

# Technological practice, relational being, non-anthropocentric being, the being of a space, and the space of being

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This article formally-thematically considers a notion of 'relational being', 'non-anthropocentric being', 'the being of space', and 'the space of being', in the context of current, past and prospective technological practice. These concepts are complex and none of them can be adequately explained in single sentence, or even a paragraph. However it is intended that some sensing, comprehending of, and reflection on these notions is engendered through the evolution of this discussion. I am using 'technological practice' in a particular and crucial sense in this essay: referring to what might be thought of as an integrated epistemological process where art, philosophy, craft/technique and science were considered part of an integrated thinking-practice.

The article re-considers the Buddhist philosophic concept of *pratiyasamutpada* (there is a glossary of non-English and uncommon terms such as this at the end of the article) - commonly known in English as 'dependent origination' - in the context of digital and new media art. In such context, the essay investigates Tannic thinking and practice that attempts to develop an integrated practice and dynamic entity of the body (artist and/or spectator), science, technology, art, philosophy, and nature. It discusses the veracity of such ideas in the context of particular new scientific insights. Furthermore the article interrogates a notion of a polyphonic T. Moreover, given the current proliferation of the worldwide web, the article discusses new ways of evolving current practice and thinking on themes related to the socialisation and mediatisation of 'difference'.

Areas of formal and thematic investigation concern rethinking otherness, multi-culturalism, convergence; rethinking difference, identity, multiplicity, fragmentation; and developing a language of difference. The article is an evolution and expansion of an initial, shorter article on the theme (Ajaykumar, 2007). It also evolves ideas developed by the author in other articles, in public lectures, and in conference papers on related topics and disciplines. As readers may be unfamiliar with these texts, there will be some necessary repetition to assist the flow of this discourse.

The nature of composition of the article approaches a form-theme synthesis, formally engaging with some of the concepts discussed. Moreover, here it interrogates the notion of 'practice as theory' and 'theory as practice'. This brings into question the notion of difference and distinction between the two, and the some time privileging of theory over practice in art and humanities research. Moreover this may have resonance with parallel approaches such as performance-lectures and lecture-texts of John Cage (Cage, 1973); as well as 'film essays', such as some of those of Chris Marker (1983); together with some of the textual strategies of Jacques Derrida. Of particular note is Derrida's text "Tympan" (1991, pp.146-168). Furthermore, the nature of the composition also serves to question conceptions of a polyphonic T. Key Words: Akasha, Dependent Origination, Emptiness-Presence, Epistemology, Interface, Ma, Non-Anthropocentric Being, Poly-tekhne-kal, Pratiyasamutpada, Rasa, Relational Being, Spectatorship, Sunyata, antra, Techne/Tekhne, Technological Practice, The Being of a Space, The Space of Being, Void

technology-I am?

spectator-I am?

nature-I am?

space-I am?

-?

I have begun this article with a page of near emptiness. Essentially the minimal text on the first page gives definition to the emptiness, the formlessness. Within this text it is the hyphen that is of most concern. I am reflecting on a hypothesis of relational being, non-anthropocentric being, and 'the being of space' that may emerge in a relational world of montage, in an interstitial realm between so-called body and so-called external space. In this realm a narrative may be elicited. It is a concept that emerged in South Asian science, technology, art, architecture, religion and philosophy over two thousand years ago - primarily through the vehicle of Tantric practice and thinking. Today the veracity of such notions come to the fore again through insights from particular fields of contemporary science. Moreover, these notions may be re-interpreted through the medium of digital reproduction.

Furthermore, in relation to digital art and current manifestations of the Internet, the aims are to interrogate new ways of evolving current practice and thinking on themes relating to: spectatorship; to the socialisation and mediatisation of 'difference'; to developing a language of difference; to particular relationships between the body, art, philosophy, science, nature, space-time, technology, health, and society. Here an unplumbed ecology may be educed.

In this writing, it is a sine qua non that I utilise my own experiential learning, my own artistic investigation, and my own practical or practice-based research.

But how is the 'i'?

The 'i' here is perhaps less

in the manner of the T of Irigaray

and more...

Although I am also minded of a particular compromise inherent to writing - Lao-tzu said, "if the Tao could be comprised in words, it would not be the unchangeable Tao" (Munsterberg, 1971, p. 13) - I have made an evaluation that there is some relative and provisional value in my compromised utterance.

Yiian-wu K'o-ch'n expresses this notion eloquently:

All the enlightened ones and ancestral teachers take this one true thing very seriously.. If this matter were in words, then it should be definable in a single statement, with change. Why should there be thousands and thousands of sayings imparted by enlightened adepts, with no end to them? From this, we know that it is not within words, but we need to use words to illustrate this matter. Sharp-spirited people should directly comprehend this idea (Parker, 1999, p.23).

The thinking in the above quotation relates to compositional methodologies for the M-I I-M series, which are the artistic works, concepts, and practice-based research that this article refers to in part; and which I will now delineate.

## M-II-M

M-I I-M is an ongoing series of science-art projects - internet art works, concepts, installations, conference presentations, lectures, talks and essays- that are responses to recent medical research, such as that undertaken by Dr. Kwame McKenzie, Professor Robin Murray and others (Sharpley, et al, 2001; Morgan, et al, 2005; Morgan, et al, 2006; Morgan, et al, 20056b; ), which suggests racism engenders mental illness. Moreover M-I I-M formally-thematically investigates notions, which have emerged in South and East Asia: such as pratyasamutpada, relational being; non-anthropocentric being; 'the being of space'; 'the space of being'; void; interval; emptiness-presence. It examines them in a contemporary world increasingly filled by virtual space. The series includes an existing internet art work, pages of madness; as well as the ongoing development of two new compositions: iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses; and asylum.

With regard to the research that suggests racism engenders mental illness, black people in Britain are several times more likely to suffer from mental illness such as schizophrenia than white people: the causes of which are social rather than biological. Professor Murray, of the Institute of Psychiatry, London, believes "The experience of black people in the UK almost drives them mad" (BBC News Online, 2003 and <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/28/063.html>, 22/01/2007 10:00:30). M-I I-M is an ongoing project of a particular community and political engagement in relation to digital technology, involving those who appear to inhabit the margins of society including the digital society. The series goes 'beyond madness': considering art as medicine, a therapeutic force; that insight may emerge from madness. M-I I-M, is also the title of a presentation made on the theme at ISEA2006/ZeroOne San José: A Global Festival of Art on the Edge (Ajaykumar, 2006).

### pages of madness



**Image title: occhio rosso**  
**Artist: Ajaykumar**

pages of madness is an internet art work that was spotlighted by American new media gallery Turbulence, and can be viewed at: <http://turbulence.org/spotlight/ajaykumar/index.htm>, pages of madness has also been invited to be presented in a number of international and diverse art contexts, such as (in chronological order):

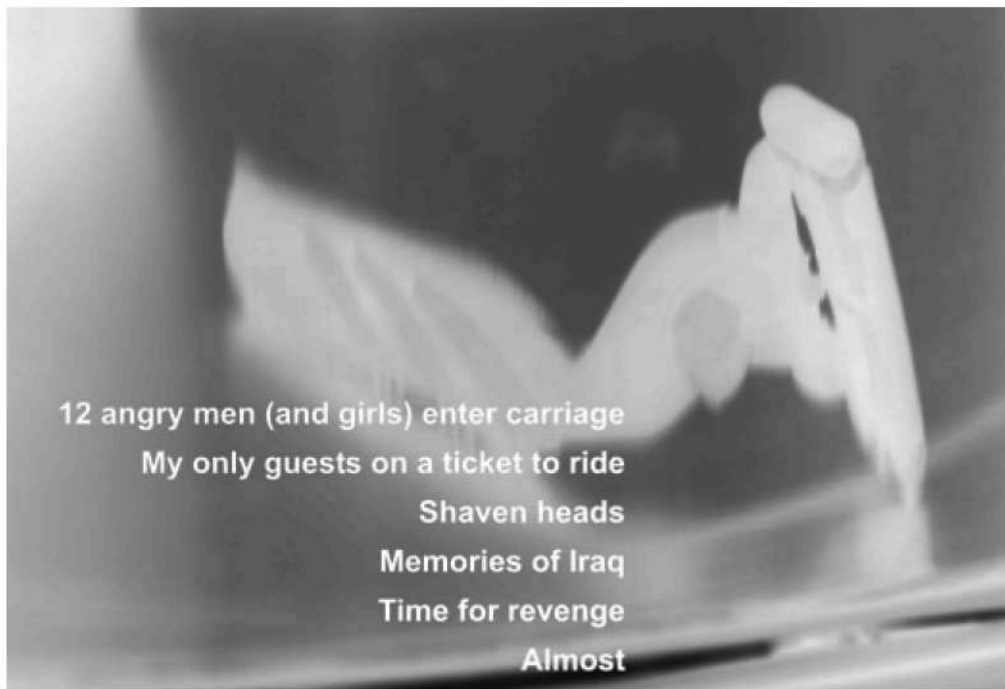
- Testimony - Inside Stories of Mental Health Care - touring group exhibition: Bourne Hall Museum, Epsom, United Kingdom, Aug. 2007.
- ISEA2006/ Zero One San José: A Global Festival of Art on the Edge, as part of M-II-M presentation, USA, Aug. 2006.
- Carnival of E-Creativity, New Delhi, India, Jan. 2006.
- Community TV Channel Mad for Arts Series, United Kingdom, 2005-2006.
- Rampton Hospital, Nottinghamshire, United Kingdom, Mar. 2005.  
Rampton is a high security hospital for the criminally insane. The work was presented to staff and patients, together with an accompanying talk to staff: Sticks and Stones may break my bones but names will hurt me more, which discussed the power of words in relation to the theme.
- Generative Arts Festival and Conference in Milan, Italy, Dec. 2004.
- National Film Theatre, London, United Kingdom, 6th Disability Film Festival, Dec. 2004.

To get a clearer sense of the article themes, I request readers here to view pages of madness first, before returning to the article.



Image title: e-erase a head\_black  
Artist: Ajaykumar

In pages of madness still images are randomly generated, and transform from black and white, to white and black, in relation to an ordered linearity of text and constancy of sound, with near endless permutation, so that the work can be experienced in a snapshot of fifteen seconds through to a time-scale of over a hundred million years.



**Almost kill me**

**The continuing head aches**

Image title: e-erase a head<sub>white</sub>

Artist: Ajaykumar

In Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes argues that cinematic movement impedes contemplation and argues of the importance of the still composition, pages of madness employs montage - involving interplays of text, sound, photographic, as well as video image - to engender a series of 'meanings' that come into being through the active participation of spectators. Here the work combines both inter-active process with spaces of contemplation, spaces of stillness, in contrast to a perceived lack of such spaces of contemplation in much of the genre of inter-active digital art work.

I have been personally involved with this area of investigation for a number of years. This work draws on personal experiences, the experience of others, as well as wider specialist research. Dr Richard Parkin, consultant psychiatrist at the Psychiatric Unit of Barnet Hospital, London, was a consultant for the project. Although utilising personal experience, the nature of the text sequences of pages of madness together with spectatorial engagement emphasises a polyphonic 'i': having multiple voices and no single authorial point-of-view or singular 'narrative'.

iPak -10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses

iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses is itself a series, within the M-II-M series. It is a trilogy of three inter-relating works: chaos, jukebox, and platform, whose themes concern the overall series' central themes of racism's engendering of mental illness; the notion and the potential of 'art as medicine'; and the notional of 'relational being'.

The first work, chaos, commissioned by Turbulence, is to be completed by January, 2008, and publicly launched shortly after (for further details see <http://www.ipak.org.uk>). The research and development was made possible by an Artsadmin Bursary, and by Arts Council England. The series formally journeys beyond pages of madness through experimentation with greater

random interplays of sound, music, texts, video and stills: to effect a more severe collage and collision of moods, tempos, and chance plays of meanings, in its narrative construction, chaos, jukebox, and platform are in development. They are envisaged as follows:-

chaos will be a generative art work that involves an ever-changing, random interplay of video, still images, poetry, sound/music, submitted by myself and other artists on the themes. Through this constantly transforming montage, new meanings, ideas, feelings may be elicited.

jukebox will offer a user playful inter-activity: s/he is to choose which sounds-music to listen to from a selection, utilising a database of items created by other artists and me, in relation to a particular flow of texts and images that a computer programme randomly generates. New meanings, ideas, feelings may be elicited each time through a user's personal montage in relation to the computer's.

platform will have two elements: a gallery and a forum, gallery will enable anyone to display art items responding to the above-mentioned project themes, enabling an archive of 10,000 art objects and more. Spectators will be able to download items also to view on mobile devices such as iPods. forum is envisaged as a meeting ground, a shared experience, where anyone can blog and discuss subjects pertinent to the themes of M-II-M. Items submitted to gallery with permission of the artists, will be introduced to the montage of chaos, and become available for spectators to play with in jukebox.

iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses, after pages of madness, considers the visuality of text in a net that is dominated by text. It re-conceives, in digital media, notions of concrete poetry; as well as

re-conceiving practices drawn from literature of the ciné-roman filmmakers. iPak plays with some of the machinery, forms, and practices that are defining the current 'now' and T: the 3G cell phone, iPod, mpeg, jpeg, downloading, texting, 'collaging', through its deliberate use of a 'lo-fi' recording equipment - such as the camera phone - to generate video clips, stills, sounds, texts.

iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses is several plays on words, including plays with portable digital devices. The title borrows from Apple's iPod with its early version's capacity to download and play 10,000 songs, or store and view 10,000 images. It corresponds with Hewlett Packard's iPAQ pocket PC series. It also plays with 'Paki' an emotive term of racist abuse in Britain. Here, reversing the order, it places emphasis on the ubiquitous 'i' in the digital world, evoking our generation that self-obsessively focuses on T.

Through the potential contribution of potentially innumerable other artists' work to the composition of chaos, jukebox, and platform, the work evades a purely singular artistic view of an historic and ongoing social tragedy. Rather it embraces a pluralistic approach: one that may engender a sense of history's polyphony. iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses will in this sense be a collective work - made through the potential participation of innumerable artists and spectators who bring the three works fully into 'being': works that both transform second by second, and evolve over a number of years. Consequently, in essence, it belongs to no one person and emphasise the notion of 'relational being'. Ultimately, through all these formal and thematic processes, iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses is a project that interrogates not only tragedy but the notion of art as a healing, regenerative force.

## **asylum**

asylum is currently in development, evolving through research enabled by the above-mentioned

Artsadmin Bursary for another digital work: iPak - 10,000 tracks, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses. It is a concept. It is envisaged firstly as an installation for a gallery, and secondly as an internet art work. The concept for the installation is for it to comprise three image tracks and one sound track. The image tracks would be projected simultaneously, side by side, on to a 'moist medium': a large aquarium with water, tropical fish, rocks, vegetation; while the sound track accompanies them through the P.A.

Each image track would centre on a fantasised life, a life that lives on the margins of general society - a refugee, a philosopher, and a sex worker - decoded through the filter of the emotive and personal life of Ajaykumar. A single sound track - emotive, disturbing, fragmentary, and elliptical - would focus on his long exploration of his own personal identity and sexuality as a black man, working in several continents at the same time. The words would be primarily in English; and would include excerpts of languages of some of the places he has lived and worked. Although highly personal, the narrative will, like the *écriture* of Barthes' autobiography, defy precise readership.

The inter-action of sound and images provokes a process of endless deconstruction and reconstruction. Each spectator would be able to choose which image track to watch, at any one time. The flow of the water and the fish, by accident and by design, would also shape the quality and nature of the image. Each image track would have a duration often minutes, and be looped six times without break.

The sound track would be a distinct entity that functions as a 'scape' that may be listened to, eyes closed, without watching the image tracks. It would last sixty minutes. The 'stories' would have no dramatic climax and have the feeling of being an endless muse: the inter-action of sound and images provoking a process of endless deconstruction and reconstruction. New senses would appear each time, new connections surface as the three films 'lap' against each other.

The work would be non-linear: Spectators would be able to begin and stop watching or listening at any time. Each spectator would not have to pay money to experience asylum but instead would need to bring a photograph of an image that is highly personal to her/him, an image representing a time or incident in her/his life that is deeply memorable. A spectator would give this photograph directly to Ajaykumar, who would receive them personally at the entrance to the installation. When spectators leave through a different exit, they would find the floor paved with the photographs they would have given Ajaykumar. To leave the site they would have to walk over these images.

Areas of formal and thematic investigation of the asylum project in development correspond to:

- particular relationships between art, technology, society, and so called 'nature';
- development of a notion of an interstitial realm between so called body and so called nature;
- spectatorship and bartering;
- rethinking otherness, multi-culturalism, convergence;
- rethinking identity; difference/multiplicity/fragmentation.
- the further development of ideas and themes explored in pages of madness, and to be explored in iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses.

The asylum installation concept further interrogates the notion of an interstitial realm between artist and spectator through the introduction of a bartering process. An interstitial realm may be elicited also between so called bodies and so called external space, through input of elements of nature. The non-linear installation would comprise three looped image tracks accompanied by a single sound track.



Subsequent to the installation, an internet art work would be composed utilising, elements of the installation's text, sound, and imagery.

a  
shelter  
sanctuary  
l  
u  
mulysa

## How and why Tantra

For non-specialist readers, I will attempt to briefly give some sense of definition to Tantra. The first thing to express is that it evades easy definition. Its historical origins are obscure and it has been used in quite diverse ways through history to mean various things for different people. Although the existence of Tantra is popularly claimed to date back to the fourth or fifth millennium BCE, there is not sufficient hard evidence at this time to back this claim. It does manifest very tangibly as architectural form from the first millennium BCE in the form of rock cut edifices: at Ajanta, Ellora, and numerous other sites in South Asia.

One could conceive Tantra loosely, as an integrated approach of science, technology, philosophy, and art that emerged in South Asia to investigate 'being' in all its dimensions. Tantra was iconoclastic; it was transgressive, and it was personal. It involved highly individuated personal research projects: a personalised ontological journey. Ultimately rather than define, perhaps one can discuss only one's own approach to 'a way of tantra'.

At the time of Ellora Tantra was science and technology at 'the cutting edge' as much as it was 'cutting edge' art and architecture. Tantra suggests the sacredness of all phenomena. Tantra influenced philosophic systems that manifested in South Asia and beyond: Hinduism, Jainism, Bon, Islam, and Buddhism, in which exists the principle that all phenomena reveal the true entity of life: the ultimate reality. It may be useful also here to refer to the contemporary Tibetan teacher and senior monk Lama Yeshe, who has attempted to clarify Tibetan Tantric Buddhism particularly for European and American readers. In Introduction to Tantra, Lama Yeshe comments on the practitioners of Tantra aspiring to "meditate on the emptiness of self-existence, and penetrate the ultimate nature of reality, thereby freeing themselves of all delusions" (Yeshe, 2001, p. 101).

In the academy  
can I free myself of  
all Deleuzions?

He writes with utmost respect of Gilles Deleuze  
and the body of writing and thinking around his.  
Yet he is aware of the tyranny of academic processes,  
which currently make it problematic  
to have discursive activity without reference to him.  
Ultimately this perpetuates a colonial project.  
To elaborate:

Taking the reverse situation,  
writers in such spheres see no need  
to cite contemporary Asian philosophers  
and critical thinkers such as Nishida or Yuasa.  
He posits some kind of notion of co-presence.

### **Emptiness-presence and Sunyata**

In this reflection, I am concerned with an architecture of text, image, and sound. The Ma-Hsia school of landscape painting in the Southern Sung dynasty in China, led by Hsia Kuei and Ma Yuan, were renowned for their construction of empty spaces. Ma Yuan's one corner style involved painting one corner of the composition, one corner of the silk, as a means to give expression to the 'blank'. I began this article with the first page having a near empty column with a few words. A reflection on emptiness. Not only was Ma-Hsia art concerned with relations between tangible and intangible, it engaged with relations between artist and painting, and between artist and spectator.

The development of ideas around sunyata in art developed in India, China, and Japan through the influence of Buddhism. The Sanskrit term akasha emerges through physical manipulation. In the monumental rock cut edifices of Ellora, emptiness is integral and crucial to the architecture and art. Carmel Berkson states that "the space which permeates, pervades, and envelops these solid forms is the ultimate unifier, denoting the fullness of the Absolute." (Berkson, 1992, p.40) The artefact essentially exists only to enable that ontological process.

Can one think here of a residue  
e?

Rabindranath Tagore writes:

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain  
the perfect pearl of the formless... And now I am eager to die into  
the deathless.  
(Tagore, 1979, p66).

### **Poly-Tekhne-kal practice and Gesamtkunstwerk**

The Tantric architects-philosophers who constructed the Ellora temples, as I discuss in another article (Ajaykumar, 2005), seem to have designed ambulations through physical space-time in order to precipitate metaphysical journeys: a kinaesthetic meditation. The integration of architecture, painting, and sculpture at Ellora endeavours to embody the philosophic and ecological outlook of a civilisation that aspired to a inter-dependent relation of: architecture\_ artbodyhealthnatureontologysciencespace-timetotechnology

Ellora may offer a paradigm for future technological thinking and practice. Beyond art, the Ellora practice could be termed a 'tekhne-kal' or 'poly-tekhne-kal' practice in the Heideggerian sense. (Heidegger, 1977). The ancient Greek word, written as either 'tekhne' or 'techne', has

a sense of practice and form that is of more than art: one that incorporates philosophy, science, and what one commonly refers to today as 'craft' and 'technology'. While today, technology is popularly regarded as being something distinct from art and philosophy, for Heidegger 'techne' means a kind of knowledge closely related to 'poiesis', which means that it was conjoined with art in its origins. The practice and thinking at Ellora appears to have a non-anthropocentric sense of the world where body is not in contra-distinction to space; mind not in contra-distinction to body; human being not in contra-distinction to nature; material not in contra-distinction to 'spiritual'; and where there is not an apprehension of or alienation from technology; nor one which sees technology as inherently dissimilar to nature.

The Natyasastra (Bharata, 1996) is the earliest surviving treatise on the creative arts in India, thought to have been written possibly as far back as the third century BCE. or as late as the second century CE. Some believe it to be derived from an even more ancient treatise, the Natya Sutra, possibly written several centuries before, of which there is no surviving text. The Natyasastra (sometimes also written as the Natya Shastra) elicits a work of art and ontology that predates almost all notions of a gesamtkunstwerk. With regard to the art of performance there is detailed theorising of stagecraft, design, make-up, costume, movement, gesture, music. If written today one could conjecture that it would include the advanced possibilities of design and lighting available through electricity, and the ever-emerging possibilities through information technology of the cinematic and digital image. Looking ahead, what 'poly-tekhne-kal' practice can one envision in a twenty-first century culture soon to be overwhelmed by nanotechnology? Thinkers such as Stelarc and Orlan have for some time opened up a world of interaction between 'human' and other technologies. Orlan writes "Ceci est mon corps. Ceci est mon logiciel... This is my body..This is my software." (Orlan, 1996, p.70). Yet the research of these artists retains a strong sense of anthropocentrism. Appia seminally advanced notions of a gesamtkunstwerk in the twentieth century with practical projects such as those at Hellerau in 1912-1913, as well as in theoretical texts. The evolution of his ideas led him, ultimately, in *Man is the Measure of All Things*, to consider the most important thing to be the living art that was before the stage: the spectator (Appia, 1997, p. 130). While critically important, Appia's ideas too emphasise anthropocentricity. To reconfirm: what is of most concern here is the space between.

### **Pratīyasamutpada - dependent origination**

A central tenet of Mahayana Buddhism is the notion of pratīyasamutpada. This Sanskrit term is known in Pali as paticca samuppada. In Tibetan it is termed: rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba. In Japanese schools of Buddhism, it is known as engi. This doctrine states that phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect. With regard the Ma-Hsia school, what is evident is not the importance of individual objects but of relation. Corresponding with akasha, the term kyo in Japanese Buddhism is used to signify the inter-relation of all phenomena through sound and vibration. While pratīyasamutpada is most commonly understood in English as 'dependent origination', there also several other renderings in English: 'conditioned genesis', 'dependent co-arising', 'interdependent arising'; expressing the idea that no thing or person exists in isolation and is continuously existing in relation with all other sentient and insentient beings in the universe. This notion resonates with the ideas of contemporary thinkers such as physicist Fritjof Capra (1997), who posits a 'web of life'. Unlike the contemporary obsession with T, pratīyasamutpada deduces the non-existence of an independent T referred to above in the section on iPak - 10,000 songs, 10,000 images, 10,000 abuses. Initially I wrote that it was a sine qua non that I wrote in the first person. Yet what kind of first person? In the context of dependent origination this first person may be perceived more accurately as:

i-space

or maybe:

i-space-time?

Or rather  
a polyphonic i-space-time

Here one has a non-dualistic, relational, non-anthropocentric vision of self. Ellora art is incomplete without the frequenting of its site by an apperceptive being. This explosion of duality finds correspondence in contemporary sub-atomic physics. John Wheeler writes:

Nothing is more important than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as 'sitting out there', with the observer safely separated from it by a 20 centimeter slab of plate glass. Even to observe so miniscule an object as an electron, he must shatter the glass. He must reach in. He must install his chosen measuring equipment. It is up to him to decide whether he shall measure position or momentum. To install the equipment to measure one prevents and excludes his installing the equipment to measure the other. Moreover, the measurement changes the state of the electron. The universe will never afterwards be the same. To describe what has happened, one has to cross out that old word "observer" and put in its place the new word 'participator'. In some strange sense the universe is a participatory universe (Mehra, 1973, p.240).

In the light of such thinking, previously conceived notions in Euro-American Physics, of space and time, of isolated objects, and of cause and effect, lose their meaning. The transgenic artist Eduardo Kac affirms such a perspective:

In science, the selection of a research topic and the extraction, accumulation, and processing of data, as well as the interface through which the data are later explored are themselves an integral part of the nature of the data. They are not a detached element that causes no interference in what is experienced. Quite to the contrary: the knowledge we acquire through instruments and media is always modulated by them. They are not separable (2000, pp.180-196).

The ancient Japanese had no word for the human being that was distinct from nature. A human being always 'in-relation'. Tadao Ando emphasises the role of the body in relation to space so that his architecture comes into being only through engagement of body with built edifice, and with surrounding nature. The architecture exists in this insubstantial space-time; in this insubstantial montage. The Water Temple, constructed by Tadao Ando in Awaji-shima, Japan, in 1991, appears to achieve a form-theme synthesis of tantric philosophy, corresponding to the ontological processes at Ellora. Ando utilises contemporary technologies, such as concrete, in combination with materials historically familiar to Japanese in religious architecture - wood, water, pebbles and 'emptiness', to engender an ontological engagement paralleling processes at Ellora. I discuss this in detail in another article (Ajaykumar, 2005).

James Lovelock's Gaia theory (2000), Lynn Margulis's evolution of the notion of symbiogenesis (1993); Candace Pert's findings with regard neuropeptides (1997), and Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's conception of auto-poiesis (1980, 1998), all provoke further speculation on notions of relational being, a relational self, non-anthropocentric being. Maturana and Varela's systems theory of autopoiesis postulates that the brain is not necessary for mind to exist. Even simple organisms, without brains are capable of perception and consequently

cognition: mind and matter seemingly correspond to the same phenomenon of life. Furthermore the entire dissipative structure of an organism is involved in the process of cognition. Cognition takes place in formations other than the brain. Neuroscientist Candace Pert believes that neuropeptides and their receptors are the biochemicals of emotions, carrying information, in a vast network linking the material world of molecules, with the non-material world of the psyche. Receptor sites are located throughout the body and form a network of communication, linking brain, endocrine and immune systems. Pert believes that it is increasingly logical to think of 'a single integrated entity, a body-mind'. She has found correspondence between the most concentrated areas of enrichment of certain neuropeptides, and the location of yogic chakras. The notion of Gaia indicates there is close inter-connection and essential inseparability of animate and inanimate systems - such as the atmosphere, the sea and rocks. Margulis explains:

When scientists tell us that life adapts to an essentially passive environment of chemistry, physics, and rocks, they perpetuate a severely distorted view. Life actually makes and forms and changes the environment to which it adapts. Then that 'environment' feeds back on the life that is changing and acting and growing in it. There are constant cyclical interactions (Capra, 1997, p. 106).

There is an ongoing evolution of the notion of the posthuman and the progression what maybe called a 'posthuman age' where practices in science and technology, as well as cross-disciplinary enquiry, extend the awareness of consciousness beyond the brain, and breaking down of divides between subject and object, self and environment. In order to clarify what is meant by 'posthuman' it is use useful here to refer to Robert Pepperell. In *The Posthuman Condition*, Pepperell uses the term in three ways: "First...to mark the end of that period of social development known as humanism, and so in this sense it means after humanism. Second, it refers to the fact that what constitutes a human being is now undergoing a vast transformation. Third the term refers to the general convergence of biology and technology to the point where they are increasingly becoming inseparable" (Pepperell, 2003, p.iv). Certain Buddhist schools express the idea that the 'true self is found in the liminal space between self and environment; a self and environment that are described as 'two but not two'.

Perhaps here  
we should actually be considering a notion of  
a being of a space,  
a being of a space-time  
or

a space-time of being?

or

non-being

being or not being

That is the question?

-

is the question

### **Spectatorship, co-creation, and conviviality**

Both Ma Yuan and Hsia Kuei were court painters and the royal responses in poetry to their paintings were inscribed on the silk itself: becoming apart of the work. In Japan, Five Mountain Zen, which particularly emphasised the involvement of acolytes in worldly affairs, was deeply influenced by this practice. Consequently the shigajiku form emerged during the Early Muromachi period (1336-1573):

(in 1410 C.E.) A Zen Buddhist monk from Nanzen-ji...wrote out a landscape poem and had a painting done of the scene described by the poem. Then following the prevailing custom of his day, he gathered responses to the images by asking prominent fellow monks and government officials to inscribe it also, writing on painting became a part of the painting...Some fifteen individuals responded (Parker, J., 1999, p.1).

One witnesses here an 'art of spectatorship' and an 'art of dialogue'. By spectatorship I am not thinking of the society of the spectacle; this spectatorship is less about looking at and more about inhabiting: inhabiting a space. This idea also manifested in other forms and contexts. Some of the haiku attributed to Basho, are begun by him, and then, by his invitation, completed by others. The collective poem of the renga, created in social situations, is also pertinent. In Japan, there is a long historical tradition of creating Waka poetry at specific poetry parties. Cha-no-yu or Sado - meaning the 'way of tea' and popularly termed the tea ceremony in English - is an art form that stems from social function. Its art is a space or a place of conviviality. So here, I leave spaces for you to draw, write whatever you want, as you read through. It becomes a part of the article. Then, if you want, scan and send me a copy: [ajaykumar@ajaykumar.com](mailto:ajaykumar@ajaykumar.com). Alternatively, if you prefer, cut the paper out of the journal and send me the 'original' to: Ajaykumar, RHB 166, Goldsmiths University of London, Lewisham Way, London SE14 6NW. Alternatively, just use the space to place your cup of tea as you continue reading.

Whatever

However

pages of madness is a space of immersivity and contemplation, involves inter-activity, and has a rudimentary format for discourse: a viewer may respond to the manifestation by email with feedback that enables further response and a dialogue to emerge. Dialogue will be one of the foundation elements of the iPak trilogy where viewers may upload items in response to mine, which become incorporated into the work. Chris Marker in *Sans Soleil/Sunless* (1983) supposedly incorporates film footage sent to him by others into the work, and calls himself the editor of the work, not the director. I am less concerned with the exposition of an individual thinking than a development of a continuum and a polyphony. Marker also generates a sense of history's 'polyphony' through the structure of his composition. This involves a narration by a fictitious female character recounting and reflecting on letters sent to her by a cameraman who journeys to diverse parts of the globe, thereby enabling Marker to distance himself from an authorial T.

If the structures of artistic and academic dissemination and academic output would easily allow it, I would choose anonymity. Works of art in a social, public realm interest me more here where one may evade having a signature on a work, elude a plaque, dispense with a catalogue: where artist is medium rather than auteur. The Zen garden of Ryoan-ji, constructed in fifteenth century Japan, is a significant example here. Despite one not knowing definitively who realised Ryoan-ji, it appears to continue to engender an epistemological process. iPak is 'engendered' by Ajaykumar not 'created' by him.

nor 'authored' by him

Pertinently when I sit on the temple veranda, from which the Ryoan-ji garden is meant to be viewed, my human eye cannot take it in one vista. Takahiko Iimura and Arata Isozaki's film, focusing on the Ryoan-ji garden, uses a scenographic strategy of series tracking shots to emphasise this aspect. (1991).

### **Interstice, interface**

The concept in Buddhism of a body and external space that are 'two but not two' further elaborates dependent origination. It concerns a definition of self that exists in an interstice between what we conventionally think of as our body and the external space. Given that our bodies are porous, at an elementary point of view even, it is not at all clear where and how a body begins and ends. If I breathe in the air around me, it becomes a part of my body, I breathe it out, and if you then breathe that air in it becomes a part of your body. Do I then also become a part of your body? The work of art here exists in that interstice: an indefinable space-time: ma. pages of madness consists of a series of texts in relation to a single soundtrack, with a random permutation of image. Even after one hundred million individual viewings of this site would you not exhaust the possible permutations.

How long is the universe?

How long is a moment?

Yet one viewing of the prospective chaos or of pages of madness, which may be what a spectator would decide to do, can take some few seconds, like the text-images of advertisements. Perhaps I should also reduce my works to one brief text like an advertisement: with name of company, the specific product, and the beautiful experience that is synonymous with that company.

ajaykumar  
asylum  
créateurdes...

He nicked that from a car advert

sampled it

A film work typically has certain 'footage', a certain length, pages of madness also has a certain footage, but it is so vast it becomes inestimable. So is this moment a moment in continuum?

but where is the work?

how is the work?

A Buddhist maxim expresses the view that "no affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality." At the time of initial writing, I had been diagnosed with dyspraxia with symptoms of dyslexia. The sincere aspiration of those who alerted me to the fact that I may have these conditions is to look at strategies that I could develop to deal with them.

I wonder  
what  
painter would Rauschenberg have been  
without  
dyslexia?

Will the treatment of dyspraxia  
cure him of  
his intelligence,  
his creativity  
his search and research?

I wonder  
if I should present this article  
with all the 'mistakes'  
left in



or some of them?

Spot the deliberate  
mistakes

Buddhism has used the icon of the lotus plant and flower for a number of reasons: one being that it is found to emerge from muddy murky water: such conditions are a pre-requisite for its beauty.

Site-specific art and performance elegantly illustrate the conception that intelligence, and memory, as Gregory Bateson remarked, is not something that exists solely in the mind but in the rest of the body and in the environment (Bateson, 2000). Our increasing engagement with what today is termed 'technology' continues to erode previous notions of individuated self and notions of human. For some this provokes anxiety, as if the 'human being' could be, and should be the epitome of universal evolution.

If one could accept the precept that each phenomenon is sacred then so is the technology that we may engender, and which may supersede that which we are today. Will our narcissism permit such adaptation of form and being? Can one relish the death of the human being as much as the life? If one engages with concepts that all phenomena are sacred, then are not the products of humanly conceived and constructed technology sacred? Moreover, the place of the human being in this realm is not necessarily central. In Shinto, all phenomena are sacred without a hierarchy of human being over animal, animate over inanimate. Essentially a train and a computer are as sacred as a rock, an animal, or a human being. Here one may redefine popular definitions of 'nature'. In such a relational world an 'art work' is not an objectified hermetically sealed off entity, but one that remains in ekaksana - a perpetual present - manifesting through spectatorial engagement.

If an art is in some way emerging through an interaction of human with products of technology - such as computers and the internet - one is beginning to find radical re-conceptions of constructivist notions, and Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanics. Roy Ascott describes emerging technoetic awareness - "techne and gnosis combined into a new knowledge of the world, a connective mind that is spawning new realities and new definitions of life and human identity. This mind will in turn seek new forms of embodiment and of articulation" (2000, p.2). As aforementioned, Robert Pepperell (2003, p.iv), further defines this posthuman situation where the convergence of biology and technology renders them ever more indistinguishable.

### **Concrete poetry and the ciné roman**

pages of madness considers architecture of text-image-sound, where text is sometimes image, or image is sometimes text. Mary Ellen Solt (1971), in her study of concrete poetry, acknowledges that the form evades easy definition. However she confirms that the concrete poet is concerned with establishing a new relationship to space (the page or its equivalent) and/or to time (abandoning the old linear measure). It would take over a hundred million lifetimes to experience every single permutation of image with text and sound in pages of madness, assuming that either human civilisation as it is currently known could survive that far. Digital technology, new desktop publishing possibilities certainly impacts greatly on relationships of space and time for a concrete poet. Solt ultimately defines a concrete poem as that where:

form = theme  
theme = form

How can the following  
notion manifest,  
if at all:

formlessness = themelessness  
themelessness = formlessness

Is this a concrete essay?

It is not a koan

Current digital technology also permits a pertinent conceptual revisiting of the aforementioned ciné-roman: the literary film - films to be read as much as viewed - and the book publications that could follow or accompany them. The artists involved in constructing the ciné-romans - Jean Cayrol, Marguerite Duras, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Agnes Varda - each had a particular view of how the ciné-roman was defined. For Varda it was the construction of "un film à lire" (1965, p.42): a film to read. Robbe-Grillet placed emphasis on the publication of the literary ciné-roman after the film: a book that is especially useful for those who have not seen the film (Van Wert, 1978, p.27).

Is pages of madness  
especially useful for those  
who have not yet experienced  
madness?

Robbe-Grillet specifies that the literary ciné-roman can be read leisurely or studied, whereas a film cannot. It functions also like a libretto for an opera, supplementing the spectator's experience of the film reading with a literal reading.

The works that I have and am now instigating (such as pages of madness, chaos, jukebox, asylum,) embodies and permits both kinds of reading to take place. One could also say this about films seen on VCR and DVD players. With the web, it is a more complete experience that one could also easily slip in and out of: whether at home, at a café, or at the office. This is in part due to the different lengths of the work, and work made for different attention spans. More significant are two other factors. The first concerns a reader's ability to sample. Anyone with a little knowledge of hypertext can lift pages, text, images etc from other web works and place them in her/his own work or archive it in some way. Secondly, for the instigator of the work (sometimes called artist) he/she can much more easily re-create the work through sampling, through re-edits. If the instigator so wishes, and in my case this is true, it can be a work that exists both in the moment and in continuum. The M-II-M series is a work in continuum. At the same time I do not discount the possibility of work-in-continuum in the cinema. The works of Wong Kar-wai immediately come to mind here - such as *As tears go by*, *In the Mood for Love*, and *2046* - which exhibits a sense of a cinema in continuum.

As internet access becomes increasingly cheaper and accessible in other ways, works on the web actually can combine aspects of the film and book publication. One could imagine another kind of writing emerging in a digital realm, somewhere between the ciné-romanists and concrete poetry. Critics have pointed out that, given the language used in films such as *Hiroshima mon amour* or *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, 'ciné-poème' would have been a more accurate term than ciné-roman. Perhaps the methodology for asylum is one that moves toward a ciné-poème

or a kiné-poème

or a motion-poème

Well,  
if we are going to  
market it for the internet,  
an  
e-motion poème

I have in mind here the notion of *rasa* - theorised in the *Natyasastra* - to generate aestheticised moods, flavours, feelings. This art of affect is mirrored by the Ma-Hsia school.

The publication of ciné-romans after the release of the films had a number of purposes. They functioned, as aforementioned, like a libretto for an opera. They supplemented the spectator's experience of the film reading with a literal reading. They permitted those who had not seen the film to experience something of its ideology. It must be remembered that these films were not highly commercial and did not have long runs, nor were they shown extensively in all theatres around France. My 'e-motion poèmes' on the web could incorporate all these facets. Assuming one has access to a computer, which most people in the UK now do, it is a work that can be endlessly reviewed, paused, re-wound, fast forwarded etc. It is a further evolution from the processes of VCRs and DVDs, and of course is analogous to books. Another aspect is that e-motion poèmes can be viewed at work as much as at home, as many people have access to the internet there. The potential of brief 'intervals' (ma, once again) of reading 'e-motion poèmes' between writing a business letter are intriguing, operating like advertisements in the midst of television programmes. The aspect of 'interval' here is poignant. It is accepted that internet browsers will only be interested in the site for a few seconds and 'switch channel' unless something engages them very quickly to remain at a particular web page. Furthermore, large texts do not hold browsers' attention. They either move to another page or print the page off. My thinking here is to instigate works that, like advertising, are 'brief encounters', momentary interjections. They function or need to function a little like poems on the underground in London's subway network. The poetic utterance with condensed language and meaning is highly communicative in this context: enabling sophisticated messages to be engendered and communicated in relatively short spaces of time. Here also the 'e-motion poèmes' operate a similar dynamic to that between a spectator and painting in a physical gallery: allowing manual and mechanistic inter-activity yet also permitting a spectator to choose her or his temporal level of engagement.

Although films exist with text, the ersatz paintbrush here is the QWERTY keyboard, which inherently lends itself to text. Moreover, in film/video editing the interface between the human and the software tool used for implementing actions is such a keyboard. It is a form where text

(either as ideogram or as sound) engages a viewer or browser. The word here is both visual and olfactory. In part, this is also because of the influence of the television form where the use of text is more common than in mainstream and experimental cinema. Text is of course part of the experience of a subtitled film. There is a confluence of formal innovation, technological accessibility to computers and the internet, and global distribution availability due to the worldwide web. A work's dissemination now on the net allows it, in principle at least, the possibility of being freely and easily viewed by the majority of the population. Ultimately, the work itself incorporates aspects of both film and literary text. Inevitably, the whole world will sign up to broader and broader bandwidths, enabling ever-wider and simpler dissemination. It also may permit random access. Do a Google for asylum and you could end up where you least expected or wanted to be. In addition, because the work is freely available it moves away from the commodification of art that performance artists and some conceptual artists once seemingly aspired to. When one sees images of Marina Abramovic on Illy cups, it is clear that utopia has long since evaporated.

If all phenomena are sacred isn't advertising?

Didn't Michelangelo advertise God?

In a period where retention levels get ever smaller, a web page invariably has to be an almost instant hit; otherwise, a reader may stop reading and move to another site or page. The condensed language of poetry allows complicated or sophisticated messages to be engendered and communicated in relatively short spaces of time. Yet unlike the involuntary process of television advertising, or with viewing a film in the cinema, a spectator cannot easily re-view it as often as he/she would like. Here also the e-motion poèmes operate a similar dynamic to that between a spectator and painting in a physical gallery: they allow manual and mechanistic inter-activity but it also permits a spectator to choose his temporal level of engagement.

Chris Marker's CD-ROM *Immemory* (2002) problematises this notion, through the length of some of its texts. In one section there is a commentary of several pages on the screen. Although the text is intellectually stimulating, it is physiologically tiresome to read, and not easy to download.

I  
mmemory  
makes  
me  
short  
sight  
ed

However, like a Noh theatre experience, it may not matter whether one drifts off while reading. One may wake with a memorable line: "the past is like a foreign country: it is not a question of distance, just of crossing the frontier..."

Is that from  
Immemory?

I cannot remember.  
I am dyspraxic.

He has only lived  
on that other side of the frontier.  
He continues to live there  
in an eternal present.

The nature of the relationship that I am thinking about also concerns an inter-relation of photographic image, typographic image and sound so that there is not an authorial track: where no track - film, sound, or text - is dominant, but exist in inter-relation. In pages of madness photographic image is de-emphasised in relation to typographic image: 'un film à lire'. The soundtrack resonates with one of Roger Fry's views of Chinese art: "The first thing... that strikes one is the immense part played in Chinese art by linear rhythm. The contour is always the most important feature of the form. Next we note that the rhythm is almost always of a flowing continuous character" (1949, p.2).

In comparison with the ciné-romanists such as Resnais and Robbe-Grillet, whose work took place in a relatively commercial film structure, my modus operandus more closely resembles an art brut. Although I may not have access to some of the so called 'high production values', my process gives me greater prerogative, adaptability, engagement, and accessibility. Moreover, it should be noted that visuals on the future generations of Playstation consoles will have images that will go beyond cinema in terms of image resolution.

### **Narrative construction in film and the space of spectatorship**

Philip Parker constructs a creative matrix to provide a way of seeing the various elements that make up a screenplay in conjunction with each other, without allowing one element a determining role over all others. For Parker these elements are the inter-action and inter-relation of the key reference points of genre, style, plot, theme, story, and form. This creative matrix as a whole comprises the narrative: it is the totality of a script or a film at the moment a reader or viewer engages with it. This concept helps to move notions of narrative away from a predominant concern with story and plot and off decentering elements. For Parker, the writer and not the director, would be positioned in the centre of this matrix. The spaces between each of these elements he defines as representing the virtuosity of each writer: "the original elements which the writer brings to each script" (1999, p.14).

However, there are obvious superficial problems with this. For example, genre has a different sense when one comes to view the work of filmmakers who have been commonly called auteurs. Tarkovsky writes "What is Bresson's genre? He doesn't have one. Bresson is Bresson. He is a genre in himself. Antonioni, Fellini, Bergman, Kurosawa, Dovzhenko, Vigo, Mizoguchi, Bunuel - each is identified with himself. The very concept of genre is as cold as the tomb" (1987, p. 150). More significantly, although Parker does consider the emotional responses of readers to the construction of the narrative, particularly as script, the dynamics of artist with spectator or narrative with spectator, and ultimately the integration of the spectator in his creative matrix is not of central critical concern. I conceive a narrative matrix where no one person, whether writer, director or spectator is paramount.

## The Narrative Matrix

'narrative' = the totality of the experiencing of film at the moment of its viewing

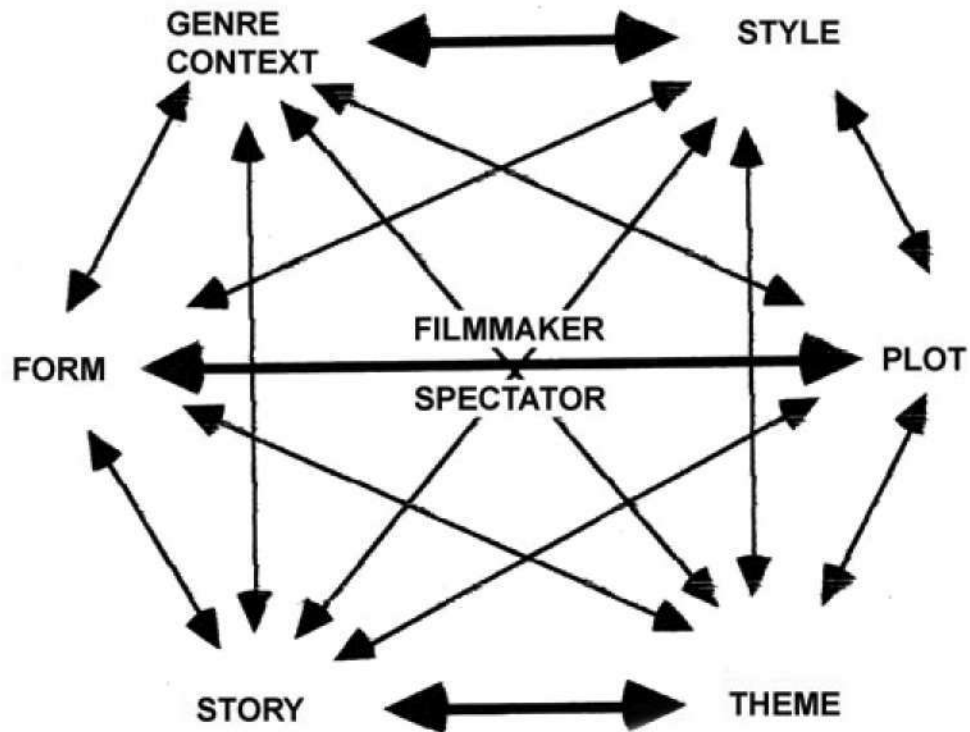


Diagram title: The Narrative Matrix by Ajaykumar adapted from an original diagram by Philip Parker

This takes into consideration the collaborative and collective element of film-making: one where the most emphasis is given to inter-stitial space and inter-play. Ultimately the directors such as Chabrol, Godard, Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut, who most brought the word 'auteur' into the arena of discussion (taking from Bazin), eventually abandoned it as a term and as a notion: Godard for ideological reasons that recognised the collaborative process of cultural production. Although a monitor/VDU could be thought of as a fourth wall between an art object and the spectator, what is critical is not structure but a spectator's attitude of mind that enters and contributes to the situation and relationship: such as having a sense of a computer being inherently related to one's body; of a self that exists not in one's body but in an interstitial space: 'two but not two'. Ascott describes future media of inter-action as 'moist' (2002). The laterality of rasa will come to the fore with the evolution of immersive experiences, which, like cha-no-yu will increasingly involve the totality of our sensory faculties.

### Savour, savoir, ways of knowing

Yi-Fu Tuan (2002, p. 10) outlines the relationship of the English verb 'to savour' with the French *savoir* (to know). I am reminded here of PanOptiKa, an earlier research project (1995-1998) that I undertook in collaboration with artist Hanako Miwa, curator Toshio Shimizu and others. For PanOptiKa, our concept was envisaged as a site-specific art experience to take place concurrently in London and Tokyo: to interrogate contemporary notions of shared and public space - virtual as well as actual - and of the relationship of the body to space. As part

of this research Hanako Miwa and I developed a concept for a cyber-gastronomic experience: the creation of a temporary 'magic café' in Spiral Garden Art Centre, Tokyo, where spectators would enjoy bowls of soup, a 'moist medium', in which would be projected live performances transmitted via telecommunication from sites around the city.

The performances would be derived from the journey of several choreographers to sites they had not previously encountered and their creation of spontaneous real-time choreographies/dances in relation to that location. Each choreographer would wear a wireless camera to communicate his vision to the cafés. These performances would also exist as distinct works in their own right for the audiences in the café - free performances that any person could encounter by chance, deliberately come to and experience. Different flavors of soups from each country would be specially created and provided for the work by chefs in each city. The audience in the café would initially see in the bowls of soup not the dancer's 'performance', but his real-time view of and his evolving relationship with the space in which he would find himself. The audience would be able to consume the soup and therefore, in one sense, the transmitted images, which would then become, in a sense, a part of each audience member. A giant public screen in Tokyo would show the soup images created by the audience, inter-cut and superimposed with the choreographers' vistas. The performance images would be interspersed with the everyday commercial advertising that people habitually witness on such giant screens. Furthermore a spectator could experience these images in conjunction with the existing sounds, smells and vistas of the live environment. The soup performance and image would belong neither to the dancer nor to the consumer/spectator but would exist somewhere between. The concept of the cyber-gastronomic experience was one intended to be plastic, amorphous, constantly reinventing itself in each moment.

ma  
can also signify a rest

"The rest is silence."  
(Shakespeare)

## Glossary

Akasha: Sanskrit for space, a space that has presence. Akasha can also mean ether or sound.

Sado: Japanese for 'the way of tea', which is known in Europe as the 'tea ceremony'. Sado can also be written 'chado' although this is less usual.

Cha-no-yu: Japanese for 'boil water of tea' and also refers to the tea ceremony.

Ekaksana: Sanskrit for 'perpetual present'.

Gesamtkunstwerk: "total work of art" or "complete artwork": a German term attributed to Richard Wagner, and his aspirations for his opera compositions. However, it is Adolphe Appia, who in practical and theoretical ways, first came closest to realise and intellectually develop this notion in contemporary European theatre.

Koan: A riddle, story, dialogue, question, or statement relating to Zen Buddhism. Zen teachers give koans to acolytes to 'solve', to enable their development in the way of Zen. The koan usually contains elements that are inaccessible to rational understanding, yet may be accessible to intuition.

Ma: Japanese, with several connotations, such as space-time; emptiness - an emptiness that has presence; interval; pause.

Pratīyasamutpāda: a central tenet of Mahayana Buddhism, stating that phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect. This concept is commonly known in English as 'dependent origination'. It is also translated as 'conditioned genesis', 'dependent co-arising', and 'interdependent arising'.

Rasa: Sanskrit for aestheticised moods, flavours, tastes, affects.

Sunyata: Sanskrit for 'void' or 'nothingness', a central idea of Buddhism. It should be noted that in certain contexts, and sunyata is also interpreted as emptiness. 'Sunya' of sunyata also means zero. In consideration of emptiness, it should be noted also that the 'su' of sunyata has also the meaning of something that is 'swollen with possibility'.

Tantra: A transgressive, integrated approach of science, technology, philosophy, and art that emerged in South Asia to research 'being'.

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