

MEMORY AND  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
LIFE

guest editors: Pierre Guillet de  
Monthoux and Antonio Strati

Alberto Zanutto

Mikael Scherдин

Timon Beyes

Terry Brown & Kathy Mack

Niina Koivunen

Klaus Harju

also

Ben Johnson

on The Liverpool Cityscape

Barbara Loftus

on visual narrative

Claire Jankelson

on the aesthetics of listening

Aesthesis

International journal of art and aesthetics in management and organizational life

# Aesthesis:

*International Journal of Art and Aesthetics in Management and Organizational Life*

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The Aesthesis Project was founded in January 2007 and is a research project investigating art and aesthetics in management and organizational contexts. The project has its roots in the first Art of Management and Organization Conference in London in 2002, with successive conferences held in Paris and Krakow. From those events emerged an international network of academics, writers, artists, consultants and managers, all involved in exploring and experimenting with art in the context of management and organizational research. The Aesthesis Project will be developing extensive research and artistic projects internationally, with academic research fellows and associate creative practitioners, publications and consultancy.

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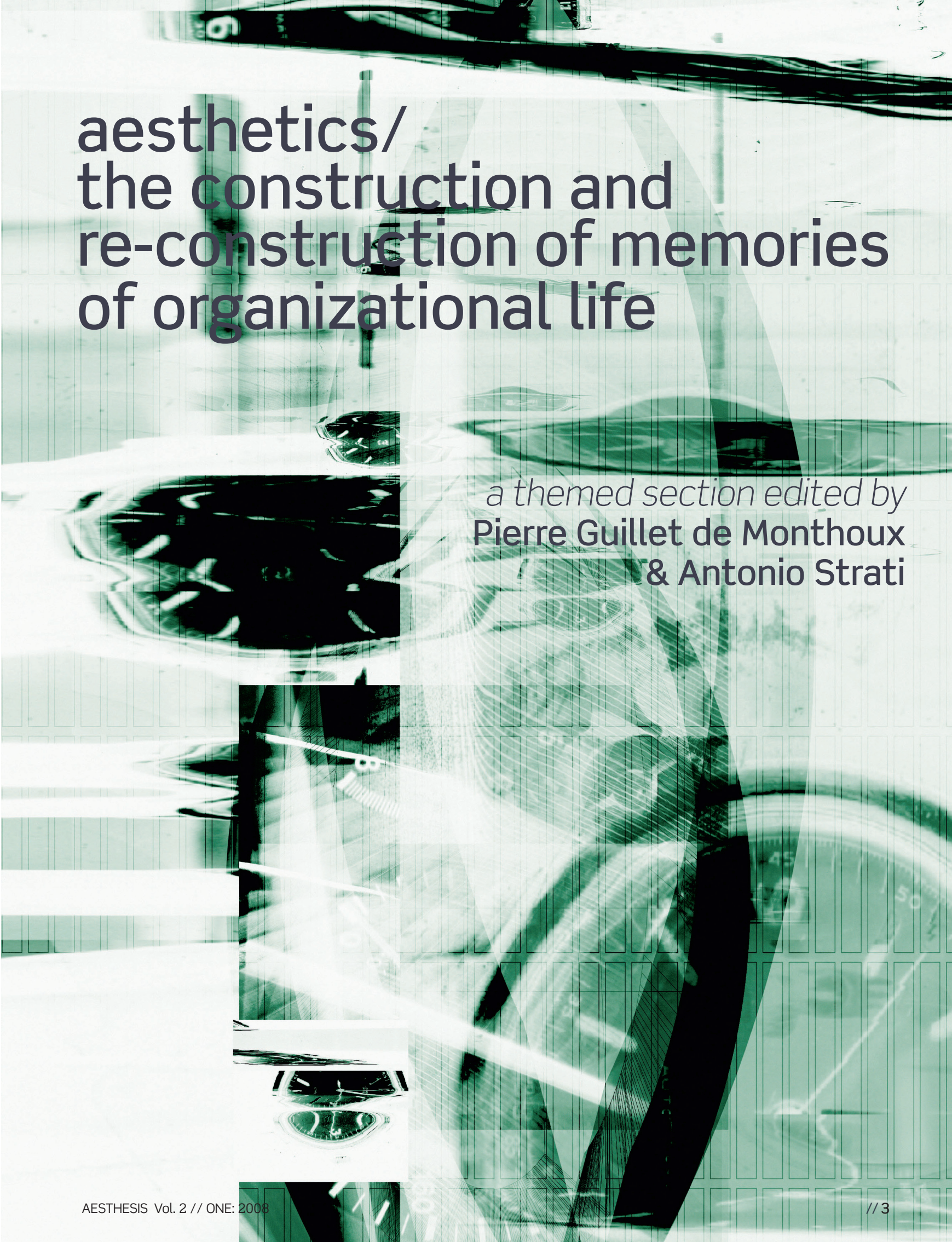
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# aesthetics/ the construction and re-construction of memories of organizational life

*a themed section edited by*  
**Pierre Guillet de Monthoux  
& Antonio Strati**

# Ponte dei Sospiri: Bridging Art and Aesthetics in Organizational Memories

Introduction by Pierre Guillet de Monthoux and Antonio Strati

Do you know when you see it, or do you see it only when you know it? Is it a matter of intention or is it something in the eye of the beholder? Is it a phenomenon or is it a perspective? How, then, do you express it, or how do you represent it? These are just some of the questions requiring an answer when 'aesthetics' enters the realm of social science. The themed *papers* section of this issue of *Aesthesis* is aesthetics and the construction and re-construction of memories of organizational life – such considerations seemed omnipresent to the researchers who gathered in the little village of Gattières,<sup>1</sup> southern France, for the Third EIASM Workshop on 'Art, Aesthetics and Organization' in July 2007. On this occasion, as in the past, the common 'call for papers' was intended to emphasise the dialectics that give strength to the ongoing configuration of an aesthetic discourse on organization. Art and aesthetics, in fact, are not understood in the same way by both of us.



// Pierre Guillet de Monthoux (2004) has a clear predilection for the arts as an arena and laboratory for aesthetic experiments. The arts have an important role as showcases of aesthetic practices threatened and marginalized by bureaucracy and corporate managerialism. Pierre is thus particularly keen to understand and enhance the aesthetics of the organization through artistic intervention.

// Antonio Strati (1999) emphasises aesthetics as a central but forgotten dimension of 'organizational life'. He focuses on *sensible* knowledge and aesthetic judgment in everyday organizational practices, and is particularly keen to highlight that the negotiation of organizational aesthetics gives form to the organization and also shapes power relations in organizational cultures.

These two diverse emphases regarding art and aesthetics in the study of organizations have also configured two different approaches – among others – in organizational aesthetics research: namely, the artistic

approach (Guillet de Monthoux et.al., 2007) and the aesthetic approach (Strati, 2008). The artists, art critics, and organizational scholars who responded to our common call for papers for these three workshops – the first held in Siena in 2000, the second in Gattières in 2003, and the third again in Gattières, in 2007 – were in various ways catering to each convener's special interests. Their participation, however, did not give rise to a clear separation between the two research styles. On the contrary, participants and organizers shared the conviction that both performing art and aesthetic comprehension must be part of our understanding of the social processes of organizing action. This conviction was shared both by participating organizational and managerial scholars and such prominent guests from art world and industrial design such as Alberto Alessi, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Maria Finders and Daniel Birnbaum. Symbolic of this interaction is the Human Relations special issue on 'Organizing Aesthetics', featuring the script of a performance (Steyart and Hjorth, 2002) inspired by the first workshop held in Siena. This was a novelty in an organization studies publication. But even though it appeared in such a prestigious journal, it did not engender much of a hybridization of art and aesthetics in organizational research and writing. The two approaches did not merge together. Rather, they continued to propose, each on the basis of its distinctive characteristics, a common ground for transgressive and novel forms of conducting and representing field research and the theoretical study of organization. In a word, what they had in common was simply a genuine and profound desire for ... aesthetics!

This issue of *Aesthesis* reminds us of this desire for aesthetics in our knowledge of organizations. When Alberto Zanutto writes that the task of research is to 'valorize aesthetics', he articulates an almost programmatic aspiration – aesthetics as an escape from a one-dimensional idea of reality. Zanutto's long experience as a researcher on a variety of projects seems to have shown how aesthetics can be 'smuggled' into traditional organizational inquiries. What memories can one represent, firstly to the researcher him/herself, secondly to colleagues involved in the same research, and thirdly to organizational students and scholars, and to the

organizational actors themselves? Zanutto's article can be read as an ongoing fragmented aesthetic memoir. It also stands as a quest for a deeper understanding of aesthetics in organizational field research, which polemicizes functionalism's basic assumptions in order to open the way for aesthetic experience itself. How can traditional, rather 'square' research, be turned into a multidimensional inquiry -- thus providing an aesthetic research team with techniques for an aesthetic research process that will constructively confuse the binary boredom of an aesthetic reading of organization dynamics! Like most freedom fighters, however, Zanutto somewhat over-simplifies matters. It is difficult to argue that reality is life whilst rationalism is death; for both are part of our desire for freedom. However, his contribution is a viable first step towards transforming the representation of the outcomes of social science research into forms of aesthetic organizational memory.

Mikael Scherдин's argument stands in sharp contrast to Zanutto's strong belief that aesthetic organizational research and the researcher's personal aesthetic comprehension of organizational phenomena should be grounded in negotiation with colleagues. Scherдин's contribution evokes a tension between an almost romantic belief in subjectivity for subjectivity's sake on the one hand, and on the other a view of aesthetics as a social phenomenon that constantly puts the idea of a given subject in constant danger. We ourselves recognize this tension in our own editorial divergences: Pierre Guillet de Monthoux's interests in art are viewed with some scepticism by Antonio Strati on account that art might well obstruct our analysis of aesthetics out there in the field. However, this issue's references to art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud's understanding of contemporary art as performing a 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud, 1998), and Guillet de Monthoux's predilection for Joseph Bueys' definition of art as 'social sculpture', indicate that we are immersed in the intricacies of a controversy. Scherдин's rather radical position begs the question of whether organizational aesthetics can be adequately represented by adopting such an individualistic style in field research. Comparisons with Zanutto's article may thus help us grasp the delicate nuances of organizational research in practice, in ways that induce diverse states of aesthetic feeling in the researcher. Here we get a feel for how to 'legitimate' certain forms of aesthetic understanding through a process of negotiation in the context of a plurality of individual aesthetic understandings. This contrasts with the aesthetic 'self-legitimation' assumed by Scherдин's 'autoethnographic' re/construction of the aesthetics of his individual organizational memories. Moreover, both articles echo broader methodological controversies in social studies, and one can see emerging a process by which the study of the aesthetic is negotiating its own legitimacy in the context of mainstream methodologies. In a sense, this brings us back to the central issue in aesthetic organizational research, that of the epistemological controversy (Taylor and Hansen, 2005) – but with a touch of novelty introduced by the specific characteristics of these two research experiences.

These methodological reflections can be understood in a new light through Timon Beyes' detailed account of Jacques Rancière's aesthetic philosophy. When organizing the 2007 Gattières workshop, we recommended this French philosopher to the participants. His booklet *Le Partage du sensible* (2000), as well other works such as *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (2004), raises issues that are not strictly bound to the art world but encompass the way in which our world offers itself to be shared and divided up in our daily perception of it. This philosophical aesthetics has recently gained fame in art schools and amongst young artists. French theory, however, has a very special way of elucidating how aesthetics is

a fundamental approach to social philosophizing, and it signalled for us exactly what the title of this introduction indicates: bridging art to aesthetics (and back).

Beyes' article provides a 'crash course' in this aesthetic philosophy. Rancière sees the formation of new arenas, the emergence of new collectives, and the voicing of new desires, and this new activity is fundamentally aesthetic. It is up to aesthetic intuition to give form to, to organize if you prefer, otherwise silenced and suppressed phenomena. Rancière's aesthetic perspective opens up what might be called a *political* analysis, and it is, as Beyes makes clear, 'critical' in the sense of relying on the self-organizing force of aesthetic intuition. The researcher is not a judge nor an expert once s/he has opted for an aesthetic approach. S/he develops a sensitivity to aesthetic forces that are profoundly liberating because they creatively generate their own trajectories, rather than simply voicing dialectic criticism or staging violent revolts.

While illustrating Rancière's aesthetics, Beyes alludes to possible implications for the study of organizing processes. Beyes also claims that Rancière's organizational aesthetics has emerged as a philosophical alternative to the implicit authoritarianism of aesthetically engaged sociologies, like that of Pierre Bourdieu. Hence his article raises an issue similar to that encountered in the tension between Zanutto's and Scherдин's articles: the tension between an aesthetics implicitly imposing something that 'ought to be' and an aesthetics that only reveals the organizational control of the sensible in order to defy and escape it – as in Strati's aesthetics (1999) or Gagliardi's empathic-logical approach (2006). The question of who is most prone to open up organizational life – a sociological researcher or an

aesthetic philosopher – still remains. Terry Brown and Kathy Mack provide a concrete example that might appeal to Rancière. They show that aesthetic research forces us to assume a new stance as social scientists. As they reflect on common organizational memories, Brown and Mack are compelled to give form to everyday artifacts in order to invoke the aesthetic dimension of collective memory. Zanutto insists that aesthetic research consists of encounters within a team of researchers, while Scherdin develops arguments to defend the sphere of subjective action for individual interpretations of an experience. For both of them the outcome of the aesthetic research process is unclear, although one surmises that it would be some kind of organizational awareness of aesthetic processes in Zanutto's case and some sort of art-like product (cut off from its context) in Scherdin's. Brown and Mack, however, illustrate how they used multimedia techniques to make a product that was then fed back into the field in order to bring forth an aesthetic dimension common to both researchers and researched: research thus consists in crafting a piece of art necessary to bring forth forgotten aesthetic memories in organization.

Niina Koivunen analyses this process by exploring the making of an artistic artefact: a recording of contemporary classical music. Her contribution implicitly supports Brown and Mack's account. They simply had to make a product to bring forth an aesthetic process; for Koivunen it was the other way round. There was a process – the listening to contemporary music by aficionados with set values and with a set context of classical connoisseurs – into which products (the recordings made by the skilled producers observed by Koivunen) were constantly fed. Rather than a process triggered by a product, the product was created by the process, and in ways that,

according to Koivunen, seemed almost automatic and system-conditioned. Koivunen accordingly helps us understand the difference between what we usually call an artwork and what we consider a tool to bring forth the aesthetics of 'non-art' organizational life.

Klaus Harju's article tackles the ontological status of this dimension itself. It propounds the extreme idea that the aesthetic of organization is nostalgia for a never-existing past. This does not involve a beautiful utopia to come; nor an ideal of some sort of perfection to be reached. It is a 'saudade' for the always bygone retrospects, which is not the same as simple nostalgia for an origin. If this is what aesthetics is about, then we are again confronted by the fact that art and research are separated only by a very fine line. For how can we seriously claim that there is a difference between fact and fiction if Harju's point is taken seriously? Mind you, this kind of fiction is not an ideal, a universal dream, or a claim to transcendent reality. It is a poetical fiction tainted by singularity, which can only be reshaped in a Nietzschean process of eternal return.

In editing this themed section of *Aesthesis*, however, we have not been able to maintain that artistic and aesthetic approaches are distinct and counterposed phenomena in organizational research. On the contrary, we have found ourselves affirming – with Rancière – that a crucial issue in both the aesthetic and artistic approaches to the study of organizational life is the changeover to a post-aesthetic discourse on organization. This involves a sensitivity, an awareness, and a taste that shapes organizational aesthetic research on the re/construction of organizational memories, as the capacity for aesthetic pathos in the understanding of organizational life. The novelist Philippe Delerm (2005: 114) – to continue with the French slant of this introduction – has relevantly and masterfully evoked:

.... tous les témoignages de lecteurs concordait: on lui était reconnaissant d'avoir su inscrire dans le temps et l'espace des sensations détachées du temps, dans lesquelles chacun se reconnaissait pour avoir éprouvé non les mêmes, mais leur équivalent dans un lieu différent, avec une intensité perdue.

..... all the readers' testimonies agreed: they acknowledged her mastery in inscribing in time and space sensations detached from the time when each reader recognised that they had felt not those sensations themselves, but their equivalents in another place, bereft of intensity.

## NOTE

1// We surely do not need to introduce Siena, but we want to say a few words about Gattières: The 4000 inhabitants of this little village, situated some 20 minutes drive from Nice-Cote-d'Azur airport, enjoy not only art & aesthetics conferences: in the village there are three good value-for-money restaurants and as many nice bars for your pastis. You can, as conference goers, check in at the nice small Hotel Beau Site and then visit Le Jardin run by the European Center for Art and Management. This is an ultra-select art space open only one day each year for us mortals. Last year Benjamin Saurer put on a show for the conference – starring a big Zebra painting and a pony in Zebra suit (see over). The rest of the year this art-space is devoted to the aesthetic education of those extraterrestrials frequently flying over the neighborhood in their tiny saucers. But there is also an annual opera festival performing late July:  
opus-opera@wanadoo.fr



Deleuze et....

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*Watch: Silhouettes by Barbara Loftus (digital prints, 7" x 113/4")*

# WATCH

## *A visual narrative about memory and childhood*

He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments; no image satisfies him for he has seen that it can be unfolded and only in its folds does the truth reside...

Walter Benjamin, *A Berlin Chronicle*

The artist, like the scientist, looks at the world intuitively and through the prism of unfamiliar viewpoints to try to understand its mechanisms and myths, drawing on the unconscious to speculate about meaning.

How as a visual artist do I operate at the interface between the personal and the public? In writing about my work and translating visual activity into words I hope to find reflexive insights on my life-long habit of telling stories with images. Why do I do it? What is it about? Fundamentally, it is curiosity about the appearance of the world and what those appearances can mean. The story telling 'drive' is concerned with enchantment and animation -- the desire to breathe life and meaning into the facts of shared experience.

I shall describe a layered visual narrative which I have been involved with, as both a painter and maker of artist's books. I had been working on the interpretation of the early memories that my mother had described to me, and became fascinated by the power of these remembered images, their function as historical ciphers. This work reflects upon the emotional milestones of a life lived and how experiences are transmitted to the next generation.

My mother Hildegard described a scene remembered from the early 1920's when, as a small child, she witnessed, unseen by her parents, a bitter marital row. She did not know the cause of the scene, which was her father's bankruptcy, precipitated by the German hyperinflation and the sudden impoverishment inflicted upon their comfortable bourgeois way of life. The focus of her memory spotlighted my grandfather's gold pocket watch, which she saw my grandmother tear from his waistcoat, and stamp on and smash.

Through the telescope of time I focus on this domestic incident and its details -- an object -- the watch -- and an action -- the stamping -- witnessed by a small girl from her secret hiding place under the dining room table. This primal scene of memory also becomes a leitmotiv of the social and political chaos which Hildegard's family and many other Germans experienced as the currency became worthless overnight.

The Gold Pocket Watch -- that essentially masculine attribute of the businessman ...the watch worn next to his heart ... his ticker

The Businessman ....

The Man of the World -

Industry and Commerce -

Working in Precision -

Time and Motion -

Time and Money

The financial crisis polarized gender relationships as its degradation penetrated the private and public spheres of life. The currency collapses, all classes of society are sucked into a vortex of fear and uncertainty - panic



## Barbara Loftus



The Observer  
- observer,  
spectator,  
watcher,  
invigilator,  
inspector,  
examiner,  
scrutinizer,  
overseer,  
witness,  
eyewitness,  
bystander,  
onlooker,  
gazer, starrer,  
gaper, gogglers,  
ogler, voyeur,  
peeping  
tom, window  
shopper,  
sightseer,  
rubberneck,  
tourist,  
stargazer,  
astronomer,  
birdwatcher,  
transpotter,  
lookout,  
watchman,  
sentinel,  
patrol, spy,  
detective,  
cinemagoer,  
audience,  
sea of faces,  
fans, captive  
audience

Roget's Thesaurus

grows. My Grandmother fears impoverishment and worse -- social ignominy. In her helpless outrage she attacks her husband and smashes his watch, the symbol of his bourgeois masculinity, surely a castrating gesture.

The emotions of helplessness and destructiveness that triggered my grandmother's action reflect the degradation inflicted upon the German people by the inflation. Largely a consequence of the excessive reparation payments demanded by the Treaty of Versailles, itself an act of humiliation inflicted on a defeated nation, the monetary devaluation of the post war years became, for some, a metaphor for cultural trauma. In his essay 'Inflation and the Crowd', Elias Canetti recalls the experience of emotional dislocation as the unit of money lost its identity and accelerated out of control. 'A man who has been accustomed to rely on it [the monetary unit of the mark] cannot help feeling its degradation as his own. He has identified himself with it for too long and his confidence in it has been like his confidence in himself. Not only is everything visibly shaken during an inflation, nothing remains certain or unchanged even for an hour, but also each man, as a person, becomes less. Whatever he is or was, like the million he always wanted he becomes nothing'.<sup>1</sup>

My title *Watch* has a double meaning: the timepiece itself and the action of the child-spectator. I focus in on the watch and its mechanism. It is round, like the world, its cogs and levers designed to move in rhythm and sequence, like the turning of the world. An emblem of order, when it is smashed, it stops, their world stops.

The word *watch* derives from the act of human participation in the measuring of time -- *the watch*. The spiritual roots of the mechanical clock belong to the rhythm of life within the walls of the monasteries. *...it would not be an exaggeration to say that the monasteries helped to give human enterprises the regular, collective pulse and rhythm of a machine. A clock not only helps to keep track of the hours but also synchronises the actions of man...the measuring of time turned into time slavery, time estimating and time rationing... the clock, not the steam engine is the key machine of the industrial age.*<sup>2</sup>

In my visual proposition *Watch*, I am speculating on the subject of memory and time, and the self-conscious position of the observer. The subject of my mother's memory was sudden and shocking, imprinting its image like a photographer's flash light, an emotional shot fired into her childhood. In that moment time froze as the watch was smashed.

I have described the *watch* memory in terms of a narrative-as-emblem within its wider historical moment of crisis. Now I should say something about the process of bringing this memory into the present, how I constructed it and gave it a visual form.

My primary means of creative expression has always been to draw and paint. It is the way I confront and interpret experience. Maybe it is also the way I control reality too, like the child who lines up her dolls and creates a world she can arrange to her will. This practise of drawing and painting is so instinctive a habit that I do not question its validity as an activity. It is what I have always done and is what defines me. Maybe it is partly a way of holding on to childhood, because although all children draw, most grow out of it. Drawing is a way of interpreting an individual perception of reality; it is a visual language, with its own complex grammar, which has to be learnt before the full meaning of its form and content can be appreciated.

The story is the motor which drives the production; the form it takes is achieved through an elaborate process of construction and selection. The components for *Watch* and my other narrative series were researched and

assembled in a sequence not unlike the preparation for the staging of a drama or film. My working process follows a pattern of research and rehearsals:

- a > *the spoken and recorded testimony* -- leading to:
- b > *visual and textual research*, immersion in visual phenomena: historical documentary photographic record, ephemera, first hand research, leading to:
- c > *visual conceptualization*, dramatisation, re-enactment with actors, recording with film and photography, editing of material, followed by:
- d > *drawing, composition and painting* from source material, followed by:
- e > *abstraction of elements* for visual sequencing, book design.
- f > *public presentation* -- staging -- installation.

'Visual conceptualization' means the image that I see in my mind's eye before I position my actors in space. Often the visual preconceptions I have about choreography are underwritten by images and compositions retrieved from the history of art -- a sense of 'frontality' and a frieze-like human interaction, with the picture plane operating as a stage and the actors performing in front of a backcloth. I use a low eye level because this gives my characters monumentality. Psychologically and physically I keep well back from the action and by doing so allow the narrative to find its own arrangement of fatalistic inevitability.

The initial analysis of the action is by drawing. There is a physical immediacy in making a drawing which is like handwriting -- often diagrammatic, always underpinned by a discovered geometric tension. This desire for geometry is emotional rather than abstract. Geometry implies order, it is masculine: mechanisation and militarism exemplify geometry. It also reveals a fear of disorder -- chaos -- geometry holds a structure up and locks it in time and into position.

The drawings are then selected, redrawn again and again, before being squared up, scaled up and transferred onto surfaces -- canvases or panels for painting. In the process of painting there is a kind of visceral inhabiting of form and content, which is both a way of controlling and surrendering to the medium of paint and surface.

My works are interdependent, a series for arrangement within an installation space. The visual narrative, though frozen, has affinities with film language in its manipulation of the emotional function of spectator viewpoint: it creates a paradigm of a moment, a synthesis of pose and gesture, which unfolds in time. Children, unlike adults, see the world in close-ups. Their smallness puts them in a different relationship with perceived reality.

In his seminal work, *Theory of Film*, Siegfried Kracauer described the emotional significance of the close-up: 'Such images blow up our environment in a double sense: they enlarge it literally; and in doing so they blast the prison of conventional reality, opening up expanses which we have explored at best in dreams' and he goes on to observe how slow motion freeze frame images parallel the close-up: 'temporal close-ups - achieving in time what the close-up proper is achieving in space'.<sup>3</sup>

The watch, with its precision movement and repetitive pulse, stands as an emblem for masculine geometry, ordered movement. When the fight breaks out -- movement becomes chaotic, ugly, human, emotional. How does the fight begin? How does it build into the decisive moment of snatching the watch and stamping on it? What happened then? What did it look like when it was all over? The movements of the bodies in space needed to be analysed and described with precision. Re-enactment became a ritualistic repossession of my grandparent's lives.

The story was also a premonition of the chaos to come. Hildegard, my mother, was later to be left as the sole survivor of a family that perished in the Shoah; all the grains of her memory that I could retrieve became vital evidence. I was motivated by urgency to give form to these telling moments saved from the silence of the past before the memories were lost. My mother, now eighty, had remained silent about her past for most of my life before she was able to give voice to her memories. The absences in my inheritance make my quest more intense. I become a detective assembling forensic material, the documentary fragments I collect acquire the aura of relics. My choreographed re-enactments stage miniature voyeuristic dramas glimpsed through lifted curtains of memory into other lives, other times.

My story is set against the backdrop of the Weimar Republic - a cauldron of change which produced revolutionary thinkers, among whom Siegfried Kracauer was one of the most original. A friend and colleague of the Marxists Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, Kracauer pursued an independent path as an essayist and commentator, whose ideas were based on life and experience over theoretical principles. His fascination was with the experienced reality of everyday life around him, which he observed and recorded with empathy and precision; it was a poetics of seeing enriched by his visual education as an architect and designer. He saw the emotional condition of the individual within the structure and surface detail of metropolitan life -- at a critical moment of social change among the newly emerging white-collar classes in Germany in the 1920's.

Kracauer, the anthropologist-phenomenologist wrote that he felt himself to be mapping the terra incognita of this new class:

*..leaving statistics and learned studies behind, he embarks on an empirical enquiry into the spheres of existence, habits, patterns of thought and manners of salaried employees. He talks to the employees themselves, to union representatives and to employers; he visits offices and firms, labour exchanges and labour courts, cinemas and places of entertainment; he studies company newspapers, classified advertisements and private correspondences... Kracauer's approach is characterized by a highly self-conscious individualism which resists methodological generalization and crucially involves a mise en scene of foreignness and distance as a condition of attention and a medium of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>*

In his writings for the *feuilleton* -- the cultural section -- of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Kracauer gave special significance to his study of superficial anecdotal social detail, the cultural ephemera and marginal domains of the new distraction industries. Walter Benjamin described his friend Kracauer as a 'rag-picker at dawn' minutely decoding the surface phenomena of complex historical changes. The *feuilleton* became the realm of the quotidian and took on an avant garde function as a new medium for social observation in a period of accelerating change.

*We must rid ourselves of the delusion that it is the major events which have the most decisive influence on us. We are more deeply and continuously influenced by the tiny catastrophes that make up daily life.<sup>4</sup>*

Kracauer was sharply aware of the abstractness of the capitalist production process and he believed that *community and personality perish when what is demanded is calculability.*<sup>4</sup> In his essay *The Mass Ornament* he writes prophetically about a new type of collectivity in Germany, one *...not according to natural laws of community but as a social mass of functionally linked individuals.*<sup>5</sup>

The Conveyor Belt becomes the metaphor for alienation -- the individual performs a partial function without grasping the totality. *People become fractions of a figure -- the ornament is an end in itself, a dehumanized organic kaleidoscope.*<sup>5</sup>

Kracauer describes the Tiller girls, those 'indissoluble girl-clusters'<sup>4</sup> as an example of the functionalization of ornament in the new entertainment and distraction industries. He sees the human image absorbed, multiplied and reconfigured into the new industrialized landscape, massed spectators and performers mirroring and celebrating each other in cinemas and stadia. Prophetically he identifies a spiritual homelessness, which he believes is leading to a new tribalism as it searches for meaning.

*In retrospect, however, his study reads not just as a description of the modernization of everyday life, but also an anticipatory diagnosis of the contradictions, distortions and delusions that the National Socialists were to mobilize a few years later.<sup>4</sup>*

It is Kracauer's focus on specificity and visual intimacy with human behaviour with which I align my position as an artist. By placing himself as observer in amongst the patterns of activity that the mass of humanity must submit to, Kracauer sees the consequences of the relationship between human beings and the mechanistic framework of modern life, and he sees it through the surface details of the city, which constantly reforms itself as it loses contact with the past. The dislocation of the exile is my inheritance and the drive behind my attempt to try to reclaim these memories from the amnesia of ruin and lost time.

The observer can be engaged, active, analytical -- or -- passive, powerless, hypnotized. He/she is always separated from the observed. Kracauer invokes the figure of the stranger, the 'one who waits':

*....what he [Kracauer] aims at is the stance of an intellectual who seeks to make the exile of transcendental homelessness, if not a home, at least into a familiar dwelling. The 'one who waits' is certainly not yet the ethnologist of the 'newest Germany'. But he is already the stranger, who has decided to stay in the modern world. Because he does not know where else to go -- and because he is curious.<sup>4</sup> //*

## NOTES/REFERENCES

- 1 > Elias Canetti (1960) *Inflation and the Crowd*.
- 2 > Lewis Mumford (1934) *Technics and Civilization*.
- 3 > Siegfried Kracauer (1947) *Theory of Film*
- 4 > Inka Mulder-Bach (1930), *Introduction to The Salaried Masses - Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany* by Siegfried Kracauer.
- 5 > Siegfried Kracauer (1963) *The Mass Ornament*.

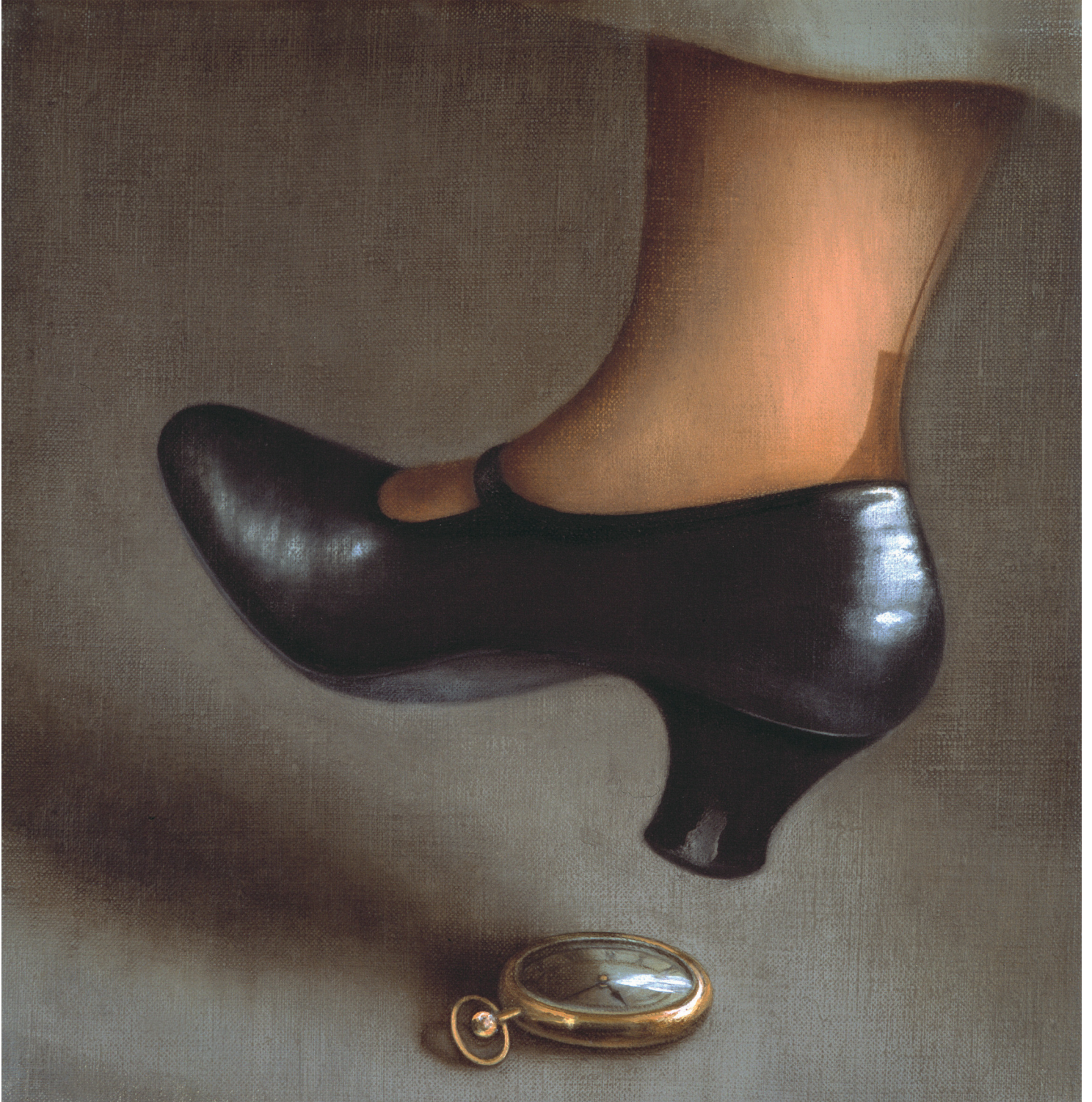
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Barbara Loftus, *Snatch* (oil on canvas 11” x 11”)



Barbara Loftus, *Stamp* (oil on canvas, 11" x 11")



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