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# The energy between us: Two affective and intertwined space-times evoked by architecture as prelude to a proper sharing?

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# The energy between us: Two affective and intertwined space-times evoked by architecture as prelude to a proper sharing?

## **Abstract**

“I enter a building, see a room, and...” Peter Zumthor writes, “in a fraction of a second I have this feeling about it” (Zumthor 2006: 13). As an immediately grasped judgment of environmental character, atmosphere has been described as a collaboration of an infinite number of multisensory factors: a non-material experience, contrasting centuries of tradition understanding architecture as material artefact experienced through the limitation of vision (Pallasmaa 2014: 20).

## **Disciplines**

Architecture

# **Transversal Practices: Matter, Ecology and Relationality**

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of both settlers and Māori themselves. Secondly, currency refers to what is current, or has deep public import – in this case referring to the agency of air and waters, to which many Māori iwi and hapu (larger and smaller tribal groupings) lay claim, as having constitutional force and bearing. Thirdly, currency refers to the medium of transaction, which in settler time is the money currency of settler-colonialism.

The materialism of Māori claims to governance asks settlers to embrace currency, more broadly and deeply, in an historical, ecological and supra-judicial sense, in order that the fullness of Māori life and flourishing that settlement inhibits might yet be expressed. Isabelle Stengers' concept of cosmopolitics, taking the earth as source of sovereignty, and in particular her reading of Alfred Whitehead, provides the philosophical wherewithal for crossing, with respect, the uncommon commons of settler societies.

Stephen Turner teaches in English, Drama and Writing Studies at the University of Auckland. He has published widely on questions of settler colonialism, indigeneity and First law. Alongside an interest in writing and cultural transmission, he has published numerous articles on the university, and is currently co-writing a book with Sean Sturm about pedagogy, fractal life and social futures.

### Hartmut Veit

Victorian College of the Arts,  
The University of Melbourne

### Matter at the Coalface

Within the current ecological crisis coal actively intervenes in complex climate, political and social systems. This paper scrutinises coal's use in an art project to demonstrate that prevalent, traditional disciplinary and linguistic frameworks and visual representations of matter as inert market-driven resource materials – without agency – are not conducive to solving the problems created by its exploitation. It transversally brings together interdisciplinary research from the fields of history, ecology, anthropology and art to reveal the ecological impact deeply ingrained anthropocentric, Cartesian worldviews exert in human's commodified relationships to matter, nature and place.

This research takes up environmental philosopher Val Plumwood's invitation in her article 'Shadow places and the politics of dwelling' to reflect on

'belonging' and 'dematerialisation', through a site-specific study of place shaped by coal. Carbon's mobility is traced from ancient forests of the Carboniferous era and coal, to fire and power through ethnographic fieldwork in Latrobe Valley communities and the frame of the Hazelwood Mine fire of 2014. Excavating beneath the usual first person narratives of trauma and survival – and the institutional interests in resilience and community engagement – matter's non-innocent, agential nature as actant in connection with environmental mal-adaptation to land and false consciousness of place is interrogated.

Rethinking matter through the embodied processes of making and theorising this entanglement towards a relationship of co-responsibility and collaboration is discussed through texts from Bennett, Barad, Latour and Heidegger. Public debate is re-orientated from purely industrial, economic concerns towards considering matter's agency, politics and history as interrelated, blended and mutually co-creative ecologies.

Hartmut Veit is a practising artist who predominately works with sculpture. He is currently a PhD candidate at The University of Melbourne within the Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts through the Centre for Cultural Partnerships. His practice-led research thesis questions the nature of our relationship to matter and examines the agency of site-specific material for spatial practice within the geo-historical concept of the Anthropocene. The longstanding emphases on social and political imperatives within site-specific and socially engaged art practices are informed by ethnographic methods and expanded through a new materialist focus to challenge dominant concepts and visual representations of matter.

### Layne Waerea

### The Chasing Fog Club (Est. 2014): Free Participation, Free T-Shirt

This paper will present documentation of the ongoing visual arts project *the chasing fog club* (Est. 2014), as evidence of free artistic association and participation in the public social. "*The chasing fog club* invites any genuine member of the public to chase fog anytime, anywhere. In order to join the club, applicants must submit a photo or video as evidence of their efforts to chase fog, with all successful documentation being posted to the blog.

New members receive 12 months free membership, free entry to the AGM and Club Awards and a free club t-shirt."<sup>11</sup>

This paper discusses whether active and free participation, on terms and conditions selected as favourable to any new or existing club member, can question the social, legal and artistic rules governing what is acceptable behaviour in public spaces. This paper will outline how this club can provide opportunities for random, yet seasonally driven, social and artistic participation; even if the attainment of the vaporous reward is only momentary. For instance the act of chasing fog may include trespass to private property and a re-consideration of behavioural norms, or written and unwritten laws. This paper suggests that these free declarations of public effort, while unrestrained by any formal rules of association and participation, can quietly challenge and deny expectations of preferred social and legal behaviour when producing artwork in public spaces.

Layne Waerea (Te Arawa, Ngāti Kahungunu, New Zealand/Pākehā) is an Auckland-based artist currently working towards her PhD. Her Māori ancestry and value base, and background in law, creates a framework from which she interrogates socio-political issues from within the visual arts. The main focus of her practice-based research is to see how performance art interventions in public spaces can allow us to question the socio-cultural and legal rules that govern our behaviours and beliefs.

### Glenn Wallace

Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney

### Activating the Transversal City: Public Art and its Uses

Cities around the world are increasingly providing opportunities for artists to engage in shaping public space – not simply as 'global city' or 'creative city' branding – but in the creation of socially equitable and environmentally sustainable cities. Further, recent reflections on the post-conceptual nature of contemporary art suggest art's impact on urbanism (Osborne 2013) while a renewed approach to urbanism reflects the impact of the philosophy of Pragmatism (Inam 2013). In a surprising and pragmatic sense, Ranciere's re-evaluation of aesthetics and politics argues that the possibility of political change is at the heart of aesthetics.

This paper argues that the threads of contemporary art, urbanism and the politics of aesthetics may be drawn together to suggest a new role for public art. Based on case studies of recent public art in Sydney, in particular Jenny Holzer's *I Stay*, 2014, the paper aims to consider the role of public art in achieving a genuine (radical) democracy, one in which contested ideas about art and place, space and identity, from Aboriginal recognition and feminism to queer politics and political economy, are openly discussed. The paper specifically aims to explore how the re-evaluation of aesthetics and politics in recent public art challenges the predominantly neo-liberal hegemony that continues to shape the design and experience of cities. It then aims to reconsider the principle of re-activating public space (Marchart 1998), and the role of public art in creating, transforming and sustaining the diverse, vibrant and inclusive public sphere(s) of the cities we live in. The artwork can be viewed at: [www.istaybyjennyholzer.com](http://www.istaybyjennyholzer.com)

Glenn Wallace is a senior project manager in public art at the City of Sydney Council. Since 2004 he has played a key role in delivering the City's long term Sustainable Sydney 2030 vision, the City Art public art strategy, and the annual Laneway Art program (2008-2012). Glenn is currently a PhD candidate at Sydney College of the Arts where his research responds to recent calls from political philosophy, sociology and urban design for artists working in public space to not only influence the design of cities but to engage in transforming the political and cultural capacities of their citizens.

### Andrea Wheeler and Aniket Nagdive

Department of Architecture,  
Iowa State University

### The Energy Between Us: Two Affective and Intertwined Space Times Evoked by Architecture as Prelude to a Proper Sharing?

"I enter a building, see a room, and..." Peter Zumthor writes, "in a fraction of a second I have this feeling about it" (Zumthor 2006: 13). As an immediately grasped judgment of environmental character, atmosphere has been described as a collaboration of an infinite number of multisensory factors: a non-material experience, contrasting centuries of tradition understanding architecture as material artefact experienced through the limitation of vision (Pallasmaa 2014: 20). Atmosphere calls upon our

entire embodied and existential sense. It stimulates and guides imagination. A different way of understanding architecture is being proposed. It is a vague experience, neither exact nor measurable, created by an object, but not belonging to it. Dufrenne (1975 [1953]) writes that atmosphere is a ‘...certain quality which words cannot translate but which communicates itself in arousing a feeling’ (Dufrenne 1975 [1953]: 178). Atmosphere is a quasi-objective experience and one, Gernot Bohme (2014) writes, shared with others but that cannot be described independently of them. Terms such as “energy”, more familiar to the Eastern philosophical tradition, find greater ease with such concepts.

So what is it, vaguely experienced through different bodies, that evokes such affect? And how does the relationality between two differently sexed subjects, suggested by the philosophy of Luce Irigaray, differently shape our relationship with the artefact of architecture? Through Luce Irigaray’s philosophy of being-two, I suggest two affective and intertwined space-times aroused by atmosphere: two worlds, two material and immaterial architectures, as the prelude to a proper sharing.

Andrea Wheeler is Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at the Iowa State University, where she contributes to the required technical lecture series and is a studio instructor. She was awarded a PhD in Architecture from the University of Nottingham in the UK in 2005. Her thesis examined the question of dwelling through the philosophy of Luce Irigaray. Her work is published in two collections of essays edited by Luce Irigaray: *Teaching and Conservations*. Andrea’s work is about sustainable buildings: she cares about lifestyle change, the actual performance of buildings and challenging the sustainability agenda in architecture.

Aniket Nagdive is a Graduate Student in Architecture at Iowa State University, and is Research Assistant to Andrea Wheeler. He did his Bachelor’s degree in Architecture at NIT- Bhopal in India where he worked on heritage conservation projects during his final year. During spring 2015 he worked with Iowa State University Senior Lecturer of Architecture, Peter Goché at the Black Contemporary Studio. This is an experimental art and design laboratory in Ames, Iowa, focused on theories of materiality and affect. He developed an abstract art installation “Mirage”, which portrays the seen and unseen energy of the agricultural landscape of Iowa.

**Ardath Whynacht**  
Mount Allison University

### **(un)subjects: Diffractive Making at the Borderlines**

(un)subjects explores diffraction (Barad, 2007) as a method of collective making and considers the role of vulnerability, attachment and boundaries in collaborative research-creation methods. (Un)subjects began as a participatory, arts-based research-creation project with a group of young women who are diagnosed with borderline personality disorder.

Borderline personality disorder is the most stigmatized disorder listed in the APA Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and is predominantly diagnosed in women. It is characterized by emotional instability and persistent self-harm behaviours such as cutting. Borderline women face incarceration rates that are ten times higher than the general population. Critical constructionist accounts of psychiatry and carceral spaces have failed to account for the materiality of suffering experienced by psychiatrized peoples, instead, positioning itself as concerned purely with ‘meaning’ and against biomedical therapeutics that seek to engage only with ‘matter’.

Alternatively, new materialist feminisms provide a space in which to critically and intra-actively engage with women who know all too well what ‘marks on bodies’ mean in lived experience. This project explores what it means to collectively read borderline experiences diffractively (Haraway, 1997; Barad, 2007) and attempts to spatially map borderline territories using digital media and curated objects produced and/or discovered by the women involved in the project. The author welcomes critical discussion of the piece; it’s potential as a transversal practice and the ethical implications of diffractive-making methods with highly vulnerable collaborators.

Ardath Whynacht is an interdisciplinary artist and Doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Humanities Program at Concordia University. She is a founding member of Phin; a transdisciplinary performance collective with roots in contemporary dance and poetry. She has a degree in Immunology and a particular interest in contagion, entanglement and the non-human in all of us. Ardath is currently a professor of Sociology at Mount Allison University and completing a two-year project supported by the Canada Council for the Arts on magic and everyday objects.

**Melissa Wolfe**  
Monash University

### **Bullying Affect and Productive Schooling**

In this visual research conducted with two inter-generational groups of Australian females I attempt to illuminate schoolgirling processes, as material discursive practices, that refract ontology. In this paper I theorise the recounted experiences of the two youngest participants of this study and their negotiation of what I have named bullying affect at secondary school. Bullying affect is a conflict involving a denial of material relationality paradoxically entangled with a desire for belonging.

This paper is informed by Karen Barad’s (2007) ontoepistemological framing where knowing is a direct material experience of the world and the present is productive of not only the past but also the future. I consider how the material experience for the schoolgirl subject might be explicitly extended to allow, and promote, desires for alternative ways of knowing what it is to be a successful girl at school and beyond.

Melissa Wolfe is a photographer and educator who has taught Media and Visual Art in Victorian secondary schools for almost twenty years. Melissa has an undergraduate degree in fine art and postgraduate degrees in both education and media. She holds a masters degree in education and is currently in her final year of her PhD research at Monash University where she is also a sessional tutor in teacher education. Her filmic research examines gendered experiences undergone at secondary school in Australia

**Laura Woodward**  
Victorian College of the Arts,  
The University of Melbourne

### **Agential Relationships of Time, Matter, Movement and Experience in System-based Kinetic Sculpture (using Luc Besson’s “Lucy” as a Transversal Testing Ground)**

In Luc Besson’s 2014 science-fiction film “Lucy”, lead protagonist Lucy (having absorbed drugs allowing her to access her full cerebral capacity) states: “Film a car speeding down a road; speed up the image infinitely and the car disappears. So what proof do we have of its existence? Time

gives legitimacy to its existence; time is the only true unit of measure. It gives proof to the existence of matter. Without time we don’t exist.”

My practice revolves around kinetic sculptural installations involving post-humanist considerations of matter, medium, agency, and systems. I was struck by the resonance of Lucy’s statement with system-based kinetic sculpture. The interrelationships of matter, motion, time, components and sensory experience are compounded and exposed in the “ecological” emergence of these works. This paper uses Lucy’s statement as a starting point – a transversal testing ground, a framing tool – through which to explore relationships of time, matter and motion present in kinetic sculptural practice.

Elucidating how kinetic sculptural systems take form through agential relationships, kinetic sculpture is exposed as a site in which entanglements of time, matter, motion, experience and practice can be explored and articulated. Delving into these practice-led articulations of system-based kinetic sculpture, this paper will show that Lucy, in focusing on time as the “legitimiser”, overlooks the equally relevant and present agency of ever-moving matter. It will foreground the agential entanglement and transversal natures of time and matter – and by extension, of motion, sensory experience, and agencies encountered through artistic practice.

Laura Woodward is an artist and practice-led researcher. Her practice and research focus on system-based kinetic sculptural installations. She received her PhD in 2014 with the practice-led project “The Introverted Kinetic Sculpture”. She has exhibited widely in Australia in solo and curated group exhibitions, with a growing profile in public sculpture commissions, with her most recent solo exhibition shown at Ararat Regional Gallery in mid-2015. She has presented at conferences in Sydney, Scotland, Belgium and Melbourne. Publications include a chapter in the collective volume *Moving Imagination: The Motor Dimension of Imagination in the Arts*, 2013; and a refereed article in *Studio Research*, 2014.

**Kari Yli-Annala**  
Aalto University, Helsinki

### **Peter Gidal’s Challenge to the New Materialisms**

In Peter Gidal’s materialist/structural Room Film (1973) the camera follows the surfaces and things

Transversal Practices focuses on how things, subjects, collectives, politics and disciplines are in the making; how they take-form and transform in relation to other elements, both human and nonhuman. Transversal Practices are concerned with ecologies where intensities of movement are aligned with and embrace hands-on attitude and artistic, scientific, ethnographical, philosophical and activist praxis.

We offer three keywords to inspire thinking and to carve out the specificities of practice. Matter refers to ubiquitous, vibrant and continuous becoming that is one of the central concerns of New Materialism: practices are always material, and surprising in nature. Ecology indicates an open and continuously transforming system, which depends upon how its components relate to each other. Relationality, for its part, is the moving principle of being in the world, or with the world. We become in relation to others. We co-emerge, as do artworks, ideas and collectives.

We question: How do transversal practices work and how can we account or conceptualise them? What kind of methodologies do they necessitate, or call for?

We encourage critical approaches that transversally cross the following: collectivity, corporeality/incorporeality, materiality/immateriality, indigeneity, individual/group subjectivity, knowledge-production/onto-epistemologies, language, temporality, transdisciplinarity, processes of making art/philosophy/ activism, and the three Ss—spatiality, sociality and the sensorium.

The NewMats2015 Conference is sponsored by the Faculty of the VCA and MCM at the University of Melbourne in co-operation with ISCH COST Action New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on 'How Matter Comes to Matter'