

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:

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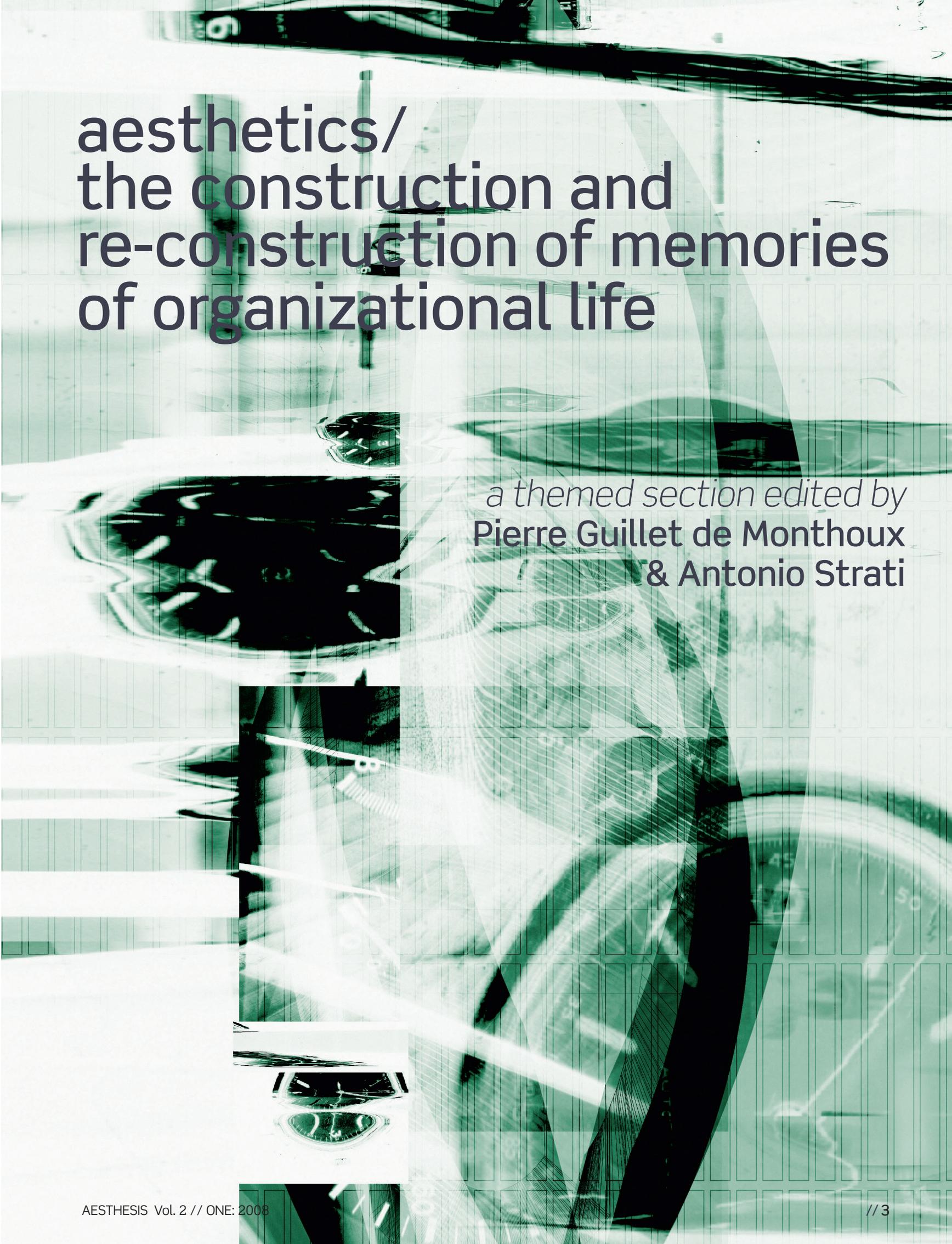
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# aesthetics/ the construction and re-construction of memories of organizational life

*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](mailto:opus-opera@wanadoo.fr)



Deleuze et....

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# CREATING MULTIMEDIA: A 'Re-presentation' of Shipboard Organizational Life Past

Terry Brown and Kathy Mack

*In the case of memory, we are always already in the thick of things*  
(Casey, 1987; xix)

Imagine that you have a box stored in your attic or, as it is in my case, on the 'to grab in case of fire' shelf. It contains things from your past: photographs, cassette tapes, boarding passes, letters, and so on. The experiences associated with these objects arouse your aesthetic feelings and personally connect you with your current research. Now imagine that you meet a former colleague and friend for lunch. Your friend, Director of Technology for a high-tech firm, shares with you his renewed passion for working with technology in his limited 'spare time' -- creating multimedia from old family photographs and music. Suddenly, your thoughts return to your own 'memory box' -- you imagine its contents coming back to life in a different form.

Traditional forms of scholarship have been insufficient for evoking and representing the phenomena of organizational aesthetics. Taylor and Hansen (2005) propose that both the content and process of aesthetic inquiry can be enriched through the development of artistic (aesthetic) 'forms' that are commensurable with the *pathos* of organizational life. Strati (2006) describes Anna Scalfi's multimedia performances as ways of articulating aesthetic knowledge -- where organizational aesthetic experience provides a 'catalyst' for the creation of a 'multimedia artifact'. The term 'multimedia' is typically used to describe the synchronized integration of two or more of a medium (e.g., video and audio) into a single application. Advancements in semiconductor and storage technologies have enabled the personal computer to hold, gather, retrieve and co-create, along with its users, multimedia 'art' forms. By combining a private collection of photographs with cassettes (mostly music) from my (Kathy) shipboard past -- life aboard a ship -- Terry and I collaborate to shape a 30-minute multimedia product that involves experimentation with an evocative 'framing device' (Richardson, 1997) designed to 'trigger emotions and sensations' (Van Dijck, 2005: 326), and to 'artistically' communicate organizational aesthetics.

For Dewey (1934) art and aesthetics are rooted in everyday experience. Art 'celebrates' the everyday -- blending past and present into a new medium of expression suited to the specificity of its subject matter and its materiality. Our celebration of shipboard organizational aesthetics privileges 'personal memories' (Van Dijck, 2007) over those which might be otherwise obtained from official 'public' records. Since aesthetics scholars have encouraged the exploration of multiple artifacts for the aesthetic understanding of organizational life (Gagliardi, 1990, 1996; Pratt and Rafaeli, 2006; Strati, 1999a, 2000, 2006), we suggest that the particularity of private collections may render them valuable as 'material artifacts' for aesthetic knowledge. In representing organizational aesthetics, multimedia uniquely brings memory and imagination into close alliance (Van Dijck, 2007), and potentially enriches both aesthetic experience and aesthetic research. For empathetic-aesthetic approaches (Strati, 1999a, 2000) multimedia affords 're-immersion' into an organizational life 'past'. Multimedia becomes a way to 're-present' (Casey, 1987), not just represent shipboard 'pathos' -- inserting us into moments from the past which 'cannot be described as thin or unsubstantial' (Casey, 1987: 287). The motivation and practices of remembering and 'looking back' are often associated with nostalgia, which has gotten a 'bad rap' in the academy (Wilson, 2005: 7). However, aesthetic approaches often encounter the 'fleeting aspects of organizational life', thus, 'when describing the beauty of an organization which no longer exists, nostalgia and myth enhance... [the aesthetic inquiry]' (Strati, 2000: 29).



## THE MULTIMEDIA CONTEXT

'The ship is the heterotopia, par excellence' (Foucault, 1986: 26).

Our investigation in part seeks aesthetic knowledge from 're-lived experience' (Strati, 1999a) onboard a Norwegian owned and flagged cruise ship. Norway is known throughout the world as a 'maritime superpower', for Norway brought the cruise industry and its highly trained seafarers to North America. Sailors often reminisce about the unique forms of 'joy' and 'play' experienced onboard these 'heterotopic' (Foucault, 1986) vessels where they worked and dwelled. The phenomena of economic globalization, among other trans-national processes, has changed all that: many of these sailors were displaced as Norwegian ship owners sought to register their ships in countries with fewer restrictions and lower labor costs. This organizational practice is commonly referred to as 'flagging out' — which typically means that when ships change flags, they also change crews. Our multimedia research commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the *moment* when these seafarers' works and lives were irrevocably changed. With profound sea changes in the shipping industry since the 1980s, such encounters with sailors are unlikely to occur for research or for fun. Sailors often lament that 'those were the days', expressing what historical hindsight deems as 'the glory days' of Norwegian shipping and seafaring. Looking back, it is the kind of experience which we may remember and say, 'that was an experience...it stands out as enduring memorial of what shipboard may be' — it is to these experiences we may return for aesthetic understanding (Dewey, 1934: 36). Created with materials from past voyages, multimedia potentially provides a unique porthole into a realm of

aesthetic 'pathos' — including its departure. Exploring both the content and processes associated with the representation of organizational aesthetics, we traverse multiple disciplinary perspectives for insights into how we might better understand the materiality and uses of personal photographs, music, and multimedia forms of articulating their aesthetic meaning.

## WORKING WITH PHOTOGRAPHS AND MUSIC

Photographs play a complex role in the experience of memory (Casey, 1987); they 'invite representations of the past and more' (Game, 1991: 138). Barthes' *Camera Lucida* is often cited as one way to get a grip on what photographs do. Barthes (1984) distinguishes between 'the studium' and 'the punctum' of photographs. For us, the 'studium' of a photograph is the culturally given, its visual signification of the forms of life from which it emerges, which would potentially reveal aspects of the shipboard social milieu. In terms of aesthetics, the studium may be linked to conscious acts of aesthetic judgment or to the 'aesthetic value' of photographs (Cronin, 1998). In contrast, the punctum disrupts the culturally given, expressed by Barthes' notions of 'sting' and 'rupture', indicating that which invites 'something more' (Game, 1991).

This 'something more' may potentially unlock tacit, unconscious and corporeal knowledge sought out and encountered through aesthetic inquiries. Ann Game connects Barthes' 'punctum' with Proust's concept of 'involuntary memory', and with Benjamin's 'shock' and 'spark of chance', that a photograph will disrupt the studium through what she terms 'disturbing pleasures' — those 'connected with affect: and the body moved by involuntary memory' (1991: 191). Involuntary memories may aid in the recovery of 'lost moods, feelings and sensations' (pathos) not easily accessed through the 'rational' mind (Gross, 2000). Keightley and Pickering (2006) conceptualize both photographs and music as complimentary (aesthetic) materials both for remembering and in their 'pathos'. Like photographs, music contains both an 'aural studium' and an 'aural punctum' — with potential for evoking both 'voluntary' and 'involuntary memories' (ibid) connected with this shipboard organizational life.

As embodied 'aesthetic material', music has tactile and aural (also agogic) qualities which have the capacity to 'take us back' and to 'prime the pump' for remembering (DeNora, 2000: 80). Unlike other material artifacts, music has been under-explored for its potential contributions to the aesthetic understanding of organizational life. Like Nissley, Taylor and Butler's (2002) study of organizational songs, our aim has been to keep the music closely grounded within its original shipboard context. In distinction from their study, we incorporated 'original soundtrack' from shipboard quotidian, rather than 'organizational song' as such. We use music that was once selected by shipboard members to 'create aesthetic moods' and 'to express feelings' — as aesthetic material, this music afforded 'agency' (DeNora, 2000: 53); its 'aesthetic value' is connected with shared shipboard experiences (Van Dijck, 2007: 91).

## WORKING WITH MULTIMEDIA

Van Dijck (2005) describes the movement of analog materials from 'shoebbox to multimedia' as 'mediating memories' — a 'mutual shaping of memory and media' (Van Dijck, 2007: 21), and not simply a mnemonic aid. Thus multimedia becomes not only a form for representing and eliciting memories, but its 'creative reconstructions' may reshape the nature of remembering through the 'performative nature of machines' (Van Dijck, 2005: 329). The process of digitally altering the materiality of photographs

and music for 're-presentation' potentially transforms and erases memory (Ibid: 336). Chalfen (2002: 146) is cautious about digitization processes that turn 'taking pictures' into 'making pictures'. However, as Van Dijk argues (2005), this kind of creative sculpture, involving the mixture of memory and imagination, may afford a sort of 'synaesthesia', thereby enhancing the evocation of multi-sensory experiences and multiple aesthetic judgments sought from aesthetic inquiries. Considering these potential 'pitfalls' and possibilities, we invite the reader to imagine the process of multimedia creation. Dewey (1934: 200) considers the 'doing and the making' of (this multimedia) art as an important move toward greater understanding of aesthetic experience itself.

## CREATING MULTIMEDIA

In this investigation, we worked as a team -- digital choreography naturally taps Terry's skills and creative 'energies'. There is an emphatic sense of 'corporeality' that comes from being immersed in the sensual aspects of this 'technology experience' (Strati, 2005). A certain aesthetic fulfillment has emerged from assembling both the hardware and software tools (e.g. Adobe Premiere, U-lead Cool 3D and Photoshop) required for recording, collecting, storing and retrieving memory objects. A significant amount of organization was needed to establish an electronic filing system for both digital still image and music archives created from over 200 analog photographs and five cassette tapes. Whereas cassettes usually contained the music from past voyages, CD was used (wherever possible) to allow its auditory 'crispness' to enhance aesthetic experience. These archives were then shaped into a provocative 'form' which balances, for example, the *comic* and *tragic* elements of this shipboard story with the creative aspects of multimedia production. While *playing with* technology to create an art form -- 'one which carries (organizational) life experiences and stories' (Dewey, 1934) -- *that evokes beauty*, it was this aspect of the multimedia creation that presented us with our greatest challenge. That is, how to balance the storytelling components with the digitally available special effects.

Thus, my individual role was to move in and out of the 'creative' process, activating my own sensory and aesthetic experiences, re-awakening memories of shipboard. For example, there was one song which needed to be connected with a certain sequence of photographs -- to represent 'an experience' within the overall shipboard experience. During other stages, Terry needed 'room to work'. Music and photography are synchronized throughout our thirty-minute episode -- its pacing communicates the 'mood' of shipboard life. Porter (2006) suggests combining grace, charm and entertainment in order to create a compelling and memorable experience, paying special attention to openings and closings which may potentially 'haunt' and 'provoke'. We open with aerial seascapes and close with 'black and white' images combined with fade-to-grey. Photographs often contain multiple artifacts. We 'stretch, rotate, magnify and distort them; simultaneously amplify and lower the music to fit the [shipboard] story' (Goldberg and Schrack, 1986). Whereas photographs represent movement, music is movement (DeNora, 2000).

Multimedia also approximates a cinematic aesthetic experience difficult to convey through the use of each medium alone. What is commonly referred to as the 'Ken Burns effect' gives life to still photographs by the 'agogic' process of panning and zooming around shipboard 'backstage' (Goffman, 1961) -- inviting a potential audience to proceed (Dewey, 1934) -- then pausing to focus on sailors' faces and other shipboard artifacts (e.g. ship logo and flag). Every effort is made to balance style with integrity to the context, in part through the use of 3-D (made possible by

cubic imaging) and 'illusion of 3-D' (in the overlaying of one set of photographs over another). Whereas the multimedia contains primarily photographs and music, some traces of shipboard dialogue are interwoven with these materials, and one sound-effect is incorporated from a generic 'stockpile'. Some intelligence is built into the multimedia DVD format, so that a potential viewer may enter the story from any one of four chapters through the tactile action associated with 'point and click' technology.

At this stage, we invite the reader to imagine that the process of multimedia creation described above has its own 'aesthetic sensibility' (Margolin, 2002), which becomes part of the 'aesthetic dimension' related to this project. As its main designer, Terry talks about his own design-in-use experiences:

*It involves synchronizing thought and dealing with spatial issues. Deciding what comes next has to do with timing and spanning; also with pattern recognition. It has to do also with rhythm, the anticipation of a sequence, which creates another pattern. This anticipatory process, created within the multimedia, provides an element of leadership in this way: where it takes you, you will follow. The effects of experiencing this interaction with the computer are 'real time; which 'signal processing' power and graphics capabilities now allow. I become deeply engaged in the process, am drawn into it; it feels 'real'; there is a flow that emerges -- the material speaks to me about what feels right or wrong about a sequence and I listen. It is like computer gaming in a way, there is real time feedback which prompts editing changes. Where you used to make an edit and then sit back and wait (while the computer does its thing), with today's technologies and tools you can play around and try things and do so much more instantaneously.*

*It may take on a different form from what you initially envision; it cannot be driven by an over-specified set of goals and objectives. The memory work and storytelling are important parts of the process too. You don't want to give the impression that you took a bunch of photographs and added music in order to present a slide show. In the end, the value comes from how the multimedia travels, and its impact on others.*

We noticed that there were certain 'aesthetics' associated with multimedia 'design-in-use' that did not fit neatly into the 'aesthetic categories' identified by Strati (1992, 1999a, 1999b, 2000), as those most typically encountered through aesthetic organizational studies. A different 'qualitative' lens was needed to understand these subjective sensory-aesthetic 'digital design' experiences. From computer science, we discovered an emerging area of inquiry: 'aesthetic computing' (Fishwick, 2006).

## EXPLORING NEW AESTHETIC CATEGORIES

Bringing together artists and computer scientists, 'aesthetic computing' seeks to explore the dialectic relationship between aesthetics and computing (Nake and Grabowski, 2006). Similar to organizational aesthetics, 'aesthetic computing' disturbs the 'organizational rationality perspective which *downplays aesthetics* [italics, our emphasis]; maintains the primacy of efficient, error-free computing' (Fishwick, Diehl, Prophet and Löwgren, 2005: 138). Technological advancements extend computing to multiple senses (Fishwick, 2006), for example, in the spaces of human-computer interactions. Computer scientist and digital designer Jonas Löwgren (2006a) has explored the unique experiences associated with digital 'design-in-use', where aesthetic pleasures may (or may not) come from the 'feel of tools' (i.e. Adobe Photoshop) and the 'outcomes they produce' (i.e.

multimedia) (Löwgren, 2006b: 13). Drawing inspiration from Dewey's (1934) aesthetics of everyday experiences in studying 'knowledge work'-in-practice, Löwgren (2006a) articulates a set of 'aesthetic qualities' that appear (or not, in specific cases) in digital design-in-use. He has helpfully offered them for consideration in the development of an 'aesthetic computing' discourse. Before pursuing them here, however, we pause for a moment to re-visit Dewey (1934) at Löwgren's suggestion (*personal communication*, 2007).

Dewey suggests a 'return to experience itself' to help discover its aesthetic qualities, though he seems concerned with certain rigidities in classifications of art and aesthetic phenomena -- with 'experience itself too rich and complex for perceptual limitations' (1934: 223-225). Recognizing however that aesthetics often needs 'to tell its own tale' (ibid: 275), we consider several of Löwgren's 'categories' to be particularly relevant for the task of explicating the aesthetics of multimedia creation: '*pliability, fluency and seductivity*' (Fishwick, et.al, 2005: 139), as well as *anticipation and playability* later developed and set forth (see Löwgren, 2006a). The category of *pliability* refers to how it feels to use a digital product (i.e., U-Cool) stemming from multi-sensory 'exploration, involvement and manipulation' of both computer hardware and software (Fishwick, et.al, 2005:139). When the 'material' feels responsive to the user, it is pliable (Löwgren, 2006a, 2006b). *Anticipation*, closely connected with pliability, deals with that aspect of the computer-human interaction experience which stimulates imagination, and appears when the user makes a move and 'almost' simultaneously (through the activation of his/her imagination) anticipates what might happen just moments later. *Fluency* is more like a dance (Löwgren, 2006a); it describes the grace and charm associated with the creation of transitions, which affords a more holistic user experience (Fishwick, et.al, 2005). *Seductivity* refers to that which seeks to grab the user's attention, to make 'emotional promises', and to deliver 'novel surprises' (Löwgren, 2006a). *Playability* is used by Löwgren (2006a) in the context of computer gaming, although for us it speaks to the experience of multimedia-in-use. Löwgren (2006a) points out that the user may have experiences associated with the challenges of overcoming obstacles as the 'game' (or multimedia) progresses -- he or she may make a move, try something, or maybe start over again. Playability is the experience of wanting to 'play' again. Play may also be considered as 'freedom in the activity' (Dewey, 1934) of multimedia creation.

In digital design, aesthetics show that the 'multisensory' human elements of 'emotion, style, and visual appeal' are equal to technological function (Fishwick, et. al, 2005: 139). 'Use qualities' may be influenced by artists, engineers, and computer scientists at the design phase (i.e. software development), then experienced by end users (i.e. multimedia development) Löwgren (2006a). The sensory and aesthetic experiences associated with these multimedia design experiences appear in-use as more pliable, fluid and seductive, playable and imaginative. The multimedia 'product' as a digital 'tool' potentially becomes an aesthetic 'vehicle of connection' (Van Dijck, 2007: 55) -- an instrument of *personal connectivity* (Löwgren, 2006a) and aesthetic communication. While still in production stage, we were presented with an opportunity for our multimedia to 'travel'.

## REPRESENTING MULTIMEDIA

Qualitative methods of investigation allow for flexibility in research design helping to account for potential changes in the context under study. Construction of this multimedia research project began as a way to engage creatively with technology and to 'aesthetically' re-immense with the pathos of shipboard life. However, things can change. In the course of the empirical inquiry about life onboard Norwegian vessels, one informant sailor's experience from almost 20 years previously corresponded directly

to the particular ship under investigation. Once this 'connection' was made, the seafarer felt inspired to locate a few other sailors from his 'cruise days' -- described by him as the 'best days' of his seafaring career; in a word, 'paradise'.

We were thus inspired to consider the potential for a 'larger audience' -- as this would be another way to fuse our 'art' with aesthetic research. Similar to Harper's (1988) ethnographic studies using photo-elicitation, we considered 'multimedia-elicitation' as a potential methodology for re-presenting shipboard to a few sailor informants, evoking their responses.

As Harper (2000) suggests with regard to photography, multimedia in and of itself may be considered neither art nor research; however, multimedia may be experienced as art and researchers may be able to use multimedia as methodology and representation. With a conference scheduled in Oslo, the multimedia was copied to DVD format; NTSC (North American video standard) was converted to PAL (European standard); and a tape recorder was purchased to record a shared multimedia experience. In relation to Strati's (1999b) work with professional photography, we imagined that an evocative multi-sensory process would be aroused from multimedia 'experience'. For example, we were curious as to whether the cinematic opening with aerial seascapes would be virtually 'smelled', e.g. the salty sea. Or would its vastness evoke the sublime? Since two of these seafarers were chefs, with trained 'bodily' experience in taste, smell and touch, we were curious if these 'lower senses' would be further tapped to render shipboard aesthetics. We also anticipated their faces as they watched the DVD; we wondered if they would be surprised; what stories might they re-tell. What types of emotions would be stirred; what 'involuntary memories' might be 'e-voked';

how would such stirrings help in the search for the 'pathos' of both the multimedia artifact and the shipboard context as represented?

In Oslo, we (with three sailors in attendance) agreed on the 'taped recording' of this shared DVD experience. As technology would have it, the seafarers' laptop designated for viewing was new, thus, not yet equipped with Windows Media Player. We were unable to locate an establishment that would allow both computer access and authorization for 'personal DVD'! With the tape recorder off (it did not feel appropriate to record this re-union) we spent the evening catching up and reminiscing. Initially frustrated by the blunder, Casey (1987) however reminds us that there is an aesthetic that comes from the 'experience of reminiscing that is enjoyed with others and for its own sake'; we consider it here to be included in the 'aesthetic dimension'. These sailors were not particularly bothered by the technological failure -- still unaware of what (if anything) they were missing. In a symbolic gesture, each left with a 'gifted' copy of the DVD for his own personal experience and aesthetic enjoyment. Unfortunately, geography has prohibited additional face-to face group meetings; all subsequent conversations have happened via E-mail and phone:

#### **Sailor 1**

I just watched the DVD. Your friend did a good job. This is just how it was. This is how I remember it. *One More Night* is the one song that I always think about with all of us in [another crew member's] cabin. I laughed and I cried. I don't know what else to say, thank you.

[Later] The DVD shows that this time onboard was really something special. Other things that made this the best part of my seafaring career were the Caribbean beaches and the passengers we met. That is what I meant by paradise. Back to the DVD, it shows these beaches but it also shows that I did not go ashore as much with you and [other sailors named]. In these scenes it is like I am standing beside.

#### **Sailor 2**

I just watched the DVD. My experience is this: Wow, this is like yesterday. And I look again and realize it was so long ago. We were so young. This is an incredible job of creating the moments built with music. Although you use still pictures, what gets me is that it is so efficient in the way that it brings the mind in and the way that it transports you back into the experience. It is as if I am sitting right there on the crew deck! Pardon my language, but this is a fucking strong medium. I don't think that you could have created this experience with the photographs if they were in a photo album. And that music; I cannot, to this day, hear *One More Night* without immediately thinking of the [vessel name].

When I step back from it, I realize that it feels like not only a personal play back of memories but also part of Norwegian history. This is an important historical record. Not to overestimate or underestimate; this is an era of ships and crew members in Norwegian history that is gone.

My cousin worked on cruise ships until recently. He quit because it was like a prison. Clocking in and clocking out with one of those security ID cards; where every move you make is followed by a web cam. He felt like he was going crazy. It is satellite which allows an owner to watch from Asia what is going on [in the Caribbean]. And all of this is done in the name of terrorism. So it is not fun anymore. I would not want to work onboard today. We had many freedoms and therefore, fun. We worked hard. Yes, we frequented the crew bar [as the DVD shows], but we also knew that if there was a problem with work, we would have stayed there and given it our full attention before we played. Not because someone was watching us; but because we wanted to do a good job as professionals. I worked

there because I wanted to — as I have mentioned before, it was like winning the lottery.

We would not have met onboard today's high surveillance ships. Since I am now a [marketing and sales] manager, I think about cruise ship management. When will they figure out that when the crew is having fun, the passenger experience is probably better? I don't see a cruise as a vacation option [for me and my family].

I don't think that it would bother me particularly if something like this were 'published'; but you know that there are hidden secrets and known secrets that might be a problem for others.

### Sailor 3

[Prior to viewing] it is easy to see that we are your inspiration.

I have a new DVD player now and I watch it quite often. It is good. With these pictures and this music -- it's like I remember everything and everybody there. You see [in the DVD] how close [sailor's name] we were. Then we just lost touch, I don't know why. But since our time together in Oslo, now [another sailor's name] we stay in contact.

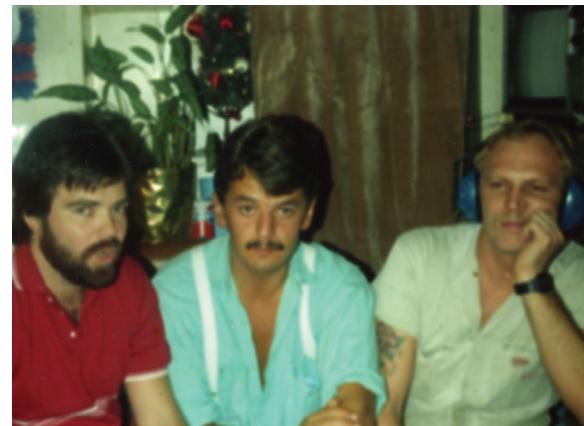
When I watch it, I dream that I am still onboard [name of ship] and you know this was 20 years ago. Watching the DVD, it is like it was only yesterday. If I could go back there now, I would. But I remember and these memories stay with me.

## AESTHETIC INSIGHTS

*'The ultimate goal of memory is not to end up as a PowerPoint presentation on your grandchild's desktop ...it is to make sense of our lives, to create our own [moments and] meanings'* (Van Dijck, 2005: 329).

We have gained insights about the artful representation of organizational aesthetics at multiple stages of the research process. First, we consider multimedia art as a way to re-present to ourselves those organizational life worlds that may not immediately be accessible. Second, there are ways to fuse art and research with methods of multimedia-elicitation. Since organizational aesthetics relies on embodiment and materiality for knowledge, we learned from the process of multimedia creation that we may need a different qualitative lens to notice aesthetics associated with 'technology-in-use'; that both embodiment and materiality need 'upgrading to include [organizational life experiences with] digital materiality' (Van Dijck, 2007). We have also gained insights about the potential power of multimedia 'art' forms to sense aesthetics 'in the field'.

Dewey (1934) reminds us that our audience (e.g. sailor informants) may have experiences that mirror those of the medium's creator. What Sailor 3 says about inspiration is significant -- experience and subject matter tend to inspire both art and aesthetic studies of organizational life (Strati, 1999a). This medium also provided a *fluency* that captured at once the pleasures and the pains associated with shipboard past as noticed from Sailor 1's immediate response. As an artifact, it performs as a *provocative* and *seductive* 'framing device'. The multimedia experience was at once charming and surprising -- *it gripped these sailors and delivered on its emotional promises*. For Sailor 3, it has *playability*; he likes to re-experience the DVD format; he dreams (imagines) that he is back onboard. 'In remembering, we are thrust back into places' (Casey, 1987: 201) -- in this case, onboard this ship (see Sailor 3), into a particular cabin (see Sailor 1), onto the crew deck (see Sailor 2), into the crew bar (see Sailor 2). *Sacred* spaces onboard invite further aesthetic inquiry into the embodied relationship



between memory and place, and the power of certain representational forms to evoke them. Sailor 2 feels that multimedia uniquely affords these types of movements, which may not (for him) have been possible through a different medium, such as a conventional 'photograph album'. We are reminded of Dewey's claim that, 'each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as completely in any other tongue' (1934: 106). One song is aesthetically significant in taking these sailors back to 'one night' of embodied memories; the emotions and passions felt during shipboard rituals of departure -- especially salient for final departures that resulted from 'flagging out'.

When music like this moves, 'it is at once their connection with former flesh and blood referents and the loss of that connection as they are simultaneously conveyed that makes the experience moving' (Keightley and Pickering, 2006: 155). For Sailor 3 it is the entire 'soundtrack' associated with this shipboard that takes him back where he remembers 'everything and everybody'; while he dreams of going back, he knows he cannot, except through his remembrances. Sailor 1's comment about 'standing beside' also warrants further inquiry into what we might learn aesthetically from 'absent' representations.

In terms of aesthetic content, the multimedia appears to construct a distinct 'quality of life' onboard. Ackoff (1976: 303) maintains that '*quality of life* is a matter of aesthetics'. For Sailor 1 it was 'paradise'. Sailor 3 'dreams' he is back onboard and would go back, if it were 'possible'. A prison metaphor is evoked by Sailor 2 in order to capture the different 'quality of life' on board cruise ships today, where high-tech surveillance systems are judged as '*ugly*'. The felt sense of freedom was one of the *beautiful* features afforded onboard this more 'heterotopic' cruise vessel -- freedoms that allow fun and professionalism to co-exist. Reference to beaches and 'paradise' partially highlights the importance of the natural environment for sensory and aesthetic experiences (Brady, 2003) uniquely related to shipboard. Multimedia is also an innovative medium for establishing connections. By engaging in this process, Sailor 3 has re-established connections with former ship mates. In a sense, we have all been re-connected. Multimedia also affords connections between private memories and public histories (Van Dijck, 2005). When Sailor 2 connects his personal playback with Norwegian shipping history, we discover another way to think about 'aesthetics as connection' (Taylor and Hansen, 2005). Gross (2000: 144) describes this type of connection as 'double vision': the ability to simultaneously experience memory and to 'appreciate the value of what is perishing'. Thus, we suggest that representing aesthetics in a more artful form may offer organizational decision makers an opportunity to imagine these types of change processes differently -- to get a 'felt sense' of its impacts on human lives and the quality of future working lives. In this way, the past aesthetically informs the present.

We further learn from this process that technology is *beautiful* when it affords creativity and imagination, *ugly* when it affords web cams and technologically driven surveillance, *frustrating* when it fails. Had the technological break-down not occurred, we sense that the nuance and detail constructed through this multimedia research may not have had its 'moment' to further evoke the richness unique to this shipboard organizational life past. As one sailor put it, 'these kinds of conversations are better taken up face-to-face; preferably over a beer'. Aesthetics is personal -- in our case it involves a bit of language interference (English and Norwegian), which artful representations may 'transcend'. Almost unnoticed in person, these communication challenges become exacerbated through e-mail and phone.

## REPRESENTING ORGANIZATIONAL AESTHETICS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

With advancements in technology, organizational researchers and members alike may find new expression for the sensory and aesthetic aspects of organizational life-worlds, especially those excluded by dominant 'artistic forms' such as poetry, plays, paintings, and so on. By resisting the dominance of one aesthetic form over another (Strati, 2000), aesthetics provides room for multiple architectures, so long as the selected form remains close to its contextual origin (Taylor and Hansen, 2005). We acknowledge that what is currently constructed by this multimedia device does not guarantee its future aesthetic experience (DeNora, 2000), and that our own histories and biographies contribute to this representation. Tacking between past and present, content and process, we have confronted the 'elusiveness' (Strati, 1999a) of an aesthetic approach, which stems partially from what Humphries (2003) refers to as the 'aesthetic dilemma associated with sorting out product and process' -- add to that, art and research. As is the case with aesthetic approaches, our intent has been to provide the reader with a plausible account of our journey (Strati, 1999a, 2000).

Whilst this textual representation limits what Taylor and Hansen (2005) have envisioned for the promise of aesthetic forms, we suggest that aesthetic representations warrant sensitivity. The multimedia was initially created as a 'private collection available to only a very small audience' (Cronin, 1998: 76). There is an ethical obligation on our part to 'do no harm' (Höpfl, 2003) and to keep some stories private (Ellis, 2007). Keeping things private is specially significant for media that identifies people in ways that others do not (as we noted from Sailor 2's



comments). Copyright issues also inevitably occur with the use of music; however, these are minor in comparison. The photographs we have chosen to publish here have been negotiated in consideration of these representational issues. Barthes (1984) reminds us too that some things are for us alone; as highlighted by Sailor 1, some 'truth' lies in the 'this has been' and 'this is how it was' (see also Game, 1991: 141). Perhaps others may (or may not) find that their own 'shoeboxes' contain treasures (Van Dijck, 2007) (for aesthetic inquires).

Creative research practices engage and connect us more intimately with our subject matter, our informants (Richardson, 1997). Creative 'aesthetic' representation cannot be driven by an over-specified set of goals and objectives. It needs room to breathe -- to grow and move us forward. Using 'art' to represent organizational aesthetics also 'teaches us' (just as these sailors taught me long ago) something about 'being' (Dewey, 1934). As we consider the potential indeterminacy of this multimedia research form -- we may find ourselves coming back to it again, creating a new 'organizational' aesthetic experience. //





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