Museum of

Infinite Relations:

artists' spaces,

worlds and

models of the universe.

Part A

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Robin Kirsten
01 May 2022

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Abstract

Atelier Brancusi, Paris, can be used as a model to configure a *Museum of Infinite Relations*. This hypothesis forms the foundation for a study of the systems, processes, rationale and methods used to produce a physical museum collection – a theoretical and material formation of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

This research employs the paradigm of the monad, which is read through various proponents of the form, predominantly Pythagoras, Leibniz, the Holographic Paradigm and Beckett, which this project then reconfigured as the Universal Object. It also considers the artists' spaces of John Latham's *Flat Time HO*, Helen Martins' *Owl House* and Ferdinand Cheval's *Le Palais Idéal*, alongside the concept of worlds, and models of the universe. By integrating the references, critiques and perspectives generated from the study, it binds them together into a way of thinking.

Research into the Universal Object as a multi-functional apparatus, logic and lens, is done through practice, working across photography, image-making, sculptural installation and theatre. The resulting artworks all take up a range of references to test and reflect on the methods, and in so doing, interpret and filter possibilities encountered by employing the Universal Object as an analytical and generative device. Artworks produced during the research are brought together in the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, articulating a self-referential museum that generates itself through the creation of its collection. My research questions: what is a *Museum of Infinite Relations?*; what is an infinite relation?; and how does one develop that into a museum collection?, are approached through the logic(s) of the Universal Object. Its representations and iterations trace the emergence of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

Connections are formed across multiple categories, such as 'living sculptures', Cosmism, experimental museology, Remix theory, embodied research and the idea of 'art event', to mark out a terrain of concerns. This thesis mobilises the Universal Object as a building block to sustain the development of the initial hypothesis into a working system, a 'machine' for producing artworks and a paradigmatic construct. By predominantly locating the questions of this part-meditation, part-critique in *Atelier Brancusi*, this thesis reconfigures that site into a model for expanding the paradigm of

the Universal Object as a methodological and conceptual structure in my studio practice.

This research proposes further knowledge generated from working with the museum as an artistic medium; how artists' spaces have transformed from operational into museological spaces; and how this can be transferred. This is finally tested through an original theatre piece that draws on multiple strands of the research to form a compound image. References, analyses, terms and discoveries encountered in the research are brought together as examples of the 'machine-like' nature of the way of thinking, enabled by working with the Universal Object as a building block and method.

Keywords: Universal Object, Remix, Museology, Embodied Research,
              Atelier Brancusi

Figures

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The Royal College of Art and its staff have provided the structural and educational framework for me to work in, and their continued interest in the research community, and provision of resources and opportunities, has been pivotal in the development of my project.

Thank you all,
Robin Kirsten

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"[1]

[1] T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," *The Four Quartets*, Paik Associates, accessed 22 March 2021, http://www.paikassociates.com/pdf/fourquartets.pdf

Introduction:

AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✾ MoIR
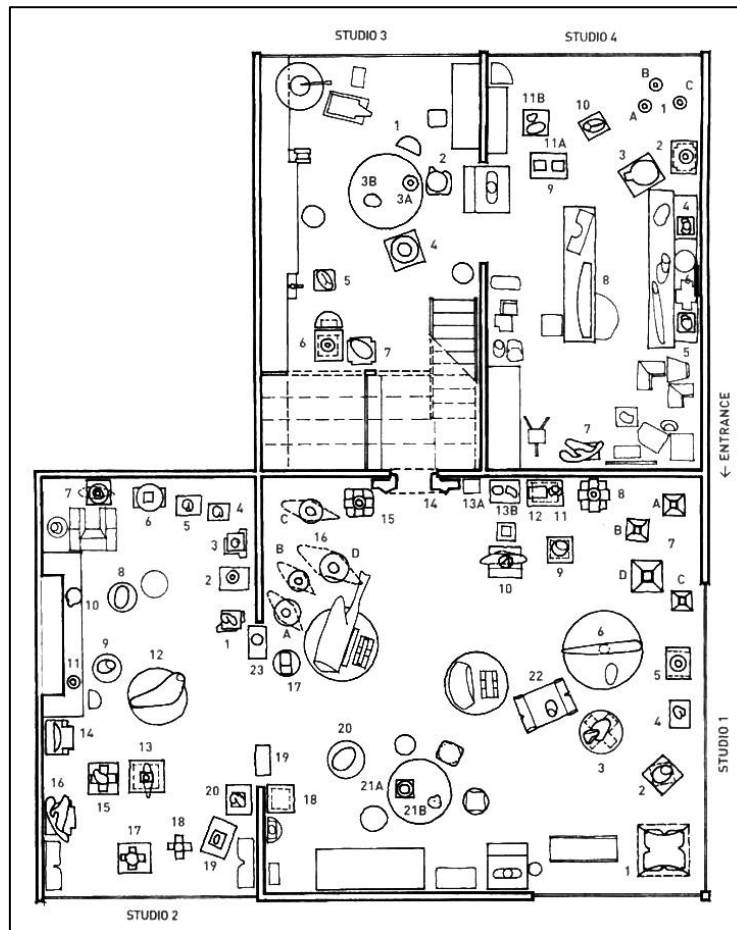
Fig. 1:   Floor plan of *Atelier Brancusi*

The idea for a *Museum of Infinite Relations* stems from a hunch that *Atelier Brancusi*, Paris, is possibly an example of such a museum when read from a particular perspective. This initial hunch, and subsequent hypothetical construct of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, was the result of an intuitive reading, which I then developed, over several visits to the site, into the foundations for this project.

Designed by Renzo Piano and built between 1992 and 1997, *Atelier Brancusi* [floor plan, fig. 1] is the third and final relocation of Brancusi's studio and living quarters from its original location at 11 Impasse Ronsin in the 15th *arrondissement* of Paris. This version is semi-subterranean, and Piano has retained the volumes of the rooms in Brancusi's original studio, but replaced most of the exterior walls with glass.

Through the glass walls, you see a sanitised version of Brancusi's studio as he left it when he bequeathed it to the French State upon his death in 1957.

The visitor's imagination is stimulated by the seemingly naturalistic recreation. Tools appear to have been left exactly where he last put them. The museum's desire to bring him back to life is implicit in the publication produced to inaugurate *Atelier Brancusi*. The English pamphlet's introduction claims that "Like her [Paris], he changes, he is becoming, he is alive."[2] The French pamphlet claims that "*Comme elle, il est en devenir, il est vivant.*" "*Vivant*" can mean both "living" and "alive."[3] The claim for his 'reanimation' in *Atelier Brancusi* suggests an image, a *tableau vivant*, or living picture, which freezes Brancusi into a permanent image of becoming.

Hundreds of photographs reveal his original space to be almost the opposite to the current installation, in terms of dust, changing scenes, parties, and a general sense of a fluid space. Nevertheless, the artworks within are instantly recognisable. His workshop and living quarters are also fully on view. The space is hugely photographable, encouraging the viewer to bring their own personal framing to the array of images and objects within. This is also what I have done by hypothesising and constructing the *Museum of Infinite Relations* out of *Atelier Brancusi*.

Brancusi took many photographs of his studio, capturing the minute alterations in the relations between the objects. Sometimes he used a turntable to incrementally adjust the angle from which a work should be seen. But the one thing Brancusi could not do was view his studio from the outside in a way that the viewer can do now. Seen from an ambulatory encircling the entire studio at the centre of Piano's building, the viewer meets an image of the studio, one that shifts as you move along, recalling a hologram which reveals its illusory depth as you move from left to right. It's not possible to presume what Brancusi would do to his studio if he could see it from the ambulatory. But even so, how does seeing his studio in this way alter its reading? How does that reflect back into this project?

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[2] Jean-Jacques Aillagon, *L'Atelier Brancusi* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1997), 1.
[3] Le Robert Dico en Ligne, s.v. "vivant," accessed 10 April 2021, https://dictionnaire.lerobert.com/definition/vivant

During those visits, the metaphysical form of the monad [fig. 2] persisted as a leitmotif, or 'conceptual sculpture'. It assisted in unravelling the hypothetical construct of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, to transform the hunch with a response comparable to *Atelier Brancusi*, in whole or in part. A 'conceptual sculpture' is a form that can be held and visualised in thought, and takes shape (or changes shape) in relation to a range of prompts.
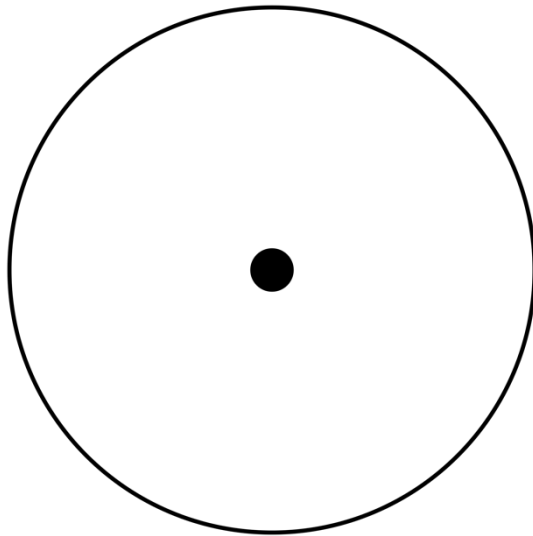
Fig. 2:   The symbol for a monad

The hypothetical construct has been formulated as: AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✿ MoIR. To help process the research and fathom the formulation between *Atelier Brancusi* (AB) and the *Museum of Infinite Relations* (MoIR), the monad (represented by its symbol of the encircled dot) was used to develop a correspondence between those two works and suggests a symmetry between them. The correspondence, however, is not precise. Attached to AB are three further sites: Helen Martins' *Owl House*; John Latham's *Flat Time HO*; and Ferdinand Cheval's *Le Palais Idéal*. These sites are included at various points to elucidate further on some of the elements particular to constructing the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

The monad (as both symbol and form) functions, in this project, as a lens and filtering device to analyse aspects of *Atelier Brancusi,* as well as a mechanism and tool for translating my research into practice. Various aspects, qualities and functions associated with the monad have been identified, named, separated out and reworked in order to construct a different version, the Universal Object, which is developed and mobilised in this project. The term Universal Object refers to this form's ability to be

located anywhere and everywhere, as well as its capacity to universalise by standing in as a cypher, or placeholder, for an undetermined number of objects, images or texts. I consider the monad to be malleable, making it possible to perform a topological modification to create the Universal Object. Two things are meant by topological transformation: a) the recalibration of the monad into a form that is constituted as an object, an image and text (i.e., not only a symbol for a thought form or metaphysical object); and b) the transformation of the form into a multi-functional device that can be used as a lens for filtering and interpretation; a tool for producing artworks; and one for meditating with, or on. A scholar's rock (of sorts).
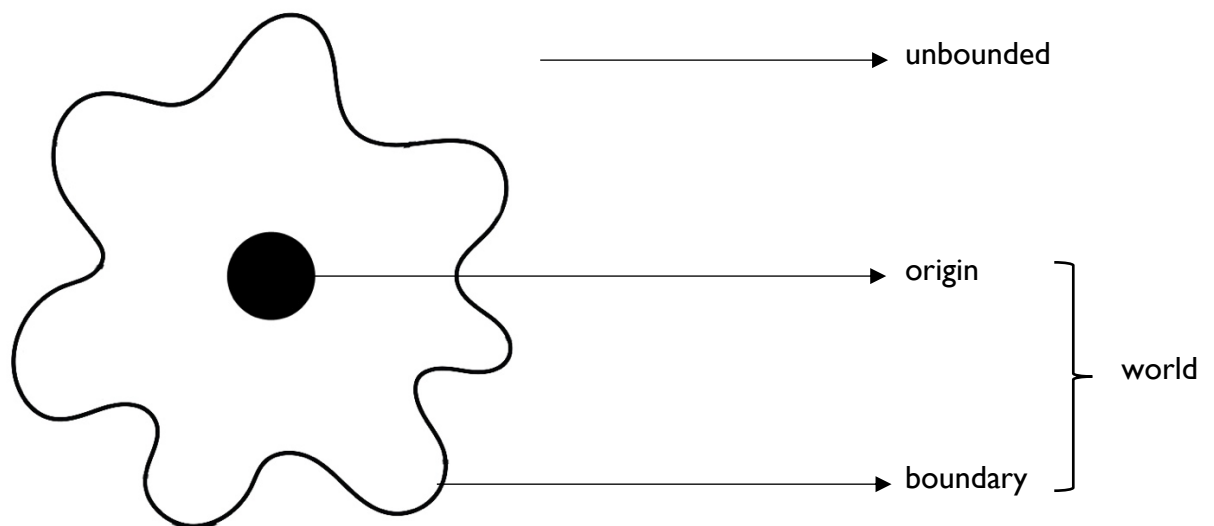
Fig. 3:   The deconstruction of the Universal Object

In this project, I have deconstructed and named the three parts that make up the symbol of the Universal Object, and to differentiate it from the monad. These are: a) the origin; b) the boundary; and c) the unbounded [fig. 3]. The origin is the central dot that initiates the symbol of the Universal Object, like the pin end of a compass which punctures a piece of paper. The boundary is the outer circle formed by drawing the pencil end of a compass completely around the origin. What remains outside of the Universal Object, the piece of paper and beyond, is the unbounded: that which is not contained within the Universal Object, but is necessary for it to be formed. Together, the origin and the boundary, which sit within the unbounded, are constituted here as 'world'. And the puncturing of the piece of paper to create the origin of the Universal Object enables a kind of synthesis between space, time and movement, in a manner that recalls Lucio Fontana, and Spatialism's, ambition, "to open up space, create a new

dimension, tie in the cosmos, as it endlessly expands beyond the confining plane of the picture."[4]

Spatialism, as envisaged by Fontana and his collaborating students at the Altamira academy in Argentina in their 1946 White Manifesto (*Manifiesto Blanco*), proposes that there is no limit to the medium for Spatialism, but rather that a work can extend in all directions, as well as the direction of the person who is observing it. This suggests to the observer "that both the physical and metaphysical substance of the work continue indefinitely in all directions beyond the canvas."[5]

By the late 1950s Fontana was renowned for a series of works that questioned the boundary between the artwork and the space around it. These paintings, often referred to as The Cuts, were made with the unyielding metallic edge of a Stanley knife blade slicing into tightly stretched monochrome canvasses. In those works space became "a conceptual rather than exclusively physical condition […] space is defined according to its cognitive perceptual apprehension."[6] In Fontana's work you travel 'through' his material, and into the space gashed open by his incisions. Space, often apparently empty, is other than empty – and nor is it full in a physical sense either.

In the White Manifesto, Fontana's desire was to create a unity of art and space. As Fontana wrote, "Colour, an element of space; sound, an element of time; and movement, developing in space and time."[7] Fontana was obsessed with the conceptual dimension of art and perceived it as an instrument for research, rather than a mere matter of aesthetics. For him a new and integrated art flows from this new state of consciousness, in which existence is shown in its totality.[8] As is put forward clearly in the White Manifesto:

> Reason does not create. In creating shapes, it is subordinate to the subconscious. In all of his activities, man uses all of his faculties. Their free development is fundamental for creating and interpreting a new kind of art. Analysis and synthesis, meditation and spontaneity, construction and sensation, are all values

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[4] Adam Hencz, "Lucio Fontana: the Slashes on Canvas that Redefined How Art is Created", *The Artlander*, accessed 24 March 2022, https://magazine.artland.com/lucio-fontana/

[5] Allan Kaprow, *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings [1959–65],* (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996), 718.

[6] Jaleh Mansoor, "Fontana's Atomic Age Abstraction: The Spatial Concepts and the Television Manifesto", *October*, Spring, 2008, Vol. 124, 141.

[7] "The White Manifesto – Lucio Fontana", *Art Theory*, accessed 24 March 2022, https://theoria.art-zoo.com/the-white-manifesto-lucio-fontana/

[8] Ibid.

which come together to work in union; and their development in experience is the only way to achieve a complete demonstration of being.[9]

Space is always therefore the protagonist, by using a range of expressive or gestural means: from line to colour and from light to sound.[10] And the painting's surface, like the piece of white paper that accepts the first insertion of the pin end of a compass to create the origin of the Universal Object, is able to reveal, or include something of the metaphysical, in the form of space that has been created by the unyielding metallic edge of a compass point.

The Universal Object is constructed on a modification of the monad, and is activated as a conceptual sculpture or form that exists in the mind. Bringing it into practice, and into 'space', from the metaphysical to physical, offered certain possibilities. These revolved around how to use the Universal Object as a building block for developing a practice, which could reflect back on the research questions.

The Universal Object also enabled the research to orientate itself in relation to other practices (e.g., John Latham, Roman Opalka), further case studies (e.g., *La Palais Idéal*), embodiment (e.g., Aleister Crowley), and experimental museology (e.g., *Studies for a Museum*). It also provided a rationalising mechanism to bring together seemingly disparate philosophies and theories (e.g. Monadology, Remix), which were brought together to look for connections to develop the thesis.

My sometimes playful orientation to practices, philosophies and theories enabled by devising the Universal Object, is reflected in the American artist, Mark Dion's, conceptualisation of what he terms an "unacademic practice". In my work, of devising the meta-form of the Universal Object to be a multi-functional tool, enables a practice which as Dion describes, "uses the methodologies and research procedures of the academic in a nonsensical way".[11] I am less interested in illustrating the theories and philosophies encountered during the research, than in playing with them to test how my practice comes out of the kind of conditions to be found in a laboratory experiment, which as Dion describes it "attempts equally hard to disprove as prove a

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[9] Ibid.
[10] Antonella Chiazza, "Lucio Fontana and the Architecture", *AGATHÓN | International Journal of Architecture, Art and Design 2* (2017), 196.
[11] Mark Dion, 'Field Work in the Natural History Museum', *The Optic of Walter Benjamin*, ed. Alex Coles, Vol. 3 of de-, dis-. ex- (London: Black Dog, 1999), 30.

point."[12] Ultimately, the Universal Object became the rationalising meta-form and building block for the theatre piece that concludes this project, *Nothing is Here*.

Translating from the meta into practice facilitated working from the general to the specific. Using the Universal Object as an attempt to account for difference and repetition, I simplified the material to a meta-form which could be used as a tool. Initially, its formal qualities evoked the simplicity of Brancusi's sculptures, for example *L'Origine du Monde* (c. 1920 and 1924),[13] which looks like a slightly flattened and elongated 'monad' carved from marble [fig. 4].[14] According to Ezra Pound, that work is "the ideal form in marble…to approach…the infinite by form,"[15] and evokes what Brancusi referred to in his works as "*dodii*."[16] Paola Mola interprets this to mean "incomprehensible oracle or wordless communication,"[17] pushing the work, for Mola, into the other world of the mystical and mythological.
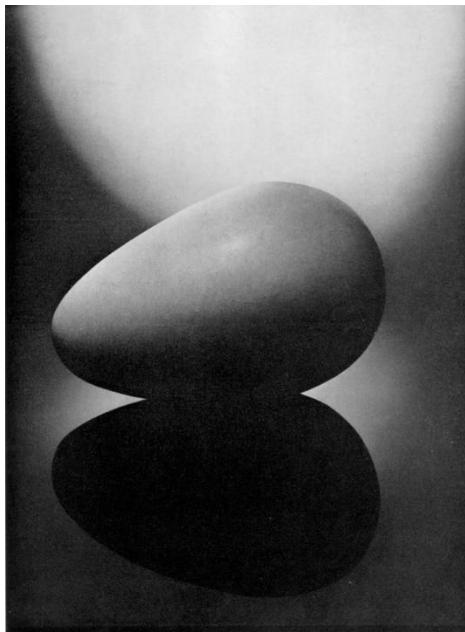
Fig. 4: *L'Origine du Monde*, c. 1920
        Constantin Brancusi

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Also sometimes referred to as *Le Commencement du monde*. Or, in English, *The Beginning of the World*.

[14] I am referring to the version created c. 1920, currently in the collection of the Dallas Museum of Art. Another bronze version exists that was created in 1924, which is in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum in The Netherlands.

[15] Ezra Pound, "Brancusi," in *Modern Sculpture Reader,* eds. Jon Wood, David Hulks and Alex Potts (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007), 83.

[16] *Reverso Dictionary*, s.v. "dodii," accessed 8 April 2021, https://dictionary.reverso.net/romanian-english/dodii/forced

[17] Paola Mola, "A Likeness," in *Brancusi: The White Work* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2005), 15.

But what does it entail to approach the mystical infinite by form? And how could something like "*dodii*" help to navigate that terrain and set up some relations? "*Dodii*" is a Romanian word variously translating as 'nonsense', 'gibberish', 'babbling', 'in tongues', or 'in riddles'. The words Dada, *merz*, and Brancusi's invocation of the word "*dodii,*" are all uttered in the same time frame around the First World War. All of these words suggest the nonsensical, or babbling associated with speaking in tongues, of a made up language, or of 'anti-art'. Duchamp and Brancusi were well connected, with the former being a staunch supporter of Brancusi's work, even organising the second solo exhibition of his work at Brummer Gallery, New York, in November 1933. Duchamp referred to the new language of Brancusi's sculptures of the time, as the 58 numbers,[18] suggesting another form of approaching the mystical infinite through numbers, where numbers might suggest a universalism and spiritualism that might be associated with purity and the essential.

Together, these variations – of words and signs or symbols which point to a break from making sense, or from complying with, the dominant aesthetics and concerns of the Western art traditions around the First World War (for example, that of Brancusi's short-lived mentorship with Auguste Rodin) – suggest a scrambling together, mixing up, mashing-up, being obtuse, embodying the idiosyncratic, playing games and generally resisting 'sense'.

Resisting sense was not an objective in this project. However, the condition of working with "inherited knowledge",[19] in an arena measured by the sensical communication of knowledge production, the research-scape, presented further possibilities. These relate to the development of my initial hunch and intuitions about how to work within the hypothetical construct of the *Museum of infinite Relations*. Primarily, these were to do with identifying what knowledge, whose knowledge and how knowledge could both excavate a ground for me to develop the ideas, and help to build them into a coherent research-based practice.

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[18] See autographed letter from Duchamp to Brancusi dated 18 November 1933, Brancusi Bequest, NMAM archives, Paris. Published in *L'atelier Brancusi*, eds., Marielle Tabart and Doïna Lemny (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1997), 200.

[19] I borrow the term "inherited knowledge", from Irit Rogoff, who uses it to describe knowledge that has already been produced by any specific and particular field of study, and which is ordinarily expected to be referred to, and added to, by continued research in that field. See, Irit Rogoff, "The Disenchanted: Contending with Practice Based Research," in *Studies in the Arts: Neue Perspektiven auf Forschung über, in und durch Kunst und Design*, eds. Michaela Schäuble and Thomas Gartmann (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021), 45–56.

This thesis is parcelled into five chapters (after this introduction). The first four are conglomerations consisting of "inherited knowledge," experiments or representations in practice, subjective points of view (sometimes critical, sometimes not), 'data', materials, associations, narratives and methods, which "pursue one another in unconventional modes [and] invite each other to dance as it were… Not just as bodies of knowledge, but as the narrative structures they are recounted in, as drives, impulses, personal histories, modes of curiosity, conceits of intelligence, etc."[20] Those chapters cover four areas, creating a bind to the fragments presented, and each is populated with artworks produced over the duration of the project, which are sometimes described with an attention to detail and the production process. This approach is to highlight the acute relation this text often has to the practice, which is a 1:1 correspondence with the theories, concepts and references encountered along the way. All of these artworks are part of the collection of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, reproduced in Part B of this thesis – a separate document accompanying this text – presenting the practice part of this project.

Chapter 1, 'On Universal Objects', opens with an overview of how the Universal Object is mobilised within the method I name The Gyroscopic Tendency, which orientates the research process to the libraries of knowledge and information traversed during this project. Eduardo Navas' theory on sampling and remixing is brought in to locate the methods and practices used in this project. Following that, 'The Same Idea in Four Different Sizes' sketches four historical instances where the monad can be found – in Pythagoras, Leibniz, the Holographic Paradigm and Samuel Beckett – to situate the development of the Universal Object. Next, 'Object Image Text', covers the three modes of artwork production in the studio, drawing on a range of practice examples which refer to a Universal Object, and my use of it as a scholar's rock. In 'Welcome to My World' I present examples of various ways to think about 'world', via Alain Badiou, Nelson Goodman and near future film design, ending with a look at the artist Helen Martins' *Owl House*. The final section, 'Models of the Universe', links the Universal Object as a building block to ways in which the universe can be modelled. This section then evolves through the concepts of "event" and "least event" to present the concept of "art event", in relation to practice and later uses of the term

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[20] Ibid., 47.

in this text. In this section I also focus on John Latham's *Flat Time HO* and Ferdinand Cheval's *Le Palais Idéal*, as examples of practices that start from a simple building block comparable to the Universal Object, and which conclude as artists' spaces which have been 'museumified'.

Chapter 2, 'On Artists' Spaces', is largely focused on *Atelier Brancusi* and references to Brancusi's photographs of his original studio. Here, I utilise the Universal Object as a filtering device, an enabler, or mediator, for an analysis of, and response to, *Atelier Brancusi*. This process produces perspectives on that site by drawing on Derrida's thoughts on the "*passe-partout*," and Plato's parable of The Cave of the Bound Soul. The next section, 'The Prehistory', introduces where the genesis of my interests lay and how it informs the development of the Universal Object, and brings forward the idea of emergence.

Chapter 3, 'On Museums', opens on the basics of my interpretation of the museum in this project, followed by 'Museum as Laboratory', which considers the museum and the studio, or artist's space, from the perspective of a laboratory, in reference to Aleksandr Rodchenko's Museum of Experimental Technology. Cosmism and its figurehead, Nikolai Federov, continue my scoping of what the museum can be, and what elements can be included or thought through. This is followed by the brief 'Note on Collecting', formed around my first experiment in collecting for this project. 'Infinite Museum and the Living Sculpture', and thereafter 'Resurrection', take a step further to present some of the ideas circulating within the framework of the museum in this project. It brings forward endlessness and soul, to locate pointers which could direct the evolution of answers to this project's questions. In the final section, 'Studies for a Museum', I walk you through my exhibition of three studies for hypothetical museums, drawing down and into it findings and experiments introduced in the previous chapters. These studies locate many of the ideas and findings from previous sections.

Chapter 4, 'On Infinite Relations', attempts to get under the skin of what the often obtuse and defiantly abstract notion of what an 'infinite relation' is, or can be. To do this, I return to Brancusi's studio and work photographs, and the various ideas around space in 'White Space', through Roman Opalka's paintings, Henri Lefebvre and Bill Hillier. The role of the studio in fashioning the infinite and thinking about the universe

is conjured up in 'Black Hole', taking in Daniel Buren's concept of the studio. This follows with 'Game Space', which looks at playing games in artwork, referencing Gabriel Orozco. The final section, 'Testing Infinite Possible Relations', presents a series of Polaroids of the same title, to show how the theory of infinite relations was tested in the studio.

Chapter 5, 'Nothing is Here', is the title of a theatre piece which is the concluding work for this project. This work relied on the methods, concepts and possibilities for making new works, generated from working with Navas' Remix Theory and the method of The Gyroscopic Tendency. Within this chapter I look at the allegorical nature of this theatre piece, and this project in general, whose elements and insights are brought together into one work.

These chapters are concerned with the questions that motivate this project's research into the various parts which make up the formulation:
AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✿ MoIR. The primary question is, "What is a *Museum of Infinite Relations?*," in conjunction with my hunch about *Atelier Brancusi* being a possible example. Besides theoretically rebranding *Atelier Brancusi*, how would I go about creating one? What kind of collection would it hold? Where would I start building the collection? How would I recognise an infinite relation, given its presumed intangibility? Are there any other examples, or slivers of information, data and references, or concepts, which can guide me towards one?

The route from my hunch to a concluding museum was uncharted. Many artists and writers have used the museum as a medium, and this project is aware of them, but does not find a route through their examples. Those could have included, for example, Marcel Broodthears *Museum of Eagles*, Mark Dion's many cabinets of curiosities, Marcel Duchamp's *La Boîte-en-Valise*, Meschac Gaba's *Museum of Contemporary African Art,* or literary museums such as Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (as a collection of fragments), and Orhan Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence* (both the novel and the museum), etc. The hunch however is much more focused on the construction of the Universal Object and what an infinite relation could be, where it could be, and what conditions and processes might bring it into being, to work through the questions.

Consequently the mediating term of the Universal Object in the formulation, AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✺ MoIR, became the dominant path to lay down. This had to be focused on as it determines the symmetry, and the hunch was concerned with creating an equivalent or comparable work to the primary site of *Atelier Brancusi*, even if only in logic. The obtuse, abstract and idiosyncratic qualities of the Universal Object left a path of destruction, but it was exactly the ashes and fragments which settled to the ground that enabled a route to be carved out of the infinite terrain the Universal Object invited in. That route is not direct. There are cul-de-sacs, dead ends, flyovers, underpasses, as well as clear junctions, one way streets and gyratories to navigate. And this is the nature of the Universal Object as it functions within The Gyroscopic Tendency.

If I can open with one final metaphor, it is that of the Pinball machine. The terrain covered in this project required the open space of that machine's game board. The Universal Object shoots out from its resting place and is bumped and pushed by the game's elastic bands and flippers, whose labels state Remix, holography, Pythagoras, or Leibniz, Beckett, Badiou, as well as event, least event, art event and Heidegger, on top of H. G. Wells, Latham and Borges. And that's only the first chapter. But the metaphor is well placed to make sense of how the research remained activated and in play, by the Universal Object's mediation in the formulation:

AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✺ MoIR.

I

On Universal Objects

"Every object whose end is unknown to us is provisionally monstrous".

Jorge Louis Borges, "A Defense of the Kabbalah"[21]

The Universal Object also made it possible to trace out The Gyroscopic Tendency. This is a method, orientation or positioning in relation to the vast array of possible references and bits of data encountered in this project, which adhere to the Universal Object as is 'rolls' through various terrains. This tendency was designed to contribute content to the studio-based research and enable an evolution from hunch to model. This was directed as a method towards creating a collection for the hypothetical *Museum of Infinite Relations*, whose content was composed of strands of knowledge drawn from multiple categories, such as philosophy, poetry, cosmology, art history, et al., which was woven together into a material base for experimentation. This represented a paradigm that might be of use value for other practitioners to model their own work on, with or through.

Remix theory can be considered an umbrella under which The Gyroscopic Tendency could be inscribed, given the wide gamut of media, processes and historical iterations of Remix which the theory incorporates. Eduardo Navas, one of the main navigators and theorisers of "Remix as discourse,"[22] – different to "remix culture," defined by Lawrence Lessig as one which supports derivative work facilitated by the use of digital media[23]– investigates the connections between, for example, collage, photomontage, appropriation, sampling, software mashups, curating etc., as discourse. Having come out of the hip-hop music scene in the late 1960s, Navas traces Remix's roots to vidding and its cross-over into hip-hop, dub, house music, and reggae.[24] Now, Remix

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[21] Jorge Luis Borges, "A Defense of the Kabbalah," in *Selected Non-fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (New York: Viking, 1999), 84.

[22] Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling* (Wien: Springer-Verlag, 2012), 6. Navas writes Remix with a capital 'R' to refer to Remix as discourse and grounds his theory in Michel Foucault's reference to "media as discourse," as expanded on in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[23] For a comprehensive overview of "remix culture" see, Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008).

[24] Other scholars point to remix's roots in the Soviet montage approach, associated with Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein and Lev Kuleshov, as well as the French Avant-Garde's collage works. See, Virginia Kuhn, "The Rhetoric of Remix," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 9 (2012), accessed 21 July 2021, https://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/358/279

theory "traces how principles found in the act of remixing in music become *conceptual strategies* used in different forms in art, media, and culture."[25]

Whilst the principles that underpin Navas' theorisation of Remix come out of music – such as sampling riffs, overlaying tracks, and extending edits – in contemporary culture they transform into a way of working and a way of thinking, which cross over, and can be applied to, all media. The terminology and processes are historically associated to music, but now they are used to highlight the strategies employed to rationalise the decisions made in the practice of making *any* artistic output, independent of what type of media is being used. Remix signals this shift away from music, and over to any media being produced.

This is distinct from using, for example, pieces of found images and paper to make a collage, or using photographic stills for a photomontage, or bringing together various 3-dimensional forms to create an assemblage, or indeed sampling from music to create a new mix. Rather, Remix characterises the strategy of bringing together elements from all available material, such as texts, theories, and/or methods, to create a conceptual framework in which various experiments can take place. In this way Remix, despite it's historical roots, no longer necessarily points only to music. Remix can be uncoupled from its musical roots, and applied to other media and forms to create a laboratory environment for mixing up and rearranging, editing and conjoining, bridging and interconnecting any number of elements, bits and pieces, from any number of available material forms, ideas and processes.

As opposed to being passionate about music, and having that passion resonate throughout the work chartered in this research because of Remix's roots, this thesis instead uses Remix precisely to *not* locate its rationale in the comparable strategies and methods associated with art making, such as the media specificity of collage, photomontage, assemblage etc. This releases the work undertaken here from the art historical discourses relevant to those media, and allows for the possibility to play with whatever material found, searched for, or encountered along the way, to simply do its own thing. That is the conceptual strategy set up to enable the laboratory of making and thinking that The Gyroscopic Tendency facilitates, because of Navas' positioning of

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[25] Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory*, op. cit., 6.

Remix as a *conceptual strategy*. The Gyroscopic Tendency is my name for that conceptual strategy, thus differentiating it from being specific to one type of media, like collage, photomontage and assemblage do.

And for Navas, writing in 2012, "the contemporary artwork…is a conceptual and formal collage of previous ideologies, critical philosophies, and formal artistic investigations."[26] The question of a conceptual strategy, when encountering the range of possible referents across faculties and genres, theoretical frames and libraries of knowledge or "inherited knowledge", was how to position the research in relation to the Universal Object? Or, how does the Universal Object – as an example of discourse – position the research? Or, as David Bohm proposes about the relation between the subject and the object that, instead of saying, "an observer looks at an object," can we more appropriately say, "observation is going on, in an undivided movement involving those abstractions customarily called 'the human being' and 'the object he is looking at'"?[27]

Fig. 5:   A fairground gyroscope

Movement in a gyroscope is generated by three interconnecting gimbals to enable a sweeping and continuous orientation along the x, y and z coordinates in 3-dimensional space. If a viewing position is taken up in the centre of the gyroscope on the spin axis, as in the human-scaled version sometimes found in fairgrounds [fig. 5], then the perceiver at its centre is able to rotate freely and assume any orientation.

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[26] Ibid, 67.
[27] David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge, 1980), 58.

From within, the range of possible 'images' seen from that position should be infinite in all directions and coordinates, which characterises the centre of the gyroscope as a zero-point. This position is representative of the origin designate within the Universal Object.

From this zero-point position the body can spin around to select and sample a theoretically infinite number of focus points in the distance. In this project, I have taken up this discursive position to select pieces, fragments, nodules of existing information and inherited knowledge in order to build up a compound image. This compound image could answer the research questions, propose further lines of enquiry, thicken the narrative, or provide opportunities for creating new works. This process partly decontextualises the appropriated objects, allowing them to be remixed into a different construction that nevertheless cites them as meta. As Navas claims, "Remix is meta and always unoriginal."[28] "It is meta-everything, meta-production, meta-consumption as well as meta-criticism."[29]

Fig. 6:   *Untitled (mono)*, 2016
          Robin Kirsten

Fig. 7:   *Untitled (Frank)*, 2016
          Robin Kirsten

My series of reworked album covers [figs. 6 and 7] from 2016 remixes and intermixes discs of meta-information to create new compound album covers.[30] This early

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[28] Ibid, 127.
[29] Eduardo Navas and Monica Tavares, "Conversation between Monica Tavares and Eduardo Navas," *ARS (São Paulo)* 17, no. 35 (2019), 117–27, accessed 30 March 2021, <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1678-53202019000100117&lng=en&nrm=iso>.
[30] I use the term "meta-information" to highlight that I am taking information from album covers to create album covers. That is, the works are self-referential and self-sampling.

experimentation used appropriation, sampling and collage to make images which reauthor the originals into new narratives, or image-worlds. As Virginia Kuhn suggests in relation to Remix reauthoring: "To make, one must pull texts apart, treating them as distinct registers but also as contributing metonymically to the whole."[31] My album covers provide another example of Remix, using the circular form of the Universal Object (here, discs) to visualise the method of sampling: pulling covers apart and authoring connections between bits of information to write a different image.

The position in the gyroscope problematises whether my role is that of author or reader, enabling the discursive approach to material and process, as 'doing research' would have it. In the essay, "Death of the Author," Roland Barthes writes that "text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."[32] As are the remixed album cover series, where a variety of quotations across each album blend and/or clash. This represents the method of situating myself in The Gyroscopic Tendency.

In terms of discourse, The Gyroscopic Tendency embodies the movement of ideas and forms from one space to another. The movement (of arranging and rearranging ideas and forms), could also be interpreted as a form of curating, itself perceivable as Remixing, to enable a discourse. In the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, the ideas and forms included in the collection can, under the aegis of The Gyroscopic Tendency, be curated into a range of different relations. The primary difference between Remix (in relation to authoring and reading) and The Gyroscopic Tendency is in intention. In the preface to Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* where, in writing about a passage from Borges in which he lays out his fictitious taxonomy of animals, the "Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge,"[33] Foucault suspects:

> [That] there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*.[34]

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[31] Virginia Kuhn, "The Rhetoric of Remix," op. cit.

[32] Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 146.

[33] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," in *Other Inquisitions 1937 – 1952*, trans. Ruth L. Sims (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 101–05.

[34] Michel Foucault, *The Order of* Things, op. cit., xix.

The "law or geometry" of The Gyroscopic Tendency is essentially that of taking a position when ordering, stretching and blending together what at times seems incongruous, or glittering. Its intention is to mobilise the Universal Object as a mechanism, a device, an operation and an "apparatus,"[35] for enabling a range of positions to capture 'data'. Stitching those together articulates the *Museum of Infinite Relations*: a machine, or an apparatus, consisting of parts, which together perform a particular task. My concern is not its relation to the political governing of men, but Agamben's statement on the term "apparatus" is useful for understanding how an apparatus or machine can govern our movement of, attitude to and reception of information, as well as its transformation into knowledge.

Fig. 8:   *The Distribution of a Single Form Across a Landscape*, 2019
          Robin Kirsten

Circulation can also suggest rolling, as in rolling through a landscape or research-scape. When rolling the Universal Object through a landscape (i.e., operating with The Gyroscopic Tendency), it modifies the scene. It warps and ripples the data, giving expression to the rolling taking place. In my reworked photograph, *The Distribution of a*

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[35] I am referring to Giorgio Agamben's reworking of Foucault's term "apparatus" in relation to governmentality. Agamben states that he "will call an apparatus, literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings." See, Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 14.

Single Form Across a Landscape (2019) [fig. 8], the foreground is 'warped' by rolling the Universal Object through it. That work captures the effect on data and making that The Gyroscopic Tendency encourages and the logic that it 'allows'. This logic refers again to Remix theory, which brings together "content from a variety of sources, taking it out of its original context and jumbling it together, creating new experiences by their juxtaposition."[36]

This thesis jumbles up, and mashes up, disciplines, voices, objects and contexts to give expression to the *Museum of Infinite Relations* as a way of thinking when making. The intention and approach is to sustain the dance that T. S. Eliot dreams around "the still point of the turning world."[37]

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[36] Abby S. Waysdorf, "Remix in the Age of Ubiquitous Remix," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* (2021), 1–16, accessed 3 June 2021, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354856521994454.
[37] T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," op. cit.

1.1

The Same Idea in Four Different Sizes

Of the thinkers and practitioners who embed the monad in their work (Pythagoras, G. W. Leibniz, the Holographic Paradigm, Samuel Beckett, H.P. Blavatsky and Aleister Crowley), all can be said to use it for their own means, mashing up the historical and philosophical 'content' of the monad, to personalise and redefine it. The image of a DJ playing two or more black vinyl (monadic) discs, mixing them into each other to create a new sound based on the originating discs, represents the sampling potential when using various monads. But how does one represent the non-representable? How does one transform the monad from the metaphysical into either object, image or text? Into physical 'reality'?

Fig. 9:   *The Same Idea in Four Different Sizes*, 2019
          Robin Kirsten

My photographic work, *The Same Idea in Four Different Sizes* (2019) [fig. 9], shows one of the ways that the Universal Object can be represented in an image. This work proposes at least four iterations of the Universal Object. Representing them as having different sizes visualises their similarities and differences. Each disc inserted into the original photograph has a different diameter, and each is placed on a different support structure: a chair, a table, a stool and a crate. Each Universal Object appears to be a sculptural form in the studio, and each could be moved onto the other supports,

creating different relations between each formation. This work introduces the Universal Object's potential to be located physically in the studio.

The Pythagoreans used the monad to develop a model of the universe that is countable (i.e., finite), with the number 1 being the most important. "Pythagoras held that one of the first principles, the monad, is god and the good, which is the origin of the One."[38] The monad is their first symbol, their number 1, a building block, and is the simplest closed geometric form to draw. As a primary form, it determines all other extensions, and "preserves a divine nature such as it is in itself pure and undefiled."[39] Their monad is the One, or God, so all extensions from the One must also contain in themselves a bit of the divine, a piece of the universe.

The dot at the monad's centre represents the pure origin of the universe, a point zero, a no thing (yet), and a thing to come. According to the scholar of mysticism and religion Priya Hemenway, the Pythagoreans "believed that nothing exists without a centre around which it revolves. The centre is the source and it is beyond understanding, it is unknowable, but like a seed, the centre will expand and will fulfil itself as a circle."[40]
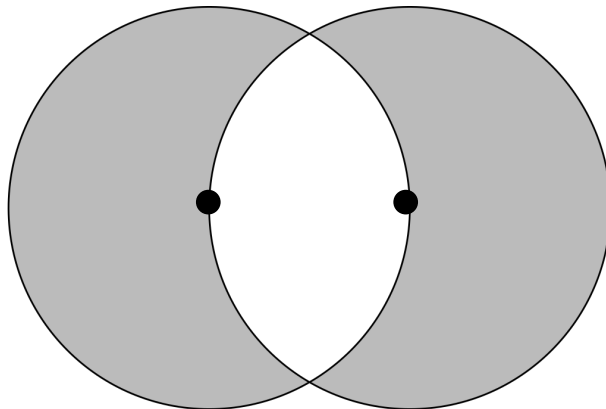
Fig. 10: The symbol for a dyad

In the Pythagorean system, it is possible to develop more complex geometric forms by duplicating the monad continuously. From the dyad, consisting of two monads [fig. 10],

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[38] As quoted in Kate Hobgood, *Pythagoras and the Mystery of Numbers*, The University of Georgia, accessed 28 May 2021, http://jwilson.coe.uga.edu/EMAT6680Fa06/Hobgood/Pythagoras.html
[39] Hierocles of Alexandria, "The Symbols of Pythagoras," Sacred Texts Archive, accessed 2 December 2019, https://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/gvp/gvp11.htm
[40] Priya Hemenway, *Divine Proportion: Φ (Phi) In Art, Nature, and Science* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 2005), 51.

all the way through to the most complex form of all, the universe. Leibniz's *The Monadology* (1714) lists 90 entries that define his ideas about the monad, but only a few qualities listed below (entry number in [brackets]) were used to model the monad into the Universal Object. Monads, Leibniz stated, are "a simple substance,"[1] which have "a certain self-sufficiency,"[18] and are "the sources of their internal activities."[18] They are "only imitations of the divine attributes," [48] which in God is "absolutely infinite or perfect,"[48] and "each…has relations which express all the others, and, consequently, that it is a perpetual living mirror of the universe."[56] It is their "nature to represent,"[60] and "each created monad represents the whole universe,"[62] so "every monad is, in its own way, a mirror of the universe."[63] [41]

Because the monad is "simple," "perfect," "self sufficient," self-reflexive and meta ("the sources of their own activities") and a "perpetual living mirror," I have imagined the Leibnizian monad as a hollow mirror-plated ball. The entirety of space, the plenum (in Leibniz's case), is filled to the brim with them.[42] The mirrored surface of each ball reflects everything around it; therefore, each monad is a reflection of the universe. Each and every reflection is always everywhere and simultaneous, operating something like a quantum object. And if you were to take one monad from the universe, it would be enough to model the universe.[43] This is also the basic tenet of the Holographic Paradigm, that the whole is accessible through the part. Or, as theoretical physicist, David Bohm, puts it, "each monad refers to the whole but with different degrees of completion and perfection."[44]

The monad represents a more formal system of logic (as is evident in functional computation[45]), or it can (in the case of the Holographic Paradigm) stand as a metaphor and meta-form for the 'true' nature of reality being distinct from 'perceived' reality. The Holographic Paradigm proposes that what is thought of as reality in the

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[41] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Principles of Philosophy Known as Monadology*, trans. Jonathan Bennett, Early Modern Texts, accessed 19 November 2019, https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/leibniz1714b.pdf

[42] As Leibniz writes, "And simple substances are lives, souls, minds – where there is a simple substance there is life – and the world's being full of such substances means that the whole of nature is full of life." See G. W. Leibniz, "Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason," trans. Jonathan Bennett, Early Modern Texts, accessed 22 March 2021, https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/leibniz1714a.pdf

[43] When I use the term 'models of the universe', I am referring to this function of the single monad: that it is able to invoke the entire universe and model it, through duplication and repetition.

[44] Ken Wilber, ed., *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes: Exploring the Leading Edge of Science* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1982), 91.

[45] In Monad Theory, as applied to computation, a monad (a building block of code), is either an action or a computation.

mind of the viewer is an illusion. The structure of the brain and processes of the mind both reflect what is reality and, simultaneously, modify the reflection to filter out that reality in order to function within the day-to-day experience of being in the world.

Neuroscientist Karl Pribram, one of the chief contributors to the Holographic Paradigm, proposed that the brain's 'mathematics' (its 'computational' processes) might filter reality, modifying it into a reflection or representation.[46] Pribram correlates his proposal to the Hindu concept of *māyā* (as written about in the hymn *Māyā-bheda* in the ancient sacred Hindu texts of *Rigveda*), which suggests that the concrete nature of reality might be an illusion.[47] Pribram questions whether, "if we didn't have that lens – the mathematics performed by our brain – maybe we would know a world organized only in the frequency domain? No space, no time – just events."[48] Pribram's proposal suggests that the "lens" enables an image of the world to be formed. In this project the lens being employed is the Universal Object, which enables a re-imaging of case studies and references in order to formulate the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

The paradox in Pribram's proposal is that it's not possible to think about the nature of reality being a hologram, as the mind's computational processes (thinking) is precisely the lens which obscures the 'true' picture from emerging – that of an event-based reality. It also states that "psychic phenomena are only by-products of the simultaneous everywhere matrix. Individual brains are bits of the greater hologram,"[49] comparable to a blockchain structure.[50] The central tenet is that the whole is accessible through the part and, for the proponents of this paradigm, the monad expresses this idea.

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[46] Karl H. Pribram, "What the Fuss is All About," in *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes: Exploring the Leading Edge of Science*, ed. Ken Wilber, 27–34.

[47] Laurie L. Patton, *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 137.

[48] Marilyn Ferguson, "Karl Pribram's Changing Reality," in *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes: Exploring the Leading Edge of Science*, ed. Ken Wilber, 15.

[49] Ibid, 23.

[50] A "blockchain" is a large database of information stored chronologically in 'blocks', which are then chained together as new blocks are formed. This can be centralised, or decentralised, across data storage devices. Typically, in blockchain, each block contains all the information about all other blocks, so that if there is an information problem in one block, it can refer to the other blocks for referencing. For a more detailed explanation see, "Blockchain. What Is Blockchain Technology? How Does It Work?", Built In, accessed 17 April 2022, https://builtin.com/blockchain.

Other philosophers view the monad in other ways, or with other qualities and operations. Prior to Leibniz's conceptualisation of the monad the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza had been writing about the entelechy,[51] which is his version of a simple universal substance based on Aristotle's idea of the entelechy, which in metaphysics is some thing that can realise or make *actual* what would otherwise merely be *potential*. This is similar to, and a precursor of, Leibniz's thoughts on *direction*, as a motivational force which reveals the infinity of God throughout all other expressions of the monad, via form and matter. Were they differ can be understood in terms of the mathematical systems they employed to formulate their views on infinity.

Both Leibniz and Spinoza were mathematicians working with the new rationalism of the 17th century, and shared the ideal of a mathematically exact and certain system of knowledge – a comprehensive 'scientific' philosophy. Spinoza was largely informed by Euclidian geometry, which proceeds from a range of self-evident axioms that determine the attributes of objects by way of precise definitions of them. On the other hand, Leibniz was more interested in the 'progress', or processing of mathematics, than relying on its well rehearsed methods, thus leading him to develop his own infinitesimal calculus (after Newton) and set theory.

The conception of the "infinities of infinity,"[52] as expressed later in George Cantor's infinite set or smallest infinite number, the aleph null, is a favourite for Leibniz, who frequently argued against the possibility of an absolute quantitative infinite, as Spinoza had done. In a letter to Louis Bourquet in 1714 Leibniz states that "Spinoza would be right if there were no monads,"[53] as through the monad Leibniz conceived of the infinite as the reality of the finite, instead of regarding the infinite as the negation of the finite, as Spinoza had proposed with his entelechy. This suggests that there is a system within a system, with the infinite being indicative of that unfolding, as the infinite is everywhere and evident in everything all the time. Robert Latta puts it that Leibniz's

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[51] From the Greek *Εντελέχεια*. Etymologically, it derives from ἐντελής, enteles 'grown up' (from ἐν, en 'in' + τέλος, telos 'aim, goal, end') + ἔχειν, ekhein 'to have.' As such it means being at an end or "full, complete reality". See The Online Liddel-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon "ἐντελευτάω", accessed 13 March 2022, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/#eid=37290

[52] According to Leibniz, "Every finite thing […] 'contains infinity': it is in some way constituted by the infinite, made up of infinitesimals." See, G. Dawes Hicks. "The 'Modes' of Spinoza and the 'Monads' of Leibniz," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 18 (1917), 329, accessed 15 March 2022, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4543947.

[52] Robert Latta, "On the Relation Between the Philosophy of Spinoza and That of Leibniz", *Mind*, Oxford University Press, New Series, Vol. 8, No. 31. (July 1899), 345.

conceptualisation of infinity is not an attribute of "one substance or to one ultimate system of things, but to each of an infinite number of substances, which are indeed regarded as related to one another, but which are so externally related, so independent in their own being, that each lives its own life as if there existed nothing but God and itself."[54]

In terms of the unfolding of one system out of another, it is Gilles Deleuze who extends the Leibnizian system of the monad into another system of the rhizome, which describes the relations and connectivity of things as a network of systems within systems. The concept of the monad is pictured in terms of the folds of space, time and movement. Likewise, the world is reinterpreted as a body of infinite folds and surfaces, which weave and twist through time and space. With reference to Leibniz's theory of the monad – that the whole universe is contained within each being – Deleuze proposes that the process of folding constitutes the basic unit of existence. And that the concept of the fold describes the nature of the human subject – as the outside folded in – a subject that is immanently political and social.

By drawing on the Baroque house as analogous to the Leibnizian system, Deleuze provides a portrait of Monadology, as "Baroque architecture can be defined by this severing of the façade from the inside, of the interior from the exterior, and the autonomy of the interior from the independence of the exterior, but in such conditions that each of the two terms thrusts the other forward."[55] Inside and outside are infinitely folded into each other to such a degree that the inside is expressed on the outside. Through the monad Deleuze is able to visualise the fundamental operations of the soul and its relation to the world, by drawing on the inside of the monad, where everything takes place "without windows or doors," as the world is included in every monad or subject, as a series of predicates as opposed to a series of attributes.

The folding that the monad enables in Deleuze's work represents the "infinities of infinity" that a rhizomatic system provides, in terms of the interconnectivity and networking which emanates between the outside and inside being thrust forward

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[54] Ibid, 348.
[55] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), 28.

simultaneously, which "is an envelope of inherence or of unilateral 'inhesion': inclusion or inherence is the final cause of the fold."[56] This for Deleuze represents the windowless interiority of Leibniz's monad, and is the soul through which everything must be connected and expressed, as in the Baroque house. Therefor the soul, or monad, "is what has folds and is full of folds."[57]

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[56] Ibid, 22.
[57] Ibid.

Fig. 11: *No Thinking Thought*, 2019
        Robin Kirsten

No Thinking Thought (2019) [fig. 11], is a studio-based self-portrait of The Artist in a Black Suit – a character developed for this project. The Artist in a Black Suit photographs himself, using medium format black and white film, seated on a stool with a pail on his head. After printing from the negative, a disc representing the Universal Object was inserted into the print. It appears to orbit the head of the figure covered with the pail. A small piece of masking tape stuck to the studio's wall provides a connecting line, or link, between the pail and the round form.

No Thinking Thought pictures the process of obscuration that occurs when trying to understand the nature of the universe, and reality, as a hologram. Emphasised in particular is the idea of not being able to 'see' how the mind *itself* prevents seeing, thereby obscuring the true reality of the universe (a holographic projection). In this photograph, there are three forms of obscuring. Firstly, the figure is 'hidden' and covered over by a phrase related to appearance: The Artist in a Black Suit. Secondly, the head of the figure is covered by a pail. Thirdly, the title is a conundrum, a paradox or riddle, which asks the question, "How is it possible to think about not thinking in order to 'see' the true nature of reality and the monad's role in structuring that reality, according to the Holographic Paradigm?" The riddle directly applies the Holographic Paradigm's idea that the brain "might have access to a larger whole, a field domain or 'holistic frequency realm' that transcends spatial and temporal boundaries."[58]

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[58] Ken Wilber, ed., *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes: Exploring the Leading Edge of Science*, 2.

But how does one access a 'larger whole'? Where and when would one know that the Veils of Maya have been lifted and 'truth' has been revealed?[59] For proponents of the Holographic Paradigm, there are no answers, just questions, as information is always in formation. Could *No Thinking Thought* also claim to have captured the true nature of reality, given that the artwork is documentary 'proof' that no thinking thought (as a thought procedure) has been etched into film? What *No Thinking Thought* does picture is the self-portrait of an artist who cannot see himself located inside the nothingness that is the black void inside the pail. This is a metaphorical observation about, not only research in a terrain where infinity and nothingness are abundant, but also a relation between the iconic figure of the artist and the artist in their studio, doing work.

Samuel Beckett also refers specifically to Leibniz's monad as the form that strongly influenced the worlds, and particularly the philosophical constructs, of his characters.[60] Leibniz's point that "each monad is, as it were, a world apart" (a fitting description for a classic Beckett scene), sustains the isolated monad as a hermetically closed form, not contingent on the ebbs and flows of the outside world.[61] In *Murphy*, Beckett writes:

> Murphy's mind pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without. This was not an impoverishment, for it excluded nothing that it did not itself contain. Nothing ever had been, was or would be in the universe outside it but was already present as virtual, or actual, or virtual rising into actual, or actual falling into virtual, in the universe inside it.[62]

Even though Beckett did not formulate his own concept of the monad – instead relaying his thoughts through the Leibnizian formulation, although inverting plenum for vacuum (a return to Spinoza) – he nevertheless acknowledges its value in the construction of a world for his characters, "furnishing him with a 'splendid little picture' which is then refashioned or comically distorted, and applied to his poetic purposes."[63] This wholly interior world, charged with psychological conditions keyed

[59] I am referring to the Hindu concept of the Veils of Maya, which states that we view life through a series of distorting veils that prevent us from seeing 'actual reality'.

[60] Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), 107. In the French translation of *Murphy*, Beckett explicitly mentions Murphy's interest in Leibniz. See Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1947), 119.

[61] Attributed to Leibniz from his writings to the Jesuit teacher Bartholomew des Bosses, dated 29 May 1716, as published in Naoya Mori's essay, "Beckett's Windows and the Windowless Self," in *Samuel Beckett: Today / Aujourd'hui,* eds. Anthony Uhlmann, Sjef Houpermans and Bruno Clement (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 364.

[62] Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press), op. cit.

[63] Katrin Wehling-Giorgi, "The Leibnizian Monad and the Self through the Lens of Carlo Emilio Gadda's and Samuel Beckett's Writings*," MHRA Working Papers in the Humanities* 2 (2007), 62, accessed 2 February 2017, http://www.mhra.org.uk/pdf/wph-2-5.pdf

into existential dilemmas, differs from the crisp geometric cosmology of Pythagoras, or the hierarchical world view proposed by Leibniz. In Beckett's characters, we can sense a "monad/individual" that is "bereft of spatial location" and "vegetates in a state of utter solitude."[64]

Leibniz's monad has neither windows nor doors, and this windowless place, or solipsistic interior microcosm, is a device that Beckett references. Katrin Wheling-Giorgi makes a case for this in her essay, "The Leibnizian monad and the Self through the Lens of Carlo Emilio Gadda's and Samuel Beckett's Writings." She writes:

> By seizing on the limited space of the monad, symbolized by spatial confinement, Beckett underlines the lack of interaction (or solipsism) of the individual with the rest of the world; at the same time, he posits an indefinable 'otherness' in the world outside which does not give his protagonists any comfort or points of reference. The hermetic closure of the system/self…is one of the central tenets of Beckett's adoption of the philosophical term. [65]

That quote could be an observation of Brancusi in his studio, or more precisely, the missing Brancusi in *Atelier Brancusi*. In *Atelier Brancusi*, we see the inside of the monad as a windowless space of inescapable darkness, a hermetically sealed glass vitrine without openings or any direct interaction with the outside world. A space cut off, functioning as a metaphor for Beckett's worldview of "uncompromising pessimism."[66] Afterall, "you're on earth, there's no cure for that!"[67]

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[64] Ibid, 67.
[65] Ibid, 63.
[66] Thomas Osborne, "Becoming Organic: Samuel Beckett's Literary Anthropology," *Journal of Beckett Studies* 11, no. 2 (2002): 74, accessed 28 May 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26468936
[67] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957; 2009), accessed 28 May 2021, https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4909865/mod_resource/content/1/ENDGAME%20-%20SAMUEL%20BECKETT.pdf

1.2

Object Image Text

If a museum is a place which holds a collection, then the universe can be called a museum.[68] It contains historical items dating back to the beginning of time, and new and undiscovered ones can and will be added to 'the collection' as they become available for accessioning.[69] The items, in this case, comprise anything that is more than a thought (or more than a *non*-thought thought). That is, any thought which can be visualised, articulated or translated into a form or language, be that visual, gestural, digital, textual, etc.[70] The Universal Object, as an idea, a thought, is formalised and depicted by the symbol of an encircled dot. As a metaphysical form for thinking, it also manifested itself as a *gōng shí*, a scholar's rock.

I am referring to the Chinese *gongshi*, or *gōng shí* (供石),[71] which were collected in earnest by the Chinese literati and artists from the late Tang dynasty (618 – 906 AD). According to Robert D. Mowry, Harvard Art Museum's Curator Emeritus, a *gōng shí* "like a landscape painting…represented a microcosm of the universe on which the scholar could meditate within the confines of his studio or garden."[72] My work, *Data One* (2018) [fig. 12], represented the Universal Object as a *gōng shí*, and in so doing, I could consider the universe through the form of the Universal Object. To create this a disc was used to cut a mask from adhesive vinyl, which was applied to the wood panel surface. The exposed panel was sprayed over with oil paint to create the illusion of a chiaroscuro modelled sphere (taking on the sculptural quality of the Universal Object), which floats in unbounded space (the panel's blank surface). The representation of a 3-

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[68] This interpretation is based on the International Council of Museum Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007. Their current definition of a museum is as follows: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment." See, International Council of Museum Statutes, "Museum Definition," accessed 19 January 2021, https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition

[69] For example, the experiments taking place in the Large Hadron Collider at the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN) to identify, isolate and analyse the Higgs boson, are adding new theories and objects to the collection of entities which make up the universe.

[70] To put this another way: in my project I consider an item to be anything that can be communicated. A thought would not be an item if it only remains within the mind and is never expressed.

[71] Literally 'spirit stones', commonly mis-translated as 'scholar's rocks' in English. See, "The Wisdom of Rocks: Gongshi," School of Life, accessed 1 March 2021, https://www.theschooloflife.com/thebookoflife/the-wisdom-of-rocks-gongshi

[72] Robert D. Mowry, "Collecting Guide: Scholars' Rocks," Christies, accessed 28 May 2021, https://www.christies.com/features/Collecting-Guide-Scholars-Rocks-6815-1.aspx

dimensional conceptual sculpture, a thought form (which can be a "microcosm of the universe"), in 2-dimensional space ("like a landscape painting"), in order to read or 'see' more into it ("meditate"), reveals the Universal Object's ability to operate as object, image and text.
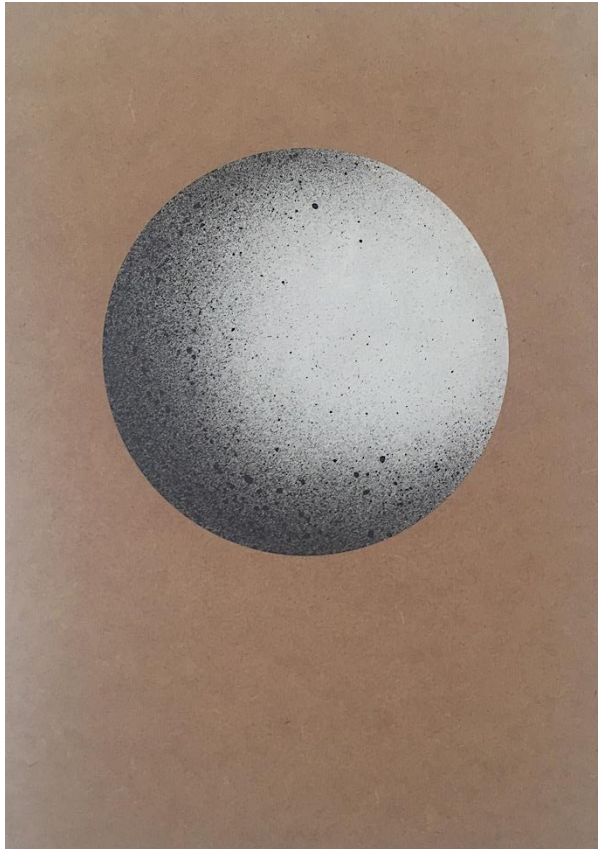
Fig. 12: *Data One*, 2018
        Robin Kirsten

As an *object*, the Universal Object can take the shape of a sphere. That sphere can be topologically modified, as with a ball of clay, into an infinite number of new forms, as "a circle is the same as a triangle or a square, because you just 'pull on' parts of the circle to make corners and then straighten the sides, to change a circle into a square. Then you just 'smooth it out' to turn it back into a circle."[73] The image of a doughnut being topologically transformed into a coffee mug depicts this transformation [fig. 13].[74] In this way, it is possible to consider a cube as originating from the sphere. A building (perhaps a theatre, an artist's space or a museum) could be a topologically modified Universal Object.

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[73] Robert Bruner, "What is Topology? A Short and Idiosyncratic Answer," Wayne State University, accessed 9 April 2021, http://www.rrb.wayne.edu/topology.html
[74] The Universal Object can be transformed into a doughnut by pushing a thumb through the centre of a sphere.

Fig. 13: *Topology Joke*
        Henry Segerman

As an *image*, the Universal Object can be seen as planar. Its space is defined by a central element, like a column, and an outer wall that rings it. It is a place that determines the "*omphalos*" and "*temenos*" of the world. The 20th century Alexandrian poet, Constantine Cavafy, when sketching out his last communication (his last motion) on his death bed, drew "a circle on a blank sheet of paper and then plac[ed] a period in the middle of the circle."[75] Such an image is the Universal Object for a poet. In "Theses on the Ruins of Geometry," Ahuvia Kahane's pictures Cavafy's symbol of a Universal Object as:

> an objective image of being: a *temenos*, a circle, a surround, a precinct, and an *omphalos*, a full-stop, a centre-point, a navel, towards which everything, and life itself, must gather. A geometric figure of our being (as Heidegger might say) towards death.[76]

That is, a geometric figure, or symbol of the Universal Object (an image), pictures the infinity in death and allows one to *imagine* spatial and temporal relations, unlike the object, which realises them physically.

My pen and ink sketch, *Study for a Museum of Opening Doors* (2016) [fig. 14], based on an architectural plan of the family house my father started building in 1980,[77] imagines the spatial and temporal relations of a body moving in space and place. By placing the compass point (*omphalos*) on various corners and junctures on the plan, I opened up multiple doorways or openings using the language of the circle (*temenos*) to

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[75] Cavafy's translator, Edmund Keeley, as quoted in Ahuvia Kahane, "Theses on the Ruins of Geometry," in *Future Ruins: Lisbon*, eds. Jaspar Joseph-Lester, Andrew Pavoni, Susanne Prinz and Julie Westerman (London: Trigger Point, 2019), 182.
[76] Ibid.
[77] This house was built at 14 Ebony Road, Loevenstein, Cape Town, South Africa.

denominate an opening door, the arc. The new spaces formed by the arc (semi-circles and full circles) were filled in with black ink to differentiate the spaces.
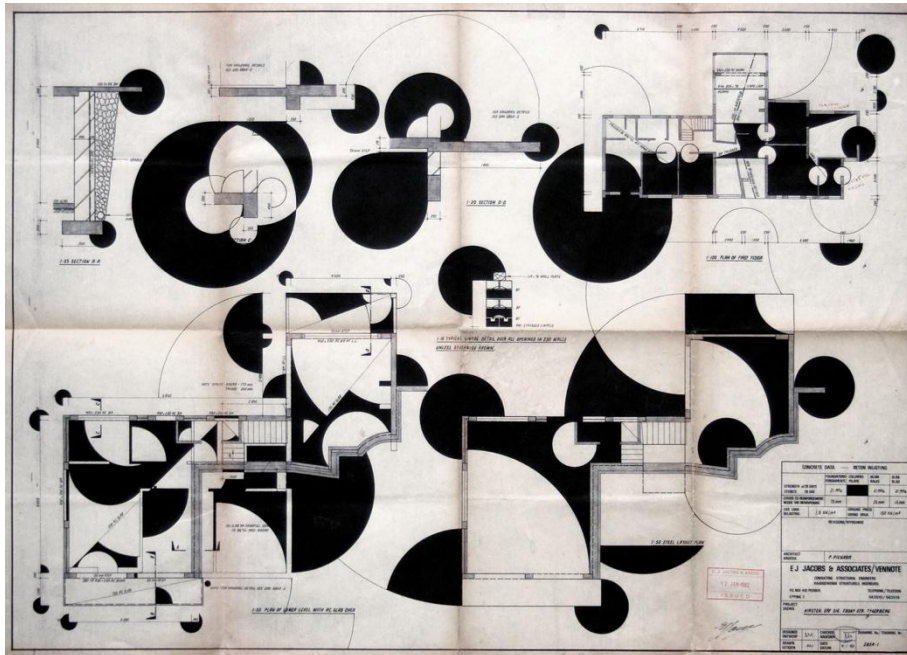
Fig. 14: *Study for a Museum of Opening Doors*, 2016
Robin Kirsten

This is a museum and building designed around the body entering and exiting simultaneously, facilitating the experience of moving through space, and taking time to do so. The body returns to the same place, arriving at the beginning again. In Kahane's language, time is "gathered" together by the body's (potentially eternal) return to the same position. It is a geometric plan of our being towards death, where you arrive, in the end, at the same place: non-existence, or simply a thought.

As *text*, the Universal Object conveys the theories it represents, or texts it generates. Leibniz's *The Monadology*, for example, contextualises his monad as a branch of knowledge – a subject (and metaphysical object) of philosophical study – becoming a porthole for libraries of knowledge. The monad might also be understood as a keyhole that opens into ideas of the abstract. Idiosyncrasies build from this symbol into a complexity stretching all the way to a conceptualisation of the universe, its systems and operations.

The Universal Object, used as a device to collect texts, combined with Remix theory's capacity to generate new meaning by sampling, resulted in idiosyncratic texts. I call

these texts *obliquus*,[78] as they invoke another world *aslant* to their source texts. In this process, I invoke The Gyroscopic Tendency to sample by Google-searching a term or word. In the example below, *Talk for Three Chairs* (2016) [fig. 15], the origin, or first search term, was "primary point". These search results were then trawled for phrases that I selected intuitively, which were then gathered together into word flows.

TALK FOR THREE CHAIRS

If the object whose gas and positive sphere cuts over the four-to-the-floor clap potential of the gyroscopic tendencies of a spectral shift below a Planck Length, then it stands to reason that a circumnavigation of the primary sphere point would indicate further anomalies in extra-orbital neutronal parameters.

Supposing we were able to hollow out the smoking clock lying on the ellipse, then irregularities behind the eighth hooped dimension in the second phase of the last sector, would modify all obliquus.

Robin Kirsten, 2016

Fig. 15: *Talk for Three Chairs*, 2016
        Robin Kirsten

Individual elements are recognisable. Held together by syntax, they appear cohesive, but when collated, these dense image-worlds slip out of grasp. In a nonsensical mode, they turn the text back in on itself, thus critiquing the process of constructing a 'logical' proposal: a self-referential process resulting in *obliquus*. John Cage's writing style also informs this method. Visually, his use of multiple columns, long breaks, jump cuts and misaligned phrases, creates jagged edges and compound forms. In *Notations* (1969), amongst the reproduced sheets of his audio notations, Cage's words fly across the page in bits and pieces, making new arrangements possible between the words and

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[78] From Latin for oblique, meaning 'slanted' or 'sloping'. See, *Cambridge Dictionary Online*, s.v. "obliquus", accessed 6 April 2021, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/obliquus

phrases. They add up to whatever you want them to be. He gets to "make something of nothing in small ways that add up."[79] Likewise, in his "Lecture on Nothing" and "Lecture on Something," the spacing of phrases across several columns makes it possible to piece together fragments into your own lecture.

In both lectures, each phrase is aligned (and misaligned) in columns. Visual and textual poetry forms out of conjunctions, blank spaces, jump cuts and phrasal arrangements. Like Brancusi's sculptures, he stacks words and phrases on top of each other, creating mobile groups. An example of this would be, as I read it:

> That is, pos-sessing anything themes the climax;
> own one's own home),
> we carry our homes to enjoy breathtakingly the telephone.[80]

This strategy is reflected in texts that utilise The Gyroscopic Tendency as a method for capturing words and phrases, or worlds of data, and piecing them together into 'something': *obliquus*.

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[79] John Cage, *Notations* (New York: Something Else Press, 1969), 16.
[80] John Cage, "Lecture on Nothing," in *Silence* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 111.

1.3
Welcome to My World

'World' is a contested term and remains unsettled. The 'world' relevant here corresponds to Alain Badiou's understanding: a world "understood not simply as a set or collection of elements but as a variable domain of logical and even 'phenomenological' coherence, a domain whose elements normally seem to 'hold together'."[81] Badiou further expands on this notion of coherence, or belonging, citing the monad as an internal structuring form: "There is nothing extrinsic about belonging to a world. Belonging is marked, in the units that constitute the world (individuals or objects), by their internal composition (effort or *conatus* in the monad; atomic composition of objects)."[82]

If worlds were to correspond with each other and be domains of "phenomenological coherence," they would each need the same set of terms to be in dialogue, which the Universal Object can provide. Belonging to either world would be contingent on each world's internal composure and innate tendencies. In each world, an origin (a centre) and a boundary (the encircling) would need to be identified, or "disclosed," in the language of Heidegger, although he warns against over-simplification:

> But the world is not simply the open that corresponds to the clearing… Rather, the world is the clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies.[83]

World, for Heidegger, is not a given. It is not automatically disclosed simply by identification, but is that upon which the disclosing takes place.[84]

Each monad-world might be seen then, as a technology, tool or language that sketches out being to trace out belonging. As Cristina Lafont writes on Heidegger's ideas about world-disclosure in relation to language as a tool for disclosure: "[D]ialogue is only possible if one and the same world is disclosed to all speakers so that they can talk

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[81] Peter Hallward, "Order and Event: On Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*," *New Left Review* 53 (September/October 2008), 104.

[82] Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Bloomsbury: London, 2009), 328.

[83] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 61.

[84] R. Raj Singh, "Heidegger and the World in an Artwork," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 3 (1990), 215-22, accessed 28 March 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/431763

about the same things."[85] The monad does this as a metaphysical form which conveys content from one world to another, or more precisely, from one thinker to another. The latter can be seen in how various thinkers (e.g. Blavatsky, Crowley, Beckett) adopt and adapt someone else's monad to achieve coherence in their own systems. Other worlds are constructed in unique ways, achieving their own level of coherence according to whatever units are put in place to communicate their innate tendencies.
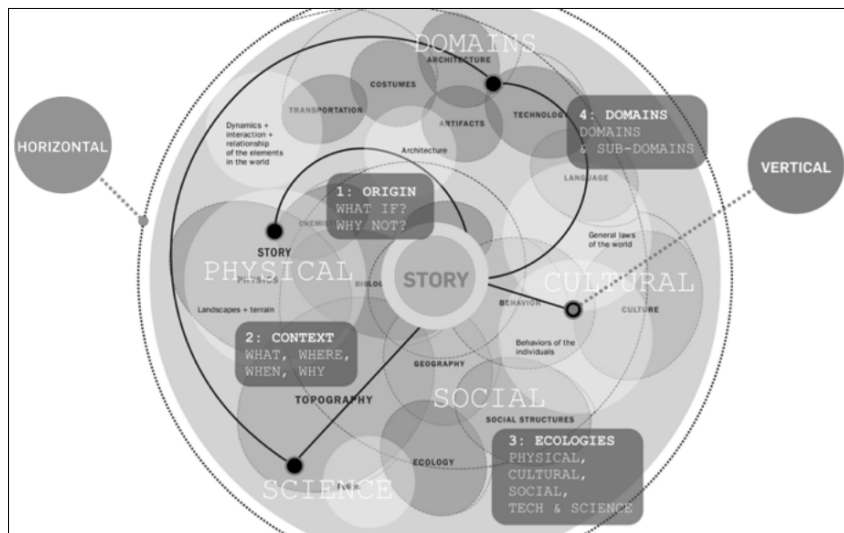
Fig. 16: World building mandala for *Minority Report*

In science fiction and near-future film production and design, new worlds can be held together on a set category of concerns to make a new world coherent for the viewer. For example, the world building mandala, initially developed for the scenography by Alex McDowell for the film *Minority Report* (2002), represents "a horizontal slice through the world."[86] Society, culture, history, technology, infrastructure etc., interconnect through the mandala to develop a logic-driven world space. Its internal matrix and logic *shapes* the future world, which influences the narrative.[87] The mandala, mapping out a near-future world [fig. 16], "shows that after an initial impetus from the story origin at the centre," the next stage of building "would stimulate the interrogation of the world," towards realising its limits and identifying that which encircles the centre or origin.[88]

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[85] Cristina Lafont, "World-Disclosure and Critique: Did Habermas Succeed in Thinking with Heidegger and against Heidegger?" *Telos* 145 (Winter 2008), 161–76.
[86] Alex McDowell and Peter von Stackelberg, "What in the World?: Storyworlds, Science Fiction and Futures Studies," *Journal of Future Studies* 20, no. 2 (December 2015), 39.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

Another perspective on what constitutes a world is Nelson Goodman's analytical approach. Largely based on symbols and an overall pluralist view, it proposes that many worlds are possible: "Worlds are made by making such a version with words, numerals, pictures, sounds, or other symbols of any kind in any medium."[89] His analysis takes up abstract and subjective operatives like style, quotation, and factuality. A subjective perspective on one world by two people, Goodman says, does not produce a new world, just versions of the one.[90]

McDowell's mandala is such an organisation of symbols (images, references, signs, language, aesthetics etc.), but it resists Goodman's meta-philosophical approach. Where Goodman anticipates that all versions of worlds are possible under any particular framework,[91] the world building mandala for near-future science fiction film design is less open-ended. The film's world narrative needs to be coherent in relation to what *today* is like for everyone.[92] To be believable, its signs and symbols are (normally) already plausible, certainly where technological advancement is concerned. It also, for example, adheres to local laws (such as building height restrictions) to make the film world believable.[93] There is a world that we all know (by sharing media and crossing cultural references), and the differences between our own individual worlds can be absolutely subtle.

When Leibniz states that his God "has chosen the best of all possible worlds,"[94] or when Estragon asks Vladimir in Act 1 of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, as he gestures to the universe, "This one is enough for you?,"[95] a picture is formed that other worlds, and future worlds, might be. We cannot know these worlds but, as Leibniz points out, "the whole realm of the possible is an actual infinity of ideas."[96] An example of an artist's space that is a world of its own, with a unique combination of origin and boundary, coherence, innate tendencies and organisation of symbols, is Helen Martins' *Owl House*.

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[89] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978), 94.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid, 96.
[92] Peter von Stackelberg and Alex McDowell, op. cit. 39.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*, trans. E. M. Huggard (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 1985; rpt. 2007), 232.
[95] Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), accessed 28 May 2021, https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/2335139/mod_resource/content/1/WAITING%20FOR%20GODOT.pdf
[96] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy,* op. cit., 33.

Fig. 17: Front street view, *Owl House*

Fig. 18: The Long Room, *Owl House*

Fig. 19: The Long Room, *Owl House*

Fig. 20: The Living Room, *Owl House*
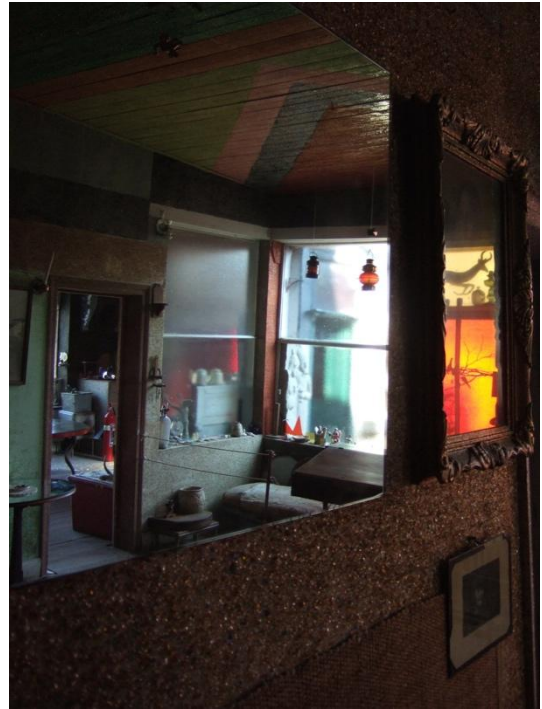
Fig. 21: The Living Room, *Owl House*

Fig. 22: The Green Room, *Owl House*

Fig. 23: The Dining Room, *Owl House*   Fig. 24: Camel Yard, *Owl House*

Owl House [figs. 17 – 24] – created in Nieu Bethesda from around 1940 until Helen Martins' suicide in 1976 – welcomed visitors with a handmade wire sign saying, "Welcome To My World." Martins was born in the house and returned at the age of 43, transforming it into a magical interior space of coloured glass windows, with walls and ceilings covered in crushed glass bottles of various hues. Outside, at the back of the house, her *Camel Yard* installation features beasts and figures from literature and mythology made from concrete and glass bottles. They all face a nominal east, towards Mecca, in homage to 'astronomer-poet' Omar Khayyam's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*.[97] The garden is reminiscent of the "enchanted garden" in which the character Wallace finds himself in H. G. Wells' story *The Door in the Wall*: "A secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world."[98] Could Martins' *Camel Yard* be the passage that represents a spiritual exit, propelling 'Miss Helen' beyond *Owl House*? A final departure from her world and into the stratosphere of divine infinity, an endless world, a future world?

Her sign suggests that she has differentiated her world from all others. The brick and mortar building has been transformed into an interior world of darting rays of light and

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[97] Anne Emslie, *A Journey through the Owl House* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Penguin Books, 1997; 2009), 82.
[98] H. G. Wells, *The Door in the Wall*, The Literature Network, accessed 8 November 2017, http://www.online-literature.com/wellshg/5

fantastical interpretations, all within an oppressive conservative small desert town, which at the time of the house's transformation, was in the grips of Apartheid and all that the system did to culture, society and politics.[99]

'World' does appear to have fixed coordinates to it. When generated from a single point perspective, Martins can refer to her world as her own. In *Owl House*, the combination of surface treatments, furniture, objects, lighting and colour is selected by her for a personal narrative. Personal narratives "can prompt changes in the brain's synaptic connections…and are our primary way of modelling our perspectives of ourselves and the world around us – our 'worldview'."[100]

This project identifies a central viewing point for world creation. The diagram of the Universal Object articulates that narrative. This is the position taken in the centre of the gyroscope. If the Universal Object is taken a step further, to model the universe as Pythagoras, Leibniz and the Holographic Paradigm have done, then how can that development be understood in terms of modelling the universe, which is the biggest world in which any *individual* version of world can be?

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[99] This is explored in Athol Fugard's play *The Road to Mecca* (1984). In it, opposing forces attempt to influence Miss Helens' decision to enter a retirement home, the last vestibule before death. A spiritual quandary around the choice between good or bad, heaven or hell, enlightenment or eternal damnation, is articulated through the two other characters in the play: a pastor, who represents the dominant nationalist ethics governing South Africa during Apartheid; and the other, a teacher friend of Miss Helens' who represents the liberal opposing force for a non-racist pluralistic South Africa.

[100] Ruth Eira Jones and Peter von Stackelberg, "Tales of Our Tomorrows: Transmedia Storytelling and Communicating About the Future," *Journal of Future Studies* 18, no. 3 (March 2014), 64.

1.4

Models of The Universe

Monad – from the Greek "*monas*" (unit), from "*monos*" (alone), theorized as coming from the Proto-Indo-European root "*men-*" (small; isolated)[101] – is considered, in this research, as a singular base unit, or building block. Much like constructing the walls of a museum, the same form is used repeatedly, each one on top, next to or overlapping one another, continuing until the walls of the institution are completed. In my artwork, *Model Construction* (2017) [fig. 25], I selected three different ways of repeating the Universal Object to represent how this process can be used to envisage a model of the universe and to build it through an image.

Fig. 25: *Model Construction*, 2017
      Robin Kirsten

The work is comprised of layers, each of which is sealed with resin. The circular forms in each layer are made up of: a) interconnected pencil circles that form cloud-like structures; b) paper and foil discs positioned without touching each other; and c) a dense overlapping of black acrylic circles. The total layout is reminiscent of photographic plates capturing the location of celestial bodies in the night sky, or a

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[101] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "monad," accessed 14 November 2020,
https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=monad

microscopic detail of an organic lab sample. A palimpsest of forms comprised of different materials.

The Universal Object functions as a building block to enable what Leibniz evoked, about monads being like a machine.[102] That machine of three parts (origin, boundary and the unbounded) interlinks, as if cogs, with the three modes of object, image and text. To reignite what I consider *Atelier Brancusi* to represent – a machine for knowing in – it made economical sense to substitute a Universal Object for each of his works and, when they are in mobile groups, to arrange them according to my own display strategies. Which Universal Object, whose monad, and of what size is not important. What matters is that they stand as cyphers for a larger idea which expands from a building block, sometimes *ad infinitum*.

The 'larger idea' is that the monad (or its variants, like the Universal Object) can extend all the way to modelling the universe: for example, John Latham's worldview, whose building block is a "least event." For Latham, the "dimensionless point of 'least event'," became the basis of his project, leading eventually to the creation of *Flat Time HO* [fig. 27]. Latham's stratagem is to foreground the event as prior to the object, so that "the concept of Least insists on this dimensionality of event."[103]

"Least event" represents Latham's first move for his manifesto. It sits at the core of the artist's space that is *Flat Time HO*. Latham's friend and collaborator, Ian Macdonald-Munro, explains that "Flat Time takes the simple first step of proposing that the 'smallest unit' which we imagine about 'the nature of what is the case', is not a 'thing' or a 'field' but a 'least event'."[104] Latham and Macdonald-Munro formulated the event framework in 1989. They stated that "the framework of Event brings forward [...] firstly, an inclusive index of all that happens; secondly a cosmological picture in which a

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102 I am referring to the contested nature of Leibniz's concept of free will, which he proposes is a quality of being, even though his *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686) promotes the universe as deterministic and pre-ordained. A thorough overview of these complexities is considered in Douglas Burnham, "Gottfried Leibniz: Metaphysics," Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, accessed 1 March 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/leib-met/
103 John Latham, *Report of a Surveyor* (Stuttgart: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1984), 8.
104 Ian Macdonald-Munro, "Introduction," The Least Event, published February 2004, accessed 12 April 2021, http://www.theleastevent.com/introduction.htm

Reflective Intuitive Organism (RIO) shows up in detailed relation to the Universe of matter."[105]

John Latham's theory on the nature of the universe as 'Flat Time' starts from his 'least event', which can be represented by a single point, dot, or circle (all monadic forms). It originates in a revelation he had in October 1954 when creating the mural *Io54* for a party thrown by his scientist friends,[106] Clive Gregory and Anita Kohsen, who authored *The O-Structure* (1959), a "psychophysical cosmology" that could unite not just science and art, but also mind and matter.[107] Latham's action, of using a can of black spray paint to create the mural, culminated in a new understanding for him about the nature of the universe. Later, in the 1970s, he reissued that action as the *One Second Drawing* series.[108] [fig. 26]

Fig. 26: *One second drawing (01" 0913; Zeittakt 1:5)*, 1971
    John Latham

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[105] John Latham and Ian Macdonald-Munro, "Dimensional Framework of Event Argued as Time-Based Theory," in *John Latham: Art after Physics*, (Stuttgart: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1991), 105.
[106] Latham also referred to this work as *Idiom of 54*.
[107] Simon Rycroft, "John Latham's cosmos and mid-century representation," *Visual Culture in Britain* 17, no. 1 (2016), 111.
[108] The *One Second Drawing* series was devised by Latham in the early 70s, when he made 60 drawings, one per day, in which he sprayed a piece of white board for one second with black acrylic spray paint.

For Latham, art was "a quantum of human creative energy" and reflected the fusion of time with event.[109] Simon Rycroft suggests that Latham saw in Robert Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951) a correspondence with the Gregory/Kohsen psychophysical cosmology. It was "a dematerialised form and yet one that was unified in the sense that it suggested a 'dimensionless point', a point of zero space and zero time from which the universe emerged – no event and no object."[110] Comparable to the library in Borges', "The Library of Babel," where hexagonal rooms allow for the immediate expansion of knowledge in all directions simultaneously. Given that "the Library is a sphere whose exact center is any one of its hexagons and whose circumference is inaccessible,"[111] the centre is the everywhere dimensionless point.

Fig. 27: Exterior street view of *Flat Time HO*, Peckham, London

In Latham's manifesto, addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation, "New philosophy, new stratagem…," he states that text-based language is unable to reconcile the contradictions between mind and matter. These can be resolved "if formal logic shared unknowingly by art and mathematical media is recognised in terms of event."[112] "Art is Event Structure."[113]

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[109] Ibid, 114.
[110] Ibid, 113.
[111] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 254, accessed 3 June 2021, https://posthegemony.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/borges_collected-fictions.pdf
[112] Ibid, 7.
[113] Ibid.

Latham's RIO is in a direct 1:1 correspondence with the universe. The RIO is the observer, "reminiscent of Latham's psychophysical state at the time [a] picture is made."[114] For him, reflective consciousness is emphasised in relation to time as event. The time framework for the RIO is predicated on finding the right solution to the context he was in, and not on intellectual rigour.[115] Latham links event, world and RIO together as entirely interdependent. As concepts, they generate each other in a reflexive process.

In a faxed letter to Laura Cummings at *The Observer* critiquing the Whitechapel Art Gallery exhibition, "Live in Your Head" (2000), he posits that the UK arts authorities have done "everything possible to obliterate our one real development since 1951."[116] He is referring to his encounter with Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951), John Cage's *4'33* (1952), and their connection to his *Io54* (1954) mural depicting the first "least event." This one real development is:

> …The finding that the world is an 'Event'.
> …with a fine-grain geometry of Event-Structure.
> …which includes within it a fine-grain map of a Reflective Intuitive Organism.[117]

Using Latham's pronouncement above, a fine-grained mapping of the *Museum of Infinite Relations* is predicated on: a) remaining at the zero-point at the centre of the gyroscope, which represents the 'event', or least point, in order to build an image of a world; b) maintaining a relation, or geometry, between the zero-point and the boundary of world in order to activate The Gyroscopic Tendency as a discourse; and c) maintaining a reflexive mode of practice in order to map the role of the artist, or Reflective Intuitive Organism, to embody and articulate the geometry as an 'art event'.

A model of the universe, in this research, is simply the building out of an idea, of modelling the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, from a single building block. Pythagoras and Leibniz have theorized the monad as a base unit for a system that can address, and answer, questions about perception, reality and the nature of the universe. In a sense, these systems are also machines for knowing in. Answers, or proposals, which rely on

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[114] Marion Keiner, "Picture World/World Picture: The Reflective Intuitive Organism and its Cosmology," in *John Latham: Art after Physics*, ibid, 40.
[115] Charles Harrison, "Where does the Collision Happen?," *Studio International,* Vol. 175 (May 1968), 260.
[116] John Latham, "Fax to The Observer," Ligatus Archive, accessed 9 April 2021, https://www.ligatus.org.uk/aae/node/1829
[117] Ibid.

the conundrum that emerges when sketching out the logic(s) of the monad. An imagining that is self-referential, as the monad and its multiplication (in the Pythagorean and Leibnizian systems) is only sustainable because of the qualities of the singular form, repeatedly repeated. In this way, the monad appears to be a very resilient single-cellular form, able to exist in the extremes of convoluted, spiralling and idiosyncratic thought.

Fig. 28: *Radiation Field No. 2*, 2018
    Robin Kirsten

In my ongoing *Radiation Field* series [fig. 28], I refer to the 'least event' of Latham's *Io54*. The pinpoint of a compass has been inserted into the centre of individual black ink dots. Circles with an equal radius were then drawn around each dot to form a Universal Object. (The fine-grain dots were created as a result of the lithographic printing process). These were then repeated to cover over multiple dots on the figurine reproduced on the book page. The overlaid ink drawing consists of several Universal Objects interlinked and brings the hidden structure of the dot pattern to the front.

After Latham's Receptive Intuitive Organism has become aware of the "least event," the next stage of development is "art event." In the artwork above, the process of drawing a circle around the "least event" (signified by the individual black dots of ink) is the "art event": the term I use to identify the development from the reception of the event to an awareness that culminates in making a decision to encircle, or conclude that event, in art.
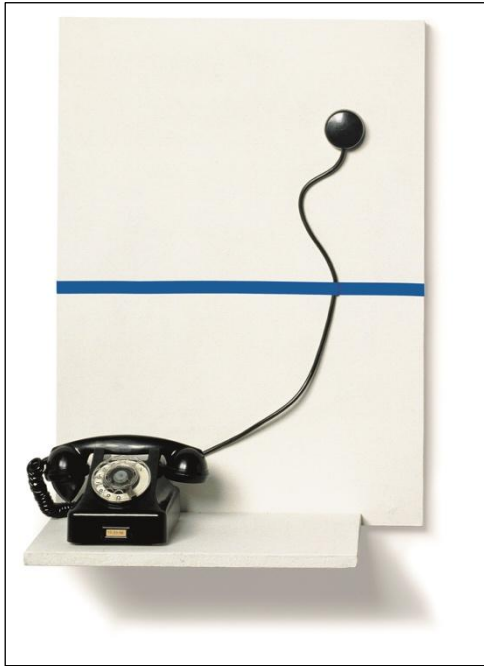
Fig. 29: *Intervention with a Telephone*, 1972
Edward Krasiński

Edward Krasiński is another example of how 'least event' evolves into 'art event'. Krasińki's 'art event' is the inclusion of blue tape in his work [fig. 29]. For him, this was "a coincidence, but I expected that."[118] It presents a rupture in his work and makes another state possible, which is his 'art event'. He refused to explain it in metaphysical terms.[119] His stock reply about its meaning was simply: "Plastic tape, Scotch blue, width 19 mm, length unknown. I stick it horizontally on everything and everywhere, at a height of 130 cm."[120] Or, he suggested that the question should be answered by the tape itself.[121] His game: deferral and referral. He deflects its meaning and gives the tape agency to answer instead.

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[118] Ewa Gorządek, "Edward Krasiński," Culture.pl, published May 2006, updated March 2016, accessed 19 November 2019, https://culture.pl/en/artist/edward-krasinski
[119] Ibid.
[120] Adam Szymczyk, "Profiles: Edward Krasiński," *Frieze*, published 6 Jun 2004, accessed 9 April 2021, https://frieze.com/article/edward-krasinski
[121] Catrin Lorch, "Reviews: Edward Krasiński," trans. Nicholas Grindell, *Frieze*, published 1 Nov 2006, accessed 9 April 2021, https://frieze.com/article/edward-krasinski-0

Krasińki's friend and fellow artist Andrzej Kostołowski notes that infinity might be a guiding motif in Krasińki's work: "[H]e wants to suggest infinity in a visually perceptible manner."[122] Certainly, its interpretation is in the category of time. Henryk Stażewski, Krasińki's mentor, says that his blue tape intervention was a way for the artist to be "an observer of changing phenomena that contain time…a 'witness of…events'."[123] Krasiński's "witness" and Latham's "Receptive Intuitive Organism" share similarities, as does my position with The Gyroscopic Tendency. All three witness events and then transcribe them into artworks as art events.

Fig. 30: *Le Palais Idéal*

A final example of how the monad (as a building block and instigator for an 'art event') finds itself reflected in an artist's space (that which is a world of its own, and which takes in the universe) is in the building created by the French postman Ferdinand Cheval (1836 –1924), which he started in 1897. This is the story Cheval told about his *Le Palais Idéal* [fig. 30]: one day, walking through the countryside, doing his daily round, Cheval bumped his big toe on an unusual looking rock [fig. 31]. The rock jogged his memory about a dream he had of a palace, so he placed it in his pocket, inspired to

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[122] As quoted in Ewa Gorządek, "Edward Krasiński," op. cit.
[123] Henryk Stażewski, *Edward Krasiński*, Exhibition Catalogue (Warsaw: Galeria Zapiecek, 1976), accessed 12 April 2021, http://flattimeho.org.uk/exhibitions/edward-krasinski/

create the vision that accompanied his dreamworld.[124]

Fig. 31: Ferdinand Cheval's first rock, at *Le Palais Idéal*

Over the following years, and until 2 years before his death, Cheval picked up more rocks on his daily rounds, eventually using a wheelbarrow to increase his harvest. Along with concrete, shells and the local rocks, he single-handedly constructed *Le Palais Idéal*, over a 33 year period, on a plot of land adjacent to the family home in Hauterives, outside of Lyon, France. His 'palace' is a combination of architectural styles, referencing the buildings he would have come across on the tourist postcards and magazines he delivered, such as Swiss chalets, medieval castles, Hindu temples, Islamic mosques, Roman temples, and Gothic cathedrals. It's a fusion of spires, turrets, Baroque ornamentation, interconnected grottoes, neo-classical façades and labyrinthine stairways, replete with mythological beasts and miniature versions of famous and exotic buildings. It is encrusted with patterns and details, hand-formed or with inset shells and stones. On the top of the building, his first rock is set on a pedestal, and around the side he has written, "The Work of One Man."

The Surrealists took Cheval to be one of their own. Introduced to them by the writer and filmmaker Jacques Brunius via André Breton, Brunius wrote:

> At the meeting place of primitive art and the art of madmen and of children Cheval established a monstrous system of imagined memories…many sided palace, luxuriant and at the same time secret, contradictory, and inconsistent in its themes, with walls strewn with

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[124] Ferdinand Cheval, "The Autobiography of Ferdinand Cheval: The Story of the Palais Idéal, Hauterives," *Raw Vision* 38 (Spring 2002), 24–33.

pathetic inscriptions…plaything of an inspired child, this rock vibrant with strangeness and ingenuousness.[125]

Breton declared Cheval to be "the uncontested master of mediumistic architecture and sculpture."[126] This epitaph reinforces the 'art event' of *Le Palais Idéal.* Cheval's single minded work brings together, gathers and coalesces (from a single form, the first rock) references that are resolutely obtuse in their relations. Together, they form a "many sided palace" which is an ingenuous "meeting place" where everything can exist coherently.

The *Museum of Infinite Relations* notes this possibility: to be vibrant, contradictory and inconsistent; a plaything which samples and joins found data into a monstrous inconsistent system that is based on a single simple form. Cheval's palace is a monument to one man's extraordinary vision and commitment. Starting from a single point, its first building block is a humble, but nevertheless strange, rock. As he expands the art event outwards from that strange rock, his palace becomes even stranger still. The entire building, however, is encoded with that original art event: bumping his toe one day delivering post.

You can see the Universal Object at work here. Starting from the single point, it expands from that centre to a full circle and, towards its completion, a final complex form. It represents a topologically transformed Universal Object (the rock), pulled, twisted, burrowed into, folded, pinched and then tweaked. The references, inscriptions, shapes and materials are absolutely unique to Cheval's vision, techniques and ambitions. Still, we can discern the Universal Object as a viable method to understand how you can go from a single rock to a complex monument that sits in the centre of his world, that is *his* world. A world, depicted as a palatial sculpture, which references the universe of everything around him. A universe he discovers through the postcards and magazines he delivers, from places very, very far away. Committed to working alone by gas light at night, Cheval expresses from within himself a "monstrous" sculpture that he had to keep hidden as best he could, to protect himself from the epitaph of "madman." Drawing on his full imaginative powers, the postman opens up into the space of the art event. He creates an artist's space that is both in a

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[125] Jacques Brunius, "Un Palais Idéal," *Architectural Review* 80 (October 1936), 147–48.
[126] André Breton, "Le Message Automatique," *Minotaure* 3-4 (December 1933), 65.

place (the land as his ground), and in the space of practice. Cheval's studio and his artwork are the same thing. One of the inscriptions on *Le Palais Idéal* reads, "Palace of the Imagination," a close cousin of the other metaphor for the studio, imagination chamber.

Breton wrote about Cheval's palace in his text about another 'outsider artist', Joseph Crépin, as being "constructed in a space where what is presumed to be 'behind' communicates with what is presumed to be 'in front' and what is presumed to be 'above' communicates with what is presumed to be 'below' so closely that they form a unity in which no shadow is ever cast."[127] Cheval's shadowless palace is lit from all sides. It is many sided and, as Elizabeth B. Heuer notes in her thesis on mail art and Surrealism, "Breton derives his description on the celebrated aphorism of hermetic philosophy: 'As above, so below'."[128] Written on the *Emerald Tablet*, this aphorism is associated with Hermeticism, based on the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, whose name is associated with Hermes, messenger of the gods, *the postman from heaven*. Hermes is also the god of roads, communication and trade, taking his name from the Greek word ʽἑρμῆς (*herma*) which refers to a "pillar surmounted by a bust,"[129] a "stone-heap" or "he of the stone-heap."[130]

The idea that Cheval, he of the stone heap, might be the postman from heaven cements his status as the master of mediumistic architecture. And that the work of one man, with one building block and one vision, can build an artist's space that sits at the centre of his one and only world, must be thought of, in terms of this thesis, in relation to a model of the universe. Cheval's Big Bang moment is when he finds his Universal Object, the rock, which he dutifully tends to and expands into an all-consuming 'cosmos' of inter- and cross-referenced bits from all over the world, as well as the multi-verses of other worlds. These collide into a spectacular adumbration, a count for one, an aleph-null, of which there is only one. His vision of a form unique to

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[127] André Breton, "Joseph Crépin," in *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald and Co., 1965), 307.
[128] Elizabeth B. Heuer, "Going Postal: Surrealism and the Discourses of Mail Art" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2008), 58, accessed 30 December 2019, http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:254284/datastream/PDF/view
[129] The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "Ἑρμῆς," Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, accessed 2 April 2021, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/#eid=43786
[130] Walter F. Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion* (New York: Thames & Hudson 1954), 104–24.

him is the imagination's full expression from a first form. His rock, scholar's rock, or philosopher's stone, is also a Universal Object with its own qualities, operations and options.

On his daily rounds, Cheval might have missed references in the magazines and newspapers to another artist whose work was then explained as originating in a simple form (in this case, an egg): Constantin Brancusi. Critics of Brancusi's first solo show at 291 Gallery in New York in 1914, reminded the public about his *Mademoiselle Pogany* with witticisms like, "Is it an Egg?"[131] And, The Soil: A Magazine of Art, went so far as to publish an image of an egg on a table as a replacement for his *Le Origin du Monde* which "threw the philistines into…paroxysms of uncontrolled glee."[132]

Cheval and Brancusi's lifelong projects both end in the creation of total artworks. For Cheval, it's his palace (fig. 32); for Brancusi, it's his studio (now *Atelier Brancusi*). Both artists can be said to represent the art event of working from a single simple form and expanding that into dynamic architectural sites which have been transformed into museums.

Fig. 32: Interior view of *Le Palais Idéal*

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[131] Anna C. Chave, *Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the Bases of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 123.
[132] Attributed to art critic Henry McBride, as quoted in Anna C. Chave, ibid, 124.

2

On Artists' Spaces

Fig. 33: View of *Atelier Brancusi*

Emptied of the endless white dust and stone shavings of his original studio, *Atelier Brancusi* has an air of the cenotaph or mausoleum about it. At its centre, you are presented with a transparent glass vitrine housing a 1:1 recreation of Brancusi's studio as he left it at 11 Impasse Ronsin. An ambulatory surrounds it, allowing visitors to navigate 360° around the vitrine. From a planar perspective, this structure resembles a Universal Object which has been topologically transformed from a circle to a rectangle, which I deduce from the map reproduced below [fig. 34]. The central rooms are comparable to the origin, and the outer walls of the building resemble the boundary. The ambulatory is the bounded space interior to the Universal Object.
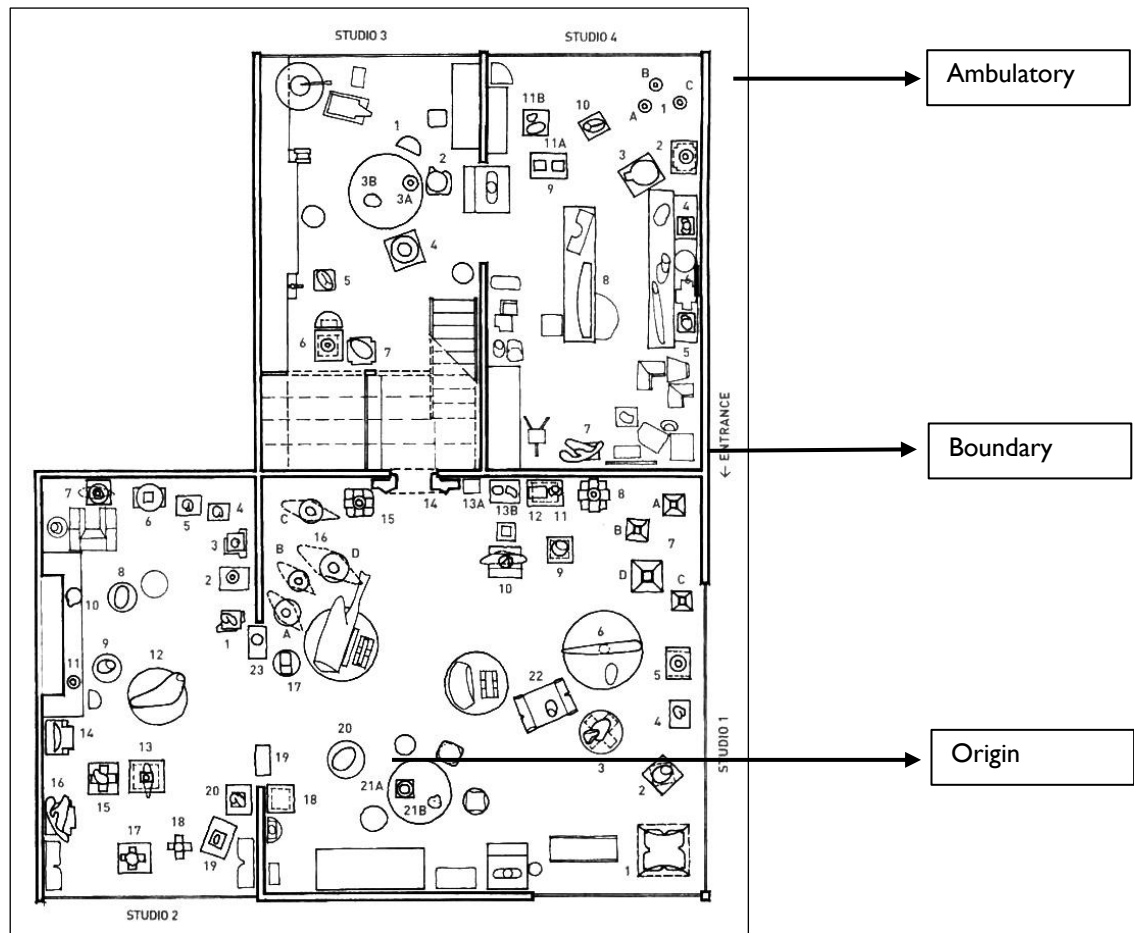
Fig. 34: Floor plan of *Atelier Brancusi*

This entire construction can be considered the world of *Atelier Brancusi*. As Man Ray noted, it was like "entering another world."[133] He "lived like a hermit, in his studio in the heart of Paris."[134] Brancusi's photographs of his studio (using the camera and darkroom Man Ray set up for him) attest to the other-worldliness of this hermit's cave. Visitors might have encountered what Caroline A. Jones, in *Machine in the Studio*, calls a "theatre of authorship," whereby Brancusi represented "a public figure for all that was private,"[135] despite his reluctance to entertain the art world.

[133] Man Ray, *Self-Portrait* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1963), 206.
[134] Ibid, 164.
[135] Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 20.

Fig. 35: *L'Enfant au Monde*, 1917
Constantin Brancusi

Jones suggests that Brancusi's withdrawal from exhibiting in the last decade of his life puts him in "a state of purgatory," and "a process of purification."[136] He spends the last decade of his life moving, repositioning and photographing his catalogue of objects, images and materials into mobile groups. The term "*groupe mobile*" comes from Brancusi himself. In a letter to the collector John Quinn on 27 December 1917, he inscribes the term onto a photograph of his work, *L'Enfant au Monde* (1917) [fig. 35].[137]

In other groupings, works are placed among other elements, such as blocks of material [fig. 36]. An informality to the arrangements, and the many photographs showing the same elements in different groupings suggests that they are neither static nor final; they have mobility keyed into them.

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Anne-Françoise Penders, *Brancusi, la photographie ou l'atelier comme "groupe mobile"* (Brussels: ANTE POST/La Lettre Volée, 1995), 23.

Fig. 36: Interior view of *Atelier Brancusi*

Anne-Françoise Penders notes how Brancusi injected play and humour in his work, giving them an ambivalence.[138] Confusing furniture and sculpture, these works wind and rewind each into the other in a move reminiscent of Dada. Or perhaps Marcel Duchamp's "reciprocal readymades,"[139] which are art objects that are repurposed as everyday objects, for example, using a painting by Rembrandt as an ironing board. At this point, Brancusi seems to be erasing the borders between a traditional sculptural approach (carving work from material) and treating the material itself, as is, as work.

Now, in his studio, both are removed from categorisation. They are put into use as equal elements for the bigger project: of transforming his entire studio into a total artwork. In the current version, the placement of those objects is apparently faithful to the original, which he bequeathed to the French government "on the condition that the Musée National d'Art Moderne promise to reproduce it as it appeared on the day of his death."[140]

One of the narratives promoted by *Atelier Brancusi* is that it should recall and remember the artist's work and studio.[141] Period rooms can do this, as they can take you back in time. A range of clues (items, tools, sculptures, paintings, photographs,

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[138] Ibid, 86.
[139] Ibid, 28.
[140] *Atelier Brancusi,* Visitor Pamphlet (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2019), 1.
[141] Ibid.

furniture etc.) are scattered across the four rooms. With them, the visitor to *Atelier Brancusi* can bring him, metaphorically, back to life.

Fig. 37: Interior view of the ambulatory, looking into a studio room, at *Atelier Brancusi*

Surrounding the glass vitrine containing Brancusi's studio is the ambulatory [fig. 37]. For Albrecht Barthel, the glass walls "dissolv[e] the volume of the studio into the surrounding ambulatory."[142] This architectural feature allows the viewer to circumnavigate the studio. This separation of the exterior (the ambulatory) from the inaccessible interior (the studio) brings the Universal Object into focus again. Being outside Brancusi's studio places the viewer on an ambulatory that always and only 'opens up' onto the ambulatory. The inside is unattainable, and an inversion of what Brancusi created in his original studio. In the original, the studio experience was designed to be entered into fully from within, with almost no ground-level openings to peer through to the outside.

As in a church or a cathedral, the ambulatory coordinates the movement of the devoted around the high altar. In the case of *Atelier Brancusi*, it takes the viewer around the high altar of High Modernism sculpture tourism, of which Brancusi is the High Priest or Chief Curator. You are outside the glass vitrine, looking into the studio, which Anna C. Chave has proposed could be interpreted as a space and place of

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[142] Albrecht Barthel, "The Paris Studio of Constantin Brancusi: A Critique of the Modern Period Room," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 3, no. 2 (2006), 34–43.

mystique constructed with elaborately conceived props.[143] It is a theatrical space, constructing a discourse between the viewer and the stage that is the studio. *Atelier Brancusi* mythologises Brancusi's studio (both his work and Modernism in general) by dramatising what would ordinarily be simply a live/work space, through elaborate lighting, the *Wunderkammer* appeal, and the site's location in the dead centre of Paris on a public square adjacent to a building housing a modern and contemporary art museum, the Centre Pompidou.

On the ambulatory, viewers are presented with an image, a hologram of sorts. The mobile groupings, seen through the flat planes of glass, appear to move in relation to each other, although it's only the viewers who are moving. The glass walls frame the studio like a "*passe-partout*" (master-key).[144] The "passe-partout remains a structure with a movable base; but although it lets something appear, it does not form a frame in the strict sense, rather a frame within the frame."[145] This device reinforces again this multi-dimensional quality of *Atelier Brancusi*. Its glass walls present the possibility of another artist's space fitting neatly behind them with the same effect. As you move past the glass walls, the objects, framed by the "*passe-partout,*" shift their relation to your viewing point. Those closest move slower than the ones further back, like parallax scrolling,[146] which is a close approximation of how a hologram works visually to show depth and movement in an image.

Derrida's take on the "*passe-partout*" as a device summarises this effect. Applying his thoughts to the glass in *Atelier Brancusi* (specifically, the way it acts to separate out the site's qualities into two different dimension structures of 2- and 3-D), it becomes clearer that, instead of creating a continuity between two spaces, glass divides them. The glass is a 'line of argument' that becomes the rhetorical device for setting up the two sides. Derrida puts it this way:

> [This device sits] between the outside and the inside, between the external and the internal edge line, the framer and the framed, the figure and the ground, form

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[143] Anna C. Chave, *Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the Bases of Art*, op. cit.

[144] Jacques Derrida situates the "*passe-partout*" as the master key that unlocks meaning, and allows you to slide behind it any other image as an example. The term comes from picture framing. It is the card insert with a window cut out of it mounted in front of the image, but behind the glass and frame. It is a secondary framing that often cleans up the edges of the image.

[145] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 12.

[146] In websites using this effect, the background image moves more slowly than the foreground text when navigating up and down the webpage.

and content, signifier and signified, and so on for any two-faced opposition. The trait thus divides in this place where it takes place.[147]

For Jon Wood, the glass walls in *Atelier Brancusi* create a kind of "democratic transparency" that equalises the viewer and the (missing) Brancusi.[148] Unlike *Flat Time HO* and *Owl House*, this studio cannot be entered physically (like Francis Bacon's recreated at the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin). The unattainability of the inside of *Atelier Brancusi* makes the objects within far more desirable; they are fetishised like commodities. The vitrine acts like a bell jar, keeping the inside intact while also transforming it into a precious object. Similar to Dan Graham's walk-in pavilions [fig. 38], they are glass constructions that can be entered and experienced, but exist primarily as art objects.

Fig. 38: *Neo-Baroque Walkway*, 2019
     Dan Graham

Graham's pavilions are deep immersions into glass itself. Where his pavilions curve and meet other planes, distortions appear across the surface, and the bodies both inside and outside see their reflections, highlighting "the existence of two sets of oppositional relationships that are intrinsically linked: the relationship between our constructed identities and our body, and the relationship between our psychological 'self' and the 'other'."[149] Graham also considers these as social spaces.[150] You encounter people who

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[147] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, op. cit.
[148] Jon Wood, "Where is the Studio?: Jan De Cock," in *The Fall of the Studio: Artists at Work*, eds. Wouter Davidts and Kim Paice (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2009), 199.
[149] Bryan Barcena, "The Senses at Play: Dan Graham at Inhotim," Academia, accessed 23 March 2021, https://www.academia.edu/1860004/The_Senses_at_Play_Dan_Graham_at_Inhotim
[150] Dan Graham, "Art in Relation to Architecture / Architecture in Relation to Art," in *Rock My Religion: Writings and Projects 1965 – 1990*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 232–241.

are all there for the same reason: to experience the illusory effects of distortions in, on and through, glass.

The illusory effect in both Graham's pavilions and *Atelier Brancusi* resembles a shadow play beyond the 'fourth wall' of glass.[151] When visiting *Atelier Brancusi*, there is nothing else to see and nothing else to do. If you're not circumnavigating the studio on the ambulatory, encountering the illusion of the hologram at the building's centre, then you're sitting on a bench doing the same. Staring at an image (a hologram) projected onto the walls inside a space of illusion, separated from the world outside, recalls another construct that can be discerned and/or applied to *Atelier Brancusi*: Plato's Cave.

Atelier Brancusi is accessed via a flight of descending stairs. Piano's building is semi-subterranean and seamlessly embeds itself within the concrete landscape adjacent to the Centre Pompidou, half submerging itself into the surrounding concrete ground. The entrance, when seen descending into it and when lit from within, suggests the entrance to a cave [fig. 39].
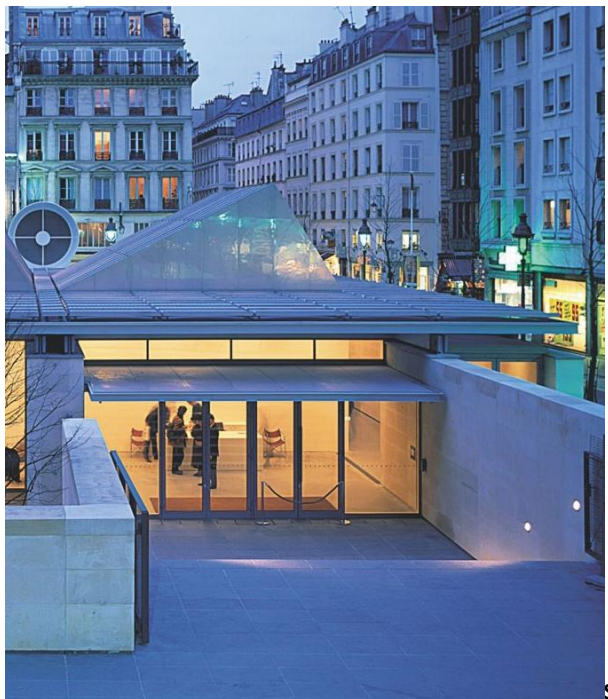
Fig. 39: Entrance to *Atelier Brancusi*

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[151] The term "fourth wall" is drawn from theatre terminology. This term characterises the separation between the audience and on-stage actors, as one where the audience can see what's happening on the other side of the invisible fourth wall, but the actors pretend they cannot.

Plato's "Cave of the Bound Soul" presents two worlds [fig. 40]: the interior cave-world where the bound souls watch images projected onto the wall, and the external "world above,"[152] of sunlight, enlightenment and freedom. The two worlds are umbilically connected by a passage descending from outside to inside or ascending from inside to outside. *Atelier Brancusi* and its "world above" (Place Georges Pompidou, Paris, Earth, Universe) reflects this same structure. A passage links two worlds which exist simultaneously. Each world has its own origin and boundary. In Plato's Cave, the origin is the fire that creates the shadow play; the boundary is the wall of the cave, or the screen for the images. For the outside world, the origin is the sun; its boundary is infinity, eternal freedom, enlightenment, knowledge and truth.
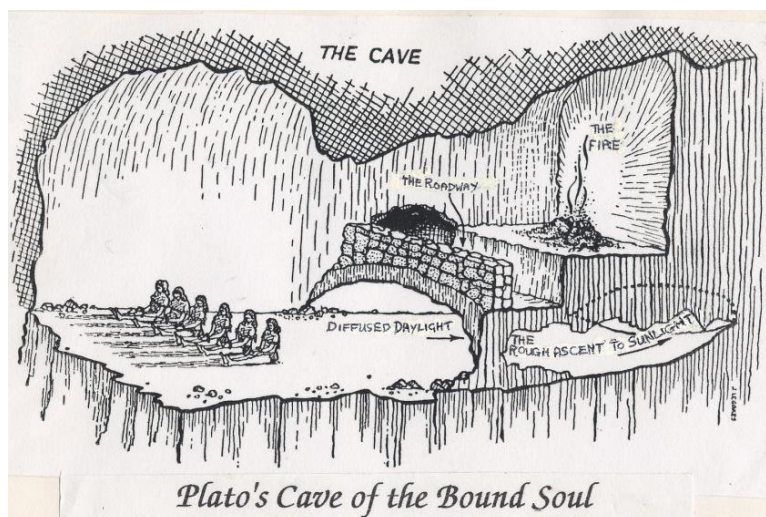
Fig. 40: Plato's Cave of the Bound Soul

The prisoner who returns to Plato's Cave is unable to disclose the higher world to his fellow prisoners, as they lack a shared language. As Heidegger points out in *Being and Time*, "only he who already understands can listen."[153] For this reason, "speakers can come to share a common world of objects only insofar as they already share a common linguistic understanding of those objects."[154] The objects in *Atelier Brancusi* do not necessarily enable a shared understanding for all viewers. I can speak about them in terms of Universal Objects, but that does not universalise them. In Plato's allegory, the gaps between word and world are not resolved. In *Atelier Brancusi,* the gaps

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[152] Plato, "Republic: Book VII," in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1134.
[153] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York, 1996), 154.
[154] Cristina Lafont, "World-Disclosure and Critique: Did Habermas Succeed in Thinking with Heidegger and against Heidegger?" op. cit., 170.

between Brancusi's intentions and the viewer's interpretations are held in place by the glass vitrine. Two worlds are brought into being at the same time and in the same place, unlike Plato's allegory, where they are separated by a passage. *Atelier Brancusi* is not only a world connected to an *other* world; it is also a site where at least two worlds are intertwined: the world of the viewer on the ambulatory and the world behind the glass walls of the vitrine. These two worlds meet on the surface of the glass walls of the vitrine. This is the place, or field, for an event that Derrida's "*passe-partout*" inscribes as the "line of argument" that "divides where it takes place," or what John Wood calls a "democratic transparency" which equalises the two worlds.

2.1

The Prehistory

The prehistory of the *Museum of Infinite Relations* traces back to Alain Badiou's concept of "event" – informed by his mathematical-philosophical-political practice, or "subject-science synthesis"[155] – and how an "event" could be translated into art, into art event. For Badiou, an "event" is a pivotal point in the production of truth and knowledge. As Peter Hallward notes, for Badiou, "a truth must be universally and even 'eternally' true, while relying on nothing more, ultimately, than the militant determination of the subjects who affirm it."[156] Contra to Deleuze's focus on "event" as found "in the exhaustible fullness of the world,"[157] for Badiou, "the word 'event' signifies… an edge, or border." It "is an infinite process, which has its origin randomly in a point."[158] My translation into practice was minimally compliant with Badiou's "event" which, for him, is "a real change,"[159] and "a change in the world that requires a site. It is more than just a modification."[160] Badiou's "event" has a flash-like quality, so I decided to focus on the minimal. The site that Badiou refers to would be a found image.
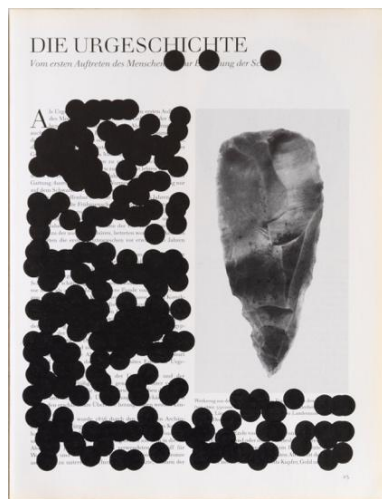
Fig. 41: *No. 1, Die Urgeschichte*, 2012
        Robin Kirsten
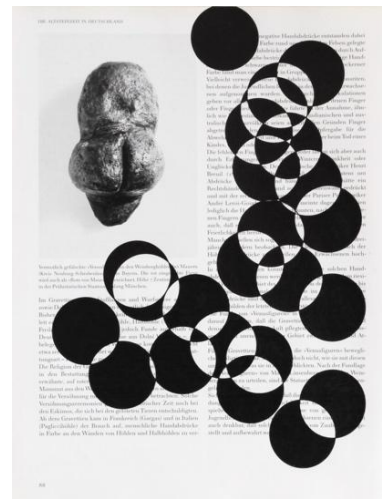
Fig. 42: *No. 12, Venus Stop*, 2018
        Robin Kirsten

My ongoing series, *Data Field* and *Radiation Field* (2012 – present), shows the approach (a combination of practice and research) to my originating questions around how to

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155 Peter Hallward, "Order and Event, On Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*," op. cit., 97.
156 Ibid, 98.
157 Alain Badiou, "Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque," in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, eds. Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994), 65.
158 Ibid.
159 Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, op. cit., 585.
160 Ibid, 582.

portray Badiou's "event." *Data Field: No. 1, Die Urgeschichte* [fig. 41] is worked onto a book page, titled "*Die Urgeschichte*" (The Prehistory), which covers the Stone Age in Germany. To practice Badiou's concept of an "event" (interpreted as a minimal flash in a site) and that "its silent or subtracted part is an infinity to come,"[161] the pin point of a compass was placed in the centre of each full stop, semicolon, the dots above each lowercase 'i' and 'j' and the double dots on the *umlaut*. A circle was then drawn to a set radius of 2 cm. Each circle was filled in with black ink. Visible now on the page is the original lithographic print with a top layer of black ink discs which mostly obscure the underlying text. The discs foreground the number of "events" within the text by expanding them to an equal size. As Badiou formulates it, the "event" signals itself "as separation."[162] The dots are now detached from their ordinary place in the written language and hover as expanded black discs over the text.

Using the compass as a method enabled the circle to function in several ways. In *Data Field: No. 1, Die Urgeschichte*, the circle expands a dot to a larger radius, exposing an underlying structure. That dot is no less critical within the text than any other rule, system or structure. Visually, however, it is minor in comparison to words and phrases. In this work, the expanded points are full stops and dots. Bringing that structure to the front produced a type of negative image, a long shadow of data, which obscured the generator of the obscuration: the dots and stops.

Producing a negative image from a positive one indicates that at least two types of images are present in any image, and that it's possible to access these image types by using a tool (like the compass). The negative and the positive are interlinked in the manner of the film negative and photographic print. In that sense, the two images produce each other, as one cannot be without the other. The negative needs the print to reveal what was recorded, and the print needs the negative to be produced.

In my *Radiation Field* series (2018 – present) [fig. 43 and 44], the less pronounced, or unpronounced, is also brought forward to foreground the "event." Peter Hallward's observation of Badiou's "event" – that it "triggers a process whereby what once appeared as nothing comes to appear as everything" [163] – is practiced in this work in a

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161 Ibid, 65.
162 Ibid.
163 Peter Hallward, "Order and Event, On Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*," op. cit., 106.

literal way, and interpreted as an 'art event'. Badiou's "event" becomes a physical and practical starting point to locate the theoretical into the actual artwork, transforming his idea into 'art event'. What amounts to the appearance of truth for Badiou, and what I applied in this series, is that an obstruction is, or can be, the expansion of something minimal, hidden or silent. The obstruction, in this case, was the inclusion of a new element, which literally obstructed the underlying 'text'.
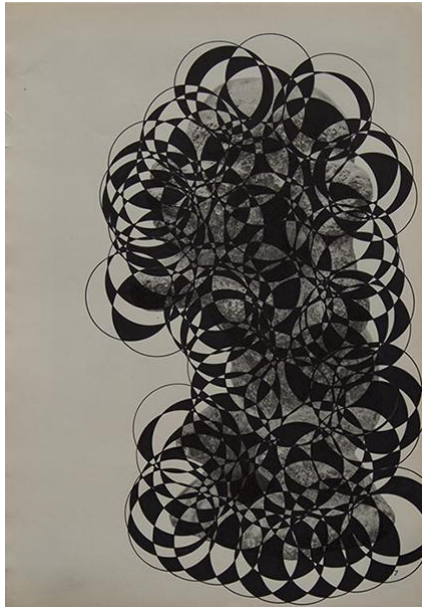
Fig. 43: *Radiation Field No. 3*, 2018
Robin Kirsten
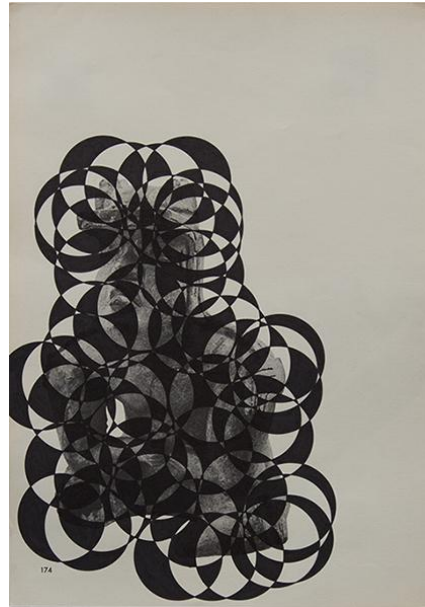
Fig. 44: *Radiation Field No. 4*, 2018
Robin Kirsten

The language of the expanded point produces more complex forms and ideas (such as the disc, whole, hole, black hole, orb, ball, sphere, void, and dot) building up to a range of iterations of the circle (or encircled dot). Expressed in the language of Badiou, "a point is a transcendental testing-ground for the appearing of a truth."[164] Using a tool (a compass) to create the Universal Object offers a language system that can express multiple operations, ideas and relations between circular forms and across media, to say something about the appearance of a truth. What I consider "truth" in the artwork (which is the "testing-ground") is the foregrounding of the Universal Object as an "event" that can speak for many things.

Any mention of Badiou's "event" should note his use of set theory to underpin his philosophy. Set theory concerns what is countable, or measurable, in cardinal points located and attributed across various mathematical sets, which are essentially a

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[164] Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, op. cit., 399.

collection of numbers and signs signifying groups or sets. What is measurable concerns a process of testing and checking for any 1:1 correspondence across the numbers in sets, including the infinite set, to visualise a pattern which reveals what can be 'measured'.[165] In my *Radiation Field* series, 'measuring' is signified by bringing forward and announcing (making countable) that which was initially unpronounced. This is what Badiou calls the full process of an "event," or "truth procedure," which is a method to expose what is latent in a work. As Robert Michael Ruehl describes it in his essay, "In Defence of Alain Badiou," this process of counting creates:

> situations where things have different levels of significance, or 'intensities of existence' as Badiou calls them. Badiou is concerned with how something new can emerge from these processes…What he calls an 'event' is the fleeting emergence of what was previously a minimally existent aspect within a situation, revealing some new possibility.[166]

At the heart of his understanding of Badiou's "event" is its potential to reveal further possibilities. So too is my fidelity to the Universal Object in relation to 'art event'.

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[165] For a more detailed introduction to Set Theory see, Joan Bagaria, "Set Theory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed 23 March 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/set-theory
[166] Robert Michael Ruehl, "In Defense of Alain Badiou," *Philosophy Now* 109 (2015), accessed 4 November 2019, https://philosophynow.org/issues/109/In_Defense_of_Alain_Badiou

3

On Museums

My interpretation of the museum, for the purposes of this project, is a public institution that collects and accessions objects for their preservation, conservation, curation and study. Each of the artist's spaces cited in this paper performs this role to varying degrees. More importantly, each of them is a museum of one: of a deceased artist who is eternally memorialised. Their studios and homes have undergone a 'museumification' process. In this sense, they have been kept, in part, 'alive'. There are many other examples,[167] but those are referenced for my interest in the cosmological drive that appears, explicitly or implicitly, in each.[168] *Atelier Brancusi* contains Brancusi's *Endless Column* and his *L'Origine du Monde*; *Flat Time HO* is based on Latham's worldview and remodelling of the universe as "flat time" based on his concept of a "least event"; and Martins' *Owl House* is resplendent with cosmic references throughout the interior (moon and sun mirrors, glittering star-like surfaces, a world and universe of its own).

The combination of their cosmological drives, their status as museums, and their role in preserving for posterity the figure of the artist as present in the here and now (keeping them alive) elicited another type of museum – that of the Russian Cosmist Nikolai Federov (1829 – 1903). Federov's posthumously published essay, "The Museum, Its Meaning and Message" (1906), calls for the museum to use all of its technologies, expertise and resources to bring our ancestors back to life. Contrary to the emerging dominance of Marxism before and during the 1917 October Revolution, he believed that humanity's emancipation (with liberty for all from feudal servitude, repression, poverty and indignity), in an idealistic socialist future, should be available to all of humanity, not just those to come, but also for those living and already dead. The Cosmists focused on using their technology, experimentation and futuristic approaches to imagine recreating the world according to a new vision: the total overcoming of nature, which they saw as hindering progress. Theirs was a science-fiction world of sorts. Federov was the most adamant about controlling nature, to the point of

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[167] For a list of European examples see, Artists Studio Museum Network, accessed 1 June 2021, https://www.artiststudiomuseum.org/
[168] By "cosmological drive" I mean the evidence in each case study of the artist's focus on using their homes/studios, as a linking mechanism between each sites physical aspects, and the cosmological theories inherent in each artist's thoughts and ideas.

pursuing a life without death. His critique of the museum, as "a place of relics, and worse than a graveyard,"[169] is a fertile space for considering how the museum can be figured in this project.

Atelier Brancusi is not the studio that Brancusi bequeathed to the French State. The current version is the third recreation. The first (1962 – 1977) was at Palais des Musées d'art moderne, Paris (now Palais de Tokyo). The second (1977 – 1990), in an approximate replica of the original, was on the north side of Place Georges Pompidou, Paris. The various objects currently on display are now in a purpose-built "modern period room,"[170] or to put it another way, a romantic staging of what an artist-genius' studio might look like. They are incorporated into an institution to be analysed, conserved and preserved for the benefit of the French State and culture in general. This is what Brancusi asked for when he bequeathed his studio and all its works to the French State after he had been awarded French citizenship, which he took after the Romanian president, Nicolae Ceausescu, rejected Brancusi's work as degenerate. That his studio sits in a 'starchitects' building, with glass walls and an anaemic, sanitised setting, is probably not what he bargained on. Federov's critique of the museum is a fitting observation for *Atelier Brancusi* as it currently stands:

> The museum is the last remnant of the cult of ancestors; it is a special type of that cult, which while being expelled from religion […] is re-established in the form of museums. The only thing higher than the old tatters preserved in museums is the very dust itself, the very remains of the dead; just as the only thing that would be higher than a museum would be a grave, unless the museum itself does not become a transport of ashes to the city, or a transformation of a cemetery into a museum.[171]

Federov's call for museums to use their resources, skills and knowledge to end death and create immortality remains untested. *Atelier Brancusi* would be an ideal laboratory for resurrecting the missing Brancusi (perhaps the museum could programme daily shows for an audience to view the outcome of Federov's vision?).

My initial response to fathoming the *Museum of Infinite Relations* was to collect objects and images that approximated the Universal Object in some or other way. (My work,

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[169] Nikolai Federov, "The Museum, Its Meaning and Mission," trans. Stephen P. Van Trees, Supercommunity, accessed 23 March 2021, http://supercommunity.e-flux.com/texts/the-museum-its-meaning-and-mission/

[170] Albrecht Barthel, "The Paris Studio of Constantin Brancusi: A Critique of the Modern Period Room," op. cit., 42.

[171] Nikolai Federov, "The Museum, Its Meaning and Mission," op. cit.

Archive of the Sphere: The Probability of Endless Possibility [fig. 46, page 92], articulated this response and is discussed later). The Universal Object was devised to work with a cypher, a placeholder, a philosophical 'relic': something that could stand in for any object, image or text and which had a flexibility to it. This would replace the specific and unique with an item that represented potentially anything and/or everything – hence, the Universal Object. The idea was to curate them in a museum-like environment, to code them as a collection of round, round-ish in shape (e.g., spheres and ovoids) or contained round elements, such as the material used to form them (e.g., polystyrene balls compressed into sheets).

Those collected artworks could responded to smaller discoveries and tests centered around the Universal Object and its properties (as opposed to its symbol of the encircled dot), external references, Federov's vision and imagined possibilities. The feedback process addressed what an infinite relation could be and how to work with that in practice. The Gyroscopic Tendency (that is, to remix ideas/inherited knowledge, make works which inform new works, drive alternative ideas, invoke further fields, sit in other categories, overlap with indirect concepts, throw light onto hidden aspects, and generally operate as an abstract, haphazard and idiosyncratic machine) presented itself as a property of an infinite relation. This is closer to a way of thinking that drove the development towards the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

The museum I am creating is a self-generating museum and a continually evolving studio-based project. It's a dynamic operation that always returns to the same central questions: "What is an infinite relation?"; "How do I represent or evoke it?"; "What can a *Museum of Infinite Relations* look like?"; and "Can it be represented at all?" By returning to the questions time and time again, without seeking finality, I have activated a process that requires new works to be generated, collected and reassessed in my search for answers. As the result of testing, the questions produce outcomes which ask infinitely more questions. This is another form of the feedback process. If there is one answer, then it is that the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, as proposed for this research, is a way to continue to continue, as information is always in formation.

That museum is a laboratory for testing, experimenting, reinventing and remixing. It asks questions of itself, processes them, attempts to collate those into an idea and then develop the hypothetical *Museum of Infinite Relations* into a thing, an artwork. The

museum as a laboratory for creating the *Museum of infinite Relations* is explored further in the following section, and it structured around the question, "what kind of museum could be configured in order to expand on the formulation set up for this project: AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✦ MoIR?"

3.1

Museum as Laboratory

Aleksandr Rodchenko's idea for a New Museum of Experimental Technology proposed:

> [That] the cold of the autopsy laboratory will blow from such a museum, the dryness of mathematical formulas, the sharp, pitiless realism of the analytic. Here, everything is invented, shredded, measured, dismembered, calculated, made deliberately, reduced to bare formulas. Nonetheless, you, inspired creators of life and feeling, you will begin to use these invented creations for your own works if you are moving toward the future, because that's the way it has been and will be. It is only from here that new paths of creation will proceed, and in its cold wisdom that special, creative future life will be eternally hidden.[172]

Rodchenko's proposal signals a turning away from the museum as an institution that collects and displays historical objects towards a place for experimenting with ideas, theories, concepts and technologies, which work with "conditions,"[173] not "inherited knowledge." In this sense, the studio and the museum present themselves as equivalent frameworks of knowledge production through research and practice, or a laboratory-like practice.

Wassily Kandinsky and Rodchenko were friends and participated equally in the renewed cultural landscape of post-Revolutionary Soviet museology. Along with Malevich, they placed the museum as a central cog in the roll-out of their visions for the role of culture in the aftermath of the October Revolution.[174] They all worked against the prevailing paradigm (the chronological museum dedicated to artists of notoriety, or those filled with the work of dead artists) but differed in their resolutions. Only Rodchenko took Futurism's analytical methods for making art and applied them to his new museum as a laboratory.

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[172] Aleksandr Rodchenko, "On the Museum of Experimental Technology," in *Experiments for the Future: Diaries, Essays, Letters, and Other Writings*, trans. Jamey Gambrell, ed. Alexander Lavrentiev (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005), 101–02.

[173] When "conditions" is in double quotation marks, it refers to André Lepecki's use of the word to indicate the social, political, ideological and economic conditions we live in and under, recalling Agamben's term "apparatus", as borrowed from Foucault. For further reading see, André Lepecki. *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance.* London: Routledge, 2016.

[174] Ibid.

Concurrently with Rodchenko, Federov's critique of the 19th century museum as "the last remnants of the cult of ancestors,"[175] sets up the dialectical framework for what the *Museum of Infinite Relations* can be. As commented by A. A. Miller in the newspaper *Iskusstvo kommuny* (Art of the Commune),[176] the framework could be that "museum[s] will prove to be…living organism[s], pulsating with the pulsations of artistic life,"[177] as well as laboratories of "artistic culture."[178] Federov goes the furthest in his approach to a radical new role of the museum by advancing the idea that the museum should be used as a force to rebuild the world, not to canonise what can be said to be dead, old, or stuck in history.

John Latham's remodelling of the structure of the universe resembles Rodchenko's Museum of Experimental Technology except, in the case of Latham, his 'museum' is the total artwork: his studio and living space in Peckham, London, *Flat Time HO*. Latham's experimental technologies might have been exactly what Rodchenko wanted to see taking place in his vision for the museum. In their manifestos, they both share a commitment to working with materials and processes that are based in the present.

For Rodchenko, history (in the form of the museum) is unable to confront contemporary needs. It represents an old value system that relegates the revolutionary spirit to second place whilst advancing the ideology of the past.[179] For both of them, art has the power, and the responsibility, to bridge the divide between the cosmos (as an event in the present) and the body/mind's capacity to remodel the world according to principles of integration, freedom from oppressive systems and advancement for all.

Federov considers arts and crafts to be the most privileged objects in the museum. According to him, preserved artefacts (such as literature, ceramics, sculpture, architectural remnants, paintings, etc.) provide us with almost everything we know about the past. His "universal museum," where resurrection will take place, "is simply

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[175] Nikolai Federov, "The Museum, Its Meaning and Mission," op. cit.
[176] *Iskusstvo kommuny* was a newspaper established in Petrograd on 29 January 1918 by IZO Narkompros as part of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment.
[177] A. A. Miller quoted in "Premia po doklodam O. M. Brika, N. N. Punina i V. A Grishchenko," *Iskusstvo kommuny* 11 (16 February 1919), 4, accessed 23 March 2021, https://monoskop.org/Iskusstvo_kommuny
[178] In the same issue of *Iskusstvo kommuny*, "artistic culture" is defined: "The concept of 'artistic culture' contains within it – in accordance with the meaning of the word 'culture' as active work – a creative moment; creativity presupposes the creation of something new, an invention; *artistic culture is nothing other than the culture of artistic invention*."
[179] Maria Gough, "Futurist Museology," *Modernism/Modernity* 10 (2003), 338.

a radicalized, expanded, and more inclusive version of the museums we know now."[180] Latham's concept of an "event structure" is, in Federov's writing, the place where time can be flat, in the sense of being transhistorical. For Federov, resurrection needs to be formalised in mathematical laboratory conditions with scientific technologies (for example, "lightning rod-aerostats,"[181] and "celestial chemistry"[182]). And for him, art objects, or museum items intimately connected to their makers, are primarily objects which must facilitate "the resurrection of everything destroyed by blind force,"[183] and by whatever new science that is available in the future.

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[180] Elana Shaposhnikova and Arseny Zhilyaev, "Art Without Death," in *Art Without Death: Conversations on Russian Cosmism*, op. cit., 53.
[181] Nikolai Federov, "Astronomy and Architecture," in *Russian Cosmism*, op. cit., 58.
[182] Ibid, 57.
[183] Ibid.

3.2

Note on Collecting

In both *Atelier Brancusi* and *Owl House*, the collection of objects and images on display is imbued with emotion and history, signalling the absence of the collectors or artists. Appearing as shrines, and using the museum as a framing device, the displays maintain the aura of historical concerns particular to each collector (for example, Martins' collection of oil lamps [fig. 45]).

Fig. 45: Helen Martins' collection of oil lamps, *Owl House*

I worked with this absence and aura in my sculptural installation, *Archive of the Sphere: The Probability of Endless Possibility* (2017) [fig. 46]. Here, I assembled and curated a collection of objects which either represented the Universal Object or contained representations of the Universal Object. The more complex items were possible to argue back as being circular.[184]

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[184] For example, the central table that formed the basis for a shrine-like display of various forms, originates as a tree, whose cross section is circular. I claim a direct relation between the table and the Universal Object via a tree.

Fig. 46: *Archive of the Sphere: The Probability of Endless Possibility*, 2017
Robin Kirsten

Archive of the Sphere: The Probability of Endless Possibility also worked with the ritualism of collecting and the enshrining of meaning into the collection. The artist has been removed from the collection, leaving only the display as a memorial or trace. As a site of memory, it positions the studio as a devotional museum. The 'temple' that it invokes (with its central shrine, votives and peripheral objects/relics and effects), peers towards the past, where a collector's subjectivity is sketched by the objects that they own.

Walter Benjamin's critique of the collector fashions this work's rationale. It does so in order to flag the relation between "completeness" and the probability of endless possibility. In his *Arcades Project*, Benjamin positions the collector in relation to his collection:

> What is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind. This relation is the diametric opposite of any utility, and falls into the peculiar category of completeness. What is this 'completeness'? It is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system: the collection. And for the true collector, every single thing in this system becomes an encyclopaedia of all knowledge of the epoch, the landscape, the industry, and the owner from which it comes. It is the deepest enchantment of the collector to enclose the particular item within a magic circle, where, as a last shudder runs through it (the shudder of being acquired),

> it turns to stone. Everything remembered, everything thought, everything conscious becomes socle, frame, pedestal, seal of his possession.[185]

The collector, as Benjamin describes them, encloses his objects by enshrining them into the magic circle, like a mausoleum. *Atelier Brancusi* is such a place. The French State, as the owner of the site and all its objects, is the collector. The magic circle is the vitrine encircled by the ambulatory where every item – items which used to move around into various formations – have been turned to stone, locked into a permanent detachment from their original functions. Could these items be revived if *Atelier Brancusi* were brought back to life as a site where the objects could move and regroup? What would that museum or artist's space look like? Under what conditions could the reviving be achieved?

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[185] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 204–05.

3.3
Infinite Museum and the Living Sculpture
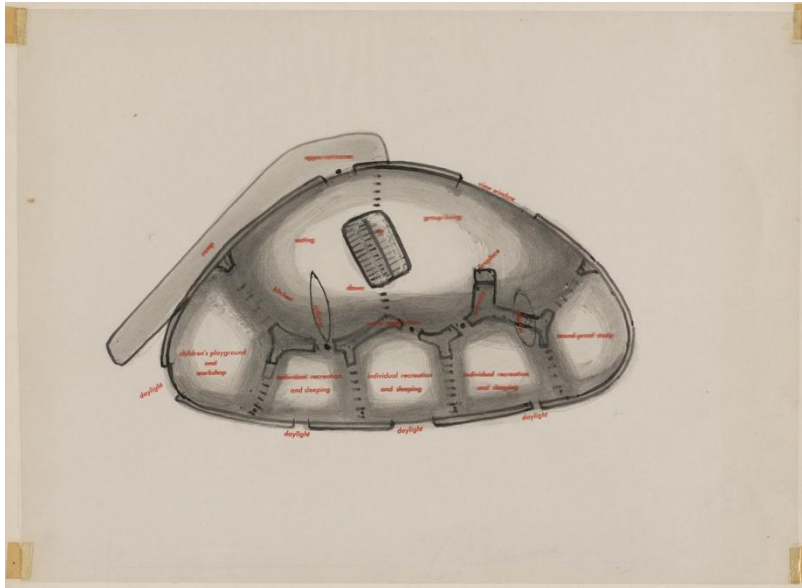
Fig. 47: *Endless House* Project Plan, 1951
         Friedrich Kiesler

Frederick Kiesler's *Endless House* [fig. 47] project formulates an endless flow across spaces in a house. Kiesler states that it is "'endless' because all ends meet, and meet continuously."[186] Both inside and outside are fully curved, without corners, flat planes or squared-off features. *Endless House* is based on a bio-connectivity which, contrary to the 1940s focus on industrialised production and pre-fabrication, seeks a spiritual connection between forms. As Ian Kiaer notes in his thesis,[187] Kiesler used his manifesto to relay his ideas about *Endless House*,[188] namely to connect "a complex system of interrelationships – material and ideal, natural and cultural – into which the occupants become drawn, with all their physical, mental, and social constraints and with all their mythical and magical conceptions."[189] Relating the house to the body and mind is also seen in Latham's *Flat Time HO*, where each room connects to specific "body events,"[190] where eating, sleeping and plumbing take place. Mind, brain, hand,

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[186] Frederick J. Kiesler, "The Endless House: A Man-Built Cosmos," in *Frederick J. Kiesler: Selected Writings,* eds. S. Gohr and G. Luyken (Vienna: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1996), 126.

[187] Ian Kiaer, "Endless House: Models of Thought for Dwellings" (PhD diss., Royal College of Art, 2008).

[188] Frederick J. Kiesler, "Manifeste de Corealisme," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (1949), 79–105.

[189] Dieter Bogner and Peter Noever, eds., *Frederick J. Kiesler: Endless Space* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2001), 22.

[190] A "body event" was Latham's living area, where he responded to the requirements of the human body such as "lying, plumbing, eating" and other aspects of his day to day life. See the entry, "Body: (Sitting Room)", at Ligatus: John Latham Archive, accessed 17 April 2022, https://www.ligatus.org.uk/jla/node/55.

face and body are separated out in *Flat Time HO*, turning the entire house into an organism. As Latham puts it, it is a "living sculpture." Separate parts signal their independent but inter-related quality, reminiscent of Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, where "the journey into intimacy is neatly evoked by drawers, cupboards, wardrobes and above all locks."[191]

Kiesler's project resists the new industrialisation of his contemporary, Le Corbusier, by connecting the subject to endlessness. This connection is closer to Federov's idea for the museum to be the "higher ground," "ancestral temple" and "expression of the entire soul." What is meant by soul, in relation to the object, be it house, room, artwork, or museum? Perhaps it is the object's capacity to be more than the sum of its parts, and closer to Giorgio de Chirico's paintings of mannequins (what he called "metaphysical still lives"), which Hillel Schwartz says, "endow mechanism with spirit, apparatus with vitality."[192] Mechanism, here, refers to the house's separation into parts which turn and interlink, like cogs of a machine which produces 'soul'. Such an effect can be auratic, historical, mythological or magical. Or, it can represent an excess that is contained and inscribed in the materiality of the object. This is closer to how the Holographic Paradigm uses the monad as a cypher to explain the relation between part and whole.

John Latham declaration in 2003 that his *Flat Time HO* is a "living sculpture"[193] – with each room being designated a bodily function and named according to different parts of the body – is possible because for Latham the house is alive. Each designated space operates together as a singular organism, which reconnects the human body to the world around.

Another very different example of a living sculpture is Vladimir Lenin's body [fig. 48], as it lays in his mausoleum on Red Square, Moscow. Lenin's body is quite a different thing to Latham's house. Lenin's is born of a paradoxical situation, where the body is his but not of him, whereas Latham's house represents his worldview (seeing and developing relations between art as event structure and the Receptive Intuitive Organism).

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[191] Gillian Darley, "Intimate Spaces," Aeon, published 17 October 2017, accessed 5 January 2021, https://aeon.co/essays/how-gaston-bachelard-gave-the-emotions-of-home-a-philosophy
[192] Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy* (Princeton: Zone Books, 2014), 85.
[193] *Flat Time HO*, "About," accessed 12 April 2021, http://flattimeho.org.uk/about/
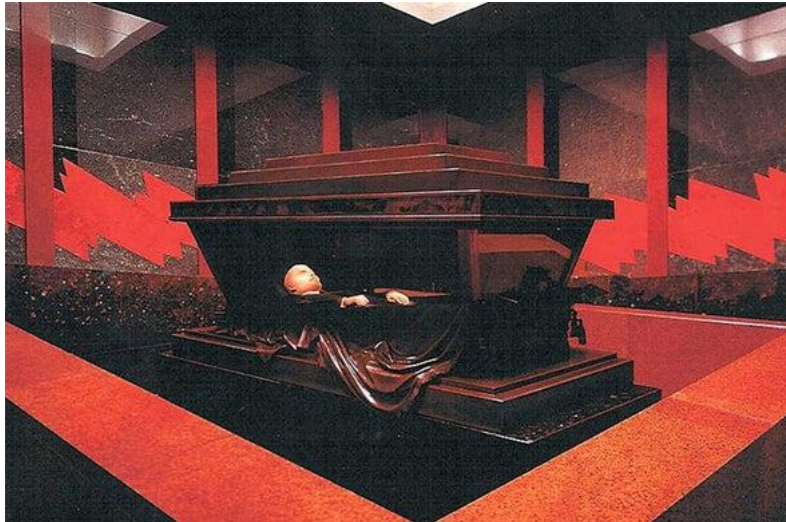
Fig. 48: Interior of *Vladimir Lenin Mausoleum*, Red Square, Moscow

Lenin's body is an example of the museum being used as a lab for "resurrection," except that a large part of his body is no longer biological material.[194] For Federov, this would not matter, as only the smallest particle of dust is enough for his vision for resurrection. For him, the endeavour of preserving Lenin's body (or any other 'object' in the museum's care), in an attempt to reanimate it in the future, is of paramount importance. He proposes that this is the shared objective for all of humanity to focus on.

The Philosophy of the Common Task (1906) is the title of the posthumously published collections of Federov's writings, whose primary focus is devoted to finding a solution to the problem of death. Federov's major idea is that "all known problems have a single root in the problem of death."[195] For him, man as he ought to be, should not only be immortal himself, but should actively pursue, through whatever means possible, immortality for everyone else who both is and was. This must be the common and shared task for humanity. And once this refocusing by all towards overcoming nature's drive towards death has been resolved technologically, only then can everyone experience true freedom and a shared consciousness. Federov writes that "with each new person resurrected, knowledge will be growing; it will peak in its task just when the human race arrives at the first person who died."[196] His one grand

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[194] Alexei Yurchak, "Communist Proteins: Lenin's Skin, Astrobiology, and the Origin of Life," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 20, no. 4 (2019), 686.

[195] George M. Young, *Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Federov and His Followers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 47.

[196] Nikolai Fedorovich Federov, *Filosofia Obshchago Dela: Stat'l, Mysli, I Pis'ma Nikolaia Federovicha Federova* (The Philosophy of the Common Cause: Articles, Thoughts and Letters of Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov),

utopian (and largely patriarchal) projection, for a full and total resurrection for all, would become easier the further down the chain of fathers of fathers we go, as humanity would have the collaboration of everyone already resurrected to arrive at the father of all people.
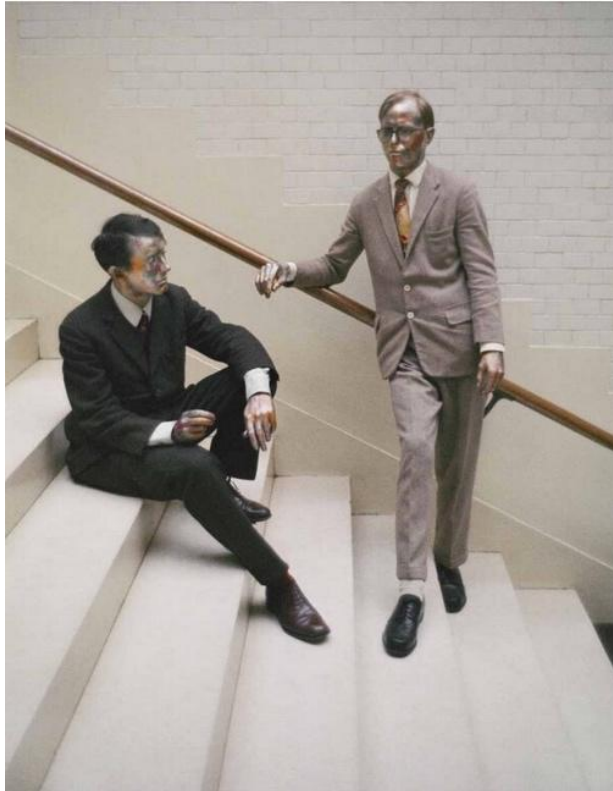
Fig. 49: *Living Sculptures*, 1969
          Gilbert & George

In 1969, Gilbert & George also declared themselves "Living Sculptures" [fig. 49] (prior to becoming "Singing Sculptures"), painting their skin with metallic paint and parading around London. George explains that their desire was to "collapse the distance between art and artists."[197] Their claim was that "to make art you don't need objects. You just make yourself the object and then you are more complex than another sculpture could be. A piece of metal can only have a surface, but we can have an inner soul."[198] Lenin's body no longer has a soul (at least, not the one George implied). It is

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ed. V.A. Kozhevnikov and N. P. Peterson, 2 vols, (1906 – 1913) (Farnborough, UK: Gregg International, 1970), 1:330, trans. George M. Young, as published in George M. Young, *Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Federov and His Followers*, op. cit. 49.

[197] Paul Gallagher, "Gilbert & George: Living Sculptures," Dangerous Minds, published 1 December 2011, accessed 21 December 2019,
https://dangerousminds.net/comments/gilbert_and_george_living_sculptures

[198] Gilbert & George, "ECE-2: Gilbert & George: On Living Sculpture," filmed for The South Bank Show: Gilbert & George, Part 1, aired on 9 February 1997, YouTube, DPSVideoLibrary, 20 April 2008. Video, 4:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=96&v=-Hfg7qlGd-A&feature=emb_logo

closer to the piece of metal that George described. Lenin's body is mostly surface, with insides of whatever material suits the purposes of the Lenin Lab's objectives. Where Lenin and Gilbert & George's bodies correspond as living sculptures, is at the point of collapse (or fusion) between art object and body. With Latham's house, a similar action is taking place: the relationship between art as event and the subject who activates that worldview, the Receptive Intuitive Organism.

Latham's "living sculpture" appears to be continuing into a long future. A kind of immortality that the function of museumification permits, or is desired, by Federov. As long as the funding and will exists to 'keep it alive', or at least full of life, then it will sit as proof, however obtuse, that an artist's space can be modelled into a site that in both its conceptual underpinnings, and its administration, can be a fully functioning "living sculpture" in perpetuity. The infinite museum is then not only a place where infinity can be displayed or experienced, as in Kiesler's *Endless House*, which connects the body to the continual flow and circulation of space, but a museum, or any place that collects things, which is perpetual: in the sense of being continually administered to be a concrete symbolisation of the forever of immortality and infinity. A place where every object, of flesh and not, can become a "living sculpture" which stands as emblematic of the conquering of nature and the triumph of technological inventions.
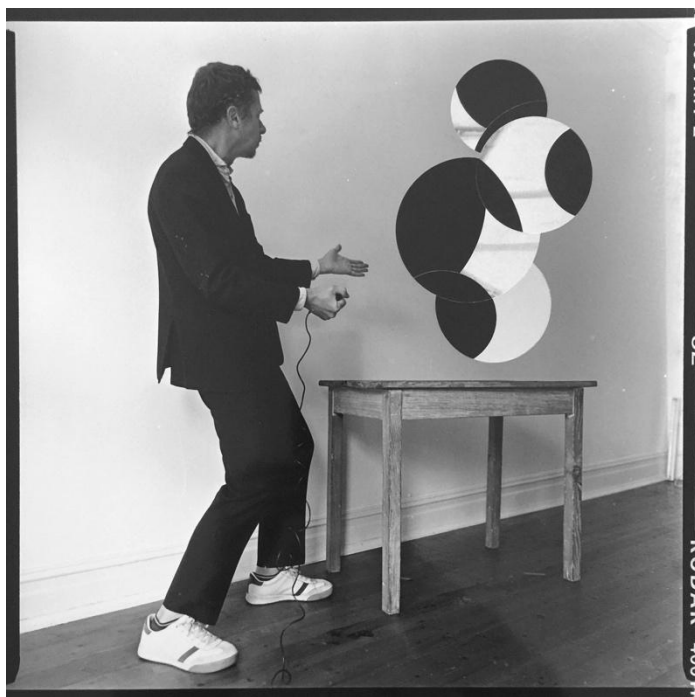
Fig. 50: *Resurrected Object*, 2019
        Robin Kirsten

My work, *Resurrected Object* (2019) [fig. 50], fakes a "living sculpture," and dreams one into existence. The sculpture is complex and has a 'soul' (contrary to Gilbert & George's suggestion that only the living body has complexity and soul). The "common task" in this work – of resurrection for all – takes the idea of the "living sculpture" to its ultimate conclusion, by resurrecting an assemblage of Universal Objects fused into a single form.

Perhaps, in the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, instead of resurrecting people, life could be given to objects so that they can move themselves around. They'd be independent, next generation, fully autonomous 'drones' with personalities, beliefs, political views, and emancipated from a life of hanging around with nothing to do. Not Brancusi, nor any other artist, would need to move them around into new formations. They could find their own place amongst others, and an infinite number of relations between objects would be possible. As autonomous objects, they'd be self-determining and self-organising. This photograph captures this vision by faking the situation, presenting an object 'magically' levitating on a table in my studio, conjured into life by The Artist in a Black Suit.
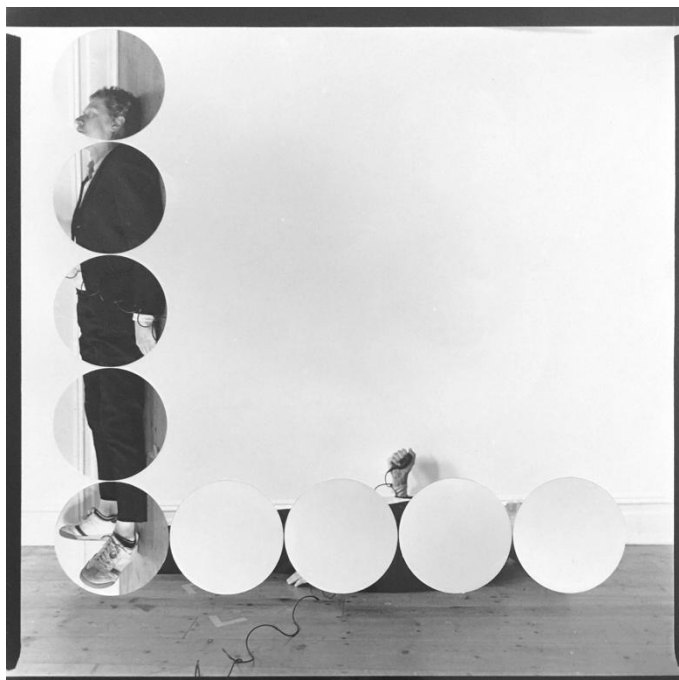
Fig. 51: *Auto-Reconstruction*, 2019
      Robin Kirsten

Another work, *Auto-Reconstruction* (2019) [fig. 51], pictures the rewinding of time (as one way to think about resurrection) from the horizontal to the vertical. The Artist in

a Black Suit simply cannot wait for futurist technologies to resurrect himself, so he does it with his monad-making tool (and compatriot, Robin Kirsten). Five Universal Objects atomise his horizontal body playing dead on the horizontal grave-line. To return to three hours earlier, he repositions them vertically. Now, pointing towards the cosmos, at 12 *Endless Column* o'clock, he has achieved auto-reconstruction. He is pre-dead.

The idea presented earlier, that consciousness could resurrect its body as an imagined form, foregrounds the role of creativity in the development of knowledge. In a more practical sense and in relation to this project, the artist in their studio or imagination's chamber, or whatever space constitutes the place of work, can bring to life hypothetical concepts to envisage the limits of the possible. In the above two photographic works, the studio has been used as an experimental laboratory to see, through trickery in photography, how an autonomous art object might be constituted, and how a body might be able to achieve pre-dead status.

The studio then becomes a space for playing with ideas, or a game space, where the hypothetical can be acted out for the purpose of critical reflection, study, further development and knowledge production. This process helped to develop the question of where the hypothetical *Museum of Infinite Relations* could be imagined and visualised, by using photography as a medium, and collage as a method. This is also close to Rodchenko's idea for the museum to itself be a laboratory for experimentation. The studio and museum then become comparable to each other, when viewed as spaces for invention, detection, comprehension and reflection. Rodchenko's challenge to artists that, as the "inspired creators of life and feeling, you will begin to use these invented creations for your own works if you are moving toward the future,"[199] traces a pathway for new ideas around the *Museum of Infinite Relations* to emerge through experimentation with the imagined technologies of autonomous objects and resurrected bodies.

It also makes possible the conflation of the museum and the studio, into a space which is not contingent on categorical definitions, and resurrects them out of the ashes of delineation and a singular purpose. They are no longer independent institutions whose

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[199] Aleksandr Rodchenko, "On the Museum of Experimental Technology," op. cit.

role is either, conservation and presentation (museums), or creativity and production (studios), but instead share their own "common task," of imaging and imagining other possibilities, whatever those might be.

This other space, of an interconnection of the museum and the studio for the hypothesising and imaging of what else can be possible, enabled the production of a new body of work presented in the following section, 'Studies for a Museum'.

3.4

Studies for a Museum

In this section, I present three studies for hypothetical museums. They are called studies because they have the potential to be expanded and realised as total sites. Using the Universal Object as a filtering device, a tool for production and a logic for making decisions, I explored and expanded each study. These studies all relate to the conditions, qualities and operations identified in *Atelier Brancusi*, thereby adding further layers to the analysis and critical perspective of that site.

The conditions, qualities and operations I am referring to are: a) the continued rearrangement of objects by Brancusi into mobile groups; b) the relations between that site as being both Brancusi's house and studio, and its current status as a museum; c) the architecture of the site, which is structured as an enclosed ambulatory surrounding a glass vitrine; and d) the site's ambition to bring Brancusi back to life.

Fig. 52: Instagram flyer for *Studies for a Museum*

3.4.1

Study for a Museum of Quantum Objects

Leibniz was a librarian. One of his projects was to develop a classification system according to categories he thought better articulated the library as an encyclopaedia, or universal *repertorium*. This was a shift at the time (1670s). A common method involved arranging books according to the aesthetic tastes of the collector. Put on display as 'visual merchandising', they conveyed the owner's nous and represented their aspirations to a select audience. Leibniz thought that "a library for display and ostentation is a luxury and indeed superfluous,"[200] and instead should be considered "on the same level as schools and churches."[201] These are institutions he considered seriously concerned with the transfer of knowledge and truth.

On truth, Leibniz states that, "it is usually found that one and the same truth may be put in different places,"[202] and that a "simple categoric proposition has only two terms; but a hypothetic proposition may have four."[203] This implies, for him, that "one and the same truth may have many places according to the different relations it can have,"[204] which motivated his classification system. This image of truth – a constant shuffling-around of items into various positions and relations – is useful to reflect on Brancusi's arrangements and his catalogue of relations (which he realised through photography).

Study for a Museum of Quantum Objects acted out the constant shuffling around of objects into various relations. This installation consisted of three interrelated works: *Study for a Museum of Quantum Objects* (a moving image piece from which the installation takes its title), *Immobile Group No. 1* (a sculpture) and *Data One* (a wall-based image also discussed in Chapter 1.2 [fig. 12, page 45]). The total installation was presented as the study, experimenting conceptually and practically with the idea that objects can be placed in different places while also appearing and reappearing in at least two places *at the same time*, like a quantum object.

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[200] Hans G. Schulte-Albert, "Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Library Classification," *The Journal of Library History* 6, no. 2 (April 1971), 137, accessed 23 March 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25540286
[201] Ibid.
[202] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, trans. Alfred Gideon Langley (New York: Macmillan, 1896), 623.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid, 624.

A quantum object is theorised as being unlocatable (unless it is being measured) and is therefore deduced as being everywhere (or anywhere) at the same time.[205] The split-slit test is normally cited as proof of that property. I declare that this is also a property of the Universal Object, as the monad appears in several places simultaneously,[206] depending on what you think of as 'place'. Many minds can think the monad (or the Universal Object) at the same time. Or, we can consider its reappearance in multiple works as an example of it being locatable only when measured (or read). The Holographic Paradigm presents this phenomenon (measuring a metaphysical form by thinking about it) as follows: "Our brain's mathematics construct 'hard' reality by interpreting frequencies from a dimension transcending space and time. The brain is a hologram, interpreting a holographic universe."[207]

The mind can measure the metaphysical object held in the mind, but, to represent (and measure) the metaphysical in 3-dimensional space required a trick. In this study, the trick is a moving image. Specifically the use of film editing techniques that creates the illusion of an object having quantum properties as well as having the ability to move independently. What if the objects in *Atelier Brancusi* were 'switched on', that is, able to move themselves around without human intervention? Where would they go? Into what mobile groupings could they arrange themselves? Could those moves embody the idea of infinite relations? The artwork that approaches an answer to these questions is my moving image piece, *Study for a Museum of Quantum Objects.* [figs. 53a–d]

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[205] It's beyond the scope of this thesis to contribute to the discourse around Quantum Mechanics! And whilst I am informed by a general and popular narration of the evolving topic in media, there are some accessible places to read more about the debate around quantum objects. A useful exchange can be found on ResearchGate. See, Gaurav Kumar, "What is a Quantum Object?" ResearchGate, posted 13 May 2019, accessed 10 March 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/post/What-are-quantum-objects

[206] Considering that the monad 'appears' in several thinkers' minds, e.g. Leibniz and Pythagoras, as well as (arguably) in John Latham's practice as his 'least event', I am nominating it as an example of a quantum object.

[207] Marilyn Ferguson quoted in Mary Ellen Pitts, "The Holographic Paradigm: A New Model for the Study of Literature and Science," *Modern Language Studies* 20, no. 4 (1990): 80–9.

Fig. 53a–d: Stills from *Study for a Museum of Quantum Objects*, 2020
                Robin Kirsten

To create this work, I filmed a studio performance. In it, I moved objects around the studio into several groupings, replicating Brancusi's presumed moves and Leibniz's hypothetic proposition. Then, I cut myself out of the footage so that the objects appear to move by themselves. I appear in three consecutive clips as an object from the *Museum of Infinite Relations Collection*: The Artist in a Black Suit. The 120 minutes of performance was cut down to individual clips of 1 second and 13 frames, providing 191 individual clips which were presented sequentially. The work loops continuously with no discernible beginning or end.

Each object was given a few set movements. For example, a low squared-off table could 'walk' through its various sides, or a glass vase could 'bounce' from one surface to another. Where gravity, form or material qualities enabled objects to be stacked, they were allowed to reach as high as they could. A fluorescent light was included, sometimes on, sometimes off. In another clip, it flickered to indicate its 'movement' (i.e., capturing the wavelength as it moves from a zero point/off, to elsewhere/on).

Fig. 54: *Immobile Group No. 1*, 2020
        Robin Kirsten

Several objects in this moving image work reappeared in *Immobile Group No. 1*
[fig. 54]. This work 'captures' some of those objects, rendering them immobile, and in
so doing, represents the antithesis of quantum properties and Brancusi's "*groupe
mobile."* Each object in this sculpture is locked into another: the chair and table
interlink; the cage on top of the table prevents the objects on the table from exiting;
and an electric cable from an overhead ceiling light enters the cage to connect the
entire sculpture to the room. None of the objects (in part, or in combination) can be
separated and is therefore immobile. Locking down the quantum objects represents
them as 'measured'. The panel of the Universal Object as a scholar's rock, *Data One*
[fig. 12, page 45], also appears. It 'jumps' out of the film to appear on a wall in this
room at the same time, thereby representing a quantum property. In this way, the
entire room was able to be constructed as a space in which a catalogue of quantum
objects (or a library of forms which appear and reappear in different places) are on
display in two states: unmeasured and measured.

3.4.2

Study for a Museum of Opening Doors

Here, the Universal Object returns to its root: the symbol of the monad. Used to create a geometric form, it carves space into what Bill Hillier calls "concrete" and "abstract."[208] Hillier is concerned with flow between spaces, and how architecture creates the subject through its encounter with spaces contained within buildings.[209]

Fig. 55: *Study for a Museum of Opening Doors*, 2020
Robin Kirsten

This study [fig. 55] is a 3-dimensional realisation of my early pen and ink work drawn onto the architectural plan of our previous family home [fig. 14, page 47]. The symbolism of a door as being a portal to another space, dimension or world, offered an opportunity to reconfigure the imagined museum. This enabled me to fuse it with the architectural layout of *Atelier Brancusi*, thus visualising a museum where entering and exiting are experienced simultaneously, so that the body is travelling through, or with, doors.

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[208] Bill Hillier, *Space is the Machine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[209] Bill Hillier, "The Architecture of the Urban Object," *Ekistics* 56, no. 334/335 (1989), 5–21, accessed 24 March 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43622100

This experience perhaps recalls W. H Auden's poem *Thanksgiving for a Habitat* (1964), in which he sketches his Austrian cottage as "not a windowless grave, but a place I may go both in and out of."[210] Transitioning between one world and the other, the sculptural installation presented doors permanently fixed together at their hinges and shaped into a mini-labyrinth, or series of tight passages, that were difficult to enter. Doors were treated in various ways, some remaining solid, while others were half or fully exposed.

As objects, each door's style referenced a different type of space, building, room or history. From an individual perspective, each door hosted a compendium of possible referents, setting up a dialectical engagement with each, and thereby multiplying the historicising effects. The doors run the gamut. They could be institutional (an office door), private (somebody else's bedroom door), or a door that leads you in or out of a building (back doors or front doors). They also refer to different historical periods through their different types of wood, style and surface treatment, with some strongly indicative of specific eras [fig. 56].
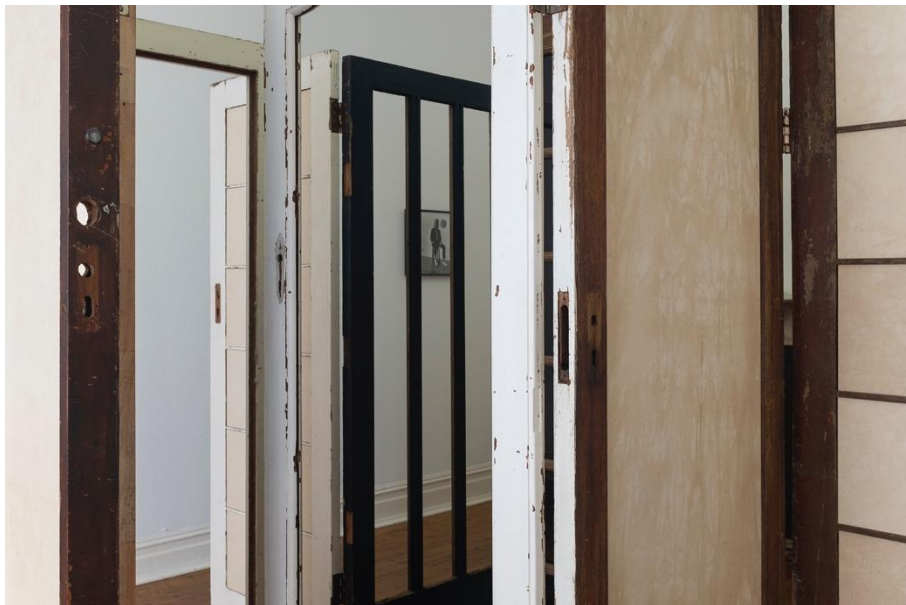
Fig. 56: *Study for a Museum of Opening Doors* (detail)
        Robin Kirsten

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[210] W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 714.

The doors are "vehicles of memory,"[211] covered in marks, dents, scratches and other residues of the passing of time. Additionally, these are doors that can still be encountered in a range of buildings; they are able to bring up memories of places I, or the viewer, might have previously been. The role of memory here, shared or not, invokes the term "implicit memory."[212] This describes a situation whereby a performance (the act of walking in and around the sculpture) "is influenced by a prior experience without the necessity of becoming aware of that prior experience."[213]

Wherever a door's internal panelling was solid, the one side was filled with black back-painted glass; the reverse side was inserted with fabric-covered panelling. The glass reads as a black mirror. This mirrored black glass is naturally reflective and had the effect of multiplying what was reflected, sometimes infinitely, especially when two reflective surfaces faced each other. In some places, the effect of the reflection was confusing. It became uncertain if there were more doors, or additional glass panelling. In these areas, the labyrinthine quality as an effect emerged fully, produced by the holographic quality of experiencing 3-dimensional depth and infinite reflections in a 2-dimensional image (the mirrored surface of the black glass).

The point of making this work was to provide an experience of the transition between spaces, or worlds, which are both liminal. Since the doors don't lead anywhere individually, it's not possible to go to the other side. The doors don't function as doors. Instead, they lead you around the space carved out. That space is the ambulatory around the installation placed within the ex-living room of the house used for the exhibition. This is the space of incoherent and unfamiliar effects, with the symbol of the Universal Object utilised as a rationalising form to determine the structure in planar view.

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[211] This term is attributed to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi as quoted in Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997),1386–403.
[212] Peter Graf and Daniel. L. Schacter, "Implicit and explicit memory for new associations in normal and amnesic subjects," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 11 (1985), 501–18.
[213] This term "implicit memory" describes a situation where a task being performed is influenced by a prior experience without the necessity of becoming aware of that prior experience. In this sense, "implicit body memory" does not mean unconsciousness. See, Petra Jansen, "Implicit body memory," in *Body Memory, Metaphor and Movement,* ed. Sabine C. Koch, et al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012), 116.

3.4.3

Study for a Museum of Multiple Vectors (in four parts)

I have put forward that the monad can be topologically transformed, and this gives rise to the Universal Object. The example given of a monad being transformed from a doughnut to a coffee mug represents this property. In this study, "multiple vectors" refers to the many different topological transformations that are possible when locating the Universal Object in physical space. An example would be taking a ball of clay and modelling it into an infinite number of different shapes, like a head, a milk bottle or a whale vertebra.

A radius vector is "a variable line drawn from a fixed point to an orbit or other curve."[214] The title of this study refers to the Universal Object being a "fixed point" (monad, ball of clay, zero-point, "least event") from which a "variable line" (topological transformation) can be drawn to an "other curve" (a new object). This is to say that a connection can be made between various objects via the Universal Object. Those connections are relations which were put on display in the *Study for a Museum of Multiple Vectors (in four parts)* [fig. 57].

Fig. 57: *Study for a Museum of Multiple Vectors (in four parts)*, 2020
　　　Robin Kirsten

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[214] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary,* s.v. "radius," (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). 988.

In this study, I presented four glass display cabinets, each containing a collection of found and reworked objects. The windows of the room were replaced internally with mirrored glass sheets, so that the room itself resembled a display cabinet [fig. 58]. This closed space reflected itself and the elements in it, putting them on display – a "Plato's Cave" of sorts. I wanted to present the idea that the cabinets are in a cabinet, and that the viewer is also in the cabinet containing the other cabinets. This decision (placing the one in the other) is a representation of the idea proposed in the Holographic Paradigm, that the whole is accessible from the part. Like Matryoshka dolls, the larger cabinet of the room contains smaller versions of itself.

Fig. 58: View towards mirrored windows in, *Study for a Museum of Multiple Vectors*, 2020
Robin Kirsten

The idea that the cabinets in the room are in a cabinet which is the room, outside of which is a larger cabinet called world, is presented visually and experientially. This also touches on the way that infinity can be found in both the macro and micro, which means that infinity can be located in all directions. And if it can be found in all directions, then it can also be found in the here and now. By multiplying the surfaces to reflect each other, I hoped to make these characteristics present.

The title's reference to multiple vectors indicates four further ways into this collection: a) the objects on display existed in different contexts prior to my acquisition; b) they have a line of trajectory that will continue as long as they do;

c) amongst and within them are qualities, forms, and references which might be interchangeable, shared or overlapping; and d) they can be swapped around in the cabinets without changing the meaning of the work. This last indication again refers back to Brancusi's "*groupe mobile.*"

In *Study for a Museum of Multiple Vectors*, I have worked to retrace Brancusi's method. There is no overriding logic as to which objects remain in what position, although certain obstructions had an influence on determining what goes where. These include, for example, the weight or size of an object, restrictions in accessing the internal space of a cabinet, and the decision to balance out the aesthetics so that focus points are spread across all four cabinets.

Whilst the method for constructing these cabinets retraces Brancusi's moves, the cabinets themselves are a close iteration of how his studio is now presented. Like the cabinets in my work, *Atelier Brancusi* can be viewed as a large glass display cabinet containing hundreds of objects with their own lines of flight (or multiple vectors). Brancusi's tools, furniture, equipment, sculptures, images, etc., have not only been moved by him in his own studio. The studio itself has been moved three times since its original relocation.

Various mannequin parts (or living sculptures, in the sense of Lenin's body) were placed in the four cabinets, with each cabinet containing at least one part. Treated in different ways by changing their surfaces, or recasting them in plaster, each part does the work of signifying the individuality of each cabinet. The choice to bring in objects that reference the body was to highlight Federov's idea about the role of the future museum, and to activate each cabinet with a potential future body-life. In each of my cabinets, the mannequin parts narrate an experience of being: a) desire/want; b) interaction/exchange; c) brotherhood/love; and d) death/transformation. They are displayed on the supporting structure of the Cartesian Grid (the vertical and horizontal) so that they sit where vectors can be measured and coordinates identified.

Céline Condorelli's thesis sketches a methodology for working with and against the support structures within displays. For Conderelli, display is not something that can be done *to* objects but instead is a transformative process that reveals "the operations

that determine the nature of the object."[215] The various processes involved when putting objects on display – within the context of exhibition making – ordinarily requires a large array of stakeholders. Artists, curators, Health and Safety officers, technicians, conservators and the sales team are all complicit in determining the nature of the object through the process of display (or whether, in fact, it is deemed worthy of being 'recognised' as an object at all).

For Conderelli, the organisation and systemising of all the processes are determined by the very spaces in which they take place: studios, galleries and museums. Those spaces contain and represent "structures and historical narratives, visual and material culture, exhibition practices and strategies of display, and the concerns and imperatives of various governing ideologies."[216] As a result of the shifting relations between the objects and the subjects that encounter each other, they also become socialised spaces.[217] The displays these spaces contain reveal complex 'negotiations' about their condition (such as the objects themselves, viewers or subjects, the display mechanisms, signage, lighting etc.), regardless of whether there are "overlapping, or conflicting, cultural ideologies."[218]

Condorelli's work takes up negotiation as her strategy for putting display on display. Her displays themselves are encoded with her own ideologies, which are critical of the power structures of the contemporary art exhibition and its role in the production of spectacle, hierarchies and capital. Hers is a reconfiguration of Giorgio Agamben's formulation of the apparatus, as "anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings."[219]

The support structure, then, is akin to an apparatus that reinforces the relations between objects and subjects, transforming both according to a set of intentions, and sits invisibly within the display. Display contains both the objects at their end points and the relations between them. Although, these need a subject to be activated,

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[215] Céline Condorelli, "In Support: a theoretical and practical investigation into forms of display" (PhD diss., Goldsmiths, 2014), 2.
[216] Ibid, 23.
[217] Doreen Massey, "Philosophy and politics of spatiality: some considerations; The Hettner-Lecture in Human Geography," *Geographische Zeitschrift* 87 (1999), 1–12.
[218] Céline Condorelli, op. cit.
[219] Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, op. cit., 14.

completing the narrative within the display. *Study for a Museum of Multiple Vectors (in four parts)* is activated by the subjects through their inclusion into the work, by being reflected in the windows and other reflective surfaces in the cabinets. This 'museum' captures the subject into it through its structure, in order to transform the subject who is viewing it into an object. In this way the subject that is reflected on the surfaces of the structure, becomes an object amongst the other objects on display.

4

On Infinite Relations

The idea of "infinite relations" stems from my hunch after several visits to *Atelier Brancusi*, and from the plethora of photographs Brancusi took of his works in his original studio. Of the many images related to Brancusi and his life held at the Centre Pompidou's Kandinsky Archive, hundreds were taken in his studio. The photographs most regularly reproduced and exhibited document a myriad of different groupings of his sculptures. These include arrangements taken from different angles [fig. 59] or captured in different lighting conditions [fig. 60]. Sometimes, only minute adjustments are captured between each negative, as with stop frame animation, or time-lapse film making. Several series of photographs consist of these minute adjustments and Brancusi's mobile groups.
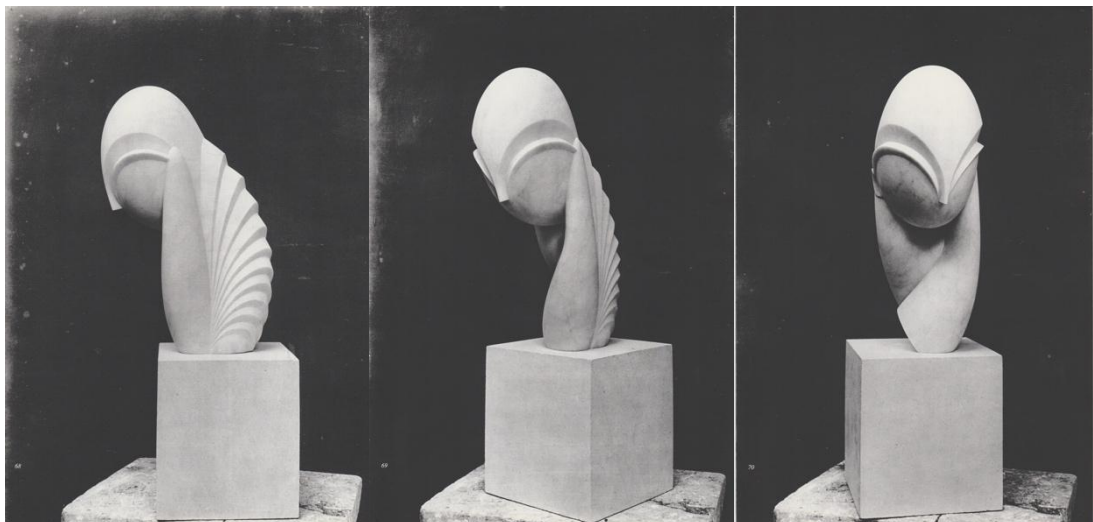
Fig. 59: *Mademoiselle Pogany [III]*, 1931
        Constantin Brancusi

In a series of three Brancusi photographs, picturing his studio at different times of the day and night, the camera position remains fixed [fig. 60]. Sculptures and bases change positions slightly, showing three different lighting conditions. Time is recorded through the movement of objects, animating them into a filmic sequence. Two versions of *Endless Column* remain fixed in a central position, signalling endlessness as constant. In the image-world of *Atelier Brancusi* these photographs show Brancusi's studio as a space for marking time.

Fig. 60: View of Brancusi's studio at 11 Impasse Ronsin, Paris, 1925

Each photograph acts like a single frame of a film strip. It seems viable that you could stitch them together to recreate, and replay, a timeline of Brancusi's life in his studio – to reanimate the world of his studio. Each photograph is what Walter Benjamin calls an "image-world,"[220] and "emerges as a place…which encodes not just the specific character of a past moment (the 'suchness' of that moment), but also the future.'"[221] A future suggested by the photographs is that of objects in mobile groups, ready to be moved again into new formations. My term "infinite relations" stems from these continual rearrangements, their capture on film as an animated history, and the possibility to continue that process.

Most of the objects in *Atelier Brancusi* are portable, making it easy to imagine arranging them into any number of groups. If you include tools, raw materials and other paraphernalia in the studio, then the possibilities increase. The idea of "infinite relations" comes from these endlessly possible arrangements, and informs the development of The Gyroscopic Tendency as a method.

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[220] Benjamin states that "image-worlds" "are not solely subjective phenomena: he refers to them as "image imperatives," implying that some part of their character is objective and inherent in the photographic image itself. The images that spring out of us are inevitably subjective, but our perception of them is conditioned by something objective, grounded as it is within the encounter with a specific photograph". See Michael W. Jennings introduction to "Photography", in Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, et al., eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 264.
[221] Ibid.

4.1

White Space

The blank space of a white sheet of paper or stretched canvas is synonymous with the capacity to invent new worlds, ideas, narratives, etc. The whiteness of Brancusi's studio is a similar kind of blank slate. Jon Wood writes of the "'timelessness of whiteness,"[222] or Brancusi's fame "for offering himself as the register of timelessness."[223] To be without time is to be without beginning or end, to be classic, in the sense of not representing any specific moment in time, and therefore infinite.

Wood expands on the *blanc* of *blancheur* (white of whiteness) which can also "be read as signalling blank. For in many ways the white studio operated as a cypher… [that is] highly generative and amenable to imaginative appropriation and projection."[224] This whiteness proposes a blankness where, for visitors to Brancusi's studio, "'what they saw' was 'what they wanted' as well as 'what they got'."[225] As I have done in my reading of *Atelier Brancusi* as potentially an example of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

The space of blankness is a cypher that holds infinite possibilities for a creative genesis. Georg Cantor, who formulated the modern mathematical theory of the infinite with his aleph-null, the first infinite number, posits that there are "degrees of the infinite,"[226] and that "possible infinity" is contingent on "logical infinity."[227] His aleph-null sets up the logic so that the possibility of infinity can be worked out. I practiced the game of marking the infinite (working it out) in my painting, *Infinity Drive* (2018) [fig. 61], which took the blank slate of the picture plane as a space for the "possibly infinite." Set up as the "whiteness" of Brancusi's studio, the picture plane became the *tabula rasa* for imaginative projection.

[222] Jon Wood, "Brancusi's 'white studio'," in *The Studio Reader: on the Space of Artists* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 270.
[223] Ibid, 271.
[224] Ibid, 281.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Rudy Rucker, *Infinity and the Mind: The Science of Philosophy of the Infinite* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1981), 9.
[227] Ibid, 3.

Fig. 61: *Infinity Drive*, 2018
Robin Kirsten

Fig. 62: *1965/1– ∞ (Detail)*, undated
Roman Opalka

In 1965, the French-born Polish painter, Roman Opalka (1931 – 2011) started his lifelong series of paintings about infinity, each titled *1965/1– ∞*. Each subsequent painting was annotated as *(Detail)* [fig. 62]. Starting from the number 1 in the top left of the first canvas, the numbers run consecutively along to the right and then continue onto the next line below. The series ends at the 233rd canvas when Opalka dies in 2011. He anticipated getting to the number 7,777,777. The Opalka Estate official website states that, on 6 August 2011, he "completed his final work *The finite defined by the nonfinite*,"[228] ending it with the number 5,607,249.

Opalka's "logical infinity" (logic here pertaining to a step by step movement) proposes that all the numbers from 1 to infinity can be counted and painted, with the infinite paradoxically intertwined with the finite, or death. Opalka states:

> Every time that I add a number, everything changes. It is a sort of journey, if you will, where the steps are conscious each and every time, each step adds to the others, the weight of the duration of all these steps that you have lived. I even use death as a tool for a work. To finish, in order to complete a work, I use death as a tool. [229]

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[228] Roman Opalka Official Website, "Home," accessed 17 December 2019, http://opalka1965.com/fr/index_fr.php?lang=en
[229] From a television interview with Opalka on France 3, 1994, partly reproduced in Stefany Anne Golberg, "Running the Numbers: Roman Opalka's Time Stamps," The Smart Set, published 19 August 2011, accessed 24 March 2021, https://www.thesmartset.com/article08191101/

Opalka took numbers to be the absolute signifier of infinity. This extended to the only brush size he used, No. 0. So too did his process of adding 1% white to the grey background of each consecutive work so that, eventually (from 2008), he was painting white numbers on a white background, calling the works "*blanc mérité*" (white well earned).[230] Throughout the series, two kinds of spaces conjoin: abstract space (the infinite) and concrete space (the canvas). These spaces are amalgamated using a numerical system: a concocted mathematics of percentages, addition and subtraction. Esther Leslie frames this relation between the concrete space of the LCD screen (a canvas) and painting's historical drive to imitate nature by depicting the illusion of depth. Sighting the "end of painting" via Malevich's 1915 "solidly black square," she frames the canvas's concrete space as a place where "Time, light and movement obliterate painting into nothingness, until the black is whitened, and the canvas becomes a screen." Painting eventually "no longer resembled [nature]." Instead, it reassembled "a concoction of base elements, of colour and of line" into "various modes of abstraction."[231] Opalka's paintings, and my *Infinity Drive*, both navigate the terrain between the 2-dimensional canvas (a concrete space) and the illusion of depth in infinity (an abstract space). They are screens concocted of base elements signalling the abstract that is infinity.

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre analyses Leibnizian space as being divided into two kinds: abstract space and concrete space. He states that, for Leibniz:

> space is absolutely relative – that is, endowed both with a perfectly abstract quality which leads to mathematical thought to treat it as primordial (and hence readily to invest it with transcendence), and with a concrete character (in that it is in space that bodies exist, that they manifest their material existence).[232]

My interest in Leibniz's space (as it relates to Opalka and the conjunction of abstract and concrete) is in the absolute relativity of both kinds of space. In *Infinity Drive*, the canvas is absolutely relative to the artist's working space. Both spaces are complicit in generating the image. This "puts its faith in difference: this is what is known as 'inspiration', or as a 'project'; this is the motive of a new work – the thing that makes it new."[233] The difference signals a pathway to imagining and imaging infinity on a 2-dimensional plane.

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[230] Roman Opalka Official Website, op. cit.
[231] Esther Leslie, *Liquid Crystal: The Science and Art of a Fluid Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 230.
[232] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 170.
[233] Ibid, 395.

The picture becomes a kind of photographic plate, recording the image of the possibly infinite, produced from the studio side. "Would it be true that the spider spins the web as an extension of its body?,"[234] asks Lefebvre. He thinks yes; the web and spider are inextricably linked. The web is an 'image' produced by the spider as an involuntary 'thought' process, not thinking as deliberation – the difference being degrees of agency (the spider is simply able to project beyond his own body). This is the kind of theoretical model that Hillier invokes in *Space is the Machine*. He defines "theory" as an attempt to model the invariants of order and randomness: "[T]he *a priori* given for taking this into theorisation is that regularity on the surface implies some systematic process below the surface."[235] He proposes that theory is a model that takes "as abstract a form as possible, uncommitted to any particular kind of representation or embodiment."[236] Theory is what Hillier calls an "abstract machine,"[237] implying that it is a mechanism for discerning an order or logic to whatever concept has moved from hypothesis, to one that is given order and a clarity of process.

Lefebvre's question about the spider and its web in relation to infinity might be posed as follows: would it be true that the artist creates infinity as an extension of his mind, as a space to reside in? If we return to Opalka as an historical example, then the answer is yes (certainly from Hillier's perspective). Below the surface of the image of infinity is some kind of systematic process: the concocted 'mathematics' of base elements formed into an abstracted image. If we consider the spider/web metaphor and theorise it through the artist/painting experiment within the framework of Hillier's text, then a simple formulation presents itself: the painting produced by the artist is analogous with the web produced by the spider. If the spider builds a place to live in, to be in, as an extension of itself, then the artist is also building a place to extend into: infinity is his domain.

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[234] Ibid, 173.
[235] Bill Hillier, *Space is the Machine*, op. cit., 75.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid.

4.2

Black Hole

In *Staring into a Black Hole* (2019) [fig. 63], The Artist in a Black Suit photographs himself in his studio staring into an empty pail. In this work, there are three "holes": a) the black hole inside the empty pail; b) the studio as an empty space with potential for an art event; and c) the black disc above the figure. The disc has been removed from a sheet of exposed and processed photographic paper and inserted into this image. The viewer is therefore able to 'see' the black hole that the artist is seeing. The camera, the artist and the viewer are all staring at a black hole.

Fig. 63: *Staring into a Black Hole*, 2019
Robin Kirsten

In this work, the studio is returned to its status as a space for contemplating nothing at all (as the title implies). Daniel Buren's contention, that the studio is pointless, is precisely the point: it's a zero-point. In its very redundancy and nothingness, some of the big questions about the universe (about dark matter, anti-matter, or the reversal of time inside a black hole) can be encountered. The studio is also a black hole, like the empty white sheet of paper waiting for the first word. Applying the mechanics of the Holographic Paradigm to the studio (as a space for thinking about the universe) results in the formulation that the studio, as a part, is able to access the whole that is the

universe. The studio is representative of the universe. In it, questions about the universe can be considered and modelled.

In Buren's 2007 revision of his 1971 essay, "The Function of the Studio," he states that making work in the studio for presentation in an ideal place "is a different case when the artwork calls on the specifics of its location for its identity and completion [referring to his own site-specific work]."[238] The studio, as evident in *Staring into a Black Hole*, is a perfect place for contemplating the infinite universe. Mind, studio and universe, as well as object, image and text, are all spaces where the infinite can exist. They are all places where the whole can be accessed. A photograph is a fragment of time (in this case 1/250th of a second), which is enough time to capture infinity, much as Latham's *One-Second Drawings* are able to portray time as "a cosmic primary event originating from nothing."[239] Nothing, here, means zero, pre-time, infinite time, time before measure, time without end. A force, or a black hole, even.

In 2008, the artist Ian Kiaer wrote about his work being (within a particular context of the urban condition) "fragments of models within a model, implying an endlessness of the kind favoured by Kiesler,"[240] bringing him to question his relationship between studio and world. Kiaer references Nicholas Bourriard's comment on Kant's thoughts on Romanticism: "Romantic aesthetics…postulates that a work of art, as a product of human subjectivity, expresses the mental world of the subject."[241] This reinforces the possibility that endlessness is probable, and representable, if the artist can think about it and inhabit it. *Staring into a Black Hole* represents this possibility by depicting the black hole (an endless space where time can go backwards)[242] as accessible not only to the artist, but the viewer as well, because of the studio space.

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238 Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Studio Revisited: Daniel Buren in Conversation," in *The Studio*, ed. Jens Hoffman (London: Whitechapel Gallery; MIT Press, 2012), 163.
239 Ina Conzen-Meairs, "Art after Physics," in *John Latham: Art after Physics*, op. cit., 13.
240 Ian Kiaer, "Endless House: Models of Thought for Dwellings," op. cit., 99.
241 Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. S. Pleasance and F. Woods (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002), 92.
242 Yasemin Saplakoglu, "Gamma-Rays Spewed as a Black Hole Forms Might Reverse Time," Live Science, published 23 August 2018, accessed 25 November 2019, https://www.livescience.com/63415-time-reversed-structures-gamma-ray-bursts.html

4.3

Game Space
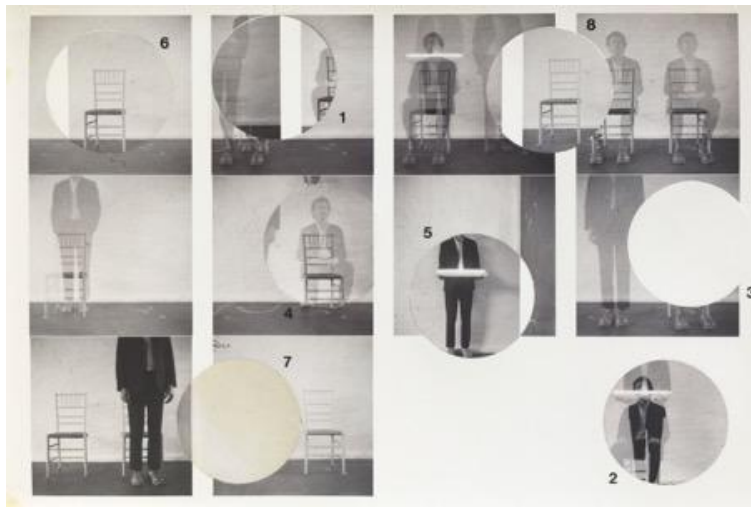
Fig. 64: *New World in 8 Moves*, 2019
          Robin Kirsten

Hillier's theory foregrounds architectural space as having a greater effect on a subject's actions, perceptions and experiences than the structure itself. He positions space as an abstract device that has a direct influence on concrete activities taking place. He describes space as "a vacancy rather than a thing" and that "related spaces…require movement from one to the other to experience the whole."[243] For Hillier, it's not the structure that is producing the effects, but the space within that determines the activities of users through its configuration.[244]

New World in 8 Moves (2019) [fig. 64] takes the contact sheet for my first Artist in a Black Suit photographic series as a gaming space to "experience the whole" of the "vacancy" of a studio space. By moving across each frame, I mark out the movement to experience the whole. Discs sampled from one frame are cut out and placed into other locations on the "concrete" sheet, which then travel across the contact sheet in order to "experience the whole" of all the frames. This new image animates the abstract and concrete, testing Hillier's idea that theory is "an attempt to model these in a system of interdependent concepts."[245] Putting into play the abstract and concrete in a single work presents a facsimile joining the two types of spaces associated with *Atelier Brancusi*: Piano's concrete and Brancusi's abstract.

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[243] Bill Hillier, *Space is the Machine*, op. cit., 26–7.
[244] Ibid, 395.
[245] Ibid, 75.

Counting moves within the 'game' of a compound image recalls Gabriel Orozco's photographic series *Until You Find Another Yellow Schwalbe* (1995). In it, Orozco drove around Berlin on his yellow Schwalbe motorcycle, a staple form of transport in the former GDR. When he found another yellow Schwalbe, he parked next to it and photographed the pair. A schematic diagram of Orozco's circulatory operation through the streets of Berlin shows "orthogonal lines [suggesting] that he rode his motorcycle following a kind of abstract chess knight movement on a chessboard."[246] [fig. 65]
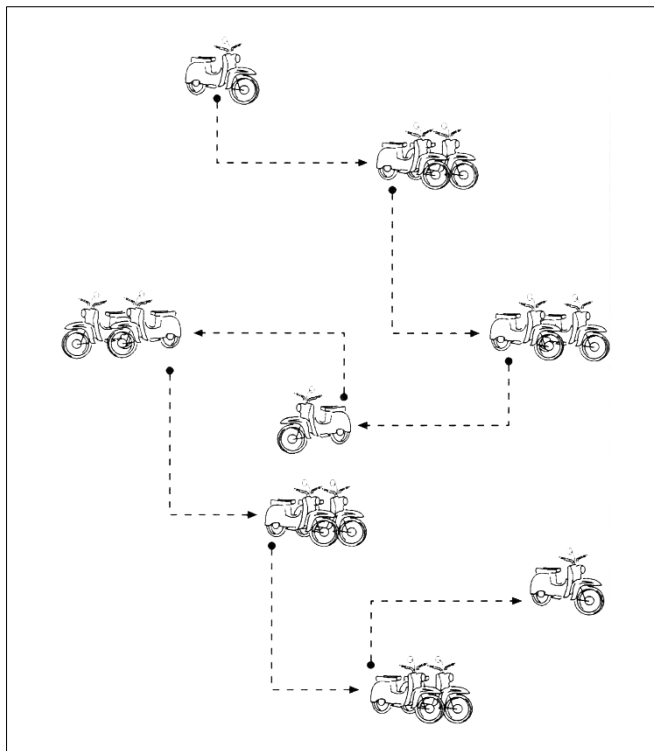
Fig. 65: Mapping of *Until You Find Another Yellow Schwalbe*

New World in 8 Moves marks time, in a space, as chess marks the duration of the game through a piece's moves. The game being played is something Miguel González Virgen defines (in relation to Orozco's work) as "the continuous and dynamic exchange of meaning…within the space structure and modulated by time."[247] In *New World in 8 Moves,* the process of mentally repositioning the discs back to their original place – reversing the time signature of the work – reveals an "infinite structure for the game of signification."[248] The work signifies the mental arithmetic required to imagine a new

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[246] Miguel González Virgen, *Of Games, The Infinite and Worlds: The Work of Gabriel Orozco* (Dublin: Douglas Hyde Gallery; Merz, 2003), 5.
[247] Ibid, 16.
[248] Ibid, 15.

world. This world is created by self-sampling, and self-arrangement, reminiscent of Brancusi's moves in his studio to develop his "*groupe mobile*" concept.

The concrete and abstract are two pieces on the game board that is the universe. They mirror each other on the line of symmetry that is infinity. The starting point, according to Virgen (for Orozco's perception of the universe as a continuous string of games *ad infinitum*), is his "realization that the universal structure has its fundament in symmetry, an absolute conceptual line without dimension."[249] The boundary of the Universal Object is this dimensionless line. It separates one space (inside) from the other (outside). The world that is the Universal Object is mirrored by the unbounded world of the universe. They are in symmetry, explaining why (according to Leibniz and the Holographic Paradigm) you only need to study one monad to access the whole universe. The universe is the same both sides, and it's more economical to study the monad.

The collection of eight discs in *New World in 8 Moves* contains information. They stretch back to another time (the production of another series of works), representing the past, present and future. The past is the historicity of the original series. The present is the viewers' encounter with it. The future is encoded in the numbering system that offers future gamers the opportunity to move the discs around. Multiple moves are possible and probable. On a larger game board (perhaps the universal plane), any number of moves could take place.

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[249] Ibid, 124.

4.4

Testing Infinite Possible Relations

Fig. 66: *Testing Infinite Possible Relations*, 2018 (detail)
Robin Kirsten

My series of black and white Polaroid photographs, *Testing Infinite Possible Relations* (2018) [fig. 66], investigates the syntax of objects in relation to each other and to space. Space is both the place where the photographs were taken and the space between, within or created by the arrangement of objects.

Two chairs, a pail, a black board, a white board and a fluorescent light were selected to perform a range of relations in front of the static camera. All of these were ready-at-hand studio objects, transcribed as objects A to F. In each Polaroid, the objects were moved around into various positions, with not all objects being captured in each image.

The static framing of the camera, and the unchanging interior landscape of the studio floor and wall, function as measuring devices, mapping the shifting locations of the elements. Doing this 'live capture' recalls Bruce Nauman's film work *Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)* (2001). That work consists of 7 video screens showing footage filmed over several months. It captures the nocturnal movement of an invasion of rats running around his studio, and "reveals evidence of daily activity, as well as

accumulated residues of past work."[250] Depending on what was happening in the studio each day, "this paraphernalia shifts around or even disappears."[251] Each camera is set up to include in its frame a junction of wall and floor around the studio's perimeter. Nauman used the studio traffic "as a way of mapping the leftover parts and work areas of the last several years of other completed, unfinished, or discarded projects."[252]

Nauman's work does not show him making art. Instead, it records a range of studio activities, like the appearance and disappearance of a ladder, or the evolution of a work in progress. This is not suggesting that Nauman's film is not an artwork. Rather, the work of art making came after the fact of recording the material, once the footage was available. I'm pushing this distinction to loop back to Brancusi, his daily process of moving about the studio, no longer making sculptures, but rearranging them. Unlike Nauman's film, Brancusi's continuous movements were not recorded as an art event, although each new arrangement was photographed. *Testing Infinite Possible Relations* practices the non-visible movement of objects into new arrangements by recording them on film and making them into an image.

Testing Infinite Possible Relations practices the poetry of framing objects in the studio through the camera's lens. This is as a form of writing with objects in instant time. Here, an infinity of mobile groups is predicted or hypothesised as being possible, hence the title, which refers to the testing of something possible. If I had an infinite number of Polaroids, I could have fathomed an infinite number of groups which fully used the x, y and z coordinates of the 3-dimensional space within the camera's frame. Space, in these Polaroids, becomes a syntactical element so that the arrangement of objects is not exhausted. As in Borges' "Library of Babel," it is possible to increase the number of possible words, phrases, sentences etc., depending on where the space is placed amongst the letters, comma and full stops of each book. Cage's writing also explicitly turns space into a syntactical element, much as his work *4'33* turns silence into an object to be experienced.

Infinite relations, as I have charted it, requires a space in which to mobilise objects into relations. That space is identified as 'empty', like the white canvas, or the studio, or the

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[250] L. C., "Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)," Exhibition Brochure (New York: DIA Centre for the Arts, 2002), 2.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.

mind (as depicted in the Holographic Paradigm). In that blankness (that could be a silence), syntax facilitates a reading – or whatever art event is taking place, such as word conjunctions or object relations – which, in total, consolidates into a mechanism that could be forever in motion. This could be pictured as an autonomous machine, a self-generating machine, a perpetual machine, which keeps objects in motion within a dedicated space, and situates syntax or connecting lines as a means to model their relations as infinite.

In the next and final chapter I will conclude this thesis with a final artwork that is grounded in the perpetual, in conjunctions, and the allegorical, to make sense of the convoluted and idiosyncratic proposal for a machine-like structure that can contain everything proposed, as being parts of that machine.

5

Nothing is Here

Fig. 67: Still from *Nothing is Here*, 2020

Nothing is Here [fig. 67] is the title of an original and new theatre piece based on, and performed in and around, my sculptural installation, *Study for a Museum of Opening Doors*. Walter Benjamin's notes on Platonic "ideal symbols,"[253] that they should not be used to construct a philosophy, but that rather they should be used "to fill up the walls of the palace to the point where the images appear to be the walls,"[254] concisely reflects how the remixing taking place in *Nothing is Here*, which uses multiple images (ideas), and mixes them together to fill up the empty theatre, visualises the "walls" of the research.

By concluding this project with this theatre piece, the research was also able to draw into it the role of the audience, as a witness to the collaborative potential of knowledge transfer acted out by the cast, and also to invite them to become participants in the activation of a site of experience. Including an audience reflected back on *Atelier Brancusi*, as a site that is only activated when viewed, when

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[253] This type of symbol is different from concrete symbols. The latter are those symbols that are given and appear to us in the world, whereas "ideal symbols" are concerned with mathematics and logics, and for the sense that knowledge is high and worthy, to the degree by which they deal with ideal symbols instead of with concrete ones.

[254] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 6 vols., eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, with the collaboration of Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), vol. 6, 39. As quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, (London: The MIT Press, 1991), 77.

circumnavigated. Piano's construction requires the viewer to move around, and to participate physically in the activation in order to see the entire studio.[255] This was placed as central in *Nothing is Here*, by asking the audience to change their position multiple times during the performance. The audience also encircled the central stage, mirroring the viewers experience when encountering *Atelier Brancusi*, with its ambulatory and central replica studio. The audience then not only functioned as witnesses, but also as active participants in bringing the work to life through their physical movement in and around the performed work.

This positions the audience as activators, in a similar sense to how the participants in Franz Erhard Walther's sculptural forms become activators of his works. Walther's soft sculptures made of raw canvas creates for each activator "a unique experience; how they perceive and react to the work is based as much upon their personal experiences as to the work's parameters."[256] For example in *Cross Connecting Form* (1967) from his *First Work Set*, or in his *Plinth, 4 Areas* (1969) where, in each work, four people become connected to each other via the soft sculptures, and at the same time create the work's ultimate outcome – of an embodied form, and an embodied practice, linking artist, materiality and the audience.

The Museum of Modern Art in New York proposed that the works from *First Work Set* are "a series of propositions for action that can only be fully activated through human participation."[257] Walther is a precursor to artists such as Bruce Nauman, whose own reference to Beckett in his video works of the 1960s, particularly *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968), places the participant, or activator, as a central element of the work's materiality.[258] Nauman's diagrams for *Slow Angle Walk* describe a series of trajectories that are analogous to Beckett's diagram of the movement prescribed in the choreographic directions for his TV play, *Quad,* first aired as *Quadrant*

[255] The version prior to Piano's, located on the same piece of ground, was only visible through a window, rendering it impossible to walk around the studio to see everything inside from different angles.

[256] Ingrid Langston, "What Can I Do with It?": Activating Franz Erhard Walther's First Work Set", *Museum of Modern Art*, 12 December 2012, accessed 13 March 2022, https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2012/12/12/what-can-i-do-with-it-activating-franz-erhard-walthers-first-work-set/

[257] Unknown author, *Museum of Modern Art*, accessed 13 March 2022, http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/events/ 17317.

[258] Derval Tubridy discusses the importance of Beckett for Bruce Nauman's work in, "Sounding Spaces: Aurality in Beckett, Nauman and Cardiff', *Performance Research*, Issue 12:1 (March 2007), 5–11.

I + II in Germany in 1981.[259] The play, or "alchemical dance"[260] consists of four dancers walking around the outlines of a square stage. Their repeated cycles walking diagonally from corner to corner via the centre of the stage (which is always avoided, as if a void), and then along the outer edge, is structured through the synchronised walking of each dancer. The play is "without plot, event, antagonism, or any speech. Rather, time and space are measured in *Quad* through permutation – the turn taking of the figures – and the rhythm of the drumming, matched by the dancer's staccato movements around the squares."[261]

Nothing is Here was also made up of repeated cycles, suggesting a kind of 'perpetual machine' (the Covid-19 bio-security legislation in place at the time of its run prevented the audience from remaining in the theatre for longer than three cycles, as 45 minutes was deemed the maximum exposure an audience could have in a closed space without fresh air circulating). As Baylee Brits suggests in relation to Beckett's *Quad*: with the perpetual machine "repetition transforms a gesture, movement or behavior (sic) from the quotidian to the performative through repetition."[262] Derval Tubridy's analysis of repetition and the resulting permutations in *Quad*, proposes that "the systematic permutation of each, are structural and narratological necessities,"[263] and are a key characteristic of Beckett's works.

In terms of an embodied practice, what is crucial "is the engagement of the body through repetition."[264] *Quad* is realised by the bodies repeated action of walking according to a set rhythm that is metronomically paced, although *Quad II* is slowed down to a point which suggests that after so much time having passed – as Beckett saw

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[259] See, Samuel Beckett, *Quadrat I + II*, Germany: Süddeutscher Rundfunk, 8 October 1981, *Text und Bühne*: YouTube, accessed 13 March 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZDRfnICq9M&ab_channel=TextundB%C3%BChne
[260] An "alchemical dance" refers to the pattern followed by the performers in *Quad*, who move across the stage charting out a geometry. The choreography of the four performers circulating along the sides of the square and dividing it into four triangles along its diagonals – which according to Minako Okamuro symbolises the circulation of the four elements – should also be understood to represent the quadrature of the circle. In alchemy, the process of transforming the square (four elements) into the circle (the united fifth element), is compared to the turning of a great wheel, and is often portrayed as a mandala in occult philosophy. See, Minako Okamuro, "Alchemical Dances in Beckett and Yeats", *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui*, Vol. 14, (2004), 87–103.
[261] Baylee Brits, "Ritual, Code, and Matheme in Samuel Beckett's Quad", *Journal of Modern Literature* , Indiana University Press, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Summer 2017), 126.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Derval Tubridy, "Samuel Beckett and Performance Art", *Journal of Beckett Studies*, Edinburgh University Press, Vol. 23, No. 1, The Performance Issue (2014), 40.
[264] Ibid., 42.

it, "a hundred thousand years later"[265] – and after so much repetition having taken place, eventually a new image emerges, of one fading out to a colourless space for shuffling figures.

Martin Creed's *Work No. 112* (1995 – 2004) also captures the marking of time, and its fading rhythm or pace, and is itself a kind of perpetual machine, if thought about in terms of marking time through repetition, and the range of permutations possible with each of the 39 metronomes which make up the work. Each metronome is set at a different tempo selected from the device's 39 available settings, ranging from 40 to 208 beats per minute. The metronomes need to be wound up often, with the faster ones lasting around two hours, and the slower ones nearly 5 hours.

The work requires continual winding, otherwise movement and sound come to a standstill when a metronome stops. The winding up of the metronomes is a reminder of the process of starting over and over again, as another expression of repetition in the perpetual machine. *Nothing is Here* also keeps starting again, re-examining with each cycle what is at the core of the work, or to reassess what is at work. Perhaps, as Loh Bi Ying suggests in his review of *Work No. 112,* "the metronomes and their beats help us keep track of happenings in our life – like a conductor in a symphony, like a marker that reminds us of certain things that should happen at certain times. Or certain things that should not happen".[266] And by embracing an objective system of marking time – that Creed describes as "like putting a ruler, or a grid, against the world"[267] – *Work No. 112* places this system of the perpetual machine into confusion, exposing, in the words of the artist, "all the chaos of the world."[268]

The repetitions in both Beckett's *Quad* and Creed's *Work No. 112*, which mark space and/or time, and capture all the permutations that arise from starting again, can also be clearly seen in William Wegman's *Three to Four* (1971) [fig. 68]. Consisting of 81 black and white photographs framed into a single work on a grid system of 9 images across and 9 images down, *Three to Four* is emblematic of both how the grid, or ruler, based system produces an image of potential chaos, if by chaos we can also mean the

[265] Quoted in James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett,* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 44.
[266] Loh Bi Ying, "Martin Creed and his 39 metronomes", *Open House Notebook*, 28 April 2011, accessed 10 March 2022, https://ohnotebook.wordpress.com/2011/04/28/martin-creed-and-his-39-metronomes/
[267] Martin Creed and Tom Eccles, *Martin Creed: Works,* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), xv.
[268] Phil Miller, "Restless Native", *The Herald Magazine,* 20 February 2010.

concept of shifting stability, of instability, and the corruptions that become evident when allowing for permutations in a grid based world. As with *Quad II*, which "a hundred thousand years later" becomes rendered faded and slowed down, almost promising to disintegrate in front of our eyes the longer we remain with the work.

Fig. 68: *Three to Four* (1971)
William Wegman

Wegman's *Three to Four* does not correlate with the darker themes of Beckett's work, but the absurdity is still there. In each of the 81 photographs three different figures assume different positions in relation to each other, and to the props available in each image – a chair, a radio with earphones, and a newspaper. The props remain the same, but are used by each figure differently in each image, who themselves change location within the framing, revealing the number of permutations there are through a kind of mathematics that can account for the total number of possible permutations, given the parameters set up by each figure and each prop, and to arrest the potential chaos.

Wegman's *Three to Four* in particular suggests a self-reflexive approach to the discipline of staged photography, and the narrating of permutations which the series of images implies. By examining every possible arrangement of props and figures, he presents a formalist critique of the medium and discipline. It was Clement Greenberg who called for the methods that characterized a discipline to criticise the discipline, not to subvert it, but for the discipline to become more entrenched in its speciality. "Each art had to

determine, through its own operations and works, the effects exclusive to it. By doing so it would, to be sure, narrow its area of competence, but at the same time it would make its possession of that area all the more certain."[269] Wegman's *Three to Four* is a clear examination of, not only a critique of, the discipline itself, through the permutations that the repeatedly staged image is able to provide.

The props and figures are mixed, and then remixed, stretching the number of possibilities to their ultimate conclusion of 81 images. Randomness has been ironed out in Wegman's work, unlike Creed's *Work No. 112*, which always has chaos encoded into it through the unpredictability of the permutations coming out of the individual metronome's repetitions, bound together into a single work. However, both rely on the mixing together, and the mixing up, between and across the various elements which make up their individual works. The repetitions and permutations are delivered via a system of combining, thereby forming a compound image, or a series of images, or a serialised image or work, with everything taking place at the same time and in the same place.

In the preceding chapters an arc has been traced from my initial hunch regarding *Atelier Brancusi* and its role in fashioning the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, via the development of the Universal Object and its mobilisation as an analytical device and generative tool for practice. Various experimentations, processes, voices and methods have built up into a fragmented panoply of markers, which sketch out responses to questions generated by the research. *Nothing is Here* advances this sketch, by uniting multiple strands, multiple utterances, already practiced, identified and outlined in the previous chapters, which coalesce in this piece and bring new insights into view. *Nothing is Here* must also be considered as a compound image that remixes the bits and pieces encountered under the aegis and conditioning affects of The Gyroscopic Tendency, as a "megamix."[270]

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[269] Quoted in Jeff Wall, *Marks of Indifference; Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art, Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965–1975*, ed. Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995), 247–67.

[270] A megamix is a remix of multiple sources, as opposed to a single quotation. It binds them together in a way that marks out the originating material as a form of memorialisation. In relation to music, "the megamix does not allegorize one particular song but many. Its purpose is to present a musical collage riding on a uniting groove to create a type of pastiche that allows the listener to recall a whole time period and not necessarily one single artist or composition." See, Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory*, op. cit., 95.

Taken out of the medium of music, *Nothing is Here*, (re)presents multiple research strands united into a type of shadow play, or room of collaged images. This recalls a developmental process that Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* went through, as an accretion of extensions and forms. Schwitters' son Ernst describes this process as starting "by tying strings to emphasize this interconnection [between objects]. Eventually they became wires, then were replaced with wooden structures which, in turn, were joined with plaster of Paris. This structure grew and grew and eventually filled several rooms on various floors of our home, resembling a huge, abstract grotto."[271] *Nothing is Here* resembles this process of gathering concepts, forms and perspectives found along the way, eventually connecting them together to resemble a larger structure. Not an artist's house, but a 'dwelling' for ideas to grow into an expanded sculpture, or total artwork.

To repeat what is stated in Chapter 1: one of my primary points when considering The Gyroscopic Tendency is its use as a conceptual strategy. A strategy that responds to the question of how the Universal Object positions *Nothing is Here* as discourse, as "a connected series of utterances,"[272] and as the narration of decontextualized objects, images and texts, drawn from this research.

The 'tendency' can be best articulated by returning to Navas' Remix theory. In Remix, as discourse, Navas identifies four types of remix which each involve themselves with material in different ways: the extended remix, the selective remix, the reflexive remix, and the regenerative remix.[273] Each of the four expressions of remix uses samples in different ways, to produce something new, or a "periodic change." The extended, selective and reflexive remix Navas largely identifies in music, with each type editing and referring to an original composition with differing levels of quotation. Regenerative remix is a more contemporary expression of Remix. "The principle of periodic change,…found in the regenerative remix makes it the most recent and important

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[271] As quoted in Kirsty Bell, *The Artist's House: from Workplace to Artwork* (London: Sternberg Press, 2013), 69.
[272] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary,* "discourse," (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 333.
[273] Navas makes a distinction between 'remix' and 'Remix', The former refers to the method of sampling and binding together, and the latter refers to remix as discourse. When referring to the discursive function in Remix, he uses a capital 'R'. See, Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling,* op. cit., 3.

form that enables Remix to move across all media, and to eventually become an aesthetic that can be referenced as a tendency."[274]

"Periodic change" in The Gyroscopic Tendency translates in this research as focusing on different ideas, images, sites, concepts etc., and interpreting them all as 'media'. This interpretation enables connections across various references so that the work that is produced becomes a dense expression, an aesthetic, which the regenerative remix encapsulates. "Periodic change" then, is the process of re-orientating my position within the gyroscope, in order to facilitate the welding together of references to create a new work, which expresses the dense interlinking and interconnecting of different 'media'.

Regenerative remix does not "point back allegorically to pre-existing sources for validation, as extended, selective, and reflexive remixes do; it merely uses Remix principles to develop more efficient tools."[275] The principles of Remix that are circulating in *Nothing is Here*, are the direct and meta-sampling of my research material – the 'media' encountered – using the 'tool' of cut/copy/paste. Material that is itself a remixing pointing back to pre-existing knowledges.

The theatre work holds everything together because actions take place at the same time. The theatrical space in this work holds everything together like a *"passe-partout,"* in a similar manner to which *Atelier Brancusi* holds any possible number of relations together between the objects and concepts that populate the site. Any other possible number of sequences or references from the research could have been put into *Nothing is Here* and *should* still hold together as a total artwork representing the *Museum of Infinite Relations*. This is comparable to how the *"passe-partout"* functions for Derrida: it is a devise behind which you can slide any other image, and the *"passe-partout"* will stand out as the organising principle.

The Universal Object is the organising principle in *Nothing is Here*, because of how it captures knowledge when you immerse yourself in it, when practising The Gyroscopic Tendency as a research method. The Universal Object is also a *"passe-partout,"*

[274] Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*, op. cit., 74.
[275] Ibid., 104–5.

because you can slide behind its symbol, as a framing device, any other site, and it will separate out and divide phenomena in the space where it takes place.

The Universal Object, if an example of a "*passe-partout*," draws the allegorical into it because it creates a framing behind which something else could be inserted, and it would still maintain its ability to process, analyse, separate and interpret. It is a symbol that can translate what is behind it, and push forward another interpretation, maintaining the dialogue and relations between the two. The symbol dominating the transmediation between the historical research undertaken, and *Nothing is Here*, is a hieroglyph of sorts. It is composed of signs and elements that aimed to contain a simplified version of the theatre piece that emerged out of it. It also facilitated a 1:1 correspondence between the symbol, its meanings and references, and the practice taking place during the construction of the piece, and constituted the logic for directing the piece.

The symbol is the staging plan [fig. 69], and the site for this work was an empty church hall enringed with blackout drapes: a cave linked to the outside world by a short passage. In the centre I positioned black flooring, based on a sports field – an empty game board, a blank space, for the performance to take place on. It could also be considered as a Pinball machine's floor. Each short end of the rectangular form extended into a 'goal'.
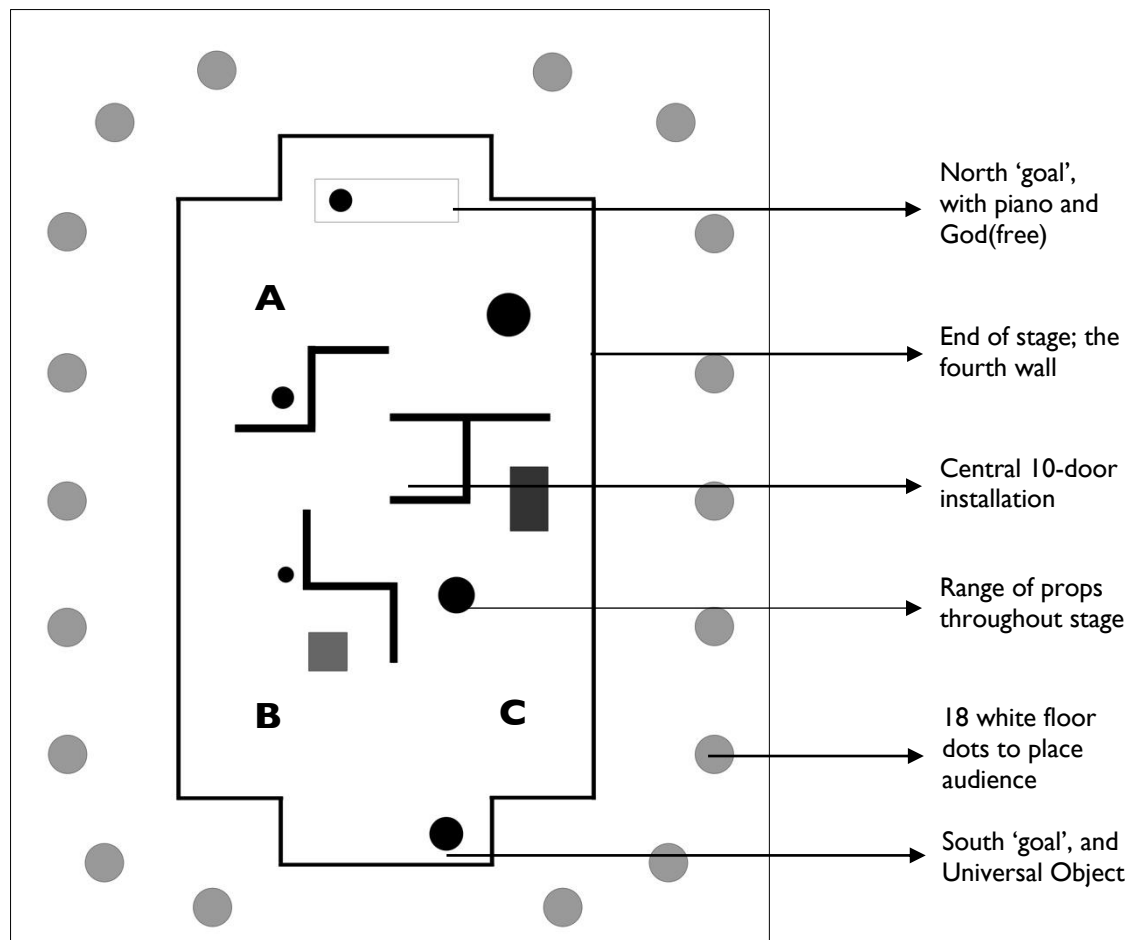
Fig. 69: Theatre and stage plan for *Nothing is Here*

A piano was located in the top north goal, and in the bottom south one a large sphere (representing the Universal Object as a sculptural form), remained throughout. My sculptural installation, *Study for a Museum of Opening Doors*, was placed dead centre on that game board, which divided the floor into three areas of activities: A, B and C, quoting the three grouped spaces that make up Brancusi's original studio layout. The central tight node at the dead centre of the entire hall and stage, was sometimes lit fire red, representing the source of light, the fire, for the projection of images in Plato's Cave, or the central 'void' at the centre of Beckett's *Quad* which the dancers can never cross. The red light cast shadows across the hall of the structures, props and characters. Each area could be accessed either via the sculptural installation by navigating through its dead centre, or around it. The limited audience of 18 attendees were placed on white vinyl dots (representing the Universal Object as a 2-dimensional symbol). These were attached to the ambulatory that fully encircled the central stage, placed at 2 meters away from each other, and 2 meters away from the stage edge.

The placement of discs on the ambulatory surrounding the stage offered a limited view of the full work, so at two different moments in the work the audience was instructed to move six white dots to the right, so that the entire work could eventually be seen and experienced from more angles. Therefore each viewer, or activator, had their own unique position on the work, and each relocation stitched together a narrative that was contingent on what they saw first, eventually building up into a fuller picture of the actions taking place in the work.

By quoting the layout of Renzo Piano's *Atelier Brancusi* in the format above, *Nothing is Here* was able to firmly place my associating of it with Plato's Cave. The spectacle which took place for the viewers in the blacked-out hall was designed to transport their experiences into another world, at the centre of which stood an illusion generating machine – the multiple reflecting surfaces of the black mirrored doors – at the centre of which was the tight node formed by the 10-door structure's layout, where performers could squeeze through to the three areas carved by the structure on the game board stage.

A collection of objects represented or on display in the works from *Studies for a Museum*, featured in the scenography as props. A stool, a table, a chair, a sphere, a pail, a modified mannequin leg and a suit populated the stage. The piece commenced with the performers, moving those props around into different locations on the stage *a la* Brancusi, or like the 3 figures in Wegman's *Three to Four*. In each performance many of the props ended up in different locations, mapping the potentially infinite relations between them on the stage-as-game board.

Each performer was instructed to 'curate' their own placement of objects according to whatever impulse or decision made sense to them, with the rule structures – of considering gravity, material tensility and stackability – being overriding external forces. Bruce McLean's photographic work, *Pose Work for Plinths 3* (1971), is the precursor to the range of moves and positions each performer was instructed to make. In McLean's work the artist was photographed awkwardly balancing on a set of three differently size white plinths, which are readily associated with the ubiquitous white plinths used

in galleries to display objects, and renders him like "comical versions of Henry Moore's figures".[276]

Caught within the limits of his body's range of movements, gravity, the camera's framing and the three plinths, McLean performs a repeating set of gestures and poses, but with each repeated image revealing the various permutations available given the limitations. Describing himself as "an action sculptor at the time, making 'impersonations' of sculptures,"[277] McLean literally personifies in *Pose Work for Plinths 3* an embodied practice, with the relation between artist and their material becoming evidently intertwined. The artist curates himself into a series of images following his instruction to strike a pose, and transforms himself into an object amongst other objects. In this way he becomes part avatar, and part prop, a two part move that is seen again in his 'band' (they never played any instruments or made music, but had the postures and costumes) Nice Style, whose most emblematic 'song' is *High up on a Baroque Palazzo* (1974).

In that work the 'band' members perform synchronised actions on stage according to set instructions issued by a voice off-stage. They take directions about what pose to strike as they 'train' to get the perfect pose, in relation to a collection of stage features, of opening and closing doors, a climbing rope and a ladder. Whilst clearly a critique of aspirational culture delivered through a self-reflexive Greenbergian approach to the discipline of being a posing performance 'band', *High up on a Baroque Palazzo* is an example of the intimate relation between curating (a set of instructions issued from off-stage about how to pose), and performance (using the stage as a site of embodied practice).

In *Nothing is Here* the procession of curating relations by 'posing' performers who are using mobile objects, commenced before the audience entered and continued until the audience had filled the hall. The audience therefor entered a space of embodied practice that was already in play, which was a device used to highlight that the idea of 'nothing being here' (in reference to the world as it used to be pre-pandemic, having

[276] Colin Perry, "Strike a Pose", *Frieze*, 19 September 2014, Issue 116, accessed 15 March 2022, http://www.frieze.com/article/strike-pose
[277] Interview by Karin Andreasson, "Bruce McLean's best photograph: fun with three plinths the Tate forgot to take back", *The Guardian*, 28 April 2016, accessed 13 March 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/apr/28/bruce-mclean-interview-pose-work-for-plinths

paused), as a condition or quality of the world at that time, might also be thought of as a potentially constant and perpetual future state.

Two *Universal Model Structures* were made of Universal Objects (represented by polystyrene balls) covered in silver glitter and linked together with dowels [fig. 70]. They were used as totems to direct the audience during the two moments in the production when they were required to move places. They were operated by a character called Quantum. These structures were also used to reanimate and resurrect the characters she passed by during her circulation when moving the audience along.

In *Nothing is Here* the vignettes and scenes reflect back on the moves and encounters of this research in two ways: a) the fragmented nature of sampling bits and pieces from an array of inherited knowledges, was represented by the multiple vignettes and scenes taking place simultaneously, which often overlapped to convey how these fragments constantly required reorientation. The audience in this work has to continuously work to focus and refocus on the many activities being performed simultaneously.

Fig. 70: Quantum carrying the two *Universal Model Structures*

And, b) this embedded into the work a sense of how the studio as a place of work, a space for thinking and action, captured the potential of being a laboratory for experimentation with ideas and their translation into acts. *Nothing is Here* narrated this experimentation and translation into a sequence that pays attention to: the Universal

Object, museum collections, mobile groups, living sculptures, resurrection, artist's space as laboratory, game space, Plato's Cave, my photograph titled *No Thinking Thought*, the black suit, infinite possible relations, modelling the universe, *Atelier Brancusi*, world, conditions and embodiment, in an art event. An art event that starts in this research from a simple substance, a building block, which circulates throughout the logic of the 'mashup' remix, and evolves into a total artwork. In much the same way that the line of development from Latham's "least event" to his *Flat Time HO*, or Cheval's "strange rock" to his *Le Palais Idéal* have done.

Abby S. Waydorf's definition of the "conceptual remix" states how this process of creating a megamix can create a new form, a new work: "It [conceptual remix] is not a remix in the formal sense of taking a direct sample of a work and transforming it, but in the conceptual sense of mixing together various known elements into a new form."[278] This is another variant of a pastiche, whose etymology and first appearance in late 17th century French Beaux Arts discourse is borrowed from the Italian *pasticcio* – a *pâté*, or a *smörgåsbord* of various ingredients.[279] Pastiche surfaced in figurative painting at the time as a genre that synthesised a variety of styles. This was often executed with fraudulent intentions, which eventually coalesced into what was then considered "a mess."[280]

The conceptual remix is a form of remix that is dominant in how we navigate online, and how algorithms imbed remixing as their structural logic. Conceptual remix is "the mixing of content from multiple sources and the juxtaposition of images and texts in one visual space [to] further normalize the idea that everything can, and should, be mixed."[281] The *Museum of Infinite Relations* is such an expression of a conceptual remix based in a 'conceptual sculpture': The Universal Object – a sculptural form located in thought as a concept. This form determines the logic (or 'algorithms') to enable a remixing of various content into one space.

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[278] Abby S. Waysdorf, "Remix in the age of ubiquitous remix." op. cit., 8.
[279] Ingeborg Hoesterey, "Postmodern Pastiche: a critical aesthetic," *The Centennial Review* 39, no. 3 (1995), 494, accessed 9 April 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23739359
[280] Ibid.
[281] Abby S. Waysdorf, "Remix in the age of ubiquitous remix." op. cit., 7.

All Remix, including the regenerative remix and conceptual remix has allegory at play.[282] Allegory, in its etymological sense of "other speaking,"[283] points to a speaking in tongues which Remix encapsulates. "Other speaking" in Remix is its method, of citation, of quotation, of referencing, and of sampling from others. In this sense Remix and allegory are structurally the same thing, as they both point back to forms, symbols, images, texts, sounds, already in circulation, and use them to speak in another way. *Nothing is Here* must therefore be looked at as an allegory. The allegorical form that Navas identifies as being a feature of "pointing back" in Remix, is one that has proliferated in *Nothing is Here*, and as the concluding artwork of this project, it applies the fragments, samples, experiences and processes accessioned into it. *Nothing is Here* is another example, alongside *Atelier Brancusi*, of a *Museum of Infinite Relations*, and provides another outcome to the formulation:

AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✿ MoIR.

It answers the question, "What is a *Museum of infinite Relations?*," by providing a work as an example, and says that the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, when applied as a methodology which starts from a simple substance and building block, the Universal Object, and extends into a total artwork, equals *Nothing is Here*. The work represents the result of collecting material in the endeavour to work out a possible and logical answer to the question, "what is an infinite relation?" This is due to its foregrounding of the mixing together of seemingly disparate material into a whole, which is cohesive by virtue of being edited together as simultaneous, and by being framed as a performing of the research.

Using the Universal Object, itself a quotation and referencing of a philosophical relic, puts it, as a symbol, in a relationship of discourse with the historical. This is further reinforced by appropriating inherited knowledge as the Universal Object circulates or rolls through the project. "Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery; the allegorist does not invent images but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter."[284] By meta-sampling my thesis I put *Nothing is Here* forward as an interpretation. As a concluding work, this megamix of a theatrical piece draws from my years long history of assembling, cut/copy and pasting, and remixing. By taking the

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[282] Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*, op cit., 74.
[283] *The Concise English Dictionary*, s.v. "allegory," (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 30.
[284] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* 12 (1980), 69.

bits and pieces that came out of my research and approaching them ruins, I constructed a new image which is built up from image upon image, as well as the superimposition of seemingly disparate forms and concepts.

"Allegories are," Walter Benjamin says, "in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things."[285] The Universal Object, as a thought form which modulates and modifies in this project, sets itself up for 'being allegorical'. "The ruin for Benjamin stands for history as an irreversible process of dissolution and decay, a progressive distancing from an origin."[286] But the origin must always be circulating in both Navas' Remix, as well as allegory. Navas puts it that allegory occurs when a text is doubled, even if allegory is "pushed to the periphery."[287] Therefor in both Remix and the allegorical structure texts must be read through each other – they should both persist.

The "doubling" taking place in *Nothing is Here* is the reading of one text, the thesis, through another, the theatre piece. Unlike remixing, which would sample from one media, for example music, and then make another music track, *Nothing is Here* jumps media across from text to theatre as an act of transmediation, pushing fragments forward as stand-ins, or symbols. As Owens puts it, "the symbol is a synecdoche, a part representing the whole."[288]

A part representing the whole is how the Holographic Paradigm describes how a hologram works, citing the monad as a metaphysical form which represents that operation and system. The Universal Object, as symbol of the modified monad in this project, reveals its full allegorical ambitions in *Nothing is Here*. Not only as a genre of art, but also as an outcome of 'doing' Remix.

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[285] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), 178.
[286] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," op. cit., 70.
[287] Eduardo Navas, *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*, op. cit., 74
[288] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," op. cit., 81.

Conclusion

My initial hunch about *Atelier Brancusi* being an example of a *Museum of Infinite Relations* presented the problem of how to find a ground that the hypothetical construct could build itself on, so that the hunch could develop into a working model. The bodies of knowledge traversed, from philosophy, poetry, experimental museology, embodied research and Remix, to performance, photography, art history, Cosmism and more, have each contributed to the unfolding process of this project's working through of the formulation: AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ✿ MoIR.

The Universal Object has been presented as a negotiator, enabler or mediator, lens, tool and device, taking a central place within that process. I have practiced how the Universal Object can be a scholarly apparatus, as well as an orientation and positioning to bodies of knowledge in the quest for answers, and more questions, by immersion via The Gyroscopic Tendency.

I have approached the case studies of artist's spaces that have been museumified as worlds, with their own origins and boundaries. This has brought insight into how they might be perceived as models of the universe. That model is contingent on applying the paradigm of the Universal Object, which traces the development of the Universal Object from a building block, to a complex structure like the universe. By reworking the monad into the Universal Object – through naming its parts and allowing it to be topologically transformable – I have been able to investigate through the studio practice, what the potential is for making new works which can capture further insights to answer the research questions. This has been done in tandem with The Gyroscopic Tendency, which provided a methodology that could be activated to make sense of the infinite possible permutations and results available when practicing the methods.

The tendency has captured data, concepts, and histories, which have coalesced into a collection of images on various aspects contributing to developing the *Museum of Infinite Relations*. Images that have been curated into a narration of the twists and turns this project reports on. These are images that are not brought into the palace, but images which *become* the walls of the palace that is the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

In total, this process has accumulated bits and pieces, things, which sometimes crystallised into dense knots, or form tessellated images around the subject areas of the Universal Object, artists' spaces, museums and infinite relations. At times fragments remain ungrounded but create linkages to other areas. By bringing them all together, this project identifies that the *Museum of Infinite Relations* is an incomplete structure, because it is predicated on a continual collecting of things to present the infinitely possible relations between them. This structure needs to bring in ever more and more things, to express those relations as infinite.

But the *Museum of Infinite Relations* is not only a structure, but also an approach. A way of thinking, a paradigm, whose contribution to a studio-based practice directed towards creating a collection for a hypothetical museum is primarily methodological. The methodology is transferable for other practitioners to use, as it traces a route from a clearly defined starting point in the Universal Object, which then expands into a totalising conceptual strategy for making, and a total, or totalising, artwork. This methodology follows in principal the progression identified as operational in Latham's move from his "least event" to his formulation of a personal cosmology and *Flat Time HO*. A paradigmatic move that is also reflected in Cheval's development of his *Le Palais Idéal* from the simple building block of his "strange rock," and my reading of *Atelier Brancusi* as a model of the universe, whose starting point, or base building block, can be signified by his *L'Origine du Monde*.

This paradigm is a variation built on sampling from comparable paradigms and remixing selected bits to produce, or at least to lay the foundations for the Museum of Infinite Relations. Employing the Universal Object, via the monad, has brought in related paradigms, like the Holographic Paradigm and Monadology, and introduced key theories and bodies of knowledge to contribute to the structuring of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*.

Navas' Remix theory provided a framework for the method of The Gyroscopic Tendency to be activated, so that the bodies of inherited knowledge traversed could become a dynamic partner in the game of making sense of the idiosyncratic, abstract and obtuse term "infinite relations." That term resists being precisely measured or definitively located, by virtue of its paradoxical construct. I have identified the term's genesis as being found in Brancusi's photographs of his mobile groups, and in my

proposal that all the items in *Atelier Brancusi* might be able to be brought back to life, or given life, to continue *ad infinitum*, moving themselves around into endless relations. The Gyroscopic Tendency, under the umbrella of Remix theory, represents the infinite possible relations that could be made between and across the fragments of inherited knowledge available, whose links and connecting lines I have evolved into a rough sketching of an infinite relation. An infinite relation expresses not only the limitless possible connections that can be made between fragments or things, but also the continual process, and processing, of finding connections. An infinite relation is both a connector and the drive to make connections. The fragments from the bodies of inherited knowledge are represented in this project through its references. References that roll into one another as the Universal Object moves through the libraries of knowledge it found itself. The metaphor of the Pinball machine expresses that process.

In this project I have situated the Universal Object as a primary point. A point of departure even, which has had an effect on many of the processes, samplings and outcomes. Crucially, each paradigm or project cited above, as well as this one, has required a fidelity to *whatever* version of the Universal Object those have configured – monad, least event, or strange rock. This kind of fidelity through immersion in a conceptual form to produce new insights, can be thought of as embodiment. To cite Irit Rogoff's question, "How do the methods by which we approach something actually emulate the kind of affective texture of the thing itself?,"[289] has as many possible answers as there are questioners.

Embodiment, immersion or just becoming research, relate to the same move, which The Gyroscopic Tendency invokes, and which the Universal Object enabled. An answer to Rogoff's question above then, from a perspective in this tendency, I am framing as follows: by employing the Universal Object within the method of The Gyroscopic Tendency, to approach the question of what a *Museum of Infinite Relations* is or can be – rolling through and circulating amongst a panoply of different bodies of knowledge – has concluded in an affective surplus that is an allegorical expression of *Atelier Brancusi*, in *Nothing is Here*. What this process has revealed is how adhering to a scholarly apparatus, the Universal Object, provides, a) a logic to sustain the development of a hypothesis into a working model for thinking and making, and b) a

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[289] Irit Rogoff, "Becoming Research," op. cit.

language and structuring system to communicate this project's experiments and findings. *Nothing is Here* is the totalising outcome of the logic and its expression in visual art, translated into theatre.

By drawing on both Rodchenko and Federov's manifesto's for the museum to essentially be a laboratory for the development and practicing of new and experimental technologies, I have been able to recast the studio as a laboratory for the development of a new version of the monad, which has been put into practice to create the *Museum of Infinite Relations*. The studio then, is a laboratory for creating a museum, and Federov's declared common task of abolishing death is reflected in the infinite relation. That is, a process which captures endlessness and continuation, which expresses a *forever* process, as an objective of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*. The kind of laboratory that is set up is also an outcome of this project that can be taken up by other scholars or practitioners. The collection of the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, and the methods and processes that are encoded in the works that make up the collection, are not contingent on Robin Kirsten or The Artist in the Black Suit. Rather, it is a sketchy manifesto whose methods are transferable, as the scholarly apparatus of the Universal Object, and its rationale and operations, have been identified and practiced in this project, and its results are available for further development.

The symmetrical formulation, AB + (OH/FTHo/PI) ⚙ MoIR, places the scholarly apparatus of the Universal Object as central to the logic and system, and the method of The Gyroscopic Tendency enables a remixing of knowledges to produce multiple meanings out of the formulation. Rogoff proposes this as a-signification, "of not adhering to a single level of meaning."[290] And "the process by which knowledge assumes a-significatory forms, is one that destabilises its relation to other fixed knowledges and acquires an affective surplus."[291]

The "a-signatory form," the artwork, produces the "affective surplus." The collection produced during this project constitutes a new body of knowledge. It is evidence of an original and unique way of knowing represented by a collection of museum artworks produced in the laboratory of the studio. This is the surplus that can be uncoupled

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[290] Irit Rogoff, "Practicing Research: Singularising Knowledge," *MaHKUzine #9: Summer 2010, Doing Dissemination*, 9, 39, accessed 19 July 2021, https://issuu.com/hku-online/docs/mahkuzine09_web
[291] Irit Rogoff, "The Disenchanted: Contending with Practice Based Research," op. cit., 52.

from other "fixed knowledges" and stand alone as a *Museum of Infinite Relations*, whose affects are rendered at the end, in *Nothing is Here*, as an allegorical 'meditation' on *Atelier Brancusi*.

The Universal Object is the mediating device, or scholar's rock for meditating with. It is a symbol that stands between *Atelier Brancusi* and the *Museum of Infinite Relations*. They are two museums using different languages to assert the paradigm that locates itself, or can be located, in the monad's move from building block, to total artwork. The monad, or the Universal Object, is a symbol for an expansive potential to produce surplus. To produce a collection of artworks.
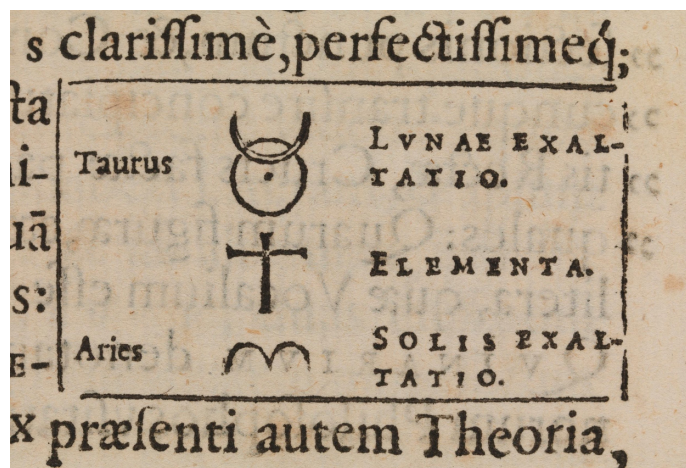
Fig. 71: *Monas Hieroglyphica*, 1564
      John Dee

The 16th geocentric cosmologist, John Dee, also produced such excessive surpluses from his design of the sign, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564) [fig. 71], which he claimed would disclose the secrets of alchemy.[292] According to Dee, planetary symbols and signs are a way to understand the entire nature of the universe.[293] His *Monas Hieroglyphica* is a constructed sign of symbols signifying the moon, the sun, Aries, Taurus, the elements, the universe and earth at its centre. His is a compound image of symbols and signs with the monad at its centre [fig. 70]: an allegorical expression of a geocentric cosmology. Craig Owens' reading of Benjamin's commentary on allegory in

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[292] Peter J. Zetterberg, "Hermetic Geocentricity: John Dee's Celestial Egg," *Isis* 70, no. 3 (1979), 389, accessed 11 April 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/231375
[293] Ibid.

The Origin of German Tragic Drama, puts this clearly: "In allegory, the image is a hieroglyph; an allegory is a rebus–writing composed of concrete images."[294]

The collection of artworks are concrete images, which function as rebus-writing to sketch the *Museum of Infinite Relations*, and *to be* the *Museum of Infinite Relations*. Using Benjamin's assertion, I would have to conclude that the *Museum of Infinite Relations* is an allegorical representation of *Atelier Brancusi*. Not by design, but by critical reflection back on the project. This does not only reveal more about *Atelier Brancusi*, but also positions the Universal Object as a constructed sign, a scholarly apparatus, which produces an excess, a surplus, this project.

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[294] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," op. cit., 74.

Glossary

The alphabetical listing below, of words and terms found in this thesis, have been brought together into this glossary to expand on their meaning, use and interpretation in this thesis.

This has been done to assist the reader by clarifying where they are drawn from, or how they have been used and positioned (and/or modified) by the author of this text.

Words or terms written in **bold**, indicate that the word or term is included in this glossary.

1:1 correspondence

This is my approach to research material, which is scanned for any element, aspect or insight that can be translated into an artwork, or used as the initiator for an artwork.

a-signification

Félix Guattari uses this term within his work on semiotics, to account for signals which don't coalesce into fully formed signs: they a-signify. Those signals resist signification, but nevertheless point to their potential to make connections to other signals. I cite this term in relation to Irit Rogoff's use of it, where she references Simon O'Sullivan's writings on Gilles Deleuze and Guattari. O'Sullivan argues that a-signification is a process where rhizomes break free from their mapping of a terrain, and become deterritorialized. At this point a signal can re-connect to other signals to form new identities.

abstract machine

Bill Hillier proposes that theory is a model that sits under the surface of a concrete object, or expression. In Hillier's work this is applied to the spaces created by architecture, as distinct from the building itself. In this way theory is an abstract machine because it is not realised in a concrete form, but determines the structure and gives expression to it: it gives it a surface and form.

abstract space

I take this term from Henri Lefebvre's comments on Leibnizian space, and interpret infinity as an abstract space, because it non-locatable and therefor transcendental.

affective surplus

This term is intertwined with **allegory**, and suggests that there is a surplus of meaning that is not contained or fully represented by the formal qualities of an artwork. In terms of the Museum of Infinite Relations: the research and production of the artworks in the museum's collection also point to the **scholarly apparatus** of the Universal Object, both as a sign and as a method, which circulates within the collection but is not located fully in any of them.

aleph-null

In Set Theory, as theorised by the mathematician George Cantor, the size, or cardinality, of each set is given a number corresponding to how many items are in the set. For example, the set A consisting of the countable numbers 1, 3 and 5, has a cardinality of 3. The set of countable numbers is null, if it contains the smallest set of numbers that are countably infinite. That is, the set needs to have a 1:1 correspondence with real infinite numbers not contained in the set. Alephs measure the size of the set, and not the line of ordinal numbers represented by infinity. A set does not require every number to be included in it to represent infinity.

allegory

An artwork or representation where the meaning of the work is delivered through symbols that refer back to previous representations. In other words, the meaning is contained in the use of symbols, or artworks, and their relations to meaning outside of the new artwork. This is partly a system of giving meaning by not inventing or reframing a symbol, instead relying on the source of the symbol to convey the narrative.

anti-art

I refer to the simple and clear art historical definition provided by the Tate, which explains that anti-art rejects and challenges established definitions of what constitutes an artwork.

Apartheid

The formal and legal system of segregation of different racial groups in South Africa by the Nationalist white minority government, which was institutionalised between 1948 – 1994. Apartheid is the Afrikaans word for "apartness".

apparatus

An apparatus facilitates an operation or process. It is the thing used to make something else happen.

art event

This is an action taking place in art, which transforms an object, image or text from being what it is, to being art. This could be, for example, by either nominating something as art, including another element into it, altering a formal element, bringing materials together, or performing an action on it. Or any other **event** that results in an artistic transformation.

blockchain

A large database of information stored chronologically in 'blocks', which are then chained together as new blocks are formed. This can be centralised, or decentralised, across data storage devices. Typically, in blockchain, each block contains all the information about all other blocks, so that if there is an information problem in one block, it can refer to the other blocks for referencing.

building block

Similar to a block in **blockchain**, a building block is the first element in a chain of actions. This building block can be repeated through duplication, topologically transforming the original block, or simply used as an initiator to develop a series of actions.

Cartesian Grid

This refers to a plane of gridded horizontal and vertical lines, on which it is possible to plot and locate objects using the x (horizontal) and y (vertical) coordinates.

common task

Nikolai Federov believed that the common task for all humanity was to abolish death, and that all of humanity should focus all of its efforts towards this uniting goal.

compossibles/incompossibles

Leibnizian terms in philosophy, which relate to his writings on metaphysics and monads. Compossibles are all those elements that can exist together, and describes the world as we know it without any contradictions.

conceptual remix

Distinct from sampling elements from one type of media and then citing them in a new edit, this type of remix samples from multiple sources and media and brings them together into whatever media type. What is conceptual about this method, is its intention, which is not predicated on highlighting the quotation. But rather, on creating a new expressive representation that uses remix as a method, regardless of whether the original quotation is discerned.

conceptual sculpture

In relation to the Universal Object: this sculpture exists in the mind as a concept, which is used to imagine, read or view an object or phenomenon through the form of the Universal Object. In this way the conceptual sculpture alters in the mind, what is encountered in the real.

concrete space

Unlike **abstract space**, concrete space can be located and measured.

conditions

When "conditions" is in double quotation marks, it refers to André Lepecki's use of the word to indicate the social, political, ideological and economic conditions we live in and under.

cut/copy/paste

In digital media this refers to the function of either cutting or copying information, and then pasting it elsewhere without altering it.

data

A word used loosely, which identifies my approach to any piece of information, be it an image, word, idea, fragment, etc.. That approach signals that I take that information as it appears, without adding to it any of its historical references or contextual parameters.

embodiment

In the strictest sense: of taking in a concept to give it a concrete form. Which in this thesis is the literal acting out of the Universal Object as a **conceptual sculpture**, and giving it a concrete physical expression.

event

When in double quotation marks: indicates Alain Badiou's idea about the "event", which is interpreted as a minimal, but sufficient, happening in any site. That site can be a piece of paper, a telephone, tripping on a rock, etc.

event structure

John Latham uses this term for art, or an artwork. Art is the medium that, for Latham, uniquely has the ability to record and encode a model of the universe which is not based on time, or things, but on events.

Flat Time

John Latham's modelling of his **psychophysical** cosmology, is based on time being flat, i.e., non- or transhistorical, and in the sense that time is located in an event, and not visa versa. So, in his cosmology, one should look to events to understand the nature of the universe. Flat Time indicates that in an **event structure**, time can be recorded, rewound and replayed in any direction, as it has no dimension. Time is flat.

image-world

The coupling of image to world, is to indicate that the images are not of a world, this one or another, but are worlds in themselves. These image-worlds consist entirely of **compossibles**, and are entirely 'self-sufficient', or enough of an image to constitute a world.

inherited knowledge

This is always a citation of Irit Rogoff's use of the term, which refers to pre-existing knowledge which is normally valorised by being passed along and through institutions. Her use of the term is often used when critiquing the process of adding new knowledge to inherited knowledge, without making space for a 'whatever' outcome: where new knowledge can be produced irrespective of inherited knowledge.

least event

John Latham used this term to describe both his work, *Io54* (*Idiom of 1954*), and also the smallest unit of the universe of matter.

logic

I use this term in its etymological sense: of fashioning a defensible chain of thoughts that are consistent with each other.

machine

This differs from **apparatus**, device, **mechanism**, lens or tool, and is intended instead to foreground that several parts are involved in creating the machine. For example, my reference to *Atelier Brancusi* being a "machine for knowing in," implies that all the parts that make up that site need to be activated simultaneously to be the machine.

mashup

In Remix theory a mashup is largely found in music edits, which bring together 2 or more tracks to make the new track. Each track is clearly identifiable. This is different from simply sampling sections of tracks, and editing them together alongside newly produced sounds. In my work, *Nothing is Here*, various elements from the research project are brought together without alteration, to create the new theatre piece. That work is then a mashup of research elements from the practice.

Matryoshka doll

Also known as Russian dolls. In each doll are several identical, but smaller versions, of the same.

mechanism

This is a series of parts that perform a function, and can be found in a **machine**, or added to to create a machine. This is different from a device, as a device could also me a means, like **logic**, whose outcome is contingent on the device.

megamix

In Remix theory this is analogous to a medley of music tracks, played consecutively. It allows for the lining up of tracks 'curated' for a particular event or programme, and can all be from the same artist or a combination of sources.

meta-form

Similar to **conceptual sculpture**, this term is used to promote the Universal Object as being a metaphysical form to think with. The difference between conceptual sculpture and meta-form, is that the latter is not located in art making, but rather in reading phenomena and understanding it in relation to origin, boundary and the unbounded.

museumified

Also "museumification": this term highlights that the artists' sites referred to have undergone a partial transformation into museums. This could either be by being supported by foundations (*Flat Time HO*), their access to public learning through tours or archives (*Owl House*), or their independence from, but attachment to, museums (*Atelier Brancusi*)

passe-partout

The direct translation from French is "master key", which is a key used to open several locks. Jacques Derrida uses this term in his work to describe the window mount used to frame artworks, which sits between the frame and the artwork.

perpetual machine

A machine that is always switched on, or that does not have an off switch.

psychophysical

Used in relation to John Latham and to the authors of *The O-Structure*, Clive Gregory and Anita Kohsen, it refers to the meeting of physic responses to the world of stimuli. Latham's **Receptive Intuitive Organism** can be seen as another way to describe the total psychological and physical state create by those relations.

Receptive Intuitive Organism

Also known by its abbreviation, RIO, this is Latham's terminology for the artist in relation to the event of art making.

rhizomatic move

Irit Rogoff's term relates to Deleuzian deconstruction, and explains this as the rhizome freeing itself from its grounding and finding other places to insert itself as a form of fragmentation.

scholarly apparatus

An **apparatus** that is used as a research tool, and for the creation, interpretation and evaluation of outcomes.

total artwork

In this thesis this term refers to the fully immersive experience of being in a building comprised of multiple other artwork elements and concepts. What is total about them are that they were also places for living in, and as such could be seen to transform the artist who created them (and viewers), into a part of the artwork. In this way they are also totalising artworks.

universal plane

A surface of the universe, which is defined by being able to position coordinates from which to measure or locate things.

vidding

Created by "vidders," who describe their work as "vids," "fanvids," or "songvids". Vids are videos or moving images, and also memes, produced by fans of a particular work, artist or genre, which are sourced from who or whatever they are a fan of, and remixed to include music or other media overlays. The work of making these "vids" is called vidding.

visual merchandising

The discipline of arranging commodities and props into scenes to promote their sale, in shop windows and instore, as well as practicing visual merchandising principles when communicating through digital media.

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