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Neutral Doing : Intending Objects

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Illustrations:

Fig 1. David Cyrus Smith, Feathered Ear, 2015

Fig 2. and Fig 3. Rudolph Stingel, Untitled 2012

Fig 4. and Fig 5. Gaylen Gerber, Nuclear War: What's in it for you? 2014

1. Abstract

David Cyrus Smith

Neutral Doing : Intending Objects

This project takes the form of an investigation into the speculative object as proposed by Alain Robbe-Grillet through his fictional writing and its use as a means for articulating the developments and propositions in my practice. The Object, which is considered through the dual statements in the title, is deployed and tested through examination and example to be considered as a viable and useful mechanism for the consideration of my studio work and thesis enquiry. Robbe-Grillet's Object, at the center of this enquiry, is considered through its material, physical, mute characteristics and impulses, and is tested against a selection of artist's and writer's enquiries that might be considered to be working with 'the object' with a degree of correlation and sympathy to Robbe-Grillet's intentions.

The question begins with the establishment of figural indeterminacy of the object that is the result of Robbe-Grillet's neutralising and repetitive objectification. The implications of this strategy are then developed through notions of the fragment, and in particular, Georges Didi-Huberman's proposal of the Patch as an agitating necessity in a formal field. This question is then applied to the Mottled screen as presented by Proust and explored by Mieke Bal. These proposals are in turn questioned as viable approaches to engaging with, and the production of, artwork. In particular, whether it is possible to evolve a spatial dialectic which functions as both immediate source for an embodied experience and as a sign and symptom to be decoded. Is it feasible to generate space around the 'object as fragment', which becomes open and transformative through the viewers collaboration.

In considering the use of the fragment as presented by Robbe-Grillet as a structural and symbolic device in his writing I have developed a set of fragmentary propositions for the structure of the text to follow. These 'fragment chapters' are intended to elide or fold together as separate and collaborative elements.

Under a series of chapter headings my intention is to explore sections and elements of the enquiry that use as starting points formal and pictorial manifestations which are then opened out into broader discussions. These debates loop back and across with the implication that they reflect the habit of description in Robbe-Grillet's writing.

2. Introduction

*Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter*¹. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*

How is an object to be encountered, and in encountering an object how does one negotiate a relationship which will, as Deleuze states, elicit thought that expands beyond recognition?

My question is an attempt to articulate a swelling of thought around the increasing presence of the object in my practice and whether this can be presented to the viewer as a generative and not a declarative statement.

These are questions that I will try to address through this text and in doing so set out an MPhil proposal for a substantial project to be developed through thesis.

In her introduction to *The Mottled Screen*, Mieke Bal declares 'how can an image be written? And once written, how can it be read?'² Through the development of this proposal I have become more concerned with the necessity for the writing to operate as an enquiry, which has similar aims to the concerns of my studio practice. Concerns, which are articulated around the object but question its reading as a definitive statement. If the writing is to be of value to how the studio work is read and maintain an openness, which is proposed in the painting, then it is necessary for it to work with these intentions and not simply commentate on them. With this in mind I have chosen to develop a method for the writing, which explores the fragmentary statements that are a feature and conceptual methodology of Alain Robbe-Grillet's writing. 'The Object' as generative encounter is central to my interest in Robbe-Grillet and is deployed throughout the text as a pulsive recurrence- a return that is affirmative but oblique.

The method employed for the writing, one of fragmentary statements presented as short chapters, is a means to echo the concerns of my proposal in a concrete form as well as a manifestation of the enquiry at stake in my proposal.

The Fragment, which grows in prominence through the writing of the text, also becomes the most appropriate form to articulate my concerns for 'the object' and how 'an encounter' with the object might be generated for the viewer and the implications of this encounter.

I have set out my text as a series of small chapters, which also operate as fragmentary enquiries. My intention was to see if these fragmentary statements would generate off one another in a manner to collectively address my interest in 'the object' in my practice.

I have focused on the 'intentional object' in Robbe-Grillet's writing and by examining the implications and use of Robbe-Grillet's object I can create a context for a wider discussion of the implications of the fragmentary object and how the reader/viewer might encounter such a proposal.

¹ Georges Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Columbia University Press, 1994, p 139

² Mieke Bal, *Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p 1

I have looked at two artists – Rudolph Stingle and Gaylen Gerber – whom I consider to be directly addressing, through interactive environments, the question of how the viewer can ‘encounter’ the art object and the significance of this participatory experience. Although, my own practice is not presented in this manner it is an attempt to illuminate the concerns I have in sympathy with these artists and reflect back an approach which generates from ‘the object’.

3. Feathered Ear

*What’s a letter, next to a big body full of buttered light?*³
Hélène Cixous, Stigmata

*The spot is on the wall of the house, on the flagstones, against the empty sky. It is everywhere in the valley, from the garden, to the stream and up the opposite slope. It is in the office too, in the bedroom, in the dining room, in the living room, in the courtyard, on the road up to the highway*⁴.
Alain Robbe-Grillet, Jealousy

.....

I’ve taken steps in the direction of ‘Feathered Ear’ (Fig.1). To stand in front of it is also to stand behind it, the silhouetted figure is a before and after. Viewing it from this position is also to be inside it, my interior vantage point discloses aspects of what I see, but must also conceal others, a process of seeing and perhaps, even being seen.

Hannah Arendt, in her text ‘the Life of the Mind’, suggests that there is something like reversibility to the categories of seeing and being seen: ‘every perceiving object is at moments a perceptual object, and every perceptual object at times a perceiving subject.’⁵

I’ve taken steps to see ‘Feathered Ear’. Close now, the ground of the painting appears to pause, it is periphery at this distance, imperceptible shifting and flowing, a slowed down pulsation. Extreme slowness, claims Yve-Alain Bois; ‘gives rise to a feeling of the uncanny. It disturbs the boundary separating the animate and the inanimate, the organic from the inorganic, the dead from the living’.⁶

³ Hélène Cixous, *Bathsheba or the interior Bible, Stigmata, Escaping Texts*, Routledge, 2005 p 11

⁴ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy, Two Novels by Alain Robbe-Grillet*, Grove Press, New York, 1990, p 102

⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Worlds Phenomenal Nature, The Life of the Mind*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc, New York, 1981, p 19

⁶ Yve-Alain Bois, *Very Slow, Formless- A users guide*, Zone Books, New York, 1997, p 202

I've taken steps back from 'Feathered Ear'. *Pachetra Sagittigera Britannica*, the Victorian name for this moth is no less unknowing, a feathered ear. Sitting in the feathered down of dense woodland bracken- the pattern on its wings is a seductive kaleidoscope of scattered features and mirrored digits.

Appearance, according to Kaja Silverman is 'a definitionally aesthetic event; the bringing forward, into the light of visibility, of a unique constellation of formal co-ordinates'⁷. The formal co-ordinates are the fragments, which are to be handled, felt and caressed. These fragments invite us to summon forth, to divine. Feathered ear is a subjective oddity, which to quote Silverman, is 'objectively intended'⁸.

.....

The silhouette appears as a formed and whole entity. Its singularities fused into the one connected mass, complete, enclosed, and contained. Scanning the object, you might look for some evidence of the fusing of parts, or of a former more articulated appearance; but what is apparent is a sealed skin. Lyotard referred to this as the 'great ephemeral skin', an 'acephalus body', split apart and spread out as a single surface⁹.

Sitting at the threshold of a liquid marbled swell, the silhouette is the crystallised thought of oil flows and eruptions. A stalagmite remainder of drained underground channels, its lips, edges, and crevices, are lacquered tight.

The black oil paint appears dense on the surface of the paper; in areas it is matt- where the oil has soaked into the paper- and in areas a glossy, sheened, and buttery paste. There seems in places to be a resistance against the oiled slick, an attempt to hold back the permeating paste, this however is an occupation that has inevitability to it. If I poured a bottle of linseed oil onto one area it would quickly make the paper transparent, greasily translucent like chip wrapping. This Fabriano is a heavy paper, and its capitulation is conceded over time.

The oil paint is applied in thin increments that sit on the surface, and it takes several subsequent reapplications before the paint begins to melt into the paper- a black buttery cube dissolving into a bleached white parchment. The paint then begins to set, and ossify, into the compressed core of the fabric, a calcification of black lava, which like a Pompeian seared shadow, is fixed into the paper as the oil soaks in.

The oil seeps from front to the back as if attempting to pass through the paper entirely. Caught at the papered threshold, the oil gathers together on the paintings reverse side, swelling into a slick of tacky residue, it emanates out in pale brown waves that reverse

⁷ Kaja Silverman, *Intending Objects, World Spectators*, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, p 132

⁸ Kaja Silverman, *Ibid*, p 133

⁹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, translation- Ian Hamilton Grant, Indiana University Press, 1993, p 3

back through the paper and emerge on the face of the painting as haloes around the silhouette. The bleached out stain, which sits beside the figure, is echo to its narcissus¹⁰.

.....

In the British Museum there are four black granite stone carvings of the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet. The four figures are in a row, two are seated and two, on either side, are standing. A pale blue painted wall flattens the space behind them, while at the same time amplifying their silhouettes. The smooth surface of the black granite appears continuous and hermetic, a symmetry of seductive density, and reposeful grace.

Sekhmet was a lion goddess whose name means 'the mighty one', a personification of aggression; she was associated with destruction and plague. The strangeness of the black anthropomorphic lionesses to a contemporary consideration makes them appear unknowable, distant, an oddity with 'affective presence'.

Kaya Silverman, in her book *World Spectators* observed of Lacan's commentary on presence: 'in order for a thing to appear, or emerge as such, it must be 'thinged'. To 'thing' something is to make it 'present'. But this particular presence, the presence of the Sekhmet carvings, is affective, not temporal or spatial; affective presence requires, in fact, the loss of the 'here and now'. A thing is thus 'a presence made of absence.'¹¹ The carvings of Sekhmet are objects that are imbued with absence- a melancholy absence, which is enduring and insistent.

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In 'Infinite Regress' David Joselit critiques Rosalind Krauss's assertion that likened the onset of semiosis in Picasso's art to a disappearance of the carnal or tactile quality in representation. Krauss, 'theorises an extraordinary transformation in cubism from the body to language'. The premise of the essay appears to be; 'what is unavailable to vision must find its place in language.'¹²

Her argument, Joselit proposes, 'assumes, a transactional model in which the body of flesh is eclipsed by language; Krauss accentuates the occlusion of carnality through semiosis rather than its reappearance as a new 'body of text'¹³.

According to this assertion, Picasso was playing 'a zero-sum game' in which the emergence of semiotic representation, in cubism, is somehow inversely proportional to

¹⁰ 'Melting is an entropic process par excellence, and perhaps this is one of the reasons Bataille was so interested in the Icarus myth. As Edward Ruscha showed with his 'liquid words', melting means falling into indifference'. Yve-Alain Bois, *Sweats of the Hippo, Formless- a users guide*, Zone Books, New York, 1997, p 181

¹¹ Kaja Silverman, *A presence made of absence, World Spectators*, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, p 56

¹² David Joselit, *Mensuration En Abyme: Marcel Duchamp's Cubism, Infinite Regress- Marcel Duchamp 1910-1941*, October, MIT Press, 1998, p 17

¹³ Joselit, *Ibid*, p 18

the visual experience of the carnal. An alternative model, one that synthesizes the carnal and the semiotic, is proposed by Joselit, which considers the model offered by Duchamp's Network of Stoppages. This painting, argues Joselit, enacts an operation in which the body attains 'the status of sign while retaining a potent residue of its carnality'¹⁴.

Network of Stoppages is positioned in the space between the sign versus carnality opposition- a space that Duchamp articulates in which one is reflected in the other, carnality in semiotics and the reverse also, a folding in and over one another.

This permeability of thresholds presented by Duchamp, between the real and symbolic, body and language, 'an embodied semiosis', is also apparent in Lyotard's 'Libidinal Economy'. Here, according to Joselit, the sign emerges from carnality- 'it is literally carved from flesh while maintaining a residue or 'stain' of its original embodied state'.¹⁵

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There is a cabinet that stands in the Mannerists room of the Rijksmuseum that is made from oak, which is entirely concealed beneath an ebony veneer embellished with ivory. The ivory marquetry flicker about the columns and panels that conceal doors and draws, in a manner that seems to increase in optical vibration as one scans the surfaces for an indication of hinges, latches or doors. The sealed seams and concealed openings resemble a riddle- it is Sphinx-like, intimidating and mute, and to be in front of it is like attempting to push against magnetic resistance.

One panel mirrors another panel, like a duplicating cell, it is a manifestation of infinite repetition. It seems that whilst its final design must have been anticipated in the beginning, somewhere along the line, it appears, other combinations opened up to the cabinet maker that were simultaneously a product of the cabinets own internal momentum, and which were extrinsic to its original plan.

In Borges library of Babel, An eternal traveller eventually happens upon the point where the library's infinite disorder begins to repeat itself. The anonymous 17th century cabinetmaker of the Rijksmuseum, like Borges's librarian, became entangled in an infinite labyrinth of difference and repetition, repetition and confusion, exquisite, ecstatic refinement, which developed its own internal logic and enveloping framework. To achieve this point of ultimate subsuming geometry, of mesmerising symmetry, and seamless enclosure, the cabinetmaker sealed himself inside of it.

¹⁴ Joselit, Ibid, p 18

¹⁵ Joselit, Ibid, p 18

4. Intending Objects

Commenting on the use and significance of objects in Alain Robbe-Grillet's writing, Roland Barthes observed; 'The whole purpose of the authors work, in fact is to confer upon an object its 'being there', to keep it from being 'something'¹⁶.

A certain mobility of thinking results when this resistance is applied, and what is revealed in this process, is something that is always deferred, not quite present. The 'placeless' places that Robbe-Grillet establishes, suggest new conditions of attention and alertness. Barthes looks into the persistence inherent in Robbe-Grillet's 'describing' and attempts to articulate the resultant conditions that are a product of this observation:

Robbe-Grillet's object has neither function nor substance. More precisely, both its function and substance are absorbed by its optical nature. But the description of the object somehow exceeds its function in every case, and at the very moment we expect the author's interest to lapse, having exhausted the object's instrumentality, that interest persists, insists, bringing the narrative to a sudden, untimely halt and transforming a simple implement into space. Its usefulness, we discover, was merely an illusion, only its optical extension is real- its humanity begins where its function leaves off¹⁷.

The object, for Robbe-Grillet, has an autonomy seemingly separate to the text, that is removed from the narrative through the prolonged and dislocating observation, which imbues it with a purpose that is at once alien and synthetic, and yet somehow also reinforces with urgency its necessity for 'being there'. Robbe-Grillet shifts the minor object to the forefront of our attention and offers them to us so that we might pick them up, handle them, and weight them in our hands¹⁸. These objects are placed in front of us so that we might divine, speculate, and read our own significances, actions, and meanings into them. Robbe-Grillet's objects entreat us to be participants in an active exchange in which we have the autonomy to perform our own meaning.

The shift of emphasis, as proposed by Robbe-Grillet, from author to participatory audience, has fascinating implications, for a viewers interaction with artwork.

This however, can be more than a proposition for an immersive participatory experience; what the artist/author is producing is a space of thought, a moment of slowing down, pause, and reflection, which is a setting out of the conditions for speculation.

Similar to the way that Robbe-Grillet's objects behave as fragments, the artwork presented as such would have spaces opening up around it of uncertain outlines and proportions, which can then be speculated upon to divine the potential significance of these missing parts.

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¹⁶ Roland Barthes, *Objective Literature: Alain Robbe-Grillet, Two Novels by Alain Robbe-Grillet*, Grove Press, New York, 1990, p 14

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 15

5. The Patch

In 'The art of not describing: Vermeer- the detail and the patch', Georges Didi-Huberman writes about the historian's inclination to examine a painting by seeing it in detail:

...see it, not look at it, for seeing thinks it knows better how to approach, anticipate, or mime the supposedly sovereign act off knowing¹⁹

Seeing in detail, Didi-Huberman claims, involves a perverse form of violence- 'you get closer only so as to cut things up, divide them into parts and pull them to pieces'²⁰

...detailing' designates the exactly symmetrical, even antithetical operation which consists of sticking all the pieces back together again, or at least accounting for them in full.²¹

A paradox is inherent in this assertion, one which only gets you nearer something the more it is cut up, and by cutting something up it is easier to see the whole, which would be to suggest that the whole can only exist in cut-up form, like jigsaw parts which have the utility to be reassembled.

This orthodoxy, according to Didi-Huberman, has three operations 'proximity, division, and summation', an approach, he claims to image analysis which states' in order to have knowledge of something, you must know about it in detail²².

This reflects a need for a definitive critical method, a means to have the last word through a process of attribution- in this sense a picture is like a ciphered text- all it needs is for you to decipher the clues and the meaning will appear to you.

Didi-Huberman makes a proposal for 'the fragment' as an alternative to the detail. The fragment, he states, 'relates back to the whole only to question its status, to suggest its absence, or propose it as an enigma or an effaced memory.'²³

'The patch' is proposed, by Didi-Huberman, as a locus for the fragment and this is explored through 'the ball of thread' in Vermeer's painting *The Lacemaker*. The ball of thread, rendered unusually in comparison to the rest of the painting, sits in the foreground, but is somehow separate from the other elements in the work and appears to behave in a manner to destabilize the image.

¹⁹ Georges Didi-Huberman, *The art of not describing: Vermeer- the detail and the Patch*, *History of Human Sciences*, Vol.2, No.2, Sage Publications, 1989, p 136

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Through exhaustive description born of an ideal form of knowledge and of totality. Or what is known as, according to Didi-Huberman, Tacit positivism. This comes from afar, postulating that the visible, in its entirety, can be described, cut up into its constitutive elements (like the words in a sentence or letters in a word), counted, just like anything else. It also postulates that to describe means to see well, and that to see well means to see the truth'. Ibid, p 136

²³Ibid, In Robbe-Grillet's 'the erasers' the protagonist Wallis is preoccupied in his pursuit of an ideal eraser from his past- struggling to recall the brand in various stationers he can only remember the middle letters of the brand name 'di'. Possibly a clue to an Oedipal sub theme running through the narrative, but a clue of such enigmatic opacity to render it as a recurrent fragment, one which locks in with the rhythm of elliptical fragments circulated throughout the book but remain stubbornly out of reach and decipherment. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Erasers*, Alma Classics.

Didi-Huberman likens the Lacemaker's patch to one observed by Proust in another painting by Vermeer- in this instance 'The View of Delft' and in particular 'a yellow flash' of colour on one of the buildings:

It is the patch that is yellow. It is efficacious, not rinsed clean by matter', but on the contrary envisaged as a 'precious substance' and as a 'layer of paint'. Not being elicited by a 'photographic arresting' of time past, it brings about a sudden, catastrophic commotion to present time, causing the body of the onlooker Bergotte, to collapse.²⁴

For Didi-Huberman, the yellow flash of colour in Vermeer's painting, is more than just a 'patch', it is a slab of paint that has an almost explosive power; 'it is paint considered as a 'precious' and traumatic material cause'.²⁵

The dramatic outcome, a kind of negative miracle (the collapse and death of Bergotte in front of the painting) – indicates the existence of something very real at work in the painting, almost a form of dazzlement. Obvious, luminous and perceptible, it is at the same time obscure, enigmatic, and difficult to analyse, notably in semantic or iconic terms, for it is an effect of paint at work not as a descriptive sign but as coloured matter.²⁶

Didi-Huberman introduces the notion of animate elements within the painting that appear to have an agency of their own- a form of self determination which fractures the image. Returning to 'the patch' in 'The Lacemaker' Didi-Huberman elaborates on this point:

For the patch has been bestowed with an unusual power of expansion and diffusion: it infects the whole picture, or it affects it, as it were, by means of a phantasmatic, uncanny effect. With the result that the obviously mimetic features begin, one by one to become unstable.'²⁷

Didi-Huberman likens this behavior to a symptom- 'the symptom is then a double-sided semiotic entity displaying and dissimulating either sovereign or accidental meanings that may correspond to either events or structures'. This, Didi-Huberman explains, is why it displays itself as an incomprehensible sign. From here he formulates the notion of 'the patch of paint' as being the symptom of the painting within the picture. Painting in the sense of a material cause and matter- 'it is something which does not correspond to the logic of desire and protension' he goes as far as to say 'when the patch occurs painting becomes hysterical, whereas with detail it fetishises itself'.²⁸

The symptom, Didi-Huberman argues, has a double edge nature – and as such also sits between theoretical concepts- 'a field of a phenomenological kind and one of a semiological kind' (similar to Joselit's commentary on Krauss's semiotic/carnal opposition)²⁹. A potential problem

²⁴ Georges Didi-Huberman, *The art of not describing: Vermeer- the detail and the Patch*, *History of Human Sciences*, Vol.2, No.2, Sage Publications, 1989, p 149

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid, p 156

²⁸ Ibid, p 163

²⁹ Ibid, p 160

arises, he observes, when privileging one view over the other. A symptom infects the body and spreads- therefore it is a sign of a larger complaint- an overwhelming cause perhaps.

'The detail', once discovered by the critic, is soon used as the definitive word on the subject of the visible- details add up to create the whole. On the contrary, argues Didi-Huberman:

The patch stares you in the face, mostly in the foreground of the picture, frontally, indiscreetly; but for all that it does not let itself be identified or enclosed: once uncovered it remains problematic.³⁰

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6. The Centipede

Alain Robbe-Grillet's focus on the 'object' sits sympathetically with the concerns of the 'the patch', as expressed by Didi-Huberman. An example of a featured 'patch' in Robbe-Grillet's writing is the image of the Centipede in the book *Jealousy*. The moment the centipede appears crawling up the wall to its conclusive violent crushing, it is returned to throughout the text, in metronomic regularity and pulsive insistence.

The centipedes broken body is picked through and accounted for in detailed forensic description, with even the impact stain on the wall becoming a generative instance, a patch of discolouration, which foregrounds the event in a way that elevates this minor moment to one of significance. In describing the centipede by objectively rendering it, Robbe-Grillet increases the oddity and strangeness of the moment by removing all emotive embellishment:

The outline seems indelible. It has no relief, none of the thickness of a dried stain, which would come off if scratched at with a fingernail. It looks more like brown ink impregnating the surface layer of paint.³¹

Having accounted for every shattered limb, and residual fragment of Carapace in meticulous rendering, Robbe-Grillet then proceeds to remove the crushed fragments and stained ink patch as though taking an eraser to the page. The visceral fragments are removed from our sight, in a form of cleansing, yet their presence persists- elongated and more real now that it has been removed from the text.

It is interesting to note that the removal of the remnants of the centipede take the form of drawing. This is Robert Rauschenberg erasing a de-Kooning drawing only to make it's existence that much more intense and present. Its 'being there' cannot be displaced as with greater effervescence it endures in our imagination, more palpable through recall.

The slender traces of bits of legs or antennae come off right away, with the first strokes of the eraser. The larger part of the body, already quite pale, is curved into a question mark that becomes increasingly vague toward the

³⁰ Ibid, p165

³¹ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy*, Two Novels by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Grove Press, New York, 1990, p 97

tip of the curve, and soon disappears completely. But the head and joints require a more extensive rubbing: after losing its colour, the remaining shape stays the same for quite a long time. The outlines have become only a little less sharp. The hard eraser passing back and forth over the same point does not have much affect now.³²

The action of removal becomes as disconnected as the revisiting of the actual crushing- the strangeness is in how we are left to dwell and linger, our focus persistent and intense.

A complimentary operation seems in order now: to scratch the surface very lightly, with the corner of a razor blade. Some white dust rises from the wall. the precision of the tool permits the area exposed to its effects to be carefully determined. A new rubbing with the eraser now finishes off the work quite easily.³³

The stain has been erased but its presence is now as ‘a patch’. So successful was the removal that it could now be construed as depression in the surface of the wall- to all extents it has been erased, however, the removal of the fragments from the text, transfers them to the reader. As with the Ball of thread in ‘the Lacemaker’ the centipede still sits in the foreground, ‘staring you in the face, frontally, indiscreetly’ it remains problematic, an enduring disturbance.

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7. Desiring Objects

Kaja Silverman, in her study ‘World Spectators’, discusses at length Hannah Arendt’s proposal of ‘intending objects’. In the section entitled ‘ the worlds phenomenal nature’, she suggests that there is something like reversibility to the categories of seeing and being seen: ‘every perceiving subject is at moments a perceptual object, and every perceptual object at times a perceiving subject.’³⁴ The implications that this has for the fragment/patch are interesting when applied. According to Arendt:

all objects because they appear indicate a subject, and, just as every subjective act has its intentional object, so every appearing object has its intentional subject.³⁵

If the object is considered as an agitating patch – indiscernible but present- with also ‘the intention to be seen’, then it could be argued that this gives it a form of consciousness

³² Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy, Two Novels* by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Grove Press, New York, 1990, p55

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Kaja Silverman, *Intending objects, World Spectators*, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, p129

³⁵ Ibid

perhaps³⁶. The implication of an 'intending object', it might be presumed, would be in something living. However, Silverman points out that for Arendt it is an 'all-inclusive' proposition. 'One which includes even inanimate, dead, and mad-made substances'³⁷

Although perhaps a step away from Didi-Huberman's operation of the patch as agitating presence in a formal construct, Arendt's animating of all forms and objects with a desire to be seen, with an intention to exist, and be present in our consciousness opens up the ground for us, and through this the significance of Robbe-Grillet's autonomous object takes on a greater mobility.

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In *Building, Dwelling and Thinking*, Heidegger uses the construct of the bridge as a location marker to link different areas of thought³⁸. We are able to move back and forwards over it and link receptive environments. Its existence creates a location that enables travel.

'The space allowed by the bridge contains many places variously near or far from the bridge. These places, however, may be treated as mere positions between which there lies measurable distance; thus nearness and remoteness between men and things can become mere intervals of intervening space...the bridge now appears as a mere something at some position, which can be occupied at any time by something else or replaced by a mere marker.'³⁹

The response we generate from looking, dwelling, and thinking in relation to Robbe-Grillet's 'object', is dependent on our own willingness to receive and project, which accordingly, will influence are location in relation to the object. Blanchot develops this point with an intense examination of the enveloping relationship of object to thought.

'From the moment we are outside of ourselves- in that ecstasy (sic) which is the image- the 'real' enters an equivocal realm where there is no longer any limit or interval, where there are no more successive moments, and where each thing, absorbed in the void of its reflection, nears consciousness, while consciousness allows itself to become filled with anonymous plentitude'.⁴⁰

³⁷ Kaja Silverman, *intending objects*, World Spectators, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, p 130

³⁸ Merleau-Ponty develops this proposition through the notion a 'mobile temporality' and argues that through movement, the display of an object is altered and redefined 'Perspective is constantly a feature not only of the look, but of objects as well.' Kaja Silverman, *The language of things*, World Spectators, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, p 140

³⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Building, Dwelling, Thinking, Poetry, Language, Thought*, 2001, London, Harper Collins, Perennial Classics, p 144.

⁴⁰ M. Blanchot, *Ibid.*

Blanchot's observation could be a eulogy for the fragment in painting. Quietly evolving and with increments of transmutation, it passes from one realm to another with subtlety and near imperceptibility. Often much of its work goes unnoticed. Or perhaps much of its work is meant to be unnoticed. It could be argued that the manner in which a fragment is interpreted does not so much characterize the art itself as it reflects an attitude toward it.

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8. The Harbour Wall

Standing alongside Alan Robbe-Grillet's anti-hero in *The Voyeur*, we find ourselves, at the start of the book, on the deck of a passenger ferry as it begins to dock in a small island harbour. People opposite to us through the harbour wall with blank faces still at this distance.

'A motionless and parallel series of strained, almost anxious stares crossed-tried to cross- struggled against the narrowing space that still separated them from their goal. Every head was raised, one next to the other, in an identical attitude.'⁴¹

The eddying of the water, churned by swells of the propellers reverse and forward thrust, trembles back and forth as the ferry undertakes its docking routine. The alto rumble of the engine revs then cuts and the boat drifts closer to the jetty.

What occupies us, standing next to the murderer, is a fascination with the transmutation of the harbour wall. We observe with forensic descriptions the structure before us:

Measured and even, despite slight variations of amplitude and rhythm perceptible to the eye but scarcely exceeding ten centimeters and two or three seconds, the sea rose and fell in the sheltered angle formed by the landing slip. On the lower section of this inclined plane the water alternately revealed and submerged great clumps of green seaweed.⁴²

The form of the wall, with water and light shifting around it, starts to take on an altogether more engrossing spectacle as our recently embodied and meticulously observed descriptions become more pronounced and detailed.

At the end of the jetty the structure grew more elaborate; the pier divided into two parts: on the parapet side, a narrow passageway leading to a beacon of light, and on the left the landing slip sloping down into the water. It was this latter inclined rectangle, seen obliquely, that attracted

⁴¹ A. Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur*, 2009, Oneworld Classics, p 9

⁴² A. Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur*, 2009, Oneworld Classics, p 12

notice; slashed diagonally by the shadow of the embankment it skirted, it showed up as one dark triangle and one bright. All the other surfaces were blurred.⁴³

There is a calm and even measuring, and listing of elevation and shadow, flicker of nuance of texture, surface and light, a detailing of form delineated and laid out before us. Several pages of this description pass and the accumulation of observations begin to create a sense of unease. At no other point in the book does an incident warrant such sustained description and observation. Why is the focus not taken from the wall and redirected onto the people? Why do we return again and again to the uprights, the shadows, the shift of water, and the greasy reflection of the stone?

This prolonged observation, we know, sets us aside from the two groups. Our behavior, given the immanence of the collective reunion, is unique, and to an extent abnormal. The geometry of the wall transfixes us, but it in turn heightens our awareness of place, for both character and reader. Our body, on the deck of the ferry, facing the jetty-- at once dipping below the height of the wall and now drifting closer-- is presented with a changeable and anxious experience.

We are aware of the space between our position on the Ferry and the wall expanding and contracting at the same time up and down, backwards and forwards. This engrossed and prolonged act of looking, in particular, looking in a manner that fragments the object into plane, shape, and angle, produces a curious distillation, a sense of geometry as menace. We note triangulations of space and form, which become a reverie of triangle bisecting rectangle, blending mossy glistening square with deep green breach of foaming water. However, the coolness of the description is at odds with our envisaging of the scene, and at once establishes the psychological condition of the protagonist; emotionless, calculating, rational and fixated, which is deliberately at odds with our experience of events.

After reading the sheer extent of detailed observation we are more likely to be anxious and uncertain- the proliferation of geometry, of abstracted form, has created a shift, but also, by way of association and drift of thought triggers an expanded field of experience: the harbour wall has become a projection screen. This device establishes the required unease suitable for our protagonist and is sustained as the story develops, but is never quite equaled.

The concrete and stonewall behaves in the same way as Max Ernst's Frottage's produced from wood grain. His discovery (according to a somewhat mythologized account) coming out of an inquisitive desire to examine da Vinci's claim that a paint soaked sponge thrown at a wall, with only a few adjustments and inflections, could open itself up to a whole plethora of associations, or, as Ernst more engagingly puts it, 'the inner pulsation of the soul and the inexhaustible vitality of nature.'⁴⁴

In the opening pages of *The Voyeur* an inversion hierarchies, of narrative presentation occurs, and it is through this action, that a field of projection and curiosity is established.

⁴³ Ibid, p11-12

⁴⁴ M.Ernst, *Histoire Naturelle* (1956), In *Ecritures*, Paris: Gallimard, 1970. P 330-331

The abstracting of form on the harbour wall acts to force through a more nuanced and complicated relationship with looking, perceiving, and projecting. It behaves in a manner, which creates a disturbance and a sense of complexity, that on the one hand services a narrative atmosphere, but more interestingly, suggests the potential for a screen to project beyond its constructs and transcend its parameters.

The harbour wall exists in a space of its own; it is at once changeable and diffuse, structured and nebulous; it is subject and non-subject. Robbe-Grillet's intention may well stem from the wall's potential to behave as a point of projection and connection- much in the same way as Proust's Madeleine's flick a switch- but the harbour wall has a non-specificity about it, an indeterminacy that behaves in a very different way. Deleuze, when writing about the question of immanence proposed the idea of the transcendental field.

It can be distinguished from experience in that it doesn't refer to an object or belong to a subject (empirical representation). It appears therefore as a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness without a self.⁴⁵

Although the harbour wall is very much a tangible object, it can be said to operate as a form of consciousness, which frees it from its empirical representation⁴⁶. It could be argued that the wall behaves or is presented in a way that Deleuze describes as virtual; what can be called virtual, according to Deleuze, is not something that lacks reality but something that is engaged in a process of actualization following the plane that gives it its particular reality.⁴⁷ This gives greater significance to the potential interpretation of the harbour wall and its significance as a screen or field. Deleuze goes on to argue that immanence can in fact be actualized in an object or subject; he states crucially, however inseparable an object and subject may be from their actualization, the plane of immanence is itself virtual:

Events or singularities give to the plane all their virtuality, just as the plane of immanence gives virtual events their full reality. The event considered as non-actualised (indefinite) is lacking in nothing. It suffices to put it in relation to its concomitants: a transcendental field, a plane of immanence...⁴⁸

Deleuze's emphasis on the virtual in this instance is a speculation on the 'imagined object', or perhaps of the virtual to 'refer' or 'direct' towards objects that exist solely in the mind, and their transition to 'full reality' -a speculation, which we can take from the patch/object, and its catalytic qualities. A synthesis, perhaps, of present and imagined objects, which shift places through overlapping and fragmentary shuffling.

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⁴⁵ G. Deleuze, *Immanence: A Life, Pure Immanence*, New York, Zone Books, p 25

⁴⁶ There are distinct parallels with Arendt's conscious intending objects here.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p 25

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p 31

9. Neutral Doing

Yvonne Rainer delivered her proclamation 'Neutral Doing' as a new statement of intent for choreography, which she characterized as:

Choreographed moves taken from ordinary movement of the body that did not employ the familiar tropes of dance, and moved away from formal stylization and emotional expressivity, towards the factual quality of manual labour, and task, and an aspiration to neutral doing⁴⁹.

Rainer declared, in this proposal, an intention that through neutral doing, a more authentic, necessary, and vital approach to movement could be achieved. That by stripping back narrative and exaggerated movement a more radical and liberating form of choreography could be employed which gave the onus of interpretation to the audience. The focus on the minor proposition, as a condition of participation through the choreography, elides itself with the objective articulation in Robbe-Grillet's passive/active objects. Observations, which are underlined by the dance commentator Douglas Crimp:

Rainer's use of literal performance and task, or task like activity, explains her interest in task as oriented toward the achievement of 'movement as object', and her use of repetition is intended to objectify movement, to make it more 'object like'.⁵⁰

'Movement as object' through Rainer, becoming the temporal factor in Heidegger's Bridge in 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' - Rainer gives mobility to the object as well as the look. The participation for the audience in the performance is emphasised by Rainer through utilizing the dancers gaze. There is a play with observation and looking- dancers observing each other, and observing the audience as they alternately move, rest and watch each other on stage. This is in effect a mirroring of the audience observing the dancers- a circulation of looking and observing.

The singling out of, and focus on task, or ordinary movement, removes all embellished expressive distraction and releases the audience through the repetitive replay of the minor gesture. Rainer's statement of Neutral Doing was contemporary with Robbe-Grillet's use of the object in his writing, and both share very similar aspirations for an alternative to the narrative form.

As with Robbe-Grillet, 'neutral doing', which is stripped of emotive styling, achieves agency through its own autonomy. This autonomy is entirely in the hands of the audience- interpretation has been released by the choreographer and given over to the audience. This is not an entirely mechanical exchange though- Rainer still selects the objects and gestures- explicitly specific in certain dances- the difference is that this is now a participatory exchange.

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⁴⁹ Douglas Crimp, Yvonne Rainer: Space, Body, Language, Konig; Bilingual edition (1 Mar. 2012)

⁵⁰ Ibid

10. The Mottled Screen

In the 'The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually' Mieke Bal looks closely at Proust's use of the mottled screen as a coalescing of trigger sensations for the protagonist Marcel. The scenario occurs to the young Marcel when he is reading in his bedroom and looks up to view the bottom of the garden through the screen on his window- Suddenly he is overcome by an excess of sensation of the physical (external and the internal), which is a mingling between the suggestions in the book he is reading and his own internalised thoughts⁵¹.

The Mottled screen is a ground on which an unfolding of the internal and external can be played out in a form of projection. These observations, seen in front, upon, and through the screen take on a fragmentary nature, which allow Marcel to feel the space around them- as suggested by Didi-Huberman's fragment- and also to co-mingle them through the space articulated by the objects, in front and through the screen, his book, and his imagination.

The object here is in perspective, with the movement and mobility of the shifting location apparent in Heidegger's thought spaces. This would suggest a rubbing up against of disparate fragments, or even patches, as Didi-Huberman claims, which function as hybrids of yearning and projection.

This is the actual excerpt from Proust that Bal refers to:

Upon the sort of screen mottled with different states and impressions which my consciousness would simultaneously unfold while I was reading, and which ranged from the most deeply hidden aspirations of my heart to the wholly external view of the horizon spread out before my eyes at the bottom of the garden, what was primarily, my innermost impulse, the rudder whose incessant movements controlled everything else, was my belief in the philosophical richness and the beauty of the book I was reading, and my desire to appropriate them for myself, whatever the book might be.⁵²

The coming together of these points of desire and Marcel's yearning to occupy all areas creates an overwhelming excess of sensation which is typically Proustian in its near catastrophic consequences. The key here is the multiplicity of sensation that is brought to bare on the object of the screen. The screen has an innate function of partial transparency- it defuses light whilst fragmenting form when viewed from within and from outside. The blotching and mottling of the screen corrupts clarity further whilst on the other hand presenting a more evocative ground – akin to da-Vinci's universe found in a sponge stain.

The mottled screen, as a figure of the unfolding of simultaneous, different states, is a metaphor that inscribes variations and nuances of colour on a flat image. Thus the metaphor functions as a concentrated figuration of variations of all sorts, among which are those governed by time, for which visibility serves as a ground, in the material sense of the term.⁵³

⁵¹ Reference to the virtual and the real in Deleuze;

⁵² Mieke Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p 18

⁵³ Mieke Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p 18

Proust establishes the flatness of a screen so as to be able to project on to it, and interestingly also through it- like a number of stained-glass paintings aligned and stacked together.

A shuffling of the sheets of glass might afford moments of clarity, through fragmentary glimpses of coherence, and unusual combinations, which Rorschach like in nature, emote fantastical assemblages and associations.

The richness of Proust's writing and the imagery that it suggests is often generated from a fragment; an object, fragrance, earlobe, or flavor, becoming the animator of a microcosm of thoughts and sensations.

I would be lying stretched out on my bed with my book in my hand. My room quivered with the effect to defend its frail, transparent coolness against the afternoon sun behind its almost closed shutters through which, however, a gleam of daylight had contrived to insinuate its yellow wings, remaining motionless in a corner between glass and woodwork, like a butterfly poised upon a flower.⁵⁴

Bal sites Chardin's painting *The Skate* to develop her investigation into Proust's image of the screen as image capture and projector. The painting's unusual flatness is what is of special interest to Bal and how depth is projected out from this. Bal characterizes Chardin's use of flatness as a mechanism to develop a form of figuration, which moves out and into the screen.

A figuration by means of which the inside and the outside are simultaneously present, without ceasing to play against each other through nuances of 'states' and colours. The figuration is constituted by the composition, not only the scene, but also of its representation- the lack of depth as sign- and the arrangement of the lines of vision and the objects'.⁵⁵

The importance of flatness in 'The Skate', Bal states, is most clearly underscored by the extremely subtle game played between clarity and indistinction that underlines its nuanced and oscillating nature.

Bal describes Chardin as 'first staging, then flattening' a scene. This then gives 'the capacity to contain' offered by a large flat image in terms of its potential to encompass and cover. For Bal, Chardin's paintings make use of the screen for the juxtaposition and the unfolding of different layers or images- 'a sequential unfolding, or perhaps folding of layer upon layer'. Each layer, erasing the last, like Robbe-Grillet's eraser rubbing off the crushed centipede, it remains and persists with greater intensity, evermore resolute and present.

Proust's uses *The Skate* to build up a whole strata of associations, played out through disgust and fascination:

A fish whose body with its countless vertebrae, its blue and pink veins, had been constructed by nature, but according to an architectural plan, like some polychrome cathedral of the deep⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid, p 25

⁵⁵ Mieke Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p 40

⁵⁶ Ibid, p47

The fish is disembodied and disfigured. A disfiguring, Bal claims, that is the result of an excess of form:

(the disfiguring) is related to a denial that is absolutely not necessary and is, therefore, excessive: effective negative surplus, the effect of which is proven by the Freud's insistence upon nonsense. A dis-figure is the visual equivalent of a Freudian denial.⁵⁷

If an excess of form tends towards a disfiguring, as Bal states, then this would indicate a significant use factor for the 'the patch'. However, it is the minor fragments that appear to offer the greatest potential to maintain an openness that the disfiguring threatens to narrow by over-determination.

The minor moment, when foregrounded, is perhaps best exemplified by Proust's inclination to write long detailed sentences built around seemingly minor objects. The slow unwrapping of an encounter or retelling of a sense sensation creates a rhythm that becomes immersive for reader, character, and text.

one of the characteristics of Proust's art is the production of long sections of text from a small generating scene, a swelling that produces spread-out or 'flattened' meaning, remaining all the while a bulbous presence.⁵⁸

Bal refers to the 'detailing', applied by Proust, being a necessary 'paradoxical development' in which 'the infinitely small is enlarged into a textual tumour and a torn- open flat image'.⁵⁹ The swelling of the minor object is developed through a slow build up of description- layer upon layer. This gives the object an energy and presence which 'swells it'; which foregrounds it and imbues it with an autonomy that elevates it from it's function⁶⁰. The swelling separates it from its conventional self and transforms it in to an aberration- amplified through the re-rendering and recollection.

This separating out is not however a traumatic rending, its presence in the space is to sit along side it. It does not punch a hole in the space with violence; it swells, and inflates what is in front of us. The fascination is in the contrast with the banality of the object and the enormity of the memory it recalls.

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⁵⁷ Ibid, p53

⁵⁸ Mieke Bal, *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p97

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

11. Unfinished and Incomplete

The actions that the fragment sets in motion, according to Blanchot, are what perpetuates its necessity, what makes it persist. Fragments, Blanchot declares, 'are always ready to be worked upon 'instead of remaining as fallen utterances' they are instead generative agents.'⁶¹

Applied to painting this becomes evocative of a dynamic and active space. The actions an 'intending object' sets in motion are what perpetuates its necessity. In order for its presence to persist for the viewer, it must become fragment like- by adopting this position it animates the space around it and makes itself available for engagement and interaction.

By becoming a fragment, the 'intending object' becomes a transitional form- trans in the sense of it being changeable, across and beyond forms. The fragment is prolonged by its incompleteness, according to Blanchot, it is bound together by the blanks surrounding it, which give it purpose.

'Fragments are written as unfinished separations. Their incompleteness, their insufficiency, the disappointment at work in them, is their aimless drift, the indication that, neither unifiable nor consistent, they accommodate a certain array of marks – the marks with which thought (in decline and declining itself) represents the furtive groupings that fictively open and close the absence of totality'.⁶²

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12. An extrusion

Kaja Silverman, when discussing Plato's parable of the cave in relation to 'appearance' and 'Being', cites Heidegger's interpretation:

'the parable of the cave helps us to understand that appearance is not an inaccurate replica of being, but, for Heidegger, rather is its mode of 'stepping forth', it is the extrusion through which Being 'presents' itself'⁶³.

Her contention is that through the visible we are most connected to the world- all things experienced will pass primarily through the visible, if one is receptive to it. Silverman uses Plato's parable of the cave to contest the looking away from the visible, which is claimed as the route to enlightenment for the prisoner - when he leaves the cave to discover truth he becomes blinded by the light.

⁶¹ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, University of Nebraska Press, 1995

⁶² *Ibid*, p 58

⁶³ Kaja Silverman, *Intending Objects, World Spectators*, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, p 3

Silverman privileges the visual as the point through which we engage with 'Being'. She defines appearance in the 'strictest sense of the word', as a 'coming forward into view or a becoming visible'. Silverman goes onto claim 'this apparent semantic narrowing down will actually result in an opening up.'⁶⁴

we bring things into the light by looking, in the strongest and most important sense of that word. We conceal when we fail to look in this way: when we neglect to exercise the visual agency with which our subjectivity entrusts us.⁶⁵

For Silverman, appearance is the catalyst that generates how we negotiate our understanding of the world. What is at stake in 'the visible' for Silverman, is a fundamental rethinking of our perception and comprehension of the world.

'Being' signifies for me not 'truth' or 'reality', but rather that 'more-than-reality' with which phenomenal forms shine when they are allowed to appear.⁶⁶

.....

13. The Figure of Eight

*The various joints of one of the big claws thus described above the table a trajectory of circles, spirals, loops and figures of eight; since the shell had broken, tiny fragments fell off and landed all around them⁶⁷.
Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur**

In the *Voyeur*, Robbe-Grillet has the protagonist fidget with a length of string, a piece of string, which is carried by Mathias throughout the book and in a manner, takes on his persona and reflects his insecurities and desires.

The wad of cord is regularly referred to throughout the book but his attachment to it is not explicitly stated. As events develop the cord features as a marker, but in the form of a fragment- undeclared and inarticulate. Its presence, always there, addressed in passing as an object whose significance 'swells' along side that of the Mathias's unraveling. The coil of string is charged as a presence through its inertness, its materiality.

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur*, Oneworld Classics, 2009, p 95

He thrust his hand into his pocket of his duffle coat, where it came in contact with the wad of cord.⁶⁸

He thrust his hand into his duffle-coat pocket to rub his grease spotted fingers against the wad of cord...⁶⁹

...having said goodnight to the mother and the two older sisters, holding his lit candle in front of him in his right hand and in his left his little suitcase in which he had carefully stored the cord...⁷⁰

The figure of eight, the double loop, which defines the appearance of the cord, is symptomatic of Mathias's looping back and forth across the island- first to navigate his sales route, with the optimum amount of properties covered in the time available, and secondly as a means to cover his tracks, and to retrace the events that lead up to the murder. The looping can also be taken for a mirroring back and forth of the narrative. It becomes an insistent and perpetual binding of Mathias to the island, to the events, which occur upon it, to his past, and also the reader's participation in this unfolding.

Instead of the memorandum book spread conspicuously over the sheet of paper that protected the first row of watches, appeared the wad of cord rolled into a figure of eight.⁷¹

The string, as an object, is wrought with potential; this is personified through the re-occurrence of the figure of eight motif- the essence of the loop-, which crops up when the string is not mentioned- a substitute stand-in, which maintains our bond to the cord. The repetition of form (the figure of eight) locates us in the space of description- we become connected to it and move along the rails of the loop through the narrative- we are moving across the cord- we feel our way over the fibers of cord.

The looped nature of the narrative moves about scenes and recollections – pulling up remembered events and shuffling them in with current circumstances. However, the added element of denial and subterfuge clouds certainty for the reader, and is perhaps used to amplify and echo the protagonist's covering of tracks. As events play out the fidgeting and winding of the string are a mirroring of the other complications, which result in delays on his rounds and ultimately cause him to miss the ferry back to the mainland.

What can be stated with certainty, in *The Voyeur*, is the significance of the objects to events- the presence of forms whose very objective weighing and measuring- repetitively returning to and recounting- take on greater significance through the speculation that they generate. Robbe-Grillet's emphasis on the object as opposed to narrative (object always objectively rendered) is an anxious but liberating shift.

We become bound to the physicality of the immutable object- but it is here in the unchanging nature of the object that the real point of projection is to be found. This is the

⁶⁸ Ibid, p 42

⁶⁹ Ibid, p 151

⁷⁰ Ibid, p 117

⁷¹ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur*, Oneworld Classics, 2009

key to *The Voyeur*- ultimately we take the place of the voyeur in the title- with our eye perched on Mathias's shoulder we become complicit in the murder.

Objects are measured with a precision and neutrality of a draughtsman's scaling of form- no object is too insignificant to be left out. In fact, the more detailed the cataloging of surface, weight, colour, and orientation of object to object, the more the reader is locked into the objects and bound to them. The exhaustive listing of the furniture in the room of Mathias's lodging house produces a rhythm and syncopation, which bounces us inevitably towards the wad of cord:

'Hence, starting at the window and proceeding left (that is, counter-clockwise), were a chair, another chair, the dressing table (in the corner), a third chair, a cherry-wood bed (placed lengthwise against the wall), a tiny pedestal table with a fourth chair in front of it, a commode (in the third corner), the door to the hallway, a kind of drop-leaf table that could be used as a desk when the sides were extended, and finally the third cupboard, standing diagonally across the fourth corner with the fifth and sixth chairs next to it. It was in this last, most imposing, cupboard- which was always locked- that the shoebox which harboured his string collection was kept, on the right-hand side of the lowest shelf⁷².

The graphic and literal detailing of the binding of the girl with the cord never deviates into emotive rendering, the effects the cord has upon her body are described with objective accuracy. The violent and horrific scene of Rape, torture, and murder of the girl, is catalogued through the use and function of the cord.

The cord had cut into both wrists, making deep red lines. Yet she was not bound very tightly. The cord must have sunk into the flesh because of her futile efforts to get free. He had been forced to tie her ankles too- not together, which would have been easy – but separately, each one attached to the ground, about a meter apart⁷³.

The detached nature of the scene is exemplified in Mathias's irritation at the inconvenience the sheep cause him – again 'the cord' is central. It is figuratively a thread, which runs through the scene.

He had most difficulty in restoring the sheep to their respective tethering's, for they had taken fright in the meantime. They ran in terrified circles at the ends of the taut cords...⁷⁴

The repetition of form (the figure of eight) locates us in the space of description- we become connected to it and move along the rails of the loop through the narrative.

⁷² Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur*, Oneworld Classics, 2009, p 119

⁷³ Ibid, p 166

⁷⁴ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur*, Oneworld Classics, 2009, p 166

The form of the loop is a remove of sorts from the cord- from the murder- but its presence, in seemingly all objects, events and conversations, begins to behave somewhat like a constricting knot. This is exemplified through the paranoia that creeps into what Mathias imagines he sees in the knots on a wooden door:

He waited. There was not enough light on the landing for him to tell whether the door was painted to imitate the texture of wood, or else spectacles, eyes, rings or a whorl of thread rolled into a figure of eight.⁷⁵

The anxiety stems from reading the surface of an object (in this case the wooden panel of a door), but even in this instance, Robbe-Grillet does not veer into hyperbole- his is a calm recounting of what he sees before him –close up this time, in front of his face- the image of eyes or spectacles (spectacles return to the object) sit in or on the grain of wood. Speculation is given to the reader through the object- and the objects own autonomy.

.....

14. Mirror Travel

In his essay 'Entropy and the New Monuments' Robert Smithson writes about his contemporaries' artwork, and I think it can be inferred his own work, in terms of being 'pure matter and pure memory'. The 'New Monuments', the emerging minimalist objects and expanded practices of the late 1960s, are described as 'crystal objects with a face turned to the actual, and a face plunging deep into the virtual'⁷⁶. For Smithson, this is what characterizes the 'New Monuments'; they present a different view of matter and a different conception of time:

instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future.....they are involved in a systematic reduction of time down to fractions of seconds, rather than in representing the long spaces of centuries. Both past and future are placed into an objective present.⁷⁷

Parallels can be drawn here with the activating membrane of the mottled screen- The 'crystalised objects' that Smithson describes behave similarly to the Proustian sensory fragment. They project, absorb, and reflect memory. The crystal object, like the mottled screen, can also distort and blend the visual, and in doing so it transfigures perception.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p 46

⁷⁶ Robert Smithson, Entropy and the New Monuments, Robert Smithson: Collected Writings, University of California Press, 1996

⁷⁷ Ibid

Smithson's large earthworks, as well as involving a manipulation of matter, might also be seen as involving a manipulation of time; the mobilization of different temporalities.⁷⁸ Smithson makes this claim in another essay 'A sedimentation of the mind: Earth Projects':

When a thing is seen through the consciousness of temporality, it is changed into something that is nothing. This all-engulfing sense provides the mental ground for the object, so that it ceases being a mere object and becomes art.⁷⁹

It can be argued that it is as much the viewer as the object that produces art for Smithson, we could say that the viewer 'actualises the virtualities' of the object through their interaction and participation in the artwork. Much like Arendt's 'intending objects', these art works have a desire to be seen. The viewer synthesises the 'actual' and the 'virtual' when encountering them, activating them in participatory collaboration with Smithson.

.....

Smithson's Yucatan Displacements involved the positing of eleven or twelve small square mirrors in nine different constellations within the South American desert landscape. Each displacement has a unique quality to it that is specific to the location that it is placed in, which relates to the context of the environment in terms of geology, plants, time of day, and weather conditions, etc.

Smithson describes in detailed observation each displacement and 'duration'. A particularly engaging instant is the displacement amongst a large cluster of butterflies. Here Smithson writes about the contrasting behavior of 'the actual' in the object of the mirror, and the suggestion of the virtual which captures the 'duration' in the reflections in the mirror:

In the side of a heap of crushed limestone the twelve mirrors were cantilevered in the midst of large clusters of butterflies that had landed on the limestone. For brief moments flying butterflies were reflected; they seemed to fly through a sky of gravel. The shadows cast by the mirrors contrasted with those seconds of colour. A scale in terms of 'time' rather than 'space' took place. The mirror itself is not subject to duration, because it is an ongoing abstraction that is always available and timeless. The reflections on the other hand, are fleeting instances that evade measure.⁸⁰

The mirror, for Smithson, becomes a device for 'erasing typical duration', or linear time, for flattening it out:

If one wishes to be ingenious enough to erase time one requires mirrors, not rocks. A strange thing, this branching mode of travel: one perceives in

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Robert Smithson, Yucatan Displacements, Robert Smithson: Collected Writings, University of California Press, 1996

every past moment a parting of ways, a highway spreads into bifurcating and trifurcating region of zigzags.⁸¹

Smithson writes about his use and selection of the mirror because it is both a physical mirror and a reflection: 'the mirror as a concept and abstraction; then the mirror as a fact within the mirror of the concept.'

Parallels to the mottled screen are certainly apparent- the mirrors use is to capture, reflect, and refract the space around it- this multiple function is what creates 'the mirror travel'. The 'travel' refers to the temporalities at play and the participation of the viewer in animating these temporary instances. These moments of travel, however, persist and insist after the moment of visual encounter has occurred and continue generating and 'swelling' in evermore enduring manifestations.

The mirrors reflected and refracted the surrounding environs, displacing the solidity of the landscape and shattering its forms. Part Earthwork and part image, the displacements contemplate temporality; while the mirror records the passage of time, its photograph suspends time.⁸²

Smithson likened the displacement 'durations' to a form of 'summoning forth', an incarnating of forces. He referred to them as embodying the energy and history of the environment, which would be absorbed by the viewer, through their own interaction with the work. Smithson viewed the displacements as embodying a certain Mayan understanding of the world incarnate in the environment.

the double aspect of Quetzalcoatl is less a person than an operation of totemic perception. Quetzalcoatl becomes one half of an enantiomorph (coatl means twin) in search of the other half. A mirror looking for its reflection but never quite finding it...by travelling with Quetzalcoatl one becomes aware of primordial time or final time- The Tree of Rocks.⁸³

This highlights the ritualistic nature of the Mirror Displacements- Importantly this mirror travel must be performed. Smithson's essays work as a manual of sorts; they offers a series of notes on 'mirror-travel' 'into' the virtual in which the instructions are given for the restaging or re-summoning of 'the durations'. Robert Smithson's endeavor, through the mirror displacements, is to take the viewer out of the typical space/time coordinates, which are passively encountered, and to propose an alternative way experiencing, through a participatory and collaborative proposal.

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⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Robert Smithson: Collected Writings, University of California Press, 1996

⁸³ Ibid

15. Palazzo Grassi

In Rudolf Stingel's installation at the Palazzo Grassi (Fig. 2-3), in which the floors, walls and some parts of the ceilings, were covered in a carpeted design taken from an oriental rug, it is possible to consider the question of immanence proposed by Deleuze as operating in this total and immersive environment. Although bounded within and delineating the architecture, the space takes on a Deleuzian virtual condition. The installation shifts perception in a way that allows for an indeterminacy to develop and evolve. Although the materiality of the space dampens sound and heightens awareness of texture (under foot, to sight and to touch) it adds to the sensation of otherness, of dislocation, and strangeness. It generates a space both redolent with association but also stubbornly sitting outside of a stated position.

The black, white and silver paintings that are hung throughout the space reinforce the experience of dislocation that is the result of a pull between the actual and the virtual. Often the paintings are extensions of the rug design or other blankly repetitive pattern. When they feature portraits, these are taken from woodcarvings whose generic anonymity is reinforced further by the monochrome rendering. This is a space that creates travel but is replete with ambiguity.

In his essay, *The Sublime Offering*, Nancy critiques Kant's separating out of the beautiful and the sublime (Beauty being disinterested pleasure, and the Sublime being a combination of the superiority of man's reason over nature, and also the limits of the imagination in the face of the absolutely great.⁸⁴) Nancy proposes that it would be more dynamic to consider a folding in together of the beautiful and the sublime. This is an approach, to the experience of looking and the imagination to negotiate a space of greater complexity. A space also proposed by Smithson in the Yucatan mirror displacements.

The curious machinations of Stingel's installation and Robbe-Grillet's harbour wall- part observational discourse and part indefinable collapsing of form- work so well at creating a sense of disorientation and separation because they are both reaching to articulate an unusual sensation of looking.

A powerful wash of water broke this rocking rhythm, and the two masses of liquid, rushing against each other, collided with a slapping sound and spattered some drops of foam a little higher up against the embankment.⁸⁵

Nancy considers that beauty and the sublime 'take place on the same site, and in a certain sense the one upon the other'⁸⁶. This creates a position of greater mobility and enables blending- 'the one along the edge of the other, and perhaps- the one through the other'.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ The imagination strives to comprehend the object in accordance with a demand of reason, but fails to do so. The feeling of the sublime occurs when the limits of finite intuition are exceeded when intuition advances towards the infinite which outstrips sensible presentation.' Jean-Luc Nancy, 'the Sublime Offering', *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*, State University of New York Press, 1993

⁸⁵ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Ibid.* p 12

⁸⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sublime Offering*, *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*, State University of New York Press, 1993

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p38

Folding-unfolding, according to Deleuze, 'no longer simply means tension release, contraction-dilation, but enveloping-developing, involution-evolution'.⁸⁸
To discuss a painting as behaving as something which 'envelopes and develops' is to allow it a more concertinaed and complex facility, one which is changeable and indeterminate. If it is possible to accept these conditions then the 'involution and evolution' create the potential for multiple layers of complexity.
Once the significance of the figure (the thing looked at and the mode of interpretation) is altered, a space then exists which is not set, which is neither bounded or infinite. Nancy refers to the 'infinite beginning' as something that is always beginning but never ending. Painting considered as immanence, which is in the condition of becoming, is to establish an attitude and approach of potential.

What gets removed and carried away is all form as such. In the manifestation of a world or in the composition of a work, form carries itself away or removes itself that is, at once traces itself and unborders itself, limits itself and unlimits itself.⁸⁹

A point also echoed by Blanchot

It is not the same thing at a distance but the thing as distance, present in its absence graspable because ungraspable, appearing as disappeared.⁹⁰

Blanchot's statement situates us amongst the experience of looking, of being aware of oneself looking, and the manifold triggers of thought and memory that this encounter engenders. It is evocative of being in a space and encountering a painting and the experience we go through of looking at it, and how that works on us and through us. How we receive, process and project the experience.

What Blanchot's statement suggests is to touch upon the space we encounter between perceiving an object, say a painting, and its associative triggers. The experience of being present while looking and forming these connections, of being a body in this space and the experience of living in this moment.

What is key to this point is a fascination with how an artwork can operate. How it can evolve a spatial dialectic where in it functions as both immediate source for an embodied experience and as a sign and symptom to be decoded.

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⁸⁸ G. Deleuze, *The Fold*, 2013, London, Bloomsbury Academic, p 9

⁸⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ibid.* p 38

⁹⁰ M. Blanchot, *Two versions of the Imaginary, The space of literature*, London, University of Nebraska Press., 1982

16. Orange

Gaylen Gerber, an artist fully committed to the artwork as embodied experience, talks of his interest in the subject that doesn't rely on distance and irony, but rather on experience and proximity. Gerber states that, his interest is in the picturesque, as opposed to the iconographic; because it brings up the relationship of the pictorial to activity.

You may be able to get a more comprehensive view of an exhibition from a number of positions by standing back from it, but to really understand it you have to approach it, walk through it. This creates a situation in which we see ourselves as the organizing force behind our experience.⁹¹

Gerber uses his artwork as a platform or contextualized ground for other objects- It acts as a back-drop, a scaled painting 1:1 with the gallery wall. It is a literal representation of the gallery wall with another artwork on top of it, and it is the relationship between the two that gives it meaning.

It works, Gerber claims, in the same way that language works- there is an unseen norm that structures the way that expression is constructed and it is the expressions that deviate from the norm that he finds meaningful.

...that's the relationship I see in my work- so when you say that it reveals itself in this way- it's revealing its relationship in the way that we make meaning out of it.⁹²

Oleg Grabar, in his study *the Mediation of Ornament*, when discussing the use and function of ornamental forms, begins to open up a space where possibility or even counter intuitive possibilities might thrive.

There is a difference between filling a space with (a) design and transforming an object by covering all parts of its surface with that design. In the first instance, the filling design has no other purpose than to partake of whatever uses its carrier has; in the second, it can transform the very purpose of its carrier.⁹³

This poses the question of function, use, and purpose, which have long been signifiers of ornament. The inference that ornament can manipulate and transcend its background status (forever filling and spanning space) is pertinent to the concerns in Gerber's presentation.

Gerber doesn't consider the combining of his work and an invited artist as a collaboration- it 'his work and his show' – Gerber talks of an exchange of use for visibility when discussing the presence of the other artists work on top of his. The other artist's work is a

⁹¹ Michelle Grabner and Gaylen Gerber interview, *bad at sports*, episode 93, mefeedia.com/watch30943598, date accessed 10/8/14

⁹² *Ibid*

⁹³ O. Grabar, *Mediation of Ornament*, *The A.W. Mellon Lectures in Fine Arts*, 1989, Oxford, Bollingen Series XXXV. 38 Princeton University Press.

discreet work, which is on top of his and together there is the possibility that they will make something bigger, but they can also be seen as separate- selfless and selfish- a platform and a parasite.

These roles can become interchangeable when Gerber additionally employs similarly coloured electric light to the wall. The implication of flooded light, which acts in concert with the wall, is to seep and permeate every object in its vicinity, it destabilise's boundaries and affects a disorientation of hierarchy.

This overt conflation of roles directly confronts the permeability between these distinctions and it is precisely the shifting relationships between characterizations that are central to understanding of Gerber's Supports. A parasitic relationship occurs in which both host and foregrounded, 'invited guest work', are complicit in the roles being switched, and are aware of either work subsuming the other.

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Moving through the space at a recent Gaylen Gerber show at the Vilma Gold gallery (2014) (fig 4-5), the saturation of orange light flooded the gallery and tainted the Will Benedict painting (the participating other art work). The glow of orange in the space was pervasive but subtle, one adjusted to the situation slowly and works gradually transitioned between foreground and support- one imitating the other.

Gerber's move is as much action as object- but the emphasis is on the material, the conditions are established as potential, as an open speculation. This recalls the transformations in Tarkovsky's *Solaris*; and how the liquid planet reflects back at the Astronauts' their own subjective experience, manifesting memories as tangible apparitions⁹⁴.

What was also fascinating, in the gallery space, was the effect of the orange light on the viewer- the haze of orange, which hung in the air, quietly and inevitably permeated all things present in the space- I looked at my hands and they were orange, the other viewers in the space are also flooded in orange. The artwork is literally and figuratively, occupying the viewer- the spectator is co-opted into the work and accordingly becomes a participant and performer in the event- here the figure is literally the ground.

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⁹⁴ Reference to Jeff Wall's essay: Photography and liquid intelligence

17. Phyllia

In Gaylen Gerber's orange light objects taken on one another's mantle, it is interesting to consider how imitation, or mimicry, in this context, can expound the sense of potential inherent in Gerber's proposal- imitation, which perhaps is chosen in order to corrupt purpose or destabilise hierarchical certainties.

Mimicry, which is adopted as a defense by animals, can be used to deceive as well as disguise. A defense mechanism for survival is logical, what is peculiar, and certainly of interest in this context, is the adoption of mimicry by animals of indiscernible purpose; perhaps even a corruption of purpose. Roger Caillois, who was a pioneer in the mechanics of mimicry in animals and one time surrealist, puzzled over the intention of certain animals that utilized mimicry. Camouflage after all does not prevent predators that hunt by smell and movement. He cites at the extreme end of mimicry a baffling perversity:

We are thus dealing with a luxury and even a dangerous luxury, for there are cases in which mimicry causes the creature to go from bad to worse: geometer-moth caterpillars simulate shoots of shrubbery so well that gardeners cut them with their pruning shears. The case of the Phyllia (leaf mimicking insect) is even sadder: they browse among themselves, taking each other for real leaves, in such a way that one might accept the idea of a sort of collective masochism leading to mutual homophagy, the simulation of the leaf being provocation to cannibalism in this kind of totem feast.⁹⁵

When Caillois applies his investigation of mimicry to forms of psychological camouflaging in humans a fascinating implication is stated for our interpretation and interaction with space.

In the invariable response of schizophrenics to the question where are you? I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I'm at the spot where I find myself. To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, and digests them in gigantic phagocytosis⁹⁶. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separate's itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is 'the convulsive possession.'⁹⁷

An artwork, it could be proposed, occupies a position of separateness; it has similarities to knowable things but elicits a pronounced ambiguity when examined. This is not a position of neutrality, but rather, its indiscernibility is an attempt to explore the fascination within ambiguity.

⁹⁵ Robert Caillois, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*, originally published by Minotaur 7, 1935, <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fcaillois.html>

¹⁷ **phagocytosis**: process by which certain living cells called phagocytes ingest or engulf other cells or particles. In some forms of animal life, such as amoebas and sponges, phagocytosis is a means of feeding; in higher animals phagocytosis is chiefly a defensive reaction against infection and invasion of the body by foreign substances. <http://www.britannica.com/phagocytosis>

⁹⁷ Caillois, *Ibid*

If we consider again Oleg Grabar's examination of ornament and apply this to an attitude and approach to painting, it becomes attractive to align sympathetic enquiries; Grabar is arguing for a dynamic reading of ornament as a projector and holder of information, which transcends and even subverts its material manifestation.

This could be considered as indicative of the qualities inherent in Gerber's work- quietly evolving with increments of transmutation, it passes from one position to another with subtlety and near imperceptibility. The slowness of incarnation or 'summoning forth' is also, however, coupled with an excessive visual experience. This overwhelming sensory saturation, is absolutely necessary to allow the other quieter operations to occur.

Excess, Bataille contends, is used to force oneself free of the habitual and reiterated relationship to the visual- it is a positive and generative move and it operates at the threshold of overdoing it. Flickering momentarily with comprehension at the point of rationality, it then 'collapses in on itself in a wave of confusion and incomprehensibility'.

Yve-Alan Bois, when discussing the use value of formless in Bataille's writing, states:

It is neither the form nor the content that interests Bataille, but the operation that displaces both of these terms. In this operation of slippage we see a version of what Bataille calls the formless.⁹⁸

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18. Mimetic Faculty

In his essay, *On the Mimetic Faculty*, Walter Benjamin describes man's gift for seeing resemblances, as stemming from a compulsion to become and behave like something else; this he attributes to evolutionary necessity. He goes on to discuss how imitative behavior in language has developed out of an onomatopoeic mode of explanation. He argues that in some cases the written word is indeed a more illuminating form of similarity, than the spoken, to what it signifies. 'Graphology, Benjamin states, has taught us to recognise in handwriting images that the unconscious of the writer conceals in it'.⁹⁹ A text that can be read in several ways is fascinating in the context of Smithson's emphasis on 'the actual and the virtual'.

⁹⁸ Yve-Alan Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, 1997, New York,

Zone Books. A point echoed by Frances S. Connelly, in her essay *Modern Art and the Grotesque*. She observes that 'The ornamental grotesque is defined by what it does to boundaries, transgressing, merging, overflowing, destabilizing them'. F. S. Connelly, *Modern Art and The Grotesque*, 2009, Cambridge University Press.⁹⁸ The Grotesque also describes the aberration from ideal form or accepted convention by creating the misshapen, ugly, exaggerated or even formless.

⁹⁹ W. Benjamin, *On the Mimetic Faculty*, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, 2007, New York, Schocken Books, p 335

It is interesting to consider that Language as script can then be absorbed into script as ornamentation, and whether or not this is a concealment or embellishment of semiotics.

It may be supposed that the mimetic process that expresses itself in this way in the activity of the writer was, in the very distant times in which script originated, of utmost importance for writing. Script has thus become, like language, an archive of nonsensuous similarities, of nonsensuous correspondences.¹⁰⁰

'To read what was never written'¹⁰¹ can be taken as a central and perhaps obvious index to developing an understanding of the behavior and application of ornament, but it is still worth reiterating for its enduring significance. Ornament here is both medium and message.

...Such reading is the most ancient: reading before all languages, from the entrails, the stars, or dances. Later the mediating link of a new kind of reading, of runes and hieroglyphs, came into use. It seems fair to suppose that these were the stages by which the mimetic gift, which was once the foundation of occult practices, gained admittance to writing and language.¹⁰²

Benjamin argues that 'language as script' does not develop in isolation from its semiotic aspect. He states that the mimetic element can only really manifest itself like a flame, as he describes it, through a bearer, which is the semiotic element. Semiotics evolve and develop through time and accordingly our perception will be limited or illuminated depending on our receptivity and comprehension.

Thus the coherence of words or sentences is the bearer through which, like a flash, similarity appears. For its production by man- like its perception by him- is in many cases, and particularly the most important, limited to flashes. It flits past.¹⁰³

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19. Afterword

*The sun's rays fell upon my bed and passed through the transparent shell of my attenuated body, warmed me, made me glow like crystal. Marcel Proust, The Captive. The Fugitive*¹⁰⁴

For the Narrator of Robbe-Grillet's novel *Jealousy*, the affirmation of his jealousy concerning his wife A...'s infidelity with Franck is amplified through the objects that

¹⁰⁰ Ibid p 335

¹⁰¹ W. Benjamin, Ibid. p 335

¹⁰² W. Benjamin, Ibid. p 336

¹⁰³ W. Benjamin, Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Marcel Proust, *The Captive. The Fugitive*, In search of lost time, Volume V, Vintage Books, 2000, p 22

surround him. This, more directly than the characters actions, are how the reader encounters and inhabits this most corrosive of suspicions.

The novel unfolds and refolds upon the narrators circling of objects; the observation of shadows on a column, the swarming of insects around a night lamp, orbiting then ping-pong off the glass lamp onto the table then back into darkness. This recounting of the visible tightens progressively to a sustained vibration whose intensity is a remarkable correlative of visual generative forces. Robbe-Grillet achieves this while never openly committing or revealing his intentions- his writing is a proposition for an encounter, it sits as much with us as the author. Bruce Morrisette observes of Robbe-Grillet's presentation:

For then as now, Robbe-Grillet's works conveyed a powerful impression that 'something', as Samuel Beckett says in *Endgame*, 'is taking its course'. This something has taken time to reveal itself, and its meaning is still not finally determined.¹⁰⁵

It is this area of the indeterminate and the objective, which Robbe-Grillet seems to occupy without contradiction or conflict that has become for me a point of great excitement and articulation. The shift in emphasis from a presentation of narrative to a position of a participatory proposal – open for the reader/viewer to inhabit, occupy, and determine- has been for me a statement of intent.

When gathering up the threads of this proposal and considering the possibility of a sustained thesis I would begin by bringing to the center of a significant study Didi-Huberman's *Fragment/Patch*. I consider the 'intending object' as generating from the notion of 'the fragment', which according to Didi-Huberman is an open proposition that animates 'the space around it'. 'The object', as discussed in this proposal, behaves essentially in the same manner as the *Fragment/Patch*- its presence is as a stimulant to the context it finds itself in. This renegotiating of boundaries is by no means a disavowal of 'the object' it is actually confirmation of its significance to this project and a sharpening of its presence.

As has happened through the text 'The fragment' has also taken on greater significance in my studio practice- it has come to articulate the more ambiguous notions concerning 'the object' and has resulted in a broadening out- and a greater investment in the fragmentary form. The fragment imbues 'the object' with mobility because it is non-declarative – it resists interpretation and is not solvable. The fragment 'as patch', which sits in the foreground, can be repositioned, inverted, and conjured with, but remains irreducible and inert, unless engaged with in participatory collaboration.

¹⁰⁵ *Surfaces and structures in Robbe-Grillet's Novels*, Bruce Morrisette, introductory essay, two Novels by Robbe-Grillet, Grove press, New York, 1990, p 3

20. Illustrations

Figure 1. David Cyrus Smith, Feathered Ear, Oil Paint and ink on paper, 2015



Fig 2. Rudolf Stingel, Untitled 2012, Palazzo Grassi, Venice



Fig 3. Rudolf Stingel, Untitled 2012, Palazzo Grassi, Venice



Fig 4. Gaylen Gerber, Nuclear War: What's in it for you? Curated by Will Benedict, 2014, Vilma Gold Gallery



Fig 5. Gaylen Gerber, Nuclear War: What's in it for you? Curated by Will Benedict, 2014, Vilma Gold Gallery



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Illustrations:

Fig 1. David Cyrus Smith, Feathered Ear, 2015, <http://davidcyrusmith.blogspot.com/>

Fig 2. And Fig 3. Rudolph Stingel, Untitled 2012, <http://moussemagazine.it/rudolf-stingel-palazzo-grassi/> 2013

Fig 4. And Fig 5. Gaylen Gerber, Nuclear War: What's in it for you? 2014, Vilma Gold Gallery, <http://vilmagold.com/exhibition/nuclear-war-whats-in-for-you-curated-by-will-benedict/>

