

Mediation through materiality in post-mediative practices

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This article is based on a conference paper presented at the 2010 SAJAH Conference at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. It poses some questions about the issue of mediation and presents some key ideas and examples from the history of ideas and practices concerning mediation in the visual arts. Following on from there it considers six registers of mediation as experienced at Venice 2009: a major biennale with associated exhibitions in that city redolent with history, memory and other dimensions of mediation between space and a spectrum of materialities manifest in a wide range of art shown in the arena of a city inhabited by many art works, a city transformed by contemporary visual arts practices while simultaneously transforming and mediating those works by providing a relational context for their reception by an engaged audience.

Key words: mediation Venice biennale 2009

Mediasie deur materialiteit in post-mediatiwe praktyke

Hierdie artikel is gebaseer op 'n referaat wat op die 2010-kongres van die SAJAH in die Fakulteit van Argitektuur en Beplanning, Universiteit van die Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, voorgedra is. Daar word sekere vrae gestel oor die kwessie van mediasie en bied enkele sleutelidees en voorbeelde uit die geskiedenis van idees en praktyke ten opsigte van mediasie in die visuele kunste. Daaropvolgend word ses mediasieregisters bespreek, soos ervaar in Venesië 2009: 'n belangrike biënnale met geassosieerde uitstallings in daardie stad wat ryk is aan geskiedenis, geheue en ander dimensies van mediasie tussen ruimte en 'n spektrum van materialiteite, gemanifesteer in 'n wye reeks kunswerke, uitgestal in die stadsarena wat reeds talle kunswerke bevat, maar getransformeer kon word deur kontemporêre visuele kunspraktyke, dog terselfertyd hierdie kunswerke kon medieer deur 'n relasionêre konteks te voorsien vir resepsie deur betrokke aanskouers.

Sleutelwoorde: mediasie, biënnale Venesië 2009

The theme for the SAJAH Conference held in 2010 in the Faculty of Architecture and Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand was announced as follows: “The artist...always starts with something and ends with something else....it may be argued that all forms of human practice is mediated because knowledge and action are socially and culturally contingent...at times mediation becomes a conscious tool through which negotiation and intervention result in some sort of resolution.” This article is based on a paper delivered at this conference; it agrees that all forms of human practice are mediated; and it looks at how mediation can sometimes become a conscious tool. I will be offering as examples of mediative modalities some of the work I saw and experienced physically – by way of their materiality -- while I was in Venice a year ago.

At that time, the Venice Biennale and associated exhibitions had been integrated into the very fabric of that city. Everywhere one turned contemporary visual arts practices were embedded in the architecture and interstitial spaces of that ancient place. In many senses the works mediated the city, while in turn being mediated by the environments they found themselves in. People from all over the world came there to pay their respects to creative innovation in the visual arts and at the same time to the splendour and flair of that exotic city, an exoticism underneath which a dark history of violence and pain still runs as deep as the waters from which the city rises like a floating museum.

Introduction: questions and examples

Before I turn to Venice and as an introduction to that discussion, this article focuses on some introductory questions and examples of mediation from the history of art and ideas. One question concerns the relationship between media, mediation and materialities in contemporary visual arts practices. I would argue that the constraints of media as specific to particular disciplines such

as painting or sculpture or drawing gave way to the importance of materiality when modernism phased into postmodernism in the late 60s and 70s of the previous century. When engaged with contemporary practices it seems to be the relationship between the force of the material and its mediation of ideas which is central. Such mediation occurs within sets of positions rather than within strictly bounded disciplines, as Rosalind Krauss argued for in the late 70s when she published a groundbreaking essay called “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” in the journal *October* in 1979. Some examples from Venice may clarify this statement further on in this article.

A second question asks how materialities perform or constitute the very acts of mediation they connote. I would argue that the level of signification operational through the world of motifs and themes – through iconography – denote meaning; while materialities perform meaning; they do not point to, they act as agents of signification. J.L. Austin spoke as early as 1962 of constative acts of interlocution, acts which denote; and performative acts, acts which do the very things they constitute. Some examples from Venice may also clarify this statement further on in this article.

A third question which can be posed here is about what can be understood as post-mediative practices? The word “post” has been used extensively in recent years. It does not necessarily mean that something has passed and is no more. It can have two other meanings: 1. It can be a response to something, such as where postcolonialism remains a critical response to colonialism or when postmediation is a conscious deployment of mediation; 2. It can be an acknowledgement that something like feminism has become integral to our way of thinking, that its discourse is no longer marginal but now informs mainstream thinking; or – more to the point for this article – that postmediative practices now acknowledge mediation as part and parcel of their fields of signification, something which is no longer obscured in the interests of a kind of seamless representation which hides process and power.

Mediation in the works shown in Venice during 2009 leads to a fourth question, namely one which asks what the relationship is between hyper-digitalisation and hyper-materiality. I would argue that the extreme focus on materiality in contemporary practice flies in the face of hyper-digitalisation and that even digital or electronic artists often go to extreme lengths to infuse their outcomes with the materialities of other disciplines such as painting, sculpture, drawing, architecture and sound. Hyper-digitalisation can be said to exist in our world today as we are all connected to others and to information through digital modes and technologies. Hyper-materiality can be seen as an opposite response, as a focus on the tactile and its haptic experience within a particular location.

As I teach in a tertiary art school, a fifth question asks how tertiary teaching in the visual arts and architecture respond to the questions posed above? Many institutions are diminishing the options for students to work experientially with the materialities of their practice. Often costs are cut which underpin hands-on workshops; often the indexicality of practices like drawing is wholly absorbed within digital technologies. Obviously much is gained through the deployment of digital technologies, but much is lost when other materialities are depleted in the mix of studio education. Works shown in Venice warn against this trend through their focus on materiality.

Before turning to Venice, I would like to focus briefly on some historical examples which spring to mind when one thinks about mediation. Each of these examples works with mediation in ways which have been incorporated into a kind of dense sediment through which we understand its operations. Plato, Velasquez, Picasso, Hippolyte Bayard, Cézanne and his followers, Otto Dix and Flynn Morris-Clarke add to this density.

Firstly, a refresher on Plato's "*Analogy of the cave*": It is found at the beginning of book seven on *The Republic*, which was written by Plato in 380 BC. It takes the form of a dialogue between Socrates and Plato's brother, Glaucon, concerning education. Socrates tells the story of prisoners who have been held captive in a cave all of their lives. They are chained so that they can only see shadows on the wall of people walking on a path behind them in front of a fire. They cannot directly see the people or the things that they carry. They can only see their shadows cast on the cave wall. That is all they have known all of their life and so they mistake the shadows for the people and things themselves. They are totally absorbed by the shadows and have become quite adept at interpreting what they supposedly mean. One day a prisoner is freed of his chains and taken out of the cave and dragged up into the light. After a long period of adjustment he is able to see in the new light filled world and discovers that he had been mistaking shadows for reality. He returns to tell his prisoner friends, but has trouble adjusting to the dark and shadows. He cannot still see the fine distinctions that the prisoners make out in the flickering forms. They still cannot turn around or leave the cave. They still see only shadows and know nothing else. They do not believe their returning friend. He does not see the shadows as they do.

Some say that in today's world the cave shadows have been replaced by television images and other mass media. Be that as it may, the point here is that Plato's "Analogy of the Cave" is an early example from the classical world of ideas about simulation and of the mediative contingency of images upon knowledge and action.

Velasquez's famous painting entitled *Las Meninas* – and Picasso's later versions of the same work – seem to place mediation in the centre of the field of signification. Many writers have explored the famous 17th-century painting, amongst them Michel Foucault and Hubert Damisch, who were fascinated by its explication of the viewing process. The painter seems to look out at the viewer who constitutes the locus of viewing but is not reflected in a mirror as are the king and queen. This painting is a court painting but it is also an exploration of the relationship between artist, work and viewer. The work is about the very issue of mediation which is not obscured but made into the tipping point of the interest, regardless of what the royal family may have thought about the work's purpose. In Picasso's versions, the king and queen reflected in the mirror are less clear or specific; the reflection seems singular and could be of the viewer. Across four centuries both artists confess to the act of painting as mediation: one from the perspective of a Baroque sensibility of the visual arts as immersive and the other from a late-Modernist interest in the viewing subject as constitutive of fields of signification.

It has often been purported that photography obscures its own acts of mediation and only fairly recently – in the last three decades – have such acts been uncovered through critiques of the notion of photography as an index of reality or as the documentary discipline *par excellence*. One succinct outline of the main arguments is to be found in Frederick Evans' article titled "Photography as Mediation" (2000) in which he discusses the photograph as a highly mediated event. He talks about how the photograph comes into being through an "associative complex of memory, analogy, intertextuality, aspiration...and...self-projection" (p.1). One can but look at the famous photograph by Hippolyte Bayard of 1840 called *Portrait of the Artist as a Drowned Man* to understand the lengths mediation within the photographic world would go to at that early stage. Today, of course, we live in a world where every possible manipulation can be utilised to mediate between the indexical and the fictitious.

In 2009, an exhibition in Philadelphia foregrounded the influence of Cézanne on twentieth-century artists. This event can be referred to here as it highlights another aspect of mediation: how we perceive the world through another's eyes. The complex processes of mediation involved in perception are hinted at by Peter Sloterdijk where he writes: "The enigma of the eyes is that

they not only can see but are also able to see themselves seeing... A good part of philosophy is actually...eye reflex, eye dialectic, seeing-oneself-see” (1987: 93). The Cézanne exhibition was predicated on this complex process: making through what we already know of somebody else’s seeing: Cézanne mediated by Picasso; Cézanne processed through the sensibility of Braque; Cézanne’s blue lake at L’Estaque transformed into a blue relief sculpture by Ellsworth Kelly. Although this last work is wholly abstract, one cannot view it as such if one already knows Cézanne’s painting. The landscape in his painting ‘superimposes’ itself on Kelly’s strip of blue-painted wood as certainly as if it is actually present.

Earlier this year, an exhibition of some works by Otto Dix was held at the Neue Galerie in New York. How he mediated his work according to his source material was indicated, for example through the inclusion of a work by Hans Baldung Grien. Also, his experiences in WW1 were represented through works which obviously shows a dark and sombre experience which would withhold him from joining a fascist idealisation of the body in Germany at that time. Rather, one could see on this exhibition examples of the work which sets him apart from many of his German contemporaries at the time; work which speak powerfully of how experience can mediate between theme and outcome or how it can be instrumental in the choice of theme and its formal presentation. More importantly, mediation itself takes centre stage in some of these works: With regard to *Self-Portrait with Muse* (1924), Mira Schor writes: “Here the fully clothed, thin-lipped, stern fair-haired male artist encounters an almost comically over-endowed, flamboyantly ethnic – whether Semitic or Latin – woman. He confronts her; he is confronted by her, as she raises a hand in a gesture which can be read as a greeting, a blessing, or a stoppage, a counter action to the reach of the brush which is in actual effect creating her. She is hardly the passive creation of a Pygmalion and if you look at some of the depictions of women by fascist-approved artists of the same general period in Germany you immediately get what makes this painting so different and seditious even though it does portray a naked woman and a clothed man, a familiar theme in the history of Western representation” (2010:2). In other words, here a well-known theme is mediated through a new experience and a new sensibility: the artist encounters a familiar theme but changes it to a third space wherein we can learn something which did not exist before in quite the same way. As in the case of Plato’s cave dweller, we cannot ‘unsee’ our new sight and the very trope of ‘male artist painting nude female model’ is forever altered.

Flynn Morris-Clarke is a young artist working in New Zealand. As often the case with those of his generation, downloading images off the web is second nature. The web is the space where the current young generation of artists operates from and within with facebook, twitter and a large variety of current search engines, interfaces and social communication networks available to the digitally savvy. Talking to Flynn, it seems at first that the images have no meaning for him, that they are randomly found items which offer formal possibilities for painting as a practice and which share at least one factor: their blurred state of presence-absence. On further investigation they turn out to be players in a kind of archetypal identification process: father, mother, son, daughter, uncle. Freud’s “family romance” where the protagonist finds a better family somewhere else, in a mediated somewhere else – today no longer of the novel or even the movies, but absorbed into the disembodied realm of the web out of which they can be plucked at will to perform their duties in a script all of one’s own – comes to mind. Here, one has to acknowledge the important work done by Jean Baudrillard with regard to issues of mediation in a hyper-digital context. Baudrillard’s text on “Simulacra and Simulation” (1981) is to our time what Plato’s “Analogy of the Cave” may have been for his, a view on mediation in accordance with current technologies and their effects. Plato distinguished between faithful representation and intentionally distorted representation (the simulacrum or the shadows in the cave) and this last he held in moral opprobrium. Baudrillard distinguishes between four possibilities: 1.

representations of reality; 2. perversions of reality; 3. pretenses of reality (where there is no model or copy of a model); and 4. simulacra (which bear no relation to any reality whatsoever (for example Disneyland which purports to represent historical fables or American experiences of the land, while being a recycled waste facility of fake phantasms; or the manufactured imaginations circulating on the web).

Venice 2009: six registers of mediation through materialities

Now to Venice and what could be found there as mediation through materiality in 2009. My discussion below focuses on six registers of mediation and within those I consider relationships between mediation and materiality. The first of the registers involve the artist's studio as a fetishistic space. One of the exhibitions associated with the Venice Biennale was entitled "Mapping the Studio". It presented a selection from the François Pinault Collection. Many images of artists' studios were shown in the extensive catalogue accompanying this exhibition and the curators prided themselves on the fact that the collection is built from studio visits rather than through buying from dealers or auctions. The close relationship with the artist and the studio as a creative space takes on a fetishistic aspect as images 'freeze' and isolate the studio from the making process. Each image functions as a kind of 'trophy' which signals the success of the collecting endeavour. Simultaneously, the viewer encounters the work on exhibition with pre-knowledge of the studio environment from which they emanated. This knowledge mediates, changes, transforms one's experience of the works. What's more is that the materiality of the studio environment mirrors that of the works exhibited. Examples by Daniel Buren and Paul McCarthy are discussed below.

Daniel Buren's studio is notable for its clean surfaces, incised lines of architectural features and light-filled space. The artist himself is shown holding a canvas on which the familiar Buren stripes feature large. Inside the Palazzo Grassi, Buren's large canvases entitled *Paintings on Variable Forms* (1966) exhibit the same materiality: smooth surfaces, clean lines, minimal texture, an aesthetic of light and airiness in a city where striped awnings cover windows against the summer glare off cream, salmon and ochre buildings.

A photograph of Paul McCarthy's studio shows parts of a huge clay sculpture in the process of its making. Forensic tape warns visitors to keep their distance. Looking up from the photograph, one sees the actual work in the exhibition space, called *Train (Pig Island)*, made in 2007. For a second, the absence of the tape is disconcerting until one adapts to the shift in materiality: from glossy photograph to sharing a space with a monumental clay sculpture of monstrous figures from the artist's imagination.

A second register deploys connections between the city and memory. Venice has a long history which includes its role in the infamous Battle of Lepanto so vividly represented in a painting by Andrea Vicentino (1542-1617) which can be seen in the Doge's Palace. The Battle of Lepanto took place on 7 October 1571 when a fleet of the Holy League, a coalition of Spain (including its territories of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia), the Republic of Venice, the Papacy, the Republic of Genoa, the Duchy of Savoy, the Knights Hospitaller and others, decisively defeated the main fleet of the Ottoman Empire. Galleys left with great pomp and ceremony from the Grand Canal in Venice to vanquish the enemy. The violence and pain it cost those citizens of Venice who were sentenced to man the galleys remain in the collective memory of Europeans. Viewing contemporary art works in Venice is an activity which takes place against the backdrop of the city and its memories mediate the experience. Works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Charles Ray are indicative of this kind of mediation.

Untitled (Blood) made in 1992 by Gonzales-Torres was re-hung to fit into a space within the Palazzo Grassi. There one could see it against the light coming through a window onto the city. The work consists of lines (strips) of red tape hanging vertically from the ceiling to just above the floor. Light bounces off the tape with the result that the whole work shimmers like a mirage or a veil beyond which lie the city and its historical paintings. *Untitled (Blood)* functions like an elusive membrane through which one sees everything half-covered. What one sees in the city zone beyond the tape and the window depends on one's own memory of the city and its histories.

Charles Ray's *Boy with Frog* (2009) stood outside high above the Grand Canal on the edge of the Punta della Dogana across the water from the Palazzo Grassi, this being another of two venues for "Mapping the Studio". In the current milieu the frog held aloft speaks of environmental concerns, especially exhibited above that particular stretch of contested water. However, the smooth marble surface of the youthful male body harks back through centuries of Mediterranean statuary: Michaelangelo's *David*, Donatello's *David*, and the *Kritios Boy* from the Early Classical period of ancient Greek sculpture.

A third register of mediation experienced in Venice revolves around the relationship between scale and the monstrous. Marie H el ene Huet writes in the *Monstrous Imagination* (1993) about the ubiquitous nature of the monstrous in Western art and culture. Very large scale or very small scale play into our experience of the monstrous. "Mapping the Studio" included many works which mediate the monstrous through scale. Piotr Uklanski, Huan Yong Ping, Jake and Dinos Chapman (juxtaposed with Goya's *Caprichios*) are among the artists who use scale as an important aspect of their work with the monstrous.

Uklanski's *Dancing Nazi's* (2008) displayed two hundred large and glossy photographs mounted continuously on one long wall. The images show two hundred actors who have played the role of Hitler in films since WW2. The floor in front of the wall was covered with a neon lighting chequer board pattern which changed in intensity as one stepped on the squares. A fairground tune played repetitively. Children skipped across the blocks of neon lighting. The shining surfaces of the photographs, the famous and attractive faces of the actors, the 'happy' tune and skipping children were monstrously at odds with the events Hitler had been responsible for.

About Huang Yong Ping's *Football Match on June 14th* (2002), Hou Hanru writes: "He refers directly to the American-led war to liberate Afghanistan from the hands of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, showing how this liberation has provoked a veritable clash of civilizations. The work consists of a football field on which armed American soldiers are shown playing against veiled Afghan women in the shadow of a huge meteorite that looms over their heads, surrounded by hundreds of bats. As the artist has stated, this is a dreamlike image of the world we are living in today" (2006). The monstrous emanates from this work and its materiality plays an important role in this. The huge 'meteorite' looks like an unformed lump of earth or a boulder hanging from the ceiling by a thin thread. The diminutive figures and the tiny fluttering bats seem fragile and threatened by its imminent fall.

Brothers Jake and Dinos Chapman work together. Their small coloured etchings entitled *Like a Dog Visits its Vomit Twice* (2005) were exhibited next to Goya's *Caprichios* which they reference directly. The viewer comes close to the small works and discovers there monstrous figures engaged in monstrous acts and events at odds with the pastel colours and delicate line work.

A fourth register of mediation in Venice revolved around excess and pleasure in that city known for its laws against luxury in attempts to curb the extravagance it became famous for

between 1200 and 1500. Amidst the sumptuous architecture and other visual overload of the city, works like Uklanski's *Untitled (Friendly Tumour)* of 2009 and Takashi Murakami's *Emergence of Fate at the Reversal of God* (2008-09) resonate with their surroundings and with the history of the city. Uklanski's piece consists of a large red bulbous mass of viscous paint protruding from the canvas support. The viewer is tempted to touch the material in order to experience the full force of the work. Murakami's large colour fields pull one into their delicate layering of texture and tone juxtaposed with fine tracery and gold leaf.

"*Fare Mundi: Making Worlds*" was the title of the main exhibition of the Venice Biennale in 2009, spread out across the national pavilions in the Giardini. Curator Daniel Birnbaum acknowledged mediation through this title: we construct worlds rather than merely representing them. A fifth register of mediation was manifest in these pavilions, one of creating contexts rather than single art works for the viewer to experience. Two of these contexts are discussed below.

Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Guests* (2008-09) represented Poland and filled a large building comprised of one space plus a small antechamber. False walls and a false ceiling in the interior made it possible for backlit video works to be screened through what looked like a sky light and round arched windows. On entering the antechamber one could read a wall text quoting Hannah Arendt where she writes about the existence of foreigners inside territorial limits being seen by nation states as a menace for national identity, security and socio-economic stability (1951). Moving from the antechamber into the main space of the work, one enters a dark room. The 'ceiling' and 'windows' on the walls enable video-projections of moving images which one experiences as if they were of labourers cleaning the outside of the building. They wash windows, vacuum clean spaces, wipe the sky light clean of water and accumulated leaves and talk amongst themselves in a strange language; there is even a dog walking 'outside' amongst them as they busy themselves with their menial tasks. The audience (us) cannot reach them and they cannot reach us. We are simultaneously aware of our privileged position as spectators of the labour of others; and we are uncomfortably aware of the porous boundaries between 'art' and 'life'. The work as simulated context becomes a mediation between the arena of an international biennale and the real-life separation between residents and immigrants in recent European history.

Another work which presents the viewer with a context rather than with an isolated work of art is Grazia Toderi's *Red Orbits* (2009). This large-scale digital projection in six parts form a grid on a wall. Six views of cities are shown, with the viewer never quite sure which city is being referenced. The projections seem refractory and ever-changing. One's experience is one of being unable to focus or of finding a point of viewing stability. This leads to a kind of vertiginous relationship with the work. Each 'city' is overlaid with a spherical shape which suggests that each of these 'worlds' remain within its own orbit, almost being like a fishbowl of isolated life through the glass walls of which the viewer can see into them. Across these spheres, small 'blips' of moving light suggest the presence of aeroplanes. Of course, after 9/11 one cannot but have a sense of extreme foreboding on encountering these phenomena. Toderi presents us with a six-fold context in any one of many vulnerable cities across the world. Her work becomes a mediation between collective memory, our subsequent fears, and frightening possibilities in the future. What's more is that viewers experienced this mediation in, arguably, the most vulnerable city in the world: Venice.

A sixth register of mediation found in Venice 2009 was evident in an exhibition entitled "In-Finitum". This exhibition was held in the Palazzo Fortuny and focused on a juxtapositioning of historical and contemporary art works. Mediation of meaning between the works resulted: one read them in relation to each other with two or more contexts simultaneously in the frame

of one's experience. Many of the combinations on this show focused on 'blackness' and its concomitant sense of the infinite. Black paintings by Ad Reinhardt, Lucio Fontana and Otto Piene were shown side by side with black granite fragments of Egyptian tomb sculptures; Kazuo Shiraga of the Gutai Group was represented with a black painting shown opposite a black sculpture by Fontana inside a black room. These combinations lead to speculation about the meanings of blackness across the history of art, especially as works like Antonio Canova's funereal *Model for a Monument to Titian* (1791), Arnold Böcklin's *Island of the Dead* (1880) and Pieter Bruegel the Elder's foreboding *Tower of Babel* (1563) could be seen nearby in the same space.

Other works in the Palazzo Fortuny exhibition deployed materialities of colour and space as mediators across the history of art in combinations of work shown together. Caspar David Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* (1809) featured large near Mark Rothko's colour fields, near Alfred Hofkunst's *Blue Sky* (1975) and Michael Borremans's *Ghost* (2008). A signature work in respect of colour and space could be seen on the exterior of the palazzo: Herbert Hamak's *Magenta*, made for Venice 2009. This minimalistic geometrical sculpture painted bright magenta wrapped around the corner of the building and jutted out into exterior space. Thus the work mimicked the industrial structures deployed to save crumbling buildings in Venice and other old European cities. Mediation between the past and the present, the history of the city and the particular building and its current status is effected. As had always been the case with minimalist sculpture, viewers related physically to the work as we mediated its scale and height and weight in relation to our own bodily presence within the densely-filled city space of Venice.

Conclusion

This article has touched on ideas and historical examples of mediation and then focused on six registers of mediation experienced at the 2009 Venice Biennale and associated exhibitions in that city. It has been argued that these registers of mediation come into effect through materialities deployed in particular art works. In *Immaterial/Ultramaterial: Architecture, Design and Materials* (2002) contributing authors discuss our experiences of architectures and other built environments such as sculptures and installations or whole exhibitions as mediated through our physical encounters of edges, surfaces, substances, smells, bodies near or further away from ours, boundary interferences, ephemeral light and other materialities. In *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (1984), Paul Rodaway argues that sensory qualities are not mere 'givens' in experience, but are in fact culturally cultivated, complexly mediated: for example, our experiences of materialities in Venice 2009 could be very different from other encounters with the same materialities. This kind of idea is taken further by Giulio Jacucci's *Interaction as Performance: Cases of Configuring Physical Interfaces in Mixed Media* (2004) where he argues that assemblages or spatial narratives bring our sense experience into central focus and that this involves performative interactions of our bodies with physical and material interfaces. He maintains that there exists an anthropology of such interfaces as they are mediated through cultural knowledge and participation. Venice 2009 offered a unique experience in this regard and it emphasised current visual arts practice and its curation in exhibition context as being post-mediative: practices now acknowledge mediation as part and parcel of their fields of signification; mediation is no longer an activity which is obscured in the interests of a kind of seamless representation which hides process and the power to make worlds: *fare mundi*.

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Acknowledgement: My travel to Venice 2009 was made possible by a research grant from Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin, New Zealand.

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