

Otium

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ABSTRACT

Two parallel investigations entwine to compose a *plane of immanence* where various concepts are rhizomatically juxtaposed. Theories of consciousness are studied in connection to the forces that surveil the will to life, palpable as well as imperceptible authoritarian powers that enframe and inform human activities. The immaterial affects the material. The fluid forces of digital surveillance today structure a particular set of constraints that densify the bodily and spatial limits of modern individuals. Electronic means of control have structured the parameters of a loose confinement that exceeds a definitive objective phenomenon to infuse everyday activities and become an integral component of our lived experiences. Entangled in this reciprocity between the material and the immaterial, the actual and the virtual, the body and its objective possibilities are subject to study within the accelerated disciplinary models of the digital age. This dissertation maps the new landscape that has emerged, the site where power is articulated on the body in the quest to respond to rhetorical questions of autonomy, selfhood, and democracy. In the search for a substance independent from imposing external enclosures, art and philosophy are studied to propose possible means of escape. Against the incessant structures of control, this project explores the potentials of building a space of delay where one can experience other modes of being, a site to become opaque, incomprehensible, and therefore resist the mechanisms of capture.

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INTRODUCTORY MAP

Philosophies of Technology

The question of consciousness selfhood and autonomy in the age of technology | To master the technological age, to define its parameters, to plan ahead for what is coming

Consciousness

Control

Discipline and Train

Husserl

Philosophy as a rigorous science of logical investigations Apodictic certitude getting back to the facts

Getting back to things as you experience them in the first person through intuition and what you contribute to establishing these facts in front of consciousness

The body is also understood as an object in front of our consciousness

Cartesian thinking became too persuasive in Husserl's philosophy that Heidegger wanted to know if it was the true definition of phenomenology? He took a different stance at phenomenology to propose a *preontological* conception of being.

Merleau-Ponty

Brings the body into the equation and fills the gap in Heidegger's philosophy as it is the body that acquires the skills/ The body as a way of being in the world

Anxiety is the base norm of consciousness for the man of the 20th century, this is a rare phenomenon as something pathological has happened in our culture . The Loss of a **metaphysical immune system**

Heidegger is not interested in the technological tools but a certain disclosure of *being*.

The liberation here comes from the idea that there is no deep truth to be liberated, no deep meaning in Dasein. To accept this ungroundedness is in itself liberating. *Haltung*, as a mode of being means holding onto oneself. being finds a form of composure in itself. It is not an activity that takes place in stillness, but it is a constant exercise in sustaining oneself among other beings and taking a stance through the act of philosophy.

Metzinger

The I that is being continuously constructed in the process of building a conception of a self

Heidegger rejects the idea that most of our activities are directed by conscious choices and mentally aware decisions. We are habituated to the social norms how is it possible for individuals to crystallize out of this public us. This is the subject of authenticity in being and time.

Heidegger

Dasein

'translates as being there-when you look at the ready to hand relationships you do not find subjects contemplating objects transparent coping

We are moving in a medium, that we are not conscious of

Gelassenheit

Relaxation in a dimension which permits us simply to let things be in whatever may be their uncertainty and their mystery. The stance of being in an attentive detachment from the grid. To let things show themselves on their accord. This is how you come back to yourself as well, and you can own what you find there. In *Gelassenheit* we can open up new dimensions and realms. It is a place outside the spectrum of the dichotomies of activity and passivity.

Gestell

Gathering Placing / Positioning Being becomes something that we posit, put on standing reserve to extract energy from The unique characteristics of being becomes insignificant. A detachment and an absence of co-dependency with forces of nature

Installation/ Project Otium

The installation strives to elaborate a perceptual experience, a temporal object-event seized within the spacious present. It will give structure to a luminous internal space that invites an encounter. The design intention is not to create an image with an external totality, but to play with how we map and employ our perceptual mechanisms in dealing with an unknown event. It is to articulate a threshold moment between the intelligible and the sensible, the mind and the body. It moves away from delineating a world of subjects and figures that are subordinated within a discontinuous perspectival space to imagine a fluid and non-hierarchical incorporeal realm; a place where time and space are harmoniously fused to curate an event. Instead of proposing a panacea, the installation aims towards composing a space for a pause, an environment within which other modes of temporalization can be experienced and conceptualized. The visitors are invited to unlock other modes of cognition that are not by default subjected to mechanisms of control. These experiential exercises in mindfulness are means to become opaque and less detectable to the machinery that enforces transparency. The artistic object of this project is to build an experiential relation to oneself, to engage in a process of reflection that cannot translate into a transparent message to be codified. Ultimately, the aim is to structure an interior site to delay, escape, and resist the excessive impositions of control society.

Deleuze

The institutions of discipline are rapidly disintegrating Ethical and political questions of how to live in the age of technology

Developing technologies of resistance against The *Mega Machine*

Axiomatic electronic enslavement

We are enclosed in a matrix of decoded flows, the new devices, algorithms that control, channel, contain the flow of energies, and measure our experience of the world. They operate in the backgrounds to study our behaviors and optimize the response to our desires.

We are being controlled through the optimization of our affect

We are facing this all-encompassing, increasingly intensified global techno capitalist market machinery that has never before been so refined and able to measure us at ever finer levels of granularity to deploy or apply various changes at a variety of different levels with great predictive validity

Exit Line of Flights Becoming Imperceptible / Opaque

To peruse lines of becomings that are incommensurable to algorithms, too multidimensional for them to capture. Becoming chaotic, nebulous, liquid, schizophrenic to resist the contemporary conditions of capitalism. To deterritorialize oneself from all apparatuses of capture.

Plane of Immanence

An immeasurable immersion in a smooth field or a pure plane that defies any hierarchy. It does not register any substantial division but infinite space. It also negates any cartesian or transcendental constitutive arrangements. Immanence is considered to be a strategy of connecting with the micro-movements around oneself in a manner that rejects established instrumental rationales.

Releasement

The self is no longer Kant's single transcendental subject but the emergence of a multitude of processes that operate in the brain. We have to give up this notion of a steady/static self and learn to reach a new state of constant becomings, to undulate and move with the changes. The more detached we are from a particular end goal, the more armed and flexible we are in this encounter with ourselves.

Shoshana Zuboff

Panopticon as an architectural & psychological model

Surveillance Capitalism A new subspecies

Installation / Immaterial Cage

Foucault

His periodization has been extremely influential. He maps the political technologies from 1650s to late 19th century

These institutions are developing and rationalizing their mechanisms to siphon off large groups of people and different tendencies. The goal is to train the perfect model of the individual for the production of capital.

INTRODUCTION

The following thesis and supporting paper together compose the thesis project within the practice-based PhD program in Visual Arts at York University. This project entails different textual components and two installations. While the fragments of this thesis are inextricably linked, they each generate their own distinct experience. The intention has been to delineate a rhizomatic model in pursuing a line of inquiry that involved a philosophical quest along with material investigations. The resulting experiences work in tandem with each other to instigate parallel environments, cerebral and spatial. What started as a doubtful process reached a definite resolution, and that was the impossibility of framing a specific answer. The whole thesis ended up being a field of inquiry to grapple with the notions of being and consciousness, control, and resistance. In the course of this work, I repeatedly returned to the question of whether notions of self, identity, and existence were substances produced and reproduced externally in negotiation with socioeconomic structures, as a product of a history in which we are immersed in, or whether there existed an ahistorical component to it that would set itself in motion internally? Two notable essays, Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" and Gilles Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control" generated a line of research that investigated the contemporary politics of control to conjure possible strategies of escape. This research ultimately focused on the potentials of registering a frame of consciousness parallel to the transitioning technologies of governance.

While at the beginning, following Deleuze's essay, the focus of this work was more on the external structures of surveillance, technological enslavement, and enframement in a digital sphere, it shifted more and more towards the internal realm of finding a base for the self to conjure forms of resistance. What would be our understanding of the psycho-chemical medium that we call the individual? Or as Heidegger may have asked, what is "the understanding that there-being (*Dasein*) has of its being?," in order to inquire after its liberation. Consequently, this project has been positioned beyond specific political identities to inquire after a more existential dimension of being, the experiences of alienation and detachment that can be societal but are universally shared.

Having come from the Middle East, the memories of collective conflict, failed revolutions, and defeat, and the experiences of finding myself severed and detached from a familiar communal base, or to use a Heideggerian term, my *Dasein*'s mythical component, my ideas leaned towards the more singular, individual notions of coming to oneself in resisting the impositions of an external frame. My focus shifted towards the positive and creative forms of confrontation that skip reactionary encounters and negative modes of opposition. Against the hegemony of socioeconomic forces of control, I believe the antithesis should not take up a negative stance to be reduced into a reactive force; one that doesn't have a visionary path but follows the other to compose itself in negative opposition. Indeed, I should

employ the right tools to build a construct both cerebral and material, a creative plane of concepts and actions, to flee the persisting forms of capture, to become opaque, to carve out an impervious void, and to exist poetically outside the grid of control. Such positive forms of resistance, if amplified, could substitute for other tactics of confrontation that are prone to enforcing the same discourses they oppose to. One form of action would be to articulate an outside, to prepare the ground for an immaterial realm of thinking or a material world of experience that is more sensitive towards being showing up as something that may not be rationally codified, as something incalculable and unpredictable. In that sense, the very process of engaging with these questions in the course of this Ph.D. program became the very creative act of my practice and a form of resistance in itself. Philosophy, art, and cognitive science offered the right instruments to pursue this quest in building a praxis, a relationship between theory and artistic construct. In following these lines of thinking, it was integral to dwell in the intersections to compose threshold moments where percepts germinate into affects, the non-linguistic but communicable mediums of sensation. It was important to meditate on the prospects of creating synergy among these different methods of thinking to compose a space of interaction between concepts and their material aggregates, to capture a myriad of forces and distil them into one particular event.

The virtual landscape of the text lays out a *plane of immanence* where concepts are juxtaposed to generate new ones. The text became an instrument to structure a central question, one that dealt with the notion of consciousness. Is theory capable of containing this quest? My answer is no, but it did help in honing a detailed path of inquiry to dwell in language, to philosophize, and to build a container around a slippery entity that by nature demands to be felt rather than described. In this process, writing was a liberating act; it helped to compose a space in *otium* to cultivate ideas, to dwell in *Gelassenheit*, in meditative delays, in the spaces between the words to bring to resolution the blur of feelings that were surfacing. As delineated by Deleuze and Guattari in their seminal work “What is philosophy?,” throughout history the philosophical tradition has been more a process of creation rather than discovery. Its function has been like art to compose concepts, generate ideas, and build various frameworks to order the chaos into comprehensible forms. Here and in the course of this work, my quest into philosophical theories provided me with a conceptual ground to hold on to questions and to compose ideas. In the absence of an absolute overarching truth, the juxtaposition of several concepts helped to structure a thesis to pursue a quest rather than aim for a resolution.

Light has been considered as a sculptural material in this exploration in conceiving spatial diagrams that visualize the ongoing narrative of bodies entangled in the surveillance mechanisms of the new and emerging techno capitalist market machinery. Working with light granted me the opportunity to work with architecture rather than make objects, to fly away from contained forms accessed

externally into experiential fields composed at a scale of the body to be inhabited internally. In preparation for these exhibitions, I questioned my past methodology of making to search for a different scale and a more affective conception of place. The objective was to probe the possibilities of an architectonic engagement with the space of the gallery, one with transformative powers that would induce a particular ambiance. The phenomenological properties of light as a tangible material has been investigated in producing sensorial effects. Light that is capable of unpacking its materiality into an expansive field generates a turbulent milieu of ineffable yet dynamic relationships. Figurative and narrative instruments are assembled to fabricate an atmosphere, an “oil field” where forces are transmitted in-between performative bodies. The installation pieces of this thesis are envisioned as spaces that defy the rigid architectural geometries to compose more fluid architectonic sceneries. *Immaterial Cage* and project *Otium* are the two installation components of this dissertation. In their aesthetic terminology, they both follow the same language of modular frames of light that are played in durations to expand into horizontal landscapes. *Immaterial Cage* was conceived in direct response to the earlier themes of this thesis to compose a parallel experience of entrapment under an all-encompassing digital gaze. The virtual space that was envisioned as part of this piece placed the viewers at a distance, at the other end of a one-way mirror, to be watched while being denied access. Encased in mirrors and invisible at first sight, the pixelated frame gradually emerged to introduce an infinite gridded trajectory to the gallery. The smooth space then transitioned to form a foreground/background relationship where bodies were mapped within the new coordinates of an immaterial realm.

In continuation of the themes set in the course of this installation, project *Otium* authors a space to afford the viewers an entrance into this formerly conceived un-traversable realm of the *Immaterial Cage*. The goal is to form a relationship with it, to affect it as much as be affected by it. Project *Otium* proposes a psycho-physical site for a clearing, a void out of the stratified frames of everyday. Away from the regulatory measures and instrumentalized rationalities of goal-oriented processes, it constructs an outside for the visitors to engage in a nomadic wandering; a smooth space where one can form immanent relations at minuscule scales. As mentioned earlier, in the course of this research, I arrived at the resolution that my work should avoid reactionary encounters to be the labor of the positive to carve out the paths for creative actions that bypass the dichotomies of power and resistance. In that sense, this installation abstains from being a representational simulation of the ideas that are already discussed in the text. Instead, it is intended to compose a parallel experience to propose a form of escape to a place of otherness, a withdrawal into a different dimension for the visitors to be able to experience other modes of being. Ultimately the project intends to process the possibility of a temporary detachment from the embeddedness in an all-encompassing matrix that

actively processes our data whether we are conscious of it or not. In response, it holds a clearing, for self-concealment, to become liquid, nebulous, multidimensional, and opaque to the ever-present algorithms of capture.

Project *Otium* was undergoing the final stages of an extensive fabrication when the process came to a sudden halt facing an indeterminate timeline with ongoing school closure. At the beginning of March 2020, York University and the Gales Gallery were indeterminately closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. Against my deepest hopes, I did not get to build the installation; the project materials are stored away as I wait for the right time to once again pursue this project. The situation introduced new possibilities as well as challenges in terms of available options to introduce the scheme. I contemplated several alternatives to investigate the potential mediums of representation. The goal was to address this stage of the work as well as the future of my practice in the event that the gallery access remained restricted. If the element of space should be excluded from the equation, would it still be possible to experience the project? The role of the visitor was another issue that needed to be considered. To construct a virtual reality experience was an initial response to this question but new difficulties imposed themselves in terms of accessing the necessary technologies to provide the visitor with. After a year of contemplation and an extended conversation with the committee, I decided to employ the medium of animation to approximate the initial purposes of the project. The aim was to use this alternative to materialize the images and sequences that were originally intended to be played in space.

While the phenomenological aspect of a physical site remains absent, the animations appeared to afford the right substitute for the unbuilt structure. They required their own layer of engagement, intensive and challenging to compose haptic visual spaces with affective potentials. The new medium imposed another reality, the durations had to be significantly shorter in the virtual domain. Several options were tested to ultimately find the right durations and suture sequences to achieve a hypnotic optical quality. It was also important to think about the processes of self-erasure. As the author of the piece, part of my intention has been to compose a sensory-based installation to respond to visitors' patterns of engagement independent from a predetermined model. It was significant to conjure responsive as well non-responsive models to partially direct an experience but also envision the potentials of stepping back from it. In the programming of the lights and their temporality, the intention was to insert sensors to observe the bodies to instruct algorithms that would generate random patterns. This purpose was closely demonstrated in some of the project's visualizations and more specifically in a sequence called *Tracing*. In this particular work, the algorithm that informs the installation dovetails with the bodies to trace their movements and draw a continuous pattern of light in the gallery space.

Following further engagement with this medium to construct the scenarios, it demonstrated its own strengths and affective visual impacts. If played in a dark room, and on a big screen, the sequences have the theatricality that is close to the real experience of the project. I strongly believe that this version of the work can travel to other places to communicate with a larger body of visitors. However, due to the fabrication work that was initially done prior to the installation phase, I intend to still see the project through to fulfil its original purpose. The project as presented in this paper is intended to illustrate the scope of the work and provide a visual taste of what could have been experienced in the gallery space. As pseudo-documentation, it remains a promise of what will be constructed in the future when the time is right. To engage the visitor, this work will be presented as a virtual destination to an imaginary space on the internet for the visitors to explore its current state. This would allow me to record their responses and incorporate them within the next physically materialized iterations of the installation.

The short sequences are informed by my speculations about the physical experiences that may be the outcome of this project. The technology that is used as the background for this installation allows me to pixelate the space of the gallery into many points of light. This three-dimensional structure holds LED lines that contain 60 chips in every meter of their length. The 240 meters LED lines will translate into 16,800 floating points of light that are spread out in space along a modular grid. Every one of these chips could be programmed to build a three-dimensional monitor to float and move an intended pattern at a relatively high resolution. The parameters of light and sound are selectively played to control the environment. One sensory stimulus will be temporarily blocked for the other to be heightened. Here the notions of space and time are infused for the visitors to get detached from quantitative measures of clock time to one that may have a more liquid dimension, one that expands sluggishly, or another that rushes in hurrying turbulence. The moving space may affect the visitors' sense of balance, this seemingly infinite container holds various moving patterns to push, pull and draw the bodies in different directions. Their eyes attuned to the darkness, hyper-sensitized to the flashing patterns of lights capture images that overlap the pursuing experience. Every journey in this landscape should record a unique cinematic sequence. In the absence of an overall image, the visitors are compelled to attend to the immediate surroundings, to affect it and be affected by it. Ultimately the artistic object of this project is the sum of the phenomenological experiences that the visitors will obtain from engaging in these experiments.

The project seeks to locate itself in this threshold, the realm between an intelligent mind and an experiencing body, to expand this philosophical territory into the realm of experience making. If consciousness is a material phenomenon, an emerging outcome of massive and ongoing neuro-electric operations, this project actualizes a material field to join the physical body to experiment with

its emerging modes of consciousness in real-time and space. Visitors are invited to unlock other modes of cognition. Ultimately, the aim is to structure an interior site to delay, escape, and resist the excessive impositions of the Control Society.

The research and installations that are proposed under the rubric of this thesis do not aim at defining a singular approach or a conclusive methodology. They strive to open a field of discussions, experiments, and discoveries rather than closing down an argument. They set out to draw out complexities rather than simplifying questions, not delineating boundaries but multiplying lines of inquiry. Ultimately, the components of this dissertation do not form a single project but bring together fragments of experiments, interventions, and reflections.

Part 1: The Sanctuary

The Psychophysical Space of Consciousness / 01

The question of consciousness as the immaterial component of our material being has been the subject study of many philosophers. There seems to exist a non-physical entity that interacts with the material world, an autonomous inner substance that forms the mental events that predetermine our reactions to our environment, something that feels, thinks, judges, and makes decisions. From René Descartes to Martin Heidegger, from Maurice Merleau-Ponty to more contemporary philosophers like Thomas Metzinger and Daniel Dennett, all have strived to articulate the intricate processes that entail the conscious experience of being someone; the processes that lead to the augmentation of an inner self-model that connects to the social world outside. Since the time of Descartes, there existed a political understanding that the body belongs to the domain of science and consciousness as an ethereal metaphysical entity belongs to more spiritual or religious methodologies of thinking. The two spheres were strictly separated from each other. The transcendental ego was largely abstracted from the embodied world of time, history, and matter. It was conceived as pure consciousness. Descartes with his work on “Meditations” set up a structure to step out of the formerly established frameworks to think about these questions as a modern thinker. The Cartesian notion of “cogito ergo” also established a line of inquiry that distinguished a clear divide between human consciousness and surrounding objects. Descartes opposed the idea that the senses could unveil the true nature of substances. It is the human mind and its innate intellectual faculty that enables us to perceive reality. In order to engage in this intellectual process to access “the fundamental truth of metaphysics”, the mind should function independently from the senses. The focus should be directed towards the essence of things, including the mind itself, matter, and an infinite being (God). For Descartes “cogito” was the “initial truth” an autonomous intellectual property distinct from the senses for accessing the truth.¹ This Cartesian line of thinking dominated Western philosophy for many years and culminated with the philosophical ideas of Edmund Husserl, who introduced a school of philosophy that later became known as Phenomenology.

Whether consciousness is a detached autonomous substance independent from our involvement with other biological processes or conversely is a by-product of the brain’s correlations with the world poses the central question and an intriguing line of inquiry for this work. The modern subject has to establish a relationship with itself prior to confronting the surrounding organizational frames that affect and threaten to enslave it. Ultimately this thesis focuses on the possibilities of registering a frame of consciousness parallel to the developing technologies of power and the market forces of capitalism. By composting a notion of the self, we may be able to conjure methodologies for resistance or carve

¹ Gary Hatfield, "René Descartes", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/descartes/>>. Accessed January 2020

out spaces of delay to influence and shape a future that is still malleable. This thesis will question the ongoing technological operations that measure and record bodies and their behaviours, modulate environmental stimuli, and frame minds in order to predict future decisions and reactions. Today, the notion of free will is challenged as we progressively encounter political and economic forces that erode our right to control and limit our experiences.² In a parallel inquiry and in response to these theoretical investigations, the installation component of this project envisions a private sanctuary for mindfulness. It constructs a field to distill the processes of perception from external forces. It will be an opening isolated from the prosaic medium of everyday to unshackle the mind from the involuntary reactions to the continuum of incessant forces. It will construct a temporary place to escape the expanded geometry of surveillance and engage in nebulous and immeasurable actions of discovery. In this sense, the space of the gallery will be the space of resistance as it provides the opportunity to re-wire (re-craft) our perceptual powers parallel to technological ‘apparatuses of capture.’ If society is formed from complex and layered relationships of exteriority and interiority, the space of the gallery becomes a playground to shift and suture new connections where the self takes center stage amidst a myriad of unfolding events.

The space of the gallery is not a space outside of the surveillance grid, as it physically remains within the boundaries of the institution that frames it. It precisely holds these opposing contradictions of being a component of an overarching organizational grid as well as an escape from it. This project conceives this space as a clearing, a conceptual place to envision an abstract map, a mental model, as well as a constructed physical diagram. In order to confront the converging forces of the contemporary capitalist machine we need to first see what is there to be seen and to establish a relationship with it, to build an analytical model to ideally conjure a machine of liberation.

This project intends to set up a space for *Gelassenheit*, to use a Heideggerian term, a place of releasement. *Gelassenheit* implicates a meditative mode of thinking that conjures the truth of being. It is not a passive stance of quietism nor does it correspond with any activity. It is a place outside the spectrum of these dichotomies. It is about waiting and holding the entirety of what it means to be human free from any activity.³ In this stance of being, thinking and acting are intertwined, to wait is to act. In *Gelassenheit*, we let things appear in their unique way without forcing any predetermined understanding of them. It is an opportunity to withdraw, to look at a distance and study something

² Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, [New York: Public Affairs, 2019]

³ Heidegger on "Gelassenheit". *Idleness with Dignity Lecture V.*, YouTube Video, 20:31, Posted By "Classical Philosophy", Aug 7, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hx9oQto3CD0>. Accessed October 16th 2019

in order to turn it from within. The space of this project intends to generate a field for a similar exercise in consciousness.

In the following paragraphs, I begin to navigate some anthropological as well as philosophical ideas. I follow these theories to understand how historically we have meditated on our presence in this universe. I am hoping that this process will help me draw a low-resolution image of our contemporary reality. These investigations seek to understand individuals in relation to their environment as well as autonomous entities. If the self is at the center of the surveillance mechanisms of today's accelerated technological operations, it has to be defined. To stop and to ask these genuine questions is to defy the enframing circuits of this world and its ceaseless processes. To think and to hold an idle stance is to resist. We need to map how we have been understood historically to perceive what we have become today.

But what do we mean by the notion of "self?" Is it a psychophysical mind with a body or is it pure consciousness? A disembodied entity? Husserl established a school of thought that radically shifted away from pre-existing models of 19th-century systematic philosophy. Contemporaneous with the onset of modernism, he liberated forms to turn the focus towards the self. He approached philosophy as a rigorous scientific line of investigation in search for apodictic certitude. His theories, however, were still heavily based on the thinking of Descartes.

At this point, following Descartes, we make the great reversal that, if made in the right manner, leads to transcendental subjectivity: the turn to the "ego cogito" as the ultimate and apodictically certain basis for judgments, the basis on which any radical philosophy must be grounded. (Edmund Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, p18)

Husserl rejected the idea that philosophy should follow theory, and instead directed the focus towards the way things are given directly to consciousness. A reductionist, his approach was to distill knowledge from experienced facts, events, and the way they are subjectively established within consciousness, focusing on phenomena experienced from a first-person point-of-view. Husserl abstained from talking about experience without involving the experiencing individual. This correlation between the two became an integral component of his methodology. The processes of phenomenological reduction would seek to bracket reality into single subjects for first-person meditative investigations. The Latin origins of the word reduce is "reducere," which is also a clue to

this philosophical line of thinking. “Reducere” means “to lead back” or “to bring back.” So reduction here does not mean to reduce things into nothing, but to engage in an introspective mode of thinking to bring them into the foreground of attention and register their origins. Phenomenology became the attentive study of common experiences in order to sensitively analyze and disclose the transcendental conditions that shape and structure them.⁴

The concrete subjective processes, let us repeat, are indeed the things to which his attentive regard is directed: but the attentive Ego, “qua philosophizing Ego”, practices abstention with respect to what he intuits. Likewise everything meant in such accepting or positing processes of consciousness (the meant judgment, theory, value, end, or whatever it is) is still retained completely but with the acceptance-modification, “mere phenomenon”. (Cartesian Meditations, p20)

Husserl assumed that each and every individual possesses a conscious awareness and took this as an indubitable fact, a place to lay a foundation for knowledge. For him, consciousness is always exterior, it does not originate from an internal container. Consciousness is understood to be this detailed relatedness to the world around us. While the objects of this world may have a presence on their own independent from our experience of them, what is at stake here is their relationship to the mind. Phenomenology is not addressing the being of things but is about their direct relations to the mediating ego regardless of their autonomous existence.⁵

The epoch can also be said to be the radical and universal method by which I apprehend myself purely: as Ego, and with my own pure conscious life, in and by which the entire Objective world exists for me and is precisely as it is for me. Anything belonging to the world, any spatiotemporal being, exists for me that is to say, is accepted by me in that I experience it, perceive it, remember it, think of it somehow, judge about it, value it, desire it, or the like. Descartes, as we know, indicated all that by the name cogito. The world is for me absolutely nothing else but the world existing for and accepted by me in such a conscious

⁴ Michael Atkinson. "A PRECISE PHENOMENOLOGY FOR THE GENERAL SCHOLAR." *The Journal of General Education* 23, no. 4 (1972): 261-97. Accessed January 16, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27796281>. p7

⁵ Husserl, *Heidegger & Existentialism*- Hubert Dreyfus, Interview by Bryan Magee, YouTube Video, 45:50, Posted by “Philosophy Overdose”, June 12th, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR1TJERFzp0>

cogito. It gets its whole sense, universal and specific, and its acceptance as existing, exclusively from such cogitationes. (Cartesian Meditations, p21)

In Husserl's philosophy, the dualism of subjects contemplating objects persists; consciousness is always intentional or directed. Consciousness is consciousness of something and it is impossible to discern the objects of consciousness from the state of consciousness. This transcendental ego forms the irreducible contemplative mind in quest for objective inquiries. Phenomenology then is mainly defined as the study of the structures of experience, experiences that are perceptual, material, and performative. The objects of consciousness entail a myriad of abstract and physical entities, mathematics, music, art, as well as the body with its countless sensory perceptions, imaginations, thoughts, pains, and even memories. Therefore, phenomenological conscious experiences include not only the passive perception of emotions or feelings but our volitions and actions, essentially whatever that we live through or perform. Husserl even went further to assume a content for the mind, a content that is always directed towards the objects around. He called this principle "technical directedness"⁶ and assumed that it is only the human mind that possess such mental content to direct itself towards, perceive and describe what is outside of it. The assumption of this mental content in encountering the objects of this world became the basis of Husserl's phenomenology.⁷

Thus the being of the pure ego and his cogitationes, as a being that is prior in itself, is antecedent to the natural being of the world of which I always speak, the one of which I can speak. Natural being is a realm whose existential status [Seinsgeltung] is secondary; it continually presupposes the realm of transcendental being. (Cartesian Meditations, p21)

Heidegger rebelled against this other iteration of Cartesian thinking that had become so persuasive in Husserl's theories to rethink phenomenology from a different stance, the assertion of a medium for subconscious entanglements.⁸

⁶Husserl, *Heidegger & Existentialism*- Hubert Dreyfus, Interview by Bryan Magee, YouTube Video, 45:50, Posted by "Philosophy Overdose", June 12th, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR1TJERFzp0>, Accessed Jan 16th, 2020

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Being in the World on the Background of the World/ 02

Registering a medium, a material base for consciousness! What does it mean to exist?

One philosophical question since Descartes has been about the process in which autonomous isolated subjects attain knowledge of the objects around them. How do we establish a certainty towards what we perceive, towards our own existence and the existence of others? Does the mind even exist? Heidegger does not refute these questions but goes further to delineate a more fundamental line of investigation. His seminal text *Being and Time* points to the notion that Western thought from Plato onward has not been successful in addressing the most crucial question of what it means to be. He takes upon himself the task of recovering the meaning of being. Heidegger refutes the dichotomy of subject/object divide that Descartes had formerly delineated. For him Descartes' dictum "Cogito, Ergo sum", "I think therefore, I am" is a fundamentally incomplete proposition. He substitutes this formula for another "sum moribundus"⁹, "I am, because I am towards my death". Mortality is the only certainty that *being* can have. Finitude accompanies *being* in its act of thinking and whatever else it does.¹⁰ In his critique of Cartesian subjectivity that posits humans at the ontological centre, Heidegger takes the transcendental ego back into the world, submerged in its medium rather than an entity separated from it.

Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its own most aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task. (Heidegger, Being and Time, section 3, page 31)

Heidegger introduces the notion of "transparent coping." In our former understanding, we were subjects looking through an imaginary frame into objective reality, a reality to relate to and obtain knowledge from. But Heidegger rejects this dual dimension. From the beginning we are in and amongst it all, adrift in a medium that is registering subconsciously. We are coping beings engaged in practices so transparent that do not even pass through consciousness.¹¹ We are submerged in

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *History of the concept of time*, [Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1992], pp 316-317.

¹⁰ Abraham Mansbach, "Heidegger's Critique of Cartesianism", *Contemporary Philosophy*, [Boston, Massachusetts: 1998], <https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Cont/ContMans.htm>. Accessed December 5th, 2019

¹¹ Hubert Dreyfus, *Husserl, Heidegger & Existentialism*, Interview by Bryan Magee, In *Philosophy Overdose*, June 12th, 2017

layered and dynamic interactions with the world without any mental representations of them in the mind. It is only in those moments that the continuity of an activity is disturbed that it becomes conspicuous and enters the frame of consciousness. The disturbances unveil the layers of involvement. Heidegger refers to these states as *presence-at-hand* and *readiness-to-hand*. He uses the example of a carpenter who is hammering a nail. While his body is involved in this mechanical activity, his mind is roaming other thoughts. But if he loses grip on the handle or if the nail fails to go in, the continuity of the procedure is broken and the many layers of the activity emerge and crystalize in his consciousness: how to properly position the body, hold the handle, place the nail, measure and adjust the necessary force, build a wall, construct a house, ultimately take shelter, and so on.¹²

Heidegger introduces the term *Dasein* to speak about this new conceived status. He needs to establish a whole terminology to describe the yet unspoken content he is bringing forward. *Dasein* literally translates to *being there*, perhaps being in the world encountering its entities engaged in the activity of existence; or being in a situation where a transparent coping is going on, or a directed activity is taking place. *Dasein* is not an “abstract agent” but a process of involvement and care for the background world as well as a meditation on the evolving self.

Dasein has a threefold structure. It always has a disposition; we always find ourselves in a particular mood. We have been thrown into a world (*Geworfenheit*) which opens up and discloses itself as a happy or a gloomy place. We might be able to shift the moods only from one to another. The moods do not originate from the inside or the outside but are integral characteristics of Being-in-the-world. The second structural component of *Dasein* is discourse. The context is laid out and already articulated. We are always in this practice of articulating this world into its pieces and further defining its elements. The hammer can take up different definitions to incorporate several functions. In one definition it is a heavy piece of metal with a wooden handle appropriated to propel nails into the wall. In another, it is a fork-like tool to pull nails out of walls. The third characteristic is time. *Dasein* always pushes towards a future goal, and it is always ahead of itself. It is always in the process of doing something in order to do something next. In a sense, *Dasein* is an embodiment of time.¹³

Dasein is not one individual personality, it is not a biological organism, but is one and all. It is the essence of being there and being affected by structural norms and predetermined sets of rules. *Dasein* is also an opening in a totality of involvements that are culturally and historically conditioned. It is then the opportunity to own up to what it means to be, to register the context, formulate new

¹² Michael Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/>>. Accessed Jan 17th, 2020

¹³ Husserl, *Heidegger & Existentialism*- Hubert Dreyfus, Interview by Bryan Magee, YouTube Video, 45:50, Posted by "Philosophy Overdose", June 12th, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR1TJERFzp0>, Accessed Jan 16th, 20207

practices, hold on to anxiety, and break away from the amorphous public self. In a sense, for *being* it is never possible to be fully authentic. *Dasein's* inauthenticity is existential and inevitable. *Being* has to find itself the possibility to rest itself from in-authenticities and to push into the authentic opportunities. Authenticity also is not a constant state of being that can be reached, but it is an attitude, a stance, and a continuous struggle against the structural components of who *Dasein* is. *Being* has to enact the ground to exist the public self, to detach itself from “they”, and to shape what it can become. Authenticity then is not centered on the idea of isolation from others, but it is about a mechanism of structuring a relationship with others that is not lost to “they-self”.¹⁴ This is the subject of authenticity in *Being and Time*.

*In utilizing public means of transport and in making use of information services such as the newspaper, every other is like the next. This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into a kind of Being of 'the Others', in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the 'they' is unfolded. We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find 'shocking' what they find shocking. The 'they', which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness. (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 27, page 164)*

We eat, dress, talk, use languages, pronounce words the way others do in a certain culture. To avoid being the anomaly, we try hard to not deviate from norms. People consistently and through very subtle mechanisms regulate themselves and others without being forced into it. Heidegger notes that many of our decisions are not conscious choices but rather a gradual fitting into the mold of established public practices. *Dasein* however, is a mood of existence that is open to interpretation. In the absence of the grand metaphysical narratives that lay a foundation for human nature, a logic, *Dasein* is the embrace of a fundamentally unsettled character.

¹⁴ Michael Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/>>. Accessed Jan 17th, 2020

For Heidegger, the primordial disposition of the human in the technological age is anxiety, an amorphous, omnipresent angst not directed at anything specific. In those moments that all disintegrates into nothing and the world appears meaningless, the human is capable of encountering what it means to be. It is crucial to own up to those moments and to hold up to anxiety, to claim its authentic potentialities in order to decipher entirely different modes of being human. Heidegger's philosophy of personal liberation originates from the idea of flexibility in accepting our essential ungroundedness.¹⁵ The fact that there is no absolute truth or meaning to it all but rather a process of discovery. The escape from the pressure of conceiving an ultimate life project is in itself liberating. It climaxes in a change in attitude, in which working with the general situation becomes a conscious choice in search for unique opportunities.

¹⁵ *Husserl, Heidegger & Existentialism*- Hubert Dreyfus, Interview by Bryan Magee, YouTube Video, 45:50, Posted by "Philosophy Overdose", June 12th, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR1TJERFzp0>. Accessed Jan 16th, 2020

Embodied Perception / 03

If the body had been easier to understand, nobody would have thought that we had a mind.-Richard Rorty.¹⁶

Heidegger's language in articulating *Dasein* remains abstract. A corporeal dimension that seems to register all is missing from his discourse. The body however, appears to be a central component in our discoveries and sensory experiences; a material base where all slips in and a reservoir where we store our knowledge of our environment and therefore build a consciousness. The body itself is a way of being in the world. It forms a symbiosis with that which surrounds, it locks into a feedback loop of interrelations. It struggles, fails, learns, and acquires skills; moves to find the "optimal grip"¹⁷ in coping with situations. The body as an instrument is tuned relationally to its surrounding. Consciously or subconsciously our bodies enter the continuum of affective forces in order to engage with the world. We do not only see with our eyes, but use the whole surface of the body to feel, touch, measure, and comprehend the space around us. Body functions through its haptic interactions with its settings to substantiate fields of emotion that lead to new perceptions. Subsequently, the body appears to be the permanent component of our perceptual field.

*Sensory experiences become integrated through the body, or rather, in the very constitution of the body and the human mode of being. Psychoanalytic theory has introduced the notion of body image or body schema at the center of integration. Our bodies and movements are in constant interaction with the environment; the world and the self inform and redefine each other constantly. The percept of the body and the image of the world turn into one single continuous existential experience; there is nobody separate from its domicile in space, and there is no space unrelated to the unconscious image of the perceiving self. (Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p40)*

¹⁶ Richard Rorty , *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, [Princeton :Princeton University Press, 2017] , p239

¹⁷ Hubert Dreyfus, *Husserl, Heidegger & Existentialism*, Interview by Bryan Magee, In *Philosophy Overdose*, June 12th, 2017

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his famous book *Phenomenology of Perception*, speaks of the body as the “phenomenal field,” a sensing organism that “coexists” and “communicates” with the world to present it to us as the familiar place of our life.¹⁸ The body is the figure against the background of the world, it is in itself a template for the logic it is unfolding. For Merleau-Ponty, the process of perception begins from a pre-cognitive (pre-*cogito*) state. He refutes the dichotomy of the mind/body to posit the idea of an embodied subject. The mind does not operate independently as a perceiving structure in dialogue with found subjects. The classical notion of an immaterial entity is exchanged for a body-subject that in a pre-reflective state has already acquired a knowledge of the objects of the world which later on presents to the ensuing layers of awareness. The objective world appears directly to our perception as determinate things but the process of perception has the tendency to lose its track and fade. In a way, we transparently perceive things, yet we fail to register the processing medium; we tend to overlook the body as the intermediate structure between the object and the subject. Our perceptions emerge from this “phenomenal field” rather than a “transcendental ego.” What we perceive as objective reality is the consequential result of being embedded in a field which we concurrently reflect on.¹⁹

*Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it sees and moves itself, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of my body; they are incrustated in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body. These reversals, these antinomies, are different ways of saying that vision is caught or is made in the middle of things, where something visible undertakes to see, becomes visible for itself and through the vision of all things, where the indivision of the sensing and the sensed persists, like the original fluid within the crystal, the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed. (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, page 90)*

¹⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, [Abingdon: Routledge, 2002]

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Porous subjects and the visceral forces of affects

The body, as Spinoza indicates, is “still a great unknown.” The intricate physiological organism of our bodies not only forms our understanding of our being, but also enables us to comprehend and relate to the world. The “materiality of the body” enters an interdependent relationship with the “materiality of the world” through which new and immanent spaces of understanding emerge. The body engages in a profound interconnectedness with its surroundings, coexisting, interrelating, and expanding its existing knowledge. Our bodies are affective fields enmeshed in a network of vibrational forces that traverse them. The porous structures of our bodies are subject to intensities and charges that do not stop at the boundaries of the skin. Affects have corporeal and energetic dimensions to stimulate neurological structures as well as shifting the biochemistry of their subjects. Forces that are capable of inducing material as well as immaterial sensations, feelings, and thoughts. Interior and exterior forces dovetail to affect our unconscious thoughts and conscious cognitions. Arrested within affective forces, we live as much outside of ourselves as within our bodies.²⁰ As individuals, we are not perceived to be contained entities. The contagious traces of affects engage bodies in reciprocities. Our thoughts are not independent and our emotions are not necessarily all our own. We are partially the incidental by-products of our interactions with others and our environments. Affect transmits from one container to another through processes that are social in origin but biological and physical in effect.²¹ Atmospheric, olfactory, and visual dimensions of the space afford the transmission and circulation of affects among bodies unknown to each other. While feelings are connected to biographical experiences and inflected by personal memories, affects are pre-personal, they are the biological sensations that function through the built-in mechanisms of our bodies. While feelings reflect different coping mechanisms to environmental stimuli and are personal, affects are innate, evolutionary in nature, and very much universal.²²

Indeed the transmission of affect means, that we are not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction between the Individual and the "environment." But transmission does not mean that a person's particular emotional experience is irrelevant. We may influence the registration of the transmitted affect in a variety of ways; affects are not received or registered in a vacuum. Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, p 6

²⁰ Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, [Durham: Duke University Press, 2010]

²¹ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004]

²² Brian Massumi, “Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements.” In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. [Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987]

Affects entail vibrational encounters and are relational. From molecular to quantum levels, everything is in motion. Everything vibrates in a duration. Whether these vibrations are registered within our perceptible field or not, we are placed in their continuum. Affects ultimately relate to preconscious bodily orientations that circulate between bodies, disputing the paradigm of self-containment. In Affect Theory, body is understood to be a porous agent that can reciprocate, co-participate, act and be acted upon.



Figure #1: Wearable Technology / On Becoming a Cyborg / study model 1 – This project was an attempt in constructing wearable forms intended to extend the consciousness beyond the boundaries of the physical space the body occupies. It explored the possibility of inhabiting a secondary skin to enter new and haptic territories of engagement with the world. The project explored the possibility of extending consciousness into objects that were designed to intensify the data the bodies collect. Can we stimulate the body to reach the new state of the body?



Figure #2: Wearable Technology / Spatial Meditations of the Body / study model 1-Plan View - The project investigated the means of employing technology as a way of redesigning the body. The forms were imagined to build an extended sensory medium for the body to deepen its sensory awareness. These environments were composed to cultivate spaces of play for the body to engage its mental powers and employ its corporeal energies as well as intrinsic skills. The physical object would adhere to the body like an extended limb to afford it a new opportunity to connect to the public space, to explore movements, and a new soundscape. The physical architecture around the body would extend a tactile skin to map the environment, swing in space, capture the sounds, and depending on speed different flows of air through the instrument. In relation to how the wearer would feel, guide, or experience them these animalistic, ambiguous objects would afford the body the potential for interactive scenarios. The body would be able to write a narrative between itself and the object to improvise spatial experiences, ones that could be an extension to its normal life. The duality of the body and the instrument would form a composite organism to explore the concept of space.

*But what about me, the ego? Am I not in the depth of my heart, in the circumvolutions of my brain, in the inner sanctum of my soul, in the vivacity of my spirit, an 'individual'? Of course I am, but only as long as I have been individualized, spiritualized, interiorized. It is true that the circulation of these 'subjectifiers' is often more difficult to track. But if you search for them, you will find them all over the place: floods, rains, swarms of what could be called psycho-morphs because they literally lend you the shape of a psyche.*²³ Bruno Latour

Can we reduce consciousness back to an actual physical organ? The brain?

Thomas Metzinger, a contemporary cognitive philosopher and scientist, asks a similar question. In his book *The Ego Tunnel*, he explores the topic of human consciousness. Metzinger argues that there is no self but an active self-model in the brain. This model is completely dependent on the subliminal neurological procedures that occur in the background of our conscious experiences. In fact, much of the reality that we experience is constructed by our brains. We occupy a trajectory between the body and the mind to conceive a person inside. This person, however, does not have a substance; it is merely an illusion. Ongoing mind-body relationships result in mental processes that fabricate a psychic being for us. The processes that are so tight and continuous in time build up and present a unified image, a subjective "I" placed at the center of a milieu we are exploring. Through these ongoing operations, we somehow succeed in generating a strong consciously experienced subjectivity towards the objective events that surround us. The mechanisms of inhabiting a body entail the ownership of some properties and mental states. We progressively transition from "being no one"²⁴ to solidly identifying

²³ Bruno Latour, *Resembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], p212

²⁴ Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One- The Self Model Theory of Subjectivity*, [Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004]

with a unique person inside.²⁵ The unconscious networks of being construct a self-model on the level of conscious experience. The “I” is ultimately a constant structuring of a mold in time.

Present-day neuroscience experiments have also determined that most of the content of our conscious experiences are the product of very selective representations of the information that we collect.²⁶ The tunnel that we internally construct filters only a portion of an expansive reality that envelops us. What we perceive as reality is a channel through a much bigger reality.

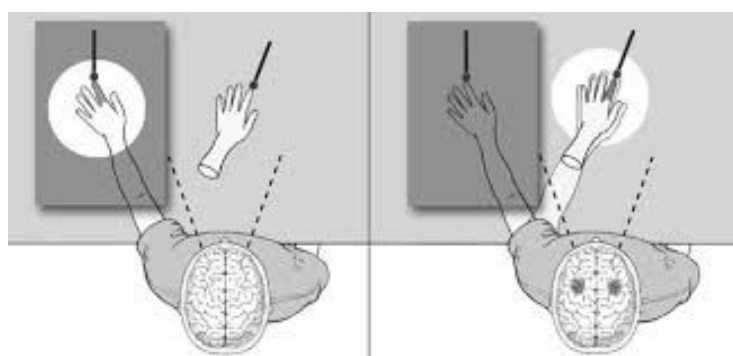


Figure #3: A diagram of the rubber hand experiment – In this tantalizing experience, the subject’s hand is covered and a rubber hand is placed in front of him. The two hands, the real one and the rubber one, will be synchronously touched by paintbrushes. The synchronous stroking evokes the proprioceptive sensation that his real hand has been displaced towards the one that he sees. The sense of ownership drifts from one (the real hand) to the other, the rubber hand

Metzinger provides the supporting scientific data through a series of experiments to further explain his theories. In one, he speaks of the concept of phantom limbs. He describes the case of a woman who is born without legs and hands but experiences the sensation of touch in those missing body parts. It appears as if the body image is an inherited model that the brain keeps regenerating even in the absence of those physical organs. The rubber hand experiment also elusively tricks the mind to feel the sensation of pain and touch in an artificial hand that the body in question does not physically possess. Such mind games could even be expanded to full body experiences. In another project, he demonstrates that by using virtual reality goggles, we can situate the self-model in a technologically generated environment to transfer our sense of self to a digitally constructed avatar. Such practical studies generate a conflict between the person that sees and the one who feels. The self-model couples

²⁵ Thomas Metzinger, *The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of The Self*, [New York: Basic Books, 2009]

²⁶ Ibid.

directly with artificial or virtual bodies to feel sensations or movements while bypassing the non-neural biological body.

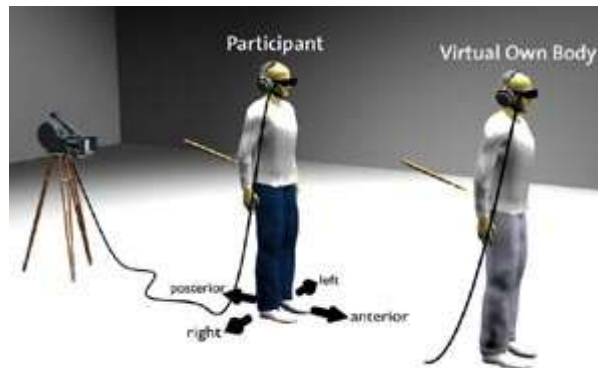


Figure #4: Creating a whole-body analog of the rubber-hand illusion.

*... Holistic sense of self is not a mystery immune to scientific exploration—it is a form of conscious representational content, and it can be selectively manipulated under carefully controlled experimental conditions. (Thomas Metzinger, *The Ego Tunnel*, p 6)*

Metzinger discusses the concept of “phenomenal transparency.” He defines consciousness as a window through which we see the world outside, but the frame (consciousness) itself is transparent. We experience the contents of consciousness but we are unaware of the medium through which the information reaches us. We do not register neuronal activity but we grasp the images, feelings, and thoughts as they are presented to us.

It must be emphasized that although our brains create the Ego Tunnel, no one lives in this tunnel. We live with it and through it, but there is no little man running things inside our head. The Ego and the Tunnel are evolved representational phenomena, a result of dynamical self-organization on many levels. Ultimately, subjective experience is a biological data format, a highly specific mode of presenting information about the world by letting it appear as if it were an Ego’s knowledge. But no such things as selves exist in the world. A biological organism, as such, is not a self. An Ego is not a self, either, but merely

a form of representational content—namely, the content of a transparent self-model activated in the organism’s brain. Thomas Metzinger, *The Ego Tunnel*, page 8

The active organism of our brain constantly collects and organizes the data it receives from the world in an attempt to predict our next sensory reactions. The body as well as attention mechanisms are employed to optimize the precision of these processes. Self-consciousness therefore is part of this predictive behaviour of putting together an image of our global properties in correlation with the information we collect, using the already active unified self-model that we have inherited biologically.

We simply would not be here if the self-models in the brains of our ancestors had not extracted the relevant causal structure of our bodies, of peripersonal space and our physical environment, and that of other minds and our group sufficiently well. Our internal models condense millions of years of interacting with this world, in many domains model evidence and statistical reliability are extremely robust – that is why we have even come to explicitly model ourselves as “knowing selves”, Homo sapiens.²⁷ – Thomas Metzinger

Metzinger further asserts that this new understanding of self would lead to experiments with the power to alter our subjective reality and modes of consciousness. The neuro-technology of consciousness can ultimately manipulate, control, and fine-tune cognitive layers, our sense of self, spatial understanding, and feelings of embodiment. Such new imagery for the mind and the constructed ego raises a series of serious ethical questions as well as controversial cultural repercussions that are potent subjects to be studied.

²⁷ Thomas Metzinger, *all about the ego tunnel*, Interview by Richard Marshall, *3:Am magazine*, February 25th, 2016

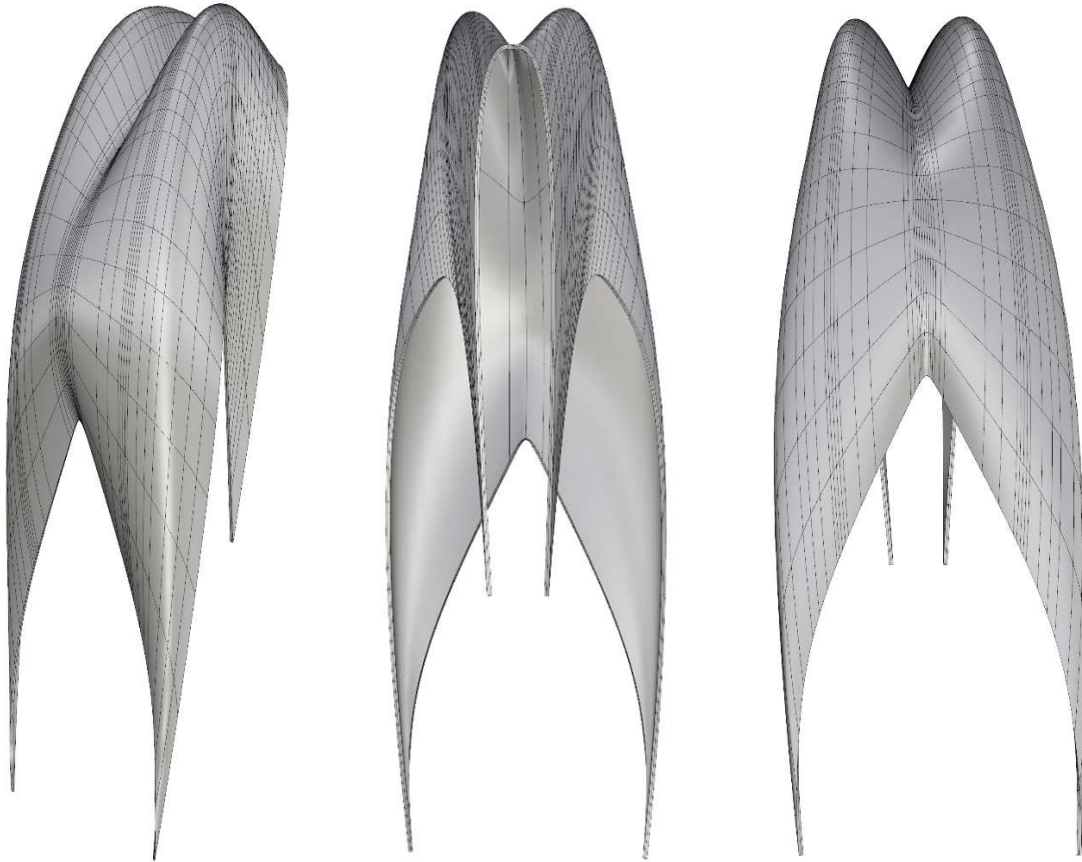


Figure #5: Wearable Technology / On Becoming a Cyborg /study model 2-

These models were intended to explore the concept of extending consciousness beyond the physical space of the body by occupying a secondary skin and changing the scale of the body in relation to its environment. The project studied the possibility of building a mindfulness machine that incites a sense of attentiveness. The wearer engages with this object that shields her body but extends it beyond its immediate borders. This ambiguous instrument tailored to the measurements of the performer's body forces the wearer to occupy an oversized object that slows its movement in space to articulate a new web of associations. The body walks into a space that it doesn't typically encounter, a private realm in between the layers of the instrument and its own flesh, one that is full of delays, and replete with a diverse range of perceptions. The body and the object become allies in constructing a heightened sensory environment to capture the ephemeral qualities of the immediate event that is taking place. The project objective is to construct a new dialogue between the body and the space to articulate sensual investigations of the physical space in relation to the body and its fragility. The project diffuses the borders between a passive spectator and an active performer building a subjective experience accompanied by an instrument.

The project is then a meditation on the body in space, moving, touching, and hearing its environment. By engaging with this ambiguous instrument the body slows down to establish creative connections between the mind and the flesh. The idea was to turn the architecture inward, into the very interior of the user, to unleash concealed potentials, and introspectively register fresh sensations. The premise of this hypothetical engagement was to become conscious of something that might be there and is waiting to come to presence. Once we are capable of seeing, hearing, or feeling this unknown, we have the ability to change or accelerate it.

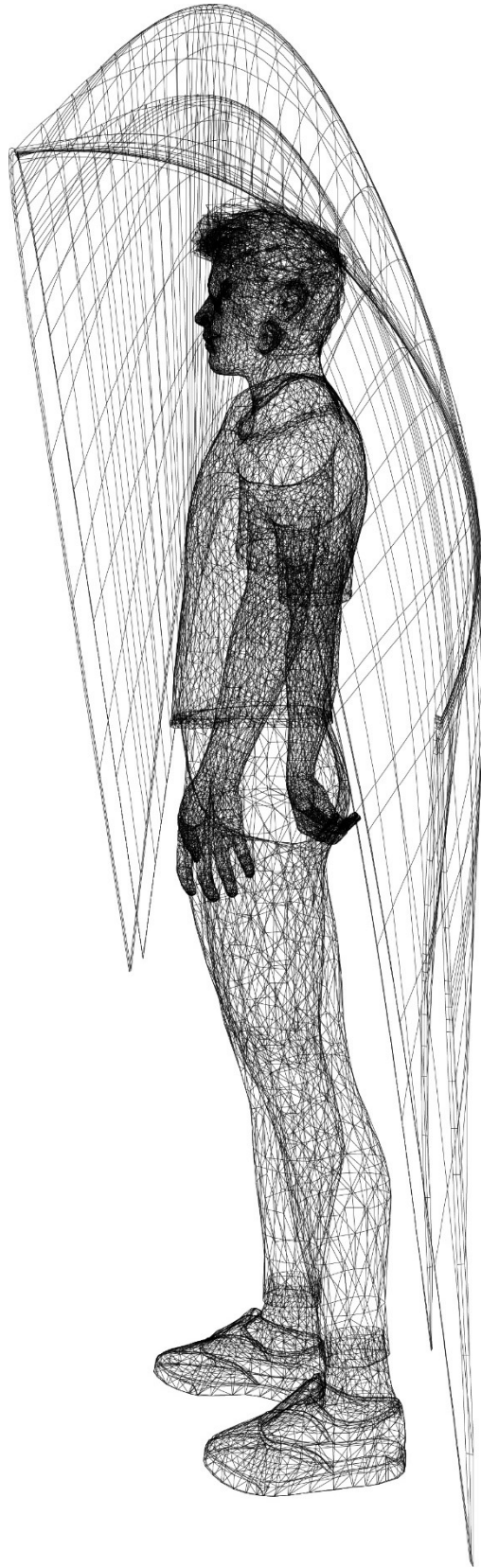


Figure #6: Wearable Technology / On Becoming a Cyborg /study model 2

The socio-technical assemblage - The interdependence of culture, human, and machine / 05

We are entities tied to a body without which we fail to perceive ourselves. It is through the sensory medium of our bodies that we register phenomenological and physiological encounters with the world around us and ultimately augment a sense of presence. Heidegger and Bruno Latour, as philosophers of technology, both deconstruct the techno-scientific frame of the subject/object divide to speak of a multitude of interrelations. We live among hybrid matters that are natural, cultural, technological, scientific, and economic that structure a co-dependency among subjects and objects.²⁸ The entities that substantiate a sensitive milieu for becoming. Together, they affect the body and modulate the inner workings of our consciousness. Husserl and his meditative approach to phenomenology also articulated a mode of scrutinizing the world as a base for the subjects to perceive themselves. Unlike the philosophers that later engaged with his theories, Husserl assumed an interior site for the transcendental consciousness to be experienced. For Heidegger and Latour, this transcendental ego is substituted for a consciousness that is immanent and interdependent,²⁹ emerging from a milieu of entangled activities.

Our human consciousness is the result of a collective evolutionary process that required us to explore and grapple physically and mentally with the world. The people in the past who were habituated to the patterns of perception and movement who could not shift to changing environments and hazards most probably did not survive beyond a point. The process may have resulted in the selection and genetic constitution of individuals who could flexibly respond to sudden stimuli as well as those who could take risks and innovatively face situational challenges to accumulate new knowledge. Our cognitive, emotional, and motor skills are the outcome of our biological aspirations to engage, explore, and expand our consciousness over our shared milieu. The neuroplastic brain and its ability to be molded structurally to perform different skills and progressively learn from new experiences, has also been the silent biological partner of this evolution. We have inherited many of our tendencies and skills through this commutative structure that has been passed to us from our ancestors.

Throughout our evolutionary process, we have also engaged in a unique relationship with technology. We have co-evolved alongside our technological tools that have been indispensable to our survival as a thriving species. The investigation of the external objects led to the formation of an interior mirror. By creating tools, human beings extended their cognition into objects to study their properties and to employ them skillfully. This activity was mirrored internally to develop an embodied understanding of

²⁸ Arianne Conty, *Techno-phenomenology: Martin Heidegger and Bruno Latour on how phenomena come to presence* (South African Journal of Philosophy, Pages 311-326 | published online: 17 Dec 2013). Accessed May 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2013.865099>

²⁹ Ibid.

what was present externally. The reciprocity between the human mind and its technological constructs has been an integral element in the developmental adaption of the human brain. We entered a particular historical phase at the very moment that one of our ancestors invented a sharp-edged stone tool³⁰. We gave agency to the objects that constituted us as much as we constituted them.³¹ The seemingly simple process of smashing one rock against another was indeed an elaborate task. It took quite a bit of know-how to perform this job which was also an intensive brain exercise. The project necessitated a multitude of elements: sequential planning, coordination, dexterity, patience, and self-control. Its effects extended beyond a single isolated event to be ultimately recorded, taught, learnt, and passed from one generation to another. The neurological structure of the human brain intertwined with its technological constructs evolved to comprise a new living organism with capacities stretched far beyond the borders of its biological body.

Environmental forces as well as our reactionary cognitive skills have dovetailed to induce the slow genetic alterations of our human species. We continue to evolve in response to the unfolding circumstances of the unique and sophisticated technological age that we are facing today. This co-evolution proceeds to incrementally affect us through many layers of activities. Technological advancements and their huge capacities for knowledge have ushered in novel possibilities of engagement with the world. In this ongoing transition, we have entered unparalleled territories of experience that are changing the nature of our presence and affinities with what surrounds us. Technology forms an invisible frame to mediate between us and our environment to enhance, extend, and at times undermine these relationships.

Along with the many positive outcomes of our technological accomplishments, we also face new and convoluted sets of challenges. There are favorable and unfavorable consequences to the way we employ our technological tools. The accelerated world seems to have lost the necessary time and stimulating delays that were crucial in capturing profound perceptions. Our contemporary culture with its very selective forces arrests us in virtual and disembodied landscapes of cerebral experiences. Our technological tools are not only employed to help us advance in the fields of science, medicine, and communication but, coupled with existing socioeconomic hierarchies, are utilized in alarming methodologies of control and unprecedented surveillance mechanisms. We are on an evolutionary path towards a future that is obscure.

³⁰ André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, [Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1993]

³¹ Arianne Conty, *Techno-phenomenology: Martin Heidegger and Bruno Latour on how phenomena come to presence* (South African Journal of Philosophy, Pages 311-326 | Published online: 17 Dec 2013). Accessed May 15th 17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2013.865099>

Technology as a *pharmakon* is both a promise and a poison. It would be paradoxical to deny the support of technology in making the facticity of an un-lived past available to us. Technological tools have made possible a progressive continuity in time, the means to document history as well as scientific knowledge. However, it would also be an integral mistake to view technology only as its visible, material structures. Gilles Deleuze, in his examination of Foucault's thought wrote that "the machines are social before being technical." Similarly, as Bernard Stiegler postulates, modern technology is a spirit, a decisive mode of thinking affecting the realness of everyday reality, a spirit that results in new conditions of subjectivity formed in alliance with economic, social, and cultural forces under capitalism.³² There exists a human technology before any mechanical construction changing its forms and updating itself in its new tools. More than the technologies themselves, it is the way they are socially and economically implemented that has led to new models of oppression and arborescent socioeconomic structures. The socio-technical assemblage of capitalism and its means of production have led to new forms of labour and has widely produced a common state of poverty. A technological construct might end, might transform into another tool, but technological thinking endures.

*The concrete machines are the two-form assemblages or mechanisms, whereas the abstract machine is the informal diagram. In other words, the machines are social before being technical. Or, rather, there is a human technology which exists before a material technology. No doubt the latter develops its effects in the whole social field; but in order for it to even be possible, the tools or material machines have to be chosen first of all by a diagram and taken up by assemblages... And if the techniques – in the narrow sense of the word – are caught within assemblages, this is because the assemblages themselves, with their techniques, are selected by diagrams...*³³ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, page 34

The body minus the formerly assumed metaphysical entity is a biological organism with relative behavioral traits that can be studied, recorded, and ultimately subjected to control mechanisms that regulate and normalize. Co-evolving along the transitioning mechanisms of control, we are steadily stripped of the powers to make decisions, exercise our free will³⁴, and therefore perceive and actualize the potentials of our beings. We are entangled in a new medium with a liquid quality, one that wraps

³² *Ister* directed by David Barison, Daniel Ross (Australia: Black Box Sound and Image, 2004), the excerpt is inspired by an interview with Bernard Stiegler talking on Heidegger and the definition of *techne*.

³³ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, [London: continuum, 2006]

³⁴ shoshana zuboff, *surveillance capitalis*, [New York: PublicAffairs, 2019]

us in shapeless, yet omnipresent forces that claim our bodies and their resources. In response to the emerging forces of surveillance, we need to conjure resistance mechanisms to negotiate new boundaries. In the next chapter of this thesis, I will map the transitioning technologies of governance that have succeeded in enframing a mode of being, a *standing reserve*, in Heideggerian terms.

Part 2: The Frame

Symptomatology of a Sickness / 06

Let us begin at the most simple, and already more or less established idea: that the technical object cannot be limited to its materiality. In techne, there are ontogenetic elements, elements of the plan, of construction, social relationships which support these technologies, a stock of knowledge, economic relations and a whole series of interfaces onto which the technical object attaches itself....

Felix Guattari, *ON MACHINES*

The technological advancements of our time affect, frame, and construct the way we live and formulate a contemporary vision. It is in this sociotechnical context that we come to perceive our “being.” The study of technology poses two interesting lines of inquiry, one stemming from the “philosophy of humanities”³⁵ and the other from sciences and engineering. Philosophies of technology analytically study the “primacy of humanities” over the scientific analysis of technological artifacts, artificial processes and systems. The focus of the social sciences is more on the reciprocity between the goals, human values, and cultural practices that extend to the realm of technological operations.³⁶ It is in this context of the intersection between philosophies of technology and the social sciences that I continue to place the psychophysical notion of the “self.” The intention is to investigate the social as well as economic cycles that repeat and update themselves in technological forms in relation to the human body. I contend that by retrieving the social dimensions of technology and through a historical analysis of shifting models of power, we can establish a critical theory for contemporary society that locates openings for constructive strategies of action.

Martin Heidegger, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari address the question of technology from both metaphysical as well as sociopolitical perspectives. They diagnose the sickness of our epoch, the loss of nearness (Heidegger) and atomization of the society (Deleuze), to formulate a totality for the

³⁵ Franssen, Maarten, Lokhorst, Gert-Jan and van de Poel, Ibo, "Philosophy of Technology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/technology/>>. Accessed November 2019

³⁶ Ibid.

technological age. To enter an independent and free relationship with technology, we need to comprehend it on a bigger scale. Heidegger does not so much address technological tools, being more concerned with a certain mode of “disclosure” and “bringing forth,” goal-oriented processes with set conditions and parameters that restrict and frame our experiences of things. He questions the willful domination of technical man over the earth and its resources, and ultimately points to the wrongheaded direction of technological operations that enframe *Dasein*. For Heidegger, “being” has become something that we posit to extract its energies and build desired and predetermined versions of human beings.

Deleuze, in his short essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1992), joins Michel Foucault in pursuing the periodization of different technological and political eras. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault spoke of a political technology that operated through institutional enclosures, architectural enclaves that cordon large groups of people in order to discipline them into a set of normalizing rules and codes. These institutions were constantly developing and rationalizing their mechanisms to administer and regulate individuals and tendencies that presented political threats to the stability of the status quo. While the old disciplinary models still operate, they are no longer the main actors in the administration of control. In Deleuze’s *control society*, these institutions are rapidly disintegrating. We have now entered a new realm that affords different relationships with technology. Energies and flows are exiting the former institutions of discipline.³⁷ Digital technologies code and channel disciplinary forces into formless, liquid, and all-encompassing models of control. There has been a shift from “molding” to “modulation;” from a “form-imposing mode” to a “self-regulating mode.” While enclosures construct distinct disciplinary castings, control forms a “self-deforming cast” that continuously transforms itself. Liberated from the physical enclosure of disciplinary institutions, the body is now arrested in “ultra-rapid” and “free-floating” mechanisms of confinement, the immaterial operations of the emerging techno-capitalist market machinery. As Deleuze writes, “there is no need to fear or hope but only to look for new weapons.”³⁸

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control.” *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3-7.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p4

A Site Where Power is Articulated on the Body/ 07

Centered on the body as a machine; its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increases of its usefulness and docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic control, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body.

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* VI, 139

Our acquiescence to cultural norms is not so much the result of direct orders or laws but the unwritten yet coercive forces of social patterns and environments that have gradually refined and proliferated, the insidious mechanisms that operate in disguise and infiltrate the spaces of everyday to undermine the power of bodies. Institutionalized and systematic corrections of behaviours enforced through the agency of clever architectural enclosures can restrain, mold, and reshape bodies and their performances over time. Similar to the space of the barracks and the training of soldiers, our bodies in offices, schools, prisons, factories, and hospitals could be disciplined into automated, repetitive habits to be economized and exploited. Foucault brings forward the architectural machinery of the 19th-century penal institution, designed and perfected to surveil the inmates, to speak to the broader relationships of power and body. In these disciplinary models, physical constraints are gradually substituted by internalized self-correcting psychological and emotional reactions in the absence of any external force. The body under constant disciplinary surveillance becomes exceedingly conscious of its state of visibility. This awareness of the conditions of constant exposure dominates the psyche of modern subjects.

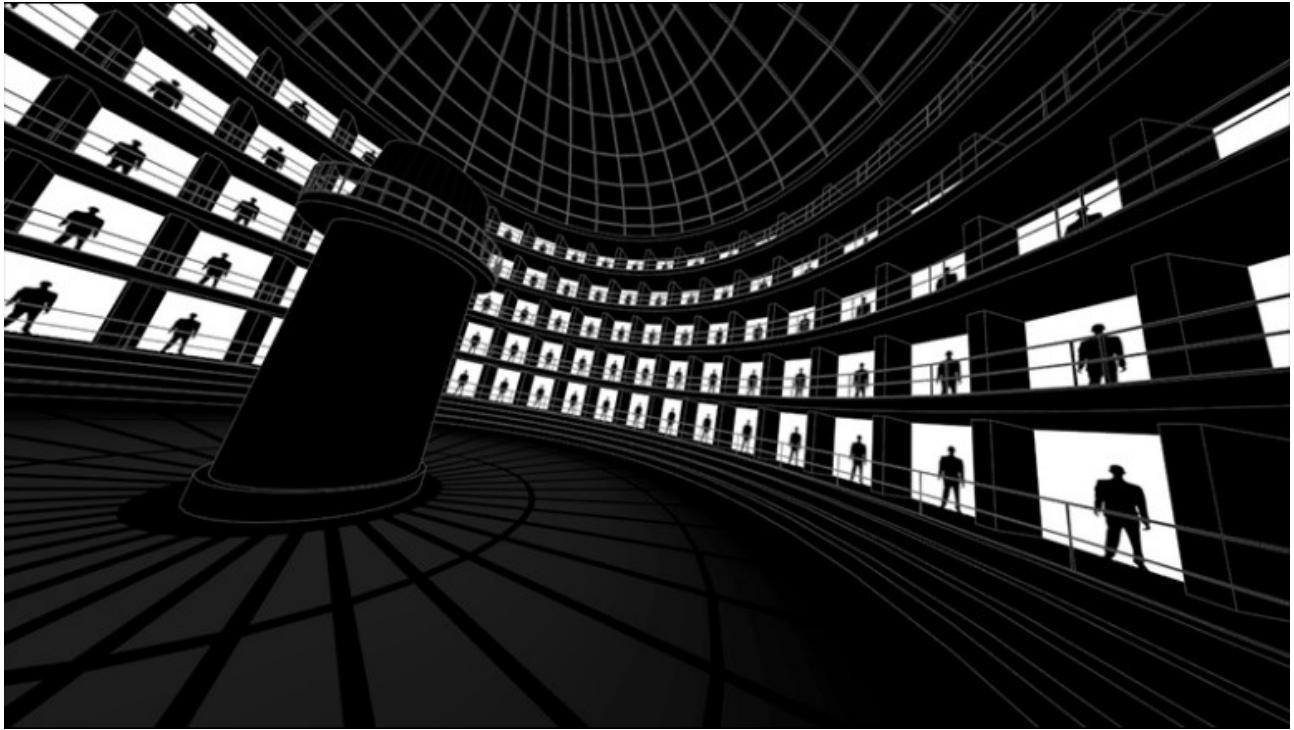


Figure #7: Panopticon by Richdaman

By using Bentham’s model of the prison-panopticon, Foucault draws a diagram to speak about the social components of a governing power. A kind of power that affects “the grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, and everyday lives.”³⁹ (Foucault, 1980, p39) The panopticon model has become a dominant feature of many Western institutions since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet this model has remained invisible and unnoticed as it has been embedded in the fabric of everyday life which also makes it so pervasively forceful.

Foucault, in two of his books—*Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*—ventures to characterize a diagnosis of the “present time.” For him, history is not the intentional outcomes of individual actors⁴⁰. In his genealogy, he examines the complex and layered relationships between power, knowledge, and the body that derive historical models of subjectivity. In Foucault’s opinion, there is a shift in the way that modern power operates.⁴¹ In “juridico-discursive” models of government in pre-modern societies, a centralized sovereign authority would rule the population through the dissemination of threats and fear and often the open display of violence. This “negative” and “repressive” power had a reductionist relationship with its subjects, mainly to tax them, to let them live, or to exercise the right over their death. This was a costly operation for the sovereign who is the center figure in this theatre of political performances. Power had to find a way to disperse itself

³⁹ Michel Foucault, (1980) *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and other writing 1972-1977*, (New York: Pantheon Books,1980)

⁴⁰ “Michel Foucault: Feminism,” by Aurelia Armstrong, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/foucferm/>. Accessed December 11th 2019

⁴¹ Ibid.

to escape being targeted. The transitioning models of governmentality in the 17th and 18th centuries presented a more productive relationship. With the advent of the industrial age, power was eager to participate in the production of capital and management of economic processes. Therefore, it presented a greater interest in administering and managing the lives of its subjects in order to insert their bodies into the machinery of production⁴². The function of power was no longer to kill but to “invest” in the lives of its subjects. “Bio-Powers” work from the bottom-up to replace the visible presence of the sovereign with an interlaced and sophisticated network of material coercions. In Foucault’s opinion, in the modern models of governmentality, laws are substituted for more subtle methods of normalization that have become essential strategies of social control.⁴³

A power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize and multiply it, subjugating it to precise controls and comprehensive regulation. (History of Sexuality VI, 137)

The organization of power over life unfolds into two different basic models that form a myriad of intermediate relationships: the “regulation of the population” and the “disciplining of the body.” Together, they constitute a “bipolar technology” that individualizes and specifies the “performances of the body with attention to the processes of life.”⁴⁴ In one, power focuses on the “species of body” as a source of life and a “base of biological processes” that can be calculated to be managed. A series of regulatory controls were invented to study the body, to intervene, and govern its resources as a living organism.⁴⁵ *Bio-powers* administer phenomena like, birth, death, longevity, sexuality, sickness, and health. In the more disciplinary models, punitive mechanisms that focus on the body both as an object and instrument to be trained and manipulated are developed and established. Foucault attentively studies the body as a powerful site for political investment. He theorizes this question: what kind of a body is required by a “capitalistically organized technology?”⁴⁶ Under modern forms of power, what types of bodies are shaped, produced, employed, rewarded, controlled, and punished?

This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the

⁴² Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1978) p141-142

⁴³ “Michel Foucault: Feminism,” by Aurelia Armstrong, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/foucfer/>. Accessed December 2019

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1978) p139

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ David Michael Levin, “The Body Politic: Political Economy and the Human Body.” *Human Studies* 8, no. 3 (1985): 235-78. www.jstor.org/stable/20008947.

controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. But this was not all it required; it also needed the growth of both these factors, their reinforcement as well as their availability and docility; it had to have methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern. (History of Sexuality VI, 137)

Surveillance, Normalization, Examination

Foucault studies the mechanisms of discipline employed in prisons, military training sites, hospitals, asylums, and schools. In his view, all these institutions have similar architectural organizations to induce discipline. He argues that such technologies of control that were formerly restricted to particular institutions have now infiltrated society on a broader scale. Technologies of discipline directly operate on the body, continuously target it as a subject of surveillance, and pervasively monitor the details of its behavioral conduct, its docility and productivity. Foucault saw the panopticon as “a laboratory that could also be used like a machine to carry out experiments to alter behaviour, to train and correct individuals.”⁴⁷ (Foucault, *Discipline and punish*) The end goal is not only to discipline but to cultivate “subjected” and “practiced” bodies for capitalist labour. The body had entered into a technology of production that would study it to investigate its resources, take it apart, and reassemble it into an optimized version of itself.⁴⁸ This would make for a more predictable society based on the one-way relationship of the panopticon model, a place where individuals are positioned as moldable and re-moldable entities. In our contemporary world, these methods have so insidiously embedded themselves into the very fabric of society that they have gone beyond distinct institutions. Foucault believed that in our modern society, the subjects are simultaneously being controlled while they are also the active participants in proliferating the cultural norms of a dominant power structure. In this massive “social prison” of panopticon within panopticon, the internalized sense of themselves is given to them by hierarchical power structures that set the standards to follow and define how to be a good citizen.

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p203

⁴⁸ “Michel Foucault: Feminism,” by Aurelia Armstrong, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/foucfem/>. Accessed December 2019

*fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time... it is that effect. It is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.*⁴⁹
(Foucault 1980: 98)

Foucault's articulation demonstrates a significant historical transition from the laws of sovereignty to the politics of modern society. We have a vocabulary that we can recognize when we talk about sovereign power, it is localizable and can be attached to an individual identity. With bio-political power, we are in a web of a global economy that operates in anonymous and diffused ways. There is no sovereign nor verifiable system that decides who will take life or who would let live. The means are more insidious under control regimes, yet the "agents" who wield power are fairly easy to detect. And there still are active actions and killings that take place simultaneously with the more diffuse modulatory flows of power. These anonymous systems of economy operate through the construction of an identity, the social and economic staging for precariousness. The systems that determine which populations will live and which will be put in a precarious state to let die.⁵⁰

Foucault's formulation frames disciplinary power structures that objectify individual bodies into automated and normalized entities. Their subjectivity is not as relevant as the role they play in the process. In his concept of *Gestell*, Heidegger speaks of a similar hypothesis, a mode of enframing *Dasein* that ultimately forces it to appear in a certain way, as if there is no escape. Heidegger in his theories focuses on *being* instead of the physical body; *being*, as something that adopts different definitions, historically takes the center stage in his analysis. In the modern age, technology is the defining feature of *being*. In Heidegger's opinion, technological thinking has brought up a closed cycle of production that not only dominates nature and its resources but pervasively occupies every detail of contemporary life. The techno-scientific industrial character of the modern age imposes a certain calculative thinking that only targets the outcome. We design processes, set the conditions and parameters to reach desired results. Caught in this technological machinery, *being* is shaped as another desired commodity, a resource to be posited.

⁴⁹ Ed. Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, Sherry B. Ortner, *Culture/Power/History: A reader in contemporary social theory*, [Princeton: Princeton university press, 1994], p214

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, [New York: Verso, 2006]

The Technological Nihilistic Understanding of *Being* /08

Heidegger speaks of a shift in the relationship between being and the world. In his opinion, the assertive metaphysical narratives of every epoch set the base for *Dasein* to engage with the world and lend itself to its phenomenological experiences.⁵¹ According to Heidegger, history does not show a gradual linear progress, but maps sudden shifts between different ontologies. In his view, we are never outside of some historical dispensation of *being*. We are required to study how we break from the past to see what is missing from our present ontology. Greeks were rooted in their myths; the world and its events showed up to them as natural.⁵² Their universe was constantly maintained and infused by the creations of the Gods. In Christianity, the scholastic model prevails. *Being* was the creation of a more perfect being, the Creator God.⁵³ The polytheism of the Greeks and their localized finite deities was replaced by the universal ever-present Christian God. In Descartes' model of *cogito*, a transcendental ego that forms a self-centered subjective understanding of objective reality is the determining factor. If with the Greeks we had the heroes and slaves, in Christianity, our ontology oriented towards saints and sinners. With Kant and the Enlightenment, we were introduced to an inner site, from which it was possible to directly commune with God independently of the pope or the prince. Since Descartes, our ontological model is shaped around subjects and objects. These grand narratives constituted the metaphysical immune systems that protected *being* in various epochs. But for contemporary man, this immune system has disintegrated, one metanarrative after another collapsing. *Being* as something that is thrown into the world, finds itself on the outside, exposed, and in a state of constant anxiety with a life-long project ahead. Motivated by the fear of death, it is obliged to search for an authentic life. In the absence of the divine, *being* finds itself existentially alone, it has to lean back onto itself to find a meaning for it all beyond survival.

Something has shifted in modern culture towards the pathological, insofar as anxiety is now the primordial mode of being. Anxiety as an ever-present basis of consciousness, indeterminate, floating and directionless, overwhelms the being. For Heidegger, these moments of exposure are crucial. It is in this particular mode that the individual is singled out of the mass to face the possibility of its own death, not that of others. *Being* needs to hold on to these revelatory moments to perceive its finitude and mortality, and to conceive an authentic way of *dwelling* on earth.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Age of the World Picture*, [New York: Harper and Row Publishers Inc., 1977]

⁵² Hubert Dreyfus, *Husserl, Heidegger & Existentialism*, Interview by Bryan Magee, In *Philosophy Overdose*, June 12th, 2017

⁵³ "Martin Heidegger Overcoming Metaphysics" by W. J. Korab-Karpowicz, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>. Accessed December 12th 2019

This uncanniness pursues Dasein constantly, and it is a threat to its everyday lostness in the "they", though not explicitly. This threat can go together factually with complete assurance and self-sufficiency in one's everyday concern. Anxiety can arise in the most innocuous Situations. ... And only because anxiety is always latent in Being-in-the-world, can such Being-in-the-world, as Being which is alongside the 'world' and which is concerned in its state-of-mind, ever be afraid. Fear is anxiety, fallen into the 'world', inauthentic, and, as such, hidden from itself. ... Even rarer than the existentiell fact of "real" anxiety are attempts to that totality of the structural whole which we are seeking.⁵⁴

But what constitutes the myth of contemporary time? The Cartesian model of subjectivity continues to prevail. With the loss of the divine, humans became isolated entities in need of self-certainty. Modern humans have released themselves from “the bond of the Middle Ages,” the former epistemological obligations of the religious authorities. He has freed “himself to himself”⁵⁵ to his intellect. In this shift, the understanding of the essence of the human has also transitioned. We have entered an era of “incomparable objectivism.” The nihilism of Western metaphysics goes beyond a mere epistemic paradigm to be woven into our environmental ontology by the agency of our technological tools.⁵⁶ *Being* today is taken to be the dominant subject that only sees itself.⁵⁷ The world also is perceived as an object at the human’s disposal to be conquered. It is the scientific object of its thoughts, observations, control, and use. The interplay of this reciprocity profoundly conditions humans next to or against the world. Heidegger introduces the word *Gestell* to speak about this mode of human existence. ‘*Gestell*’ points to a kind of enframing, a calculative mode of thinking, and a manner in which the human engages with nature, overpowers, structures its resources, and puts everything on ‘standing reserve.’ This orientation towards the world, as Heidegger describes, renders the world as a pile of raw material and ultimately sees the human being itself as another source of material for technological operations.

However, when, man becomes the primary and only real “subjectum” that means: man becomes the being upon which, all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its being and its truth. Man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such. But this is possible only when the comprehension of what is as

⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, [Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1962], p234

⁵⁵ *The Age of the World Picture*, p127-128

⁵⁶ *Heidegger, science, tech & spirituality with Johannes Niederhauser - Voices with Vervaeke*, YouTube Video, 52.47, Posted by “John Vervaeke”, March 1st, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5C_9OhdvM

⁵⁷ *The Age of the World Picture*, p127-128

a whole changes. In what does this change manifest itself? What, in keeping with it, is the essence of the modern age? (Martin Heidegger, The age of the World Picture, p128)

According to Heidegger, philosophy in the modern age has dissolved into a series of specific sciences. The Cartesian human and its transcendental logic operates the planet as a massive control matrix. Everything is understood as phenomena that can be scientifically objectified, and dissected into a set of formulas and representations rather than real experiences. The metaphysics of the modern age is informed by this scientific-technological vision obsessed with constructing, shaping, and forming reality based on predetermined conceptions. Technology has now turned into a new basis for the modern human to engage with the world and its happenings. This relationship, however, has unfolded and been characterized as a mastery rather than a co-dependency of alliances. The mathematical human has built itself a self-referential matrix to ward off the divine, that which it cannot calculate or control. For the Greeks, humans were entities beheld by the world among other mysteries, concerned with apprehending hidden truths by saving, preserving, and un-concealing them. As Heidegger enigmatically describes, *Dasein* is an openness submerged in a medium to whom *being* presences itself in a form of a calling or inspirations. Instead of objectifying the world at a distance, humans should be ready to attend to it, to spontaneously interact with it, and to strive to house those moments of revelations using means such as language.⁵⁸ Modern science, however, tends to calculate and categorize aspects of nature into some representations of them. We have followed a paradigm which mandates the forceful dissection of matter into parts to translate their secrets into comprehensible rationalities. But as Heidegger points out, nature does not always reveal itself in the results we find about her. There are things that reason cannot quite fathom. "It may even be that nature just hides its essence in the face that it turns toward the technical seizure <of it> by man."⁵⁹ With science, we can observe and disclose some features of it but the entirety of its essence cannot be fully disclosed. Nothing is ever exclusively there for humans to calculate and operate on.

The modern scientist does not let things presence as they are in themselves. He arrests them, objectifies them, and sets them over against himself, precisely by representing them to himself in a particular way.⁶⁰ (William Lovitt)

⁵⁸ Tr. William Lovitt, *The question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, [New York: GARLAND PUBLISHING, INC, 1977], in introduction page xxvi

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, [ebook] Wagner College. Available at: <http://wagner.edu/psychology/files/2013/01/Heidegger-Letter-On-Humanism-Translation-GROTH.pdf>. Accessed 26th 2019

⁶⁰ Tr. William Lovitt, *The question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, [New York: GARLAND PUBLISHING, INC, 1977], in introduction page xxvi

Advances in technology and science have dramatically altered the nature of our presence and our doings in this world. Heidegger, in his essay “The Question Concerning Technology” (1954), points to two instrumental and anthropological definitions of technology as ‘a means to an end’ or a product of “human activity.’ However, all these definitions deal with the notion of technology as a form and fail to address its essence. As Heidegger writes: “The essence of technicity is nothing technological.” Heidegger traces the origin of the word technology to the Greek word for production *techne*, which he defines as the human ability to bring things into presence by making them. *Techne* is know-how, the craft of extracting something from science, physics, and nature, a hidden essence that otherwise does not offer itself. In the realm of *mythos*, there is no distinction between physics and *techne*. The primary explanation for reality consisted of highly imaginative narratives involving supernatural personalities. It is in the world of *logos* that we separate the two to explain natural phenomena based on observation and logical deduction⁶¹. For Heidegger, technology is a means of revealing. He characterizes nature as an entity with a seductive character, one that does not always fully reveal itself. In every opening there is something concealed, something that is shrouded in mystery. Heidegger uses the Greek word *aletheia* to speak of a passage from concealment to un-concealment. In Ancient Greek philosophy, *aletheia* is a form of disclosure or the way in which things are brought into intelligible availability. *Aletheia* has a two-fold structure, it is about presenting something that withdraws itself. It holds an appearance in disappearance, and opens a clearing to conjure a self-concealing entity.

And yet the revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of poiesis. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [Herausfordern], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such. Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, p14

Today’s technological thinking posits entities as potential resources always ready to be used. This ordering mechanism challenges nature in an aggressive and predatory manner, looks at it quantitatively, and extracts its energies. These processes involve not only the natural world, but all biological and non-biological beings. Technology today has invaded the most private recesses of our lives in an unprecedented and pervasive manner from which there seems to be no escape. In this

⁶¹ *Ister* directed by David Barison, Daniel Ross (Australia: Black Box Sound and Image, 2004), the excerpt is inspired by an interview with Bernard Stiegler talking on Heidegger and the definition of *techne*.

technological world, everything is understood as objects, all energies and flows are channelled, exploited and turned into marketable commodities. Everything is understood in terms of its function, and this notion of function propels everything towards more functioning. Heidegger is not demonizing technology but he formulates its relationship to *being*.

I am not against technology. I have never spoken against technology nor against the so-called demonic nature of technology. I rather try to understand the essence of technology ... I see in technology, in its essence, that human beings stand under a power that challenges them and in which human beings are no longer free – that something announces itself here, namely a relation [Bezug] between being and human being – and that this relation, which hides itself in technology, one day comes to light ... Thus, I see in the essence of technology the first appearance of a much deeper occurrence (Geschehen) that I call Ereignis. (The event of appropriation) ⁶²

For Heidegger, what sets off Modernity is the forgetfulness towards *being*, the rebellion against it.⁶³ ‘Dasein as a being whose being is an issue for it’⁶⁴ has now turned into a quantifiable thing, a *non-being*, an entity that can be manipulated. In the processes of enframing, we will inevitably make human beings the way we want them.⁶⁵ Man as the openness in which *being* can be embraced now stands at a distance operating through his technological instruments. Technical humans observe the world without actively participating in it; therefore they have lost the connection to the necessary encounters that disclose paths to an understanding of *being*. His relationship to *being* is mal-informed, impoverished, and shrunken through its technological tools. For him, the unique characteristics of entities are secondary to their functions towards other ends. In a world where everything is reduced to objects, we lose a sense of sacredness. The awe and wonder that we used to empirically experience towards the world and its manifestations is substituted for measurable and calculative inquiries. Technology today manifests itself through humans as the slave participants of

⁶² Heidegger on *Being, Technology, & The Task of Thinking (1969)*, You Tube Video, 6:16, Posted By “Philosophy Overdose”, January 13th 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtATDIUSIxI>. Accessed October 12th 2019

⁶³ “Martin Heidegger”, Michael Wheeler, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), RL=<<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/>>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Heidegger on *Being, Technology, & The Task of Thinking (1969)*, You Tube Video, 6:16, Posted By “Philosophy Overdose”, January 13th 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtATDIUSIxI>. Accessed October 12th 2019

its operations. What might be harmless in itself (technological tools), is a danger when it induces a revealing that takes the place of *being*.⁶⁶

The machines and apparatus are no more cases and kinds of Enframing than are the man at the switchboard and the engineer in the drafting room. Each of these in its own way indeed belongs as stockpart, available resource, or executer, within Enframing; but Enframing is never the essence of technology in the sense of a genus. Enframing is a way of revealing having the character of destining, namely, the way that challenges forth. Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, p29

Our former relationship with nature and its entities was a form of poetic exchange. A relationship that unfolded as gathering, profoundly engaging, revealing the hidden logic of materials, working with them in harmony and building co-dependencies. Technology was a way of connecting to materials, a means of bringing forth the mysterious revelations of *being*. The Greeks did not objectify *beings* for thinking subjects. *Presencing* for them was about establishing an enduring relationship with something they did not have any power over. It was about lingering patiently for “self-showing” entities to rise out of concealment.⁶⁷

Modern technology, however, pursues a different purpose. It is about stockpiling rather than revealing. Heidegger, born at the end of 19th century and witness to two World Wars, surveyed the shift between modern tools and the less advanced, pre-modern versions of them to delineate a framework for the ongoing transition. His views were in contrast with other philosophers like Oswald Spengler (1936) who viewed technology as a continuous development of tools from pre-historic times to modern-day machines. Heidegger observed this transition to be a discontinuous one and an extreme shift in nature. He further described his ideas in several examples. The river *Rhine* that was a source of inspiration for Hölderlin’s poetry is now appropriated to stand ready to generate energy for nearby cities, chemical factories, and the tourism industry. Heidegger sees a drastic difference between the windmill and the hydroelectric dam. The old windmill as a mechanical machine depended on the wind’s drive to function. We needed to closely observe and work together with the forces of nature to harvest needed energies. The windmill was not unlocking the wind’s energy to

⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning technology*, [New York: Harper Perennial, 1982], p32

⁶⁷ “Martin Heidegger Overcoming Metaphysics” by W. J. Korab-Karpowicz, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>. Accessed December 12th 2019

stock it. But in modern times, something has changed. The close-knit relationship to nature and its resources has been substituted with a kind of mastery over objectified entities, an ordaining or destining in a circuit of productions. The nuclear power plant or hydroelectric dam does not need the seasons anymore. In the age of the explosion of power, we became liberated from certain tasks but were chained to new and more elaborate systems. Humans drifted into being the “functionaries of technology”. We no longer engage in a flow of co-creation that depended on time and being in a landscape. We are in this constant tension and movement to wilfully produce and stockpile resources. A ceaseless and repeating cycle of production and accumulation that while appears as moving and dynamic is resulting in a massive and perpetual stagnation. This technological thinking that has become the inescapable phenomenon of our epoch has established a dominant world picture that has excluded all other ones. We have lost the calm, the stillness to comprehend a meaning for reality, to capture that which that withdraws.

Yet when destining reigns in the mode of Enframing, it is the supreme danger. This danger attests itself to us in two ways. As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve.
Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p26

In the Heideggerian view, *Gestell* imposes a ceaseless activity upon humans. It is a fixed frame of mind that channels human actions and dictates its flow via a set of conduits. It is a form of compulsory labour that opposes random, turbulent, self-complexifying encounters. Ultimately, *Gestell* is a force that stands against free actions. A confrontational encounter with modern technology should entail a meditation on its lost essences, on *Techne* as the art of revealing, and as a way of holding and “safeguarding the truth”.⁶⁸ *Techne* does not entail a forceful production but refers to a creative and artistic engagement. In Heidegger’s view, once modern man recognizes his position in relation to technology, the techno-scientific frame that has entangled his life, he will be able to construct a new identity, one that might transcend the subject/object conception of the world that has dominated his vision. When he no longer identifies himself as an insurmountable ego ordering the world into

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning technology*, [New York: Harper Perennial, 1982], p34

objectified entities, wielding over its resources, he will be able to access a more essential mode of being; one that allows himself to be affected by what lies beyond his authority.

In the next section of this paper, I look into the updated forms of *Gestell* that are the result of the hyper-technological environment of today's information technologies. The constant ordering and arranging of the data that we leave behind has ultimately provided capital with new raw material for both strategies of economic gain as well as advanced mechanisms of control. The social and economic ramifications of the world of information technology along with the new opportunities these present have imposed numerous challenges. They seem to have substantiated a new form of enframing that operates on a more granular level to surveil the will to life, to control the boundaries of human experience, and to undermine democracy.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, [New York: Public Affairs, 2019]

From *Being* to *Dividuals* & *The Machines of Capture*/09

The Wall of factories give way to the permeating “spirit” of the corporation, the accumulation of things shifts to the accumulation of information, and networked bodies replace the spatial concentration of populations.

William Bogard, *The Coils of a Serpent: Haptic Space and Control Societies*

Heidegger questions the essence of technology and speaks about a relationship that is lost or is fading away. He thinks in terms of the origins and inquires about the status of *being*; the way *being* is reformulated and conceptualized in the age of modernity. Heidegger’s main concern is to conjure the possibilities of escaping the enframing powers of *Gestell*; the megastructures that permanently position *being* externally. He investigates the possibility of making use of the essence of technology to discover “a saving power” or a new mode of revealing that resonates with the nature of *Dasein*.⁷⁰ Heidegger does not reject the techno-scientific world view but points to the transparent way it is permeated into our ontology and concepts of identity. In his view, our modern models of thinking, sets up a profound cognitive grammar that stops us from waking up to the quest of what it means to be. We need to take a step back to see the frame, rather than automatically see through it.⁷¹ Deleuze and Guattari speak of machines, the tools that manifest the underlying spirit of an age. They see technology as something that is diffused and engrained in the political and economic fabric of the everyday. While Deleuze and Guattari talks about apparatuses of capture, stratification, and control, Heidegger points to technological enslavement, enframing, and concealment. While the terminologies are different, the overarching concepts share similar propositions.

Deleuze responds to the extraordinary technological accelerations that took place over a relatively short span leading up to the 1990s; a shift that started with the industrial revolution and reached its peak in the 20th century. He is concerned with the long-term outcomes of this recent change in human history. He outlines the coordinates of the contemporary technological moment, the age in which technology has taken up an intermediary role between power and the control dynamics via networked feedback. In his view, the nature of political power has changed and therefore our mechanisms of

⁷⁰ William Bogard, ‘Deleuze and Machines: A Politics of Technology?’ pp.15-31, in: Mark Poster, David Savat, (Eds.), 2009. *Deleuze and new technology*, Deleuze connections. [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,2009]

⁷¹ Heidegger, *science, tech & spirituality with Johannes Niederhauser - Voices with Vervaeke*, YouTube Video, 52.47, Posted by “John Vervaeke”, March 1st, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5C_9OhdbvM. Accessed August 5th 2020

resistance, confrontation, and liberation should be modified. He investigates the ethical and practical questions that should be addressed in response to the unfolding circumstances of the *control society*. How should we comprehend the existing parameters and live facing the accelerated technological domain that we find ourselves in? What are the possible vectors of escape or intellectual defiance against the cybernetic technological frame that is surrounding us? In his essay “Postscript on the societies of control” from 1990, he posits an empirical diagnosis of the trends that have increasingly permeated everyday life, the abstract machines of control, including data analytics, and digital profiling that have captured the entire social field. These machines, however, are neither “nihilistic” nor “redemptive” but are the central actors in the emerging spaces of negotiation between control and resistance. His essay follows the periodization that Foucault started with his formulation of disciplinary societies. Deleuze marks the beginning of a new period. In this emerging technological civilization, dispersed networks have deterritorialized former disciplinary assemblages. A cybernetic model of political control has replaced the confrontation that used to take place in the definitive and concrete architecture of institutions. Similar to Foucault’s hypothesis of biopower, this recent model is also more enabling than inhibiting, affirmative rather than restrictive. It invests its powers in life in order to control and manufacture it; its parameters, however, are opaque, all-encompassing, and difficult to grasp.

Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society-not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating them and using them. The old societies of sovereignty made use of simple machines-levers, pulleys, clocks; but the recent disciplinary societies equipped themselves with machines involving energy, with the passive danger of entropy and the active danger of sabotage; the societies of control operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy and the introduction of viruses. Gilles Deleuze (1992), postscript on the societies of control, p6

Digitization has transformed the nature of communication. On the digital plane, all is reduced to the language of codes.⁷² The entire architecture of computers and electronic devices that we use are based on the binary distinction between ones and zeroes. We invented an abstract terminology with a mathematical foundation to simplify the world’s complexities into communicable data. This reductive process granted us unparalleled technological capacity as well as exploitive powers. We have

⁷² Robert K. Logan, *Understanding New Media: Extending Marshall McLuhan*, [New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2010], p110

turned everything into the universal language of computers to facilitate the generation, organization, and dissemination of data as well as its analysis. This transition also helped replacing physical models with more virtual presences. Instead of discontinuous institutions, control mechanisms take over the fluid digital plane to circulate in its new pathways, to wrap bodies, affecting and governing them. In today's surveillance models, the body has entered into a new state of visibility. It appears less confined to a place, yet it is ceaselessly monitored. The modern body is objectified to be inserted onto the homogenous digital plane. The deciding factor, therefore, is to capture the body as data that can be integrated into the management of information. If we construct a mental model from Heidegger's view, the problem precisely lies in this particular reductive process of digitization and abstraction. *Dasein* seems to have been disassembled into a non-entity, an intensified set of unsubstantial data. The question may be formulated differently: how is it that we now see *being* as data and information? This appears to be another outcome of modernity, the empiricism that sees being as something to experiment with and manipulate. The positivist (to posit) attitude that turns *being* into a market commodity that can be enframed and turned into a standing resource.

Heidegger speaks of something that is lingering in concealment and is waiting to be disclosed, something uncanny, close and near, yet difficult to grasp in its nearness. *Being* also has to be in waiting for an opening, for a *Kairos*, an opportune moment. This is a kind of presencing that we cannot will for it to occur; we cannot objectify, code, or manufacture it. We can only engage in actions to increase our receptibility for when it manifests itself.⁷³ In a world where everything is abstracted as information and data, all is objectified into entities with limited or lost dimensions. These digitized models frame our vision and exclude other modes of *being*. Here, nothing is brought forward or revealed out of concealment. Similarly, in our contemporary cycle of productions, time and space lose their essence and are perceived as modified concepts, transmuted to adapt to the fast pace of technological operations; they are conceived as abstracted parameters, posited as standing reserve in generating seamless systems of control. Time is the quantified clock time, and space is understood as a vessel. The idea of time as something with both linear and vertical dimensions, as something elastic that expands and contracts, opening up and pushing out, stands in contrast to the ensuing one-dimensional vision that defies slowness. Heidegger wants to take *being* back to the realm of multitude dimensions, of earth and landscape; the one that stands in stark contrast to *Gestell*, the realm of sheer abstractions, of machines and techniques.

⁷³ Heidegger, *science, tech & spirituality with Johannes Niederhauser - Voices with Vervaeke*, YouTube Video, 52.47, Posted by "John Vervaeke", March 1st, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5C_9OhdbvM

The Surveillance Assemblage of Control Societies /10

We are only now beginning to appreciate that surveillance is driven by the desire to bring systems together, to combine practices and technologies and integrate them into a larger whole. It is this tendency which allows us to speak of surveillance as an assemblage, with such combinations providing for exponential increases in the degree of surveillance capacity.
(Haggerty & Ericson, 2000)

The theoretical narratives that map the evolution from disciplinary to control societies, from direct commands to indirect control, present a shift not just in institutional forms, but technological ones. The vertically layered sovereignty that functioned based on optical dominance is substituted for a fluid horizontal field of information. The human gaze that was enhanced through the architectural technology of the panopticon has been exchanged for the impersonal gaze of the machines. Advancements in information technology have resulted in a panopticon without physical walls, a decentralized surveillance system that operates through networks and heterogeneous agents rather than a central power. The dual relationship between the big brother and the subject, the observer and the observed has *deterritorialized*⁷⁴ into a society of many little brothers (government plus corporations), a democratized surveillance society with many dispersed functioning elements.

The abstract machine of control no longer ‘normalises’ its object, as discipline does. Normative information rather is integrated into numerical codes.

William Bogard, *Deleuze and Machines: A Politics of Technology?*, 2009

The panopticon was a good metaphor for the Foucauldian disciplinary models that were focused on subjugating bodies into a set of norms.⁷⁵ The patterns that aimed at “soul training” and making “docile bodies” with internalized psychological effects that extended beyond the physical territories of

⁷⁴ William Bogard, “Surveillance assemblages and lines of flight”. In David Lyon (Ed.), *Theorizing Surveillance: The panopticon and beyond*, [Portland: Willan Publishing, 2006], pp. 97-122

⁷⁵ Masa Galič, Timan, T. & Kooops, “Bentham, Deleuze and Beyond: An Overview of Surveillance Theories from the Panopticon to Participation”, *BI. Philosophy & Technology*. (2017) 30, pp 9-37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0219-1>. Accessed December 11th 2019

institutions. The post-panoptic theories of surveillance theorize a shift from the dual interaction of the “observer” and the “observed” to formulate the intensified and dispersed mechanisms that function at a distance and at times entail the active participation of surveilled subjects. The control mechanisms of the information age go beyond the politics of labour to control and modulate life and its complexities.

Foucault taught us that power is everywhere. The state’s mechanisms of power over individuals operate in polymorphous forms to organize and govern human life. The terms biopolitics and biopower tend to be used interchangeably.⁷⁶ Biopolitics, as formulated by Foucault, referred to the emerging sub-disciplines that applied data collected from life sciences to broader analyses of the social behaviour of the population and public policy. From the perspective of biopolitics, the individual is seen as a complex and layered biological organism of rational and emotional tendencies in reciprocity with a cultural environment. Biopowers, discursively, are the various techniques that are insidiously employed to subjugate the bodies and actively control the population. As Foucault discussed, pre-modern state models were mainly negative and juridical, targeting the population to punish bodies and inhibit rights in order to establish central sovereignty. In modernity however, this model has been transformed, now dispersed into mechanisms that are not merely governmental but are part of a myriad of power relationships involving various institutions including the family, the school, and the hospital.⁷⁷ Biopowers establish norms and regulations to positively influence and administer life through precise control strategies that are opaque, plural, and less detectable. Through a manifold of pervasive techniques, power permeates modern society, aggressively enticing and molding human desires, structuring political life, and exercising its totalizing control over bodies. These invisible yet dominant techniques involve the optimization and supply of a labor force that is mutually linked to the development and maintenance of regimes of capitalism. Biopolitics and their assertive epistemic models produce a social cycle that forms individuals who will refuel and perpetuate this cycle themselves.⁷⁸

Today’s biopowers are invariably tied to the socioeconomic structure that frame and inform our being. The line between power and its subjects has diffused. It is not very clear where control stops and self-surveillance begins. The notion of self-surveillance alludes to new and emerging dynamisms that cannot be framed within the old classical models. We no longer seem to need a panopticon state as individuals today objectify and exploit themselves. They themselves are the panopticons, watching, measuring, and optimizing their own performance. What is necessary is for neoliberal market forces to stage the scene and set the rules for predatory market relationships to emerge. Individuals

⁷⁶ Laurette T. Liesen, and Mary Barbara Walsh. "The Competing Meanings of "biopolitics" in Political Science: Biological and Postmodern Approaches to Politics." *Politics and the Life Sciences* 31, no. 1/2 (2012): 2-15. Accessed March 25, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23359808>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

themselves become the competitive actors on this scene to work themselves to extreme ends. The techno-scientific understanding of *being* has established a cognitive grammar that has changed the way we perceive ourselves. What was formerly imposed from the outside has now become what the self willingly does to itself.⁷⁹ In this game, individuals are ensnared in advanced and unfamiliar mechanisms of subjectification, impersonal and obscure that impact them through the insidious channels of network connectivity. Today's individuals are not so much disciplined or normalized by being exposed to a gaze, they are controlled in advance through more subconscious processes. The symbolic instrument of the cane has been replaced by psychic drugs for self-regulation.⁸⁰

*In actuality there is an imposed and inescapable uniformity to our compulsory labor of self-management. The illusion of choice and autonomy is one of the foundations of this global system of auto-regulation.*⁸¹ - Jonathan Crary

The Body- Optical Vs Tactile Control

The ubiquitous digital landscape of network technologies has immersed bodies in a new medium. In fact, the body is the central subject for the techno-digital surveillance models of today's *control societies*. These rhizomatic models form networks of connections that function laterally. They are comprised of databases focusing on different aspects of the human body, its consumer habits, repetitive patterns, and its movements. Surveillance today collects and stores information to decode, replay and reassemble. Along with the old model of disciplinary enclosures that are still very much alive and operating, the new surveillance models shift their focus beyond the physical enclosure of concrete structures to focus on the increasingly disembodied and abstracted modulation of entities. If in the so called disciplinary models bodies were individually targeted as humans, in *societies of control*, the process is *de-humanized*.⁸² Individuals are no longer the subject of study. Instead their behavioural patterns are targeted. Their numerical representations and the data trail they leave behind enter the abstract operation of algorithms. The algorithms that run in the background of our experiences to measure our bodies and their affects. The goal is to predict and also to optimize responses to our desires and needs. Bodies are dissected into parts to be reassembled as data bodies, a digitally composed entity. Deleuze's concept of dividuation is also related to control and parametric

⁷⁹ Heidegger, *science, tech & spirituality with Johannes Niederhauser - Voices with Vervaeke*, YouTube Video, 52:47, Posted by "John Vervaeke", March 1st, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5C_9OhdbvM

⁸⁰ Jeremy Jae, *Deleuze-Guattari: Societies of Control and Antipsychiatry*. "PHILOSOPHORUM ITINERIS AEQUALIS" (blog), Wednesday, 27 March 2013. Accessed April 2019, <http://the-simulon.blogspot.com/2013/>

⁸¹ Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, [London: Verso, 2013], p46

⁸² Masa Galič, Timan, T. & Kooops, "Bentham, Deleuze and Beyond: An Overview of Surveillance Theories from the Panopticon to Participation", *BI. Philosophy & Technology*. (2017) 30, pp 9-37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0219-1>. Accessed December 12th 2019

modulation. It follows the capital logic of accumulation that divides life into measures of information, and population into databases.

We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become "dividuals," and masses, samples, data, markets, or "banks."

Gilles Deleuze (1992), *postscript on the societies of control*, p5

Deleuze calls this the society of “passwords” and “surfing,” where individuals are perceived as data and not subjects, *dividuals* that are granted passage or denied access to a myriad of domains, physical or digital.⁸³ Passwords organize an immaterial territory that is fluid but also quite impenetrable, and definitely bounded. The deterritorialized and distributed networks do not confine bodies physically into specific locales but restrain them through their information. Under the discrete gaze of the machines, bodies are interpreted as compositions of hybrid mixtures, a “flesh-technology-information amalgam,”⁸⁴ and a quantified entity that is extracted from its physical setting to be *de-corporealized*. These *data doppelgangers* may or may not correspond to the real bodies but they are the more functional versions of them. They form an abstracted and digitized being that enters data flows; the *cyborgs* that are more “measurable” and “mobile” than their physical equivalents.⁸⁵ The information extracted from these bodies enters the data operations of various institutions, corporations, financial offices, police stations, and statistical laboratories to be organized, *scrutinized* and *re-assembled*. The goal is to conjure strategies of *administration, commerce, control*, and predictive policing; to objectively measure the possibilities of the body.⁸⁶

These hybrids can involve something as direct as tagging the human body so that its movements through space can be recorded, to the more refined reconstruction of a person's habits, preferences, and lifestyle from the trails of information which have become the detritus of contemporary life. The surveillant assemblage is a visualizing device that brings into the visual register a host of heretofore opaque flows of auditory, scent, chemical, visual, ultraviolet and informational stimuli. Much of the visualization pertains to the human

⁸³ Gilles Deleuze (1992), *postscript on the societies of control*

⁸⁴ Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, “The Surveillance Assemblage” in *British Journal of sociology*, Vol. No. 51 Issue No. 4 (December 2000) pp. 605–622, https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/ifi/INF3700/v17/bakgrunnsnotat/the_surveillant_assemblage.pdf. Accessed December 12th 2019, p613-614

⁸⁵ Masa Galič, Timan, T. & Koops, “Bentham, Deleuze and Beyond: An Overview of Surveillance Theories from the Panopticon to Participation”, *BJ. Philosophy & Technology*. (2017) 30, pp 9-37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0219-1> accessed December 2019

⁸⁶ Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, “The Surveillance Assemblage” in *British Journal of sociology*, Vol. No. 51 Issue No. 4 (December 2000) pp. 605–622, https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/ifi/INF3700/v17/bakgrunnsnotat/the_surveillant_assemblage.pdf. Accessed December 12th 2019

body, and exists beyond our normal range of perception. Haggerty & Ericson, Surveillance assemblage, p7

Affect Engineering- The information/body interface – On Becoming cyborgs

The immaterial can act on the material. The exchange between the actual and the virtual can induce transformative physical and cognitive effects. Surveillance has entered the tactile space between the body and the digital surfaces that are in contact with it. Together, the organic and nonorganic bodies, the corporeal and the technological ones, form an interstitial space where information is exchanged. The mutual interaction between the body and the virtual machines attached to it forms a flexible mold. This immaterial enclosure warps the body to continuously monitor its responsive emotions and to extract data from it. It is also in these spaces that messages are relayed to and are mixed with bodies, messages that contain affective powers that impact the moods, thoughts, and psyches of subjects. The media and the subsequent digital networks of the *control society*, have obtained the power to incrementally modulate emotions by subjecting bodies to rhythmically disseminated information. William Bogard in his essay *Digital Resisto(e)rs*, speaks of a kind of modulation that focuses on timing and the synchronization of deliverable messages that ultimately support the economic and political demands of the controlling powers. Messages that induce feelings of sadness, fear, or greed, distract bodies in different directions, adjust their responses, and influence their powers to act.⁸⁷

The real problem is how a mutual resonance of information and affect is established via the interface of messaging machines and flesh. The rhythmic modulation of information and affect is one of the key technological projects of post-disciplinary societies, and a dominant means by which networked Capital organizes its circuits of accumulation and coordinates them with the production of subjectivities.

William Bogard, *Digital Resisto(e)rs*, 2010

The body transitions into a mixture of information and flesh via contact with the digital interfaces and “material assemblages” that it is in constant correspondence with. These control surfaces are the material avatars of the codes and algorithms that constitute the underlying layers designed to audit the body. The “technical,” “political,” and “biochemical” machines of control target the surface of the skin to haptically engage with it and to monitor the body’s affective capacities. The timing and intensity of the charged messages are adjusted to ensure the ceaseless functionality of the subjects. In

⁸⁷ William Bogard, “Digital resisto(e)rs”, *CTHEORY* cds012 (2010), http://ctheory.net/ctheory_wp/digital-resistoers/, Accessed December 16th 2019

the “message-escapes” of the information society, bodies are caught and the everyday life of the subjects are administered. The “bio-electronic coils”⁸⁸ of control instruct the individuals by sending affective messages that restrain and channel their energies but also push them into responding in manners that can be measured. The dissemination of information in the control system follows a “haptic” logic⁸⁹ to embrace a myriad of feelings, emotions, and desires that lead to corporeal, cognitive and perceptual transformations. In this cycle of co-participation between flesh and technology that appears innocuous, individuals willingly relegate incredible amounts of information to increasingly abstract processes that code and decode them. The accumulated data is subsequently appropriated to fit the reproduction of capital.

These machines interface the body on multiple levels. They are the receivers and transmitters, sensors and jammers, data pads, control surfaces, and catalytic devices that enable everyday life and round-the-clock functionality in network society. For both information and the living body, in the context of postmodern global Capital, they are means of controlling flight, not in the sense of physical apparatuses of capture or enclosure as once employed by disciplinary societies, but rather forms of digital tethering proper to information societies and the message-scape. William Bogard, *Digital Resisto(e)rs*, 2010

Surveillance Capitalism and the rhetorical question of autonomy

Surveillance in its broader forms operates both as an economic as well as a political mechanism of domination. Today’s model of control not only entails the disciplinary methods to organize and control the labor force in the processes of production of capital but they have transmuted into a coercive technological infrastructure with pervasive economic objectives. Surveillance capitalism is the result of an economic logic that has hijacked available technologies to implement its ambitions in molding desirable consumers. Corporate capital has taken down the walls to operate under the imperatives of “fluidity” and “flexibility.”⁹⁰ The “hierarchical” and “stratified”⁹¹ corporations can now be deterritorialized to function at finer scales of exploitation. Distributed networks deconstruct human desires and social relations to monitor the entirety of human life in its granular details. The capital system of today seeks to profit from the data that is generated from people’s bodies and daily

⁸⁸ Bogard, “Digital resisto(e)rs”

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ William Bogard, ‘Deleuze and Machines: A Politics of Technology?’ pp.15-31, in: Mark Poster, David Savat, (Eds.), 2009. *Deleuze and new technology*, Deleuze connections. (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press,2009), p21

⁹¹ Ibid.

behaviors.⁹² The goal is to feed the algorithms that predict the probabilities of future actions. Today's surveillance models seek strategies to directly manipulate and influence those behaviors in order to control the market and also produce more revenue.⁹³ In post-panoptic theories, *surveillance capitalism* is a newly defined *subspecies* that fits the network society. It functions based on the accumulation of data as raw material for capital.⁹⁴

Private human experience is now a commodity that has entered market dynamics. The insatiable demand to collect and analyze data in conjunction with advances in artificial intelligence has led to increasingly impersonal and independent market processes. The new desired product is prediction, an information commodity that is now exclusively traded. Today's market interests lie in the power to know in advance, to measure the body's patterns, and to modulate the response to it. We are being controlled subconsciously and through the optimization of our affects. The algorithms that run in the background of our experiences measure and record our data to predict what we need even before we know ourselves. We have entered an all-encompassing and intensified field of global market machinery that has never been so refined, a techno capitalist structure that is capable of applying various changes at a variety of levels with great predictive validity.

*In a world where such a system of contractual monitoring and enforcement is the norm, 'habitats inside and outside the human body are saturated with data and produce radically distributed opportunities for observation, interpretation, communication, influence, prediction and ultimately modification of the totality of action', establishing a new architecture from which there is no escape, making the Panopticon seem prosaic. Where power was previously identified with ownership of means of production, it is now constituted by ownership of means of behavioural modification*⁹⁵ Shoshana Zuboff

The asymmetries of power and knowledge – The social relationship of one-way mirror

Surveillance today can shift its focus from commerce to politics to induce specific outcomes. The mechanisms of contemporary surveillance not only use our data to predict our actions but to exert power over our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Surveillance capitalism is eroding our autonomy over our experiences through

⁹² Masa Galič, Timan, T. & Koops, "Bentham, Deleuze and Beyond: An Overview of Surveillance Theories from the Panopticon to Participation", *BJ. Philosophy & Technology*. (2017) 30, pp 9-37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0219-1>. Accessed December 2019

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, [New York: Public Affairs, 2019]

⁹⁵ Shoshana Zuboff, "Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization". *Journal of Information Technology* (2015), 30, 75–89, p82

processes that are engineered to bypass our awareness.⁹⁶ It aims at determining the boundaries of our decisions, our right to the future tense, and the inward *sanctuary*.⁹⁷ Today's surveillance operates in subtle and insidious ways to control its subjects. We seem to have lost the "right of combat"⁹⁸ in a confrontation that is diffused, impersonal, and from which there seems to be no exit. It also imposes a challenge to democracy from above by having gained excessive power to manipulate the population at bigger scales. We are now dealing with technological operations embedded in the corporate infrastructures that appear too intricate and are far more advanced than the old legal institutions to be regulated. The exclusivity of access to technologies that collect and employ our data has led to disproportionate asymmetries of power and knowledge. They know so much about us while we know so little. The socially constructed one-way- mirror relationships have bestowed corporations like Amazon, Facebook, and Google, with the unauthorized power to influence and modify people's actions. The fight for democracy today necessitates the fight for equal rights to information as well as the establishment of the right institutions. The emerging non-consensual mechanisms of governing require new forms of civil engagement; legal infrastructures necessary to defend individuals against impersonal and computerized governing tactics.

*We saw predictive knowledge morphing into instrumentarian power in Facebook's contagion experiments published in 2012 and 2014, when it planted subliminal cues and manipulated social comparisons on its pages, first to influence users to vote in midterm elections and later to make people feel sadder or happier. Facebook researchers celebrated the success of these experiments noting two key findings: that it was possible to manipulate online cues to influence real world behavior and feelings, and that this could be accomplished while successfully bypassing users' awareness.*⁹⁹ Shoshana Zuboff 2020

As discussed in this section, today's mechanisms of political power portray a system that has changed its model of confrontation. Control operates through the dissemination of an ambient atmosphere that targets bodies by incorporating extra-judicial techniques. Bio-powers of the *societies of control* induce positive and affirmative forces in addition to employing restrictive measures. They invest in life to manufacture life itself, to harvest our energies and to channel them along pre-determined paths. In our time, digitization has fostered forms of collaboration in which we expose ourselves to networks that open a detailed window into our lives. If power micromanages the population in unwritten forms,

⁹⁶ *The Rise of Surveillance Capitalism* (2019), YouTube Video, 1:44:27, Posted By "The Intercept", March 1st 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s4Y-uZG5zk>, accessed Dec. 2019

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Shoshana Zuboff, "You Are Now Remotely Controlled", *Opinion in The New York Times*, Jan. 24, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/24/opinion/sunday/surveillance-capitalism.html>. Accessed January 16th 2020

resistance mechanisms may also take on similar patterns, through non-conformist micro-subversive actions. If power exercises itself everywhere and in everything, then the sites to resist such manipulative forces are also dispersed in the recesses of everyday life and in the infinitesimal subversion of repetitive norms, in the refusal to participate, and in non-conformist inactions.

The next section of this thesis introduces an installation project that aimed at studying similar theories in with the ambition to substantiate them into visual forms. The intention was to visualize the surveillance net and employ art as a means to investigate a methodology of response. The materiality of light was studied as a sculptural medium to generate a particular ambience; one that orchestrated an affective field for a physical experience in space. *Immaterial Cage* was the title of a project that was exhibited at York University *Special Projects Gallery* in the summer of 2017.

Part 2B: *Immaterial Cage*



Figure #8: *Immaterial Cage* installation view, Special Projects Gallery York University



Figure #9: *Immaterial Cage*, Special Projects Gallery York University- A Perspectival Drawing in the Air- The *Immaterial Cage* is a spatial instrument that holds afloat an infinite space of confinement. In a durational operation, frames of light build intensity. Within the subtle thresholds of transitioning lights, the reflective frames dissolve into layers of darkness. The object surpasses the borders of its objecthood. A cage materializes before the viewer's eyes. The light permeates the darkness for an ephemeral terrain to spread its body. The architectonic device enraptures the space of the gallery with a tremulous ambiance. The reflective layers of mirrors capture viewing bodies in space and place them within the proliferating frames of an immaterial cage. Entrapped in a virtual grid, the viewers are enmeshed within a breathing atmosphere of light that moves around and through the materiality of their bodies. The emerging sensory landscape carries in itself "blocks of perception". There resides an interiority that withholds access; an interiority that slices the space open to undergo a transformation but establishes a distance, untraversable, yet in close proximity.

The Ontogenesis of An Affective Construct –Reciprocity of Theory and Materiality/11

The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own. The artist's greatest difficulty is to "make it stand up on its own". Sometimes this requires what is, from the viewpoint of an implicit model, from the viewpoint of lived perceptions and affections, great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality.¹⁰⁰

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is philosophy*

The *Immaterial Cage* was an installation piece that was assembled in response to the ecology of socio-political forces that shape our contemporary environment. The project was intended to generate a milieu of experience where the constructed forms along with the collage of elements germinate percepts into affects. For the author, the practice of making entails a reciprocity between theory and material construction. We situate ourselves within the particular grounds of theoretical research to accumulate facts and narratives; a mixture of thoughts that lay a foundation for a work and sustain it in time. Yet, the work of art is not a representation of what is already visible. It is not the mere act of storytelling as it is the channelling of invisible forces into visible and tangible constructs. In his essay *Mediators*, Gilles Deleuze speaks of the relationship between science, philosophy and art as creative processes of generating functions, concepts, and sensory aggregates.¹⁰¹ He questions the prospects of creating a synergy between these different methods of thinking, movement, and acting. "How is it possible for a function, an aggregate, and a concept to interact?"¹⁰² Through a theoretical construct, this work established a conceptual lens to address a set of questions. The act of making however, focused on compressing these findings into sensations and "percepts." It strived to capture a myriad

¹⁰⁰ Gilles Deleuze & Filix Guattari, *What is philosophy*, [New York, Columbia University Press, 1996], p164-165

¹⁰¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Mediators*, posted by "Columbia.edu", established URL:

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arts/vad/critical_issues_on_art/deleuze_mediators.pdf. Accessed May 11th 2020, p123

¹⁰² Ibid. p124

of forces to singularize and distil them into one particular event. The act of making is an act of “deterritorialization,” where a material entity undergoes an affective formation to be “reterritorialized” and imbued with immaterial substance. The artwork ultimately becomes the material unpacking of the forces and percepts that are registered affectively and precociously on the nervous system.¹⁰³ The project probed the possibilities of an architectonic engagement with the space of the gallery, one with transformative powers that would induce a particular ambiance. The phenomenological properties of light as a tangible material were investigated in producing sensorial effects. Light that is capable of unpacking its materiality into an expansive field generates a turbulent milieu of ineffable yet dynamic relationships. *Immaterial Cage* was an instrument that rhythmically breathed light into the space to expand and contract its volumetric perception. It fabricated an atmosphere capable of transmitting forces in-between performative bodies.

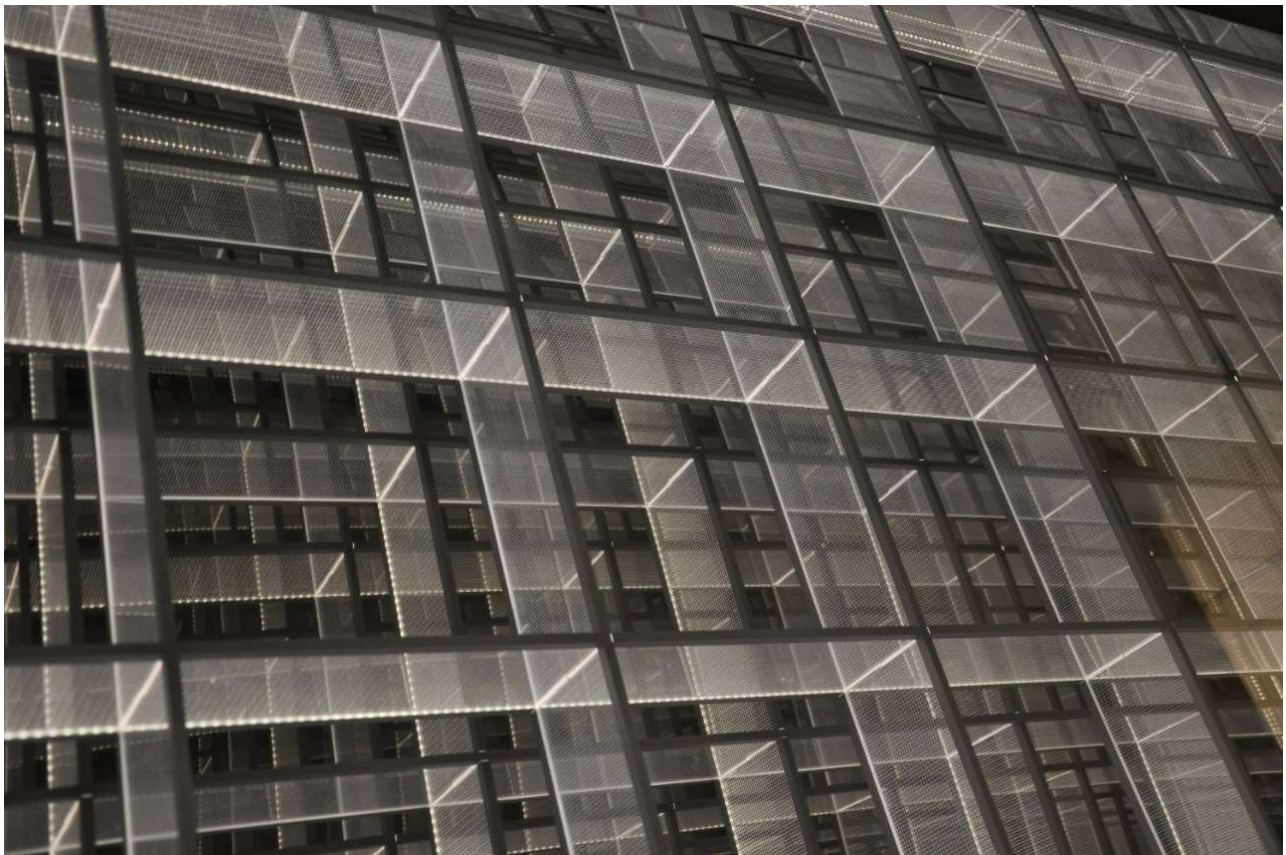


Figure #10: Immaterial Cage installation view - Light establishes a foundation for the modern digital age of the internet. Beyond illumination, light as an image postulates a “depthless, placeless flow of abstract information”. Light renders a rhizomatic virtual space where data is captured, stored, curated, and transferred; a place where data is analyzed computationally to reveal patterns; a virtual space that structures a flexible mesh of confinement.

¹⁰³ Coleman, *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*

A Machine of Capture- Striated vs Haptic Landscape /12

Optical visibility is necessary for distance perception: for surveying a landscape, for making fine distinctions between things at a distance. That's how the object of vision is constituted in optical visibility. The subject of vision — the beholder — is also conceived as discrete, as having solid borders that demarcate the beholder from the thing beheld. So you can see why optical visibility is needed, for example, for firing a missile. It conceives of the other, the object of vision, as distant and unconnected to the subject of vision. Optical visibility is necessary. But it's only half of vision.

-Laura Marks

Deleuze and Guattari, in their introduction to the concept of “Nomadology,” speak of two different sets of constructs. The space of the city as a striated territory where movement is modulated and controlled is contrasted with the landscape of the nomads that can be freely traversed. If in a striated space, objects are locatable and separated from their background, the nomadic land is a haptic space where the whole surface of the body is engaged in the act of navigation. Haptic space is described as a smooth space, one that is fluid and intensive, a deterritorialized space that must be navigated by constant referencing to its immediate surroundings instead of abstractions like maps or compasses. It is rhizomatic, tactile, and “sonorous, much more than being a visual space.”¹⁰⁴ Smooth space is a close range vision that should be perceived through the particularities of its materials. Optical space, in contrast, is striated, extensive and territorialized. In this space, objects exist in three-dimensional space and are perceived from a distance in fixed locales. There exists a clear relationship between figure and ground. In haptic visibility, the subject is not detached from the object and sees the world as if it were touching it: close, intensive, on the surface of the body.¹⁰⁵

The state needs to subordinate the hydraulic force to conduits, pipes, embankments, which prevent turbulence, which constraints movement from one pint to another, and space itself is to be striated and measured, which makes

¹⁰⁴ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, [Seattle, WA: Wormwood Distribution, 2010], p46

¹⁰⁵ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film, Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, [Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000]

the fluid depend on the solid, and flows proceed by parallel, laminar layers. The hydraulic model of nomad science and the war machine on the other hand, consists in being distributed by turbulence across a smooth space, in producing a movement that holds space and simultaneously affects all its points instead of being held by space in a local movement from one specified point to another.
(Deleuze & Guattari, *Nomadology*, p20)

Beyond aesthetic measures and encrypted metaphors, *Immaterial Cage* as form is a diagram, a cartographic object that maps the space of the gallery. The relationships within the work are minimized in favour of the relationships that the piece generates within its context. As a site-reliant installation, the object is bound to its physical location. It acknowledges the gallery's contextual frame as an active participant in establishing a reading of the work. The *Immaterial Cage* is intended to be an intelligent structure that facilitates a visual experience and an architectural metamorphosis. In its minimalistic construct, it follows a non-hierarchical, impersonal arrangement of elementary components. It appears as a flat box made out of layers of mirrors. Yet, it has an invested interiority that transcends its presence to attain the state of an objectless object. The form that hides in plain sight codes and de-codes the space. It has a dual presence that shifts in a durational time frame. In one, it is a simple mirrored surface that occupies the room without counting it; in another, it changes scale to transition into an infinite landscape of a geometric grid, counting the space while occupying it.¹⁰⁶

A Sensory Aggregate of a concept -The gallery at first appears like an open smooth space; one can move from one point to another without crossing a gridded trajectory that situates the emerging nebulous paths within any particular coordinates. One might argue that the gallery itself is bordered and walled within the university context, the imposing and policing geometry of the institution that houses it. Yet inside the enveloping body of the institution, the bodies of the visitors come across another object that transforms and shifts the space geometry to unfold another relationship. The people who were moving freely in an indefinite territory are suddenly propelled into another geometry, striated and definitive. In this emerging and ephemeral terrain, the mirrored images of the bodies that are held in the immediate memory of the visitors are parcelled out of their context to be placed onto a different one. Space gets layered to form a foreground-background kind of relationship. The apparatus stretches a virtual body across the gallery to insidiously capture and infest it with the coordinates of a perspectival landscape. The installation operates similar to a digital surface, pixelated

¹⁰⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*, p18

with a uniform modular to map the events that are taking place here with a higher resolution, one that can be measured quantitatively. The reciprocity between the object and the viewer form an intermediate space. The body gravitates towards this depthless void that directs a gaze at it. The installation finds its ultimate formation in that affective space that materializes between this evanescent immaterial landscape and the bodies that encounter it.

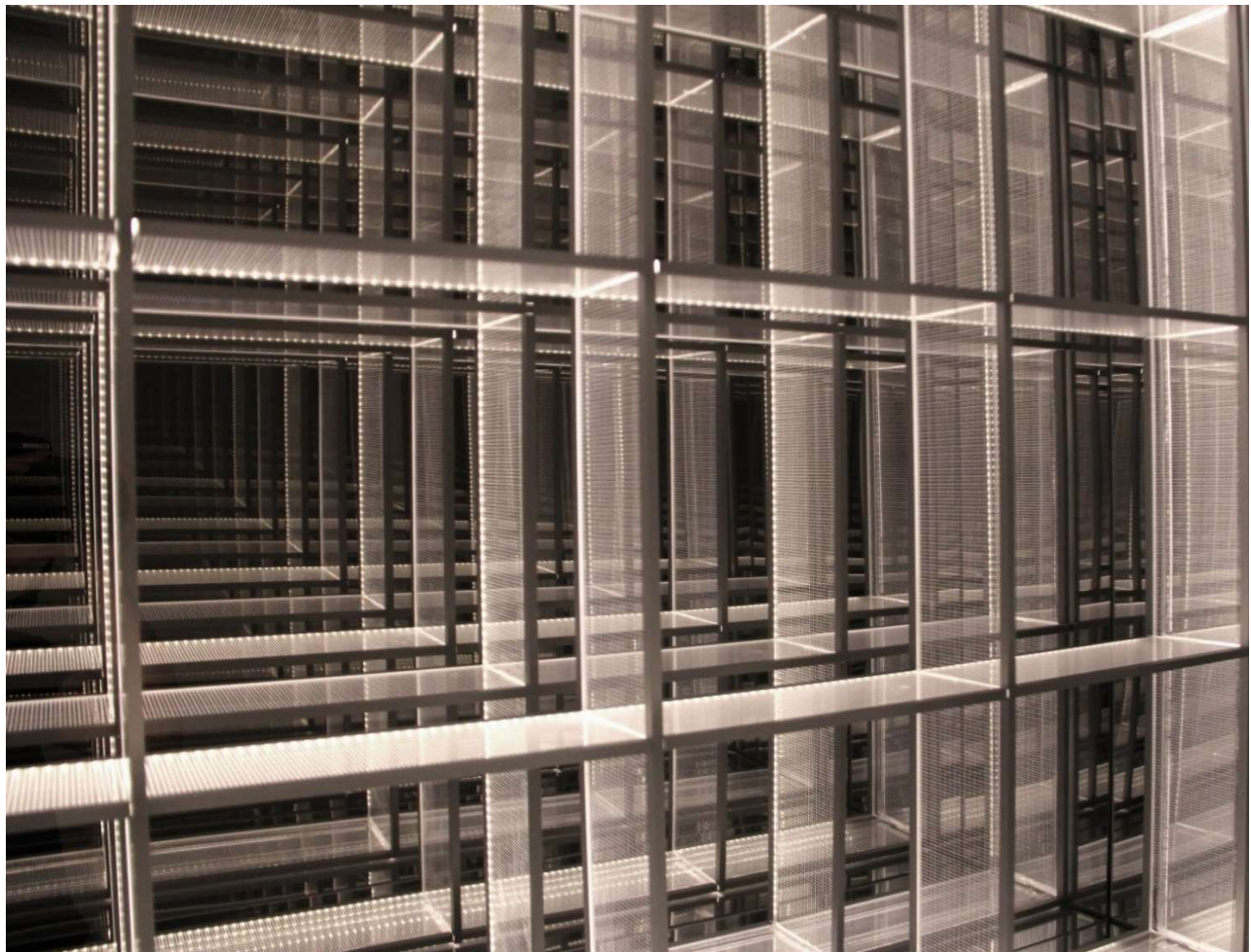


Figure #11: *Immaterial Cage* installation view, Special Projects Gallery York University- Are there any thoughts or actions that could exit the stratified frames of *Gestell*, the axiomatic grid of *standing reserve* and the imposed geometry of the state? How can we map some escape routes out of the *society of control*? What are the *lines of flight* that traverse the integrated *machines of capture*? How can we introduce a smooth space of immanent relations for a new kind of *poiesis* to happen? Actions that reverse the regulatory measures and the instrumentalized rationalities of goal-oriented processes? How can we bring the outside in to make another territory? To deterritorialize ourselves by going elsewhere, to a new space-time composition? A clearing, for self-concealment, to become liquid, nebulous, multidimensional and opaque to the ever-present algorithms of capture. A place for the *nomad warriors* to void the commanding enclosures of surveillance that collect, predict, and modulate the next actions. To wander poetically and to escape the landscape of *the Immaterial Cage*?

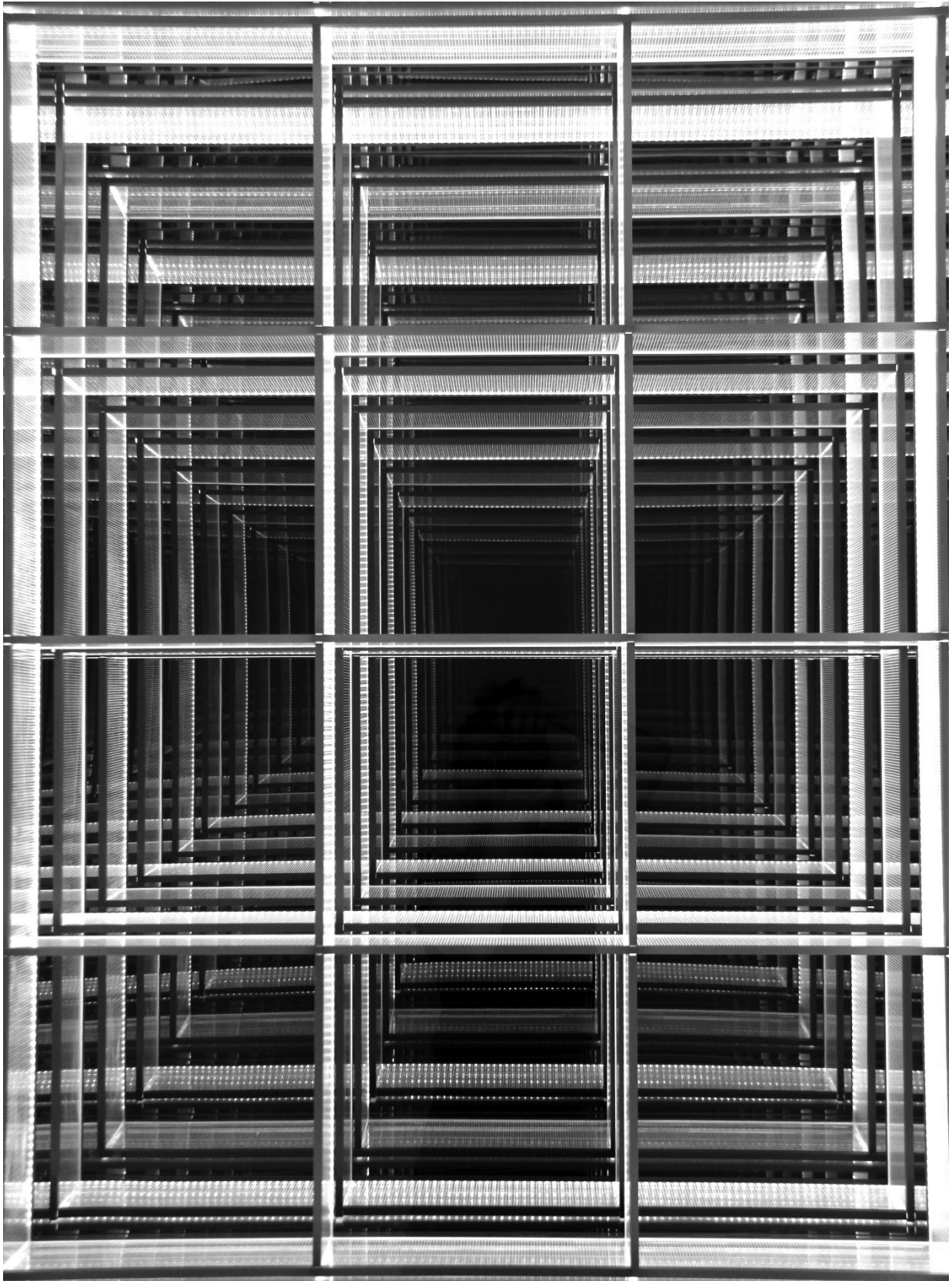


Figure #12: *Immaterial Cage* installation view, Special Projects Gallery York University

Part 3: Action

The Cognition and Recognition of Selfhood within the Grid of Control /13

It is important to keep in mind that the necessity for dream is stronger than any utilitarian need. In the language of science, the necessity for understanding the unknowable comes before any desire to discover the unknown. Man's first expression, like his first dream, was an aesthetic one. Speech was a poetic outcry rather than a demand for communication. Original man, shouting his consonants, did so in yells of awe and anger at his tragic state, at his own self-awareness, and at his own helplessness before the void.

Barnett Newman, *The First Man Was an Artist*, 1947

Thus far, this thesis has intently followed two parallel lines of investigation. It has inquired after the question of selfhood against hyper-industrial market technologies and their global computational logic. The kind of market machinery that has progressively grown to be more powerful than any individual can ever become, analyzing, predicting, and insidiously putting into motion the kind of trade mechanisms that only respond to the logic of a thriving market.¹⁰⁷ The dwindling of social and moral values in the face of a *healthy economic body*,¹⁰⁸ has led to the initialization of a new notion of the self, one that is devoid of anything divine, and one that has quietly transitioned into being a mere commodity. In the constant movements of taking actions, the breathless haste of modernity, the propelling forces of the “will to will”¹⁰⁹, and the ferocity of imposed doer-ships, we seem to have lost the time and space for leisure, for true *skhole*¹¹⁰, to pause in *otium*¹¹¹, and to cultivate a relationship to

¹⁰⁷ Prof. Philip Mirowski keynote for 'Life and Debt' conference, YouTube Video, 20:31, Posted By “University of Technology Sydney”, Aug 18th 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7ewn29w-9l&t=256s>. Accessed August 16th 2020

¹⁰⁸ Judith Butler: on COVID-19, the politics of non-violence, necropolitics, and social inequality, YouTube Video, 1:06:48, Posted By “Verso Books”, July, 23, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=6Bnj7H7M_Ek&feature=emb_logo. Accessed August 16th 2020

¹⁰⁹ The phenomenon called the “will to will” points to the modern adventure of the Cartesian subject indefinitely willing itself. In response to its existential loneliness, the modern subject has centered everything in itself. In the absence of any divine cosmology giving a protective shelter to its life, he/she has to constantly generate everything from scratch. In this Cartesian perspective, the subject wills to hold on to itself, to enact and reify itself in a continuous search for self-certainty. It has forgotten stillness for the sake of movement. It becomes extremely difficult for it to let go of itself and to embrace the void that is behind its back.

¹¹⁰ In ancient Greek *Skhole* means idleness. It is understood as the time of leisure, the unoccupied opening in the quantitative continuum of time. Both Plato and Aristotle may argue that there is no philosophy without *Skhole*. Philosophy requires the time out of the business of everyday to think. *Skhole* then is a presupposition for philosophizing.

¹¹¹ Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *Otium* as leisure with dignity. This abstract Latin term has many meanings. In the old Greek meaning of the term, it was the time of leisure dedicated to worshiping the Gods. In the context of this thesis, *Otium* is understood as the time free of the business and public negotiations. It is the time spent towards self-cultivation, on poetry, philosophy, and art. Cicero spoke of the idea of gaining dignity not

the other side. The modern iteration of Descartes' human is constantly in action, running away from the void, the infinite nothingness that holds the core of its being. Technology also has filled the integral spaces for these necessary existential encounters, the time and place to confront the boredom, the pain, and the angst of being human. The modern person takes refuge in the media to kill time and to avoid the void, the nothingness that is lurking beneath its feet. The will to will, that irresistible energy that pushes him/her forward doesn't stop to linger but instead engages humans in passive mindless activities. Furthermore, enmeshed within a network of synchronized clocks, digital devices, intensive computational algorithms augmenting/converging the forces of *Gestell*, we are conditioned to keep accumulating far beyond our basic needs. In the world of total work, we only attend to what we lack. Ensnared in the endless cycles of calculating utilities, we carry a heavy burden we fail to see. We never know when we have reached enough to take a break and to contemplate a relationship to ourselves and our senses, to compose a space to listen to the quiet inner void that is no longer silenced by the outside noise. The forces of *Gestell* paint a world picture that appears indestructible and eternal. The Cartesian human resides in a self-referential matrix that wards off the divine, that thing that has remained unknown. Yet *Dasein* has to find a dimension outside the specter of *enframing* to face its mortality, to engage in a dialogue with itself, and to exist poetically. This dialogue has to start from an inner site, a traversable distance to oneself, to conjure the methods of escape, resistance, and disobedience.

In this chapter of this thesis, I inquire after a mode of resistance. On a more external layer and from a Deleuzian perspective, I ask: how is it possible to be liberated from the existing grid of control, from the structures of intelligibility and surveillance? How to flee the staggering frames of visibility that continuously modulate and detect? How to confront a regulated and coded battlefield that affords no retreat? On an existential layer, once again the cognition and re-cognition of selfhood in the face of all that is nothing, in an era of the ungroundedness of all ideas, constitute the central axis of my inquiry. The questions that are presented here are eternal and a solid answer to an ultimate truth may not be attainable. I will, however, strive at formulating a framework to probe ambiguities and to conceptualize possible paths of exit. In this chapter, the study of the work of philosophers like Heidegger, Deleuze, and Bernard Stiegler has been conducive to delineate a structure for possible passage.

just through the active life of *negotium* but the idle time of *otium* given to personal activities. In this kind of leisure, we enter a dimension to open up to apprehending reality, to take an elementary natural stance, and to taste stillness.

“Informational Self-defence” & Machines of Liberation / “Vacuoles of non-communication”/14

The problem is no longer getting people to express themselves, but providing little gaps of solitude and silence in which they might eventually find something to say. Repressive forces don't stop people from expressing themselves, but rather force them to express themselves. What a relief to have nothing to say, the right to say nothing, because only then is there a chance of framing the rare, or ever rarer, the thing that might be worth saying. What we're plagued by these days isn't any blocking of communication, but pointless statements.¹¹² Gilles Deleuze

In today's society, we face the compulsion to communicate and be social, to reverse our interiority, and speak about our desires and secrets even in the absence of those. We are constantly instructed to participate in polls and statistics to voluntarily take part in “obliged revelations” and “forced confessions” even if there is nothing to be revealed.¹¹³ We are directed to engage in fabricating a reality that will come around to penetrate our lives. Post-panoptic theories herald a surveillance era where control migrates, becoming a force of various state institutions and corporations. It no longer operates via a single identifiable body of governance. The new versions of capitalism have turned contemporary society into a *Mega Machine*, to use Lewis Mumford's term. Different components of science, economy, political power, and techniques converge to accumulate, to learn, to augment their forces, and ultimately to subordinate. For Mumford, the escape from the *Mega Machine* begins from an inner site, a place that cannot be fully repressed, and that is where one forms feelings and perceptions of oneself.¹¹⁴ There exist a wide variety of resistant approaches that seek to interrupt, block, and sabotage the operations of capital by hijacking its mechanisms and relays. Against the technologies of market control, we can propose technologies of resistance. We can employ legislative

¹¹² Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1995], p 129.

¹¹³ Andy McLaverty-Robinson, “An A to Z of Theory | Jean Baudrillard: Marx and Alienation – Draft 2”, *CEASEFIRE*, <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-4/#:~:text=In%20The%20Mirror%20of%20Production,people%20are%20constructed%20as%20workers>. Accessed March 202

¹¹⁴ Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Human Development: The Myth of the Machine, Vol. I*, [Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 1971]

systems to bridle the insatiable desires of corporations for data extraction and analysis in order to enforce a more transparent use. As a method of self-defence or data protection, we may use manifold technologies to resist compliance, obfuscate our data tracks, add noise, and sabotage the existing collected data to make it all more ambiguous, harder to use, and therefore ineffectual.

*Here, “digital hygiene” begins to replicate our modern relationship to bodily health: just as “health” is merely a temporary and relative freedom from pathologies, into which we may slip back at any moment and therefore require our unending vigilance, there can be no escape from the threat of surveillance.*¹¹⁵ - Sun-ha Hong

In the age of ubiquitous capture, another persisting issue seems to be the notion of self-surveillance. The dividing borders between institutions and individuals are less distinct today as many actively contribute to relinquish their data to various systems. In our technology-saturated societies, individuals are compelled to resort to devices and apps that promise the idea of self-control. We willingly submit our bodies to these “black boxes” that promise transparency but function in ways that operate beyond our human perceptual capacities. Rather than top-down external surveillance, we now have an extensive horizontal model where people use wearable computing devices to track data and monitor their performances. The idea of the internalization of data sounds empowering but undoubtedly begs the question of whether these apps are a mere façade for other forms of illicit data mining operations that may be taking place in the background.¹¹⁶

SIGINT¹¹⁷ is the inevitable protagonist to the age of the internet and global communications infrastructures. The narrative of SIGINT’s necessity thus forms a certain parallel with self-surveillance’s vision of automated and autonomous data collection. Both interpellate a world of knowing machines that can produce meaningful knowledge prior to or in excess of human

¹¹⁵ Sun-Ha Hong, *Technologies of Speculation, The Limits of Knowledge in a Data-Driven Society*, [New York: New York University Press, 2020], p128.

¹¹⁶ Masa Galič, Timan, T. & Koops, “Bentham, Deleuze and Beyond: An Overview of Surveillance Theories from the Panopticon to Participation”, *BJ. Philosophy & Technology*. (2017) 30, pp 9-37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0219-1>. Accessed December 17th 2019

¹¹⁷ Signals intelligence stands for intelligence data gathering by intercepting signals. This data is generated by collecting information about the communication between people as well as the electronic signals not directly used in communication. Signals intelligence is a subcategory of intelligence collection management. Signal intelligence also entails the use of cryptanalysis to decode and decipher encrypted messages and sensitive information.

*intervention. Machines that know in our stead loomed even larger in the explicitly fictional and hypothetical. Interpassivity not only does not stop at projecting what is known by others or realized in secret but also leverages more speculative literature to bring forth the secret and uncertain.*¹¹⁸ - Sun-ha Hong

The notion of participatory self-surveillance in a way successfully fulfils Foucault's objectives. The cycle is utterly complete where we have individuals who have unreservedly internalized the methods of self-disciplining. We are no longer in need of an omnipresent panoptic framework in a time when citizens willingly self-discipline and self-exploit. The ambient atmosphere of control has set up a vigorous existential understanding of *Dasein*. Being perceives and eagerly presents itself as a *standing reserve*. These new and emerging dynamisms are far more difficult to capture based on the old and classical paradigms of surveillance. The liberation from today's machinery of control seems to start from a more internal place, from an individual locale. This interiority should target the way we relate to ourselves, the way we perceive our environment, and think about it; the way we compose our senses and regulate our affects. In this sense resistance and liberation should be conjured on a more personal scale before testing strategies publically and at larger scales. We need to construct other modes of being in the world to experience other moods. Instead of a reactionary critique, we can institute a counter-mood to null the effects of the control society. To avoid a direct response, we can compose an environment, cerebral or material, for us to function more autonomously, an affective-cognitive space that is less codable or permeable.

To exit the grid of control, one has to become imperceptible to the machinery of tracking and capture. For Deleuze, imperceptibility goes beyond the mere idea of data obfuscation to encompass a larger concept. To become imperceptible is to become *vague*, *nonsensical*, and even a *fool*; it is to exit the pre-established structures of intelligibility. The concept exceeds tactics of anonymity or masking identities to point to a deeper layer of *releasement*, to use a Heideggerian term, in a process of liberation.¹¹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari's revolutionary politics map and model a theoretical framework for escaping the dominant institutional structures that continuously reinvent themselves to deftly arrest our energies and potentialities. They use a manifold of terms to discreetly portray the opacity of today's institutional forces at a finer resolution, *molar aggregates*, *stratas*, and *rigid segments*.¹²⁰ In their view, one has to look for fractures within the solidified layers of domination for opportunities of escape and for *lines of flight*. This could encompass tiny imperceptible operations that we perform

¹¹⁸ Sun-Ha Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, p138

¹¹⁹ Justin Murphy, 'Becoming Imperceptible', *Other Life*, September 2020, <https://otherlife.co/becoming-imperceptible-1/>

¹²⁰ Ibid.

on ourselves or others in grappling with the politics of power and resistance. We need to conjure forms of *molecular revolution* to search for fissures or pathways that escape *capture* and *stratification*.

In another digression in his analysis of the titular character of Herman Melville's novel, *Bartleby the Scrivener*, Deleuze further delves into the notion of "becoming imperceptible". *Bartleby* invents a linguistic formula, "I would prefer not to", in order to respond to the demands of his employer. He uses this phrase as his own individual rule to passively resist the corporate culture of the office. Here, the stakes are not simply to refuse or negate a request but to use a language that obfuscates the whole process of communication. *Bartleby* withdraws into an imperceptible distance, systematically refuting the dichotomy of accepting or refusing. He doesn't state his preference to do something, nor does he offer any reason for his non-preference to perform his tasks. He infests the atmosphere around him with a sense of suspense that disarms and bewilders the other characters of the story. They are rendered unable to formulate replies.¹²¹ A foreign language within his language opens a "zone of indetermination" that replaces any form of confrontation with silence.¹²² As his words are devoid of any references, no one can attribute any particularities to Bartleby. He exists in a void that defies any "logic or psychology." Throughout the novel he remains this mysterious impenetrable character who forces others into bizarre reactions. As Deleuze writes, *Bartleby* is "the modern-day Ulysses (I am No One)", who appears and disappears with no past or future.¹²³ He proclaims his rights to once again be anonymous, indiscernible, and therefore, liberated from the external structures of intelligibility.

*Bartleby is the man without references, without possessions, without properties, without qualities, without particularities: he is too smooth for anyone to be able to hang any particularity on him. Without past or future, he is instantaneous. I PREFER NOT TO is Bartleby's chemical or alchemical formula, but one can read inversely I AM NOT PARTICULAR as its indispensable complement.*¹²⁴

In his analysis, Deleuze repeatedly speaks about a zone of "indiscernibility, indetermination, and indistinction." Bartleby remains an uncategorizable character that restrains the reader's ability to construe a "rational codification." His story is the story of passive resistance, of an "autonomous and self-contained" individual that challenges the others by studiously not participating in their game. He resides outside the mainstream ideals to question the notion of freedom in a political context that

¹²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Bartleby; or, The Formula*, in "Essays Critical and Clinical", [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], p71

¹²² Ibid, p72

¹²³ Ibid, p74

¹²⁴ Ibid, p74

demands constant participation and the approvals of a “yes man.”¹²⁵ This minor, unthreatening, but undecodable literary character gains power through his rebellion against compliance to an imposing structure. His “preferring not to” hollows an impenetrable space that cannot ever be fully perceived. His is determined not to fight, but to withdraw into a zone outside of the status quo. His retreat into denial empowers his resistance to a tragic condition, to be a cog in a political machine. His calm resignation and indifference makes it impossible for him to negate or deal with and at the same time forces others into reaction and madness as they cannot quite fathom an appropriate response. He resists by carving out an inner space outside acceptance and refusal, an indeterminate place to assert himself and to step into an undecipherable unknown. Bartleby sets up a protective “psychological barricade” to divide his inner landscape from the external civil and political domain.¹²⁶

*Figures of life and knowledge, they know something inexpressible, live something unfathomable. They have nothing general about them, and are not particular—they escape knowledge, defy psychology. Even the words they utter surpass the general laws of language (presuppositions) as well as the simple particularities of speech, since they are like the vestiges or projections of a unique, original language and bring all of language to the limit of silence and music. There is nothing particular or general about Bartleby: he is an Original.*¹²⁷

Due to similar conceptions and in search for some novel politics of anonymity in a time of exceeding exposure and visibility, in the course of this thesis, I seek to address some fundamental questions in finding strategies to evade the politics of capture. Instead of inquiring after, social, political, or anthropological questions, I am concerned with a deeper philosophical point, liberation in *otium* as a place of inception. How to define and restructure the cognitive frameworks that prevail over our minds, regulate, or intercept our actions? In my mind, and in accordance with the field of my practice, philosophy and art are freeing mechanisms in this encounter of being with itself and its surrounding forces. Philosophy as a process of formulating ideas enables us to dream in response to the ungroundedness, the void we find ourselves in. To philosophize is to take a step back and engage in a kind of thinking that palpates in silence. It is a form of escape from playing a predetermined game out of the grid of social intelligibility. It is to exit *instrumental rationalities* and to trust the pathless

¹²⁵ Jane Desmarais, “Preferring not to: The Paradox of Passive Resistance in Herman Melville’s *Bartleby*”, *Journal of the Short Story in English* [Online], 36 | spring 2001, Online since 29 September 2008, connection on 03 December 2020. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/575>

¹²⁶ *Ibid*

¹²⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Bartleby; or, The Formula*, in “Essays Critical and Clinical”, [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], p83

path; one that might “extricate thought from the state model”¹²⁸ to offer unthought horizons of meaning. Art as a means of building sensory relationships with our microspheres affords us the space to connect to the chaos and to organize it into felt and communicable sensations. In that space of play, we can compose ineffable perceptions of a particular situation that can stretch far beyond the ossified language of representations. Revolutions commence from the horizontal collaboration of individuals coming together probing social, political, or anthropological questions. The unit of individual philosophizing about these issues could further expand to ultimately rupture bigger societal structures. Philosophy and art are the forceful instruments to architecture an immaterial realm of confrontation and the means of structuring a collaborative space for dialogue.

As Barnett Newman imaginatively articulates, the first humans like us had to deal with their existential quest in finding a meaning for their being. They had to search for a direction, a hold, and a shelter within a world that overwhelmed them. Prior to attending to their utilitarian and communicative needs, they employed their artistic nature to communicate with the unknowable, to philosophize, and to find a meaning for their existence.¹²⁹ In a time that has lost its *telos*, it is the poets and the artists who are reviving this ancient human’s original use of the creative act to delineate a path. It is through arts that we can address the incomprehensible and the irrational aspects of this universe to once again affect our being, opening up opportunities for self-secluded revelation to take place.

Thinking is both a singular and a communal act. It can take place in solitude or transition to become an inter-mutual activity. Processes that may start from smaller scales of interaction could exceed their original units to structure larger frameworks for political and public engagement. Ultimately, for a more effective curbing of capitalist ploys of capture, thinking should shift its focus towards active intervention. Philosophy helps us build the underlying discourse to furnish a more collective context for new becomings.

The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away. We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn. To render

¹²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Nomadology The War Machine*, [Seattle, WA: Wormwood Distributions, 2010], p35, https://epicbaz.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/nomadology_read1.pdf. Accessed August 29th 2020

¹²⁹ Barnett Newman (1905-1970) 'The First Man Was an Artist' first published in *Tiger's Eye* (New York), No.1 (October 1947), pp. 59-60

imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel and think. Also because it's nice to talk like everybody else, to say the sun rises, when everybody knows it's only a manner of speaking. To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied.

-Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

Parallel to the discourse of philosophy, art could also instigate a threshold to structure a passage from a singular experience to a more collective one, from a cerebral environment to an affective corporeal realm of meaning-making beyond linguistic means. In the course of the next chapters of this dissertation, I will revisit this question as ultimately, my work has been organized around this threshold between philosophy and art, between an experience in mindfulness and its correlation with the body as an instrument connecting to the material and sensible world.

To reclaim the sanctuary /15

In short, the first philosophers are those who institute a plane of immanence like a sieve stretched over the chaos. In this sense they contrast with sages, who are religious personae, priests, because they conceive of the institution of an always transcendent order imposed from outside by a great despot or by one god higher than the others. ... Whenever there is transcendence, vertical being, imperial State in the sky or on earth, there is religion and there is philosophy whenever there is immanence, even if it functions as arena for the agon¹³⁰ and rivalry.¹³¹

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is philosophy?*

Systems of power seem to have always targeted the relationship of the human with itself. Religions, with the introduction of God as an omnipresent divine force, laid a lucrative infrastructure for surveilling a more predictable population whose cognitive framework, worldview, and habits were externally set. God had entered the relationship of the human with itself to bifurcate it into two, one that sees and one that does, one that supervises and controls, and the other who complies or defies. In Foucault's disciplinary societies, institutions of capitalism replace this modality to siege bodies, mold the psyches, and to cultivate and optimize the right type of individual for the production of capital. In Deleuze's *control society*, newer technological tools enter this dichotomy between the individual and structures of power in order to diffuse the forms of confrontation. Individual subjects become the more visible performers on this stage while manipulative political and market forces are obfuscated. In Zuboff's age of *surveillance capitalism*, we are no longer being watched by a divine or a spiritual power but the technologies that are tenderly hooked to our bodies to trace every move, to disrupt, and to manipulate. The subtle infusion of machines and bodies pervasively targets the willing subjects. The individuals are subconsciously stimulated in processes that influence his/her

¹³⁰ Agon is an ancient Greek term for a conflict, struggle or contest.

¹³¹ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *What is philosophy?*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], p43

autonomy over their decisions. The psychophysical medium that we call the individual turns into an automated subject, a predictable entity in the service of political and economic forces.

These individuals and groups are thus transformed into data-providers, deformed, and re-formed by “social” networks operating according to new protocols of association. In this way they find themselves disindividuated: their own data [donnees], which also amounts to what we call (in the language of Husserlian phenomenology of time) “retentions”, enables them to be disposed of their own “protentions”- that is their own desires, expectations, volitions, will and so on. ... Everything that for individuals forms the horizon of their future, constituted by their protention, is outstripped, overtaken, and progressively replaced by automatic protentions that are produced by intensive computing systems operating between one and four million times quicker than the nervous system of psychic individuals. ¹³²

Am I the perishable body? The hyper-intellectual mind? Or the doer? Someone who stands in the world and is willing. The will that operates on the world and itself.

How can we liberate *Dasein*? But what constitutes *Dasein*'s individual and social scale; what definition do we give to our being first to inquire after its freedom? As Heidegger asks what is “the understanding that there-being (*Dasein*) has of its being”?¹³³

To begin addressing such questions, it is crucial to define the unit of individual that we have in mind. It is essential to set a base first before pursuing these lines of inquiry. Is the individual constituted by Descartes's transcendental ego plus the corporeal and perishable elements of the body? Or is the self-more akin to Metzinger's description, a by-product of neurological procedures and a continued and active model in the brain? Is our notion of the individual a psychochemical medium that can be affected externally and put into motion? Or is the individual a thinking, willing subject capable of generating ideas and ordering its macrocosm? If our idea of the individual is already constituted then it may be too late to address its freedom. Here I try to conjure some possible individual or collective strategies of confrontation. In this passage, I inquire whether this liberation entails an inner activity relating to the philosophical sphere of human existence, or whether it is a collective act targeting the

¹³² Bernard Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, [Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2019], p7&8

¹³³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, revised by Dennis J. Schmidt, [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010], p4.

socio-political structures of our communal environments. Do we attain our freedom through negotiation with others in our day-to-day business (*negotium*) or can liberation be achieved in a self-secluded activity, a withdrawal in leisure time for self-cultivation (*otium*)? I contend that the two are inextricably linked. We first conjure freedom on a more personal scale before expanding it in our negotiations with the otherness of the other.

In order to build we need to think. Thinking is acting, and it requires its own space-time. Beyond the dichotomies of activity and passivity, freedom is about attaining an individual stance and holding a place for observance. In response to our nihilistic age, infused with technological processes with predetermined outcomes, the notion of freedom remains the old and persistent question of existence: what does it mean to be? Or how do we encounter our being in the technological age? The individual needs to form a perception of itself and the cognitive structures that feed and encircle its existence. True liberation could be an outcome of a negotiation between what has been and what can become. To succeed in this course of action, I believe we need to reclaim the right to the sanctuary, to hold on to a consciousness that resists peripheral stimuli.

“McMindfulness” - The Atomized Society

Contemporary theorist Ronald Purser, in his book “McMindfulness,” argues that Buddhist practices of mindfulness have been detached from their social and cultural geographies to be co-opted by neoliberal strategies of control. Traditions that were intended to help individuals manage selfishness, greed and suffering in specific cultural contexts structured around ideals of kindness and empathy are commodified to promote the ethos of self-control under the hegemony of a capitalist economy. In order to organize more “conforming and pliable” employees, corporations have put pressure on individuals to manage stress on a more personal level. The bigger systematic economic issues that trigger a competitive context apt to be highly stressful are not addressed for such emotional responses to be rendered as private matters. The heavy burden has been passed on to individuals to mind themselves up, and to calm down in order to remain productive. In this atomized society of people who are instructed to only fend for themselves, to heighten their own “mental capital,” a “social myopia” stops them from organizing towards more revolutionary and collective actions. In a neoliberal economic context where even stress is privatized to turn into a profitable industry, the social movements that could deal with the embedded structural injustices are effectively hindered.

We are stopped from a deeper investigation into the social, political, and economic causes that stage the scene for such emotional and psychological reactions.¹³⁴

*I am skeptical. Anything that offers success in our unjust society without trying to change it is not revolutionary – it just helps people cope. However, it could also be making things worse. Instead of encouraging radical action, it says the causes of suffering are disproportionately inside us, not in the political and economic frameworks that shape how we live. And yet mindfulness zealots believe that paying closer attention to the present moment without passing judgment has the revolutionary power to transform the whole world. It's magical thinking on steroids.*¹³⁵ – Ronald Purser

“A Molecular Revolution”? The Question of Apolitical Passivity in Both Deleuze and Heidegger

The persisting question in this thesis is whether the ideas discussed under the milieu of this work constitute potentials for grand societal actions or on the contrary read as apolitical? Is *Gelassenheit* understood to be passive, unreflective inertia, a form of releasement from the problems of the world, a relaxed attitude that follows a kind of self-help mentality? Or are there positive actions embedded in taking such a stance, an intense layer of participation to acquire an understanding of our present epoch? I argue that the existential angst that the body at the centre of this work deals with is distinctly different from the emotional stress that Purser delineates. Purser speaks about a form of anxiety that is derivative of a fast paced environment operating under the rule of an unethical market economy. The anxiety that *being* experiences in the context of the present work is formless and universal. It is not a by-product of an external system to be directed at anything specific but one that is structurally embedded and central to one's *being*. It is a form of anxiety that is centrifugal and omnipresent, layered underneath one's existence. It presents itself without being triggered but surfaces to engulf a *being* in fears of nothingness and death. Here, and in the course of this dissertation, the body encounters this unresolvable tension at the heart of its existence, the tragedy that is life, and the acceptance of its own mortality. She enters a void, a time and space outside the spectre of *standing reserve* and the numbing effects of technological tools to conjure an understanding of her *being*. Philosophy in the context of this work is an art of holding onto and composing concepts to order the unbearable chaos into comprehensible forms. It is to exit the arborescent structures of the state and the controlling bio powers and enter a smooth space of

¹³⁴ Ronald E. Purser, *McMindfulness How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality*, [London, UK: Repeater, 2019]

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p6

rhizomatic dimensions. It is to dream on a *plane of immanence* to construe an ontology that precedes the more utilitarian actions.

The “will-less” component in *Gelassenheit* harbors an enduring form of resistance at its core. In an era that promotes technological mastery, the rising powers of the will, the very acceptance of our powerlessness is a form of negation. *Dasein* has the potential to twist free of this entire domain of the will to experience a realm of non-willing, for other modes of being to appear to it. Away from “wilful activity” and “will-less passivity,” *Dasein* takes a stance to philosophize about a new ontology to inform its actions. Furthermore, both Heidegger and Deleuze appear to opt for a kind of molecular revolution that takes place at the level of the individual and smaller groups. These other modes of being are subject to creative acts that cannot be explained as codifiable attitudes or actions to form another nexus of capture. Such tactics of escape and resistance cannot be engineered to be further instrumentalized to be taken back into systems of control. Both philosophers propose ideas that may sound problematic at the surface level but upon deeper investigation reveal other and more nuanced interpretations. They discourage reactionary forms of confrontation to promote strategies of connecting with micro-movements that nullify established instrumental rationalities. In *Gelassenheit* we engage in the act of authentic seeing to look for fissures, for lines of flight and releasement from solidified strata that enframe one’s psychological being. Instead of taking a negative reactionary pose to fight the system from the outside that is reaffirming to some extent, the focus has shifted towards composing a more positive thesis. The individual in this context is compelled to take on a creative attitude, to employ a multiplicity of actions and non-actions that are emerging and not predetermined to overturn the system from within.

Perhaps the technologies of resistance start from structuring the “technologies of the self,” the way we understand ourselves and engineer our affects to impact the medium in which we are embedded. Instead of taking a reclusive stance, we need to engage with the forces of modernity but we should be vigilant to not fall prey to them. We have to come up with thoughts or actions that present us with the potential for escape routes. In response to the dominant narratives of our time that set the parameters and dictate the cultural vocabulary of who we are, and how to fit in this world, we should structure a science of the self. The task is to question and pursue a fundamental understanding of our existence, to employ our energies, political, and economic resources towards more independent directions that escape the paths of *standing reserve*. This is where our true revolutionary power lies.

The schizo is not revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process—in terms of which the schizo is merely the interruption, or the continuation in the void—is

the potential for revolution. To those who say that escaping is not courageous, we answer: what is not escape and social investment at the same time? The choice is between one of two poles, the paranoiac counterescape that motivates all the conformist, reactionary, and fascisizing investments, and the schizophrenic escape convertible into a revolutionary investment. Maurice Blanchot speaks admirably of this revolutionary escape, this fall that must be thought and carried out as the most positive of events: "What is this escape? The word is poorly chosen to please. Courage consists, however, in agreeing to flee rather than live tranquilly and hypocritically in false refuges. Values, morals, homelands, religions, and these private certitudes that our vanity and our complacency bestow generously on us, have as many deceptive sojourns as the world arranges for those who think they are standing straight and at ease, among stable things. They know nothing of this immense flight that transports them, ignorant of themselves, in the monotonous buzzing of their ever quickening steps that lead them impersonally in a great immobile movement. An escape in advance of the escape."¹³⁶

– Deleuze/Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

¹³⁶ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, [Minnesota: the University of Minnesota Press,1983], p341

“Psychotechnologies of Self-transformation,” To Philosophize is to Act /16

The speculative object and the practical object of philosophy as Naturalism, science and pleasure, coincide on this point: it is always a matter of denouncing the illusion, the false infinite, the infinity of religion and all of the theologico-erotic-oneiric myths in which it is expressed. To the question ‘what is the use of philosophy?’ the answer must be: what other object would have an interest in holding forth the image of a free man, and in denouncing all of the forces which need myth and troubled spirit in order to establish their power?¹³⁷ - Gilles Deleuze

“Bearing a bearable heavy lightness”- To Take Shelter- To hold onto oneself

Heidegger considers a transcendental component within *Dasein*. For him, this transcendence means being in the world and encountering its most mundane, everyday realities. He sees Philosophy as a liberating act and an ultimate form of freedom. *Dasein* as a being whose being is an issue for it finds itself in a tragic state. Thrown into the world, it faces a void, the unknowable, and above all, it conceives its finitude and fragility. In the absence of any cosmology and the waning of the divine, it encounters an infinite space filled with dread. In this helpless state, it requires a shelter, a base to form a kind of awareness, a hold, a worldview (*Weltanschauung*). *Being* needs to take a stance to conceive a pattern in response to these overwhelming experiences. To find this protective layer, Heidegger proposes two fundamental possibilities. *Dasein* can shelter itself among other beings. For Heidegger, *Dasein* is not merely an instinctual animal but a historical figure that inherits the myths and the cosmology of its ancestors. The mythical (religious) *Dasein* could quench its need for a shelter in rites, cults, and customs, the structures of meanings that it inherits from its biographical context.

¹³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, [New York: Columbia university press, 1990], p248

*Dasein can receive the retentions that it inherits from an already-there past as its own retentions (by adopting them) only because the latter are inscribed in the factual and technical space of the world (including as language), thereby constituting what, at the end of “Being and Time”, Heidegger called Dasein’s ‘world historicity’ (Weltgeschichtlichkeit), that is, the fact that temporality is already there before it in the world, as relics, monuments, stories, as its past that it nevertheless did not live.*¹³⁸

The second path is one that has been identified as a passage from mythical to logical. He calls this second modality *haltung*, which means holding onto oneself. In the later state, *being* finds a form of composure in itself. *Haltung* is not an activity that takes place in stillness, but it is a constant exercise in sustaining oneself among other beings and taking a stance through the act of philosophy.¹³⁹ It is about being in the crowd, understanding it as a point of reference, but momentarily rising above it by the way of critical thinking; it is to orient oneself. It is about interrogating and taking a position in respect to other beings and towards oneself. The *Da* in *Dasein* has also been translated not as *there* but as an *opening*. As human beings we possess a natural opening in encountering and experiencing other beings in particular ways. It opens the discussion to human freedom, our agency in the world, and an opportunity to escape the mindless machinery of the crowd. *Dasein* has the potential to form a *Weltanschauung*, “a self-realized, productive, as well as conscious, way of apprehending and interpreting the universe of beings.”¹⁴⁰

Am I bearing my being to build a hold or am I computing something?

As Heidegger points out, thinking is a craft in its own league, similar to the work produced by hand. To think is to take action. It is to enter a site where one brings one’s essence to speech. Language is the inceptive instrument that structures this path to give our actions a meaningful dimension. With thinking, we learn to reside in this realm by engaging in a continuing conversation with ourselves and to compose effective actions.¹⁴¹ Heidegger speaks of a *turn* from “forgetting of the *being* to the

¹³⁸ Bernard Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, [Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2019], p17.

¹³⁹ Heidegger on the Question of Being and the Origin of Language. With Ivo De Gennaro, YouTube Video, 1:46:00, Posted By “Classical Philosophy”, March 31, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQudSpPv5Zw&t=381s>. Accessed December 5th, 2020

¹⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Revised Edition, Tr. Albert Hofstadter, [Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1982], p5.

¹⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures Insight into That Which is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012], p67

guardianship of the essence of the *being*".¹⁴² Humans do not know of the "turn's arrival". We are to guard our *being* in waiting, to protect oneself in thinking for "the arrival of another dispensation of *being*".¹⁴³

Idleness is about cultivating time and space out of the demands of the market to establish a harmonious dwelling. Barnett Newman speaks of the necessity for dreaming. Before attending to our utilitarian needs, one has to take the time to withdraw from the cycle of industrial productions to face the void. He/she needs to find a hold in its holdlessness and to take a stance. *Skhole* which is translated as Leisure from ancient Greek, is understood to be the time free of labor, the time spent on worshipping the gods, reading poetry, pursuing education, philosophy, or theology. In the modern age of industrial capitalism, we seem to have forgotten about true leisure, the license to take a break, and to reconnect to our senses. Leisure has become another commodity to be purchased.

Baudrillard and the critique of Marxism – Liberation from the enclosures of Labor

On a similar trajectory, Jean Baudrillard, in his seminal book "The Mirror of Production," critiques Marx's discourse for being too conservative, closely derived from the same political economy that he attempts to deconstruct. In Baudrillard's view, Marx successfully drafts a revolutionary social theory but fails to see more radical conceptual grounds to obtain this end. In his view, Marxism neglects the fundamental themes that reconstructs people as workers. In Marx's thesis, the form of production and labor remain the same. He unveils the systems of value exchange but instead of transcending the political economy that they originate from, he merely reverses them to create a "mirror-image." In his critique, "use-value" still functions as a derivative of "exchange value," a new interiorization of the same structure that was heavily based on the rationalist concept of labor itself. In this framework, "social wealth" was a product of man's activity arbitrarily imposed as various forms of labor. In response to the economic structure that alienates humans, to exchange their labor power they should reverse capital to liberate their "productive potentials."¹⁴⁴

Marx however did not take a more progressive stance to free humans from their status as labor power, perpetually alienated as a work force, and conceptualized as a "producing animal." The idea of labor as "human essence" was internal to the logic of capitalism. It was a product of the same political economy that would exchange it to accumulate capital. While Marx relatively demystified these belief structures, he reaffirmed the concept of labor as a principal measure of "self-comprehension" to re-impose it on the working class.¹⁴⁵ Capitalism exploits the workforce not only through systematized

¹⁴² Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures Insight into That Which is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012], p67

¹⁴³ Ibid, p67

¹⁴⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, [New York: Telos Press, 1975], in introduction written by Mark Poster, p 1-17

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

machinations but also by creating a prevailing code of normality that conditions the terms of their labor. Marxism ironically perpetuates similar codes to be reused in the service of the newer forms of capitalism. It reinforces the myth that labor is a “fundamental human potential” rather than an artificial social construct set through the economic relations at the service of capital. The true liberation would have been liberation from being confined as labor. As Baudrillard writes:

In other words, the system of political economy does not produce only the individual as labor power that is sold and exchanged: it produces the very conception of labor power as the fundamental human potential. ... In a work, man is not only quantitatively exploited as a productive force by the system of capitalist political economy, but is also metaphysically overdetermined as a producer by the code of political economy. In the last instance, the system rationalizes its power here. And in this Marxism assists the cunning of capital. It convinces men that they are alienated by the sale of their labor power, thus censoring the much more radical hypothesis that they might be alienated as labor power, as the "inalienable" power of creating value by their labor.¹⁴⁶

Baudrillard’s thesis aims towards more radical forms of struggle confronting capitalism “on an immanent level.” This confrontation should be a form of departure to entail tactics of exclusion. The focus should shift towards the refusal of the enclosing systems that readily define the individual as “Labor-power.”¹⁴⁷ In another book, “Symbolic Exchange and Death,” Baudrillard investigates other means of producing value in pre-capitalist systems, societies that operated outside the logic of production. They were functioning based on the logic of excess rather than surplus or accumulation. Nothing was taken from nature without the idea of returning it.¹⁴⁸ In his analysis, he establishes the idea that “homo faber” was a historical contingency and by no means a necessity.

Productive work vs non-productive amusement has become a great conundrum. How is it possible to stop measuring our lives based on our outputs? The quantified self, the one that is constantly working, and the one that lets go to hold on to a stillness are juxtaposed. What would be the nature of a true *skhole*? What kind of actions or non-actions define a place for us to dream or to curate another dimension out of the demand of the public? In Heidegger’s view, philosophy has that liberating quality for *Dasein*. Philosophy as an exercise that cannot be institutionalized is a

¹⁴⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, [New York: Telos Press, 1975], p31

¹⁴⁷ Andy McLaverty-Robinson, “An A to Z of Theory | Jean Baudrillard: Marx and Alienation – Draft 2”, *CEASEFIRE*, <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-4/#:~:text=In%20The%20Mirror%20of%20Production,people%20are%20constructed%20as%20workers>. Accessed March 2021

¹⁴⁸ Andy McLaverty-Robinson, “An A to Z of Theory | Jean Baudrillard: Sybolic Exchange”, *CEASEFIRE*, <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-1/>. Accessed March 17th 2021

transcendental practice. It has to be understood as that constant struggle against the overwhelming powers of the void to nurture a worldview and to form a unique awareness. A kind of movement, a mental activity to avoid being lost or to sink into a bottomless void. Through the act of philosophy, *Dasein* can find a hold in itself in an understanding way.

The concluding thesis also indicates that, in Heidegger's understanding, the act of philosophizing itself has an "ethical" sense: "Philosophizing as the letting occur [Geschehenlassen] of transcendence is the freeing of Dasein ... The original letting be [Gelassenheit] of Dasein lies in the letting occur of transcendence as philosophy ... the human's confidence [Vertrauen] towards the Da-sein in him and its possibilities" (GA 27, 401)¹⁴⁹

A clearing for self-concealing / exiting the structures of intelligibility

For Heidegger to give up on the will is the right form of resisting the forces of modernity. By being present, like a fruitless tree, we begin to observe and apprehend the beauty of this world. To take a stance in *Gelassenheit*, as Heidegger points, is to exit the predetermined dichotomies of activity and passivity. It is to release oneself, to hold onto one's being, and to closely observe. It is to inhabit a dimension to think about thinking and to contemplate the possibility of the right activity. The two activities are intertwined, thinking is acting. In this state of stillness, one remains in a position to authentically relate to other beings and to let things appear to him/her as they are without forcing any representations. As willful beings, modern humans are entrapped within the objectifying forces of the will. Ultimately the true nature of beings is either concealed or forgotten. *Gelassenheit* is the state of release from the will. Freedom in Heidegger's philosophy seems to have broad mystical undertones, freedom is this transition from the will to *Gelassenheit*.¹⁵⁰

It is crucial to bear in mind that this turn from will to Gelassenheit would not involve a mere reversal within what Heidegger calls "the domain of the will", a turnabout, for instance, from will-ful assertion to passive submission. Rather, Heidegger's thought calls for a twisting free of this

¹⁴⁹ Jean Greisch, *The "Play of Transcendence" and the Question of Ethics* in Francois Raffoul, David Pettigrew, *Heidegger and practical philosophy*, [Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2002], p115

¹⁵⁰ Bret Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*, [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007]

*entire domain of the will and a leap into a region of non-willing letting-be that is otherwise than both will-ful activity and will-less passivity.*¹⁵¹

In *Gelassenheit* we enter a more meditative space, exiting chronological time and engaging in non-quantifiable activities. In this time-space of “non-willing” we can structure a relationship with ourselves to be able to apprehend the true nature of our being. We take a step back to release ourselves from what is already formatted, to see the frame rather than automatically see through it. It is a presence and a withdrawal, an appearing while disappearing. To stop and to release oneself from the hasty business of the will to will is in itself an act of defiance against the forces of *Gestell*. We prime the opportunity to delineate a direction, to reach an opening, a window for a possible revelation. In *Gelassenheit* however, one has to learn to release control, to let go to let it take its course. It is to connect to a new consciousness, to stretch the bow, to carve out a path into the chaos, to patiently linger for the arrow to reach you from the other side.

*An ontology where what is there is not the same old things but a process of continual creation, an ontology that does not seek to reduce being to the knowable but instead seeks to widen thought to palpate the unknowable.*¹⁵² -
Todd May

But what would be the ensuing texture of the experience that will unfold? Will it encompass a transcendental quality borrowed from a hierarchical realm of spirituality or is it more immanent, existing, or operating within our very own material being? Here I would like to connect the concept of *Gelassenheit* to another idea laid out by Deleuze, the notion of *immanence*. *Immanence* is considered to be a strategy of connecting with the micro-movements around oneself in a manner that negates established instrumental rationales. Rather than formulating substantial diagnostic philosophies that may plummet the discourse further into a reactionary response to the forces at play, immanence is about engaging in infinitesimal, imperceptible actions that open new vistas. It is an exercise in authentic seeing and looking and a search for the *lines of flight*, the fissures in the solidified stratas that enframe the psychophysical realms of one’s being. It is the search for the vectors of escape

¹⁵¹ Bret Davis, “Will and Gelassenheit.” *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, edited by Bret W. Davis, Acumen Publishing, 2009, pp. 168–182. doi:10.1017/UPO9781844654475.013

¹⁵² Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*. [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005]

outside the stratified, fixed apparatus of the state and the controlling *biopowers*. Such patterns cannot be engineered in an instrumental way to be caught and fed back into the systems of control, to form another nexus of capture. It is a withdrawal from being a *standing reserve* by employing a multiplicity of actions or non-actions on a fabric of immanent relations that are emerging and not predetermined.¹⁵³

*[Immanence] is the nonthought within thought. It is the base of all planes, immanent to every thinkable plane that does not succeed in thinking it. It is the most intimate within thought and yet the absolute outside—an outside more distant than any external world because it is an inside deeper than any internal world: it is immanence, ‘intimacy as the Outside, the exterior become the intrusion that stifles, and the reversal of both the one and the other’ [...].”*¹⁵⁴

In *Gelassenheit* can we find an exodus to the smooth plane of immanence?

In formulating his concept Deleuze finds a foundation in mathematics, borrows many terms from geology, and addresses a persistent gap in the history of ontology, the need for transcendence in the history of philosophy to explain things. He questions the hierarchical dualism of transcendental substance and the world of human experience in which one is always superior to another. He negates the former’s arborescent structures to conjure a smooth space of rhizomatic dimensions where many things could happen simultaneously. His conception portrays an image at the cross-section where Euclidian geometry is juxtaposed with differential algorithms. In one, we are dealing with solid objects with resolute coordinates. In another, the spaces are in continual transformation. They are smooth, foldable, and stretchable surfaces that transform and change shape and dimensions. The only thing consistent in such geometries are the points that remain connected. For Deleuze, reality, the time of being awake, is stratified, and is a metric space. The space of dreams, or the unconscious, falls under the other category. Such ideas percolate from mathematics into his philosophy to lay a base for his theories, where he tries to find an image for reality, a reality that does not borrow anything from the

¹⁵³ Manuel De Landa. *Immanent Patterns of Becoming*. 2009, You Tube Video, 2:30:11, Posted By “European Graduate School Video Lectures”, Feb 12, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKqOic0kx4U&t=6s>. Accessed September 24th 2020

¹⁵⁴ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, [New York: Verso, 1994], p59

outside, the transcendental realms of spirituality, but finds its foundation in what is already immanent within the very material system of this world.¹⁵⁵

It is a table, a plateau, or a slice; it is a plane of consistency or, more accurately, the plane of immanence of concepts, the phenomenon. Concepts and plane are strictly correlative, but nevertheless the two should not be confused. The plane of immanence is neither a concept nor the concept of all concepts. If one were to be confused with the other there would be nothing to stop concepts from forming a single one or becoming universals and losing their singularity, and the plane would also lose its openness.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Manuel De Landa. *Immanent Patterns of Becoming*. 2009, You Tube Video, 2:30:11, Posted By "European Graduate School Video Lectures", February 12th 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKqOic0kx4U&t=6s>. Accessed September 20th 2020

¹⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, [New York: Verso, 1994], p34

Project *Otium*- A place of otherness to escape forward / An “Aesthetic War-Machine” /17

Today, the anti-economical, infra-political logic of heterotopias makes them potentially the contemporary sanctuaries of ‘the multitude’ in a post-civil society. The engaged spaces of conviviality and self-organization, the ritual spaces of mourning and feast that preserve the decorum of life, the bohemian liminal spaces of imagination, the reflective spaces of commentary, study and critique, the holiday spaces of skholè and play – all these places that make up the ‘third sphere’ besides, outside and in between the public (political) and the private (economical) sphere, realize heterotopia’s binding role within the polis.¹⁵⁷

Instrumental rationality as nexus of capture

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, philosophy could foster an interrogative process. Its liberating force is in its ability to defy the stratified structures of intelligibility that strive to make the subject a predictable entity. To think is to exit the time of chronometers and enter a more meditative mood. It is to create a time-space where true questioning can emerge. By becoming *opaque*, and *nonsensical* through a kind of thinking that appears outside the fixed models of state’s thought we can become less intelligible and therefore exit its control mechanisms. In the final chapter of this thesis and on a parallel trajectory, I will look at the role art can play as another form of resistance in curating heterotopic spaces of escape. The work of art could indirectly place the audience on a different ground to avoid a reactionary encounter with the forces of *Gestell*. Through art, we could enter an escape space, a third-place to exit the dichotomy of power and disobedience to venture beyond the prevailing discourse. By building a new locale within the stratified territory of its immediate context, I intend to insert a structure that could enable an indirect encounter.

¹⁵⁷ Lieven De Caeter, Michiel Dehaene, *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Post-civil Society*, [London, UK: Routledge, 2008], p100

We clamor for the right to opacity for everyone. - Édouard Glissant

The concept of opacity becomes a quintessential and generative frame in political theory as well as aesthetics in formulating tactics and the material condition for opposition towards the totalizing gaze of global surveillance. As originally theorized by philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant, opacity encompasses the notion of undefinable alterity in relational ontology, something or someone who stands as an alternative to the familiar terrain of calculability and visibility, one that resists being a surveyable entity. As Glissant argues, the process of understanding people in Western thought is a reductive mechanism based on the notion of transparency. For otherness to be comprehended and subsequently accepted, an individual has to be measured against a series of solid ideas that provide a scale for comparisons and judgments. By placing someone within the hierarchical scale of norms, their existence can be confirmed in a particular system. They will be created afresh. But would it be possible to forego the very notion of scale, to dismiss the reductive process for another way of relating to otherness? As Glissant notes, we need to resist the injunction to be transparent. It is only by sustaining some level of opacity that one can get to know the other, relate to the otherness of the other. Opacity should not be understood as a singular event but a more comprehensive right for everyone. This concept displaces the thought of self and the other to encompass a larger notion of “divergence of humanities.” We no longer project a form onto the other but relate to his/her opaque totality as a citizen. The right to opacity could structure the foundation for a relational ontology that delineates no boundaries and a path to real freedom.¹⁵⁸

*Agree not merely to the right to difference but, carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity. Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components. For the time being, perhaps, give up this old obsession with discovering what lies at the bottom of natures. There would be something great and noble about initiating such a movement, referring not to Humanity but to the exultant divergence of humanities.*¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Édouard Glissant, *For Opacity in “Poetics of relation”*, [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997], p189-190

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Against the politics of transparency with their many reductive influences, the tactics of opacity could provide a protective shelter. The acceptance of the forces of diversity also is a distraction from the notions of absolute truths that are unifying and limiting in nature. The notion of opacity could liberate us from being cornered into an unequivocal and identifiable essence. As a personal practice, we also should accept and not relinquish the opacity of our own selfhood.¹⁶⁰ These amazing territories of unknowns are ones that could be explored independent from objectifying mechanisms that strive to externally expound them in communicative forms. Art could provide the tools to delve into the absolute excessiveness of chaos to establish a relationship to what has remained inaccessible and opaque.

While art galleries are not excluded from the economic rules of the market, the activity they curate is less categorizable as a measurable entity with economic goals. The space of the gallery caters to a non-economical time exterior to the exploitative and instrumental processes of the market. In this time of *Gelassenheit*, we have the license to do nothing but observe, relate, and rebuild a relationship to our senses. The work of art creates an openness in the world, a realm of ambiguity for the human intellect to penetrate. It delineates an open region where objects enter a dialogue with questioners. The gallery hosts a clearing where the union of forms and matter contours the forces of being; a place of palpable *aletheia*, and a passage from concealment to un-concealment. The artist brings forth background subliminal awareness into an open field of encounters; an opaque experience outside the quantitative and traceable grid of intelligibility. This project imagines a liminal space outside of *Gestell*, for only then can we expose its weaknesses and find its cracks. Enframing with all its excruciating attempts to enforce its will has little to no power. Its pervasive persuasions are a sign of its fragility. The project aims at building a threshold to dwell in temporarily, to think, and traverse the integrated machines of capture. As Heidegger writes, in order to alter the essence of technology, we need to refocus our attention towards the essence of the human. We must cultivate the time and space for thinking. By thinking we learn how to *dwell* in a realm where we could resist and ultimately reject *being's* positionality.¹⁶¹

In order that an essential relationship would be founded between technology and the human in respect to their essences, the modern human must first of all

¹⁶⁰ Édouard Glissant, *For Opacity*, p192

¹⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures Insight into That Which is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012], p67

*find its way back to the breadth of his essential space. The dimension that joins together this essential space of human essence is only received through that relationship by which the guardianship of being itself is brought into the ownership of the human as what is needed by it. Apart from first cultivating himself within this essential space and taking up a dwelling therein, the human is not capable of anything essential within the dispensation now reigning.*¹⁶²

Towards a new Ontology in the age of “positionality”, the essence of information - Gottfried Leibniz and “Characteristica Universalis”

Leibniz, a 17th-century mathematician and a natural philosopher, established the idea of a universal language to convey mathematical, scientific, and metaphysical concepts. He hoped for a formal framework to be used for calculations. One that might provide a platform to analyze ideas by breaking them into pieces. The logic of science parted from the logic of philosophy to be liberated from the boundaries of language. The focus shifted from meaning finding to calculus. Science became largely concerned with the way things operate, an objective approach to worldly phenomenon characterized by a series of disambiguated signifiers operating autonomously from their content. Science shifted its course to describe a totalized system, scrutinizing the patterns of how things move or function without attending to questions like why they exist or what they are. This shift was perhaps the beginning of the information revolution; the systems of categorizing entities into a series of inputs and outputs to be interpreted, controlled, and manipulated independently from their context. Information became a viewing phenomenon, a strict method of observing and calculating entities to be entered into the computational algorithms of controlling machines. The calculative logic de-ontologized us from the need to have an ontology, to look for meaning beyond the manner in which things appear. Under the new regime of thinking, everything that exists represents what it means to be and can be interpreted and manipulated as such. In a world where everything appears as information, *being* also is represented exclusively as a pile of data. Heidegger saw this transition, heralding the age of *positionality*, where forces of *Gestell* optimize to train and instruct *beings* into particular shapes or forms. In this new setting, all other dimensions of *being* are precluded from our discourse.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Ibid., p66

¹⁶³ *On the Ontology of Information Age*, YouTube Video, 1:19:31, posted By “Classical Philosophy”, Feb 3rd 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDbVE_7TK0&t=2864s. Accessed February 14th 2021

The concept of information enabled the scientific methods to capture with incredible versatility the processes that are at work in the world around us. This new language brought with itself useful instruments for the exchangeability of information, and for steering powers to modulate specific outcomes. Scientific positivism breaks through anything negative. In the positive feedback loop of cybernetic¹⁶⁴ systems, it also became possible to capture resistance, antithesis, and negative critique as new forms of information to be incorporated into the ongoing processes. The overall structure can be enforced by the resistance to it. To fall into a reactionary encounter with the forces of *Gestell* bears the possibility of strengthening the latter's power. I believe that is why both Heidegger and Deleuze speak about these other dimensions as tactics of confrontation, to become imperceptible, to ask philosophical questions, or to search for a new ontology. Perhaps one form of action would be to articulate an outside, to prepare the ground for an immaterial realm of thinking or a material world of experience that is more sensitive towards *being* showing up as something other than information, incalculable and unpredictable. Heidegger speaks about some sort of "concealing," or a "sheltering" and a language that exits the calculative logic of machines, to establish a discursive language to wonder in awe and meditate a sense for this world.¹⁶⁵

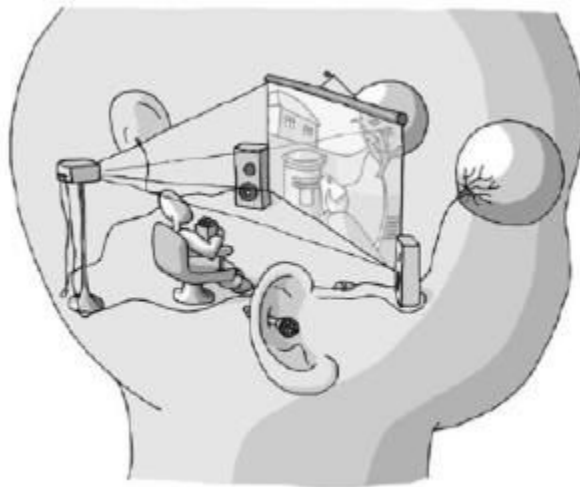


Figure #13: *Homunculus in the Cartesian Theatre*

¹⁶⁴ Cybernetics in the Greek origins of the word means "to steer". The word was originally used by Plato to describe the governance of people. Later on and during the early decades of the 19th century, French physicist Andre- Marie Ampere (1775-1836) used the term to signify "the science of civil government". Norbert Wiener, a 20th-century American mathematician, and philosopher, first coined the word. Cybernetics or "control theory" refers to "the study of control and communication in the animal and the machine."

¹⁶⁵ *On the Ontology of Information Age*, YouTube Video, 1:19:31, Posted By "Classical Philosophy", February 3rd 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDbVE__7TK0&t=2864s *On the Ontology of Information Age*, YouTube Video, 1:19:31, posted By "Classical Philosophy", February 3rd 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDbVE__7TK0&t=2864s. Accessed August 24th 2020

The borders between science and philosophy and the question of consciousness – The Mind/Body Dualism

Against the *Cartesian Theatre* that imagines a “unitary and fixed” consciousness as an “extra property”, Daniel Dennett, a contemporary philosopher, and a cognitive scientist proposes the theory of “multiple drafts.” In his view, in our brain, multiple streams of content run in competition with each other to leave a trace and to rise to the fringe of consciousness. Our brain is capable of collecting and analyzing a fraction of the signals that it receives. Many of these data remain as shadows and are stored in our deep brain structure without us even becoming aware of them. The immaterial site that Descartes conceptualized as a place where we determine what to focus on is substituted for a fluid field of sensory information that at times leaves us behind. A field of multiple performances that simultaneously builds momentum by joining other allies to corroborate forces and temporarily dominate the brain. They form the channels that surface to render what is going on in the world. In the ongoing competition some of these win over the others in establishing their content. The intricate way that all these activities correlate does not necessarily follow an orderly and predictable manner. Are we conscious of them as they are happening? Or do they register with a delay, only for us to remember later what we were conscious of in the recent past?¹⁶⁶

Dennett introduces the term “fame” to speak about a condition that is not a momentary or a “dispositional state”, but the repercussions of a repeating pattern that has a temporal quality in time and space. When ongoing operations compete to control the body, some win the scene for a duration of time until other processes with greater forces replace them. The former ones then fade into oblivion. These processes in the brain appear to be more democratic, with an overseeing Cartesian subject absent from the equation. As Dennett notes, consciousness is not an “intrinsic property” but it is a phenomenon with the potential to be actualized.¹⁶⁷

Whether consciousness can be explained scientifically is still a perplexing argument. Our sense of selfhood might be an emerging systematic quality resulting from massive neuro-electronic operations in the brain, however, we have other qualities that cannot be mechanically explained. Our capacity to use languages and sustain intelligent conversations among many others point to a mysterious quality that raises new territories of questions. As Dennett further expounds, consciousness is not the end destination in what we ultimately experience. It is an intermediate product that heralds the beginning of another development. We build intelligence by measuring the input we receive from what surrounds us, we learn to modulate our reactions and hone a “sensory guided behavior” towards our

¹⁶⁶ Daniel Dennett, *Can Brain Explain Mind?* YouTube Video, 12:28, posted By “Closer to Truth”, January 14th 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPGvu8IT8HY>. Accessed November 20th 2020

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

world. Perhaps this is the task of philosophy to venture beyond the limits of science to theorize the next set of questions for the scientists in furthering the discussion that seeks to answer the mind-body question.¹⁶⁸

To articulate a place for self-reflection

In the next section of this paper, I will conjure a space for an installation piece. Project Otium seeks to locate itself in this threshold, the realm between an intelligent mind and an experiencing body, to expand this philosophical territory into the realm of experience making. If consciousness is a phenomenon, what would be the possibility of actualizing a field to experiment with it in real-time and space? Once again, I am interested in the Heideggerian notion of *Gelassenheit*. If consciousness is an involuntary process towards another emerging and deliberate quality, is it possible to take a step back to question if we can control its emerging operations? To slow down to ultimately accelerate this process? Can we materialize a realm to dwell in, to protect our *being*, and wait for another, an emerging new ontology that helps us get closer to our human essence? Would it be possible to capture an ahistorical substance independent from the societal skin that encloses it?

Furthermore, the project deals with the notion of authenticity and perhaps a dimension that can be possibly reified as an “authentic self.” Several arguments in the course of this thesis have already addressed this problem. Whether it is possible to conjure a thing as an “authentic self” free from the technological forces that penetrate it is questionable. As it was discussed earlier, we are thoroughly embedded in an all-encompassing matrix, the technological forms of control that actively process our data whether we are conscious of them or not. The space of the gallery is no exception from this logic. Instead of proposing a panacea, the installation aims towards composing a space for a pause, an environment within which other modes of temporalization can be experienced and conceptualized. The visitors are invited to unlock other modes of cognition that are not by default subjected to mechanisms of control. These experiential exercises in mindfulness are means to become opaque and less detectable to the machinery that enforces transparency. The artistic object of this project is to build an experiential relation to oneself, to engage in a process of reflection that cannot translate into a transparent message to be codified. Ultimately, the aim is to structure an interior site to delay, escape, and resist the excessive impositions of control society.

¹⁶⁸ *What is Philosophy of science?* YouTube Video, 26:47, posted By “Closer to Truth”, April 16th 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvwkMxgahA4>. Accessed August 24th 2020

Part 3B: **Project *Otium***

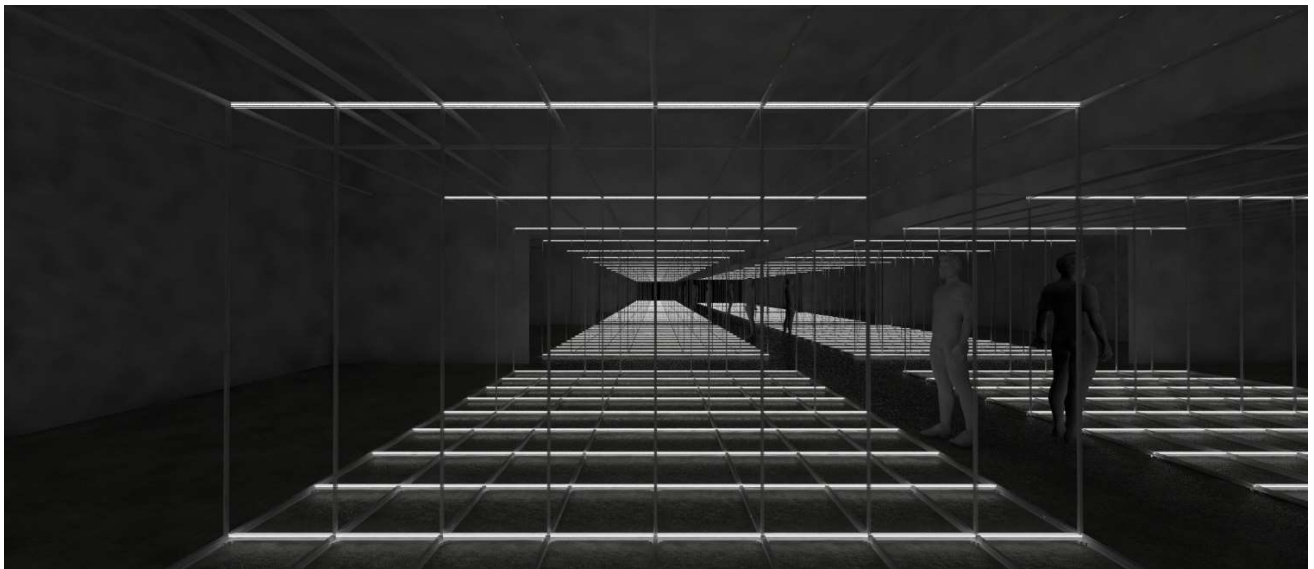


Figure #14: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University

A Minimalist Construct: Mark Making in Space /18

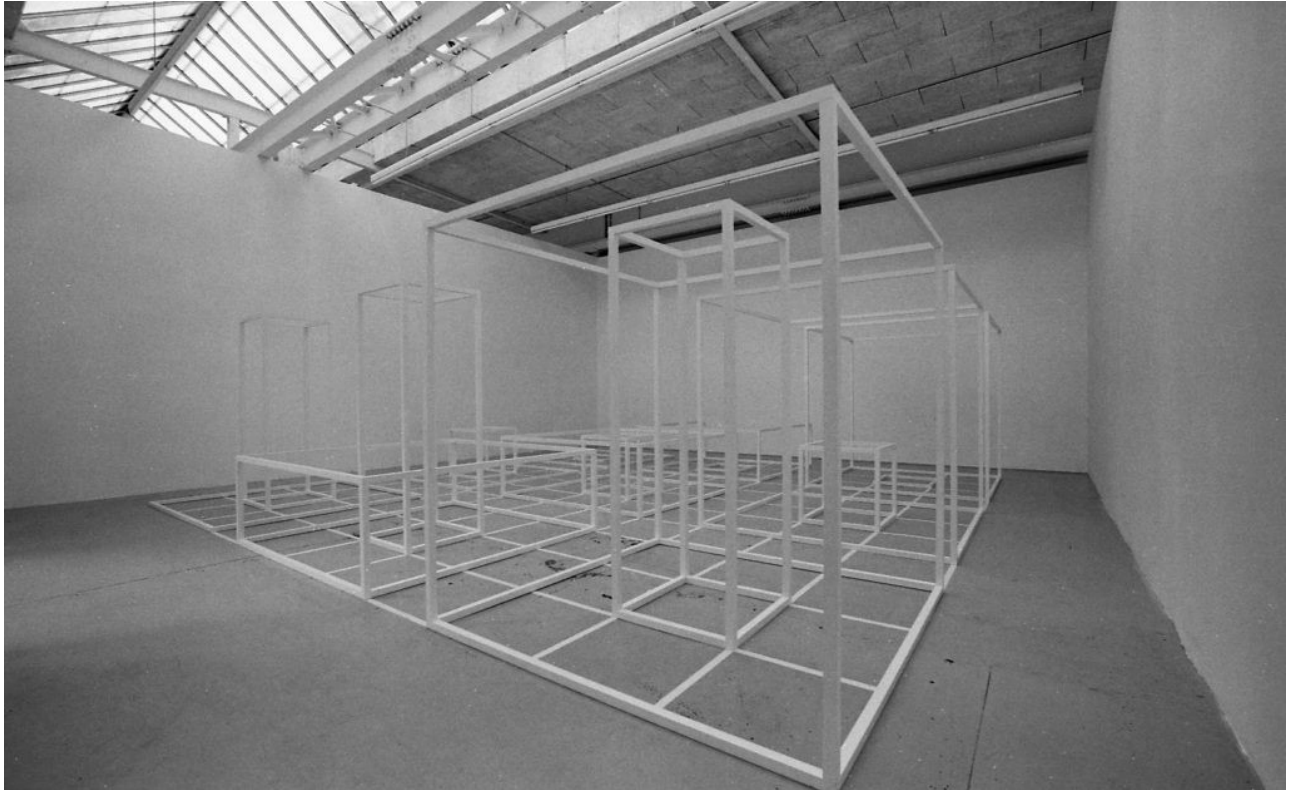


Figure #15: Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project No.1 (Set A)*, 1967, at InK, Zurich, 1980- Enameled aluminum squares and cubes are extended along the geometry of a grid that is laid out on the ground to initiate a process that follows certain rules to delineate an idea rather than a conventional aesthetic form.

The Minimalist movement in the visual arts transformed the space of the gallery into an exploratory landscape where the agency was given to viewers who could navigate the installations at their own speed, following their own trajectory. The spectator was given the sovereignty to access the sphere of his/her domain. The fixed position of the viewer's eye was abolished. A work of art could be read from multiple positions generating several possible readings ultimately subject to "vicissitudes of size", scale, and the shifting positions of the viewer.¹⁶⁹ The role of the author was reformed from one that instructs a particular reading to one who stages a situation, determining a set of conditions.¹⁷⁰ Viewers became the protagonists of an unfolding narrative and the readers of emblematic moods. Minimalist artists celebrated the intrinsic values of ordinary experiences. By providing their viewers

¹⁶⁹ Craig Rodmore, "A Field without Origin / Notes on Paintings for Electric Light." *YYZBOOKS* (blog). Accessed June 6th 2017, <http://www.yyzartistsoutlet.org/2013/05/a-field-without-origin-notes-on-paintings-for-electric-light-by-craig-rodmore/>

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

with facts rather than symbols they freed up the experience from romantic mentalities and the complex associations that these engender. They heightened the very essence of the materials they used to create artworks that stood on their own without professing to anything other than what they were. Devoid of any emotional content or specific expressions, the minimalist artist created visual fields in front of the viewer's eyes to unravel their logic. In their practice, they followed highly methodological approaches to create systems of information that could generate an artistic construct independent from the subjective presence of the artist. They actively strived to erase themselves from the process to make work that was "objective, inexpressive, and non-referential".

The aim of the artist would not be to instruct the viewer but to give him information. Whether the viewer understands this information is incidental to the artist; he cannot foresee the understanding of all his viewers. He would follow his predetermined premise to its conclusion avoiding subjectivity. Chance, taste, or unconsciously remembered forms would play no part in the outcome. The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object but functions merely as a clerk cataloging the results of his premise.¹⁷¹

-Sol LeWitt

In essence, Minimalism was a discrete response to the violent political context of the 1960s, a context that had emerged out of decades of American military action in Vietnam, the onset of the military-industrial complex, and the excessive use of disciplinary force on university campuses across the country. In a turbulent context in which power was challenged on many fronts by civil rights activists, a group of artists carved out a new space for a different type of practice. Minimalists deliberately abandoned notions of grand narratives and symbolisms to make space for pure and unadulterated experiences of matter. Disengaged and politically aloof, they occupied the space of the gallery to focus on immediacy and purity of simple experiences. They claimed a language full of regulated patterns and repetitions devoid of any referential potency. A language whose vocation was not depiction or storytelling but a performance that would resist any readership.¹⁷² In this sense they avoided a reactionary encounter with the forces that infested the social space with grand narratives, the forces that simultaneously engender their own particular forms of negative confrontations. These artists shifted their focus to a more immediate perceptual realm of a body that inhabits space liberated from the specific coordinates of imposing ideologies and "heroic ideals".

¹⁷¹ Lary Bloom, *Sol LeWitt: a Life of Ideas*, [Wesleyan University Press, Middletown Connecticut, 2019], p108

¹⁷² Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and The Rhetoric of Power" in *Art in Modern Culture and Anthology of Critical Texts*, ed. by Francis Frascina et al. [Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 1993], p117.

Space of Labor, Space of Delay- Encountering Opaqueness

Delay usually refers to a time suspended or postponed. A deviation from a straight path and a concentration of time, now and present. The time of delay generates a line of inquiry into a space that resists transparency and withholds metaphoric closure. While the space of the gallery is the architectural framework and the stage for the performative body, the body of the viewer is the “silent space of performance”¹⁷³. The gallery is an “experiential laboratory” for investigative processes to take shape. What appears inconclusive invites further inquiry into the nature of things on display. The body becomes the “prosthetic space of creative production”¹⁷⁴.

Disparate images and meanings extend each other and find resonance in the body. In this interstitial and liminal space, ideas linger to inspire new possibilities of interpretation. The conceived images intermingle with the ambiguities of lived experiences, juxtaposing the new with the past. The body enters into a space of “reflexive delay,” a time and space of contemplation. It pauses in this perceptive field and slows down to escalate the amount of perceptible details it receives from its environment. The body lingers within the thresholds of an elongated experience to acquire additional complexities, and to heighten its senses. In a slow and attentive process of perception, it engages with its immediate surroundings and its latent affects, to cultivate unforeseen physiological or physical reactions. It also paces and controls its responses. As Jennifer Higgie, in her article “A Theory of Relativity” (2005) writes, “All art in some way or another is about the ritual of slowing down life’s chaos.”¹⁷⁵ Art is also a way of perceiving and organizing that chaos into tangible and communicable forms, material or immaterial. Art as the “creative disruption” of everyday life is an empowering mechanism to organize this world’s chaos and contemplate a response.

A Site-Responsive Construct

The intended project envisions an installation that obtains the gallery dimensions to spread a geometrical grid across the space. In its minimalistic construct, it follows a non-hierarchical, impersonal arrangement of elementary components that are carefully constructed out of diffused lines of light. While the installation relies on the architectural frame of the gallery as a container, it uses the media of light to perceptually manipulate the volume of the space. This mute structure is intended to become a generator that is bound to the set geometry of a grid and the solid frame of the room but with the use of mirrors is capable of expanding its body beyond the solid coordinates of the space and into a vanishing point at a distance. This three-dimensional grid transforms the gallery into

¹⁷³ Homa Fardjadi, *Delayed Space: Performance and The Labors of Architecture in Delayed Space: Work of Homa Fardjadi and Mohsen Mostafavi* [Cambridge: Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 1994]

¹⁷⁴ Charles R. Garoian, *Prosthetic Pedagogy of Art, The: Embodied research and Practice*, [New York: SUNY Press, 2013], p10

¹⁷⁵ Jennifer Higgie, “A Theory of Relativity.” *Frieze* 92 (June-August 2005).

a dreamscape with liquid and expansive dimensions. It transcends it to attain the state of a placeless place. As a site-responsive installation, the piece is bound to its physical location. It acknowledges the gallery's contextual frame as an active participant in establishing a reading of the work. However, it investigates the construction of a boundless formula, a grid of non-hierarchical, repetitive elements that can be inserted in different settings, to be responded to by the communities within which it is lodged. This structure will foreground different potentials depending on the viewers that enter this site. It will compose a clearing within the anarchy of normalized impositions for the viewers to contemplate on what is immediate beyond the confines that set and encircle various notions of the self. It is an act of place-making that inserts a delicate structure into more rigid constructs, a grid to be interlaced within the other institutional, psychological, or political grids to compose a more fluid expansive geometry to null the specificities that mark, modulate, and control. The abstract form materializes a space resembling that of inner thoughts, a vital space to hold a fragile distance away from what has reached so close.

The Materiality of Light - An Immaterial Entanglement within a mesh of Light

The palpable wash of light that silently permeates the space leads to the conflation of the object and the observer. It surpasses the material confines of the place to address the conceptual notions of the site as a “phenomenological construct”¹⁷⁶. Light enters the viewer's field of vision to physically and perceptually alter the experience of the place and to raise a new awareness of the phenomenology of the room.

The depthless, immeasurable enveloping body of light generates a ubiquitous environment. The unmediated presence of light, its immaterial materiality, prompts palpable sensory and physiological impacts. Light signifies its amorphous presence as a field of energy. It mediates between the architecture and the viewers to sculpt their spatial perceptions. It performs a silent space-defining function to put the viewers in a particular position, to “sense themselves sensing”¹⁷⁷, to cite Eliasson. Light warps the viewers within a gaseous materiality that generates an affective terrain where the observer enters into a new state of relatedness with the surrounding environment. In this prolonged state of in-betweenness, subliminal and visceral forces infiltrate the porous skin to vibrate within the body of the viewer. Such affective forces function within a state of unconscious knowing, urging their subjects into particular actions or thoughts. The emerging environment fosters perceptual complexities obtained through irrational forms of bodily experience.

¹⁷⁶ Dan Flavin, *Dan Flavin: The Architecture of Light: Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin*, [New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1999]

¹⁷⁷ James Rondeau, “The Mobility of Real: Olafur Eliasson is Now” in *The Hugo Boss Prize 2002*, [New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2002], p37.

The construction of an abstract grid to critique another grid, the striated space of data capture



Figure #16: Gales Gallery York University - Testing the grid geometry for project *Otium*, December 2019

The aesthetic decisions for this project came out of my deep desire to relinquish my former tendencies to build sculptural forms. In this process, my focus shifted towards conjuring architectonic spaces that were affective constructs to make inhabitable spaces for the body. In these environments, the expressive objects would give their place to diagrams that resembled mental narratives, maps that modulated the rooms in different forms of abstraction. The aim was to measure the space with a set structure to lay a base for another medium to be unfolded here. These structures were mere containers, intended to disappear along the process as the ultimate goal was for light to take over and to sculpture visible but immaterial forms. Light moves along this geometry to permeate the atmosphere, to sense it, and to undo its rigid geometry. The project was conceptually conceived as an abstraction of a void that can be inserted into the striated surveillance landscape of an institution that is hosting the gallery to explore a flight line of exit out of its control mechanism. The form, however, should have adopted a logic to compose a modular unit to be repeated elsewhere. The grid appeared

to be the right form for an impartial geometry to map and hold space in a sequence of lines that cross each other to introduce a spatial unit. In this exercise, a lot of attention was given to finding the right scale to compose an enclosure while allowing a person's movement in this gridded territory. In conjuring an appropriate measurement for the modular units of the grid I relied on the gallery dimensions and the existing lighting track to mark the main crossing points on the floor. The length of these lines was divided based on several dimensions to finally pursue a unit measurement that was the minimum possible to accommodate a person's footwear. A circulation corridor of 1200 mm was provided around the perimeter of the room to accommodate an accessible path for disabled bodies

Moving into a veil of a gridded void, a holding environment, a space of abstraction to relinquish the established structures of knowledge – A parallel study into the work of Agnes Martin

The abstract form of the grid composes an elemental environment that disassociates itself from any external representations. Abstraction affords this project the freedom to compose a space at a distance from reality to organize other forms of composure. It conjures an enclosure for attentiveness, a quiet solitude to register the immediate encounters that tend to slip away. The grid holds a cradle for an aesthetic encounter liberated from the confines of historically imposed structures of self-representation, hyper-connectivity, and noise. Not neglectful of an existing context, it becomes a deliberate detachment that aims towards a political gesture that operates beyond mere reliance on negative forms of reaction. It searches for steadiness in a “veiled vitality” to actively engage in the process of self-erasure to care for a new birth. It becomes the attempt to hold on to an “uplifting sanity” amidst the ever-present confines of normalized and reinforced artificial constructs. It is an effort to deflect and confuse their gaze, to deftly exit their axis of control.¹⁷⁸ It is to enter a retreat to labor towards the positive, to take a solemn stance in a wilful releasement that is determined to contemplate on what is essential.

Agnes Martin (1912-2004), a contemporary abstract expressionist painter, investigated the notion of transcendence in her work. She painted various grids to establish an aesthetic terminology in order to communicate her personal thoughts and ongoing interior monologues. Her work is replete with silence, solitude, repetition, and rhythms that hold a non-verbal pulse of an affective visual dialogue. In her paintings, she structures vast landscapes of pure emotion depleted of any formal representations or descriptions. The subtle registrations of these perceptual fields in her paintings alludes to the ascetic inwardness of an artist in pursuit of self-erasure towards an entanglement in a more fluid and slippery presence devoid of any “subjective I”. A place to devote herself to herself, disengaged from the external constructs and the otherness imposed on her by other bodies. For

¹⁷⁸ *Agnes Martin: A roundtable discussion for new scholarship*, YouTube Video, 1:43:08, Posted by “The New School”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGIYpo-aWzs&t=3904s>, March 5, 2015. Accessed June 2021

Martin, the form of the grid was not “a human measure” but “an ethereal representation of the boundless order of transcendent reality”.¹⁷⁹

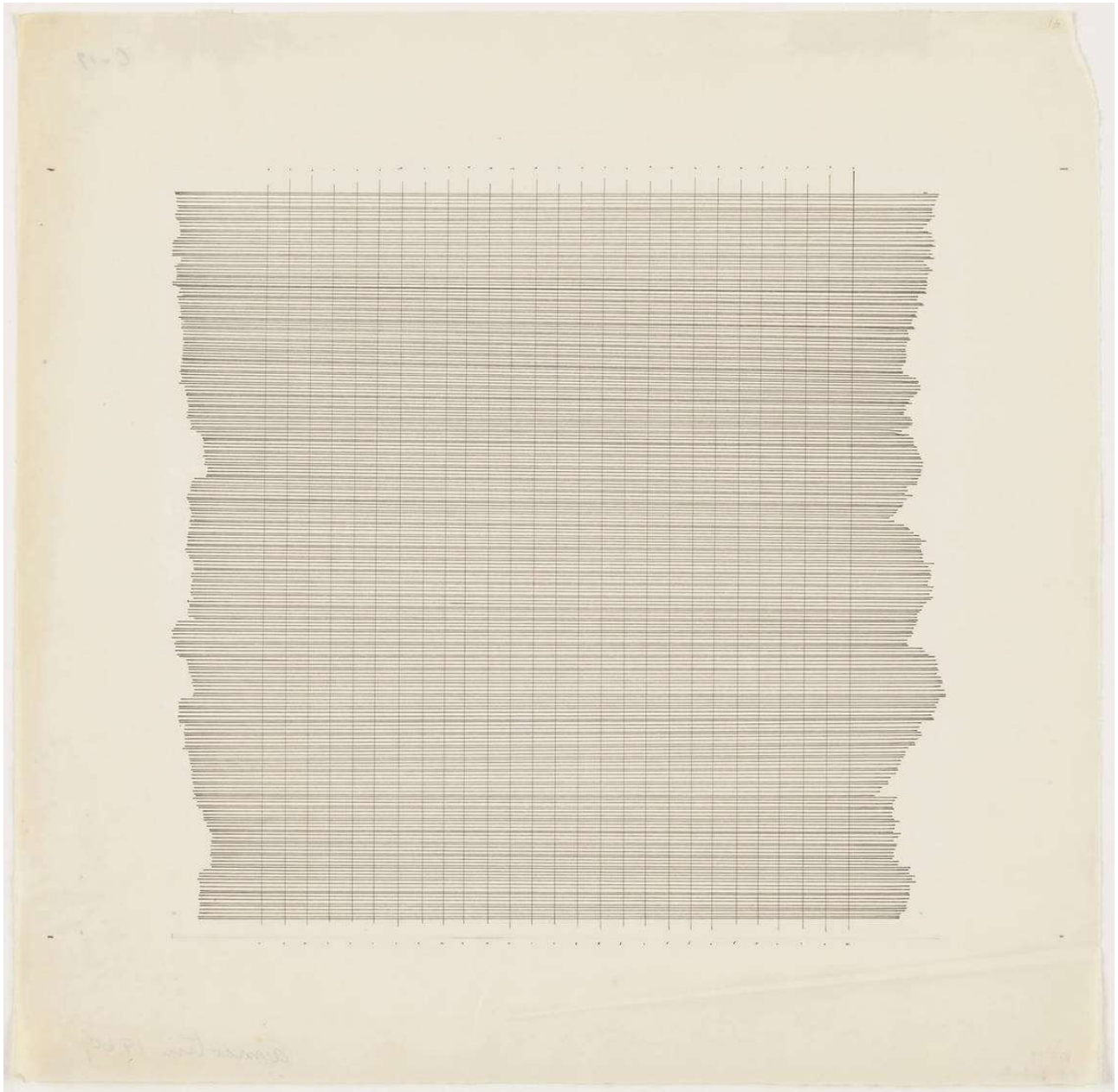


Figure #17: Agnes Martin, Untitled, 1960 - ink on paper, 30.2 x 30.6 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Throughout her creative career, Martin repeatedly struggled with paranoia and periods of depression. The auditory hallucinations and rushes of voices that occupied the space of her mind drove her into

¹⁷⁹ Nikkal, “Agnes Martin: Drawing Lines- Painting Space”, *Art of Collage*, September, 5, 2020, <https://artofcollage.wordpress.com/2020/09/05/agnes-martin-drawing-lines-painting-space/>. Accessed June 12th 2021

disabling and catatonic trances. Her situation instigated her to begin an inquiry into the nature of her mind. Like many other artists before her, she asked, “what am I?” She investigated the possibility of finding an “authentic self,” a threshold passage towards the sublime. As troubling as it was, she distanced herself to deconstruct the very fabric of her being, to delve into the spaces of a “vacant mind” to patiently wait for inspirations to reach her from the other side. She assiduously turned her back to the world to engage in a disciplined artistic method of discovery and expression that presented in the immaculate spaces of her paintings.¹⁸⁰

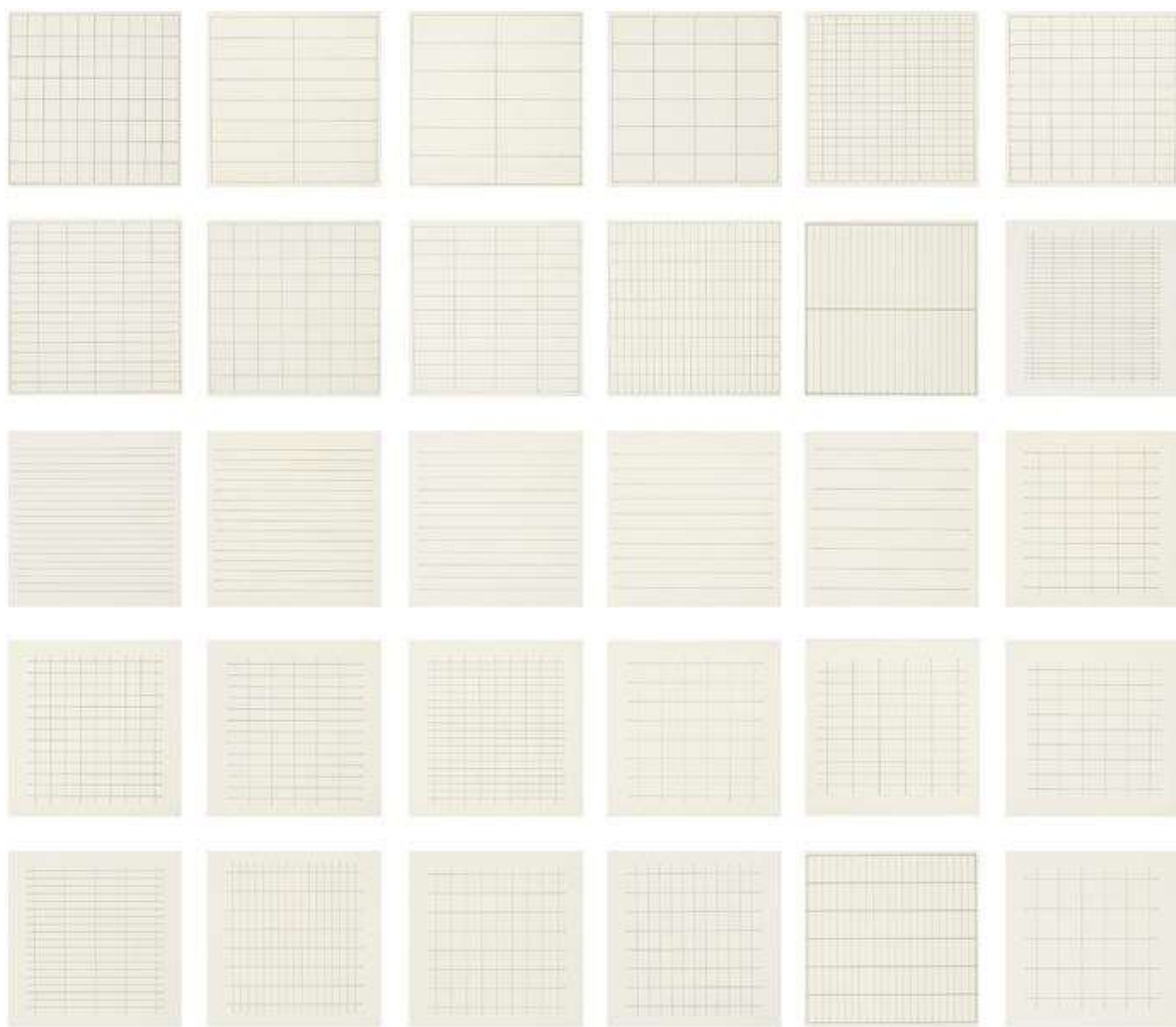


Figure #18: Agnes Martin, *On a Clear Day*, 1973 - 30 Screen prints in gray, on Japan rag paper, each (with mat):
14¾ x 14¾ in.

*If you have enough respect for yourself you will ask yourself:
'What am I.' If the answer is 'I am a man' then the question becomes: 'What is*

¹⁸⁰ Paula Marvelly, “Agnes Martin: Writings,” *The Culturium*, February, 11, 2018, <https://www.theculturium.com/agnes-martin-writings/>. Accessed June 12th 2021

*a man.’ When you come to the end of all ideas you will still have no definitive knowledge on the subject. Then you will have to wait for inspiration. Until you can clear up your true identity you will be tied to a repetition of this life. I have come to tell you the easiest way to find an answer to this question. First you must say to yourself: ‘I want to live a true life.’ Then you must watch your mind to see the response that it is making to life. You will discover the true response that you yourself make to life undistorted by the ideas of others. You will make discoveries every day and they will all be very helpful. Just as consciousness of the sublime is the path of life so is self-knowledge the path of life.¹⁸¹- Agnes Martin, *What We Do Not See If We Do Not See**

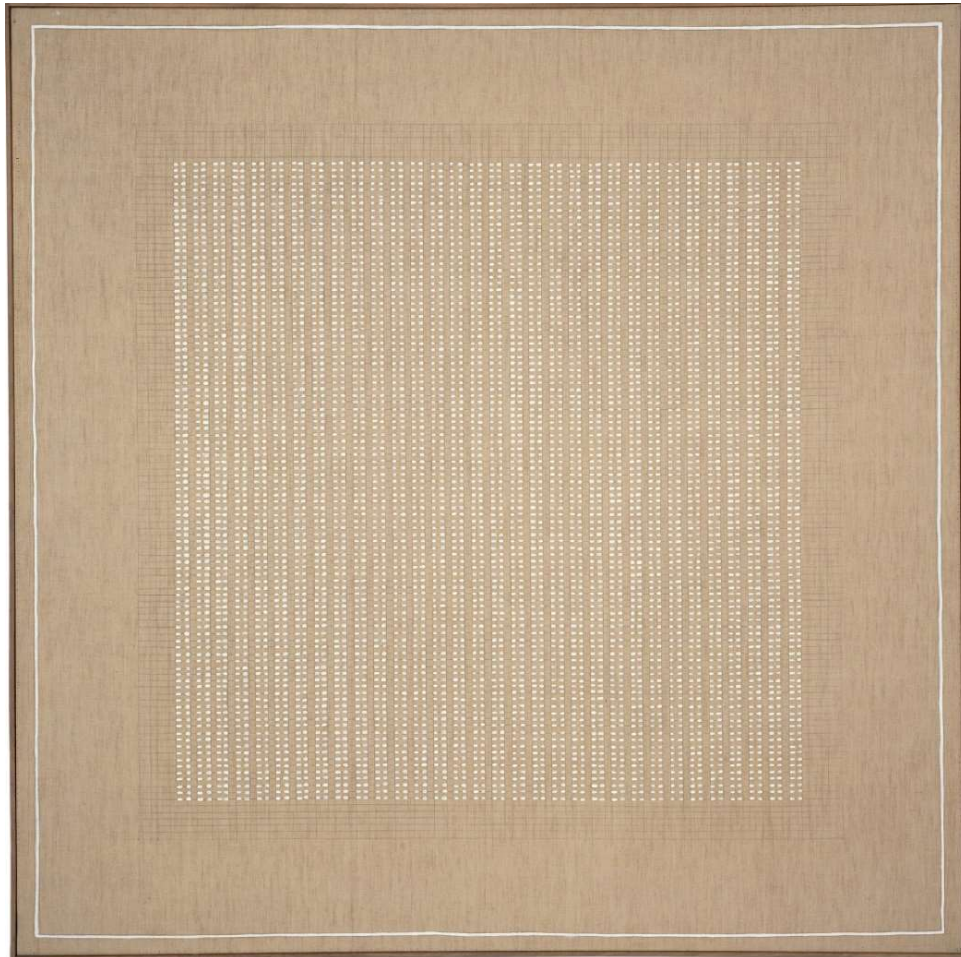


Figure #19: Agnes Martin, *The Islands*, 1961, 72 x 72 inches, Oil and graphite on canvas

¹⁸¹ Paula Marvally, “Agnes Martin: Writings,” *The Culturium*, February, 11, 2018, <https://www.theculturium.com/agnes-martin-writings/>. Accessed June 12th 2021

“A queer phenomenology”- Casting off the Culturally Constructed Body - A parallel study into the dance performances of Tatsumi Hijikata

Sara Ahmed, in her essay *Orientations: Towards a queer phenomenology*, argues for a way of looking that deviates from the straight axis of normative structures, "the repeated and habitual actions" that mold a fabric that entangles bodies. In the shared spaces of our social existence, bodies are instructed in specific ways on how to orient towards each other. The dominant power structures in our world prescribe distinct behaviours that restrain the body's diverse potentials. The physical spaces of culturally constructed artifacts, objects, and architectural spaces shape a foreground to our experiences that direct us into definitive paths and obscure others. The set constraints of the phenomenological orientations inform "the incorporeal aspects of bodily dwellings." The tendencies that are successfully normalized and reinforced through repetition eclipse the impulses that may surface but are captured quickly to be reoriented towards the more recognizable categories.¹⁸² But what are the possibilities of circling those structures to investigate alternative ways of being? Our capacities to act are instructed and limited by the persisting culture of norms. By revitalizing our perspectives we will be allowed to explore the things that slip away, the fleeting moments of contradicting realities, we come to recognize the patterns that are artificially constructed; the structures that are mere historic contingencies rather than primordial essences. Beyond the socially constructed effects that set the differences on how to inhabit a gender-oriented body, a queer phenomenology opens a field of discussion on other vital ways of creating ourselves.

*Phenomenology, after all, is full of queer moments, moments of disorientation, which involve not only "the intellectual experience of disorder, but the vital experience of giddiness and nausea, which is the awareness of our own contingency and the horror with which it fills us." Maurice Merleau-Ponty gives an account of how these moments are overcome, as bodies are reoriented in the "becoming vertical" of perspective. A queer phenomenology might involve a different orientation toward such moments. It might even find joy and excitement in the horror.*¹⁸³ - Sara Ahmed, *Orientations*

Queer phenomenology looks at the deviant body that is relegated to the back, to the compulsion to follow a straight line, and to inhabit the more affirmative forms of social orders; instructions that are elevated and sanctified as moral and social ideals. Such frameworks render some lives unliveable in the projection of a certain future to uphold and a common base to sustain; one that is devoid of

¹⁸² Sara Ahmed, "Orientations: Towards A Queer Phenomenology", *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 12(4), pp. 543-574. ISSN 1064-2684 [Article], <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202832>, 2006. Accessed June 12th 2021

¹⁸³ Ibid, p544

diversity and difference. By inhabiting the spaces of rejection, the out-of-placelessness of non-normative desires, the suppressed and the veiled may surface. Queerness is a way of revisiting the overlooked, to follow a model-less and unscripted form of life, and dance to a new birth. This non-committing aims towards the oblique dimensions of alternate routes that bear the horrors of disorientation but in return offer novel ways of acquiring a body along “unsystematized lines of acquaintance.” Queer phenomenology orients itself towards the invisible, that which is erased from the face to follow a path of untested and boundless desires. It juxtaposes old forms of inhabiting this world with perceptions that are forgotten to carve out new geographies of existence.¹⁸⁴

*We have hope because what is behind us is also what allows other ways of gathering in time and space, of making lines that do not reproduce what we follow, but instead create new textures on the ground. It is interesting to note that in landscape architecture the term desire lines is used to describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow. Deviation leaves its own marks on the ground, which can even help generate alternative lines, which cross the ground in unexpected ways. Such lines are indeed traces of desire, where people have taken different routes to get to this point or that point. It is certainly desire that helps generate a queer landscape, shaped by the paths that we follow in deviating from the straight line.*¹⁸⁵

- Sara Ahmed, *Orientations*

Ankoku Butoh, A Corporeal Transmutation and A Sailing Adventure in the Dark, “Plucking Off the Darkness of the Flesh”

The work of Tatsumi Hijikata (1928-1986), a contemporary Japanese choreographer and the founder of a genre of dance called *Butoh*, alludes to similar conceptions of a body that repudiates the implicit imposition of political identities and the infested atmosphere of media power. The rejected body affirms itself as is to structure its own “paradoxical ethos.” *Ankoku* in Japanese means darkness, the space of shadows. Hijikata relegated the body to a dark void to liberate it from what was acquired externally in search of what was taking shape from within. Stripped of its societal skin, the body in his performances releases a dance to search for an ahistorical substance that defies categorization or aestheticization. It defines an actual here to dwell in, to orient itself and detects the possibilities of a new world to unfold. In his poetic gestures, Hijikata strived to capture an amorphous life, one that resists being trapped in static forms.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p570

¹⁸⁶ Kurihara Nanako, "Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh: [Introduction]." *TDR (1988-)* 44, no. 1 (2000): 12-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146810>. Accessed June 10th 2021

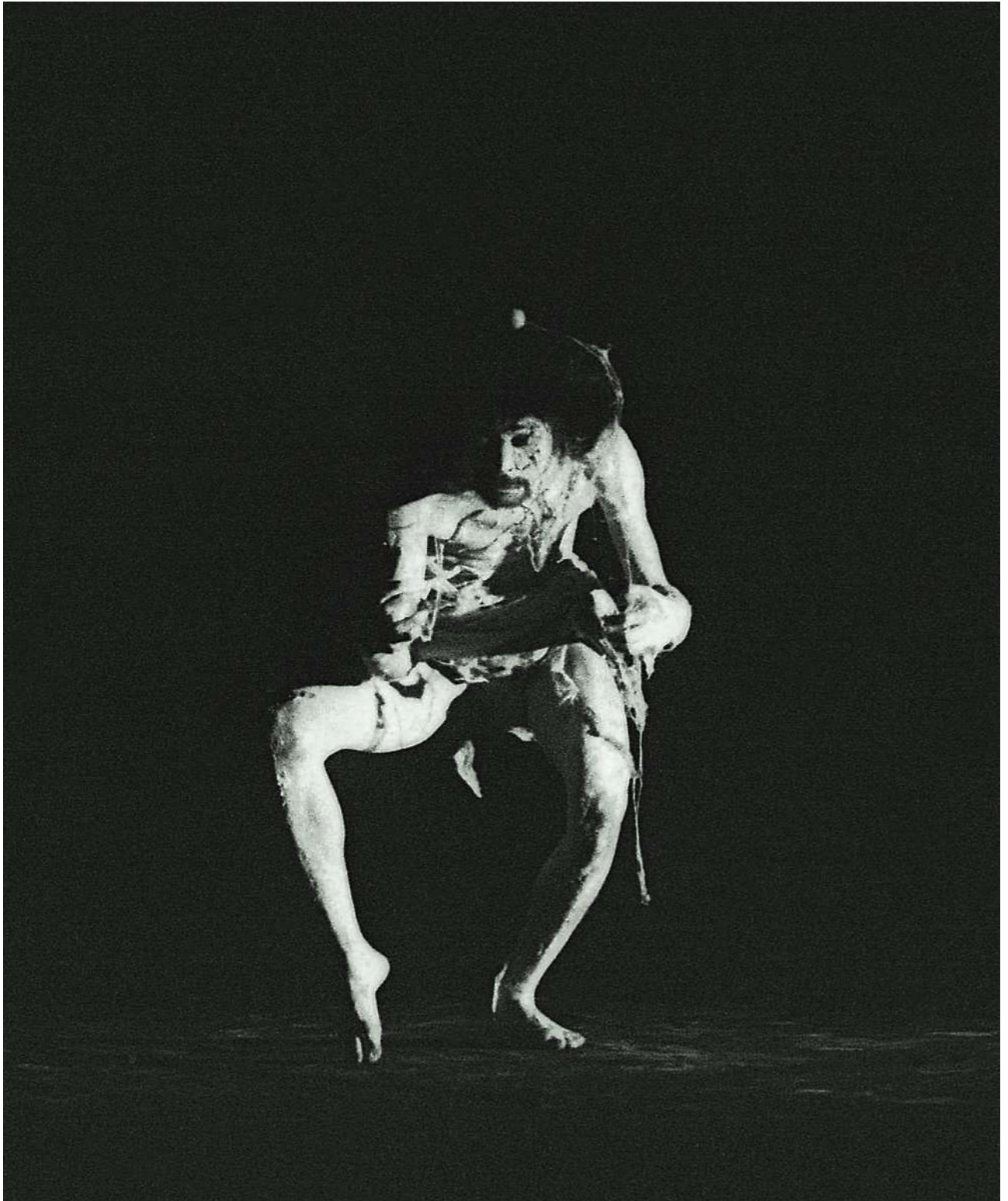


Figure #20: Tatsumi Hijikata

An artist in the midst of drastic transitions that affected postwar Japan from periods of poverty to extreme materialism, Hijikata understood how the body was impacted in a world of social turbulences.

"Now is the very crucial moment when the world has become filled with all kinds of materials. Even when there were obstacles and resistant things in the past, we did not necessarily grasp what was lacking within you vividly" (1977:123)¹⁸⁷

The body violated by technological agencies of computers and virtual simulations has lost a sense of the real. The culturally constructed body further enmeshed in the medium of technological and materialist operations has been deprived of its sense of selfhood. Hijikata believed that the body has turned into something distant, a remote entity. In his work, he tried to return to the space of the body for an intense engagement with its potentials. The cosmological moves in his dance choreographies departed from the old and aestheticized classical notions to explore the darker sides of the flesh. He restlessly endeavored to “cast off the self” to become life itself.

A dancer must be able to relate to, for example, a frozen bone that transcends gender. Getting to that point, however, demands exhaustive examination, and without it the work will lapse into a trendy pseudo-darkness. In part, such a failure is doubtless a result of the times in which we live, but it's also because people have superficial perceptions of their own particular landscapes. Underground art turns into mere trendiness not because of external factors but because of the people who practice it. They create a desert around themselves, then complain there is no water. Why don't they try drinking from the wells within their own bodies? They should instead drop a ladder deep into their own bodies and climb down it. Let them pluck the darkness from within their own bodies and eat it. But they always seek resolution from outside themselves.¹⁸⁸

– Tatsumi Hijikata

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. P 17.

¹⁸⁸ Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, and Hijikata Tatsumi. "Hijikata Tatsumi: Plucking off the Darkness of the Flesh. An Interview." *TDR (1988-)* 44, no. 1 (2000): 49-55. Accessed June 10th 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146814>, p51-52.

A contextual Base for the project

Project *Otium* cannot possibly modulate a fixed and definitive experience for the body. Such a task would be incommensurate with the goals of this project. Instead, in its conceptualization, it conjures manifold orientations towards this structure. Tendencies that foreground an encounter with this installation inform the responses that would unfold as per the engagement of different bodies. In this last section of this paper, I set a contextual base for the ideas that inform a background layer for the project. The technological body, the digitalized body, the labor body, and the culturally framed body are juxtaposed to structure mechanisms of encounter for a line of flight. Perhaps in this confrontation, the body should migrate elsewhere. Project *Otium* condenses a temporal event for such a happening.

Project Logistics/19

The plan of the Gales Gallery at York University offers an almost square shape layout measuring 32' x 31'. The light track which is a gridded square hovers somewhere in the middle at 12' 8", shortening the relatively tall white cube of the gallery and introducing a more intimate scale. The intended project of conceptualizing a stage and a three-dimensional canvas works with these dimensions. The track functions as a support structure to hold this installation in place. The project incorporates over 920' (280 meters) of omnidirectional programmable white LED tubes with 4000K colour temperature. Aluminium profiles will house these LED lines and acrylic diffusers ensure a soft finished quality of light.

Project *Otium* is a 24' x 16' structure composed of three layers, two horizontal and one vertical, connecting the top and the bottom. It sets up a grid that follows a 2' modular. Together these layers build a net to hold the lights and a series of pathways to sustain their movements. The three sidewalls of the gallery are covered with mirrors that closely follow the dimensions of the structure measuring 18' x 8' and 30' x 8'. Once the audience steps onto this field and perceives the mirrors they will swiftly float in the middle of a horizontal landscape.

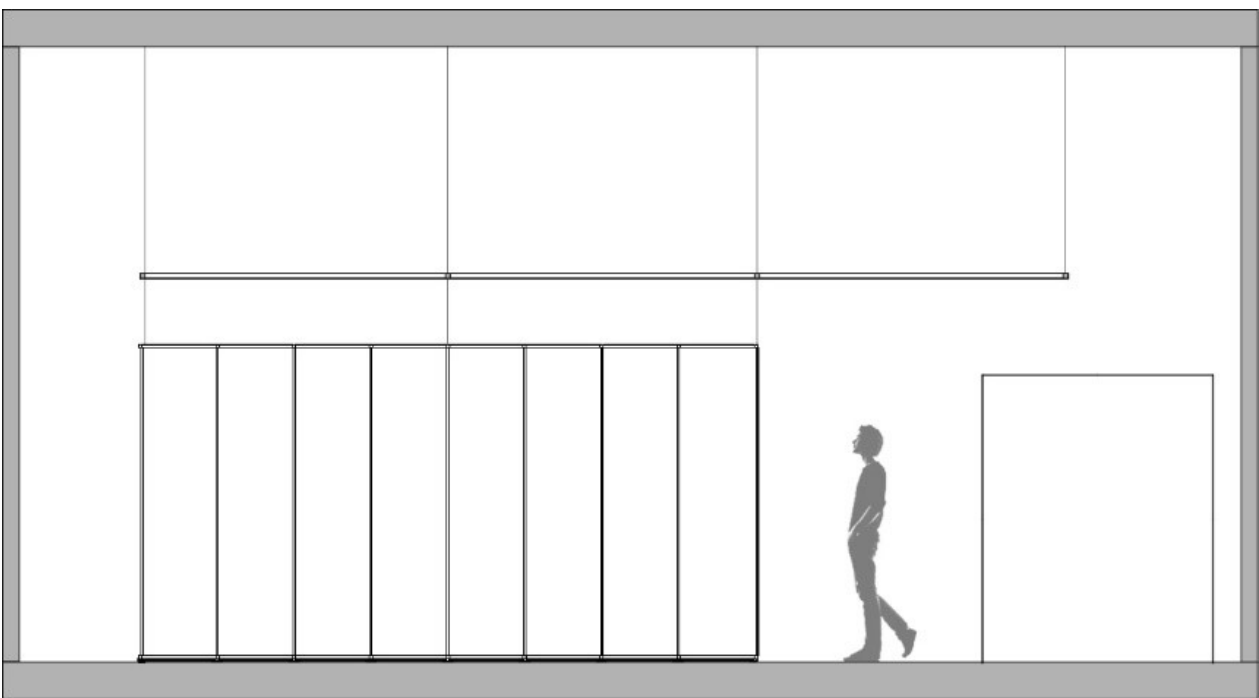


Figure #21: Project *Otium* Cross Section, Gales Gallery York University

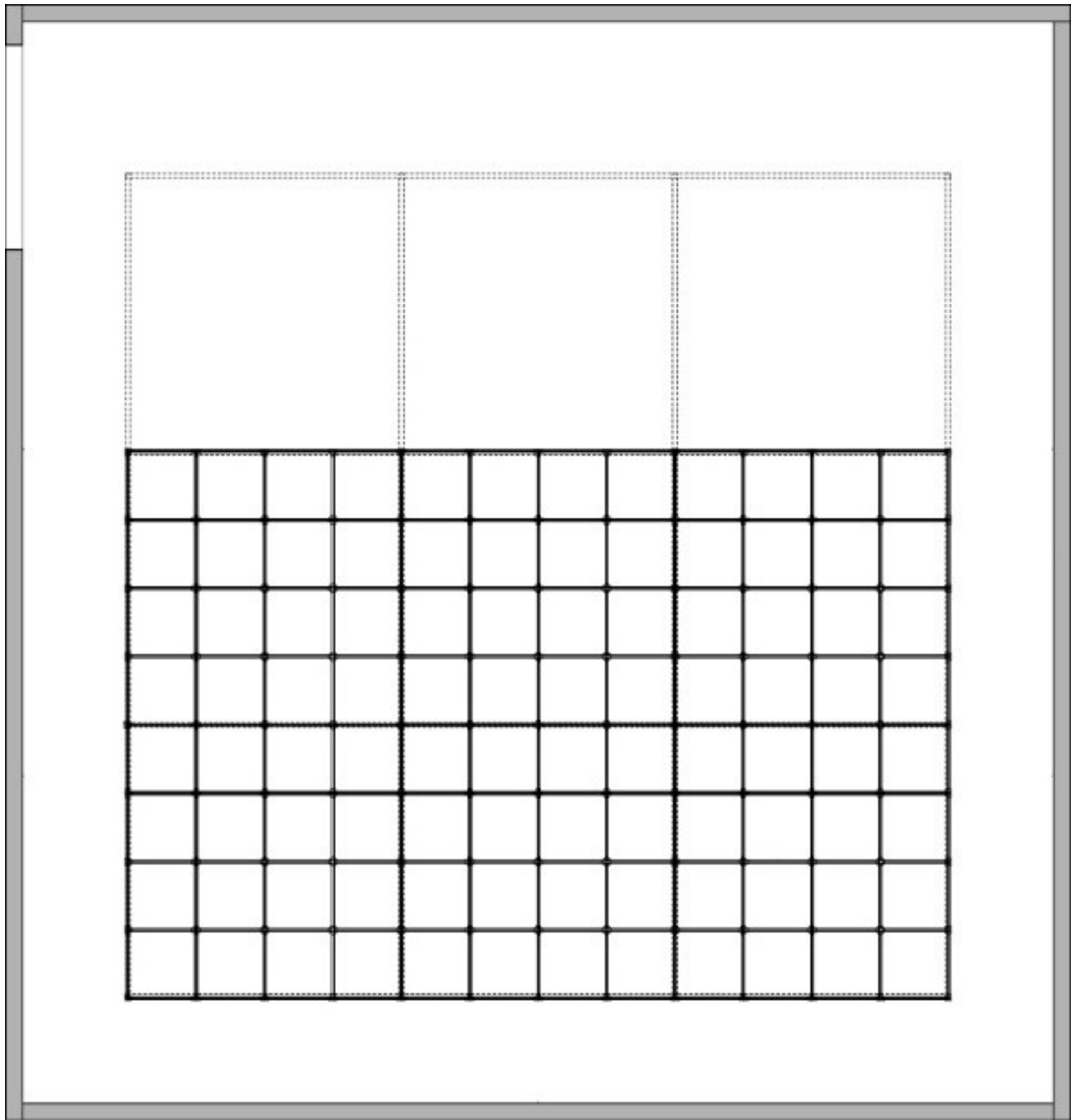


Figure #22: Project *Otium* Plan View, Gales Gallery York University

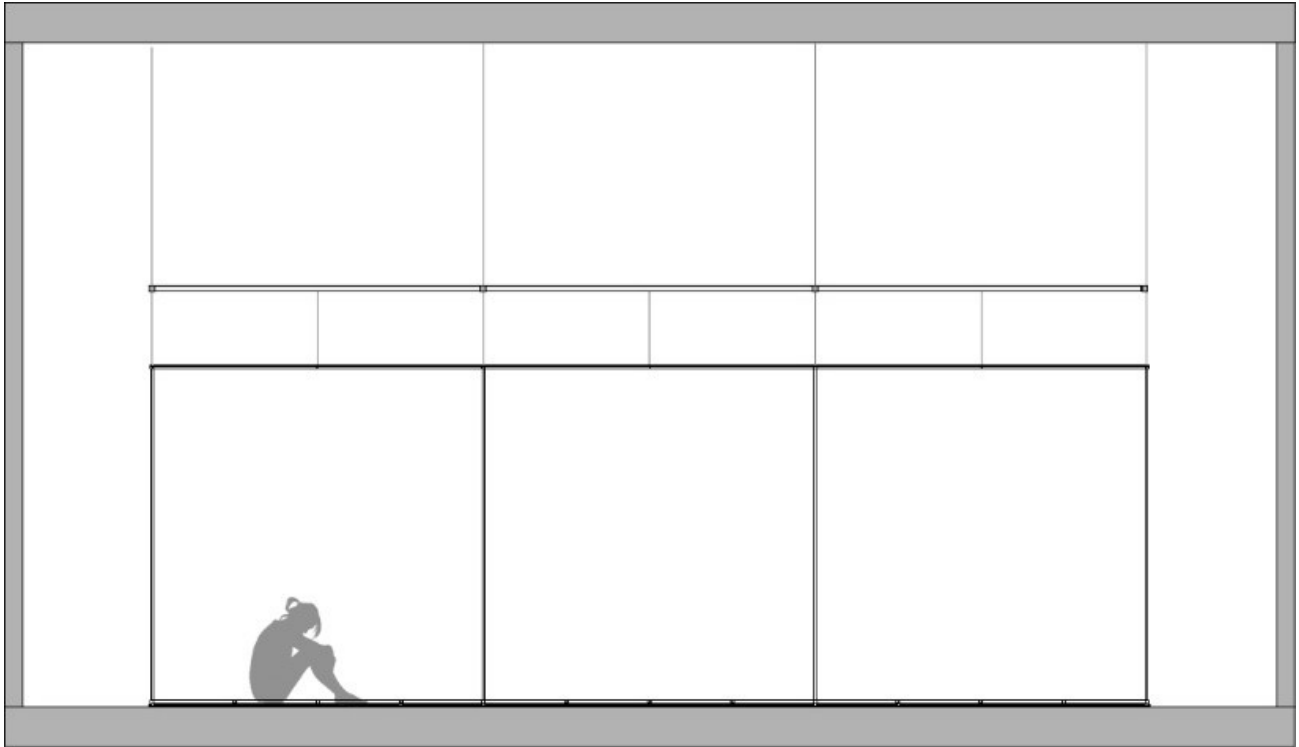


Figure #23: Project *Otium* Longitudinal Section, Gales Gallery York University

The elements of light and sound together structure a space that disintegrates and shifts. The place becomes a container that holds a void in total darkness. The structure then paints a series of light sequences from flickering points to moving lines of light to compose two, three, and 4-dimensional spatial narratives. The bodies of light and the emerging soundscapes unfold their patterns at different speeds. At times these transitions are very slow, lasting several hours, while other transitions rapidly transform the space, expanding and contracting, pulling and pushing the other bodies that float in this space. The visitor is frequently forced to balance herself against this shifting territory. The sounds, as well as the light compositions, do not necessarily correlate. The task of finding a pattern remains with the visitor.

The installation is intended to run for a week. As it is designed to be a solitary experience, only one person at a time can enter the room. Depending on the date, the time of day, and the duration of their stay (within an hour limit) the visitor will encounter a different spatial composition. The experience may never be the same. Some light sequences are designed and will be played at set intervals during the week. Other narratives are sensory-based and are triggered by the movement of the visitors in space.

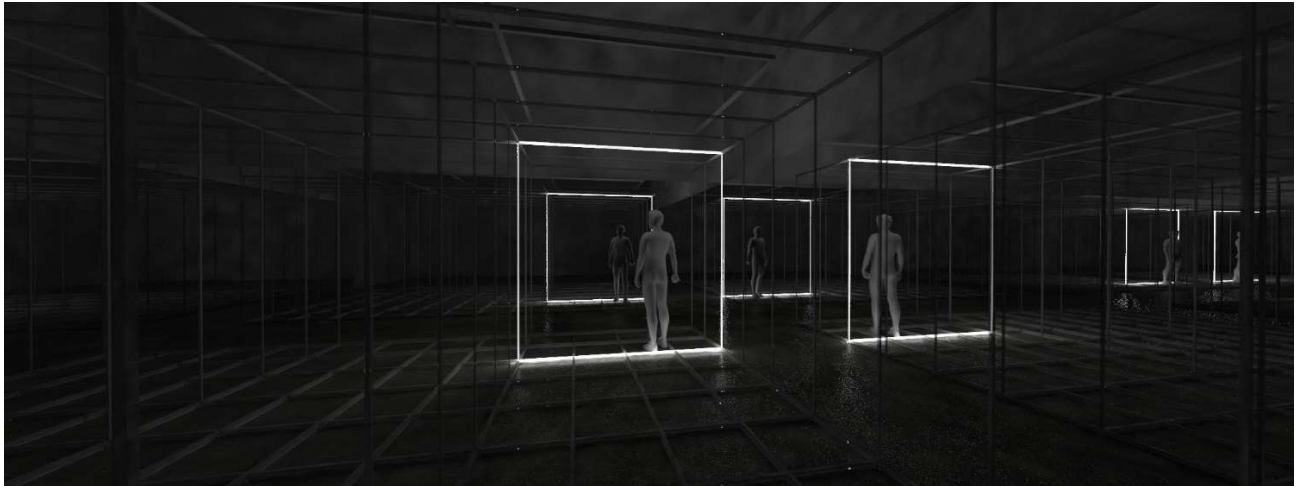


Figure #24: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University

An anti-institutional model – “Make the outside a territory in space”

Project *Otium* is an exploration in making an opening within a strictly contoured and striated field of an institutional structure. It is conceived at the cross-section of ideas that were stitched together in the course of this thesis to fabricate a theoretical map; a map that illustrates the intricate conflicts of modernity. Theories that probed the ontology of modern humans to perform a diagnostic function, to meticulously inspect its illnesses. Philosophies that responded to an ontology that has shifted towards the will to will to depict an epoch that has forgotten about the necessary stillness that should precede its actions. The project is intended to curate a parallel dimension, one that opens a terrain for an experience in anti-economical time. A time-space that offers an exit from a territory of calculable, definitive actions to a realm of indefinite and undetectable sensory revelations. It will diagrammatically model a *plane of immanence* within the enveloping plane of organization that has sieged its bordering landscape.

*Make the outside a territory in space; consolidate that territory by the construction of a second, adjacent territory; deterritorialize the enemy by shattering this territory from within; deterritorialize oneself by renouncing, by going elsewhere. Another justice, another movement, another space-time.*¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, [Seattle, WA: Wormwood Distribution, 2010], p5

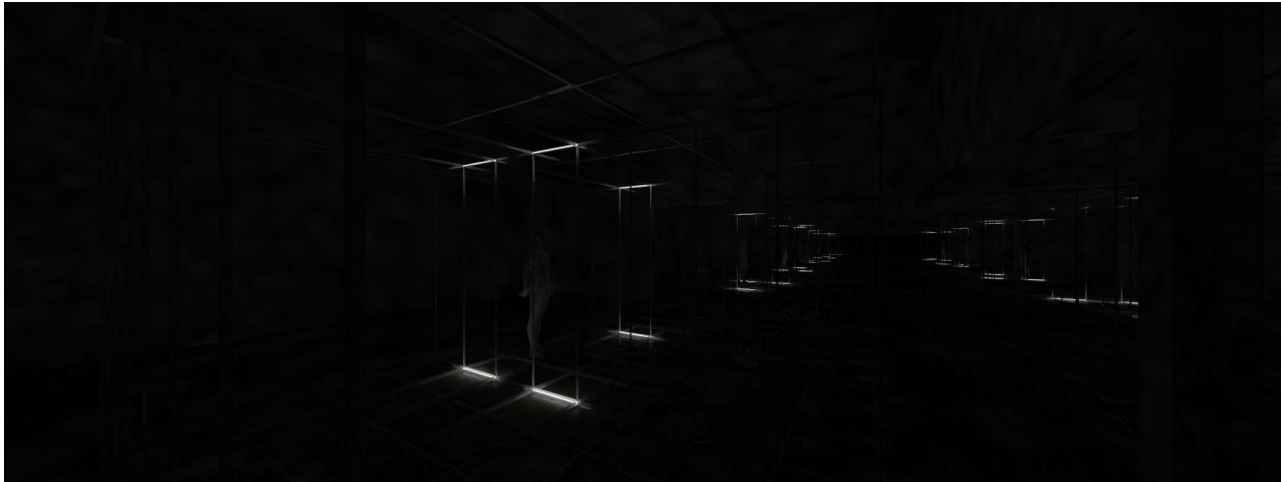


Figure #25: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University

A Smooth Space / “The Illuminating Gas”

The speeding world seems to have lost the necessary time and stimulating delays that were crucial in capturing profound perceptions. Project *Otium* considers this state to study this transition and speculates upon the possibility of hijacking existing technological tools to offer a space to withdraw and resist exhausting immersive networks. In this sense, the project does not follow the intention to materialize the ideas discussed earlier but strives to be a conscientious response and a deliberate act of defiance. Opposing a technological atmosphere infested with subliminal cues, the project should provide an opportunity to slow down and to reconfigure neural links to the spaces of presence and times of presencing. More than a transcendental experience, the focus of this project has shifted towards the physical components and chemical reactions that are composing an immanent and emerging event. This deprivation chamber deliberately obliterates external stimuli to situate the audience on a platform of an embodied awareness. It is conceived as a mindfulness machine for threading vectors of escape out of the framing forces of the everyday. In this field of sense-making, one can circumvent the material and immaterial enclosures of *Gestell* to release oneself into the turbulence of random encounters. Here, technology will perform a background function to structure a diagram for a synthetic experience of the ephemeral elements of light and sound. Different clusters of light momentarily sketch a space in transformation, one that expands, disintegrates, and elongates to shift its volume. In this field of pure intensities, the light with its clean vastness builds a reticulum to hold the chaos. At times the lights construct a rigid perspectival form to delineate a distant and vanishing horizon. In this milieu, one traverses the space from one point to another without arriving at any particular destination, but to compose “a closed space for oneself” to permeate the stratas of sense-making and to introspectively articulate fresh sensations. The project then molds an interior

site for an exercise in hyper-surveillance, to closely monitor the self to compose a paradigm for the exterior global city.

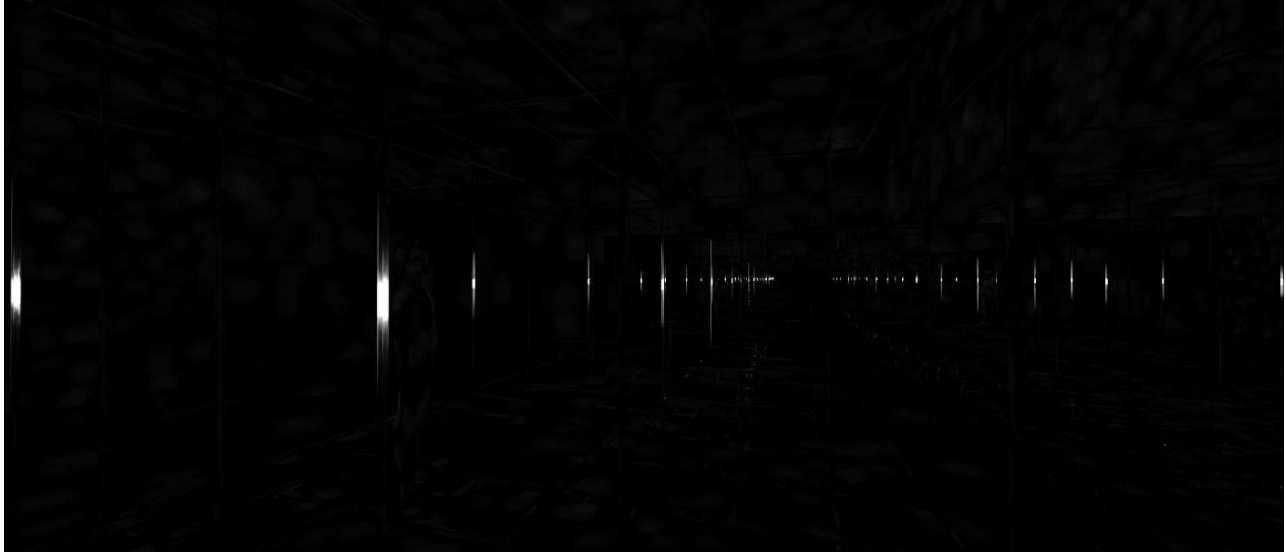


Figure #26: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University

Smooth space is precisely the space of smallest deviation: therefore it has no homogeneity, except between infinitely proximate points, and the linking of proximities is effected independently of any determined path. It is a space of contact, of small tactile or manual actions of contact, rather than a visual space like Euclid's striated space. Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, aceneted, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without "counting" it and can "be explored only by legwork." They do not meet the visual condition of being observable from a point in space external to them; an example of this is the system of sounds, or even of colors, as opposed to Euclidean space.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, [Seattle, WA: Wormwood Distribution, 2010], p30

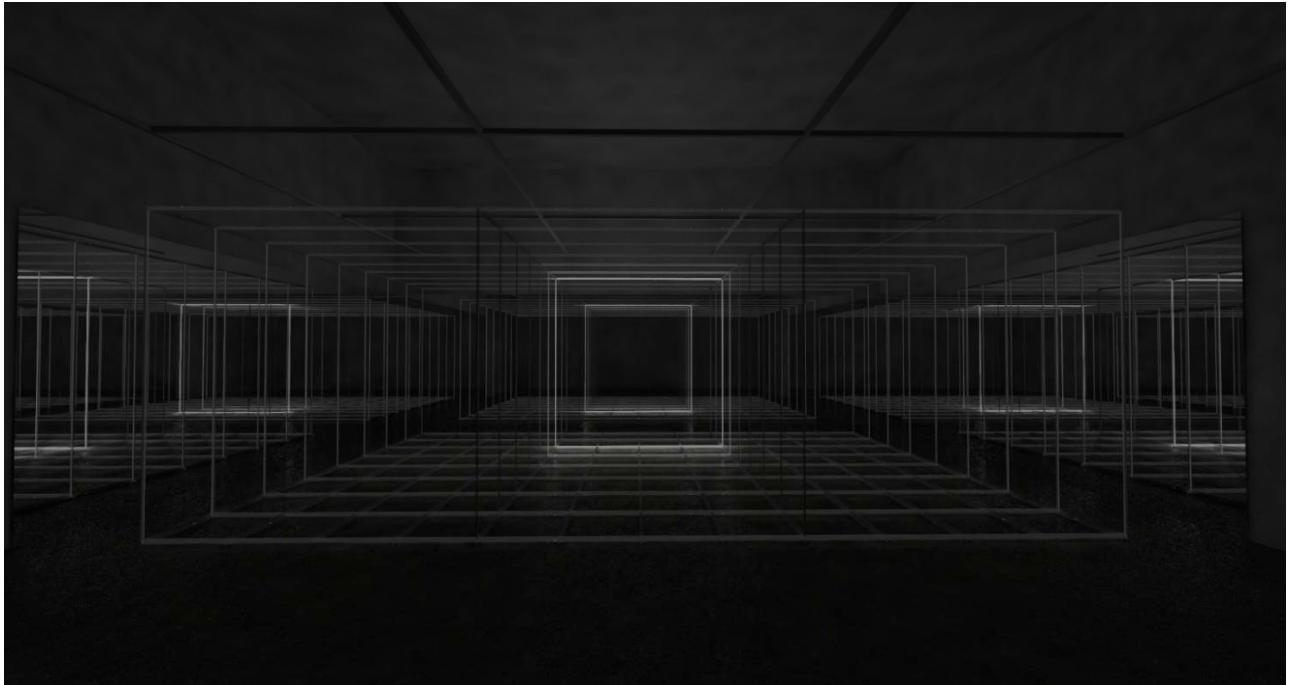


Figure #27: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Pulsation* Sequence

Towards a new ontology

I should intentionally refrain from speculating about the emerging experiences that this project may foster; such experiences should not be remotely conjured but to be apprehended as tangible and intimate physical sensations. However, I will broadly approximate my conception around the ideas that are surrounding this diagrammatic machine; the four-dimensional moving domain that envelops the self to deterritorialize it. I ask whether it is possible to deconstruct the *Cartesian Cogito* that promises a concrete inner substance to inquire after a new grammar for *pure becomings*¹⁹¹. Can we thread a material plane to wrap the body in a shroud of affective intensities to harbor immanent relations? What are the chances of reterritorializing the conception of the self to conjure a new ontology? Ultimately the goal of the project is to seek a perception of the self that may be found outside the two-dimensional, depthless surfaces of our contemporary electronic utopia.

Plato invites us to distinguish between two dimensions, (1) that of limited and measured things, of fixed qualities permanent or temporary which always presupposes pauses and rests, the fixing of present and the assignation of

¹⁹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1990], p1

*subjects (for example, a particular subject having a particular largeness or a particular smallness at a particular moment); and (2) a pure becoming without measure, a veritable becoming-mad, which never rests. It moves in both directions at once. It always eludes the present, causing future and past, more and less, too much and not enough to coincide in the simultaneity of a rebellious matter.*¹⁹²

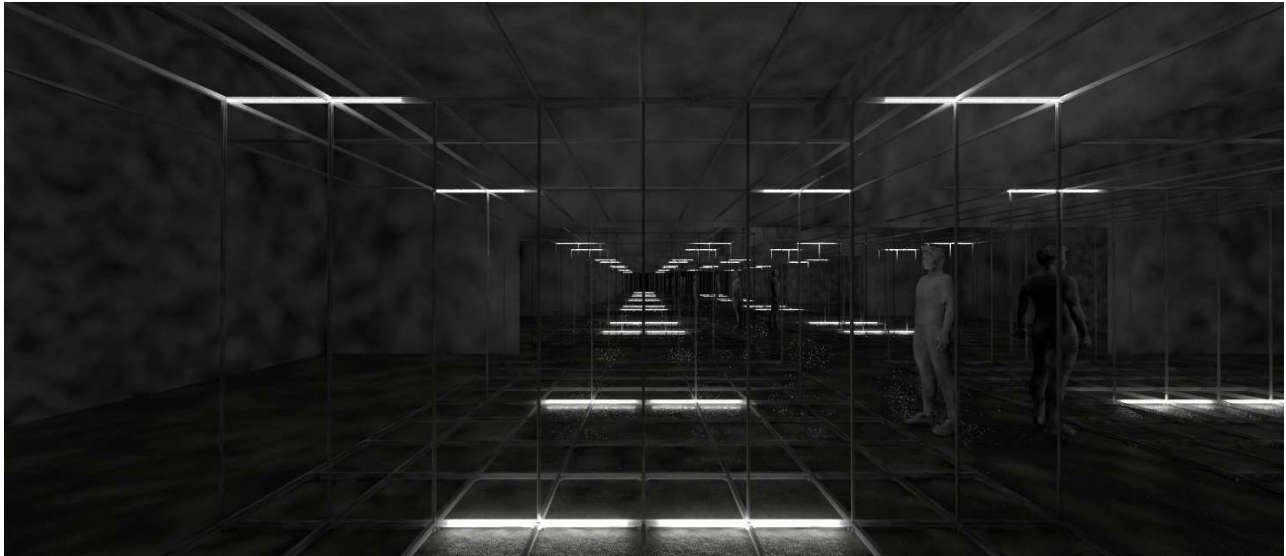


Figure #28: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University – *Adrift* Sequence

A Threshold Moment / To make the immaterial volumetric and tactile.

Project *Otium* strives to elaborate a perceptual experience, a temporal object-event seized within the spacious present. It will give structure to a luminous internal space that invites an encounter; one that is grounded in sound, vision and movement. The design intention is not to create an image with an external totality, but to play with how we map and employ our perceptual mechanisms in dealing with an unknown event. It is to articulate a threshold moment between the intelligible and the sensible, the mind and the body. It moves away from delineating a world of subjects and figures that are subordinated within a discontinuous perspectival space to imagine a fluid and non-hierarchical incorporeal realm; a place where time and space are harmoniously fused to curate an event. Cartesian perspectives and spatial constructs will be dissolved for the sake of extending a nomadic landscape where seeing and walking allow the visitors to newly inhabit the space. In this boundless world of

¹⁹² Ibid. P 1&2

affects, the subject exits the measured and finite structure of causes to discern a perceptual experience for unlimited *becomings*. The undefinable place makes it possible to sink into the immeasurable. The installation provides the opportunity to retrieve a sense of selfhood independent from the mechanisms of digital capture and control. The self being a continuous construction with unknown parameters finds the opportunity to reconfigure itself in this void. Ultimately, the project seeks to stage a perceptual ground zero to further sensitize the audience to their mechanisms of attention.

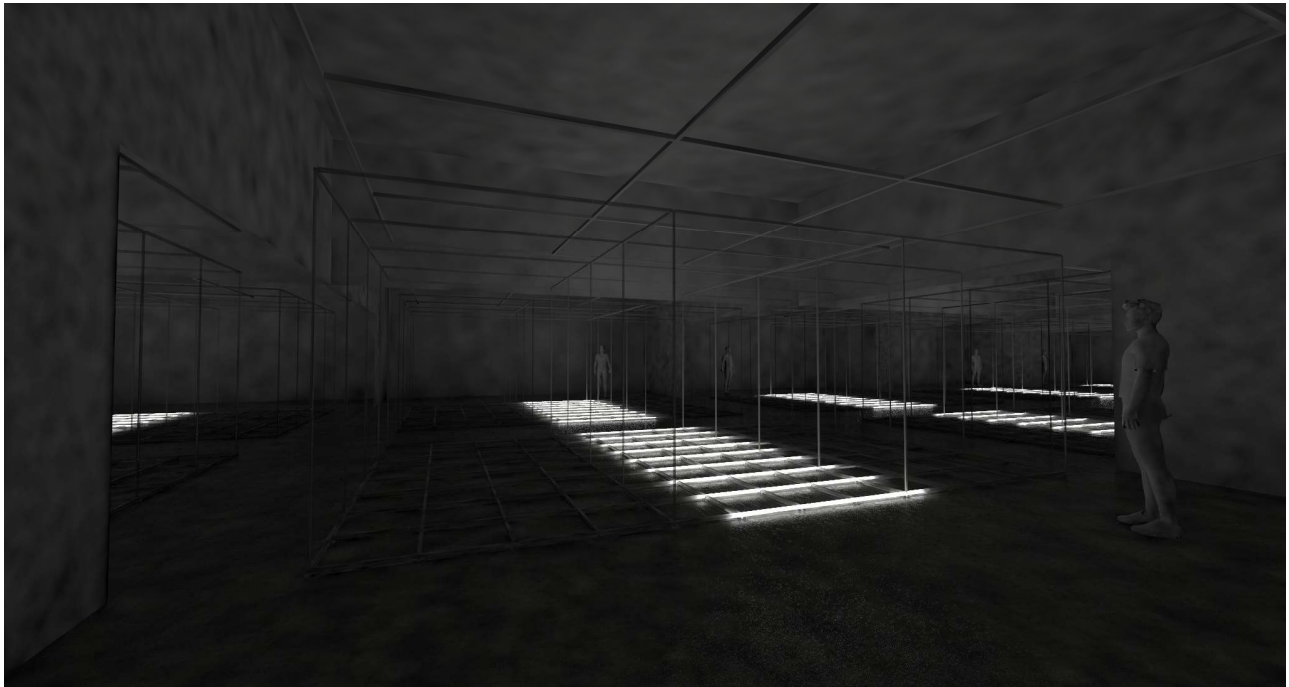


Figure #29: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Force Field* Sequence

The “I” that is demolished and reconstructed through the course of time.

The project's draws substantial inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's notion of *embodied perception* which contrasts with the mind-body dualism central to Cartesian philosophy. The underlying idea is to elevate intuition and immediate experience over science and reason. Merleau-Ponty refuted the notion of a stable and objective reality or an outside world independent from a thinking subject. In his view, it is the thinking subject who constantly composes and recomposes the world. The project oscillates between being a thing or an event. The room, a threshold to the world outside, fosters a laboratory of experiments, a passage from a fixed and solid exterior to an unstable and transitory realm of encounters. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is not only a visual activity but involves the whole

body. What we perceive depends on our being physically present in a matrix of relations that influence and regulate our perception.

*I do not see [space] according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is all around me, not in front of me.*¹⁹³

The project choreographs an alienating physical, embodied experience which returns you to your "perception in the act". The simple act of walking across the room becomes a new experience. The intended space provides an opportunity to temporarily bracket reality and block external stimuli for the sake of attending to the immediate. The audience enters a fragile realm of actively doing nothing but sensing themselves sensing; attending to the act of viewing itself; traversing the distance between watching and seeing. The project then tries to aesthetically frame the experiences that ultimately become the introspective object of consideration. In this disorienting environment with transitioning parameters, the body is compelled to modulate new relationships. The architecture of the room becomes a medium to heighten the perception of the immediate environment. In this pulsating void, the visitor's experience will be an exercise in holding perception in flux, a perception that will be stored in the flesh.

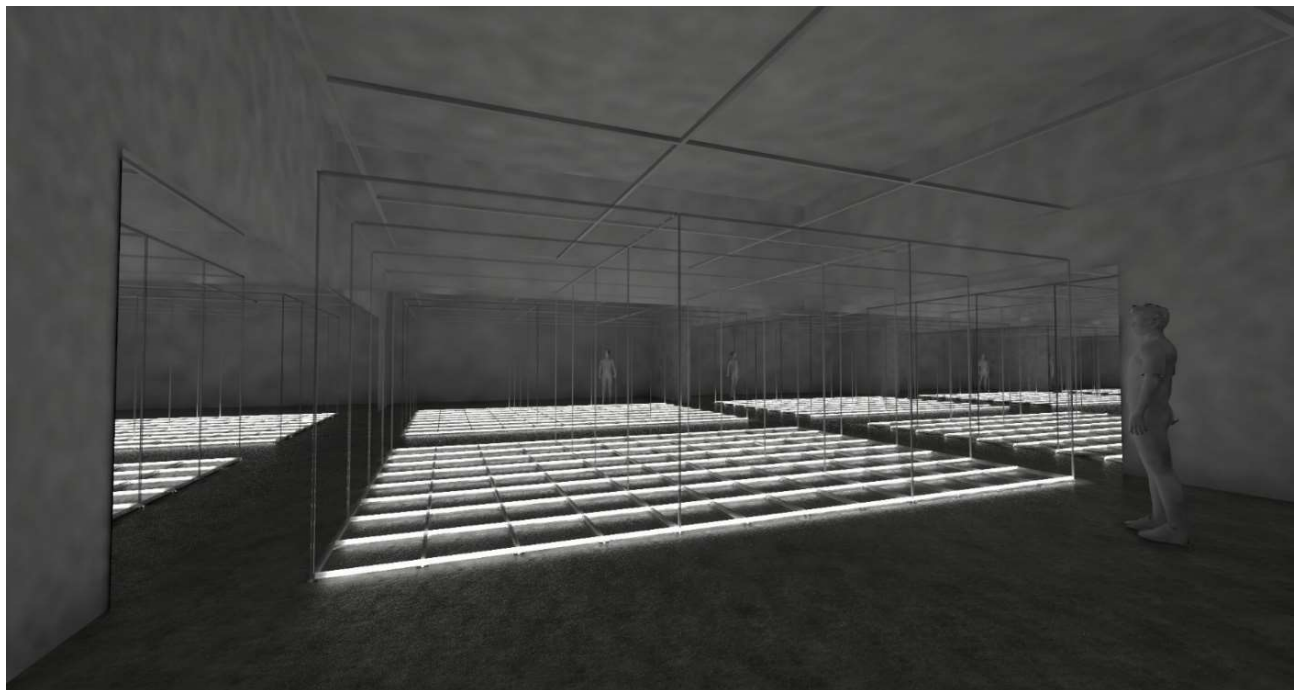


Figure #30: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, a still image from the project

¹⁹³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology*, [Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964], p178

Experiential Sequence – Conceptualizing an hour in the duration of the installation

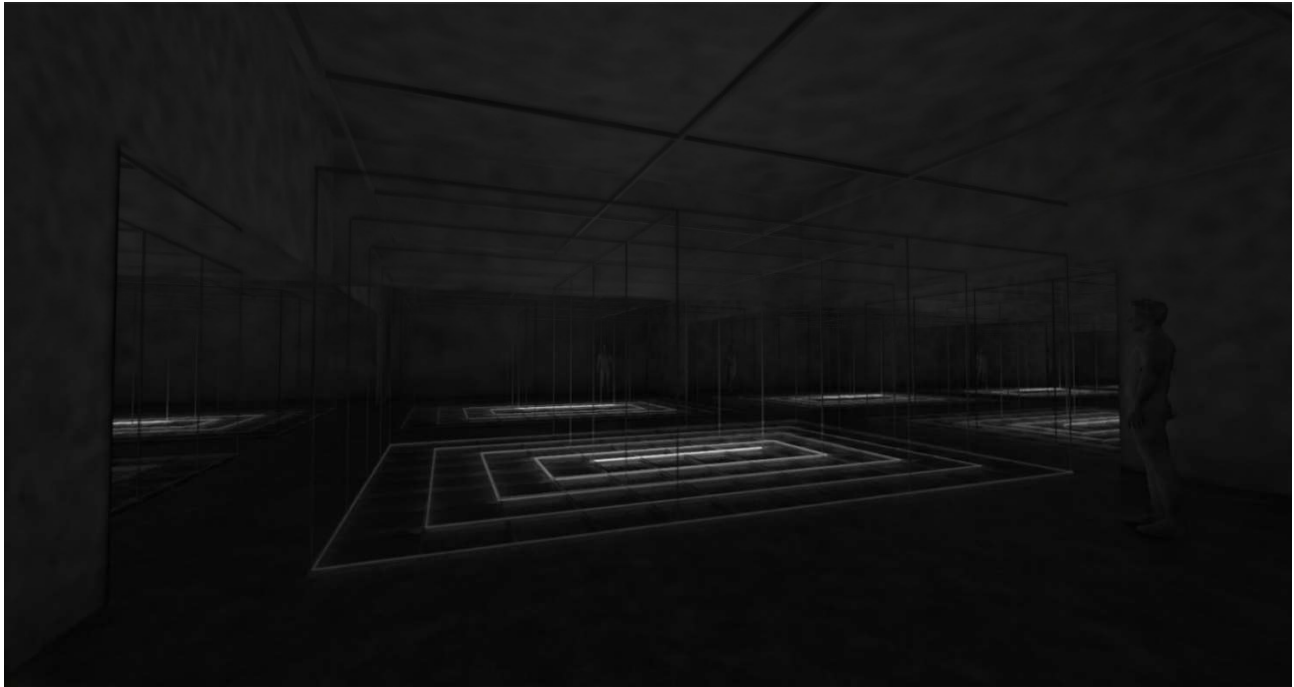


Figure #31: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Spring* Sequence

A Sensory deprivation chamber – 10 minutes intervals

Upon entering the gallery, the visitor encounters a dark space. They will be momentarily blinded as this transition from light to dark occurs with a delay. In an unhurried pulse, the installation faintly breathes light in and out so that the room oscillates between total darkness and a lit stage. The structure briefly appears, a ghostly spectre with minimum lighting to vaguely articulate its presence within the room. The visitor is free to walk around the space to navigate its territory. The subtle registration of the installation is crucial to delineate a path to avoid any possible accidents with the fragile structure. In this in-between realm, there will be only enough ambient light to ensure one's passage through the space in a perceptive and safe way. A humming sound in the background will be played to cancel the noise from the lobby or the gallery's HVAC unit to control the auditory threshold of the room.

Depending on the factors involved, different types of sensory deprivation chambers could induce differing effects.¹⁹⁴ The intent here is to control light and sound to minimize anything that might distract one's attention, to cancel some stimuli in order to heighten others. To be submerged in

¹⁹⁴ Peter Suedfeld, "The Benefits of Boredom: Sensory Deprivation Reconsidered: The Effects of a Monotonous Environment Are Not Always Negative; Sometimes Sensory Deprivation Has High Utility." *American Scientist* 63, no. 1 (1975): 60-69. Accessed February 25, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27845271>.

darkness could confound the effects of reduced stimulus input to amplify a sense of strangeness and fear.¹⁹⁵ These feelings might be the result of being confined in a room as well as the body losing half its environmental input. Some cognitive discrepancies may occur as a result of stimulus reduction. This may cause an increase in stress level, hallucinatory experiences, anxiety, and a loss of sense of time.¹⁹⁶ The unfamiliar place may feel disorienting or threatening, however, I trust that after some time these feelings would subside so that the visitor may settle in this nest. The time span required for this transition might be different from one visitor to another, but a 10-minute pause at the beginning should be long enough for the body to swiftly measure its new setting and to adapt itself.

*Recent articles have reported beneficial changes in a variety of sensory processes after sensory deprivation. This research has a dual focus: effects of reduction of input in one modality on perception in the same modality (e.g. of periods of darkness on subsequent visual perception), and cross-modal effects (e.g. of darkness on subsequent auditory acuity). ... There are lower visual recognition thresholds for stimuli presented at tachistoscopic speed after a very brief period of sensory and perceptual deprivation for both the recognition of digits and the identification of meaningful words. Visual acuity has also been reported to improve.*¹⁹⁷

The audience will be immersed in darkness in order to slowly tune into this new environment. Beyond being a mere absence of light, darkness holds a myriad of positive qualities. It has a weight, a particular texture, and an intense sense of intimacy. In the darkness, we transition to a higher state of alertness not knowing what is real. While the monotonous setting may cause delirious effects, it can escalate our perceptiveness to the persuasive environment. Depending on their background, at first, the visitor may become unsettled or feel vulnerable, questioning their senses or go through an experience that may resemble that of an “isolated prisoner” or a “lonely explorer,”¹⁹⁸ The project, however, gives the visitor time to develop an appreciation for the dark as a realm of reflection. As they walk around the room, they work out a new connection with this intimate terrain while maintaining a detachment from it. By being forced to attend to the immediate, other thoughts are cancelled so that the visitor can experience an embodied sense of self. They are invited to entertain a more “spontaneous

¹⁹⁵ Suedfeld, *the Benefits of Boredom*.

¹⁹⁶ Suedfeld, *the Benefits of Boredom*.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, P5

¹⁹⁸ Michael Bross, Dan Harper, and George Sicz, "Visual Effects of Auditory Deprivation: Common Intermodal and Intramodal Factors." *Science* 207, no. 4431 (1980): 667-68. Accessed February 25, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1683503>.

reciprocity” between their senses and the spatial body that wraps around. In the absence of any redundant stimulus, they become aware of a sensuous world waiting at the fringe of their consciousness. Perhaps the experience is similar to that described by a philosopher, David Abraham, after an extended power breakdown caused by a hurricane in Long Island:

AS WE REACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH OUR BREATHING BODIES, then the perceived world itself begins to shift and transform. When we begin to consciously frequent the wordless dimension of our sensory participations, certain phenomena that have habitually commanded our focus begin to lose their distinctive fascination and to slip toward the background, while hitherto unnoticed or overlooked presences begin to stand forth from the periphery and to engage our awareness.¹⁹⁹

Liquid space – A “temporary dissolution”

Our eyes have evolved from light-sensing but nonvisual organs to image-forming cameras over 500 million years. Their original function was to detect light, regulate the body, and drive the circadian rhythm. However, vertebrate camera-style eyes have developed photoreceptors to sense light for vision, discern shadows, instruct motor behaviors, and help the body orient itself accordingly. Eyes are “optically and neurologically” complex mechanisms that are capable of sensing light in an environment with low light levels, like deep oceans.²⁰⁰ Our eyes continue to adapt to the dark environment up to 30 minutes after entering the room. Following this duration, they become around 10,000 times more sensitive to the presence of light. This improved ability for night vision is the result of a light-sensitive chemical called “rhodopsin” in the rods of our retina, a combination of the protein *opsin* and *retinal*, a derivative of vitamin E.²⁰¹

Things lose their solidity in the dark. It becomes a challenge to decipher depth and distances. We can still see in the dark but not in the same manner that we usually perceive our environment in light. This is the result of different types of photoreceptors in our eyes. The human retina is equipped with two different sensory styles, cones for daylight vision, for discerning colors and spatial acuity, and rods for the night-time. Our vision in the dark relies on the rods, which are higher in number and more sensitive to the presence of light, shapes, and movements. In lower light levels, however, we

¹⁹⁹ David Abraham, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, [New York: Vintage Books, 1997], p47

²⁰⁰ Trevor D. Lamb, "EVOLUTION OF THE EYE." *Scientific American* 305, no. 1 (2011): 64-69. Accessed February 25, 2021.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26002713>. P4

²⁰¹ Exploratorium, "Afterimage A flash of light prints a lingering image in your eye". Accessed February 2021, <https://www.exploratorium.edu/snacks/afterimage>

perceive images in reduced resolutions, details disappear, shapes become obscured, and colors are muted. The rods enhance our peripheral vision. We might scan our environment better by seeing through the corner of our eyes rather than looking directly at things. We enter the monochrome realms of shadows with a heightened sensitivity towards any movement.

Darkness instructs the body to form a relationship with what surrounds it. With light and in a visualized context, we are capable of measuring space; in dark, the boundaries of space, as well as the body, dissolve for a more fluid construct. We lose track of where our body ends for the darkness to begin. This could bring with itself a sense of liberation or a troubling submission. The visitor will endeavour to position themselves in relation to the dark, the silence that dominates the scene. They are compelled to listen to the silence and stare into the darkness. Silence becomes the intervals between breathing in and out, the pause in your journey, and the intense anticipation for something to come that makes your heart pound.

In reality, it is nearly impossible to reach absolute darkness; there is always some manifestation of light in our environment. This installation will strive to construct an artificial setting to heighten the audience's sense of imagination to a degree that may not be achievable elsewhere. In this environment and under controlled settings, every flicker of light gains dramatic magnitude. The boundaries between reality and imagination dissolve for an experience in consciousness that is more slippery. We migrate from a central consciousness relying on a directional gaze placed at a distance to engage our whole body and nervous system in detecting our immediate surroundings.

Once our sense of vision is obstructed, we develop a higher sensitivity towards sounds. Instead of immediately bombarding the audience with the intensity of moving lights or dramatic sound sequences, the installation orchestrates a setting to selectively control the effects and consequently the affects of the environment. The empty space is replete with present resonances. Before delving into the theatre of lights, the visitor is given the opportunity to tactfully engage with these shifting layers to experience not a fixed place, but a temporary construct, a landscape of intertwined and simultaneous happenings.

The clearing –The Theater of Light

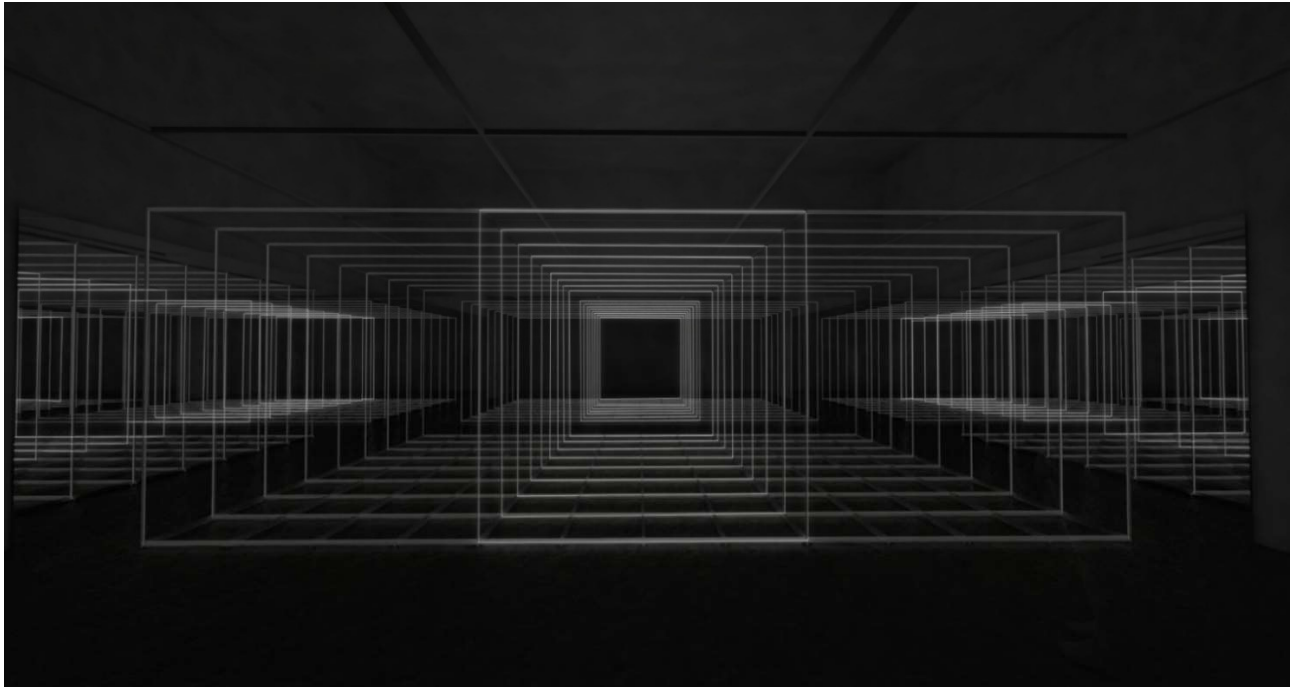


Figure #32: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Pulsation* Sequence

The installation crafts a staged environment to represent and enact a sense of place in performance. A series of visual signs control and coordinate a theatrical atmosphere where events take place. The space of the room is distributed between the light structure and a clearing adjacent to it that connects to the pathways around the perimeter of the gallery. This empty room within the larger precinct would approximately measure around one-third of the space. The open area stretches a viewing platform into the horizontal landscape that proliferates, shifts, momentarily materializes and disappears in front of it. The juxtaposition of the stage and a clearing is intended to afford the visitor the chance of breaking away from the installation, to rest at a distance, and to experience its totality. They can observe the scene from an independent frame, a gazing subject that is detached from the image that lays in front of it, from a perspective that recedes from the perceiver. The choreographed and dramatized exhibition space also constitutes a physically accessible environment. The visitor is invited to immerse themselves in the light compositions, to not only look at them but to walk into them and to look from them, to become part of them. The alternating configurations allow the visitor to establish several relationships and patterns in the way they connect with the installation to experience its overall spatial volume, to touch its visual tactility, and grasp its scale.

A Hypnotic Effect - A Serious Destabilization and Renormalization- Increased Temporal Acuity

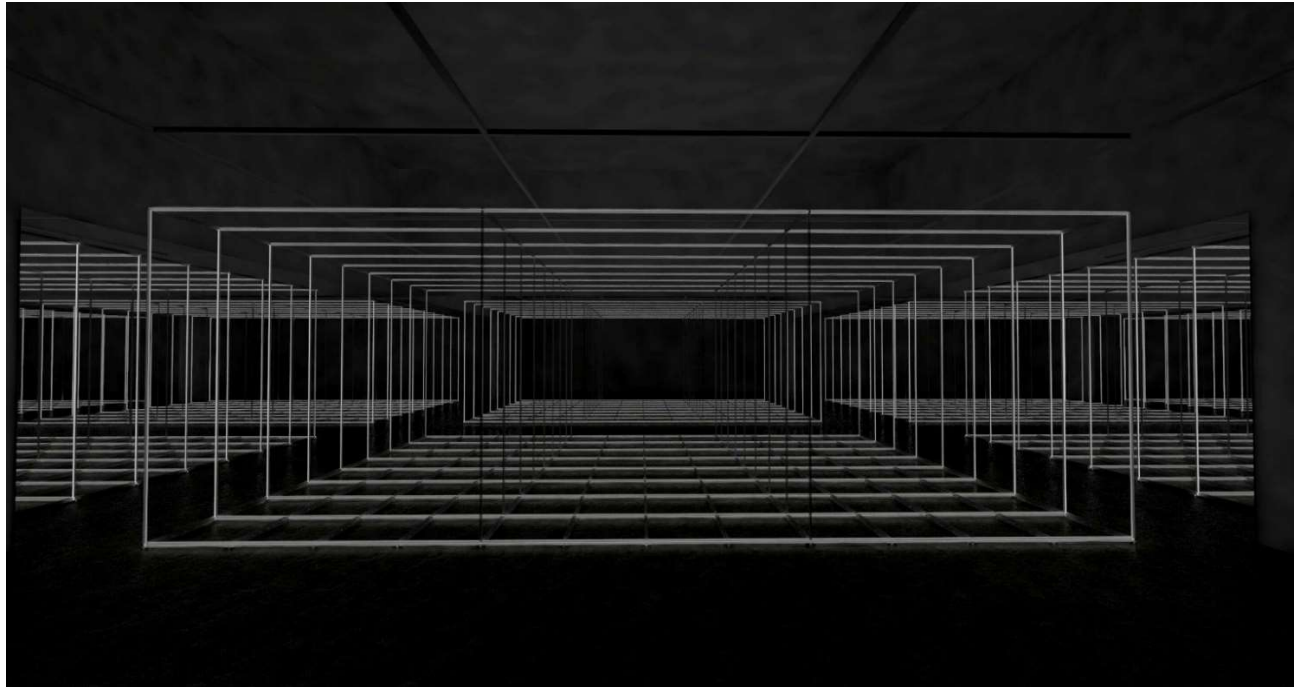


Figure #33: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Pulsation* Sequence

Following a prolonged experience of darkness, and after inducing a heightened sense of visual sensitivity, the gallery actively transforms to house sequences of light renderings. It turns into a vessel to hold a spatial entity in flux, one that defies registering an absolute coordinate system, to momentarily actualize and disintegrate. The sense of place dissolves in this capsule as the frames of light agitate, pull, and shift to transport the body into a void. One becomes adrift in this vessel, she moves as the body of light convulses to stretch itself along with the room and into different configurations. The sequences accelerate and slow down to take ownership over time. The intelligible fusion of temporal and spatial attributes composes a *Chronotope*²⁰², a time-space construct. In this place, time densifies, condenses, turning into an almost tactile visible quality. Space solidifies, turns liquid, and gaseous as it is drawn into the shifting patterns of time. Time stops being an independent and stable quantitative entity to operate under the function of space. It is assiduously slowed down or intensively rushed by the ways the light sequences unfold for the installation to synchronously sculpt both space and time.

²⁰² Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), a Russian literary theorist, first coined the term *Chronotope* to refer to the coordinates of time and space that a certain narrative may evoke. The term expresses the setting that a certain narrative evokes as a Spatio-temporal whole. Source: Oxford Reference.

The visitor is transported to vistas near and far to be part of a landscape that is patiently constructed to articulate a happening. Together, the dynamic processing of space and the luminous environment create an atmosphere of abstraction and scalelessness, liberating those who experience it from typical expectations of bordered rooms with definite outlines. The ground underneath one's feet shifts, it induces motion and becomes obscured. The transitioning lights that render overlapping images compose a space that appears to be out of focus. The abstraction and the spatial ambiguity engender a dream-like surreal experience. We enter a daydreaming realm of self-reflection with boundless interiority. The installation enables us to observe how our knowledge of our surroundings is shaped. In the absence of any object to attend to, we are given the opportunity to unremittingly connect with the work in terms of the dynamics of perceptual engagement. By once again tuning our consciousness into registering the overlooked details, we take the work with us to encounter a more vivid world than the one we left behind.

The Persistence of the After Image



Figure #34: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, a still image from the project

In this dark theatre, the bright patterns that appear in front of the visitor's eyes produce a lingering afterimage. This effect generates a negative image in one's vision after the exposure to the original image has ceased. This is the result of the desensitization of the photoreceptor cells. The lights entering into our eyes stimulate the light-sensitive inner lining on our retina, provoking chemical changes. Extended exposure to bright light sources desensitize this layer. The neurons get habituated to the bright unchanging stimulus. It may take them a while to reset into their former responsive state.

If we change the direction to look away, this desensitized area in the retina is unable to respond sufficiently as the rest of the retina to the new input. Therefore, the old image is conceived as a negative image, a dark form that corresponds with the original shape then appears in the eye. The duration of this effect may last up to 30 seconds.²⁰³

The installation incorporates this optical effect to play with the illusionary aspects of this environment. The images that are formed in space are superimposed on top of the ones that linger in the eye to construct a layered photographic composition in the brain. Here, reality and fiction are intertwined to generate a uniquely profound and personal experience for each viewer. These mental photographs will differ based on the patterns of their movement in the gallery. What is perceived is mutable. Consciousness becomes a slippery phenomenon. What is seen in the recent past will change the ensuing image. The integral idea is to engage the whole body and the nervous system, to provide the visitor with an open-ended framework within which to author their individual meanings. The afterimage effect imprints their retinas with light compositions that are embedded into the visitor's visual memory. The work ultimately relies on their feelings, conceptual, and intellectual responses to this environment but the visitor's body and their physiological reactions to this installation will be an inevitable component of this immersive experience.



Figure #35: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, a still image from the project

²⁰³ Exploratorium, "Afterimage A flash of light prints a lingering image in your eye". Accessed February 14th 2021, <https://www.exploratorium.edu/snacks/afterimage>

CONCLUSION

As discussed in the course of this paper, the modern iteration of Descartes's subject is bound to an ontology that enframes itself and the surrounding world in predatory relationships and negates otherness in order to dissect it scientifically into its own intelligible models. It seeks to dominate, and posit the resources of nature as well as *being* itself a stockpile of entities. The manifold forces of science, technology, and Neoliberalism have converged to mesh into an immaterial net cast over our consciousness. The insidious mechanisms of surveillance today have left the fixed confinement of physical spaces to remotely operate on the body. Subtle in their very forms, their operating ground is still the body, the environment, and the landscape. They induce a dense yet dematerialized sense of incarceration that is alienating, present, but not always detectable.

Through the course of this paper, I meditated on the materiality of perception by situating Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze in conversation with each other. The objective has been to model a frame of consciousness against the transitioning structures of governance. I asked whether the notions of the self and identity were merely social constructs or whether there existed an existential component to them to act upon their liberation. I looked for an agency in *Dasein*, an opening towards a more creative mode of being.

The body as a social construct under the operations of *biopower* is disciplined, normalized, paced by various micro-political techniques of control that are no longer restrictive or prohibitive but enabling and positive. As Foucault delineates under the influence of these prevailing epistemic regimes, individuals are both created and are creators. Heidegger speaks about a more subtle but dangerous form of enslavement subject to technological operations. According to him, there was a sudden shift rather than a straight continuation from old technological tools to their modern iterations of nuclear bombs or cybernetics. Technology today has nothing to do with technological tools but it is about how the world is enframed. The forces of *Gestell* impose instrumental processes that frame our bodies within ceaseless activities and ultimately predetermine our experience of things. The invisible forms of modern enslavement capture *beings* to be positioned to stand as a resource to be optimized and exploited. Everything is preformatted, time and space have turned into quantified entities, nothing is allowed to linger, to arise, and to come on its own in its own way. The forces of *Gestell* channel turbulent and random encounters to ultimately curtail free will. Ensnared within these loose coordinates, we can no longer access what is primordial about our *beings*. In the smooth space of surveillance conceptualized in Deleuze's *Postscript on Control Societies* and Shoshana Zuboff's thesis on *Surveillance Capitalism*, the body and the data that it leaves behind become commodities. Tactile technologies of control invade the space between the body and its environment to further engage it within the feedback loops of affective commands. Ultimately the body's external sensitivity to its

surrounding environment, as well as its internal knowledge of itself, are being continuously modulated by covert technologies that operate in the background.

This dissertation delineated a quest to position these theories along a path of inquiry in search for possible exit routes out of the stratified grids of the *Control Society* and the modern frames of technological enslavement. On a parallel line of investigation, it focused on some key ideas. Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit* was introduced as a way of connecting to the elemental aspects of our *beings* by stepping outside the domain of the will to engage with the immediate and not the ideological world. In Heidegger's philosophy, technology had its origins in the Greek understanding of the term *Techne*. It had to do with art and creativity, a way of apprehending and disclosing the world more in line with a human ethos rather than machinic dominance. Gilles Deleuze's theory of imperceptibility was analysed as a tactical strategy against the apparatuses of capture that aim to standardize and integrate *beings* within the coordinates of the *Mega Machine*, a system that captures raw and creative energies to morph and twist them into calculable, intelligible, and identifiable forms. To become imperceptible is to flee a machine that seeks to integrate and identify *beings* as standing reserve. It is to step on a creative *line of flight* outside the grid of intelligibility to become illegible to the ever-present grid of capture. In the context of this thesis and in line with a practice in Visual Arts, philosophy and art were introduced as the instruments to model forms of confrontation. Both practices afford us the time and space to dwell in ambiguities, to step out, and to search for an existential opening or a new revelation.

The projects that were presented alongside the theoretical context of this dissertation were situated in this threshold between philosophy, science, and art to construct an experience parallel to an ongoing and an emerging context. Beyond mere representations, my intentions shifted towards constructing affective atmospheres to locate the body elsewhere. In these third spaces of experience, the body was compelled to break away from the contradictory and excessive forces of a surveillance society, to escape and to observe and monitor its own mechanisms of consciousness. In response to questions that were mapped in the course of this research, the possibility of proposing a direct answer seemed uncertain. It is always an option to engage in reactionary politics to grapple with the predatory and controlling forces of surveillance. We should not acquiesce quietly to the forces at play as the future is still malleable and we can shape, delay, and change its course. However, in a more nuanced response in tune with the field of my practice in visual arts, I delved into a set of more fundamental issues. To resist we need to change our cognitive grammar. To exit the game of calculations we should mediate on finding a new ontology in a time-space outside the grid of representations. Philosophy and art could sketch possible paths of exit from the ossified strata of intelligibility and control. Venturing into an immanent and embodied understanding of our being could lead us through this line of inquiry.

The research and installation pieces proposed under the framework of this dissertation strived to articulate a process rather than suggesting a definitive closure. The aim has been to expand a plane of inquiry into a multitude of actions or non-actions for possible forms of encounter. It was integral to reside in a philosophical and creative territory to experiment with consciousness alongside the transitioning frames of control. In this context, the positive forms of engagement could substitute for reactive models of confrontation toward conjuring revolutionary tactics that operate at singular and molecular scales. Instead of a conclusive methodology, this thesis aimed at collaging fragments of experiments to cross boundaries to compose an interdisciplinary line of research. The process that started as part of this research has not reached a definitive resolution and will be continued. This Ph.D. program allowed me to test the unknown and contemplate it in material and linguistic forms. As I conclude this paper, I am sure the future holds catalyzing questions that will open vistas to pursue this work in new directions.



Figure #36: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, a still image from the project

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Appendix A: Project Documentation

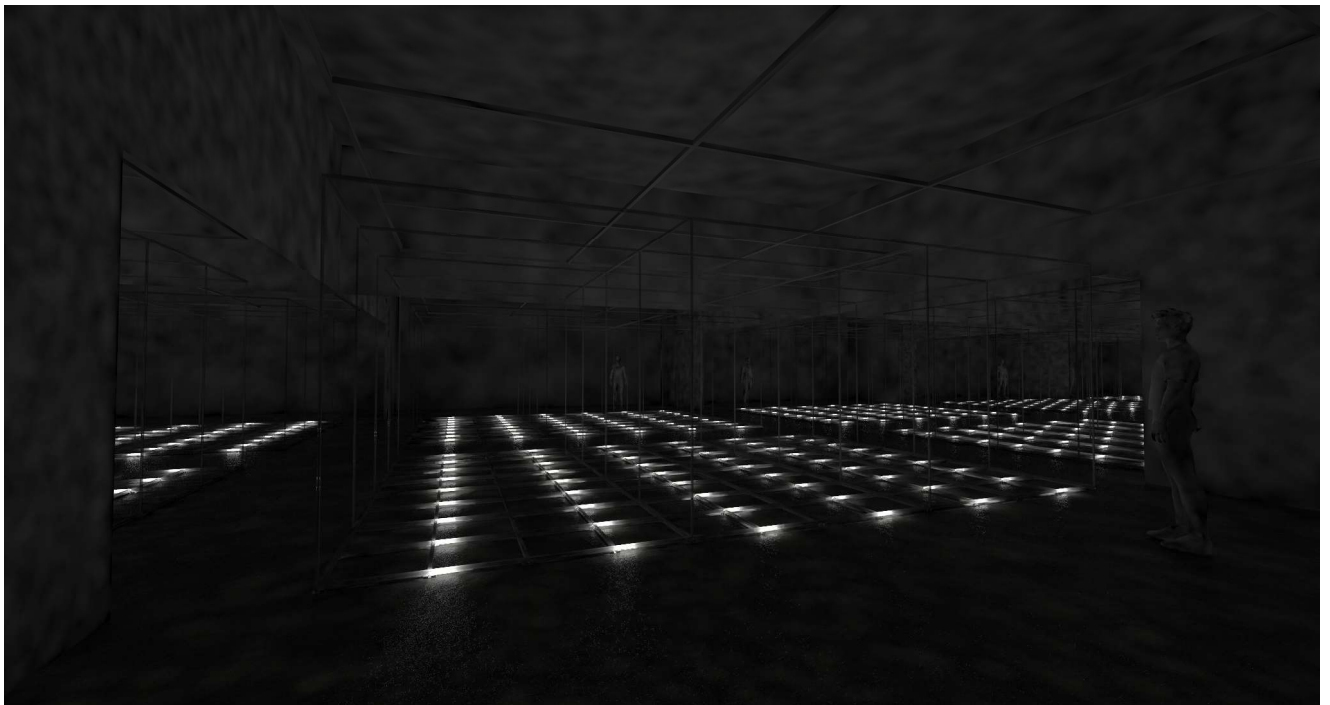


Figure #37: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, a still image from the project

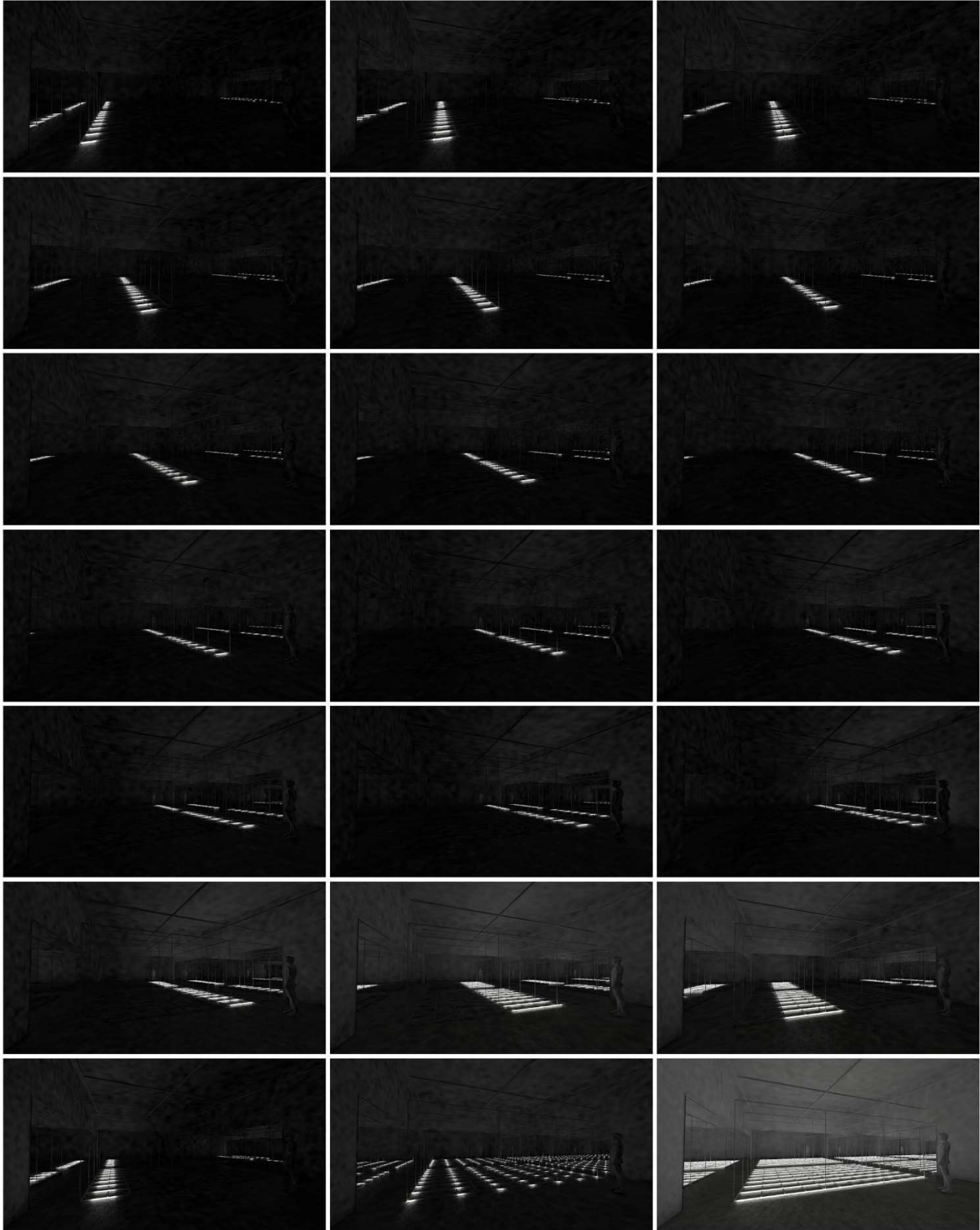


Figure #38: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *ForceField* Sequence

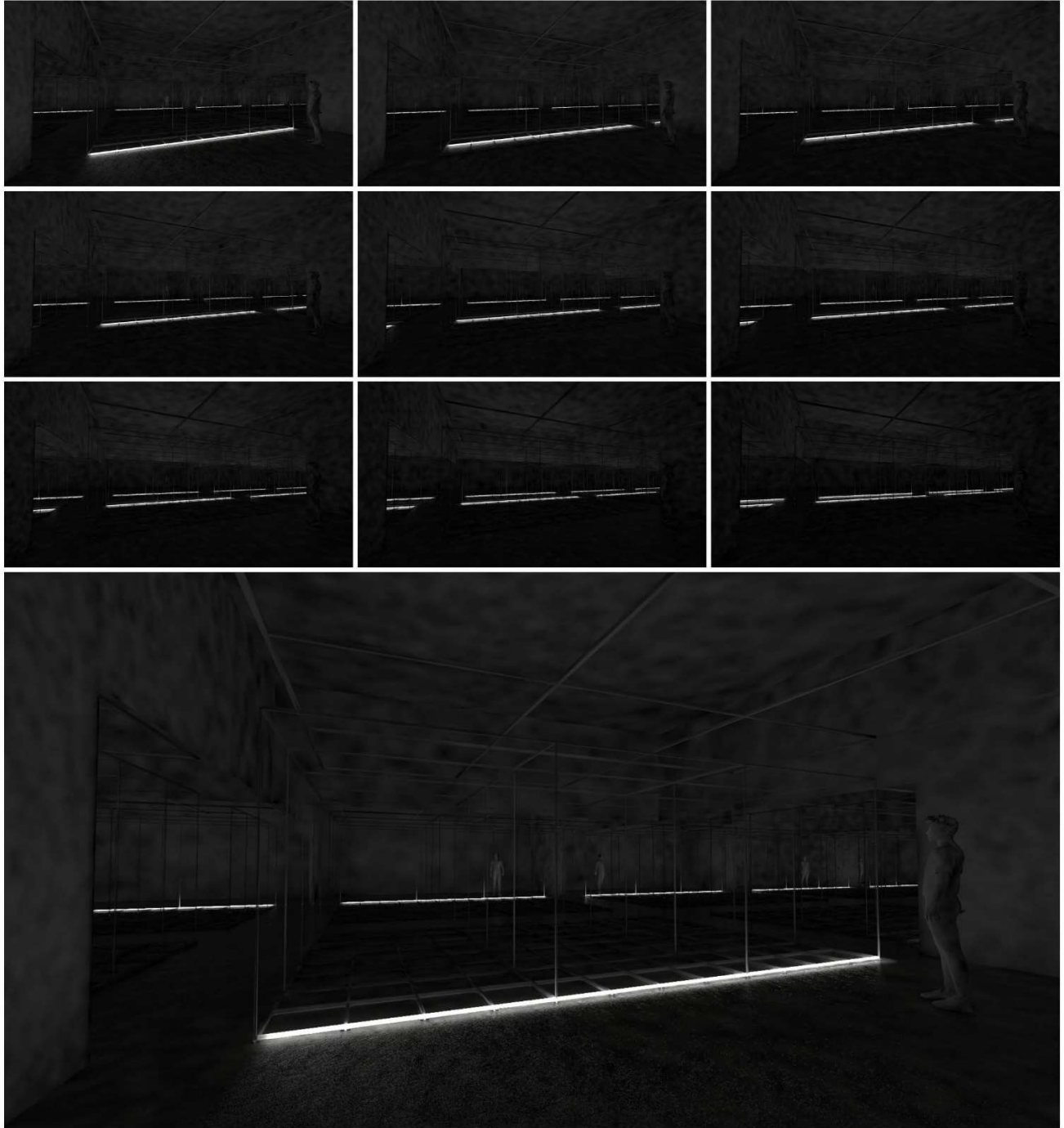


Figure #39: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Passage* Sequence



Figure #40: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Zipper* Sequence

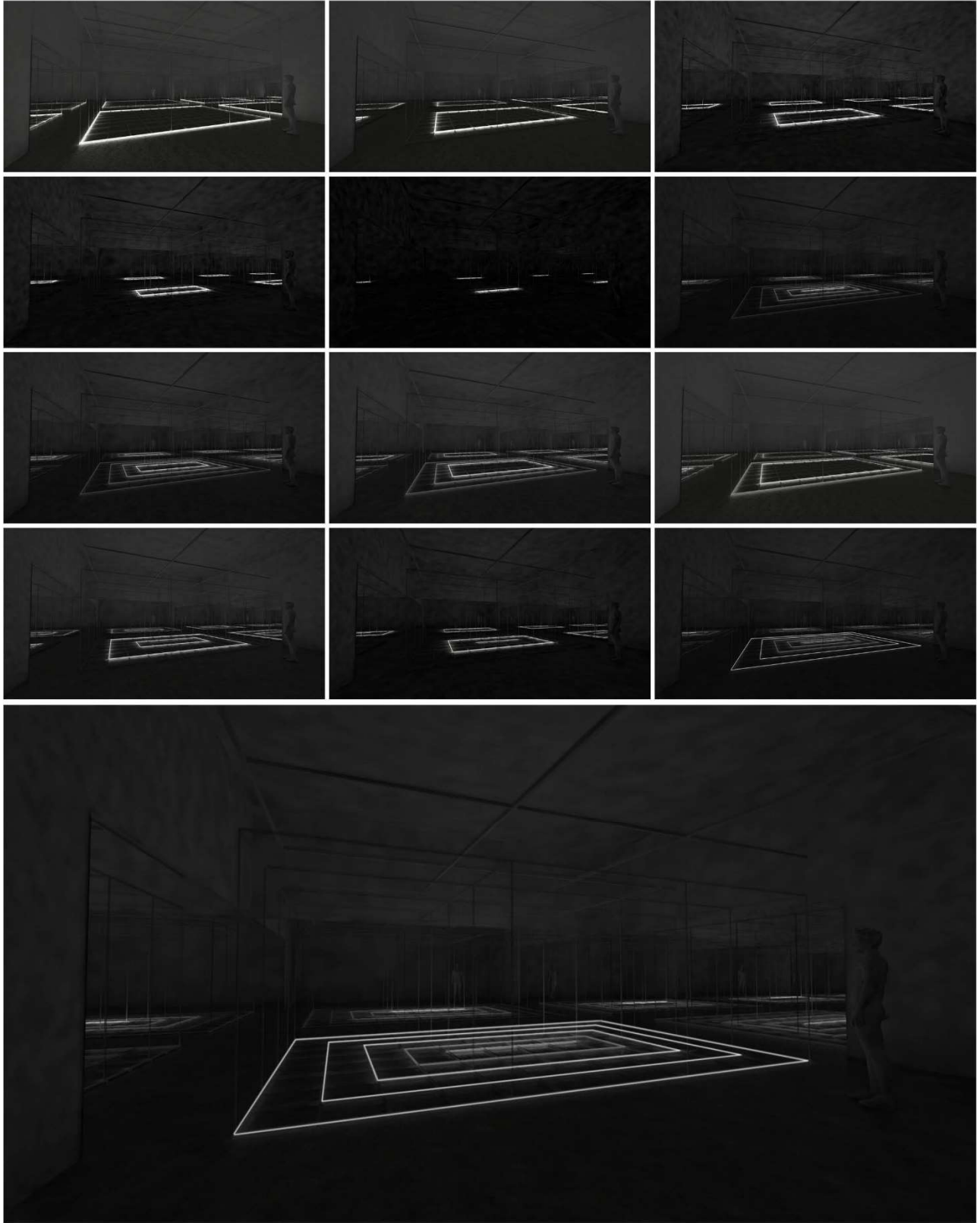


Figure #41: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Spring* Sequence

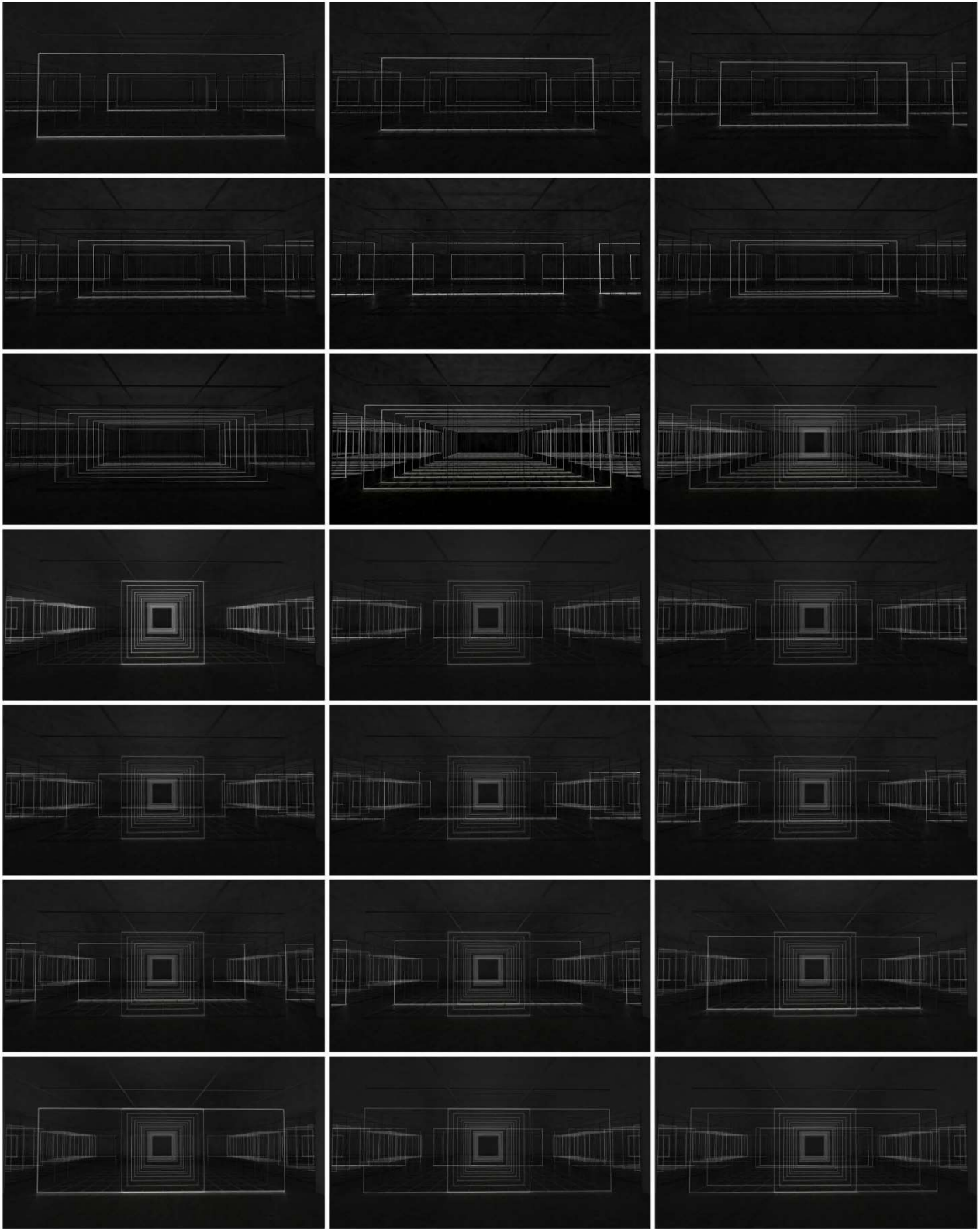


Figure #42: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Pulsation* Sequence

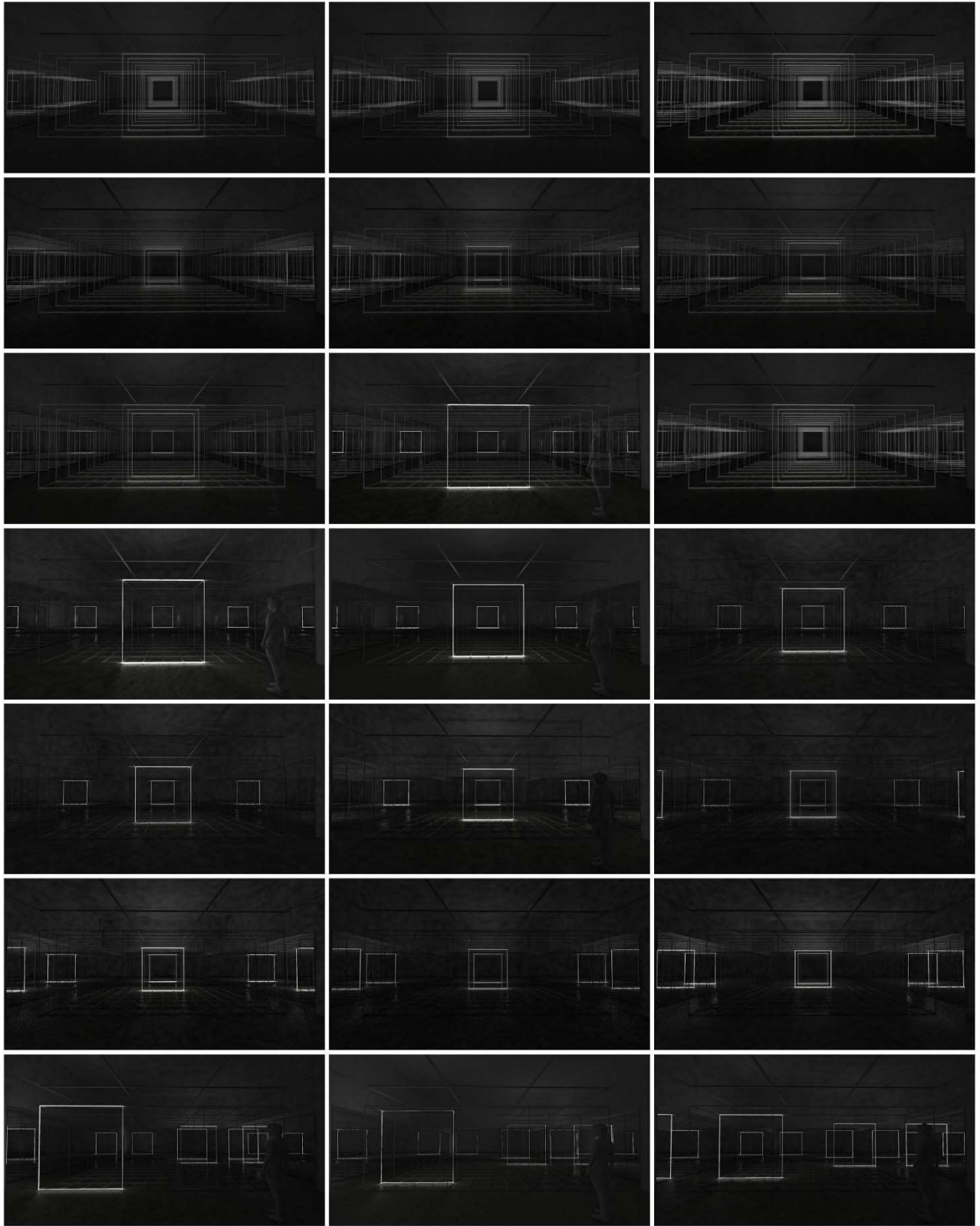


Figure #43: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Pulsation* Sequence



Figure #44: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Pulsation* Sequence

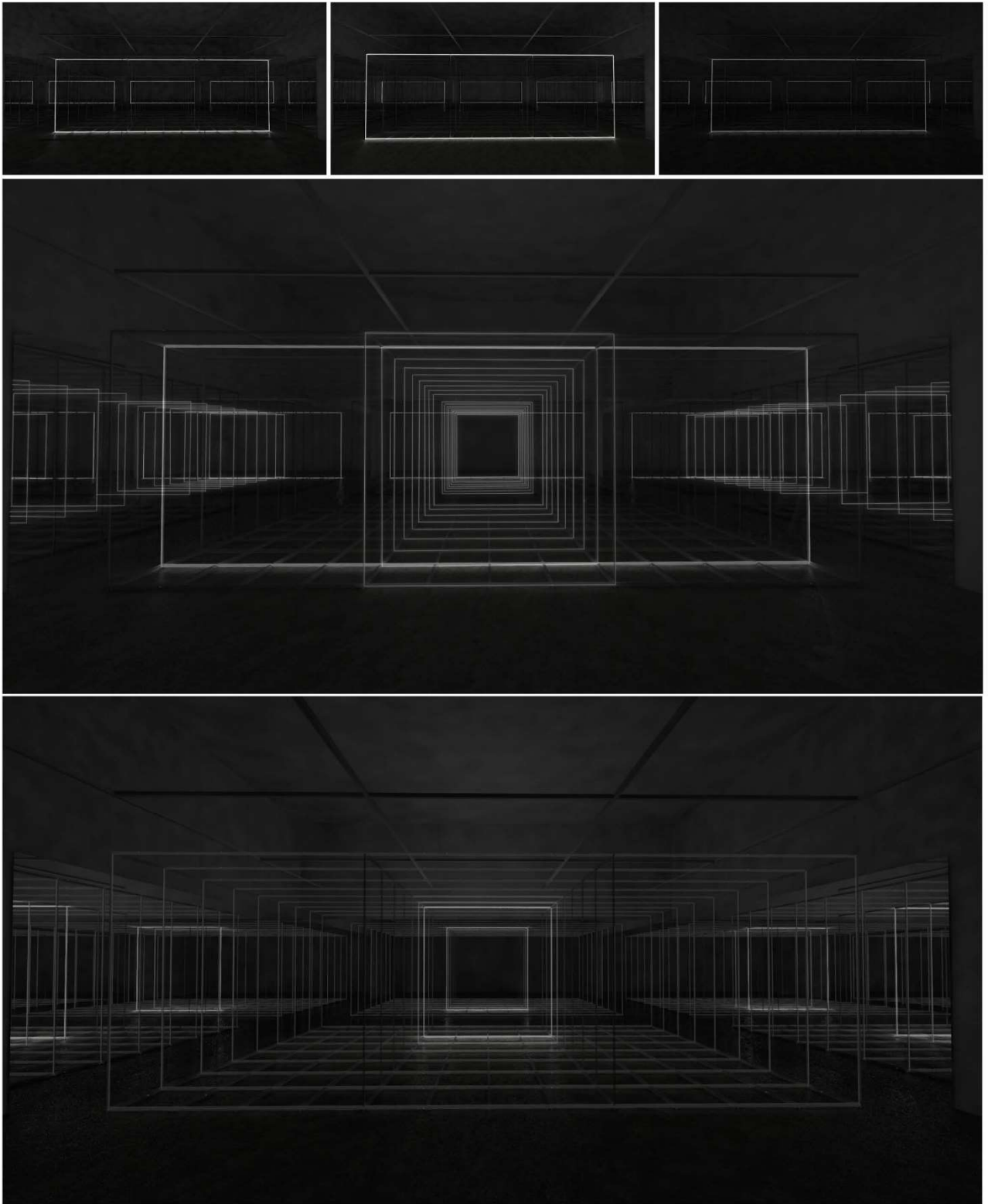


Figure #45: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Pulsation* Sequence

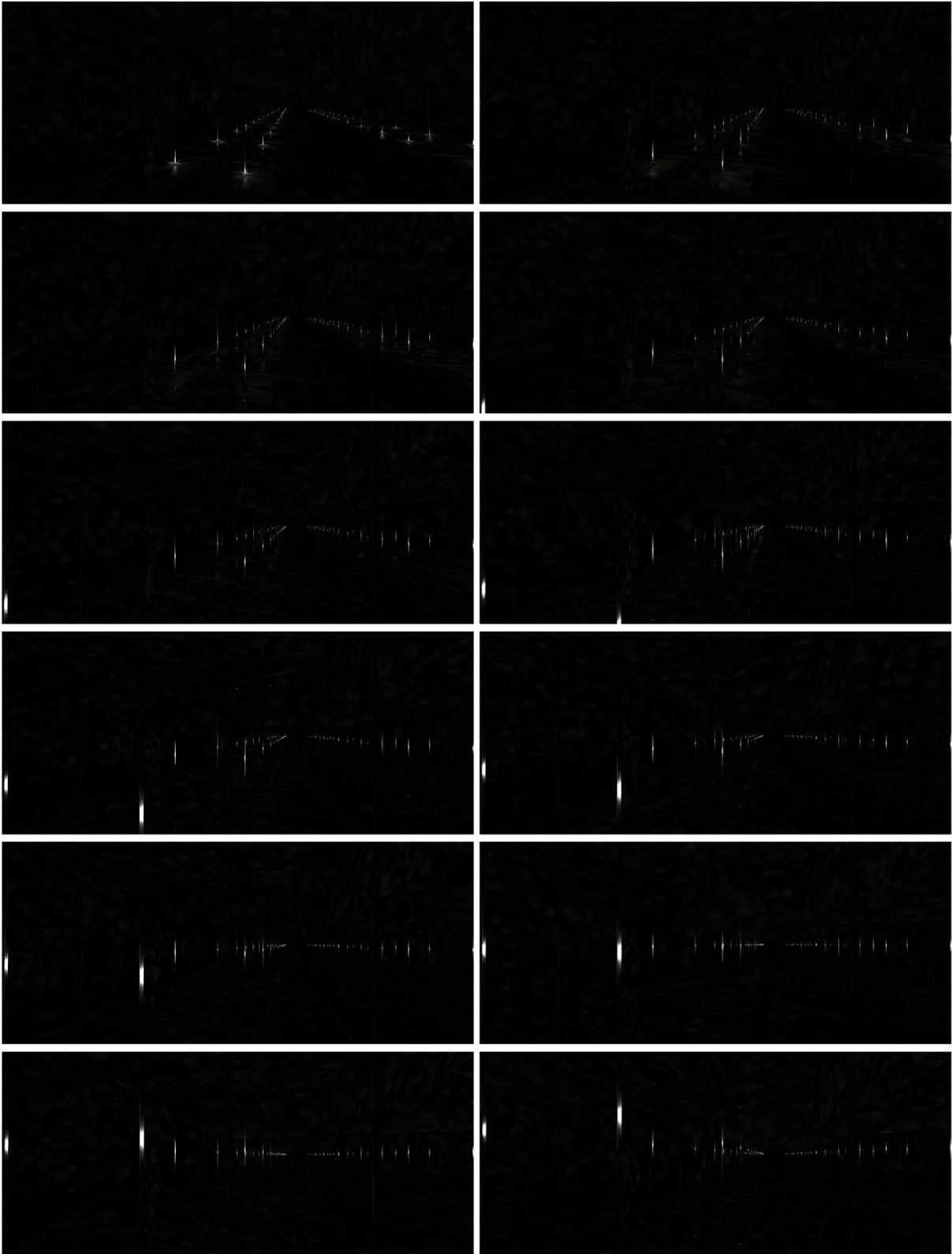


Figure #46: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Ascend* Sequence

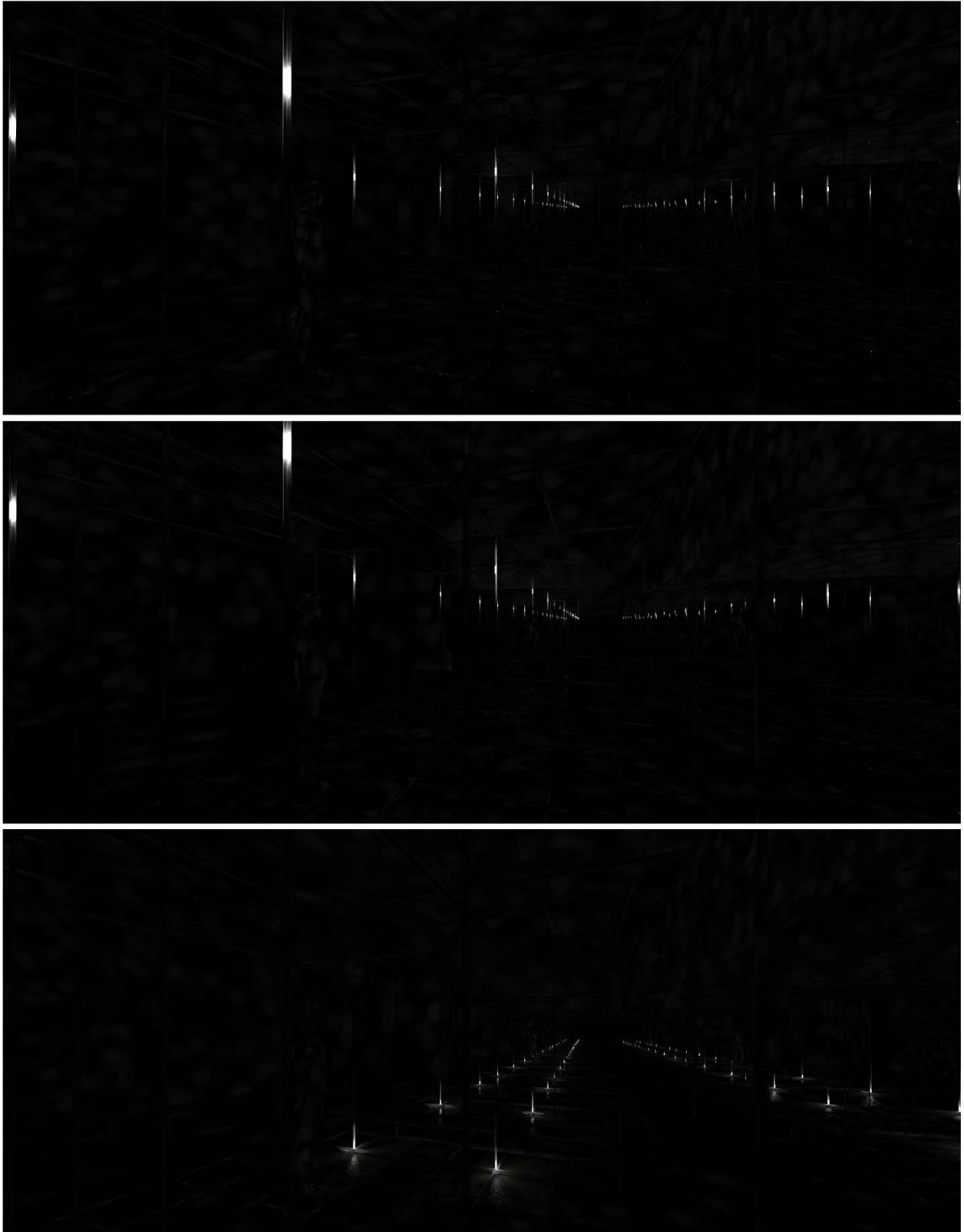


Figure #47: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Ascend* Sequence



Figure #48: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Adrift* Sequence

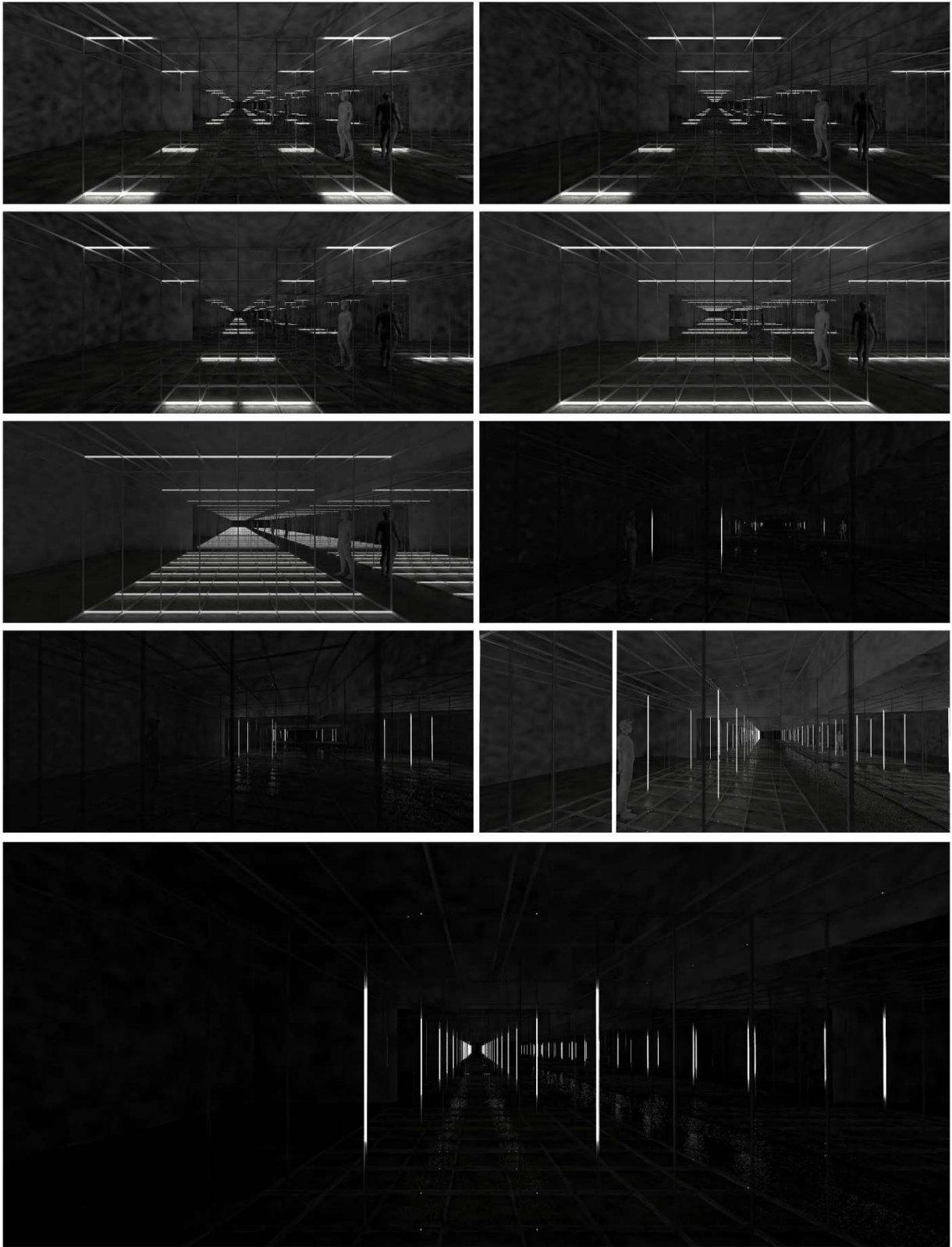


Figure #49: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Adrift* Sequence

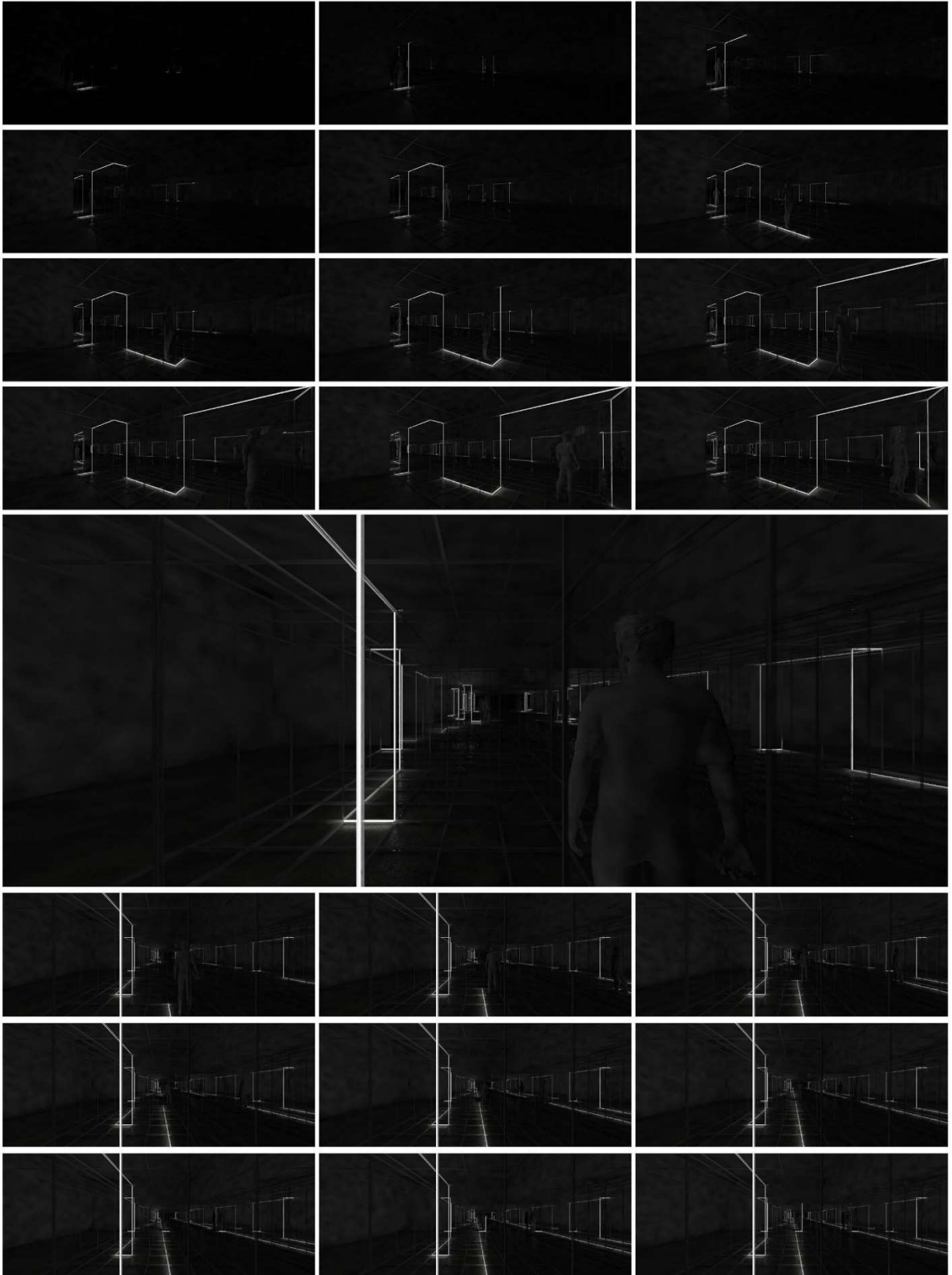


Figure #50: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Tracing* Sequence

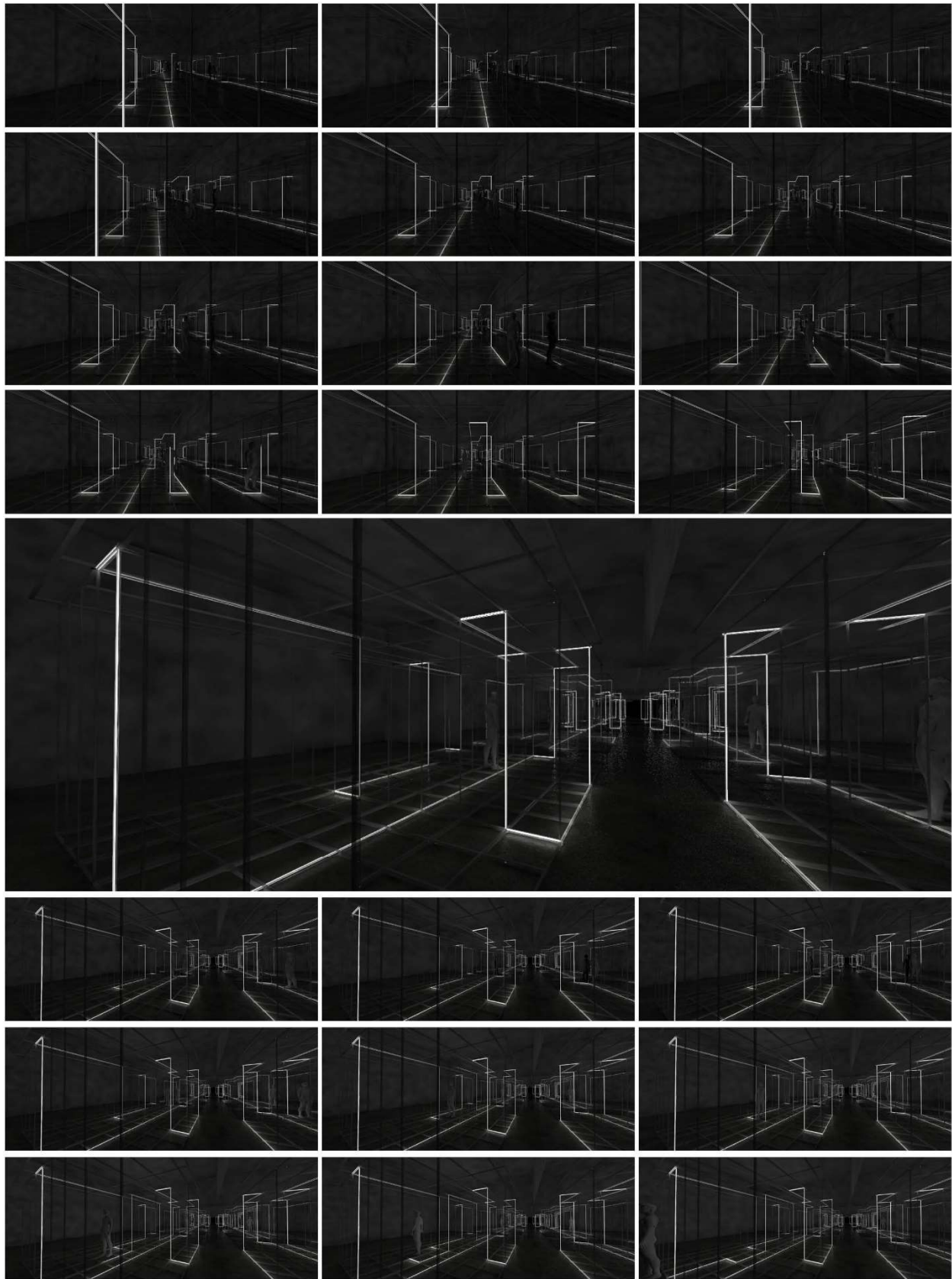


Figure #51: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Tracing* Sequence

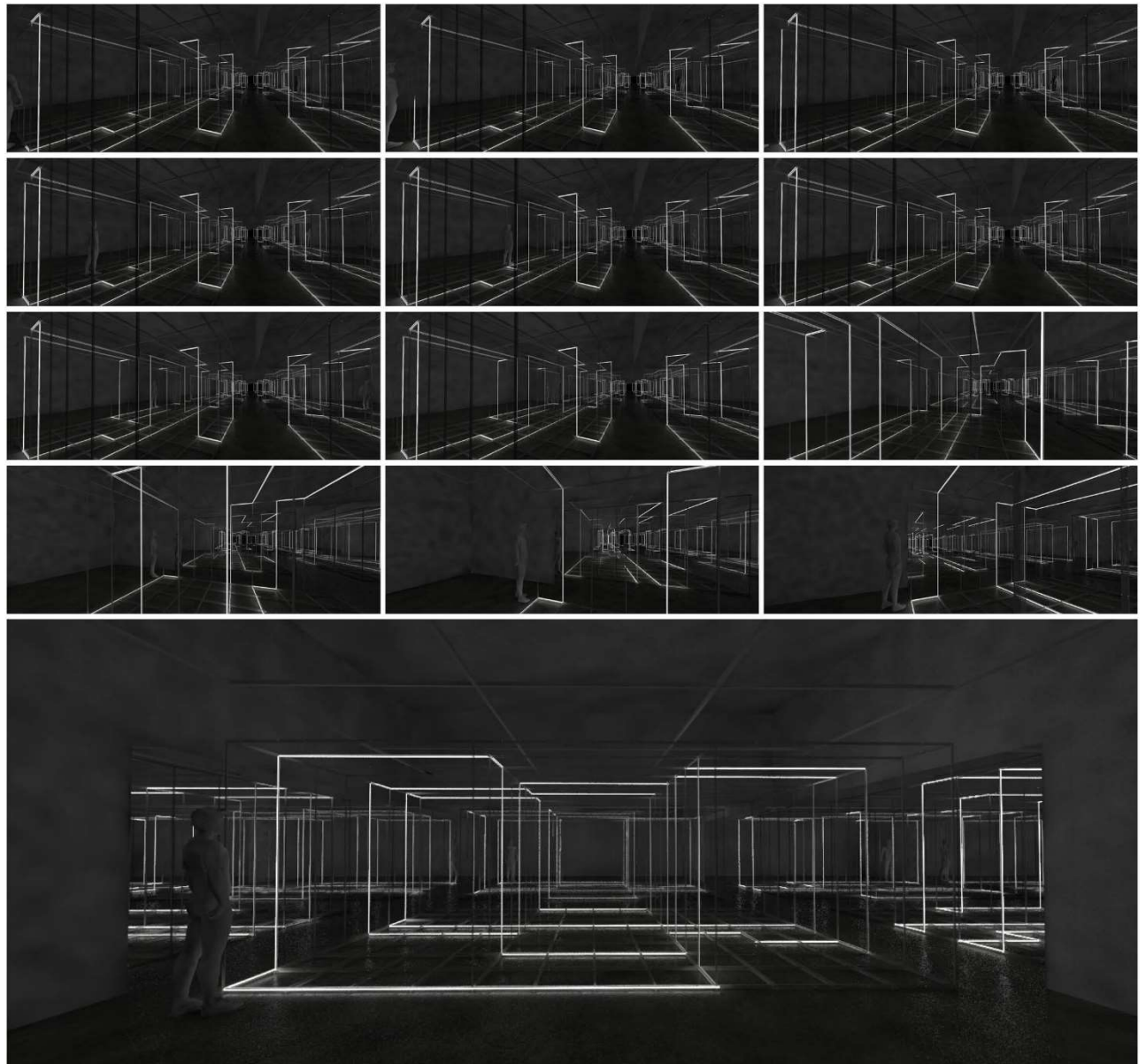


Figure #52: Project *Otium* Perspective View, Gales Gallery York University, *Tracing* Sequence