

De/Territorialized Practices Oreet Ashery.

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Territory - **1** the extent of land under the jurisdiction of a ruler, state, city etc. **2** an organised division of a country, esp. one not yet admitted to the full rights of a state. **3** a sphere of action or thought; a province. **4** the area over which a commercial traveller or good distributor operates. **5** an area defended by an animal or animals against others of the same species. **6** an area defended by a team or a player in a game. **7** a large tract of land.*

I'm a curious witness to how we territorialize neighbourhoods, language, bodies. How space becomes a territory.

Often we find ourselves in a territory where-by, a system of classification does not allow for complexities and nuances to surface. I experiment with new territories, soon they too become invested with limiting preciousness. Politically, territorialization is synonymous with a desire for homogenization, control and expansion.

I'm drawn to processes where de-territorialization occurs, practices that dissolve or disrupt an indexical knowledge of the term 'territory', creating a different sense of it, which might then become re-territorialization.

*'Against the Oedipal and Oedipalized territorialities (Family, Church, School, Nation, party), and especially against the territoriality of the individual, Anti-Oedipus seek to discover the "deterritorialized" flow of desire, the flows that have not been reduced to the Oedipal codes and the neuroticized territorialities, the desiring-machine s that escape such codes as lines of escape leading elsewhere.'***

* Oxford Concise

** From the Introduction by Mark Seem to Anti-Oedipus by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

This paper is looking at art works/practices (my own included) that strategically negotiate given territories, these might be cultural territories or geographical ones. Deterritorialization, in the case of these works, might consist for example

of introducing a 'disturbance' to a sense of an existing order. Reteritorialization, might than create a new sense of dis/order, In all cases there is a sense of mobilising an existing territory.

There is no particular attempt to draw on similarities between the works, however, all the projects mentioned exist only through a discourse or an intervention with a specific public space: English cafes, a contested street in Peckham, internet newsgroup, etc. In this sense there are not autonomous art objects, like a painting for example.

I would like to look at Emma Hedditch and Paula Rouch's current collaborative practice, their collaboration called MSDM - Mobile Strategies of Display and Mediation.

MDSM primar ethic, I would suggest, is collaboration with other people: '*... (this project is)... an extended research into the collaborative practices available to us. Within our experience, we acknowledge this can include our engagement in art making activities, eating or cooking a meal. That is , not only the things we do together, but the results of collaborative effort which we can take advantage of...it is drawing on this network that we integrate into a social structure to gain an understanding of how it functions, and in turn locate and speculate on our possible function within it.*'

More specifically, MDSM have been critically looking at issues of gentrification and regeneration in the city, and in particular, what consultation around public art projects might consist of.

A recent project MDSM developed was connected to Monecriff Place in Peckham, a contested space. The street currently has market stalls for as long as 20 years. The plans for public art project in the street, involve a large screen outside the Premier cinema and leading to it an 'International Carpet of Flowers', consist of a stretch of flowers from all over the world lit with underground lighting. This stretch would mean that the market traders would have to move. The market traders started a campaign against the plans. Emma and Paula spoke to the traders, the council and the artists involved, the various arguments materialised on a video called 'The Public Art of Campaigning' and was shown to the market traders and also in a number of public events. The immediate outcome of this intervention put a hold on the plans.

These particular plans are part of a larger program of regeneration which has been taking place in peckham for a while now and resulted in the loss of small business, mainly black, in favour of chain stores and multi-nationals.

I want to move to another contested space, the body, and in particular the female body.

In Peggy Phelan's book 'Mourning Sex, Performing Public memories', she writes on the study case of Anna O. Who was treated by Josef Breuer, (the study case can be found in 'Studied on Hysteria' by Freud and Breuer). Anna O, according to the case history, develops a phantom pregnancy following the death of her father and the ending of her treatment with Breuer. (Interestingly, independent of both her father and Breuer, she became the founder of the Jewish feminist movement in Germany later on in life). I quote from Mourning Sex: *'The feminine body is, profoundly, an auto-reproductive body, one that continues to reproduce symptoms and movements phrases that dance across the slippery stage of the paternal order'*.

Miho, an artist currently based in London, has been pregnant for a while, she travels on buses and walks the streets, do people give her a space on the bus to sit down? only she is not really pregnant, its a cushion. Miho performing a pregnancy and so testing herself and people's responses.

Deleuze and Guattari's book 'Anti Oedipus' describes the territorialization of desire and the body under the symbolic order.

*'Everybody has been Oedipalized and neuroticized at home, at school, at work, Deluze and Guattari want to know how these beliefs succeed in taking hold of a body, thereby silencing the productive machines of the libido. They also want to know how the opposite situation is brought about, where a body successfully wards off the effects of power.'**

Deleuze and Gattari's 'solution' to 'the body successfully wards off the effects of power' ~~scenes~~inctly(? - svar darling do you know the word i mean?) expressed in a sentence: *'A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst couch'*. Their notion of a 'schizo' or a 'schizophrenic', is not in the clinical sense, but rather, a person in a state of delirium. The many interpretations and writings on Deleuze and Gattari's notion of 'delirium' is for another discussion.

*From the Introduction by Mark Seem to Anti-Oedipus by Deleuze and Guattari.

Demarcation of the body calls upon questions of gender, movements between a masculine space, a feminine space and those spaces around and in between.

This is where I come to talk about one of my projects, (I'm an artists working in photography, performance and video. I am also involved, as an artist, in regeneration projects).

In the project 'Sings of Loyalty' I develop a persona of an orthodox Jewish man that allows me, symbolically as yet, to enter into religious and cultural territories were women are not allowed. Fetish, cross dressing and ritual are my points of entry into my own heritage. In photographs, video/performance and street walking, **Marcus Fisher**, my male self is testing the ground.

Leaving Israel for England, Jerusalem for London, produced a constant sway between the privilege of having two 'homes' and a feeling of having no 'home'. My work explores this movement.

A series of self-portraits, dressed as a male orthodox Jew, started in tribute to a close friend who 'left' when he entered Jewish orthodoxy. My research of the specific cross/dressing codes for these portraits became quite fetishistic. Gradually this male persona developed and emerged as **Marcus Fisher**. Sometimes I think I might be creating a Golem or maybe a Dybbuk.

Golem in Jewish folklore, is matter that comes to life. *Dybbuk*, refers to the sinful soul of a dead person who sticks to a living body and doesn't leave until professionally exorcised.

It is a queer way to investigate one's heritage, some might say, and I agree, (the Jewish heritage is a religion, race and culture all in one, and for Israeli Jews it's also a nationality), **Marcus Fisher** is experimental and has to be tested. The research of my subject has led to a fascination with religious body rituals.

Like: *Tfillin*- writing the name of God on the arm by binding a leather strap tight enough to stop the blood flow, a ritual kept for men only, or *Tashlich* - when one symbolically empty their pockets of sins and throw them into the water, never to be seen.

Recently I discovered that in the Bible there is a direct ban on cross-gender activities: A woman shall not hold a man's tool and a man shall not wear a woman's dress. The ban doesn't express a fear of sexual deviancy, but rather, it is part of the list of things that must not be combined or hybridised by human intervention: milk and meat, horse and donkey, wool and cotton, male and female. The punishment is pelting with stones.

Dressed as Marcus Fisher I 'do' a lot of street walking. Marcus Fisher changes context where ever he goes. In London's Soho he is visibly Other, but really more of a 'double agent'. In Tel Aviv, he makes a political body, flirting with Jewish patriarchy and law. Is Marcus mobilising the territory?

Now on another order: English Cafes . I met Maritxu Ontondu, a Chilean artist living in London and she told me about her activity.

I quote from a conversation with Maritxu: *'I was thinking how difficult it will be to let someone change my own space which I have systematically ordered. Imagine going to someone fridge and changing the order of the food on the shelves, or the order of their clothes in the cupboard'*.

Interested in this notion Maritxu decided to go to English cafes and ask if she could change the order of things on the tables. She says, I quote: *'I started very nervous just moving the salt, the pepper, brown sauce, the ketchup, the sugar and everything very fast. I did not want to make any formal arrangement or any aesthetic decisions, even though I have been trained to do so, so I did it very quickly. When I finished I came back to the owner, I had a cup of tea and I said; I finished. and he said: Is that all? and I said that is all. I wanted the work to be performed in the mind of the person who had a system, I was interested in their changed perception.*

I will now move to another territory within English culture. Rayna Nadeen presented album of photographs as part of the Homeless project. The Homeless project set itself to research a range of different models of the exhibition event, and to find out whether art is homeless.

Rayna's book contains many B&W photographs of shop keepers on the Caledonian road in London. She asked them all the same question and the responses are all printed along side their photographs. 'No way', 'No' , ' You must be kidding', 'Never' , represent the general responses to the question. We, as the viewers of this book are challenged to try and figure out what the question was. what do you think the question was?

This conceptual exercise forces us to check our assumptions regarding a specific ethnic group. But hold on, this is where it gets more interesting, because maybe the question had nothing to do with the fact that these people are all Asian. After all, they are also all English, working in a particular street in London. So the question was: Do you watch Noel's House Party? I will leave it open for contemplation whether watching Noel's House Party is or is not a purely ethnic issue.

Another project Rayna did challenges the space of language in multicultural , post-colonial England. In collaboration with other second Generation 'Brits', the group 'borrowed' a flower stall in Islington, London, and for one day all of them sold flowers speaking their mother's tongue, their second language, Urdu in Rayn's case.

Responses from the panthers ranged from: hey! speak English! speak English! in England you speak English! to people unconsciously reverting into their other language.

Another intervention in the streets is a poetic work by Helga Oskarsdottir. For a time Helga, Icelandic artist, inserted little glass 'diamonds' in all kind of walls, in public toilets, streets. in Iceland, New York, London, Paris. the effect of the diamonds is multiple: they shine, they make the wall look as if there is a hole in it

and if you look closely you can see the view breaking down in an abstracted pattern.

I quote from Helga: *' I just did them and than I have to leave it to fate and I have this romantic notion that somebody in 10 years time will find it and it will totally change their day'*.

To my question how did it all started she said: *' as a child I would make small shapes out of things I found in the streets., I would make them on the spots and just leave them in the street for people to find. I did not see it as art, only years later I start referring back to it as an artistic concept'*.

I asked Helga about her seemingly fascination with smallness verging on the invisible. She replayed, I quote: *' smallness has a different power, it is a different power trip as well, it forces the passers-by to get really close to the work, it is a subtle way of manipulation, it is also my rebellion against bigness which seems to dominant the art world, big installation, big paintings.'*

In contrast to the near invisibility of the work above, Helga did another piece in which she literally 'swamped' Iceland capital with yellow un-defined Styrofoam objects. The effect was of a surreal alien invasion.

That brings me to the last project I want to describe, this project was done through intervention in virtual space, the internet. The internet (arguably) is a space that still offers endless potential for deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. In this case the intervention in virtual space spilled into 'real space' .

Nicoline Van Haarskemp, Dutch artist, in collaboration with another German woman artist who had a Mini car entered the Mini Car News Group on the internet. They soon discovered that not only they were the only non-English and non-male members, they also brought with them a curious agency to the group by being artists.

Nicoline learnt from different sources how following the film 'The Italian Job' the Mini become an icon for the British post-colonial 'anti hero lad'. Indeed, the Mini owners were showing-off on the net over who lost more tyres during a motor way drive.

To challenge the predicted nature of their MA final show in Chelsea, Nicoline and her collaborator organised the Mini Love Parade. They invited the Mini internet news group to college for the final show to do a concert with all the Mini's car radios.

The mini owners drove to college from as far as Manchester to do the music concert of their car radios with tapes prepared in advanced by the artists and a

parade circling the college buildings driving the cars.

Visitors to the show sat civilly on chairs listening to the concert, and the Mini owners went for a walk to look around the degree show. Nicoline said she found the Mini club 'guys' and her art friends very similar in the way they are both obsessed with one thing only, art or Minis.