect the site from interference while the work was in progress, to the art world, which receives the idea through the chain of documentation and commentary – a movement connecting the local to the global. (Fisher, 2007:118)

It is through the construction of the work as a story that Fisher situates its collectivism and engagement with community, proposing the poetic gesture as a catalyst towards: "a more expansive politics of solidarity and conviviality."(Fisher, 2007:120) She is proposing that the poetic and political efficacy of the work lies in the transmission of insight that mobilises feelings and imagination in the viewer;

an affectivity that depends on an encounter with an event, and a realisation that alters existing perceptions of the world and sense of self within it. She contends that if we recognise art: “as an event that opens up a new narrative about reality it provides the conditions of a possibility for a nascent political consciousness, one born from conviviality, a being together as a coming-into-being of community: the realization of shared existence.”(Fisher, 2007:119) Fisher is inferring that participation is in some way engendering a sense of community and that participation is communitarian in and of itself. If we accept that the intervention on the dune was a directed form of participation, and that the students were an unidentified crowd with no apparent affiliation between them, then it appears that they were at best performing an image of community rather than constituting one. Furthermore, if the space of encounter is the site of the displacement, then this sense of conviviality claimed by Fisher is further compromised. The dune is separated from the shantytown by the road that runs between the two. The students were transported to the dune by coach and therefore had no reason to pass through or enter the shantytown itself. There is no evidence that the local residents were even present on the dune, as claimed by Fisher, and the video footage suggests a clear separation between the action on the dune and the daily life of the local people by virtue of the existence of the road. Indeed, the road acts a poignant reminder of the difference between the privileged position of the students and the poverty of the migrants. Alys’s work, whilst supposedly referencing the unseen inhabitants of the shantytown, keeps its distance from them, and the road ensures a barrier is maintained between the two. If we consider this barrier between the two groups, separating them, it becomes difficult to support notions of nascent community, conviviality and shared experience. Perhaps the road is the thing that says the insightful thing, the thing that separates the privileged place of the art biennale from the urban poor. It lends the work a sense of ambiguity and unease making it a more uncomfortable space than that envisaged by Fisher.

There is a sense of ‘violence’ within the Alys video as we survey the harsh landscape of the dune, watch the students labouring under the hot sun whilst a

helicopter films overhead raising clouds of sand in their path. The social reality of the shantytown is only alluded to, creating a sense of unease amplified by the road separating the students from the unseen inhabitants of the pueblo joven. In this way the shantytown becomes an 'empty place', characterised by Zygmunt Bauman as a place in which difference may be made invisible or prevented from being seen: "Empty are places one does not enter and where one would feel lost and vulnerable, surprised, taken aback and a little surprised by the sight of humans."(Bauman, 2000:104) It is this pervading sense of separation within the work that Fisher seems to want to eliminate through this idea of a 'shared experience of thought', which she extends from those who may have directly encountered the event locally to a global art world whose encounter came through the 'mythopoeic ' effect of its dissemination[37] Fisher is proposing that Alys's idiomatic use of allegory should be readable for all who encounter it, conveying a shared insight that opens up a space for a collective claim for change. She appears to be proposing that the work offers a micro-community in the spirit of Nicholas Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' in which meaning is elaborated collectively. However, microtopias are a community whose members identify with one another because they have something in common, therefore excluding those who hinder its conviviality and disrupt the space of encounter. Within Fisher's account, there is no consideration of disruption, that transmission may be unequal, ambiguous or anything other than convivial.

This framing of participatory projects as collective, co-authoring and de-alienating has also been accompanied by a shift away from textual modes of production towards process-based experience. Grant Kester has described a set of practices the focus of which is organised around conversational exchange and interaction which he has termed 'dialogical' art. It is a set of practices that share with 'relational art' an interest in social networks but that are essentially activist and

[37] Fisher has proposed *When Faith Moves Mountains* as a site-specific work in which the displacement as event was the work and the film a re-presentation or documentation of that act, proposing that there was no tangible art object and that the event is encountered through the 'mythopoeic effect of dissemination'. It is the durational interaction with the 'story' which generates insight rather than rupture, questioning Alys's authorial autonomy.

socially engaged. The emphasis lies in process, this making dialogue a medium and advocating tangible interventions through reciprocal exchange. He has criticised Alys's mode of production in *When Faith Moves Mountains* not as art practice, but on the basis that the experience of creative control and the power to imagine and act upon a thought or action remained the domain of the artist, expressing the view that: "There are other ways of working , in which the experience of collaborative labor is seen as generative, not simply symbolic, improvisationally responsive rather than scripted, and in which the distribution of agency is more reciprocal."(G. H. Kester, 2011:76)

The fact that this work was not created through a process of reciprocal creative labour, conversational exchange and interaction is seen by Kester as demonstrating an 'impoverished notion of praxis that is often encountered in textual projects'[38] when applied to socio-political context. In his 2011 publication *The One and The Many,* Kester seeks to differentiate between participatory practices that he considers textual and those that he sees as collaborative process. In Alys's work, Kester characterises this differentiation as poetic contemplation, labour as an 'imagistic' resource, participatory agency reduced to physical presence and the retention of authorial autonomy by the artist. He points to the way in which it reduced its five hundred participating students: "to an undifferentiated collective mass, labouring among clouds of sand"[39] and also its failure to engage with the inhabitants of the shantytown: "whose mute presence lends the work its aura of political authenticity."[40] The main focus of Kester's criticism is that the work offered an experience of symbolic, scripted labour rather than a way of working in a collaborative, more generative and responsive way. He also suggests that Alys was avoiding the possibility of real political change by retreating into the poetic and allegorical.[41]

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[38] (G. H. Kester, 2011:75)
[39] (G. H. Kester, 2011:65)
[40] (G. H. Kester, 2011:73)

[41] In recent times Alys has explicitly distanced the work from the realm of community collaborations and stated that: "The fact that most of the volunteers were university students distanced the work from the current presumptions of so-called 'collaborative works'. The

Kester is judging the work based on the artist's relationship with the participating students and the local residents. He positions participation within collective situations in which meaning is elaborated collectively and provides a structure to create a community capable of achieving demonstrable outcomes. He is in favour of practices in which political change is sustained through reciprocal exchange, practical experience and meditative insight. It is a process that he says: "begins with the experiential knowledge generated through collective or collaborative practice and an increased sensitivity to the complex registers of repression and resistance, agency and instrumentalization, which structure any given site or context."(G. H. Kester, 2011:212) Kester sees Alys's work as performing a purely symbolic function rather than contributing to oppositional practice and whose claim to political efficacy is negated by its symbolic value. We should not take this to mean that the poetic and allegorical has nothing to do with the political, rather that the political impulse within the work does not take the form of reciprocal collaborative exchange. Thomas Hirschhorn has asserted: "I am concerned with doing my art politically – I am not and was never concerned with making political art"(Hirschhorn, 2008) It is a mindset that appears relevant to Alys:

> Poetic licence functions like a hiatus in the atrophy of a social, political, military or economic crisis. Through the gratuity or the absurdity of the poetic act, art provokes a moment of suspension of meaning, a brief sensation of senselessness that reveals the absurdity of the situation and, through this act of transgression, makes you step back or step out and revise your prior assumptions about this reality. And when the poetic operation manages to provoke that sudden loss of self that itself allows a distancing from the immediate situation, then poetics might have the potential to open up a political thought."(Medina et al., 2007:40)

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organisers of the action were understandably reluctant to reduce politics to the direct interaction with 'communities', on the presupposition of any lack of mediation between art and a specific society. The work questioned the iconography and concepts of mass politics, insofar as it addressed the significance of poetic motifs and affects in political formations"(Alÿs et al., 2010:129)

Poetic licence allows him to stage an intervention and make a statement without engaging in any demonstration. Within his practice, Alys is constantly questioning what art can achieve in a location going through a political, military, religious, social or economic crisis, and the relevance of his interventions.[42] It is the framing of these questions that situates the work in a critical discourse.

When Faith Moves Mountains does not sit easily within the models of 'relational aesthetics' proposed by Bourriaud nor the politicised working processes promoted by Bishop and Kester amongst others.[43] It reasserts the autonomy of artistic activity; it was a work that Alys had envisioned beforehand and that he subsequently placed before a Biennale audience. He does not engage with the people of the pueblo joven, the student volunteers are engaged in a directed form of participation and the works structure is designed for a gallery space. It provides a platform for dialogue, but does not attempt a transformation, only an inference that collectivism and faith have the potential to instigate change. Within the structure of the work, storytelling is positioned as a mechanism by which to activate the imagination of the viewer according to their own experience whilst also proposing a model of reception that accords with active interpretation.

This reassertion of art's autonomy is an issue for socially engaged art involving participatory practice. There is a concern that participatory practice has resulted

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[42] Alys set out these questions during a conversation with the curator Russell Ferguson : "Can artistic intervention truly bring about an unforeseen way of thinking, or is it more a matter of creating a sensation of 'meaninglessness', one that shows the absurdity of the situation? And can an absurd act provoke a transgression that makes you abandon the standard assumptions about the sources of conflict? Can an artistic intervention translate social tensions into narratives that in turn intervene in the imaginary landscape of a place? And finally, can those kinds of artistic acts bring about the possibility of change? In any case, how can art remain politically significant without assuming a doctrinal standpoint or aspiring to become social activism?"(Medina et al., 2007:40)

[43] Alys: "I always found it quite ironic that some people criticized the project for its gratuitousness, when voluntary collaboration was the *sine qua non* condition of the action. I suppose nowadays political correctness has moved on to economic correctness. But more to the point, I think today it's difficult to pass on an attitude that doesn't conform with the climate of scepticism or systematic criticism, an attitude that's more optimistic or even naively utopian. Words like 'change' 'faith', or bridge, when they are not coming out of the mouth of politicians or evangelical preachers, seem somehow out of place."(Medina et al., 2007:48)

in projects that are indistinguishable from community projects, government initiatives, educational and leisure activities. It is a concern shared by the critic Claire Bishop who has questioned how participatory practices might be read as art in an effort to remove them from a focus on compassionate identification, consensual behaviour, demonstrable impact and aversion to disruption which :

> In insisting upon consensual dialogue, sensitivity to difference risks becoming a new kind of repressive norm – one in which artistic strategies of disruption, intervention or over-identification are immediately ruled out as 'unethical' because all forms of authorship are equated with authority and indicted as totalising. Such a denigration of authorship allows simplistic oppositions to remain in place: active versus passive viewer, egotistical versus collaborative artist, privileged versus needy community, aesthetic versus simple expression, cold autonomy versus convivial community."(Bishop, 2012:25)

As previously noted, Jacques Rancière's writings with regard to the politics of authorship, positions the oppositions enunciated by Bishop as embodied allegories of inequality which: "specifically define a distribution of the sensible, an *a priori* distribution of the positions and capacities and incapacities attached to these positions."(Rancière, 2009:12) For Rancière, the political exists in a reconfiguration of the 'distribution of the sensible', a transformation of the visible, the possible and thinkable. This idea of a disruption of the visible to create new vectors of thought or understanding accords with Alys's own preoccupations:

> Can artistic intervention truly bring about an unforeseen way of thinking, or is it more a matter of creating a sensation of 'meaninglessness', one that shows the absurdity of the situation? And can an absurd act provoke a transgression that makes you abandon the standard assumptions about the sources of conflict?(Medina et al., 2007:40)

In this way Alys cannot anticipate the effect of *When Faith Moves Mountains* because everyone who encounters the work will do so as an active interpreter who renders their own translation of it according to their reception in it. The

experience of the participants will form part of their translation and interpretation of the event that will be different from anyone who saw the event on the dune, or encountered it through documentation presented at the Biennale, or through newspapers journals and online. In these acts of interpretation and translation there can be no assumption of an equal undistorted transmission because the form of the work prevents it. It is this capacity that can open a space to challenge social and political conventions and to imagine a different world than the one we occupy.

The importance of participation in this project is thus seen to shift away from the labour of the 500 student volunteers shovelling sand towards a form of interpretive spectator participation. The event itself becomes less important than the way in which it is remembered, talked about and presented. Participation in this context becomes one of active interpretation. The giving of cultural, social and political meaning to the work is required in order that it be activated. It is this interpretive aspect of the work that sits at its conceptual core. Alys is concerned with creating a modern-day fable from the fabric of everyday life, whether it is his own efforts to push a block of ice around Mexico City, or the efforts of 500 students to move a dune in the Peruvian desert. In this way, he makes no direct socio-political statement nor attempts a transformation through direct practical action. Meaning is given to the work by the audience through their own interpretation and translation of it according to their own experience and points of reference. The development of a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation by Alys in *When Faith Moves Mountains* may be seen to have something in common with the position adopted by Oiticica that: ”individual and collective vitality will be the raising up of something solid and real despite underdevelopment and chaos.” (Ramirez, 2007:322)

When Faith Moves Mountains opens a space for non-consensual interpretation and translation. It proposes the possibility to set in motion a capacity for new ways of thinking or seeing that are inherently political. This acknowledges that within the realm of inter-human relations and social interstice meaning is not always elaborated collectively and dislocation and dissent are an inevitable part

of life. Jacques Rancière contends that such contestation is essential to sustain political energy and that art needs to: “keep something of the tension that pushes aesthetic experience towards the reconfiguration of collective life and something of the tension that withdraws the power of aesthetic sensoriality from other spheres of experience” (Deranty & ebrary, 2010:168)

CHAPTER 3

Case Study 3

Jeremy Deller (1966-) - *After The Gold Rush* (2001/2)

Jeremy Deller is a British artist whose work tends to emphasise people over place. He collects things from stories to images and ephemera and has an interest in all things personal, ritual, site specific and folkloric. Often his work deals with local histories and cultural heritage. He has taken on the role of artist, curator, archivist, actor, researcher, investigative journalist and producer. The principal characteristics of his work are concerned with archival practice, historical and social context, and the idea of the encounter. Collaboration is a feature of his practice and is almost always concerned with the amateur participant, from people he meets on the street, music fans, members of community clubs, societies and local people co-opted for one of his projects. The work may include photography, books, films, recordings, interviews, t-shirts, bumper stickers, posters, found objects, archival materials and diagrams. Performance is regularly a feature, and can be something as simple as documenting someone trying to put up a deck chair on the beach, to a fully staged production such as *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001),a public re-enactment of the clash between pickets and police during the 1984 UK miners' strike. Performance was also evident in his 2009 project *Procession,* in which he brought together hundreds of people in a spirit of carnival, to ride floats, march through the streets waving specially commissioned banners or simply to watch, but all celebrating the things that matter to them.

After the Gold Rush (2001/2)

In 2001, Deller accepted a three month Capp Street residency at the CCAC Wattis Institute in San Francisco. He arrived in California on the 9th November

2001 and ended up staying a year. He had been invited to make work for an exhibition but has said he wanted to produce: "something more involved with California. I wanted to go out and discover things about the state and in some small way test the level of the culture." (Helfand, 2002) In a spirit similar to that of Oiticica, he left the City and travelled to those places that exist on the periphery of the urban centre. He bought a twenty year old jeep and five acres of land at Trona in the Mojave Desert and embarked on a road trip across California. Deller saw California as being a place: "on 'the edge' in all senses: a meeting of all these different people, migrants and cultures." (Doherty:96) The result was *After the Gold Rush,* a work whose title was taken from a Neil Young album[44] and that he saw: "as a reference to how one gets by after the good times, or when a dream doesn't quite work out as planned on a personal or collective level."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:7)

There are ideas here that resonate, and to some extent mirror, the failed modernisation attempts in South America. The great American Dream, as with the dream of Modernity in South America, may be seen to have been found wanting. The divide between the affluence of the City of San Francisco compared with the poverty and hardships of the desert towns, is not unlike that between the affluent south of Rio de Janerio and the poverty of the northern favelas, the comparative wealth of the students attending Lima University and the poverty of the people of the pueblo joven at Ventanilla, outside Lima.

It is a work that exists primarily as a ninety six page book, part guide book, part travel diary and treasure hunt, containing photographs, maps, drawings, interviews and a history of the fifty eight counties of California. The CD of folk music that accompanies the book is a recording by the banjo player William Whitmore, made by the artist at Melancholy Ranch, the name Deller gave to the plot of land he purchased at auction in Los Angeles.

[44] *After the Gold Rush* was an album of country folk music released in 1970 by Canadian musician Neil Young.

Production/structure

After the Gold Rush came at a time when Deller wanted to engage in a project about place, and of which he has explained:

> I wanted to exile myself from a place I knew well and that in turn knew me too well. Perhaps more than that of any other country, the history of the US is intricately tied up with travel and exile. Historical examples abound beginning with the arrival of the Pilgrims, the enforced displacement of Native Americans, and the victims of the slave trade. They continue with the Mormons and the Gold Rush, as well as the more recent phenomena of the Dust Bowl, Route 66, Hells Angels, Jack Kerouac and the seasonal migrations of retired "Snowbirds"[45], right up to our own present day, where every time a road trip is taken, it becomes part of this tradition."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:6)

This insistence on making work with a life outside the gallery is an important part of Deller's practice. It speaks of his curiosity about the everyday, the manner in which information is collected, learned, disseminated and adopted by people through history and contemporary life. It is also a mechanism that allows him to make things happen, and to bring participation into the work itself. In order to understand Deller's practice, it is useful to consider another of his projects. *The History of the World* (1997) is a flow diagram produced by Deller that suggests social, political and musical connections between house music and brass bands. It was the visual justification for the musical project, *Acid Brass* (1997). It is a work which, on first inspection, may look casual, but on further scrutiny it becomes clear that each element within it has been carefully considered before inclusion. In many ways it is a blue print for the way in which Deller constructs his works. It represents a map of connections bringing together apparently divergent strands into a whole. Deller's projects are constructed from all manner of fragments including memories and ephemera. Their structure is not dependent

[45] "Snowbirds" is the name given to a nomadic group of Americans who travel across the country following the sunshine.

upon the individual fragments themselves, but on the form they take when added to other fragments. If we consider *After the Gold Rush* in the same way, we can discern that everything that has been included links to everything else. It is this linking of elements that are of interest in terms of a whole, which is the total work, and is seen in the practices of both Oiticica and Alys.

After the Gold Rush is a work that demonstrates in-depth research and archival practices. It brings together a vast array of individual elements and gives the work a number of forms including performance and installation. Its principal form as a guidebook works in much the same way as the flow diagram described above. It provides a format in which the artist is able to bring together all the seemingly disparate but interconnected elements into a whole. It is a work that combines the artist's journey across California, his surveys of the desert land leading to his attendance at a land auction, the purchase of the land, his staking and naming of his acquisition and the recording of an album of folk music at the location. Along the way, he meets people whom he interviews and who share with him their personal histories and memories. Interspersed within all these activities are facts about the settling of California, the extent of the correctional facilities in the State, suburban housing projects, observations on SUVS, Ronald Reagan, an American boy who converted to Islam, the Mormon church, facts about the 1849 gold rush, Silicon Valley, the unrealised manifesto of the Black Panther Party, Charles Manson, military activity in the area, roadside memorials and a survey of the 58 counties of California. All these elements are drawn together with map coordinates, photographs, drawings, passages from the Book of Mormon, maps, the production of street signs and car bumper stickers and interspersed with the sly wit and barbed observation of Deller himself.

Historical and social context figures prominently in Deller's practice, which means that a project's genesis is essentially in the public domain before it becomes an artwork, and therefore the readings of the work can become multi-layered, complex, personal and even contested. In order to try and understand what it means to ideas of participation when considering the ways in which Deller was working at the time he was in the U.S., it is useful to look at other projects Deller

produced using similar production techniques. *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) was a filmed re-enactment of the clash that took place between pickets and police on the 18th June 1984 during the UK miners' strike.[46] Alongside the re-enactment event and the film of its performance Deller also published *The English Civil War Part II: personal accounts of the 1984-1985 miners' strike* (2002), an anthology of texts, interviews, original documents, pamphlets, news clippings, anecdotes and photographs. It was essentially a work of historical research that prioritised the personal history, responses, memories and experiences of those who were there. Deller likes to talk to people; to understand the social and cultural context of their stories and has said that the research for *Orgreave* took him eighteen months in which he was engaged in talking to people, eliciting information from them. He has a curiosity that he attempts to satisfy through the process of interview, informal discussion and trying to understand what people think and how they make sense of the events that touch their lives. His process is then to evidence these events on the back of an artwork. In the case of *Orgreave,* it was a political film about the miners' strike and a book containing the personal accounts of those who bore witness to it.

For his 2009 work *It Is What It Is,* Deller embarked upon a month long American road trip[47] in an RV towing the mangled remains of a car. The car had been destroyed when a bomb was detonated on a market street in Baghdad in 2007, killing thirty eight people and injuring hundreds more. He was accompanied on his trip by an American soldier and an Iraqi citizen. Along the way, they stopped at fourteen towns and cities trying to engage local people in conversations about the war in Iraq. The project included the road trip, an online journal (www.conversationsaboutiraq.org), an exhibition *It Is What It Is: Conversations*

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[46] The enactment performance took place on the 17th June 2001 and the film made by Mike Figgis of that event was shown on channel 4 on the 20th October 2002.

[47] The work was originally commissioned as a gallery exhibition to be exhibited in New York and then Los Angeles. The exhibition featured the car and a series of conversations led by invited journalists, Iraqi citizens, soldiers and academics. Deller decided to make the delivery of the car and the encounters on the road between the two galleries part of the work, thereby providing both a performative element to the work and an engagement through open conversation with non-experts. The road trip took place between March 26th and April 27th, 2009.

About Iraq, (2009) and a book *It Is What It Is* (2010). The book documents the road trip including conversations and interviews held along the way, a travel journal of the trip by one of his companions and various texts, images and doodles. Deller has said that he wanted to see what sort of reaction the car would provoke, but also that he wished to avoid making an anti-war statement[48] explaining that: ”It was presented in as neutral a way as possible, which puzzled a lot of people. But it meant that the public were more likely to talk to us, because they weren't scared of being dragged into some sort of political arena.”(Deller et al., 2012:152)

In both of these works Deller has evidenced historical, cultural and political events and peoples' responses to them. He has done so on the back of an artwork and his approach has been to bring together opposing points of view whilst remaining almost absent from the work himself. Neutrality and the ceding of an authorial voice are common traits in many of his projects. As a result of Deller's approach to collaboration and participation, the form of the work and the outcome can be unpredictable. It is an approach that shares something in common with the works of Oiticica and Alys in so far as the collaborators and the participants can interpret and translate the meaning of the work in a form meaningful to them. *After the Gold Rush* is a work that reflects the social, political and cultural history of California. Through the work, we are introduced to a place of migration and exile, one full of the contradictions of an American rhetoric filled with promises of the land of opportunity. It is a place of extreme wealth and tremendous poverty, gentrification and squalor, fertile land and barren desert. It is also a place dominated by right wing politics, Christian evangelicalism and home to The China Lake Naval Weapons Centre a significant military presence, research and testing facility. The last chapter of Deller's guidebook was written by Matthew Coolidge, Director of the Centre for Land Use Interpretation entitled *The*

[48] The New York Times critic Ken Johnson called it an educational programme, not art. He did so on the basis that he considered the mangled car as a useful artefact, not sculpture .(Johnson, 2009) Johnson has not considered the car as neither artefact nor sculpture but a mediating third term within the work which opened up a space for non consensual dialogue and exchange. The car itself was one element within many comprising the work.

Fifty-Eight States of California. Coolidge profiles the area giving an abridged history and description to each of the 58 counties making up the State of California, from terrain to population, wealth and predominant activities. The project itself focuses upon locations close to Death Valley, in particular, the town of Trona that developed around the Searles Dry Lake, a natural resource containing one of the world's largest deposits of chemicals. Trona is a mining town that has suffered boom and bust economic cycles and is now in decline, with a shrinking population and deserted properties being reclaimed by the desert. The aftermath of mineral exploitation at Trona has much in common with the Californian Gold Rush of 1849 and the dot-com bubble of the late 1990's. At their inception, they offered the opportunity of great wealth, lasted a relatively short time and left devastation for many in their wake. The year 2000 marked the burst of the dot-com bubble and was therefore relevant at the time Deller made this work. These stories carry with them the notion of the American dream, its contradictions and precariousness.

A further characteristic of Deller's practice is that of the encounter. It is within the wider social and historical back stories of place that Deller's encounters resonate with the people he meets. These are the people without whose participation and willingness to share their stories, experiences and memories, many of his projects would have been incomplete. In their six year collaboration on the *Folk Archive* (2000-2006) Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane employed this idea of the encounter to explore the world of folk art, community events and cultural gatherings. The project is a visual account of the encounters the two artists had during the six year period of its creation with a wide assortment of individuals and groups across the UK. The project not only entailed numerous encounters and collaborations but it culminated in an exhibition in which community participants could have their work shown in an art gallery for the first time. This included a diverse range of participants from community groups, prisoners, gurning champions, music fans, local bakers, young people and the homeless. His work *Procession* (2009), a parade through the city centre of Manchester, was a homage to the social realism of the City, bringing together the 'otherness' of the

people living there, from mill workers, unrepentant smokers, Big Issue sellers, school children, brass bands, pipe bands, rose queens, steel bands, Oldham's chip shops and music fans. The bookwork to this project documents the event and includes interviews with local people, historical news clippings and photographs, drawings by local children, music scores and doodles. Writing in The Guardian, Simon Hattenstone recounts a road trip he himself made to Manchester with the artist during the making of *Procession* and recalls Deller saying: "The thing about a good procession is that it tells you so much about the society it sprang from."(Hattenstone, 2009)

In After the Gold Rush, Deller employed the device of the encounter to narrate the story of his road trip through California and to explore the social and cultural traditions he found there. This included attendance at land auctions, heritage sites (from jelly beans[49] to the endangered red wood tree), roadside memorials, the nine churches of Trona, a trip to 'The Village' housing project designed by born again Christian Thomas Kinkade and the site of a mythical cave into which Charles Manson and his followers were to retreat in the event of an apocalyptical race war he called 'Helter Skelter'. The project included numerous encounters with people from community groups such as the Black Panthers, congregational members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, participants in the Veterans Day Parade near Death Valley, those attending and participating in the Miss Exotic World Contest, a pageant celebrating the art of burlesque and members of the Desert Tortoise Protection Society. The work also attests to his collaborations with the people who shared their stories with him, the artists with whom he made work (including street signs and bumper stickers), Matthew Coolidge for his account of the history of California and the musicians responsible for the folk music he recorded there.

[49] Within the work Deller includes a photograph of a portrait of Reagan and observes: "There is a portrait of Ronald Reagan made out of jelly beans at the Jelly Belly visitor centre in Fairfield. Look for the Reagan memorabilia display and compare his signatures from the 1970's and'80's – there is a clear deterioration in his handwriting skills."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002) Reagan announced he was suffering from Alzheimer in 1994, he had left office as president in 1989.

Participation (of the sharing in, taking part in and being part of)

Jeremy Deller has said that the epitome of participatory art is one in which everyone is taking part and no one is watching.[50] *After the Gold Rush* is a work in which he has expanded this notion to include himself as artist, everyone he encounters along the way and by invitation, to those people he has never met. It is participation of the taking part in and being part of something that extends backwards into the past, is performed in the present, and extends outwards to the future. It is a form of participation that oscillates between performance, object and dialogue and whose duration is dictated by a continued acceptance of the invitation (open proposition) to participation itself. It is a form of participation that is reflected in Oiticica's 'cycle of participation' and in Alys's storytellers and translators.

Deller's ideas of participation are rooted in the concept of living history. His works bring together an eclectic mix of history, social protest, art, ephemera, observation and memory. He is at pains to demonstrate that history, culture and politics all come together to influence each other. These notions about the everyday, the ordinary and the peculiar, the device of the encounter, dialogue, archival practices and the placing of people at the heart of his work, are all used to evidence this living history. His own participation within the work is an act of immersion and performance. It is situated in ideas of historical re-enactment. The performative nature of his actions are a device used by him to try and understand what it means to be a part of something and of sharing something in common with others who have gone before him. In this way it helps him to become closer to what it means, or meant, to be part of a national, social or ethnic event or situation[51]. In this case, Deller associated California with the historical and

[50] (Deller, 2007)

[51] During a conversation with Matthew Higgs in 2012, he makes clear this need to understand events through personal experience or an encounter with others who experienced them: "There was an opportunity to go to the US… I arrived on 9 September 2001, so needless to say, it was a fascinating and complicated time to be in that part of the world. I was in the country during the invasion of Iraq and the 2004 election. I was a worried observer, if you like, and the *It Is What It Is* exhibition, and its US tour, was the culmination of this worry and research into the war. I felt I had

cultural act of travel and settlement. His road trip reflects the tradition of travelling the vast places of America. It is a performative action that is as much a part of the work as the final book. The act of the road trip may be seen to fit into the story of the New Jersey Turnpike, as told by Tony Smith, in which the actual experience of the journey is of itself the art. He not only travels across the State but also scouts for land[52] and then buys it at auction. It is Deller's way of understanding what it means to be a part of the land owning culture of America. It is a series of performances that resonate with the historical social imperative of 'staking a claim', following in the footsteps of farming settlers and gold miners. When interviewed by Glen Helfand in 2002 he explained:

> I bought a plot of land because I figured if I were going to spend a year in America, I might as well own a piece of the country. It's the idea of coming to the West where everyone wants to own a piece of land. I bought mine at an auction, which was a very old-fashioned event--like a religious revival meeting revolving around money and land. The first bit of audio on the CD is me buying the property. The clip is only about forty-five seconds long, but it gives you a sense of the experience. It's like an art installation, with a slide show of the acreage and all these quotations from people like Mark Twain about how land is the best thing ever. (Helfand, 2002)

In *After the Gold Rush,* Deller is not creating a participating public sphere but a space for individual identity (memory, history, actions, interpretations). It is a work that prioritises a form of individual participation that brings together divergent views, thereby reflecting the increasing diversity within communities. His focus is the bringing together of people in ways that spark collective associations and

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read every book and newspaper article, seen every documentary and so on, and yet I was no closer to what it was actually like to be there, so, like with *Orgreave*, I decided to embark on this huge project as a way of sorting it out in my head. So both projects are very personal despite being so public and open."(Deller et al., 2012:190-191)

[52] In a manner reminiscent of the discipline of site selection study engaged in by the land artists of the 1970's Deller made a lot of trips into the desert, photographing various parcels of land together with their plot numbers. It is also a process with which Francis Alys engages before settling on the exact sand dune he intended to 'move' in *When Faith Moves Mountains*.

disassociations in a manner he refers to as 'living history'. The participants whose memories, stories and experiences are woven into the narrative and visual account of Deller's journey included:

- Alan Laird in Oakland, California. A story of race segregation, oppression, racial abuse, the community role of the Black Panthers,[53] civil unrest and community initiatives uniting people through art. [54] He owns an art gallery, is a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church with a prison ministry and teaches children art in the summer holidays.[55]
- Don Pino in Drytown, California. Pino's story is one of escape and exile to the US from Cuba in 1960, having trained in guerrilla warfare with Che Guevara and then acted as scout for the CIA in the Bay of Pigs invasion. He was a Green Beret specializing in jungle warfare and worked for the US in Vietnam, the Congo and Bolivia, where he claims to have helped track down Guevara. He owns a shop selling military memorabilia and his dream is to retire to Cuba and live in the hills overlooking the ocean.

[53] Deller comments: "The Black Panther Party was formed by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton at Lake Merritt College in 1966 in a response to police violence against the black community in Oakland. They gained notoriety through mounting armed patrols of their neighbourhoods to monitor police activity. Within two years the party had become the FBI's number one domestic priority. Twenty-eight Panthers were killed between 1966 and 1972; thirty are still in prison and seven are in exile." (Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:21)

[54] Whilst in Oakland a Black Panther commemorative sign was erected by Aaron Gach and Jeremy Deller. It was attached to a traffic light and reads: "On August 1, 1967 This stoplight was installed as a result of a community initiative spearheaded by the Black Panther Party" (Deller & California College of Arts and, 2002:17) Within the context of the work this act serves to highlight the community initiatives, including a food distribution program, that were often overlooked by the media in favour of the Panthers' more confrontational activities.

[55] Alongside this story Deller presents us with a black and white image of the Alameda County deputies helmeted and armed, guns raised against a retreating group of protestors. The caption reads "… and in 1972 Alameda County deputies fire at a group of protesters during a confrontation."(Deller & California College of Arts and, 2002:24) The scene evokes something which resonates with Deller's then recently enacted *The Battle of Orgreave*, a situation of conflict and confrontation between community and state, a civil action against perceived injustice which the administration sought to repress, at all costs. It is an observation Deller makes pointedly: "The Panthers had a powerful enemy in Ronald Reagan during his term as Governor of California (1962-1972). Never a liberal at the best of times, Reagan was obsessed with destroying radical protest movements."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:24)

- Dixie Evans in Helendal, California.[56] A story of 1950's burlesque and a quest to preserve its heritage through the Exotic World Museum of Burlesque.[57] She shares a house with burlesque performer Tempest Storm and together they host the annual Miss Exotic World Contest. It is the story of a faded past being kept alive and the attempts by a group of aged women in small town California to provide joy, colour, fun and laughter in an otherwise desolate and difficult environment.
- Richard Olson & Jimmy Bills in Randsburg, California. A story of an area ravaged by mining, military operations and dirt biking and the efforts of a community to conserve the delicate ecosystems of the desert. [58] Together they run the Olson's Randsburg Gallery and are members of the Desert Tortoise Preservation Committee, protecting the endangered animals from dirt bikers and off-road jeep drivers.

We are led to believe that the participants whose stories are included are not people Deller sought out, nor were they found as a result of any search by him to identify particular types of people or characters in order to narrate a particular story. Deller has stated: "I didn't set out to find particular people, I just came across them. It was a road trip of sorts and the encounters that I experienced were genuine and thus are a genuine reflection of that place and that time. I never force anyone to be involved in the projects I do". (Doherty, 2004:96) The participants in his projects are usually 'ordinary' people who may or may not do extraordinary things. Sometimes they are singled out and identified individually

[56] Since Deller's visit the site of The Exotic World Burlesque Museum in Helendale has been relocated to The Burlesque Hall of Fame in Los Angeles

[57] The exotic world of the burlesque evokes the spirit of a community gathering to celebrate the odd and the marginal. We are introduced to the Miss Exotic World Competition, 2002, which provokes a carnival atmosphere, drawing everyday people together in a spirit of conviviality. It seems to invoke the processional pieces which Alys was to make in San Juan Sebastian in 2003 and Deller's work *Procession* set in Manchester in 2009.

[58] They speak passionately about their environment with Rand explaining that: "The desert might seem like a wasteland, but it isn't. It's a very dynamic, beautiful working system that is fragile in many ways. It can stand a lot of extremes, like the heat and the cold and the wind and all that, because it's adapted to that, but it can't handle dirt bikes."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:59)

and sometimes they exist as part of a collective. Stuart Hall asserts that Deller's imagination is animated by:

> this idea: that people who are sometimes considered to be unimportant, or not worth listening to, matter. They are creative but often have their creativity denied or taken away from them. He believes they should be valued for what they are – their voices heard, their practices celebrated – and that one way of doing this is to re-deploy them as sources of new artistic work in a modern idiom. (Deller et al., 2012:88-89)

The people who participated in this work were treated with neutrality evident in Deller's projects. In projects dealing with political opposition and cultural difference, such as *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) and *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* (2009), he has generally been careful not to take sides, thereby ensuring that he does not alienate any of the people upon whom the work relies. If his projects are to be truly inclusive they require participation by all, and not only those who share a particular point of view. He has therefore provided a platform for opposing concerns and conflicting views, allowing the images in his publications to suggest a narrative. Unusually, in this work, alongside the participant's stories Deller himself has made observations, included images and sometimes provided oppositions to a particular political or belief system. It makes this work uncommon within his ouvre as it is one in which his authorial voice is very much in evidence pointing to concerns and contradictions he observed at the time. Deller exhibits a high level of engagement and immersion in this project. He appears drawn to the strange, messy aspects of daily life and their connection with complicated social and cultural histories.

The stories of these participating individuals focus on the social reality of the marginalised and the exiled, putting historical narrative in dialogue with current concerns. They are stories that may appear rooted in violence and exploitation but with a humanistic perspective, and embody not only personal narrative but also emotional and sensory experience. They are stories whose interpretation by

the viewer will be translated according to their own cultural, social and political experiences and situation.

Within this project, Deller also produced an album of folk music. The recording exists as another performance situated within the work and is collaboration with the musicians William Whitmore and Jennie Olsen. It was recorded on the land purchased by Deller who says that the reason he made the recording at the ranch was: “in part because one of the things that excited me about being in America is the ongoing legacy of the folk and country music tradition. It is not taken for granted here, but is accepted and loved, and is as much a part of the fabric of people’s lives as a motel is part of the highway landscape.” (Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:7) Deller uses music as a framing device, suggesting the possibility that through music we can adjust our perceptions by learning to look at one kind of ‘culture’ through the lens of another. Oiticica’s *Parangole* had its origin in the life of the Rio favela and was situated within the Samba culture that Oiticica saw as opening up a way of interpreting the world around us, as if everything was potentially connected to everything else. This connectedness is drawn upon by Deller who points out: “you can hear the audio of me buying the land on the CD,”[59] and: “On a few of the songs, you might hear a rumbling; this is the sound of fighter planes overhead.”[60] This notion of connectedness runs throughout the work from the past, to the present, and extended to the future in the form of an invitation to the viewer. It is an invitation to share the artist’s experiences and to participate in the work through their own trip to the places he visited, including the site he called Melancholy Ranch. It extends to embarking upon a treasure hunt to find the participating storytellers in the book and be rewarded with a gift. The book contains all the map co-ordinates needed by an individual who chooses to accept the invitation and, in the case of his land acquisition, he gives directions should we wish to take the trip: “To visit Melancholy ranch, approach Trona from the south, and turn off to the left when you pass out of the town, at the sign for Bri-Mar Lane. After you have driven

[59] (Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:78)
[60] (Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:82)

along this dirt track for a few minutes, you will see the four fluorescent posts that delineate Melancholy Ranch boundaries."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:78) The inclusion within the project of a treasure hunt, adds a further temporal dimension which suggests an incompleteness, and places the work in a position where it oscillates between being the 'object' in the form of the book and the 'work' engaged in an ongoing dialogue.

Deller recognised the form of the book as a way to bring all the elements of his project together into the work commenting:

> The idea of creating a guidebook came to me after talking to a friend about treasure hunts, an element I've incorporated into the book in a low-key way, and it dovetails nicely with the idea of the gold rush. A guidebook is a convenient vehicle with which to tell a story and connect disparate elements, and there's an interactive, even performative aspect to it, with readers acting out the journey in their own way. The book is more about the people than the places. It's literally a tour of people: You can meet the folks I've met. They run museums and shops or whatever. If you do meet them, you will get a free gift-and if you take the whole tour, you can collect a complete set of gifts. (Helfand, 2002:170)

Within this project, Deller explored the cultural history of the place in which he found himself. The idea of a road trip and the inclusion of country folk music situate the work within the traditions of American culture. Through these performative devices of road trip, land acquisition, folk music and treasure hunt, the artist insinuated himself as a participant in the social history of California.

The view from here

Jeremy Deller makes artwork on the back of socio-political events. Their genesis is often already in the public domain and his projects spring from the society to which they belong. They are often complex and contested but strive for a form of neutral participation. Deller's fascination with processions and carnivals stems

from their participatory quality. Speaking at a lecture in 2007 he describes a procession he witnessed in October 2001 in which he says some two hundred people were taking part and only thirty watching, and comments that: “talking about participation this was the epitome of a great art work when no one is watching it but everyone is part of it.” (Design, 2007) Deller was speaking about an image from *After the Gold Rush* that does not appear in the book. It is the image of children dressed in army fatigues, loaded onto a low, flat bed truck travelling in the desert. The children are carrying a large, life-size wooden cross, similar to that seen in Easter parades depicting the crucifixion, and affixed to the top of that cross is the Stars and Stripes banner of the US. It is titled *Veterans Day parade near Death Valley, Nevada* (2002). During the lecture Deller explained that what the image did not convey was that the children were singing martial Christian hymns and giving out bibles with camouflage covers and a sticker with the words ‘Holy Bible’ in M.A.S.H typeface on the front. [61] It was, he said, what he loves about America and also what scares him about America. He also described that event as being “the greatest art work ever made.”(Deller, 2007).

It is an image not made visible in the original bookwork and yet one that formed part of the whole work. It is an event to which Deller has returned on a number of occasions and of which Simon Hattenstone recounts Deller describing as being: “the craziest one he has ever witnessed: a veterans' procession in Nevada, just after 9/11 - all Christianity, superstition and military hardware. He has never seen anything that so accurately captured the confused bigotry of George Bush's America.”(Hattenstone, 2009) It is a description that encapsulates the tone of *After the Gold Rush,* whose structure provided a lens through which Deller was able to observe socio-political tensions and to reflect upon these oppositions, questions and contradictions. It speaks to the experience and situations of the storytellers both in the face of adversity and hope, reflecting on issues of race, foreign policy, military dominance, Christian evangelicalism, rightwing politics and environmental exploitation.

[61] M.A.S.H was a 1970 film based a novel by Richard Hooker and a television series which ran from 1972-83.

Alan Laird, a former Black Panther, gives us a window onto the divisive nature of race segregation and the accompanying violence and social deprivation of 1950's America.[62] We are given a view of the struggle between a black community seeking to improve its situation (both through direct action and community initiatives) and the State. The theme of American foreign policy is introduced within the work as Deller points to the similarities between the unrealised manifesto of the Black Panther Party and that adopted by the Cuban Revolutionaries before we are introduced to Don Pino who arrived in the US from Cuba in 1960. He claims to have been trained in guerrilla warfare under the command of Che Guevara before escaping to exile in the US. Once in the US he was recruited by the CIA and acted as a scout for the Bay of Pigs Invasion.[63]It is in the context of exile and conflict, amid questions concerning interference in the domestic affairs of foreign powers and the explosive responses to such interventions, that Deller appears to reflect on the events unfolding at that time. Within a few months of Deller arriving in America and following the attacks of 9/11, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan. It is then he comments on John Lindh[64], an American boy who converted to Islam and was captured by US forces at Kandahar in December 2001, observing that:

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[62] "I was born in Oakland and during the 1950s there were certain areas we wouldn't even go into, such as the Idora Park neighbourhood that is bordered by 58th and 55th Streets, between Telegraph and Shattuck. It was an amusement park at the turn of the century and developed into this special neighbourhood, and I remember as a kid, even though there were no fences, I knew I couldn't go there. This was where the rich white people stayed. It was that unspoken law and the invisible barricades. That place that you couldn't go and things you couldn't do"(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:13)

[63] This was he says: "...my introduction to special forces operations, and for the next seven years I was a Green Beret specializing in jungle warfare. There was no shortage of work. I went to Vietnam, the Congo, and Bolivia, where I helped track down my old teacher Che."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:45)

[64] John Walker Lindh is a United States citizen from Marin, California who was captured as an enemy combatant during the United States' 2001 invasion of Afghanistan in November 2001. Lindh converted to Islam at age 16, went to Yemen in 1998 to study Arabic for 10 months. He later returned in 2000, and then went to Afghanistan in May 2001 to aid the Taliban fighters against the Northern Alliance. He was not involved in and did not know about the planned September 11, 2001 attacks.

> Lindh has complained that he has been denied many of his rights. He is currently in prison serving a twenty year sentence after a plea bargain. His fanaticism, though extreme, is no more so than that displayed by many mainstream Christian groups, like the Mormons, for example, who appear repeatedly in California's history and in this book."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:30)

The work includes a harrowing drawing of John Walker Lindh during his interrogation at a US marine base. Deller makes no comment upon it, leaving its interpretation to the reader.[65]Religious fanaticism, the dominance of religious beliefs and dogma, together with the power of churches and sects is explored within the work. From the existence of nine churches in Trona, supporting a population of 2,000 people in 2001, to the dominance of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, of which Deller remarks:

> The Mormon Church, or the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints as it is officially known, is one of the most American of religions. Its teachings maintain that Christ came to the US after his resurrection to convert Native Indians to Christianity. This theory is corroborated by, and elaborated on, in The Book of Mormon, The Church's companion to the Holy Bible."(Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:32)

We are introduced to 'The Village', a suburban housing project reminiscent of a scene from *The Stepford Wives,* at Hiddenbrooke designed by Born Again Christian, Thomas Kinkade. We are told about Charles Manson's stay at the nearby Baker Ranch, his obsession with the Book of Revelation and his search for a mythical cave into which he and his followers would descend upon

[65] It is a drawing which represents Lindh's ordeal as described by his father: "On 7 December, wounded and still suffering from the effects of the trauma at Qala-i-Jangi, John was flown to Camp Rhino, a US marine base approximately 70 miles south of Kandahar. There he was taunted and threatened, stripped of his clothing, and bound naked to a stretcher with duct tape wrapped around his chest, arms, and ankles. Even before he got to Camp Rhino, John's wrists and ankles were bound with plastic restraints that caused severe pain and left permanent scars – sure proof of torture. Still blindfolded, he was locked in an unheated metal shipping container that sat on the desert floor. He shivered uncontrollably in the bitter cold. Soldiers outside pounded on the sides, threatening to kill him." (Lindh, 2011)

commencement of an apocalyptical race war he called ‘Helter Skelter’. Within this narrative of religious fervour and conflict. the fact that Trona is surrounded by the grounds of the China Lake Naval Weapons Centre, a 1500 square mile testing and research facility that for the last 60 years has been instrumental in the development of some of the world’s most deadly weapons, is not lost on Deller. Nor is the US history of invasion and occupation as he reflects: “The Naval Weapons base land is also home to thousands of Native American Indian petroglyphs, ancient line drawings or carvings on rock, which are well preserved because of the general public’s limited access to them.”(Deller & California College of Arts and, 2002:73) Not so well preserved is the desert itself. In a place which has seen the end of the good times and the disappointment of the here and now, we are introduced to Richard Olson and Jimmy Bills. They bring to life the reality of an area ravaged by mining, military operations and dirt biking and the efforts of a community to conserve the delicate ecosystems of the desert. They collect discarded rubbish from the desert floor and turn it into art. It is a story of hope, desperation and futility.

The issue of borders and immigration are highlighted in one of the final entries in the book:

> San Diego County is home to nearly three million people, most clustered in the southwest corner around the city of San Diego. South of the city, the suburbs break down into the no-man’s land of the Tijuana River estuary, where the Border Patrol has plowed a five-mile stretch of the boarder, between the ocean and Interstate 5, into a landscape of surveillance, illuminated at night and wired with ground sensors. Until a few years ago, nearly a million illegal immigrants flowed across this stretch of border ever year. Now they have to cross farther east, in hotter, more remote terrain. (Deller & California College of Arts, 2002:90)

Through the stories of the participants, images, ephemera and his own commentary and observations, Deller conveys a strong sense of contradiction within the work. We glimpse it through the memory of the participants, the

conflagration of churches, the power of the dominant Mormon Church, the military might and terrifying scope of the weaponry located within the county and the seemingly intolerant stance on those things that question the dominant forms of influence operating within society and the actions of the American state. It is a series of oppositions oscillating between an apparent ethos of freedom on one side and a strong air of repression and intolerance on the other. The device of the book and its use of interviews and depiction of personal images belonging to the participants allow a rewriting of history by them and expose basic social and cultural relationships that are often conflicted or uneasy.

Deller has bound together all these fragments of a place and put them in a guide-book, itself an object of participation and one which provides an opportunity for participation by an unidentified other. The form of this participation being through the reception of its images , stories, songs and histories in galleries or bookshops and in the invitation to undertake the journey the artist made, to visit the places he visited and talk to the people he met. To the traveller who undertakes the journey there is the promise of a gift from each of the storytellers in the book. The participatory nature of the project is presumably as durational as the lives of the gift givers.

This is a very uneasy work. It is exploring the myths of harmony and exposing an alternative national identity, the repression of another faith voice and the inequality of class. It does not fit into the ameliorative forms of participatory practice so common at the time it was being made and in particular, those situated within Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' in which the aim of the relational work was seen to be one in which to restore a perceived breach in the social bond. Here there is no harmonious set of relations that may be seen as constituting unified community. Deller was not proposing a socially engaged or dialogical project in the manner proposed by Bishop and Kester. This was not a concept of participatory art as something envisioned beforehand by the artist in the manner of Alys, but the concept of art as a process of assemblage or collage presenting big issues rendered small and intimate in the book. Unlike Oiticica and Alys, there was no collective encounter with events but individual acts of

participation within the context of a historically engaged subjectivity making visible issues of difference, opposition and tension. In common with Oiticica and Alys, this is a work which calls upon a thoughtful and reflective spectator which may open up a space to imagine the world differently. Deller's work offers an aesthetic experience of encounter in which found images, conversations, music, historical documents and essay are juxtaposed to contextualise rhetoric, faith, political and military opposition. It shares in common traits of photo journalism in which the juxtaposition of images and text can inform us about the world and maybe open a vector of thought that changes the way we see or act in it. There is no feel good factor in this work, it does not present a unified picture of Americanism but makes plain difference in all its forms ethnic, racial, class and faith. However, what it also does is bring all these forms of identification together in a way that includes them and their voices.

Reception in this work is difficult as it has been almost eradicated from view. The book can be tracked down and some of the images and the soundtrack accessed on the artists website. As a pictorial representation of that post 2000 moment, made in the wake of the collapse of the dot-com bubble and 9/11 and situated within 1990's multicultural and post-identity discourse, it is a work that could conceivably have been open to misunderstanding at the time it was made. It may be a work that might be better understood and re-appraised when the patterns of history can be more clearly identified. Books by their very nature are participatory devices, existing both as historical and cultural objects and as receptacles of memory. Jeff Wall has said that misunderstanding is both inevitable and interesting and an essential moment or element of artistic experience. The lack of control in transmission of the works meaning is what he considers significant:

> Pictorial art is radically open to the world. We can't know who is going to respond to it..... it is rooted in experience, it is addressed to the individual, and to the complexity and spontaneity of individuals. Certain associations made between works are made only because a certain person suddenly recognises them. (Wall, J. 2007:328)

Deller explored what it meant to be Californian and the perceived cultural attributes to being American. The resulting work reflected the socio-political tone of the project and, in common with the works of Oiticica and Alys, the requirement for a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has considered the socio-political dimension of participation in art by focusing on three works that mobilised participation in different ways, in both their making and reception. This investigation addressed the relationship between participation and socio-political comment and the ways in which such works have been framed by contemporary criticism. Socio-political here is understood within a process described by Jacques Rancière as 'dissensus' that works upon the established framework of inclusion and exclusion operating in society. It is the idea that by disrupting the borders and roles determined within the 'distribution of the sensible', a precluded other can set in motion the capacity to make the unseen visible and the unsayable audible. It is the possibility for diverse groups of people, communities and individuals, who might otherwise not be heard, to confront the established order of perception, and to reconfigure it in a way that makes them visible and their voices heard. At the heart of these ideas is Rancière's articulation of an 'emancipated spectator' as being one who interprets and translates what is placed before them in order to produce meaning. It is a proposition that dismisses the opposition between active and passive spectators, positioning these oppositions as 'allegories of inequality' within the 'distribution of the sensible'. He argues that looking is already considered to be active and that the act of looking confirms or modifies the 'distribution of the sensible', and hence interpreting the world is already a means of transforming it. In the works considered, here Hélio Oiticica's *Parangole* capes, Francis Alys's film *When Faith Moves Mountains*, and Jeremy Deller's book *After The Gold Rush,* serve as the mediating third term that frustrates equal undistorted transmission of meaning between individuals and also negates any assumption of cause and effect. They open equal spaces of encounter that makes anybody equal to everybody. It is this formulation of emancipation, intervening in the visible and sayable, that proposes transformational possibility and sets in motion a capacity to imagine the world and our relations to it differently.

The cycle of participation

Oiticica's notion of the 'cycle of participation' is significant for art practices in which the art object and its mediation of autonomous aesthetic experience include a socio-political form of interpretive spectator participation. It supports a general position that spectatorship is active participation in different ways. It is a proposition in which the act of looking confirms or modifies the distribution of the visible and hence, interpreting the world is already a means of transforming it. Spectatorship, in this regard, is removed from any historical notion of aesthetic contemplation. It is transformed into an aesthetic experience of encounter that requires the response of all our senses to the work, and a process of association and disassociation in which our encounters with the world are felt and measured. Oiticica's *Parangole* emphasised the importance of the autonomous experience of watchers and wearers within the 'cycle of participation'. Collective power in the work is not the status of members of a collective body, but a function of the power of translation and interpretation to produce a network of associations and disassociations linking individuals. It was this power that opened a space for the watchers and wearers to confront the established order of perception, and to imagine their world differently to the one characterised by the poverty, marginality and oppressive military rule, existing within a 1960's Brazilian context. It is the same processes through which Alys proposed the capacity of an artistic gesture in *When Faith Moves Mountains* to intervene in the established order and propose the transformative possibilities of collective effort. Alys utilised spectacle and allegory to confront the circular politics of Latin America, providing a story and the possibility to imagine a transformation of the future through an act of interpretation and translation in the present. It operates through the 'cycle of participation' in which Oiticica's watchers and wearers are represented by Alys's storytellers and translators. In *After The Gold Rush,* Deller evidenced historical, cultural and socio-political events on the back of an artwork, using encounters with people, places and situations to gauge responses to them. His work is a representation of a post 2000 moment in America, utilising ideas of historical re-enactment and 'living history' to explore the myths of harmony, exposing an

alternative national identity, the repression of another faith voice and the inequality of class. The form of the work as a book, its juxtaposition of images and texts, requires acts of interpretation and translation by its viewers and whose meaning may be revealed in what is sensed beyond any description of it. It too, operates through the ‘cycle of participation’, in which storytellers and readers stand in the position of watchers and wearers.

Rupture

These works are neither political nor activist art, but they do exist as works that were made politically. They were not created through a process of reciprocal creative labour, conversational exchange, negotiation and consensual dialogue as proposed in the socially engaged practices supported by Claire Bishop or the collaborative processes and dialogical exchange promoted by Grant Kester. That is not to say that they do not represent examples of oppositional practice or have no political efficacy. The political impulse within these works is not to create situations in which meaning is elaborated collectively or by providing a structure to create community, either in the manner proposed by Nicholas Bourriaud’s temporary micro-utopias or in the collective, co-authoring and de-alienating endeavours championed by Bishop and Kester. Each of these artists were posing questions about the function of art, and its ability to translate socio-political tensions into narratives, and to open a space for critical discourse that may in turn be transformational. They may be seen to operate through Rancière’s articulation of emancipation proposing a space in which autonomous acts of aesthetic experience converge, through an irreducible play of associations and disassociations, to set in motion the capacity of individuals to imagine the possibility for change, rather than through medium specificity reflecting on different interests on the part of different constituencies. The autonomy of our experience in relation to art suggests transformational possibility through Rancière’s notion of ‘dissensus’. It is predicated on ideas of equality that open a discursive space to facilitate non-consensual dialogue, foregrounding places,

situations and context and one in which ideas of aesthetic autonomy and socio-political concerns exist within an integrally related domain.

Art practices that include participation tend to be thought of as consensual, but the case studies considered here attest to the idea that they need not be, and art which reveals socio-political conditions, resulting in feelings of discomfort, disruption and unease, is as valid as that that seeks to be ameliorative. Oiticica's practice was oppositional, and based upon his belief that it was necessary to oppose everything that could be considered as cultural, political and social conditioning. His views accord with Rancière's idea of 'dissensus', and *Parangole* set out to destabilise established boundaries and roles through a proposal that made anybody equal to everybody. The work did not differentiate on grounds of class, ethnicity or gender nor did it privilege high art traditions over street culture. Oiticica had questioned what the experience of *Parangole* might bring to bear on the environment into which it was cast, and if it could give a participating subject the freedom to imagine his/her world differently. One consequence of this was to make plain issues of conflict and disruption. At the time Alys and Deller made the works focused upon here, there was a tendency in contemporary criticism which positioned art practices that mobilised participation in their making as convivial and collaborative arenas of exchange. *When Faith Moves Mountains* was a work by Alys which has a socio-political dimension and mobilised large scale participation in its making, but nonetheless, did not fit into these collaborative practices. It is a work in which the boundaries between the urban poor and the privileged space of the art biennale were made plain. There is a sense of unease, violence and a pervading sense of separation within the work that is at odds with the insistence, at that time, that works that had a participatory dimension should be inclusive and essential to the task of repairing a perceived break in the social bond. Deller's practice is one in which he strives to understand the conditions of life through personal experience and encounters with others, but he does so with the intention to investigate all points of view. *After The Gold Rush* is an uneasy work, and one in which there is no identification with a set of harmonious relations constituting unified community or shared sense of national identity.

There are no collective encounters, only individual acts of participation within the context of a historically engaged subjectivity, making visible issues of difference, opposition and tension. Each of the three works discussed in the case studies highlights the boundaries and roles in place determining who is included, and who was excluded, from the discursive frame. It is the ability of these works to cause the participating spectator to question and re-evaluate what is set before them that retains the tension between non-consensual dialogue and the possibility to set in motion the capacity for new ways of thinking that are inherently political.

Critical engagement

The focus of this thesis has been three works which do not set out to challenge the difference between object and process, between the work itself and experience of it, but bring many elements together. They offer a glimpse of the variety of the observed world and succeed in making a connection between the world we inhabit and the imaginary world the work proposes. As such, they call upon attentive spectators to interpret and translate their meaning..

You can't make people engage with particular artworks; they either will or they won't. For those who do, the aesthetic experience in that work will be impacted by their encounter with it. A work like Oiticica's *Parangole* struggles in this respect since its traces in the museum oscillate between the object of a cape and the incomplete work, requiring a physical body to activate it. When the work is encountered in a Made-on the-body-*Parangole* event the encounter is more playful than socio-political. However, although spectatorship of the *Parangole* in a re-staged form or through documentation is very different to direct spectatorship of the work in 1960s Brazil, something of its dissensual potential remains, and to some degree, the spectator can continue to contribute to the 'cycle of participation'. Liberatory possibility was at the heart of Oiticica's proposal and represented in the freedom to act and think through interpretation and translation. These are ideas which can now only be conveyed through description

and documentation and in which the specificity of knowledge to be gained from the physical experience of the work is not easily accessible. Alys's *When Faith Moves Mountains* does not privilege the experience of the individual in the here and now, but relies upon interpretation over a different period of time. Alys will typically include a postcard text to describe a particular project and will display all manner of material together to form the work. This may include faxes, e-mails, interviews, diary entries, drawings, photographs and paintings alongside video footage, slide projections and sound recordings of interventions he has staged. The specificity of knowledge gained through an encounter with the documentary element of the work will therefore be different according to each spectator's engagement, or otherwise, with it. *After the Gold Rush* is a process of assemblage and collage presenting big issues rendered small and intimate in the form of a book. It serves as a participatory object in its own right as well as a historical and cultural object and as a receptacle of memory. As a work emerging from a particular moment in American history, its meaning may be revealed in what is sensed beyond any description of it. As a pictorial representation of that post 2000 moment, it is a work that could conceivably have been open to misunderstanding at the time it was made and may be one that might be better understood and re-appraised now. These are all works in which everyone who encounters them will do so differently. The physical experience of participants in a work will be different from anyone who encounters it through documentation, either in galleries, journals or online. In these individual acts of interpretation and translation, there can be no assumption of equal undistorted transmission because the form of the work prevents it.

Controlling Agency

When I began this research I had not anticipated that one of the issues to emerge from it would be concerned with controlling agency. Art today cannot be free from commercial interest and market ambition, but for artists wishing to engage in practices with a participatory and socio-political dimension, there is a difficult path

to be steered to avoid appropriation of their works with a view to promoting a particular cause or point of view, being put to use for established ends or to be re-imagined as attraction.

Institutional reception in *Parangole* was controversial; by attempting to take the performing favela participants into the gallery, Oiticica was destabilising the hierarchies that distribute boundaries concerning the constituencies of art and who has access to cultural memory. In so doing, he suffered an act of institutional censorship by being refused entry to the museum.[66] *Parangole* was subjected to these imbedded cultural constructions of authority and identity a second time in 1994 when, during a performance of *Parangole* by the Paulista Samba Club at the San Paulo Biennale, the participants attempted to leave the public areas and enter the Malevich rooms of the gallery. The curator shouted at the dancers to leave. In contrast, Alys's work was not subject to censorship, but as a work with a socio-political dimension, and one that mobilised large scale participation, it has been seized upon to promote particular points of view. It has been shoe-horned into the realm of relational aesthetics to extol a sense of conviviality and to initiate and unite community in a shared insight. It has also been criticised as impoverished praxis through its use of collaborative labour simply as symbolic and scripted and to an extent that has led Alys to explicitly distance the work from the realm of community collaborations. Institutional reception in *After The Gold Rush* is difficult to ascertain. It is not an ameliorative work and does not present a unified picture of Americanism. It reflected upon social and historical reality, and exposes an alternative national identity and repression of liberatory possibilities that may have been difficult to confront in that post 2000 moment. It is a work that has been hidden from view but the themes and production techniques of which

[66] In 1992 the Witte de With exhibition of Oiticica's work did not tour England. The artist Susan Hiller implies that censorship was at work in this decision:"England will remain none the wiser, since the spectacular, labyrinthine restaging of much of his work, currently travelling to Paris, Rotterdam, Barcelona, Lisbon, Rio and the United States will not come here. Oiticica's assault on good taste, his involvement with delinquency, marginality, drugs, transgressive sex, and the trance states induced by colour, samba and rock'n'roll may be one reason for this. It is just as possible that his deep commitment to art theory feels too foreign and his political acumen too unsettling to appeal to a repressed audience in a depressed era."(Hiller, 1992)

have figured in subsequent works by Deller, not least *Memory Bucket* (2003),[67]*It Is What It Is* (2009)[68] and *Procession* (2009)[69]. I am inclined to think that reception of *After the Gold Rush* was uncomfortable. It is a work that challenges cultural memory, questions ameliorative notions of community, and bears witness to the erosion of historical, national, cultural identity. Challenges to such social orders are, in some way, seen as destructive of social harmony and as engendering notions of ideological misunderstanding or mistrust. Therefore, controlling agency may come to bear in deciding visibility. There is no evidence to suggest that this was the fate of *After The Gold Rush,* but it raises issues concerning the representation of such works.

The performance of the *Parangole* at Tate Modern in 2007 made me also consider the extent to which institutions appropriate art as attraction. In this case, the artist had conceived and provided instructions for the performance of Made-on-the-body- *Parangole* events, and therefore, the participating institution cannot be accused of appropriation for attraction. There are works whose participatory characteristics lend themselves to public interaction and in which their meaning or intention becomes lost once they are re-imagined as visitor attraction.[70] Art

[67] Deller returned to the US in 2003 to make *Memory Bucket* for which he won the 2004 Turner Prize. It was a road trip in Texas which including encounters with survivors of the Waco massacre, Christian fundamentalists, Quaker anti-war protesters, the manager of George W Bush's local diner, a Willie Nelson concert and its environmental focus, the filming of millions of bats leaving a cage. It is a work in which his authorial voice, barbed wit and sly comments so evident in *After The Gold Rush* are absent.

[68] The remains of mangled cars Deller saw and included in *After The Gold Rush* served as roadside memorials to those killed in automotive accidents. The use of a memorial device as a mediating third term in *It Is What It Is* seems to echo this earlier work.

[69] Deller considered the Death Valley Veterans Parade he witnessed whilst in California as: "the greatest art work ever made"(Deller, 2007) and it is therefore conceivable that this was the inspiration for him to create a parade of his own.

[70] In 2006 the artist Carsten Holler installed five giant slides in the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern, the work entitled *Test Site (2006)* invited gallery goers to travel on the slides and they did, in large numbers. Holler conceived of the idea as a means to alleviate commuter congestion and saw the slides as a means of human transport and an essential component of future architectural planning. In reality it is unlikely that this incarnation of Holler's art will awaken a participating visitor's awareness of urban congestion and raise it much beyond a gallery attraction akin to the tradition of the Helter Skelter. Holler is known for his slide works and the exploration of freedom of release whilst sliding, but it is unlikely that the majority of those gallery goers participating in the sliding will have given much thought to his intentions.

institutions have seized upon participatory visitor events as the main stay of their public attractions, and in so doing may be seen to be opening up the space of art to a more diverse public in ever growing numbers. Art in general has been subsumed into the leisure industry where it competes for attention amidst a long list of other attractions and activities including cinema, television, amusement parks, sports, music and the online world of social networking and gaming. Museums of modern art are places in which leisure activities have flourished alongside permanent collections, restoration, research and educational programmes. They are competing for visitors, funding, sponsorship and third party income generation. As a result, they engage in all manner of interactive public events, provide shops, restaurants and merchandising. They are answerable to their stakeholders, government funding bodies, corporate sponsors and the viewing public and are under constant pressure to be viable and stay relevant.[71] In addition to these corporate commercial interests, there are economic pressures on artists themselves. As self-employed workers they need to make a living like everyone else. Profile and reputation become an essential part of an artist's ability to attract funding and dealers, to get invited to exhibit, be offered mid career surveys or win awards. Those who can garner a reputation have studios to run, people to employ, and networking, marketing and financial responsibilities in line with any other private commercial business. Their clients are the museums, dealers, auction houses, art fairs and private collectors and their longevity depends upon a stream of production and their ability to maintain a visible presence. As Robert Smithson observed "Some artists imagine they've got a hold on this apparatus, which in fact has got a hold of them. As a result, they end up supporting a cultural prison that is out of their control. Artists themselves are not confined, but their output is."(Smithson, 1972)

In conclusion, the next stage of this research would be to consider how, within this commercial interest and market ambition, do those artists who want to make

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[71] Don Thompson provides an interesting view of the economics of the art world and the importance of branding in his book *The $12 Million Stuffed Shark*.(Thompson, 2008)

art with a participatory socio-political dimension resist controlling agency to overcome problems of appropriation and representation.

APPENDIX 1

PARANGOLE CAPE SERIES

- ***Parangole P4 Cape 1,*** 1964.

  Worn by: Miro of Mangueira (1964), Tineca of Mangueira (1964), Nildo of Mangueira (1964), Desdemone Bardin, photographer (1964), Mosquito of Mangueira (1966), Caetano Veloso, musician (1968), Torquato Neto, poet & songwriter (1968), Hélio Oiticica (1979).

- ***Parangole P5 Cape 2***, 1965.

  Worn by:Roseni of Mangueira at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janerio, (1965), Jeronimo of Mangueira (1966).

- ***Parangole P6 Cape 3, "Pedrosa: to Mario Pedrosa"***, 1965.

  Worn by:Miro of Mangueira at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janerio (1965), Hélio Oiticica (1966).

- ***Parangole P7 Cape 4, "Clark",*** 1965.

  Homage to: Lygia Clark, artist, based on an idea by Renato Fernandes.

  Worn by:Roseni of Mangueira and Hélio Oiticica at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janerio (1965), Antonio Manuel, Artist (1966).

- ***Parangole P8 Cape 5 "Manguerira"***, 1965.

  Homage to: Mangueira.

  Worn by: Maria Helena and Nildo of Mangueira at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janerio (1965), Jeronimo of Mangueira (1965), Nininha Xoxoba (1979).

- ***Parangole P10 Cape 6 "I am the mascot of Parangole, Mosquito of the Samba"***,1965

  Worn by:Mosquito of Mangueira (1965).

- ***Parangole P11 Cape 7 "Sex, violence, that's what pleases me",*** 1966.

  Worn by:Robertinho of Mangueira (1966), Jeroniomo of Mangueira (1966).

- ***Parangole P12 Cape 8 "Liberty Cape"***, 1966.

  In collaboration with:Rubens Gerchman, critic.

  Worn by:Robertinho of Mangueira (1966).

- ***Parangole P13 Cape 9 "Beware of the Tiger***", 1966.

  In collaboration with:Antonio Dias, artist.

  Worn by:Antonio Manuel, Artist (1966).

- ***Parangole Cape 10 "Out of your skin/grows the humidity/the taste of earth/the heat"***

- ***Parangole P15 Cape 11 "Embody Revolt"***, 1967.

  Worn by:Nildo of Mangueira (1967).

- ***Parangole P16 Cape 12 "On Adversity we live"***, 1964.

  Worn by:Nildo of Mangueira (1964).

- ***Parangole P17 Cape 13 "I am possessed",*** 1967.

  Suggested by:Nildo of Mangueira.

  Worn by:Nildo of Mangueira (1967).

- ***Parangole Cape 14 "We are hungry",***

- ***Parangole P19 Cape 15 "Gilease",*** 1968.

Dedicated to Gilberto Gil, musician.

Worn by:Nildo of Mangueira (1968).

- ***Parangole P20 Cape 16 "Guevarcalia"*** , 1968.

  Homage to: Guevara and Tropicalia.

  Worn by:Frederico Morais, historian and writer (1968).

- ***Parangole P22 Cape 18 "Nirvana"***, 1968.

  Realised with Antonio Manuel, artist.

  Worn by:Hélio Oiticica (1968), Torquato Neto, poet & songwriter, Whitechapel Gallery, London (1969).

- ***Parangole P23 Cape 19 "Caetelesvelasia"***, 1968.

  Dedicated to Ceatano Veloso, musician.

  Worn by:Paulo Ramos, musician (1979).

- ***Parangole Cape 20***, 1968.

  With: Rosa Correa.

- ***Parangole P25 Cape 21 "Xoxoba"***, 1968.

  Worn by:Nininha Xoxoba (1979).

- ***Parangole Cape 22 "Warm Ballot Box"***, 1968.

  In collaboration with: Rogerio Duarte, artist.

- ***Parangole Cape 23 "M'Way Ke",*** 1972.

  Worn by:Luis Fernando Guimaraes, New York City (1972).

- ***Parangole Cape 25***, 1972.

  Worn by:Romero, New York City (1972).

- ***Parangole Cape 26***, 1972.

  Worn by:Romero at the World Trade Centre Building, New York City (1972).

- **“Why impossibility/crime/existence in searching/search for happiness”.**

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