On *On Otto*:

Moving Images and the New Collectivity

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Part One: Cinema and Automatism Recontextualized (Report on a Reversed Film Production Process)

I

Here is how the movie project named *On Otto* (2007) starts: with a poster for a film that is yet to be made, a film that no one, at this stage, knows if it is even possible to make (fig. 1). No names (of actors, directors, producers) are mentioned. But, like all movie posters, it takes film itself for granted; in fact, it takes the whole cinematic context or apparatus as absolutely self-evident. There is, and will be, cinema: beyond individual productions, cinema is something akin to a paradigm—a generative set of rules organizing the production of phenomena at once scientific, perceptual, aesthetic, technological, economic, and existential. There will be titles, music, editing, stage design, sound. Something will be directed by, produced by, photographed by, acted by.

The poster advertises this certainty and spells it out in letters that visually frame "the cinema" that they promise: A screening space, seen from the back of the row of seats so that attention is directed towards the movie screen. On this screen the enormous head of a film diva—apparently caught at the moment of death—clings to the foreground of the

screen-image; due to the play of shadow and light, a lock of her hair actually seems to have spilled over into spectator space, as if to make contact. And the quest for contact is reciprocated. A boy, a lone figure among otherwise empty seats, points a fish in the direction of the screen, directly in the angle of the blonde coils of diva hair. Between the screen and this spectator, a space of action is established: the poster, none too subtly, marks this space with a red markered circle. Demarcating an "expanded" notion of cinema, the poster for *On Otto* announces a cinematic production process that will reformulate the place and status of so-called "moving images."

II

To reiterate: The poster was actually the point of departure for the movie project named *On Otto*, whose final articulation—a city-like architectural construction, a labyrinthine cine-city of sorts—was first presented in Milan in 2007. And, if this project departed from the marketing devices that are normally seen as final or supplementary elements of a movie production, it is because *On Otto* was in fact a reversed production, an "impossible" or "illogical" project that started with the design of the poster and ended with the writing of the screenplay. In what follows, I will trace in some detail the production process of *On Otto*—up to and including the highly particular screening situation it presents us with. But it has to be stated right away that in this project there is no principled distinction between the production process and some final product that might be called a finished film and that might subsequently be studied in terms of a concept such as "reception." The project is essentially a process of production that is perhaps better understood as a specific process of construction. And what is constructed here is not a cinematic "work" in the ordinary sense of the term, but more precisely a social world or an instance of sociality emerging in terms of specifically cinematic materials, agents, and ways of doing. To trace *On Otto*'s production process is then not just a way of grasping how the features of an idiosyncratic work of art come together, but—more pertinently—to be able to understand this instance of cinematic sociality (i.e., the social proposition launched by this project). Hence, the question of the role and status of moving images in this project is also a question of their function in the construction of this particular social world.

Tracing this production process, one rapidly comes face to face with one significant fact concerning the role assigned to moving images—in their generalized difference from still images. Usually, the difference between moving vs. still images is approached in terms of the difference or intermingling of distinct mediatic frameworks or technical support systems, such as film versus photography or film versus painting. In contrast, *On Otto* departs from a displacement and generalization of one key feature of moving images that is subsequently deployed in the construction of a complex urban environment and

Fig. 1. Tobias Rehberger, *On Otto*, poster, 2007. Courtesy Fondazione Prada, Milan

associated with the operations of a social collective. In this project, the term "movie" does not just connote images that move automatically (i.e., images that are defined by an immanent capacity for movement that does not depend on the mobilizing perception or imagination of the spectator).[1] It is also, and just as importantly, the name for a whole series of other automatic mobilizations or automatisms that take their cue, so to speak, from the automatic movement associated with cinematic images. In film-related philosophy, an expanded concept of automatism is primarily associated with Stanley Cavell's open-ended definition of artistic media: as Cavell saw it, such media are not given or definable a priori, but forms that arise out of the material conditions of specific art practices and that are unknowable prior to the creative act of artists.[2] The concept of automatism is here, so to speak, transposed from the notion of immanent movement in and of a cinematographic image to a more generalized concept of automatic creation well known in the history and theory of twentieth-century art—the materialist concept of a machinic instance that produces, moves forward, all by itself, beyond the conscious control of any one artist, producer, or otherwise transcendent instance, and beyond the framework of a formal definition of media and media technologies. Experiments with automatic writing, *cadavres exquises*, and various types of chance operations were then also figures for collectivity at work in the here and now. It is this transposition that takes place in *On Otto*, where the centrality of the question of automatism is indicated in the title itself: spoken aloud, *On Otto* sounds off as *on auto*, abbreviation for *on automatic*. Starting with the poster that announces the series of cinematic components, *On Otto* is a machine, a material assembly or *agencement* that produces automatically—in the sense that production moves ahead beyond the control, will, or intention of any one director or producer.[3] It does so thanks to its dramatic unleashing of the creative forces of a heterogeneous assembly of cinematic agents: dedicated film professionals as well as the non-professionals known as spectators, human agents as well as non-human agents.

These agents all belong to the sphere of ordinary film production: the audience, the promotional apparatus, the sound designer, the composer, the editor, the cameraman, the actors, the costume designer, the set designer, the storyboard writer, the writer of the screenplay, the poster, the trailer, the sound, the music, the images, the cuts, the costumes, the light, the locations, the set constructions, the drawings, the pages of writing, and the projection space. What is less ordinary is how they are assembled, or put to work. For this production is moving ahead thanks to the automatisms unleashed by a simple and absolute rule. It is a rule as simple and absolute as the unshakeable logic of narration, which decrees that a film production start with a screenplay and then move methodically through the different moments of production and post-production, each moment working off and adding to and correcting the results of the former, until the final projection of a luminous image of a certain duration takes place—what is generally referred to as "a film." *On Otto*'s rule reverses this order. Everything starts from the "wrong" end, all the while sticking to the

same rigorous film industry methods, executed in each instance by the type of Hollywood professionals one would have called on to do a normal movie. And the viewing situation arising from this automatic process is not centered around a single projection but on a complex architectural construction formed and informed by a variety of cinematographic materials—a spatial articulation that seems to inscribe itself in the discourses of expanded cinema or cinema without film that has evolved in the context of avant-garde and new media art.[4]

Here is how the inverted production took place, step by step. Based on their personal interpretation of Rehberger's poster, Kuntzel & Deygas, known among other things for the cartoon title sequence in Spielberg's *Catch Me If You Can*, created a movie trailer—after which composer Ennio Morricone and sound artist Randy Thom (*Forrest Gump*) created a ninety-minute sound and music mix. This sound mix triggered the editing work of Sylvie Landra (*Catwoman*, *The Fifth Element*), which, in turn, spurred the cinematography of Wolfgang Thaler (*Megacities*). Only now—after the cinematographer had done his job—were the actors (Kim Basinger, Danny DeVito, Willem Dafoe, Justin Henry, and Emmy Rossum) called in. Next, Mark Bridges (*Magnolia*) designed costumes and Jeffrey Beecroft (*12 Monkeys*) created the production design, passing on the torch to J. Todd Anderson (*The Big Lebowsky*, *Fargo*) who came up with the storyboard. The production process ended as Barbara Turner (*Pollock*, *The Company*) wrote the screenplay. At this point the German artist Tobias Rehberger—the person responsible for initiating the project—created an architectural construction for the screening of this project.

The screenplay was, in other words, the last stage in the production. But, given the lack of logical continuity in the sequence above (what is the point of editing when no film has as yet been shot? how can actors "play" in advance of costumes, stage sets and roles?), it could not be an end product in the sense that a projected film is the unified artistic end product of a collaborative process that starts with a script. But then one can, of course, question the concept of a unified aesthetic product—"*a* film"—the way Joan Didion ridiculed the pretensions of film critics who earnestly read auteurial will-to-art into every spot on the celluloid. A finished movie really defies all attempts at analysis: as she put it, the responsibility for its every frame is clouded not only in the accidents and compromises of production but in the clauses of its financing. And so, to the reviewers trying to understand "whose" movie it is by looking at the script, Didion coolly suggests they take a look at the deal memo instead. Here, perhaps, one could get a glimpse of the almost aesthetic excitement of the deal itself:

> *Many people have been talking these past few days about this aborted picture, always with a note of regret. It had been a very creative deal and they had run with it as far as they could run and they had had*

some fun and now the fun was over, as it also would have been had they made the picture.[5]

What these observations reveal is not primarily the alleged cynicism of the film industry. What they emphasize is the peculiar phenomenology of a cultural object that is not so much based on collaborative effort as on the assembled effects of a number of highly different crafts and aesthetic practices that are held together so to speak at financial gunpoint. A "movie" could then very well be understood as a series of heterogeneous materialities and temporalities, each producing to the beat of its own logic, its own set of ideal requirements. All it takes for these materialities to come forth in their singularity is, basically, a different organization of the material: in this case, a reversal of the production sequence.

III

To see how these different cinematic materialities become self-producing entities, it is necessary to trace the different steps in the production process in some more detail. Imagine, for instance, design team Kuntzel & Deygas having to make a trailer from little more than whatever may be conjured up by the film title (*On Otto*). Sticking to what they know best, that is, to shape, outline, design, they focus all attention on the graphic outlines of the letters in the title, making the basic circles and crosses of the o's and t's into a tic-tac-toe game, but a tic-tac-toe game made out of bones, with sinister white shapes standing out against a black background. A suspense theme is evoked—but above all, the trailer demonstrates the independent power of the visual "theme," the purely atmospheric power of design.

Imagine, next, Randy Thom creating the sound for the yet-to-be-made film—a ninety-minute soundscape subsequently enriched by a small catalogue of orchestra and choir themes composed by Ennio Morricone for what would appear to be a modern non-comedy movie of some style and gravity. Thom happens to be an experienced sound designer who has frequently complained about the lack of interest in the narrative potential of sound on the part of scriptwriters and directors. Rather than being used to direct attention, activate memory, and focus action, sound work is essentially done only in retrospect, as a way of filling out the picture, patching it up, and smoothing it out into a seamless whole. Now, Thom could orchestrate a full vindication of the injustices suffered by sound: A feature-length soundscape *without* film. A soundscape composed, more precisely, in terms of a purely aural evocation of cinematic locations and action— the hollows of great halls, the packed dust-sound of the private apartment, the subdued din of the outdoors—and the multiple smaller sounds that modulate and shape them into action-spaces. There are the generic cars passing on wet asphalt, showers splashing on bodies, stiletto-heeled footsteps, and keys turning in locks, but also the growling of unknown machinery, vague crowds, indefinite animal life. In

all events, cinematic sound here appears as an independent entity, only hinting at the many possible but essentially interchangeable images that would, so to speak, feed off it.

A similar logic of independence informs the separate contributions from the editor and cinematographer as well. Having as yet no specific footage to work with, Sylvie allowed editing to emerge as an entirely autonomous activity (i.e., as a way of imposing a certain "personal" sense of rhythm on a material that is now above all a function of this rhythm). To foreground this sense of rhythm, Landra cut together short sequences from hundreds of films, some familiar, others not, some cleverly arranged to go with Thom's soundscape and others haphazard-seeming, with passages even shown upside down. Once the rhythm of the edit took center stage, the imagery became supplementary, mainly indicating the vast and seemingly anonymous stock of footage passing through the hands of an editor,

In contrast, Thaler's cinematography played up the weight and specificity of photographic imagery, foregrounding a camera that seemed to soak up the world as one grandiose photographic vista after another. With long footage edits from his own personal archive, his camera seemed to seamlessly pass over continents, seasons, cities, faces, and genres, as if an issue of *National Geographic* was slowly brought to life. Here, Thom's soundscape seemed to mainly function as a non-specific backdrop to the image sequences; if it was foregrounded it was mainly to draw attention to the very activity of photographic recording. At one point, an abstract whirling sound is interpreted by Thaler as the spinning reel of a small handheld film projector used in an Indian street context. When, a few minutes later, the same whirling sound reemerges as the backdrop to a desert landscape, we recall the Indian street scene and reread the lush desert images as the actual film material spinning in the tiny projector. Sound may serve narration—but, in this case, the narrative is that of cinematography itself, its technical and material reality and contexts of use and abuse.

At this stage in the production process it becomes abundantly clear to all involved that no one film will ever come out of this project. The poster will not generate film in the singular. There will be multiple costumes made for scenes that as yet do not exist, and perhaps never will. There will be production design for potential spaces hidden within incompatible layers of footage and elusive sound signals. The possible strategic choices of storyboard and script are endless. The cinematic assembly or *agencement* is at every twist and turn present, yet *On Otto* awakens you to the fact that such an assembly is not the composite or sum of the elements that compose it: it is above all a mobile *distribution* of materials.

But even with this distributive assembly of cinematographic materials, actors are still called in to do their job. The job of an actor is notably to embody, to give life and soul to a

character as yet existing only on paper. They are points of identification and in most cases also focalizers in the visual narrative. In this case, however, there are as yet no specific characters to embody, nobody in particular to "play." Instead the actors seem to give life to the media relation outlined in the poster that started off the automatisms of *On Otto*. The screen image of the dying blonde shown on the poster is taken from one of the final scenes of Orson Welles's 1947 film noir classic, *The Lady from Shanghai*. The five actors—Basinger, Dafoe, DeVito, Henry, and Rossum—are simply filmed by a still camera, one by one and close up, as they watch Welles's movie from beginning to end in a cinema space, the screen action reflected in the expressions of their faces. Five singular feature-length movies result from this, as singular as the facial expressions of each actor.

It is a curiously intimate form of presentation. To see the iconic face of Kim Basinger balancing for ninety solid minutes between acting and just being, between "giving" absorption and just falling in and out of it like any normal viewer, is to observe an entirely new form of cinematic "life" coming into existence (fig. 2). This notion of cinematic life had already been apprehended by the movie poster, which repeats a trope from early video art. The image of a zone of contact between the screen and a fish (held out by the young spectator) recalls the associations between signaletic and biological life that were continually staged in the 1960s work of video pioneer Nam June Paik: aquariums containing live fish were built in front of TV screens or TV apparatuses were constructed as aquariums that allowed you to see the fish through the screen. These constructions played off the fact that images of aquarium fish were used by many TV channels to fill the pauses between programs, as if to indicate that the channel was still, and in fact always had been, "alive." Paik seemed to suggest that the "live" emissions of TV, its real-time feed of signals, were not primarily a presentational form, but a token of the deep complicity between the new time-based media technologies and life processes in general.[6]

In *On Otto*, the positing of this new form of cinematic life depends on the distribution or refraction of the singular moving-image object named film, taking its cue from the way in which the filmic image itself is refracted in the famous hall of mirrors climax scene in *The Lady From Shanghai*. In this innovative scene, bodies and perspectives are serialized and multiplied in a way that is reminiscent of the early image experiments of video art. The stage for a final shootout, the hall of mirrors and its effects makes it impossible to determine whether the bullets hit images or persons. As a consequence, we never know if any of the characters actually die: as the film concludes, the dead-looking blonde (Rita Hayworth) lifts her head and cries: "I want to live!" Psychoanalytic theory uses the concept of the mirror to explain the process of identification—the individual discovery of (and adaptation to) a stable and ideal world-image that includes your own self. The apparatus theory of film, for its part, has long referred to this psychoanalytic model in order to explain film's identificatory grip on us, and

Fig. 2. Tobias Rehberger, *On Otto*, film still (Kim Basinger watching *The Lady from Shanghai*), 2007. Courtesy Fondazione Prada, Milan.

hence its unique force as an instrument of ideology.[7] *On Otto* is a cinematographic project where the mirror image of the unitary projection is not just "broken," reflecting wildly and senselessly in every direction, but where the very idea of mirroring (and the whole associated semiotics of messages, codes, ideological meaning) is brought up only to be dismantled. A different model is needed to explain the way in which this project evokes the existential reality of moving images and the politics that may be associated with their force and appeal. Henri Bergson's refutation of the (at once) realist and idealist distinction between matter and representation, perception and reality, may have some relevance here. Watching Kim Basinger, media icon and living person, pure image and "real" material body, at once watching and acting her own watching of the image of Rita Hayworth (for ninety minutes), in many ways recalls Bergson's notion of our bodies as "images that act like other images, receiving and giving back movement": in relation to a material world defined as a flow of images, the human body and its perceptual apparatus is above all a center of action, an object destined to move other objects and not the sort of apparatus that, in the act of seeing, gives birth to a representation.[8] Having asserted the general existence of cinematic images, the poster explicitly hints at this problematic: in the lower right corner you find the legend *reality strikes back*, like an additional title. If the actors in *On Otto* are focalizers, they might then be seen as focalizers for this explicit shift towards an emphasis on image-bodies in action, enjoining us to trace its wider ramifications for a conception of a world at once real and cinematic.

Part Two: Automatism, Architecture and Collectivity

I

Every film is a society. It is a society in the sense that it is a complex collective production, the result of negotiations and collaborations between multiple persons, techniques, ideas, institutions, and competences. However, by overturning the mechanistic principle of normal film production—the principle whereby each step in the production process (each application of knowledge and creativity) is potentially contained in the preceding one—*On Otto* raises the question of the relation between cinema and collectivity to a principle. The real product of this work is then a specific collective formation—and not "film itself." And the most immediately available figure for this collectivity is an architectural expression—the city-like construction that both houses and is shaped by the multiplicity of cinematic materials let loose in this project (fig. 3, 4, 5). In this city, passageways and avenues lead you in and out of labyrinthine constructions where sounds, moving images, design proposals, drawings, texts, and audiences intermingle and overlay in numerous different ways and from a variety of angles and perspectives—depending on the movements of the spectators that visit the city or the cinematic personae or points of view that already inhabit it. This spatial organization radicalizes the familiar notion that film is always

Fig. 3. Tobias Rehberger, *On Otto*. Installation shot, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2007. Photo: Wolfgang Günzel. Courtesy Fondazione Prada, Milan.

Fig. 4. Tobias Rehberger, *On Otto*. Installation shot, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2007. Photo: Wolfgang Günzel. Courtesy Fondazione Prada, Milan.

Fig. 5. Tobias Rehberger, *On Otto*. Installation shot, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2007. Photo: Wolfgang Günzel. Courtesy Fondazione Prada, Milan.

edited in three dimensions: its effects are played out in a dialectical operation where image, sound, and the perceptual apparatus of the spectator confront one another. But even more pertinently, the architecture redefines spectatorial agency itself. In this city, cinematic materials are not just seen and heard by a specific class of human subjects named "spectators." Made up of percepts and affects, images and sounds are themselves quite literally posited as seeing and hearing, reacting and responding to other images and sounds. It is the architectural construction that allows this to happen, by, among other things, using projection screens as constructive elements (so that the image can be accessed from both sides) and by using sounds as territorial markers in a way that makes each aural territory confront and blend with others. The subtle articulation of insides and outsides, transparencies and reflections, open trajectories and closed circuits, gives each image, text, and sound element multiple extensions or modes of existence depending on their actual interaction with other elements. A decidedly modern city (reminiscent perhaps of the spatial complexity articulated in the city paintings of Picasso and Braque), everything is at once seen and seeing, heard and hearing.

II

Yet the key question is, of course, how this specific cinematic articulation of collectivity is to be understood. An interesting perspective on cinema's collective dimensions arises from the ambiguities of the term *Aufnahme* as it is used in Walter Benjamin's essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. Signifying at once *reception* and *recording*, it points not only to the collective mode of reception associated with the mass reproduction and distribution of media objects. As Samuel Weber has pointed out, Benjamin also saw the reproductive inscription that takes place in a film production as a specific form of recording proper to the mass itself. The mass should in fact be identified with recording and not just with reception: it should be understood as that which "takes up" or repeats the shock of events in which the contemplative unity of time and place (the auratic moment) associated with great works of art is scattered or multiplied. In fact, this new notion of the mass character of recording opens up for a radical redefinition of aura: with cinema, focus shifts from the question of the unique identity of auratic *objects* to the question of the *temporality* of the unique presence implied by the concept of aura. It makes no sense, then, to speak of the mass in numerical terms, as a simple multiplication of contemplative subjects accessing reproduced media content: the concept of mass recording means that the mass must be defined in temporal terms, as a simultaneous repetition and dispersal of presence. And it is in these terms that the new recording technologies—the cinematographic apparatus of production—may be seen as staging an *encounter of the mass with itself*, giving the amorphous mass not an image or a representation of itself, but the *semblance* of a face, a purely virtual face vested less in the

idea of collective identification than in the project of collective becoming.[9]

This analysis may seem pertinent in relation to *On Otto*—a production that not only highlights the collective aspect of the cinematic recording apparatus, but that also seems to associate this collective with the ineluctable automatisms of recording. On a purely technical level, modern recording technologies are noted for the way in which supposedly intentional artistic processes (the thoughtful and controlled placing of paint on a canvas or words on a page) are overruled by a machine that "takes up" everything and anything, significant and insignificant, all by itself. Such automatism could also be seen to apply at the wider level of the cinematic apparatus: individual decisions are "carried off" in a collective process that moves ahead with a force that gathers its own momentum and that can never be traced back to one singular artistic will or origin. In ordinary film production this collective may have to face itself in the deal memo; in *On Otto* the cinematic collective is explicitly presented as *that which records*. Furthermore, this collective is defined through an equally explicit scattering of the very *moment* of contemplation: to walk around Rehberger's cinematic city, continually gathering and redistributing its huge array of cinematic "moments" in a process that is perhaps best described as a perpetually ongoing "spectator's cut," is quite literally to encounter a collective defined in temporal terms.

However, the *architectural* articulation of this collective adds another, and slightly different, dimension to the notion of a collective defined in temporal terms. Benjamin's concept of mass recording and its relation to the distribution of (shock) events are among the features that define cinema and its moving images as a time medium (i.e., a medium that produces and processes not images or representations but time itself). Cinematic time here is the critical or even revolutionary instance that systematically interrupts any mere *representation* of the historical past and its "given" collective identities: instead, historical time is re-activated as event-time. But the collective dimensions of cinema's time processing capacities may also be qualified along a different explanatory axis. To the extent that it is the human perceptual and cognitive apparatus that produces or "gives" any notion of time, film and other time media seem to operate in a special proximity to (or interaction with) human memory. According to Maurizio Lazzarato, these technologies mime the operations of thinking and memory, albeit in a very rudimentary way: their free contraction and distribution of temporal material resembles Henri Bergson's description of the memory as an ability to process past and future material within a continually unfolding now-time. And it is precisely through this capacity that these technologies have become the key social machines for a form of production that no longer draws value only from activity in the workplace but from all aspects of our lives—through our "free time" down to the level of the affects and sensibilities that characterize our cognitive activity.[10] Hence, the temporally defined collective may perhaps also be described

in terms that evoke brain functions, the mental operations at work in sensation, perception, and memory. This proposition may, at the very least, be explored with reference to the highly specific association between architecture and film that *On Otto* sets up.

The association between architecture and film is not in itself new: in fact, film has been compared to architecture since its invention due to how it seems to mobilize both spatial and temporal modes of reception. First of all, stage sets and locations are vital parts of any film—at times they may even function as the protagonist or subject matter of the film itself. Second, it is generally recognized that film is not just a visual but also a spatial practice, in the sense that one has to take into consideration the cinema space itself and the phenomenological relation between the film and the spectator's body. Third, cinema has played a key role in the modern spectacularization of space—the formatting of complex geographical and geopolitical sites into the homogenized "locations" of the tourist industries, the kind of places that can be marketed for their untarnished "pastness" and quasi-ritualistic resistance to change. Fourth, there seems to be a structural relation between architecture and film based on the fact that both art forms are intimately related to the big state and capital institutions, and in fact depend on the interest of these institutions for their existence. And, finally, it has been argued that film and architecture are structurally similar in the sense that both are received by a collectivity in a mode of distraction—received that is, in an incidental, absentminded way, reminiscent of the attitude of a person drifting through a city and unlike the alert and contemplative vision associated with the viewing of paintings or sculpture. This was, at least, Walter Benjamin's perspective, which was no doubt informed by the non-organic compositions of the early cinema of attractions rather than the later narrative films of the Hollywood traditions.[11] According to Joan Ockham, this concept of distraction is the structuring principle of Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, where the hypnotic glass spaces of international-style architecture emerge as the film's real protagonist, as well as a visual metaphor for the luminous and "transparent" screens of film itself.[12]

This last emphasis on a *mode of reception* shared by architecture and film differs in significant ways from the specific association between architecture and film established in *On Otto*: the question here is a form of production involving the "work" of the human brain. A first cue to the logic on which this association is based can be found in the one-man cinema Tobias Rehberger built at Stockholm's Museum of Modern Art in 2000—a construction that was initially conceived as the actual starting point of the *On Otto* production.[13] It was a superbly stylish piece of architecture, made in the type of slick 1970s style that evokes all of those expansive corporate environments endlessly caressed by movie cameras: in this way, it mimicked the design logic of the early cinema theatres, which were made to look like veritable palaces of cinematic fantasy, as if the movie had already started in the lobby. In

fact, this cinema space seemed to have been conceived as the kind of construction that emerges when the image is no longer a representation existing at a certain distance from the viewing subject. The space was, quite literally, articulated as the second skin of a body placed so close to the screen as to be completely immersed in the moving image.

At this point there is no longer a principled difference between perception and reality, images in space and images in consciousness: they belong to the same continuum. The one-man cinema seemed to illustrate Hugo Münsterberg's 1916 theory on the mechanisms of close-up that allow cinema to capture attention like no other time-based medium, because the close-up objectifies, in our world of perception, our mental act of attention. When attention focuses on a special feature, the surrounding world adjusts itself, eliminating what is not in focus and making the object of attention more vivid. The spatial effect of cinema, given actual form in the Stockholm cinema, is that of an outer world, so to speak, woven into our minds, shaped not just by its own laws but also by our acts of attention.[14]

It seemed only logical that this extended cinematic body could itself be the object of spectatorship. Through tiny windows in the walls, outside viewers could inspect this specimen of mediatic life, a uniquely modern creature. But the Stockholm cinema was just a preliminary test case or point of departure: Rehberger's more fundamental idea was that an actual movie project should be developed based on the existential vectors of his one-man cinema—that is, on its peculiar infiltration of image, perceptual apparatus and spatial construction.[15] And this is exactly what takes place in *On Otto*, where Kim Basinger, Willem Dafoe, Emmy Rossum, Danny DeVito, and Justin Henry are each being watched as specimens of mediatic life. At once actors, spectators, and screens, *The Lady from Shanghai* is here as if projected through their facial expressions—the automatic reactions—of bodies that are themselves already cinematic through and through. And the perceptual responses of these already-cinematic bodies are presented as the actual constructive elements of an architecture that should now be understood as being made up not just of building materials in the ordinary sense of the terms but—more pertinently—of "live" sensations, perceptions, and cognitions. As Deleuze has pointed out, Sergei Eisenstein was interested in the capacity of cinematographic materials to directly engage the central nervous system, to deliver a sensorial shock that would provoke not just thinking in general but more precisely a self-reflexive "I think!": in this way a cinematographic "subject" of sorts would come into being.[16] Jean-Clet Martin seems to describe the spatial operations of this subject when he compares the non-distinction of reality and image in terms of a body's movement in a city: a city, which is obviously a definite and materially invariant site, enters into a variation and virtualization through the points of view of the bodies that act on it—bodies that, in the moment of acting, process the city through all sorts of memory materials, so that the extensive "trajectivity" of perception is redoubled by

the intensive "trajectivity" of memories. Beyond the image/reality distinction, reality itself turns out to have several dimensions: it is constituted through the sharp point of a gaze that cuts through matter and also through a virtual, cumulative gaze that connects the elements "cut out" by perception along the lines of its own perspective.[17] Above all, "the city" in *On Otto* presents itself as a space continually formed by the work of perception, memory, and thinking—an approach that differs radically from the traditional architectural focus on "built form."

Still it is difficult to neglect the heavily stylized dimension of Rehberger's cine-city, its unabashed evocation of all sorts of contemporary design trends and sensibilities. Built form may not be the end product here, but the effects of architectural "style" will still have to be accounted for. In fact, the specificity of its association between architecture and cinema seems to hinge on the fact that design styles are, so to speak, identified with the cinematographic capacity to trigger thinking. This dynamic can perhaps be explored more fully with reference to the many contemporary artworks (by Rehberger, among others) that initially come across as prototypes for elegant and trendy design solutions. But a closer look reveals that almost every single one of these designs are actually time machines, in the sense that they are fundamentally formed and informed by informational materials and production principles. There are, for instance, the many colorful and original "design" lamps that are also televisual in the most literal sense of the term, since they are connected to computer programs that make them at each moment transmit—in real-time—the quantity of daylight at some other time and place, for instance, in a city on a different continent. Design is here not a value in itself, but a sensorial material or memory material that evokes the reality of design as a key site of self-relation or subjective becoming.[18] These "design" works then seem to trace a real if rarely discussed complicity between contemporary information technologies and the current overvaluation of design, a connection that makes it possible to think the precise way in which we "live" the media surround of the contemporary time machines. The activation of memory and affects in the processes of self-styling is just an aspect of the thinking operations that animate and are animated by the time crystallization machines—machines whose only real product is subjectivity itself. From this perspective the sensory and cognitive apparatus of individuals are seen as intrinsic parts of the media apparatuses, part of the synapses or relays through which affective energy is accumulated and value created. Rehberger's cinematographic city may well look like the quintessential media playground or leisure palace—founded as it is on the manifold activation of perceptions, memories, affects, and tastes. But by the same token it emerges as a place of production, a place where affective bodies are also working bodies. In brief, the specific association between architecture and cinema that is set up here seems to turn around the conditions of inhabitation and collective existence in a media society where the mind itself is put to work, or engaged in productive labor in the most concrete sense of the term and in an historically unprecedented way.

III

What is the collective spatial expression of minds put to work, engaged in a form of labor that exploits not work time in the traditional sense of the term but the all-encompassing time of memory and thinking? The term "labor," of course, evokes its own architectural landscape: the great nineteenth-century factory buildings, designed for efficiency, standardization, and overview, quasi-palatial monuments that gave a new form of visibility and definition to the borderline areas between the countryside and the city. And, by extension, the development of huge landscapes of standardized worker housing projects, extending both horizontally and vertically and articulating (by their rational, modular forms) the definition and management of the minimum needs of laboring bodies. By contrast, theme parks, tourist destinations, "sculptural" museum buildings, TV studios, real estate development projects, computer game environments, and the ubiquitous presence of everyday stylistics form a heterogeneous set of spatial articulations whose representative functions remain obscure. Yet if the collective of cognitive workers may not consider their reality to be mired in a definite architectural form, it can, at the very least, have recourse to an architectural parable. This parable is a work of pure imagination—one produced at the peak of Western industrialization but with a strong intuition for the transformations about to take place within this mode of production. This parable has been recycled in recent years in precisely those artistic milieus most intensely preoccupied with constructing a new association between design, architecture, and media technologies. In fact, it has not just been recycled but updated, tweaked and polished so that it could function better as a guide to the contemporary condition. In the years between 1879 and 1884 the eminent Italian sociologist Gabriel Tarde wrote a short novel, an exercise in utopian imagination that—like so many of the literary works produced by social scientists—was basically the fictionalized expression of his own social theories.[19] A new global society—a world where every corner of the earth is discovered and exploited, a society of unheard of riches where all sorts of aesthetic productions take pride of place over the mere satisfaction of needs—is confronted with catastrophe: the sun is suddenly extinguished. Once it no longer shines its light on the territorial expanses of the earth, life on the planet's surface becomes impossible and most people end up dying. However, a small population survives by escaping underground, carving out spaces in the deeper geological layers heated by the earth's burning core. Gradually a new society arises, but its mode of existence challenges the very premises of social explanation established by the economists and sociologists of the aboveground world.

This new mode of social existence is closely associated with the conditions of inhabitation determined by underground life. Once you go underground, territories can no longer be surveyed, monumental building forms can no longer exist, and axial construction and the hierarchical subdivision of

space into center-periphery relations no longer make sense. Underground, you are always in the middle of things, in the same way that your mind is always in the middle of its own now-time. Wherever you find yourself in the expanding network of caves is always the center: a society organized in terms of the extensive *forms* of aboveground architecture has been supplanted by an *intensive* mode of existence whose organizational principle is that of force rather than form. This concept of intensive existence was in fact key to a social theory that challenged the transcendental status given to the concepts of value, scarcity, and need in usual economic accounts of human collaboration. For Tarde, any description of sociality should take as its point of departure the question of sharing sensations, perception, attention, and memory rather than the question of how the means of subsistence are shared. The traditional deduction of the former from the latter would, in other words, have to be overturned. Society or collectivity should perhaps be described as a brain-like network of synaptic relays where human collectivity is first of all accounted for in terms of the "intensive" operations of mental forces such as desire, belief, sympathy, and the capacity for imitation and differentiation.

> *Certain Sophists, who were called economists and who were to our sociologists of today what the alchemists were to the modern chemists, had noted the error that society essentially consists of an exchange of services. From this point of view, which is quite out of date, the social bond could never be closer than that between the ass and ass-driver or the sheep and the shepherd. Society, as we now know, consists in the exchange of reflections. The tendency to copy one another accumulates and is combined to create a sense of originality. Reciprocal service is only an accessory.*[20]

In the underground caves the enormous surcharge of intellectual and aesthetic exchanges that was already a key feature of the pre-catastrophic aboveground world found an architectural expression adequate to their central role in the definition of human society itself. In this parable, architecture is tantamount to social philosophy: if Tarde's text describes an architecture turned inside out, it is because it indicates a social ontology turned inside out. In a similar way, Tobias Rehberger's radical displacement of the moving image also contributes to an overturning of the principles of architecture that triggers the very question of how collectivity should be defined. In fact, the underground spaces that express the intensive exchange of reflections sound uncannily similar to the cavernous and labyrinthine cine-city created by Rehberger. Where Tarde describes "the most incredible and endless galleries of art," magical palaces lit by "countless lamps, some incredibly bright, others soft" glowing constantly "through the blue depths," Rehberger constructs spaces where insides and outsides are no longer sharply defined, thanks to the omnipresence of all sorts of luminous moving image materials that reflect off one another and also function as sources of light.[21] Both present us with an

architecture defined by the activation of perception and intellect rather than the spatial "functions" derived from a life divided between labor and repose. Using cinema and its moving images as a cipher for what has often been referred to as a dubious "aestheticization" of politics, the public sphere, or life in general, *On Otto* momentarily overturns the logic of cinematic production as if to suggest how such aestheticization might point towards a new definition of the common (rather than being seen as a "problem" for politics per se). In this project, moving images do not contribute to a finished aesthetic monument of the kind that will compete (at the Oscars, in Cannes) for visibility and representational value. And neither can they be associated with the much-deplored "spectacle" that bars access to material reality and history.[22] Rethought as a different kind of architecture, the big movie production here attests to the existence of a live brain network, ready to be connected with anything and anyone.

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1. Here I rely on the definition of moving images given by Gilles Deleuze in *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 1–11.
2. Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed, Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 105–108.
3. I prefer Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "*agencement*" to the English term "assemblage," or the Foucauldian "*dispositif*," which can more easily be misread as a composition of elements, or a totalizing system, rather than a dynamic and open-ended connection between heterogeneous entities. This, despite the fact that Foucault's "dispositif" may also be aligned with the underlying principles of the concept of "agencement," as Deleuze in fact did in his study of Foucault. See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Rhizome. Introduction* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1976).
4. The classic reference here is Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: P. Dutton & Co. Inc, 1970).
5. Joan Didion, *The White Album* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 167.
6. For a discussion of these issues, see Ina Blom, "The Touch Through Time: Raoul Hausmann, Nam June Paik and the Transmission Technologies of the Avantgarde," in *Leonardo Journal of Art, Science and Technology*, no. 3, (2001): 209–216.
7. Jean-Louis Baudry, *L'Effet cinéma* (Paris: Albatros, 1978).
8. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books: 1988), 19.

9. Samuel Weber, "Mass Mediauras" in *Form, Technics, Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 78–107.
10. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Videophilosophie, Zeitwahrnähmung in Postfordismus* (Berlin: b-books, 2002).
11. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *Early Film*, eds. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1989).
12. Joan Ockham, "Architecture in a Mode of Distraction: Eight Takes on Jacques Tati's Playtime," in *Architecture and Film*, ed. Mark Lamster (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 171–196.
13. For practical reasons this idea could not be followed through: Rehberger was not able to contact everyone involved in the *On Otto* project to Stockholm during the period of exhibition, and so the poster was devised as an alternative starting point.
14. Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (New York and London: D. Appleton & Company, 1916).
15. Interview with Tobias Rehberger, Frankfurt, October 2005.
16. Deleuze's discussion of Eisenstein and the cinematic circuit is found in *Cinema 2, The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 158–164.
17. Jean-Clet Martin, "Of Images and Worlds: Toward a Geology of the Cinema," in *The Brain is the Screen, Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 61–86.
18. I discuss this topic in detail in my book *On The Style Site: Art Sociality and Media Culture* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2007).
19. Gabriel Tarde, *Underground: Fragments of a Future History*, updated by Liam Gillick. (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2004). Tarde's novel has figured as a central element in a number of works by Liam Gillick. Its influence can also be traced in the manuscript for a science fiction radio play produced on the occasion of Rirkrit Tiravanija's retrospective exhibition in London, 2005.
20. Ibid., 65.
21. Ibid., 55–56.
22. Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1992).