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SUSURRATION: from the visual
production to written word

Gail Bourgeois

A Thesis
in
The Special
Individual
Program

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

April 1991

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ABSTRACT

SUSURRATION: from the visual
production to written word

Gail Bourgeois

Following the multi-media, site-specific installation *SUSURRATION*, this part of the thesis requirement builds on the art work as primary source material. This process discusses transformation over information and the formation of subject positions. The exhibition and the written document witness memory and the passing of time in discontinuous waves in a site/spatial continuity with *le quotidien*.

Presented is a collection of interconnected events taken from the experience of the work itself, taken from life, from formal research into theoretical discourses, new physics and notions of an inter-disciplinary art practice. The thesis embodies a view of nature and the material body which underscores and outlines reality as being in constant motion and as based in contradiction.

The installation, *SUSURRATION*, attempted to replace the art object with the viewer as *comédien* / performer. As contradiction and discontinuity are seen to be the roots of reality, an idea emerges that the viewer should be made aware of perceptual acts away from a focus on "art" as an object.

While adhering to the regulations of theses preparation, where page numbers mark time in a linear way, this thesis has no centre, has no unity as such. It is constructed from "moveable" *blocs* to be read in any order. This structure contrasts with conventional "chapters" which can close down textual readings. White sheets have been added between *blocs* to soften the edges of these demarcations by extending spaces between. . .and so time ...

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also many thanks to Ricardo Gomez, who gave immeasurable encouragement in the early stages of my research

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and to David Leahy, special thanks . . .

with these lines from Mary Di Michele,
I dedicate this work to my brother, Eric

that we love

to forget we forget

to love

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INTRODUCTION

Susurratio, the installation, required hybrid reading strategies. It required the viewer's continued vigilance and displacement over time as an integral part of the work. The discontinuity of the human perceptual process was reflected and spaces were created in pursuit of expanding fields.

Susurratio was a multi-media, site-specific, time based installation work. The art production consisted of graphite drawings and text on a variety of surfaces; including differing sizes of paper, the walls and the windows. There was a floor piece. There was a continuous play of sounds signaled by the inclusion of a twelve minute audio tape loop. Images from fractal geometry, in the form of black and white slides, projected notions from new physics.

Susurratio interrogated the transcendental project of wholeness and harmony. The distance and the scale of text to image reflected the material presence of the viewer as she or he moved into and away from spaces in and between the drawings. Literal space and awareness of scale, here a function of comparing the constant of the one's body size to something Other, distanced the viewer.

The drawings figured ruptures of signification. They imaged fragments, layers, imbrications, stratifications and sedimentation in relationship to

texts. The texts, formed from feminist theoretical discourses, combined with images to provoke connections and to offer multiple and shifting subject positions. Through an interaction with the site and a conscious recognition of the material self, the experience of moving through the work in a common space with other gallery goers could be foregrounded.

Disparate formal elements in conjunction with memory and sounds placed the event in the present tense of the everyday. Geographical and theoretical spaces were respected. Susurrat offered alertness to sameness which could focus the viewer on larger political issues arising out of dissonance and difference.

Susurrat was its site. *La galerie Powerhouse*, a women centred artists' run space, provided a context compatible with certain intentions in the production. It was the integrity. *Galerie Powerhouse* positioned the installation as a feminist site for the possible interrogation of art discourses, and for the negotiation of certain social discourses. These possibilities refer to early investigations by installation artists exploring site-specificity.¹

Chantal Boulanger has described installation as eliminating "the boundaries between hall and stage so as to permit a journey inside a scenographic structure in which play, dream, spectacle and discourse intertwine."² She establishes a meaning for discourse parallel to Octavio Paz "of showing the way : inventing, remembering, imagining a trajectory, going to..."³ She posits that installation is an indexical practice which overturns how the object is read.

Susurration presented spare *blocs* of formal information which could be accessed in much the same way as a Minimalist production. However this "information" served as agency not as resultant art object.

Gregory Battcock edited and published the definitive text on Minimalism.⁴ Important breaks from the Modernist paradigm were executed by the Minimalist players: absence of ambiguity, art which isn't art, acknowledgement of both the viewer and the space of the gallery, and a desire to create from complex conceptions new notions of scale, space, containment as these notions must address the relationship between object and man.

Michael Fried's influential essay, "Art and Objecthood", is based on dichotomies between Modernist painting and Minimalism and argues that "Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre."⁵ Fried explains that, "Theatre is the common denominator th it binds a large and seemingly disparate variety of activities to one another..."⁶ For Fried theatre is bad because when the artwork is opened to the space and so to experience and time, the viewer must ultimately become the subject.

And so theatre is a "common" denominator. Common to the cracks of interdisciplinary practice, not pure. In Susurration the viewer was not a privileged link - opposed to theatre - the viewer was the work.⁷ What is at stake is the disruption of the art object as isolated in an autonomous lineage of privilege. What is at stake is a re-positioning of the sight/site away from the viewer as a bourgeois individual in possession of a private domain.

Minimalism is attractive as efficacy. Susurratio sought to declare and occupy a position which was first a concept, which came first from language. The desire was to foreground interconnections and the belief that everything is relational, including art, the position of the viewer and life itself. Like Fried, I would posit that art which moves toward theatre exposes the relations, the randomness and the contradictions which are inherent in nature, in art and in language. Unlike Fried, I adore all of it.

Theatrical techniques distance the viewer at the same time that they provide something shared. Paradox and contradiction help to activate the work as a critical transgression. The function of this art, as with feminist socio-linguistic theory, is to deconstruct the logocentric position of binary opposition; to extend and break the sign : the binary system between the material signifier and the signified (concept).

Paradox : intimacy is an action. In Susurratio intimacy grew out of a recognition of the distance. In that play of distance, the viewer became actor/active with the site which was the work. Denied the privilege of unity, the viewer selects a part or portion of what has been presented. Over time that portion becomes an even smaller unit, a fragment which acts on memory, but then expands inclusively.

Contradiction : myself the producer absent and my self present. Myself displaced is consistent with the dislocation of the art work from my studio (private) to the gallery (public) and then to the pages of the written thesis. Finally the art production mutates - bound in this thesis work.

Or does it?

Nature exists - it is what it is - it is consistent with itself.

The self exists - it is what it is - it is consistent with itself.

Nature presents the model of contradiction and of paradox.

Contradiction can not represent true opposition because it is not

a simple idea, it is context.

It is the very stuff of existence.

In reality I hold Susurration in my memory. Although my memory

is discontinuous and jagged like perception itself it is in the present.

Susurration was absences and dislocation represented by the passing of time and by the witnessing of memory, which being discontinuous comes in waves. It was about estranging expectations and putting into place a possible dialogue.

se réconciler; to become friends again; to make it up (*avec* , with)

Minimalism is unattractive as it defines itself in concordance with Euclidean geometric concerns of Unity. This Unity maintains that the art work has inherent integrity. The art work as subject leads to a denial of the material body. I maintain that memory is in the body and keeps the body present.

Susurration imaged fractal geometry. Such a reference is a burst of noise. It is waves and particles at the same time.

Often the scientists drawn to fractal geometry felt emotional parallels between their new mathematical aesthetic and changes in the arts in the second half of the century. They felt they were drawing some inner enthusiasm from the culture at large. To Mandelbrot the epitome of the Euclidean sensibility outside mathematics was the architecture of the Bauhaus...spare, orderly, linear, reductionist, geometrical...To Mandelbrot and his followers...simple shapes are inhuman. They fail to resonate with the way nature organizes itself or with the way human perception sees the world.⁸

There is no dichotomy, not one polar opposite.

A move away from the notion of living separately from the environment, in this case from art, entails a notion of no discrete boundaries, no real beginnings and no real ends. Process, the expenditure of energy at every juncture, replaces a passive reception of information.

Susurration negotiated interactivity as its intrinsic component. Necessary for the work's completion, this process of interactivity could suggest a connection between the viewer, the work and le quotidien.

The viewer à *Montréal* is French speaking, English speaking, female, male, young, older, an artist, a person otherwise interested, one who knows other art productions that I have exhibited, one who knows my studio practice only, one who is looking for something to collect, a family member, a friend, someone from out of town, someone completely unknown to me, someone who could have great influence on my life, someone to test my skills, someone looking for a free ride, someone who would struggle with the weather to participate in the production of an event. It was with this viewer in mind that I constructed a work which I titled Susurration.

Each viewer brings to a work notions about the world. Notions formed by experiences and memories which pass into language. Through language experiences are given structural coherence. *Susurrations*, as an interactive work, provided vehicles for a "rational" construction of imaginary spaces.

The drawings figured stone-like shapes as possible subject positions. Understood in this way, a given subject was meant to be re-positioned by the viewer in relation to a text which appeared somewhere in the same spatial field. Disruptions of preconceived notions emerged along with widening fissures as the breeding ground for subjectness.

One series of drawings was presented as follows: isolated on a wall by themselves, three drawings, all the same size (56cm x 76cm) read as follows:

**THIS ENIGMA THAT
ULTIMATELY HAS
NO TRUTH**

**SAVE THE NECESSITY OF
STAGING ITSELF, OVER
AND OVER
AGAIN**

this first drawing imaged a crumbling stone support for a gate, the underside partly missing giving the impression that although still solid it could be toppled and leaving many crevices

without any text, the second drawing imaged the same stone support but from a slightly different perspective and at a closer range indicating that distance changes what is seen

the third drawing was composed of text centred off the left margin.

**is a struggle about power with a clear material effectivity
one might ask how far it is possible for the observer to
speak for**

The ironic functioning of the image (delicately drawn in pencil to indicate a changeability of mass) as it represented subjectivity, was heightened by its metonymical reference to patriarchal structures. This idea was broadened in the textual reference to "the observer speaking for" the observed.

Feminist research clearly indicates that woman is colonized by language; such displacement is necessary to access dominant codes and to function in the "objective" world. In the context of Susurratio there were complex overlays of these concepts.

Spacialization metaphors pervaded. Such structural metaphors oriented notions of new spaces as a progressive feminist project. A difficulty presented itself when these metaphors spoke about interstices and literal space conjoining. Though not yet culturally grounded, this notion worked for many viewers based on moving in the physical world. This spatial construct placed an accent on the material body in the installation, and on the continuity of body with mind with environment.

One visualization of this concept was in the piece described above. The first drawing contained image and text in a claustrophobic relationship. The words talked about the promise of an answer or perhaps an ultimate truth which is not obtainable. Being spoken was the empowerment of naming and the potential access to other understandings through a negotiation between one's own insight and one's experience of dominant codes of exclusion.

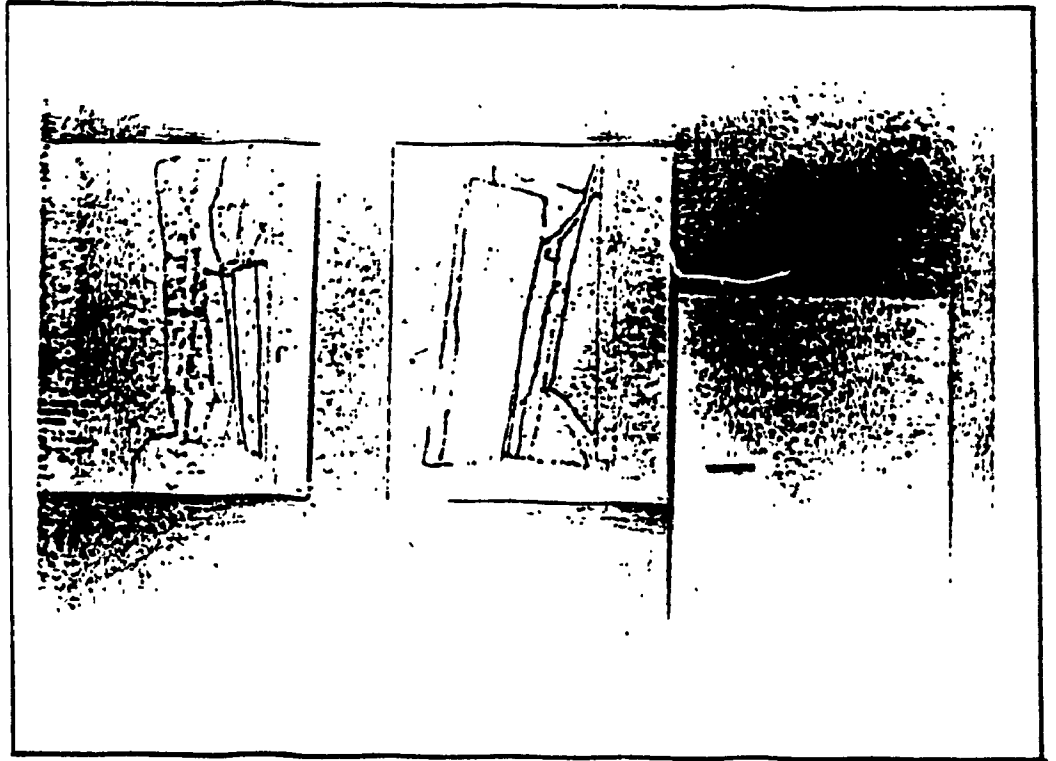
The second drawing was spaced apart from the first not touching but parallel to it. This placed the first drawing in an autonomous space on the wall. In the second drawing a new perspective on the stone image provided fresh possibilities. The image took all the space of the paper and touched the third drawing where the text

**is a struggle about power with a clear material effectivity
one might ask how far it is possible for the observer to
speak for**

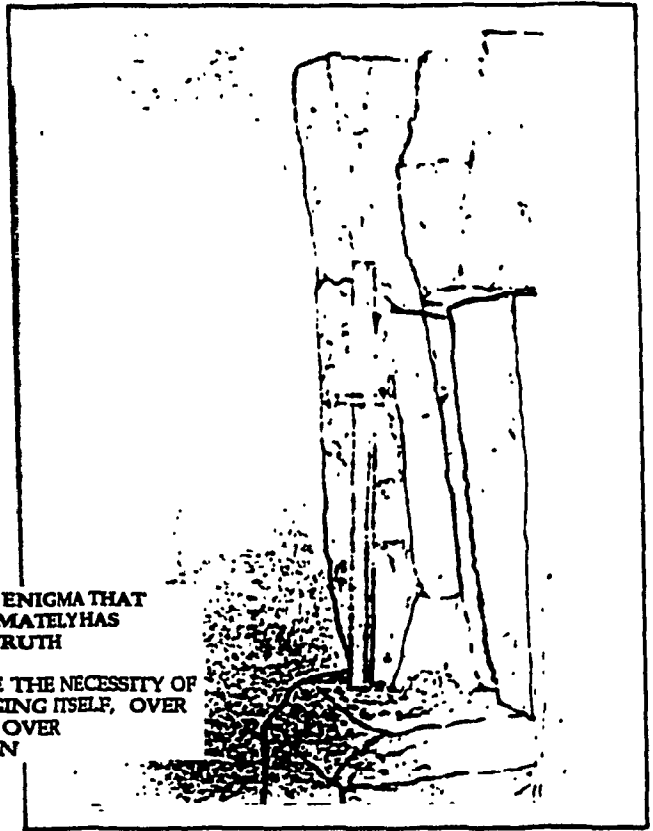
was presented as a continuation of the imaged unmoving mass of stone. Presenting the text below eye level referred to the invisibility of much oppression. Connections between colonization, systems of violence and patriarchy could be made.

The third drawing was mostly space belonging to the viewer which extended metaphorically into literal space through its connection to the viewer's physicality. That extension implicated the viewer as one who "might speak for".

New perspectives ... naming (access to language) ... imaginary spaces ... were presented as locations of hope and of struggle. Understanding spatial fields as inbetween places was crucial. Levels and disparate parts of the production signaled sites of transformation contained within Susurration.



drawing series "the observer to speak for"



THIS ENIGMA THAT
ULTIMATELY HAS
NO TRUTH

SAVE THE NECESSITY OF
STAGING ITSELF, OVER
AND OVER
AGAIN

panel 1 of the same series

**is a struggle about power with a clear material effectivity
one might ask how far it is possible for the observer to
speak for**

detail of panel 3 of the same series

Art which surfaces à *Montréal* comes from two cultural/linguistic fields. Distinct and resonant fields where each effects the Other. A viewer à *Montréal* has access to either, both, or some re-sounding construction from between these fields. Language plays with looking plays with pleasure.

It becomes necessary to connect our basic constructions of receptivity with notions of the everyday to dislocate myths of individual freedom. Actively placing the pleasure of looking at the centre of daily life can become a search for interconnections. When connections foreground larger issues arising out of Otherness, the inherent power relations of looking can transform fear into a pleasure replacing fear of difference.

While patterns remain the same over scale, pleasure and the search for interconnections is specific to location.

What of a walk-into and wander-through exhibition?

A work of art is encountered as a subject through interactivity.

What is that state of interactivity?

How does it play on the relationship it imposes?

Must it objectify as it searches for a way to be seen?

These questions could be asked when viewing a work by Geneviève Cadieux titled, Hear me with your eyes.¹ At the site of struggle - the body - she presents monumental photographs of the upper portion of a woman's body twisting in anguish. There is no text only the image and a title in English. An image 'spoken' in French and a title written in English afford an understanding of the insecurities, the fragility, and the changability of subject positions. The distance, the pain and the subject connect.

Distance, pain and subject connect . . .

the pleasure of the body looking lies in dialogue . . .

space and bodies
co-determine
each
other

Susurrations, as an installation, looked closely at the notion of how the two dominant languages are inscribed à Montréal. It investigated notions of the other/*les autres*. It presented these notions visually and textually. It figured each language group in its own distinct space with one overlap of translation signaling this distinctness. The translation, on a music sheet from Eric Satie's *Les Trois Gnossiennes*, read as follows:

questionnez
(ask)

du bout de la pensée
(on the edge of an idea)

postulez en vous-même
(make your own demands)
pas à pas
(little by little)

sur la langue
(on the tip of the tongue)

French, the language of the city, was used as a parenthesis to an English production. One "bracket" was text applied to the gallery windows. A pair of windows looking out onto *rue Duluth* and onto the rooftops lining *boulevard St-Laurent* had a mechanical print across each of them respectively,

LA NOTION DE L'ETRANGER DANS LA...

...LA RUPTURE DÉFINITIVE...

Across the gallery on the far wall, measuring a length of 6.5 meters and almost 2 meters from top to bottom, was a rectangle of soft pink (champagne) paint applied to the wall's surface. Contained within this colour field were drawings on paper exactly the same colour. The left edge of the first drawing aligned with the edge of the paint, everything else was contained within.

Of interest here is that all works presented on paper in this exhibition included text written in English. The one exception was the middle drawing in the colour field. This drawing, comprised of two panels (56cm x 76cm each) touching on their common border, showed the Eric Satie score to scale at the lower inside corners. This is the bi-lingual contribution described above.

The other "bracket" of French was text applied directly to the wall's surface.¹ Placement was deliberate. Although *Susurration* had no beginning or end, the logic of the physical space dictated that this stenciled wall work provided either the first or the last word of the exhibition. Stenciled in pencil in a single line along the wall was:

Il s'agissait d'éviter toute fusion entre les sons... Mon souci était d'éviter qu'on eût affaire à un quelconque objet spatial, et donc, également, à un objet temporel fini, avec un début, un milieu et une fin.

The painted colour field mediated the wall surface and the paper. It mediated the two languages.

Displacement of the language of the gallery was identified through attaching drawings with English text to the walls. This could signal text applied directly to the gallery's (architectural) surfaces as the language which constructs the location. Making this distinction is an important gesture toward understanding experiences of dislocation.

Susurration, the installation, was not easily entered. No moment of recognition was provided, no humanist mirror, no quick sting. Susurration, a time based event, was constructed in such a way that meaning could arise only out of process and discovery. My involvement with and commitment to the viewer equaled the demands made by the work.

Months of production and years of research could not be accessed without reciprocity. The connections between disparate elements within the work/life and the interconnections between the work/life, its viewer and its larger cultural contexts were/are rewards of alertness to process and discovery and they appeared/are appearing over time.²

From Michel Foucault we understand the concept of discursive fields, the relationship between power, language, social structures and subjectivity. Discursive fields set up competing ways of organizing social institutions and of giving meaning to the world through alternative modes of subjectivity.

No unified subject position was offered through looking at Susurration. But through the concept of discursive fields, an understanding of art production as empowered social agency is forwarded

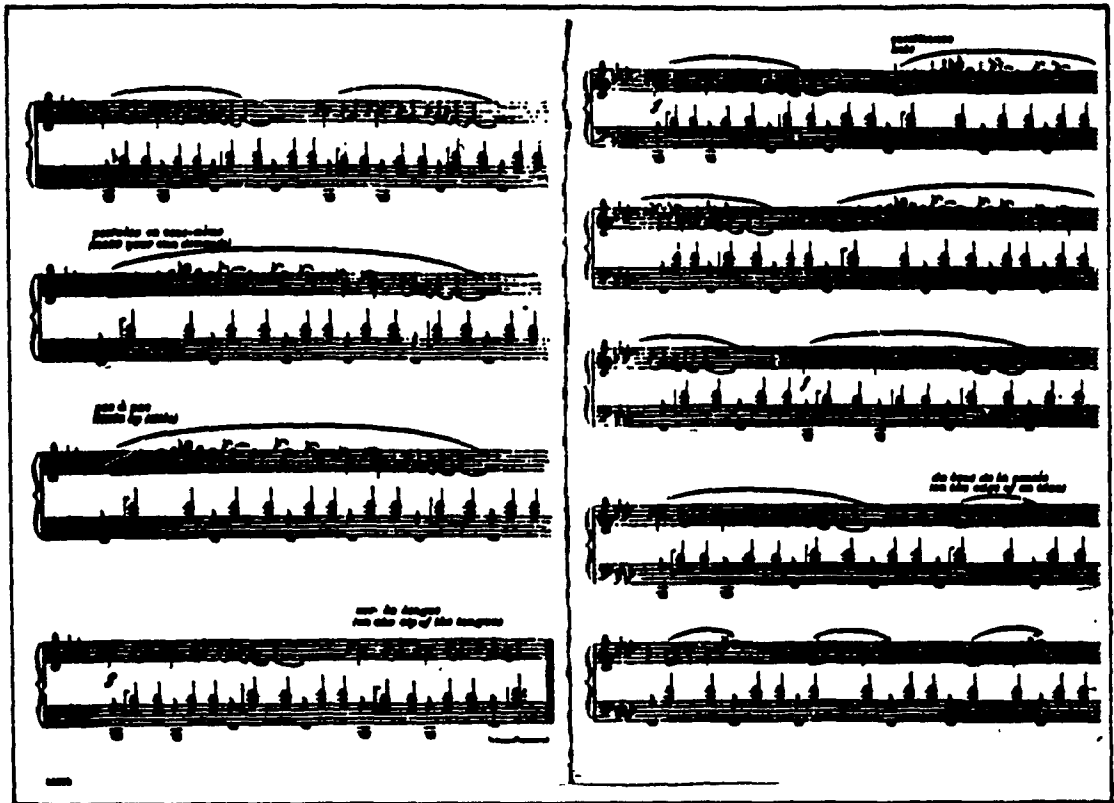
(albeit in the margins of power and influence).

After Roland Barthes we can discuss art production as connotative. Susurratio wanted to build on already existing systems. It presented a reformulation of site compatability against a general trend of what works here, works there, works universally everywhere.

If we analyze reality in terms of occurances, shifts, discontinuity, contradiction and so forth, we can break with binary oppositions. If in a site specific installation the viewer becomes a performer with comprehension and sympathy for the world of the everyday, then reality can be perceived as process.

The pleasure of the body looking lies in dialogue

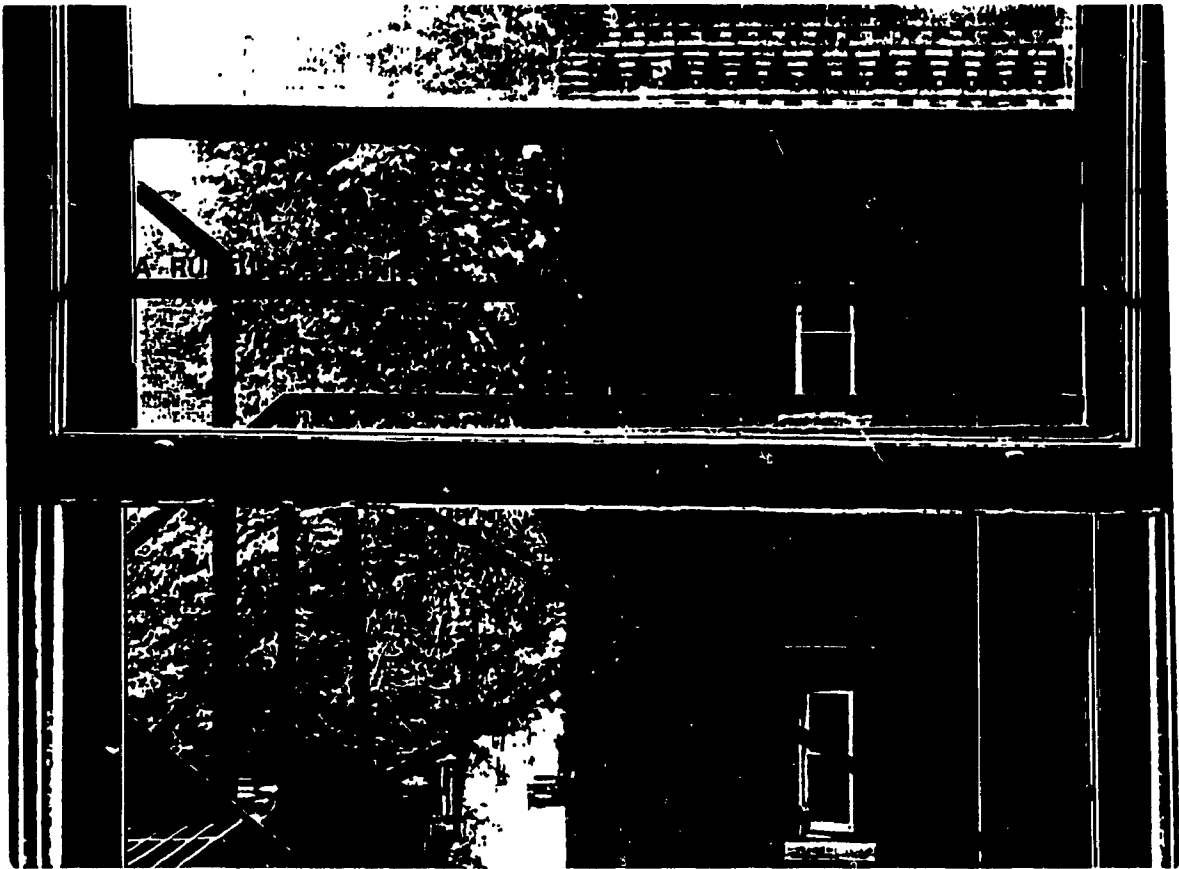
It is difference that makes dialogue possible



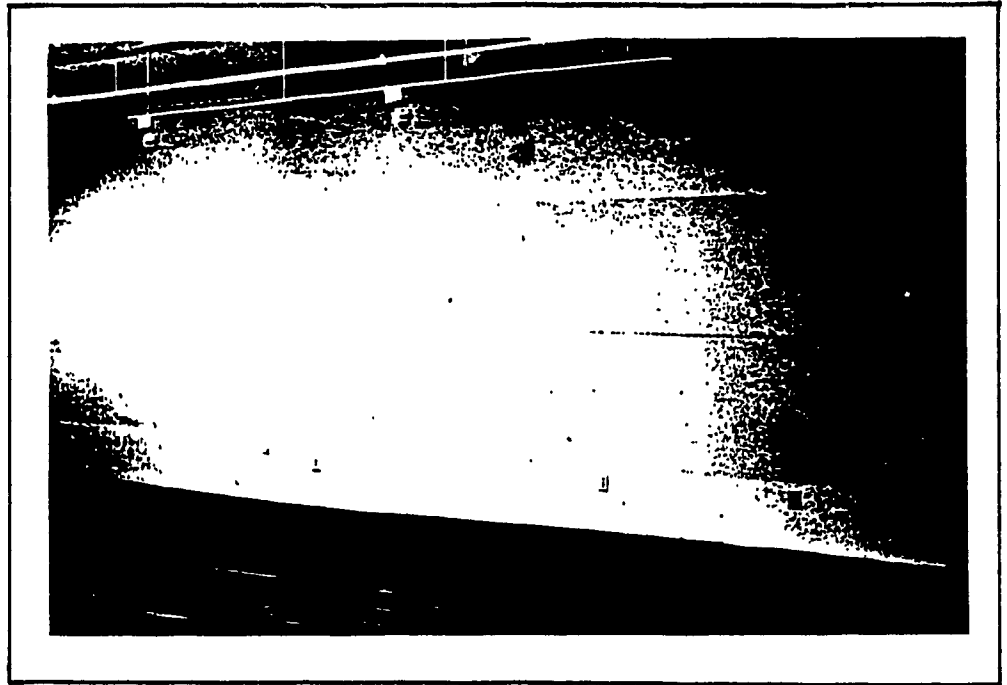
a heat transfer onto paper from the score *Les Trois Gnossiennes*



LA NOTION DE L'ETRANGER DANS LA...



...LA RUPTURE DÉFINITIVE...



Il s'agissait
d'éviter
toute fusion
entre les sons...
Mon souci était
d'éviter
qu'on eût affaire
à un quelconque
objet spatial,
et donc, également,
à un objet temporel
fini,
avec un début,
un milieu et
une fin.

Discontinuity, bursts of noise...

**The new geometry mirrors a universe that is rough,
not rounded, scabrous, not smooth. It is a geometry
of the pitted, pocked, and broken up, the twisted,
tangled, and intertwined...1**

In the Francoeur Novels David Plante traces the lives of three generations of Franco-Americans as they lose their language and their culture in the context of post-war America.² Three stories, "The Family", "The Woods" and "The Country" are combined into one novel. Dislocation, the underlying theme, recalls itself as the reader witnesses the inarticulate passions of the Francoeurs. "The Country" of the final story, is the place before disembodiment. It is the history, the memory held in common by the children of Reena and Arsace Francoeur.

My name, Gail Bourgeois, presents an interesting analogue. Gail (an English name of uncertain origin) was chosen because it means 'joy of the father'. Bourgeois (my father's name) is French.

The working-class Francoeurs live in Providence, Rhode Island. Providence is the place where I entered the world. I lived there for seven years. Daniel Francoeur, the protagonist, is my father, born in America. I am the second generation without the pain of collective exile and without the language. I am also without a memory of the history. It was/is only spoken between my father and my grandmother. They did/do speak of it privately in their language. French, for me, is a language of exclusion.

In Québec, English is the language of exclusion.

After thirty-three years and returning to a land my father never knew, I began to name my loss. It becomes - bound together with my consciousness as a feminist - something about reclamation. It is named through a notion of spatiality and of time/space connectedness.

As an Anglophone artist in Québec, I must be conscious of my place in a system of privilege. Not least of all I have more direct access to the English speaking world than do the majority of artists here.

English is a large world forming the logic and the centre of the (Art) market economy.

But this discourse of power is of no interest to me, other than how it puts into place a paradox of subjecthood.

The paradox of my person is the paradox of my work.

How can I claim Susurrations as a work which is open? As it foregrounds the notion of spatial fields as de-centred sites of transformation, I, the artist, must claim some authority from which to speak.

How can I (re)-write myself as I displace/translate the site-specific installation to the written word at the site of my thesis...



Ernest Gerard Bourgeois
studio photo taken at the age of 34

Gail Bourgeois
photo taken from a video clip at the age of 40
the inscription on the photo reads

'To my best
girl - Gail
Daddy
August 1952'



Allmeda Virginia Keennan Bourgeois
photo taken at the age of 19
Chicago, 1947



Allmeda Virginia Keennan Bourgeois
Eldora Oriana Riendeau Bourgeois
Gail Bourgeois

photo taken Christmas, 1951
Providence, Rhode Island

**SOUVENIR PIEUX
PRIEZ POUR LE REPOS DE L'AME DE**



J. ERNEST BOURGEOIS

Décédé le 11 octobre 1923, à l'âge de 35 ans,
2 mois et 2 jours—Inhumé dans le cim' tière
N.-Dame du Sacré-Coeur, Pawtucket.

Consolez-vous avec moi, vous tous qui
m'êtes chers; j'abandonne une vallée de
larmes pour le royaume des Cieux.

J'implore les prières de tous ceux qui m'ont
connu et aimé.

Nous l'avons aimé pendant sa vie ne
l'oublions pas après sa mort.

La mort du juste est le soir d'un beau jour
et l'aurore d'un jour plus beau encore, elle
marque la fin de ses peines elle consacre sa
victoire et lui ouvre la vie éternelle.

O bon Jésus, accordez-lui le repos éternel.

(7 ans et 7 quar. d'ind.)

Mon Jésus Miséricorde. (100 jrs. d'ind.)

Doux coeur de Jésus, soyez mon amour.

Doux coeur de Marie, soyez mon salut.

(300 jrs. d'ind. ch.)



Joseph Ernest Bourgeois

Décédé le 11 octobre 1923, à l'âge de 35 ans,
2 mois et 2 jours -- Inhumé dans le cimetière
N.-Dame du Sacré-Coeur, Pawtucket.



Mrs. Eldora Bourgeois
1 Slater Park Ave.
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

photo taken at the age of 29
in 1927

after the death of her husband and second son and her father

I studied the little girl and at last rediscovered my mother. The distinctness of her face, the naïve attitude of her hands, the place she had docilely taken without either showing or hiding herself, and finally her expression, which distinguished her, like Good from Evil, from the hysterical little girl, from the simpering doll who plays at being a grownup—all this constituted the figure of a sovereign *innocence* (if you will take this word according to its etymology, which is: "I do no harm"), all this had transformed the photographic pose into that untenable paradox which she had nonetheless maintained all her

The photograph was very old. The corners were blunted from having been pasted into an album, the sepia print had faded, and the picture just managed to show two children standing together at the end of a little wooden bridge in a glassed-in conservatory, what was called a Winter Garden in those days. My mother was five at the time (1898), her brother seven. He was leaning against the bridge railing, along which he had extended one arm; she, shorter than he, was standing a little back, facing the camera; you could tell that the photographer had said, "Step forward a little so we can see you"; she was holding



Ernest Gerard Bourgeois
photo taken at the age of 9
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Susurration the site specific installation exists as a memory...

(but memory is in the present)

I remember that piece as making no concessions to the institutions of exhibition. I also remember that piece as legitimate art grounded in its presentation, in its history and most importantly in its context.

Its presentation was the politics of exhibition. Susurration was installed at *galerie Powerhouse, un centre pour les femmes-artistes*, one of five galleries in the city which defines itself as an "artist-run-centre". This notion of artists' control is important. Artist's control was important in making the work. A notion of autonomy, whether real or fictive, opened for me the possibility of several speaking voices.

Historically, Powerhouse has been a 'safe place' to look exclusively at women's production. It has witnessed the changes and struggles for visibility in varied communities over sixteen years and has provided a centre in which to discuss, to dispute but ultimately to form logically correct positions for making and viewing women's art production. For this reason, the site itself deconstructs systems of looking. It is literally a "woman-centred" space.

I adore discontinuity, bursts of noise... I adore boundaries, corners, demarcations, grids, maps, endings, zonings, borders: these are sites of struggle. I adore overflows, spills, run-ons, obliterations, floods, rushes, the dark, spirals: these are tools. I adore the body electric and new physics which has taught that space is a field in which particles and waves come into being and vanish in an endless dynamic play.

Perhaps I can postulate that Susurration was/is a fragment which provides a glimpse of an unfixed wholeness brought about through a constitutive construction of fictive space and through the avoidance of only locating an installation work in a compatible site. I will argue that just as Susurration was developed from a Minimalist frame, so it moves beyond a formalist language of unity as it breaks apart Euclidian geometric concerns.

Although less easy to defend, I put forward the notion of Susurration as a collection of spaces through its inclusion of and its focus on the viewer's material presence. My intention in this regard was clear as I included Brechtian notions of theatre, the political economy of sounds;¹ as well as excluding myself as a central, authoritative voice. The permanence, the euphoric security, sought by the bourgeois individual viewer was missing. It was/is this absence which places the work at the disposal of dialogue.

In Susurration the idea of a trace was subverted through an ironic use of 'tracings', very precisely, lightly drawn images proposed afterimages. The installation after images a thought process. The gallery is not the message; but the gallery and the work and the viewer could form connections to re-organize codes of receptivity. The work forced a rupture with past time (formalist beginnings), re-posed itself contextually in present time (the history of the gallery and the greater cultural influences brought into this time based work), and looked/looks to re-examine ideological stases through a time/space continuum.

Les centres d'artistes autogérés à Montréal (part of the artist-run-centre system in Canada) function not only as launching pads for young art makers; but as a system unto itself with power to validate the work chosen and with access to funding agencies. At the same time, these centres offer to the artist a certain autonomy from the commercial/museum world.

Susurration did/does proceed from a kind of hereness or presentness - grounding itself and the viewer in everyday presentness.

In her essay, "*Le Musée en Pièces Détachées*" Johanne Lamoureux discusses a series of spaces, "...d'interstices créés par la stabilité de certaines manifestations".² The (international) pilgrimages to art continue the legitimization of the private space/experience even as it presents site specific works and forms of installation works.

At the site of *la galerie Powerhouse*, Susurratio presented an installation with the windows open, allowing the June air through the gallery, where the sounds of the busy streets constituted the work just as the tapping sound of the office computer and the material bodies of the viewer's choreographed movements across the floor boards constituted a work which implicated itself in the everyday.

Artist run centres crack the privatization of the art experience open. Not all of them and not any one of them all the time, but the collective structure of these centres makes that property inherent to the premises. I wanted to use this notion to move beyond the individual. From the beginning, the work was produced with this in mind. Susurratio gave/gives the viewer the feminist body present and moving and acting.

And the implication?

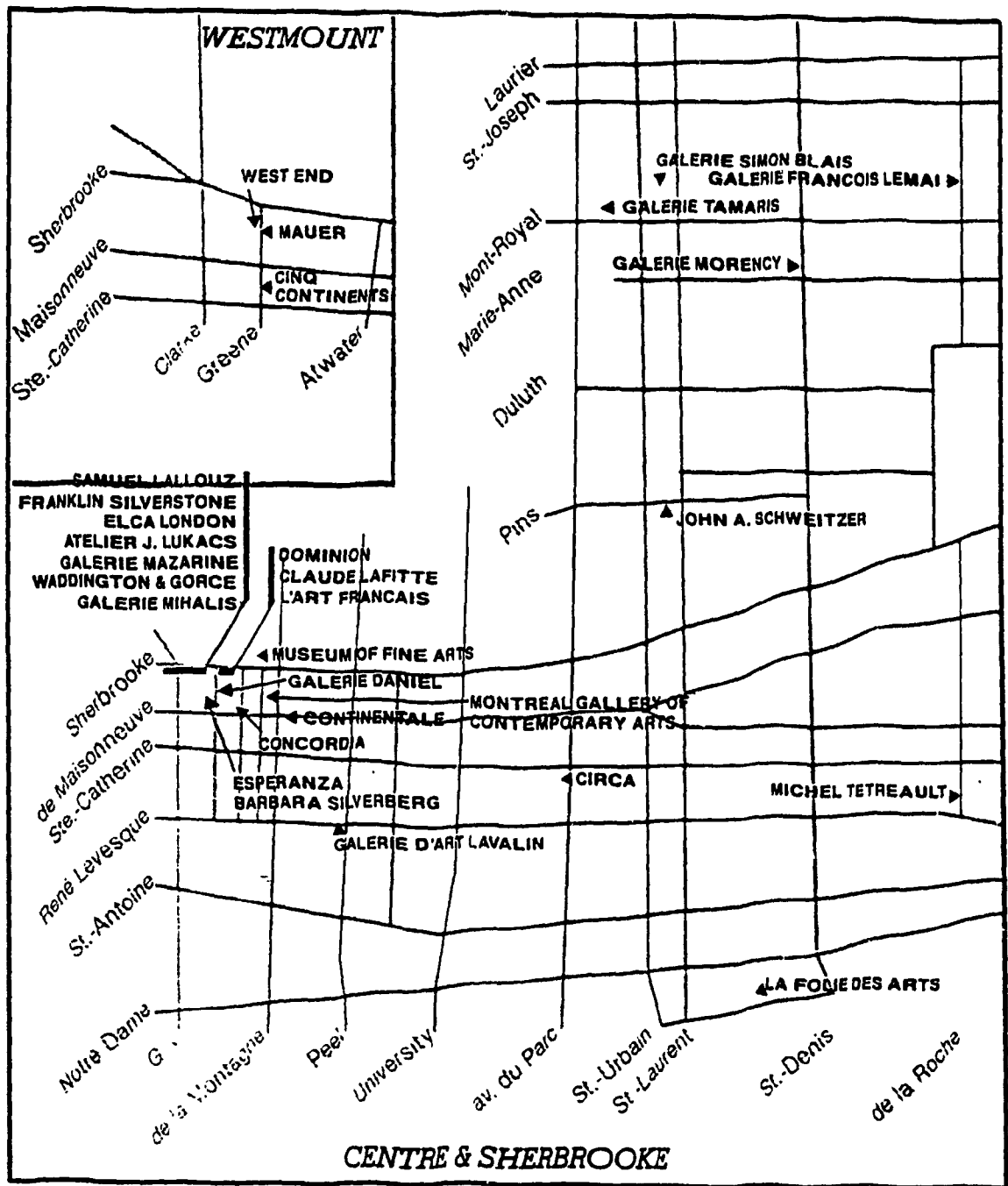
The sweaty physical space of the artist was there to be re-claimed. The neutralized Euclidean space described by Jean-Marc Poinso³ was re-placed by the noise and bodies and smells of a public *quartier*.

the material body of the artist

the material body of the viewer

the gallery space rendered public and

the work is its context.



15

map of the commercial art districts of Montreal

Glossary

Acrophase

Phase angle of the crest (maximal value) of a sine function fitted to the raw data of a rhythm.

Active element

Component in a biological system which is capable of generating self-sustained oscillations.

Aftereffects

Long-term transients, often lasting for 100 days or more, after a rhythm is released into constant conditions where it can adopt its spontaneous free-running period.

Amplitude

Difference between maximum (or minimum) and mean value in a sinusoidal oscillation; often used in a looser sense for other oscillations.

Circadian rhythm

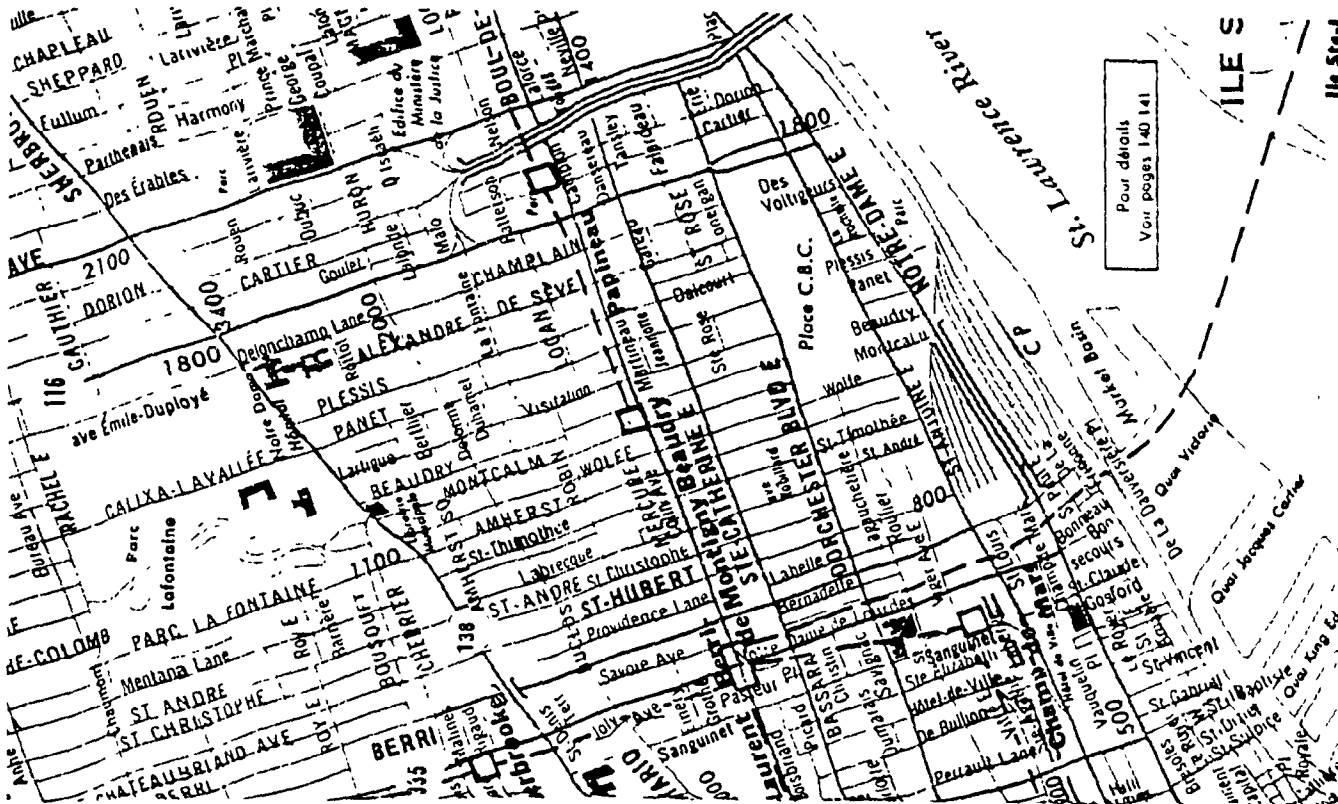
Self-sustained biological rhythm which in the organism's natural environment is normally entrained to a 24-hour period.

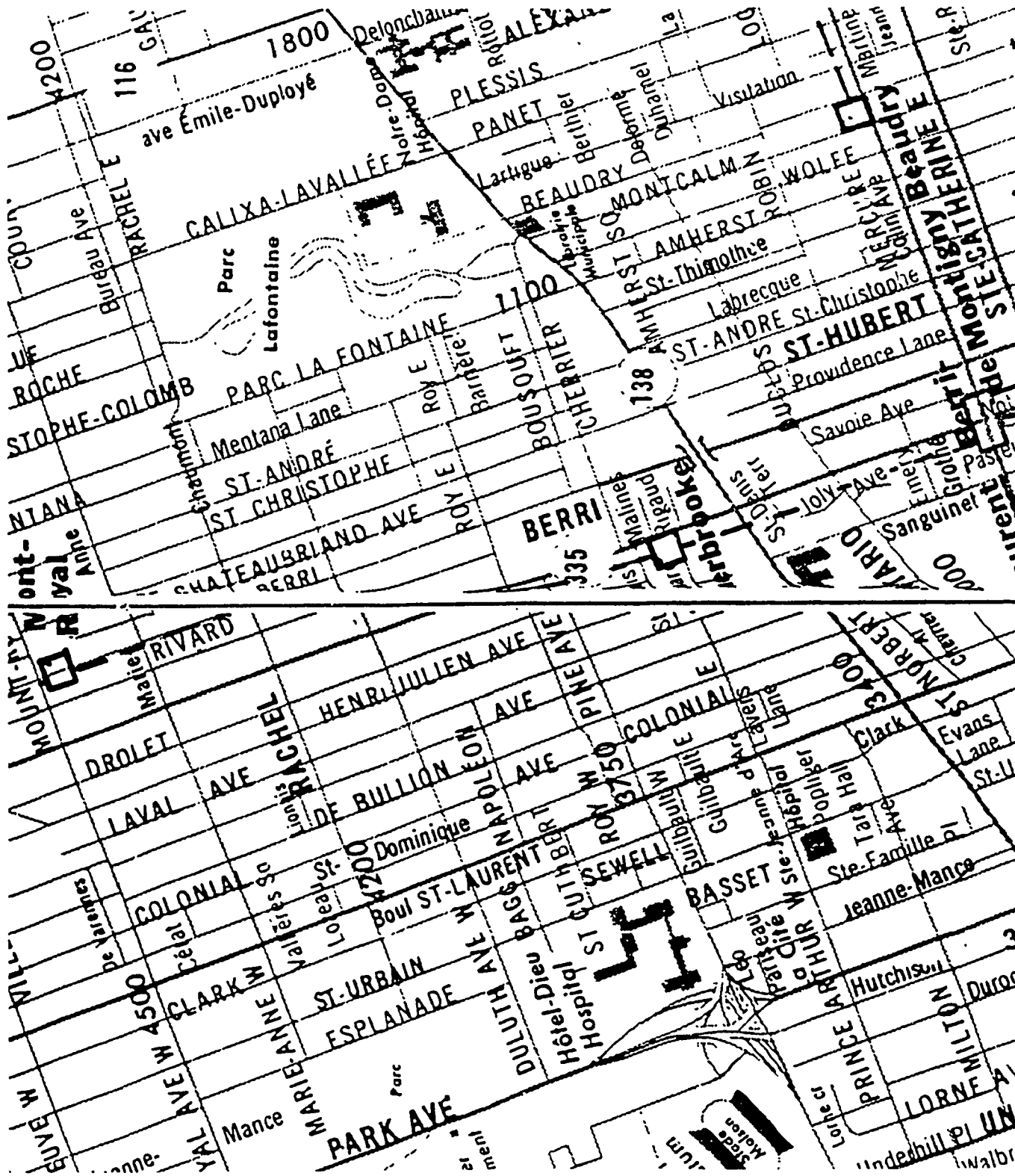
Circalunar rhythm

Self-sustained biological rhythm which in the organism's natural environment is normally entrained to the period of the moon (28 days).

Circannual rhythm

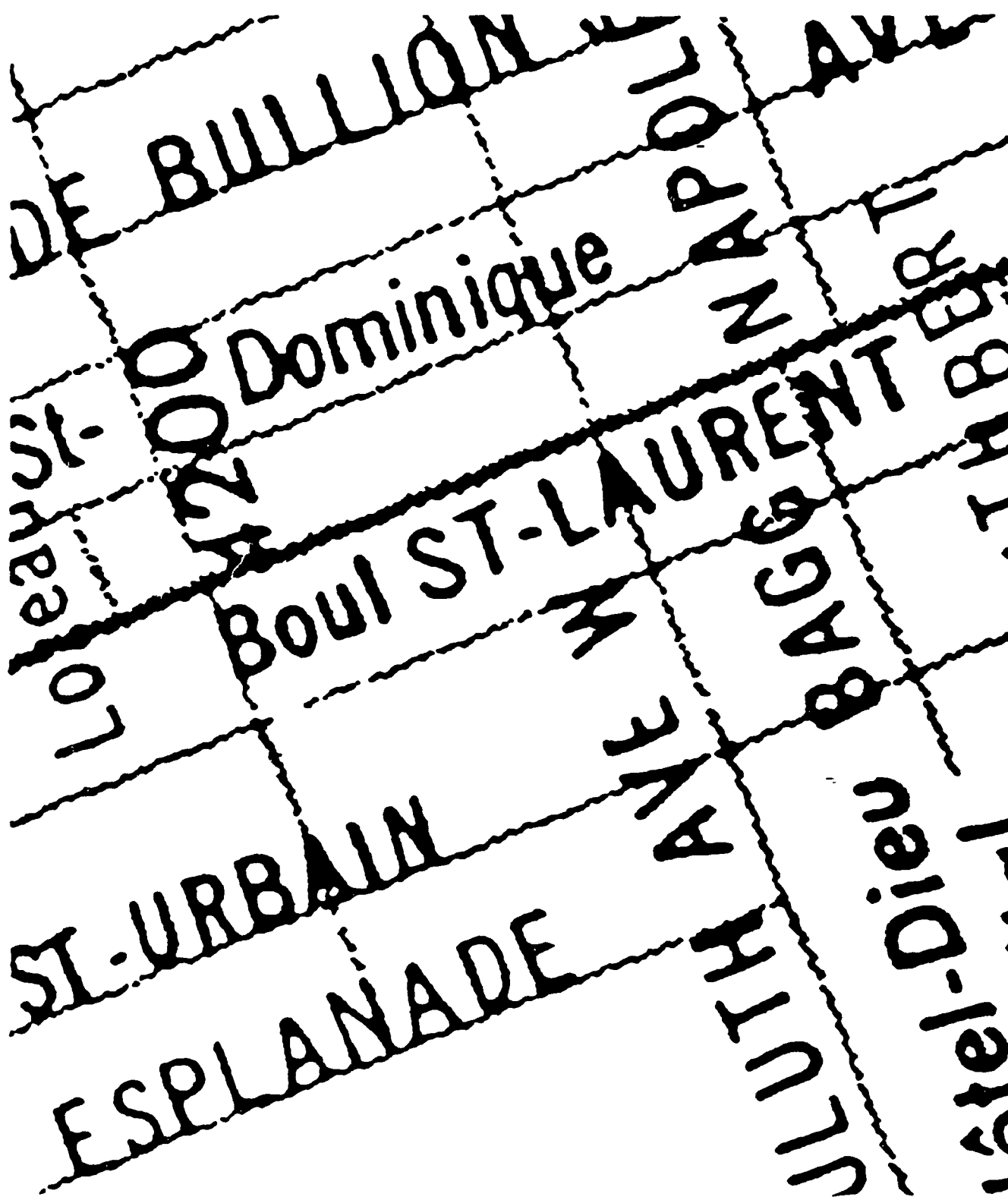
Self-sustained biological rhythm which in the organism's natural environment is normally entrained to the period of the 365.25-day seasonal variation in the environment.





map to find les centres d'artistes autogérés à Montréal

I
 AL AVE
 HENRI LULLU
 LIONEL ACHET
 DE BULLION LEON AVE
 CÉCIL LONIAL
 Valières St
 LOUÏS DOMINIQUE NAPOLÉON AVE
 Local St.
 BOUL ST-LAURENT
 CLARK W
 ST-URBAIN
 AVE W
 ESPLANADE
 MANCE
 MARIE-ANNE
 Parc
 PARK AVE
 DULUTH AVE W
 Dieu BAGG



map to find la galerie Powerhouse

There is something quite delicious that comes to us from Duchamp.
There is of course his humour.
There is also the model
which comes to us
of a closely related
set of ideas
which form
connections
to one another
through the axis
of an index.

There is something quite delicious that comes to us from feminism
There is of course the inclusion of women in art
There is also the questioning of space and techniques that has made a return
to painting and sculpture in the traditional sense so very very problematic

The floor piece in Susurratio was a found object. It is a long rectangular
empty wooden box with a window/door. Printed on the glass in English are
the words

WHEN NEEDED
BREAK
GLASS

I found this treasure quite literally outside my door on garbage collection
night. The box contained an old metal fire extinguisher, which I left there as
garbage. The printed letters on the glass are yellow with age and partially
missing where someone started to remove them. The scratches are thin as if
done with a fingernail or a razor edge.

When standing upright the box takes on the characteristics of a house, long
and slender with a little pointed roof. This reading of the physical object is
curious to me, as I would extend that reading to be a prison house. To avoid
far reaching ambiguity, I turned the box on its side presenting a directional
index.

For Susurratio I painted the outside of the box the same white as the gallery walls, and faced it into a corner just opposite the gallery entrance. The door fell open onto the floor, into the corner. The empty wooden extinguisher case, with the rough unpainted interior, was positioned with an open door which had the text facing down, reading backwards.

High on the wall and turning the corner, I obliquely drew in graphite directly on the architectural surface. The drawing (2m x 1.9m) touched the ceiling in one place. It figured the fluid lines of a classical balustrade echoing some of the paper works on an adjoining wall. As with those drawings on paper, the wall drawing could offer references to shifting subject positions. It contained small spaces between things. It contained references to classicism and to traditional ways of seeing. It was a delicately finely formed image which suggested that the viewer might have pleasure in looking.

The wall drawing took on new significance as the slides were projected. The slides engaged literally and figuratively the floor piece and the wall drawing, interstices were revealed. Not only small spaces were disclosed; but the spaces between parts of things, the cracks and crevices which allow for growth and new meanings. The wall drawing did not look back until the slide projections were encountered and interstices revealed.

The slide transparencies were projected at an oblique angle into the corner and veered from the perpendicular. They overlaid parts of the wall

drawing and encompassed the floor piece. They consisted of black and white representations of computer generated images of fractals. Fractals, part of the language of new physics, are the new elements of motion.

Susurrations used slides of computer generated images of fractals to place a notion of predictability giving way to pure randomness. Fractals represent a science of process, of becoming rather than being. "Fractional dimension becomes a way of measuring qualities that otherwise have no clear definition: the degree of roughness or brokenness or irregularity in an object... [and that] the degree of irregularity remains constant over different scales."¹ Instead of separating tiny changes from grand ones, they can be brought together. It is possible then to look for patterns not at one scale or another, but across every scale. Patterns remain the same over scale, "not a symmetry of right and left or top and bottom but rather a symmetry of large scale to small".² Fractal geometry affords a glimpse of something which is everywhere and yet can not be seen.

The study of dynamical systems - Chaos - entails a nonlinear approach. This model appeals to me. Classical science has never examined the connections between different kinds of irregularities or disorders. Without these investigations, we suffer "a special ignorance about disorder in the atmosphere, in the turbulent sea, in the fluctuations of wildlife populations, in the oscillations of the heart and the brain. The irregular side of nature, the discontinuous and erratic side",³ can be a lost part of how the physical world is understood.

The floor piece, the wooden box painted the same white as the gallery walls, provided clues to the many spatial layers. While the work extended literally from the architectural surface forward into a triangular space one side being the box, it reached across the gallery to the slide projector on the other side. The box was painted white to play with this notion of expanding the walls; to maintain the overall spatial balance which should not become focalized in any one area/voice; and to address the gallery itself as a larger container of ideas and the building which contains the gallery and the artistic community which contains the building and the city which frames the production of discourses etc.

This notion looks at scaling. Using fractals as an entry point, it is possible to think about space moving toward the microscopic. We are reminded that what is seen is determined by the relation of the observer to the observed.

Then what is the dimension of a ball of twine...It depends on your point of view. From a great distance, the ball is no more than a point, with zero dimensions. From closer, the ball is seen to fill spherical space, taking up three dimensions. From closer still, the twine comes into view, and the object becomes effectively one-dimensional, though the one dimension is certainly tangled up around itself in a way that makes use of three-dimensional space...on toward microscopic perspectives: twine turns to three-dimensional columns, the columns resolve themselves into one-dimensional fibres, the solid material dissolves into zero-dimensional points.⁴

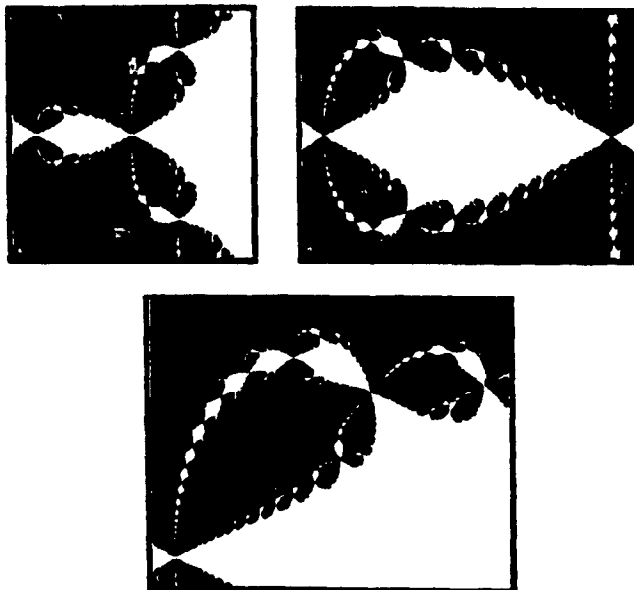
Scaling is useful when looking at the social production of art, and when thinking about how patterns of looking and thinking about art are encoded and processed.

The slide projector was placed high near the ceiling. This produced the best angle for 'turning the corner'. A remote-control for changing the slides was placed at the viewer's disposal - this direct interactivity implicated the viewer. The same inclusion in the work was suggested by placing the wooden box in the viewer's literal space, on the floor.

The viewer's literal space had overtones of *le quotidien*. It entailed memory. It contained the literal body.

Constructing Susurration somewhere else would entail a re-thinking.

New investigations and understandings must include a perpetually alert discourse to feminist respect for difference/*différence*. *Le quotidien*, for an artist living and working à *Montréal*, is filled to capacity with differences. I would suggest that a discourse of *différence* in Susurration was/is possible because the work, produced for a women's gallery, was attentive to its location. The work was local.

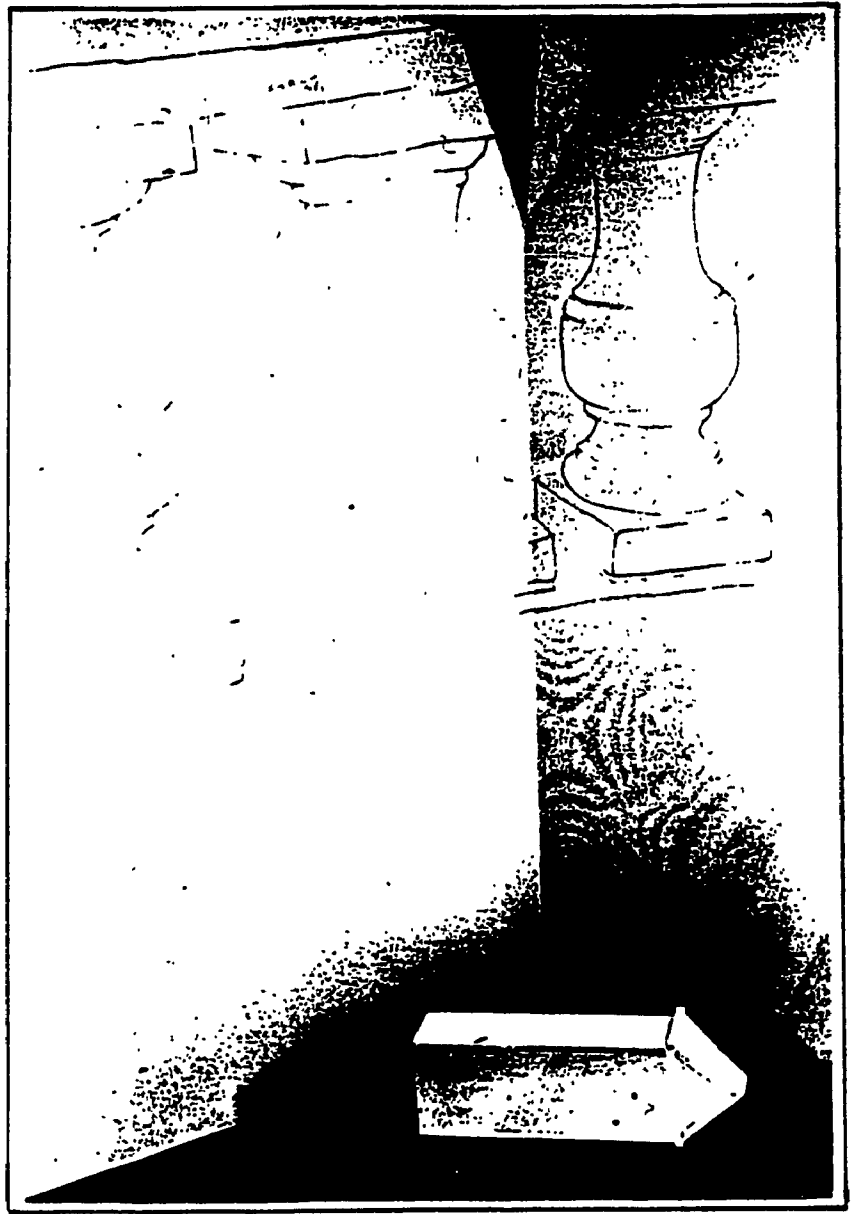


BOUNDARIES OF INFINITE COMPLEXITY. When a pie is cut into three slices, they meet at a single point, and the boundaries between any two slices are simple. But many processes of abstract mathematics and real-world physics turn out to create boundaries that are almost unimaginably complex.

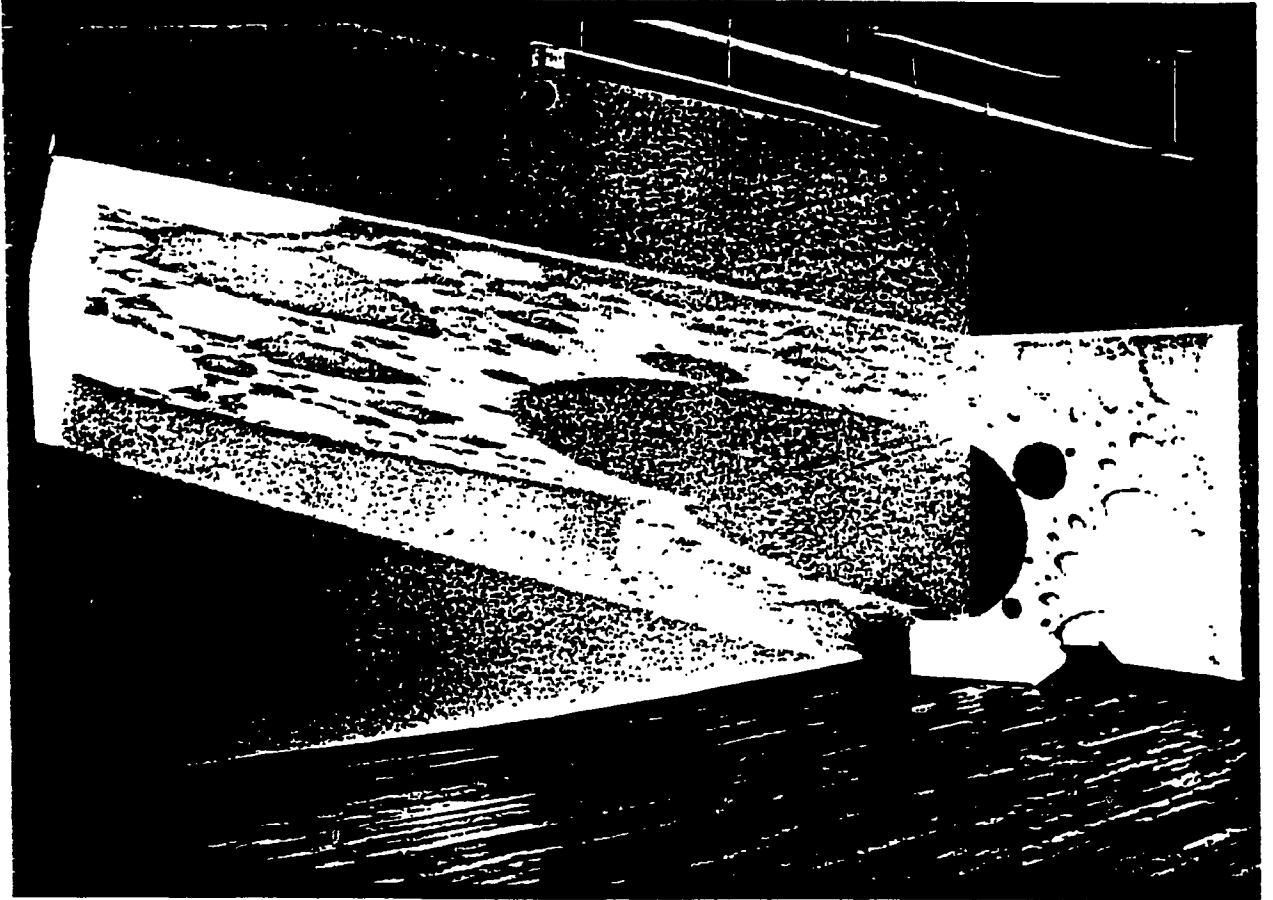
Above, Newton's method applied to finding the cube root of -1 divides the plane into three identical regions, one of which is shown in white. All white points are "attracted" to the root lying in the largest white area; all black points are attracted to one of the other two roots. The boundary has the peculiar property that every point on it borders all three regions. And, as the insets show, magnified segments reveal a fractal structure, repeating the basic pattern on smaller and smaller scales.

method was just one of a whole unexplored family of pictures that reflected the behavior of forces in the real world. Michael Barnsley was looking at other members of the family. Benoit Mandelbrot, as both men soon learned, was discovering the granddaddy of all these shapes.

There is something quite delicious that comes to us from new physics



"I obliquely drew in graphite directly on the architectural surface."



"This produced the best angle for 'turning the corner'."

Théâtre

II. (XVI^e). 1^o Art visant à représenter devant un public, selon des conventions qui ont varié avec les époques et les civilisations, une suite d'événements (V. Action) où sont engagés des êtres humains agissant et parlant.

2^o Fig. (*Vielli*). De théâtre: digne du théâtre, théâtral

3^o Genre littéraire; ensemble des textes destinés à être représentés en action devant un public. V. Comédie, drame, tragédie.

4^o (1610). Ensemble d'œuvres dramatiques présentant des caractères communs, une origine commune.

5^o Activitiés de l'acteur

(de: petit Robert dictionnaire de la langue Française)

The Oxford English Dictionary

defines theatre almost exclusively as a "place constructed...for viewing dramatic plays or other spectacles". It provides descriptions of buildings, how locations were chosen, etc; "In modern use, An edifice specially adapted to dramatic representations; a playhouse."

There is seemingly no real definition to locate "theatre" culturally and no means of relating the notion to the self. In English, the word comes closest to doing so with the following:

3. c. Dramatic performances as a branch of art, or as an institution; the drama.

d. Dramatic works collectively

6. *fig.* Something represented as a theatre (in sense 1 or 2 [a place; an edifice]) in relation to a course of action performed or a spectacle displayed; *esp.* a place or region where some thing or action is presented to public view (literally or metaphorically).

I can find within English definitions nothing to help me with notions of an artistic event (even the word actor, in the masculine, is used sparingly), of personages or of social or collective activity. Theatre denotes somewhere to go outside of one's self. It is designated an other.

I arrived at this conclusion even before reading:

8. *transf.* A thing displayed to view; a sight, scene, spectacle; a gazing-stock.

The differences between definitions reflect the differences between cultures. Consistent with the empiricism of English culture, theatre is predominantly associated not with an activity, but with a particular material place. Human action is not emphasized, but rather the site is personified and thereby privileged.

The *petit Robert* also initially emphasizes the site, but in equal proportion defines theatre as the engagement of humans in words and actions.

For me to write about the installation Susurration, it is necessary that I define for my readers how and why notions of *le théâtre* were necessarily embedded in the work. Finding oppositions between the etymologies comes out of writing about the event and clearly was not in the event itself.

Dissonance and difference are building blocks.

However, I believe that each viewer consciously or unconsciously brought some definition of theatre to the work.

Susurration employed some subtle theatrical techniques. Pale blue gels were used on some lights to cool the white paper. Some work was lit from across the room to cause a shadow to be cast by the viewer indicating her/his implication in the work. Viewers got caught in the light of the slide projector, casting a shadow. Sound was presented through two speakers and gallery and street noises were incorporated. The work, and anyone physically in it, proved to be the production.

A drawing reached the ceiling after turning a corner, the slide projector was placed near the ceiling, the lighting was used self-consciously, there was work on the windows, on the walls and on the floor. These elements, plus the viewer, filled the space in the creation of an event.

I borrow from many definitions of theatre. I construct a social contract. I believe that my work provides a location within which I and those who enter participate in a performance. The performance, being in the present, creates a work which takes life as its subject.

Bertolt Brecht borrowed from his times and against a climate of expressionism he developed a theory and a practice of distanciation. Brecht left to the world unorthodox moral tales, where the dispossessed and the disillusioned toughs on the streets of his contemporary Berlin became heroes struggling for life and for pleasure.

In the theatrical practice of Brecht there was a "chain of events" which became a substitute for the comprehensive linear plot. In a contemporary journal, Theaterarbeit, the following was said of Brecht's rehearsing of "Mother Courage",

Each scene is subdivided into a succession of episodes. Brecht produces as though each of these little episodes could be taken out of the play and performed on its own. They are meticulously realized, down to the smallest detail.¹

With a sensibility that has little reinforcement for a reader in post-modernity, he wrote "One can describe the world today to the people of today only if one describes it as capable of alteration."²

From Vsevolod Meyerhold, the most radical of Soviet producers, Brecht learned that "good theatre" is "when the spectator does not forget for a moment that he is in the theatre".³ From Eric Satie the first to include sounds of the everyday in his compositions, he incorporated the theatre equivalent of "*musique d'ameublement*", begging his audience to talk, to register the event as inconsistent, as 'full of clash' and contradiction as life itself.

From Meyerhold I borrowed the function of director, one who "erects a bridge between actor and spectator".⁴ This notion lays open the possibility of installation work as transformative theatre - art/theatre connected to its time and place and given meaning by those who make a pilgrimage to take part in/with it.

Such theatre would continue the practice of "Verfremdung", Brecht's conception of 'epic' theatre. "Verfremdung" in English means something close to estrangement, alienation or disillusion; *et en Français, le mot se traduit comme dépaysement ou distanciation.*

For Brecht, "Verfremdung" was accompanied by "Verfremdungseffekt",

'Effekt' corresponded to...[the] stage use of the word 'effects': a *means* by which an effect of estrangement could be got. Both these new words have a single object: to show everything in a fresh and unfamiliar light, so that the spectator is brought to look critically even at what he has so far taken for granted.⁵

perspective: the 'I' of the eye and the 'I'

A specific sense of time shapes how the world is perceived and how it is lived in. From the beginning of industrialization, clock time (a mechanical system of measurement imposed new demands away from an organic time-flow in rhythm with the seasons and agricultural society) defined moral limits for man's perceptions and reinforced a concept of the mind as separate from the body.

Renaissance painting had put into place a new paradigm. The perspectival system provided an ideologically privileged place for the isolated bourgeois viewer and constructed the individual's body as property.

A mind/body split is the foundation for the unified subject position, "I". If the material body is rendered absent from a perception of the self, notions of a shared space also are rendered absent from lived experience. The body as property alludes to a position of power over what is surveyed. Whether the object of the gaze is a painting, a woman, a worker under contract, it denotes individual possession of a visual space.

Susurration, the installation, did not describe the world. It constructed blocks of images and texts to be connected by the viewer with other images and texts in the exhibition and in the viewer's memory. The site was a women artists' centre for viewing.

Susurration challenged the notion of an isolated privileged viewing position by offering a plurality of subject positions. This could happen if the viewer remained alert to the processes and to the possibilities of making connections between and among...

The eye ceaselessly tries to make middle grey from what it sees because to the eye, middle grey is restful - it is comfortable. The mechanics of the human eye function like that. The human brain should not.

Susurration - the production of the artwork - actively negated any possibility of a privileged viewing position. The images were drawn flattened out. They were drawn lightly with pencil, sometimes with words placed in a dominant position to the drawn image (the artist's hand). The words and the drawing could not be "read" at the same time. No totality was presented, only the possibility of relationships.

With the exception of one wall, which had a painted pale hue, everything presented was black and white. Utilizing only black and white could make it easy for the eye to absorb its environment.

But no

wait

the presence/presents of distanciation, *dépaysement* caused ruptures...exposing contradictions and paradoxicalness in conjunction with the history of art and the memory of site/sight...

Susurrations exposed to view my strategies of dissonance and difference. For me, these are feminist strategies for breaking the supposed linearity, the supposed unity of the "I" which comes from the Romantic tradition. In a contemporary art context, this "I" is very present in expressionism. A common vehicle for "expression" is the use of painterly applied colour.

A strategy of re-clamation is often employed as resistance by those in the margins of influence (blacks, gays, women). In feminist production an expressive re-clamation is made through the appropriation of certain colours from dominant culture and through a use of texture. This re-production of expressionism connotes a faith in colour and texture as containing inherent meaning understood in the same way by everyone.

In semiotic terms, this appropriation and re-clamation is meant to change the signified. Yet the valency of sliding the signified under the signifier means that pink signifies little girl booties just as it signifies gay liberation. New cultural projects entail the analysis of signs within dominant culture and possible changes in their meanings.

A discussion of Susurratio took place during the exhibition as a *café rencontre à la galerie Powerhouse*. The questions which kept surfacing in different ways were: where is the colour and the texture traditionally associated with feminist art practice? where is the emotion which supports the struggle to make women's production visible? and doesn't the production Susurratio refuse the history of that struggle through its minimal use of these referents?

Numerous questions indicated that colour and maybe texture are felt to inherently contain emotion or indicate passion in the artist and in artistic "creation" or indicate a political direction. A lack of colour and texture, as strong elements in Susurratio, was cited as an absence of emotion and a few times as an absence of feminist content.

Feminist expressionism derives from the formal exploits of male artists in dominant artistic centres from the beginning of this century. The artist's "creative" power was directly associated with the phallic power he shared with his male viewer. For example, between the world wars, sexual prowess and creative ability were depicted as a seamless whole through the imaging of otherness (vagina "dentate", dismembered females, black woman as exotic fruit) often combined with the genital/paint brush motif.

For me, the colour fields of expressionist production are equivalent to a middle grey area. No artistic risks, no analysis of power and no links to the given cultural context are necessary. The weakness of such production is that it is self-perpetuating and does not account for Otherness.

Expressionism "expresses" an essentialist subject position. It did when imaging the "essential" sexuality and privileged subject position of male artists at the beginning of this century. It continues to do that. And it has come to "express" an essentialist feminist production.

At points... sometimes... a break is necessary for the paradigm to shift.

A rupture of the narrative is necessary to re-adjust the sight/site.

Susurration - the project - is/was allied most closely to post-structuralism, to a feminist strategy of distanciation and to *dépaysement*. Post-structuralism as a working theory of individual consciousness is necessary - a theory which studies the relationship of language, subjectivity, social organization and power. Distanciation is the necessary element to signal a dialogue with the viewer - a feminist dialogue of difference/différence and of shifting subject positions. *Dépaysement* is an inclusion of and respect for the larger social context which frames English production à Montréal.

Susurration offered ways to make manifest the material feminist body.

Through the spaces and through the abundant interstices presented in the installation, a viewer could wander and explore and turn corners. A notion of time/space connectedness could implicate the physical body. The randomness of street noise as integral to the work could disclose everyday materiality. Even when viewer controlled projections placed the body of the viewer physically against a far wall, Susurratio could be taken in only as fragments.

The lightness of the pencil drawings could initiate choreography as the viewer moved in to see a detail and out again to see the larger image. Large image beside small text or bold letters beside light lines could induce a sense of scale. Text stenciled onto the wall in a line just below eye level could force the reader to walk along the wall with it in an action of complicity.

The lightness of the pencil drawings and the smallness of detail could suggest a sense of vastness. Paradoxically, it could suggest intimacy.

Intimacy is an action.

Susurratio - the intimacy, the vastness - dissuaded an easy entry into the work and an easy exit from it. If the work was not comfortable, if it did not offer familiarity; the work was inter-active and it offered dialogue.

Susurrations - the event - was the extent of the viewer's involvement.

ALERT
WATCHFUL
ACTIVE
MINDFUL
ATTENTIVE
HEEDFUL
OBSERVANT

My feminist project in Susurrations went from cultural space to space and from sight to site against closure. An energized territory, present in the material body, undermined the mechanical discourse of clock time, not through interpellation necessarily, but through a process which forms its-self from its context.

Susurrations provided no comfort zone.

C'était une zone énérgisée

On the far side from the gallery doors, was the largest drawing on paper. It measured almost 10' x 4'. A graphite drawing filled the first half of the paper from top to bottom. It figured a crumbling plaster facade over a brick wall. Some bricks were exposed. Some bricks were cracked and chipped and pieces were missing. Some small interstices could indicate a future breakdown of the wall. Some bricks, row upon row still hidden under white plaster, could direct a reading of text placed in the very bottom right corner. Surrounded by a vastness of white paper, it read:

a wedge of emptiness

On the adjacent gallery wall were panels two and three of this series. Panel two figured one of the cracks in the plaster imaged in the large drawing. The text appeared to be sliding into the interstice or maybe it appeared as part of the wall fixed by the facade. It read:

EVEN IN DESPERATION WE FAIL...

**A LINE DRAWING MIND
IS ONE BENT ON CLOSURE**

**THE ONLY MEANS OF GETTING
TO AN OTHER**

IS BY NOT DRAWING LINES...

BY FLUENT DISCLOSURE

Panel three had no drawing, only letraset and heat transfers which figured the word **DISSONANCE** with an enlarged version of its definition (OED), and on the same level further along the paper occupying the same plane was an image of a full page of the OED on **DIFFERENCE**.

Panel two (4'2" x 4'1") together with panel three (5'4" x 4'1") almost equaled the surface area of panel one (9'10" x 4'1"). The three panels of this series could be read together with the spaces between the paper and with the corner that separated panel one from the others. The drawings with spaces as gaps could be read as a wedge of emptiness, turning a corner to recognize and discern A LINE DRAWING MIND through a recognition of the attraction of and the necessity for DISSONANCE and DIFFERENCE.

Or if a wedge of emptiness - read as an emotional state, turned the corner to A LINE DRAWING MIND and moved towards DIFFERENCE - a representation of the analytical process which offered some hopeful DISSONANCE; then what was offered by a linear presentation of a series of drawings on a wall behind the viewer as she/he entered the installation Susurration ?

The wall ran from a far corner across the room to the gallery entrance 28' 6" x 10'10". Starting one foot from the corner, a painted rectangular colour field of soft pink (champagne) covered 20' x 5'6" of the wall. This colour field could signal common ground.

The colour of the paper remained consistent with the wall throughout this series. While the size of the paper remained consistent, some differences presented themselves. Panel one figured a classical balustrade drawn lightly in perspective with pencil and text written at the base of the columns in the foreground. Panel two consisted of two pieces of paper touching along one edge and figured the same balustrade divided at the center of one column.

In this drawing the division marked distinct borders. Beside the second column was text formed by its shape. In the third panel two pieces of paper touched and each side figured a sheet of music by Erik Satie on the inside lower corners with a translation of the composer's instructions.

The precise colour of the paper on which drawings and text in English were presented was the same soft pink as the field which contained the final panel of this series. This part was a text written in French directly on the wall. It ran in a straight line just below eye level and read:

Il s'agissait d'éviter toute fusion entre les sons...

Mon souci était d'éviter qu'on eût affaire à un quelconque

objet spatial, et donc, également, à un objet temporel fini, avec un

début, un milieu et une fin.

Any perceived linearity of these texts was meant to be disrupted by the shadow cast upon the work as the viewer (Francophone/Anglophone... woman/man...) walked along the wall reading images, texts and spaces.

DIFFERENCE IS MUTUAL
EQUALITY IS A VALUE

Choosing to use "we" is an ethical issue for feminists. A concern raised by the inclusivity and exclusivity of language has caused feminist post-structuralist discourse to question the position of the speaking and the writing subject.

Universality is a discourse of the privileged.

An ethical usage of "we" requires that the speaker/writer first acknowledge who she is, "where she is coming from", and then how she names or speaks for the "other woman".¹ The recognition of the fluidity of subject positions marks a concern with how power functions within language, within the subject using it, and within a cultural and historic moment.

Post-Saussurean linguistic theory is one which looks at a system of differences but which could better investigate how accurately language represents the world. At the same time, this theory has informed the work of Michel Foucault as he identifies and asserts what constitutes the power relations inscribed in specific knowledges.

The opening of new subject positions within around and through current theoretical discourses causes cracks and changes to occur in the status quo. Catherine Belsey building on the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan suggests

that subjectivity has a history of its own, that psychoanalysis is itself a part of that history and that, understood in that way, psychoanalysis can contribute to our understanding of the historical specificity of the present.²

Belsey argues that it is not only the understanding of sexuality in Freud's theory that is relevant and noteworthy, but also the identification of the unconscious as a site of meaning. The existence of the unconscious puts into question the notion of the freedom loving consumer as the unified subject of the enunciation and as the originator of all his choices.

polyphony n. 1. multiplicity of sounds, as in an echo. 2. in *music* a combining of a number of individual but harmonious melodies; counterpoint.

All the drawings in Susurrations posed questions. If the producer of these images and texts could be located at all, she could be seen as implicitly or explicitly posing questions and contradictions in such a way as to invite the viewer to produce answers.

In Belsey's terms this process could be called "interrogative".³ Because it was meant to "unfix" the subject, Susurrations attempted to touch a repository of repressed signifiers forcing potential disruptions of the symbolic order. It meant to stir the unconscious, and to jolt new connections into being, to put the subject into process because therein lies the possibility of transformation...

This subject, as a site of contradiction and as one perpetually in the process of construction, was directly addressed in the two panels which figured classical balustrades. The first read:

I TOLD HER/HIM I LOVED HER
she used my desire

The text I TOLD HER/HIM was written with the her crossed out and the him marked above it and imaged on the base of the nearest column. The text I LOVED HER was written on the next base. Below, where a wall imaged the support for the whole structure was the text

she used my desire.

Part two in this series posed 'secrets' as a site of desire. The text in these panels was drawn beside the shapely outline of the mid-section of one column. The column's shape, reminiscent of a female form, could direct the meaning of the text:

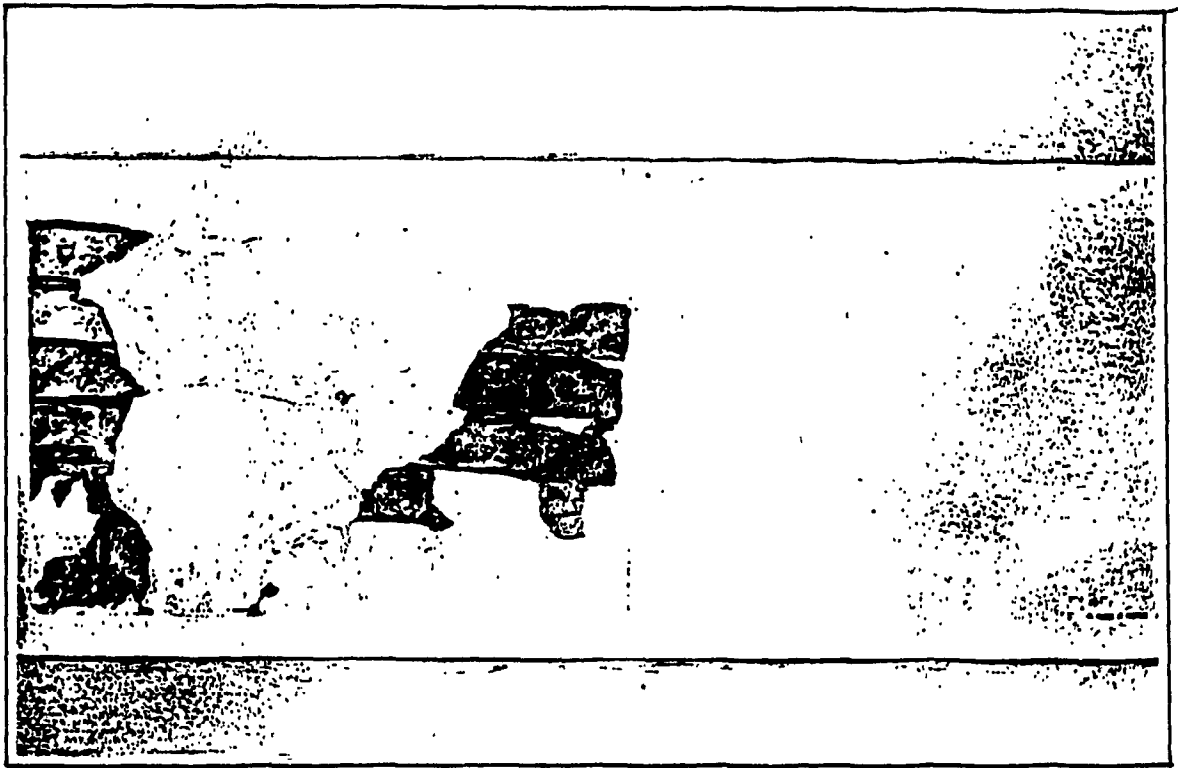
SECRETS FUNCTION TO ARTICULATE
A BOUNDARY
AN INTERIOR NOT VISIBLE TO OUTSIDERS
THE DEMARCATION
OF A SEPARATE DOMAIN
A SPHERE OF AUTONOMOUS POWER

How these drawings were initially read probably depended upon the gender and class position of the viewer. Within the signifying chain, the 'secret' of the second drawing had the mystery of a sexual/social practice and those images and texts had the potential to foreground/ elicit/ stimulate notions of material space *et les espaces imaginaire*.

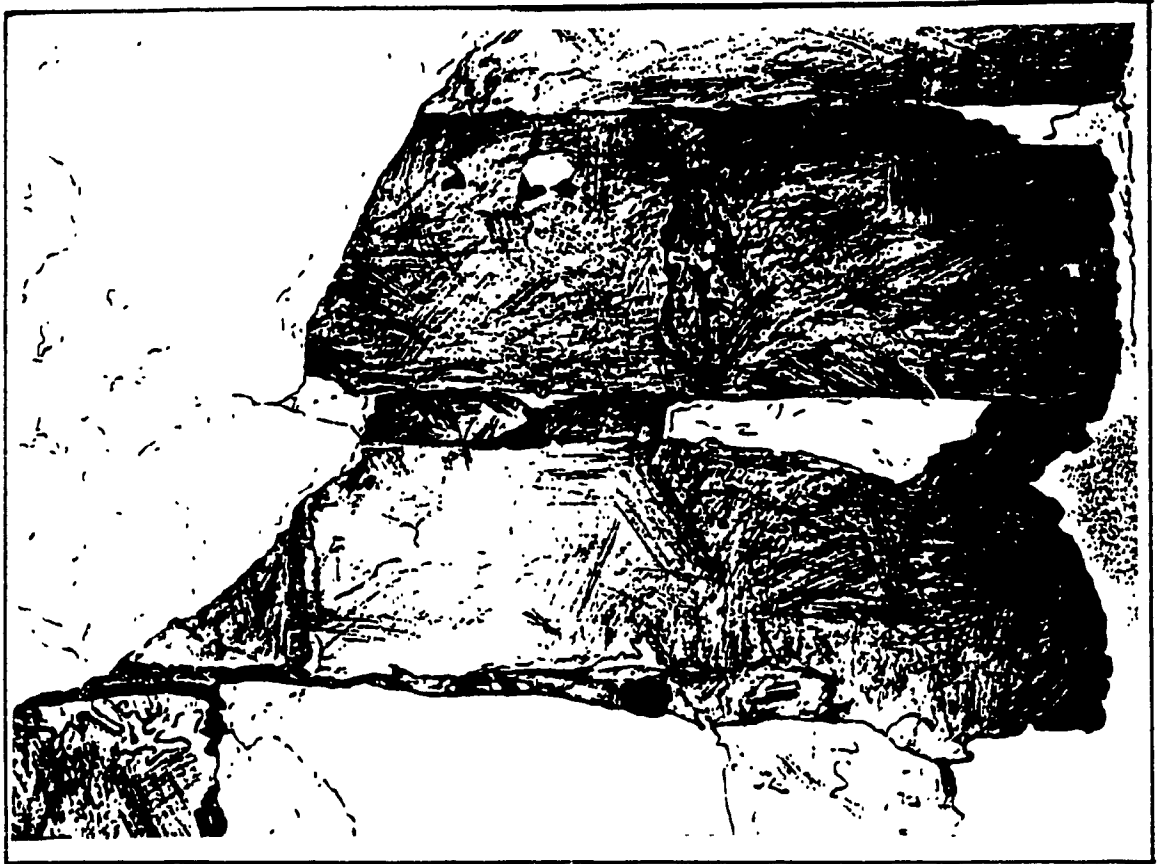
Disjunctions between intimacy and exclusion can be seen to open binary oppositions. Signs, the binary system between the signifier and the signified, function to articulate a boundary, an interior not visible to outsiders. Signs demarcate power. Access to interiors located across many boundaries is through language... and then transformations... ?

An image of a classical balustrade signifying patriarchy, or pawns in a game of logic, or the binary codes of a computer text, could be re-visited.

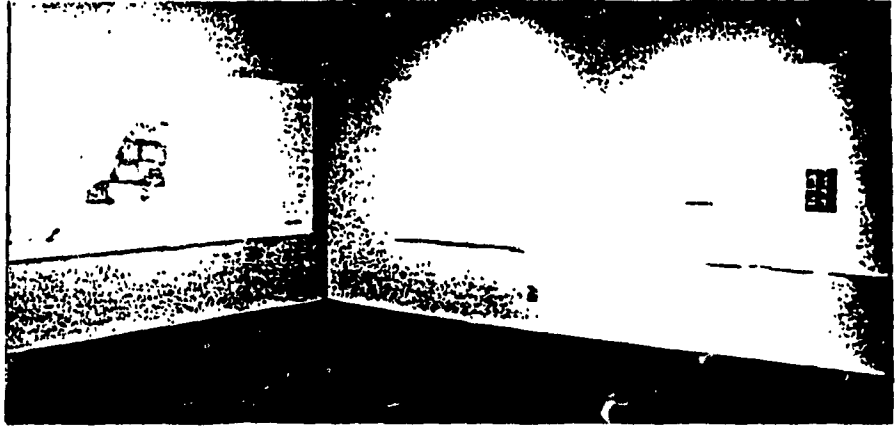
The gap between the subject of the utterance, the subject as speaker, source of meaning, and the subject of the utterance, the subject as signifier, held in place in its own speech, is the site of desire, which also speaks, but from another position and with another meaning. This other discourse offers the possibility of other positions for the subject and thus demonstrates the nature of subjectivity as an effect of language, the system of differences which always precedes it.⁴



"a wedge of emptiness"



detail of "a wedge of emptiness"



installation photo of the drawing series

DISSONANCE

Dissonance (di'sōn-āns). [*ad. L. dissonantia* dissonance, discrepancy, *f. dissonant-em* Dissonant; see -ANCE. Cf. *F. dissonant* (14th c. in *HALL-DARMS.*)]

1. The quality or fact of being dissonant; an inharmonious or harsh sound or combination of sounds; = DISCORD 3 a. 4. *spec. in Music.* A combination of tones causing *harshness* (cf. *BEAT 26.1 8*), and thus producing a harsh effect; also, a note which in combination with others produces this effect.

1857-8 *Dr. HALL-Jed. Pinner.* The Tradition of one of Pinner in 1857-1858 English, the definition and dissonance which shall make good my assertion. 1859 *MILTON Comus* 328 The ... rear ... Amid the air with harsh dissonance. 1860 *THE ...* *Approved French com. Belg. 1. vs. 103* *Dissonance* like music and connecting dissonance. 1871 *AMERICAN JOURN. N. S. 23 P. 7* What is Harmony to one Ear, may be Dissonance to another. 1872 *MILTON'S FIFTH LECT. (1782) 62* The harshness and dissonance of an unharmonious & unsmooth. 1873 *SOUTHERN JOURN. OF Agr. vs. 126* With all the dissonance of business work. 1874 *QUARTERLY HARMONY* vol. 27 The untraced new sound ... is called a Dissonance. The chord in which the Dissonance is heard, is called a Dis-

cord. 1875 *DISSONANCE Mus. Acoustics* 70 The various degrees of dissonance are produced by tone.

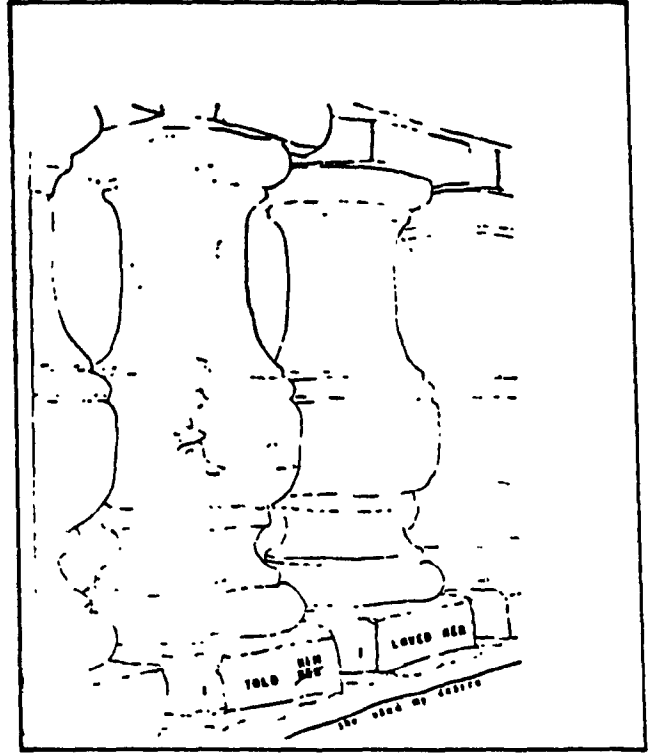
1876 *DISSONANCE* *Smith, Life 4. vi. 197* Your dissonance, which was in tune upon the organ, is a dissonance amongst ladies in full dress.

2. Want of concord or harmony (between things); disagreement, incongruity; = DISCORD 2.

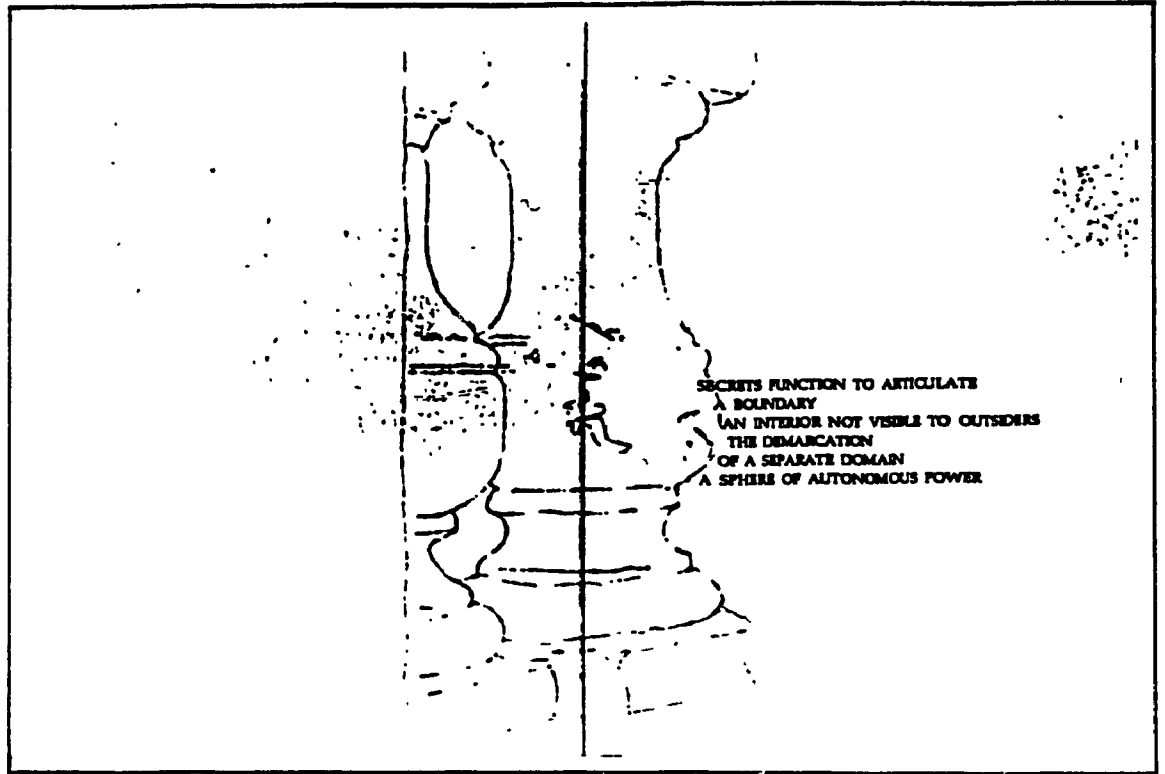
1877 *MILTON'S CIVIL. (1871) 47* To reconcile the dissonance of varying views. 1878 *SCHUBERT Def. French. in detail 1 43* The greatest dissonance, and even antagonism of opinions.

1879 *KNOW & EN. ECONOM. 2100. (1862) IV. 261* The pressing variance and dissonance between the different tribes. 1879 *TRINIDAD. Fragm. Sc. (1879) L. 26. 63* The materials ... are in dissonance with the immense says.

detail from panel 3 "DISSONANCE"



"recognition of the fluidity of subject positions"



"...two in this series posed 'secrets' as site of desire"

FAÇON ÉBLOUISSANTE

Neils Bohr

(a Danish physicist and 'father' of quantum mechanics)
is quoted as saying that language for the atomic scientist can
only be used as in poetry, as a way of creating approximate
imagery and mental connections.

os cil late (os'ð-lat'), *v.i.* [-lated, lating], [L. pp. of *oscillare*, to swing], 1. to swing to and fro. 2. to be indecisive; fluctuate; vacillate. 3. in *physics*, to vary between maximum and minimum values, as an electric current. *v.t.* to cause to oscillate.

os cu late (os'kyoo-lat'), *v.t.* & *v.i.* [-lated, -lating], [L. *osculari* < *osculum*, kiss, dim. of *os*, a mouth], 1. to kiss. 2. to touch closely. 3. in *biology* to have (characteristics) in common.

(Webster's New World Dictionary - Concise Edition)

osculation *n.f.* (1765; fin xve, <<baiser>> ; lat. *osculatio*). *Géom.* Mode de contact propre aux courbes et aux surfaces osculatrices.

osmose *n.f.* (1861; gr. *ôsmos* <<poussée, impulsion>>). 1o Phénomène de diffusion, qui se produit lorsque deux liquides ou deux solutions de concentrations moléculaires différentes se trouvent séparés par une membrane semiperméable laissant passer le solvant mais non la substance dissoute. 2o *Fig. et littér.* Interpénétration, influence réciproque.

<< Il se fait comme ça, entre les rêves et la conscience éveillée, des échanges mal définis: une sorte d'osmose >> (Aragon).

(Le Petit Robert dictionnaire de la langue française)

Michel Foucault

Latin saying: Nomen est numen "to name is to know"

Latin: fractus (adj) frangere (v) to break: to create irregular fragments
grainy, hydralike, in between, pimply, pocky, ramified, seaweedy,
strange, tangled, tortuous, wiggly, wispy, wrinkled ...

In his monograph entitled, The Fractal Geometry of Nature,(1983), Benoit Mandelbrot elucidated his theory of fractal geometry. Fractal, his word, was invented to bring together under one heading a large class of objects that have played an historical role in the development of pure math.

To some musicians, to some visual artists, fractals signify the new science. A progressive science of motion, of process, of becoming rather than being. This works as a metaphor. It works as an intervention.

Modern math began with Cantor's set theory and Peano's space-filling curve.
The patterns of Euclid and Newton did not work...
A basic interconnectedness of nature arises...

Interconnectedness is beyond a reality of opposites.

All things are not equal...

Differences are mutable...

Quantum theory demolishes classical concepts.

The solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities. These are probabilities of interconnection . . . of interpenetration. Nature, not made of basic building blocks to be observed and pondered, is a complicated network of relations among various parts. In classical physics, the temporal order of two events was assumed to be independent of any observer. Not so...the observer is integral.

There is an overwhelming implication of any observer to the physical environment. There are artists in all disciplines (and between disciplines) who are using new physics as tools. For example:

Natalie Crohn Schmitt¹ discusses contemporary theatre and its connection to a new science view of nature. A Chorus Line became Broadway's longest-running show in September 1983. This popular musical, produced around many notions inherited from new physics, was far from esoteric. The doors closed in April 1990, to a sell-out crowd.

A Chorus Line was interactive; not only technically, but structurally. "[L]ayering can be seen in the performers who assume the role of performers; the audience that assumes the role of audience; the mirror set that reflects the actual theatre; the theatre that symbolizes the theatre in the play..."²

[T]he relationship of layers is intensified by their affinities, particularly by their isomorphisms, which push the seeming or actual interplay between layers to the limit. Our attention oscillates between the actor as background and the character as foreground. We have no word for the kind of aesthetic experience provided by this layering of isomorphic elements: a kind of shimmering, density, or multitude, often suggestive of an infinite loop...³

While working with the British rock musician David Bowie, Montréal dance choreographer Edouard Lock was quoted in the press as saying: "There is essentially an unpredictable and undefinable element that people have chosen to call chaos...that doesn't seem to be coherent with the Newtonian

view of things... There's something in the variations it implies...which is interesting to me as far as dance is concerned."4

Bruno Degasio, a Toronto based electroacoustic musician, has composed numerous computer music pieces developed from fractal theory. Paterson Ewen paints images which imply sound and which entail notions of chaos and unpredictability.

The recent exhibitions of Montréal painter Carol Wainio could be read as an exercise in "self similarity". Small scale landscapes related to large figures and/or text and/or music. These scaling references shifted within the work and carried a potential for moving the work beyond itself to its context.

The sculpture of Claude Mongrain offers "landscapes" filled with lost unity, displacement and notions of scaling. "Thus, entering into the "field" of a Claude Mongrain sculpture becomes an adventure of self discovery. Its like the old adage, you can't put your foot in the same river twice."6

John Cage:

unimpededness

and interpenetration.

now this

unimpededness is seeing that in all of space each thing and each human being is at the center

interpenetration means that each one of these most honored ones of all is moving out in all directions

penetrating and being penetrated by every other one no matter
what the time or what the space. so that when one says
that there is no cause and effect, what is meant is that there
are an incalculable infinity of causes and effects, that in fact
each and every thing in all of time and space is related to
each and every other thing in all of time and space. this
being so there is no need to cautiously proceed in dualistic
terms7

Computer jargon: Windows Of Vulnerability: "taking the risk is worth it". These are not space windows. This is space of time. In a highly sophisticated network of computer information, which has been programmed to allow other information to pass through, where information being fed to a given monitor arrives from a number of sources and many programs are feeding many differently working computers all at the same time and all the information must filter through at the right time and in the right order and it is difficult to conceive of the complexity anyway, there is a margin of probability that the whole system will crash. Not a little crash. The whole operating system will change itself from how it can be recognized and how it can be used to what appears to be incomprehensible/different or not at all.

Practicing complicated networks, which favor flexible interactions over stable systems, can be profitable. For example, such complex systems are used in high finance. Risks encountered, chaotic in form (it is known a crash will happen, but not when or at what juncture), are outweighed by the probable gains. This activity moves chaos from a theory to a method.

In his early research on the fluctuations of cotton prices, Mandelbrot developed a method of scaling. "...a symmetry of large scales and small...[w]ithin the most disorderly realms of data lived an unexpected kind of order."⁸ When entering a new reality there is no intuition.

Intuition must be developed. Mandelbrot developed an intuition to look at scaling. Then his studies of irregular patterns in natural processes and his

exploration of infinitely complex shapes had an intellectual intersection: a quality of self-similarity was found, a symmetry across scale. A way to represent symmetry across scale is to use fractal imagery.

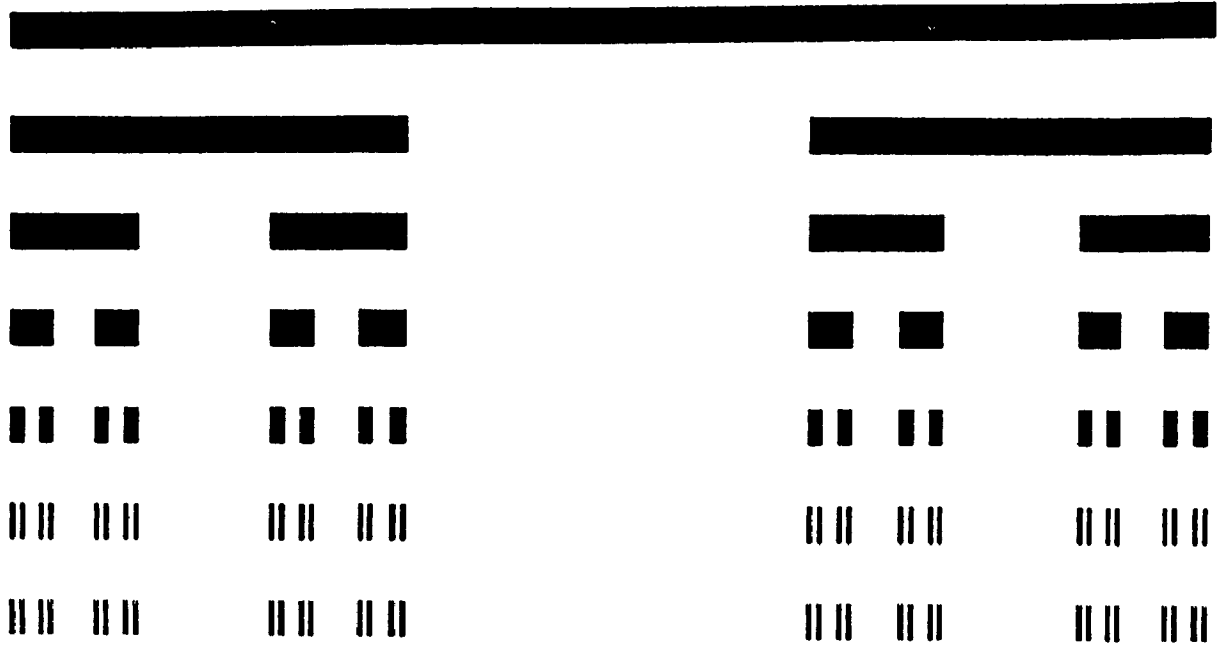
New physics notions of scaling come from the study of chaos. Chaos, the study of dynamical systems, is a true paradigm shift. It is a transformation in ways of thinking and it is work that falls between disciplines.

The American physicist, Mitchell Feigenbaum, looked for the hidden regularity contained in the constant change of turbulent systems. He is quoted as saying,

One has to look for different ways. One has to look for scaling structures - how do big details relate to little details. You look at fluid disturbances, complicated structures in which the complexity has come about by a persistent process. At some level they don't care very much what the size of the process is - it could be the size of a pea or the size of a basketball. The process doesn't care where it is, and moreover it doesn't care how long it's been going. The only things that can ever be universal, in a sense, are scaling things.⁹

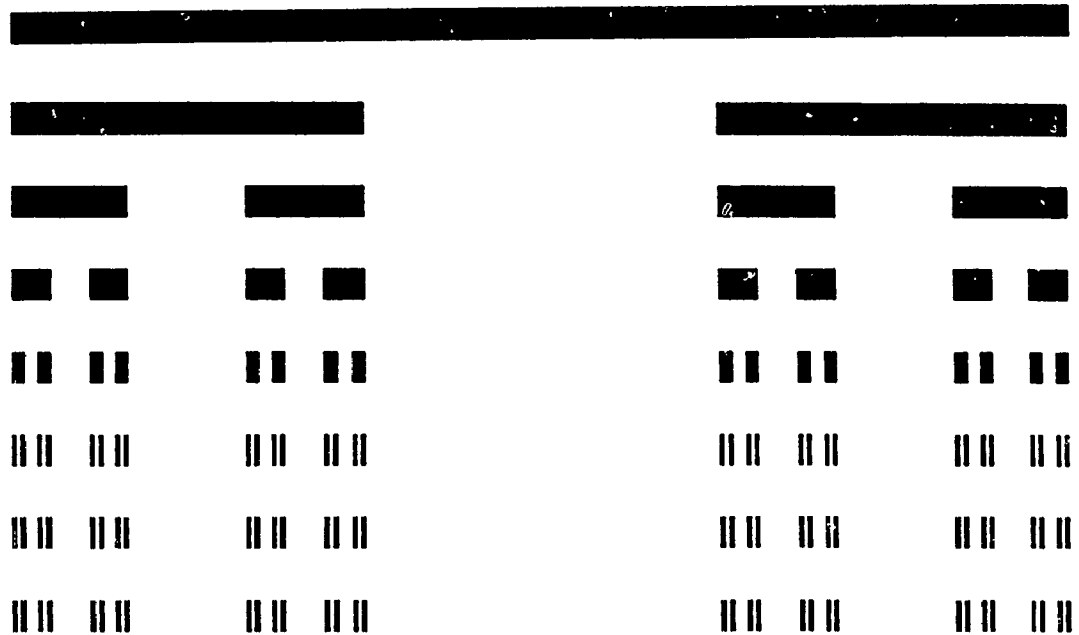
Physical laws were of great concern to Feigenbaum. The "kind of relativity in which the position of the observer, near or far, on the beach or in a satellite, affected the measurement."¹⁰

He tried quite seriously to analyze this experience in terms of the tools of theoretical physics, wondering what he could say about the brain's machinery of perception...Given the vast amount of information available to your senses, how does your decoding apparatus sort it out? ...the brain does not own any direct copies of stuff in the world...Information is stored in a plastic way, allowing fantastic juxtapositions and leaps of imagination.¹¹



THE CANTOR DUST. Begin with a line; remove the middle third; then remove the middle third of the remaining segments; and so on. The Cantor set is the dust of points that remains. They are infinitely many, but their total length is 0.

The paradoxical qualities of such constructions disturbed nineteenth-century mathematicians, but Mandelbrot saw the Cantor set as a model for the occurrence of errors in an electronic transmission line. Engineers saw periods of error-free transmission, mixed with periods when errors would come in bursts. Looked at more closely, the bursts, too, contained error-free periods within them. And so on—it was an example of fractal time. At every time scale, from hours to seconds, Mandelbrot discovered that the relationship of errors to clean transmission remained constant. Such dusts, he contended, are indispensable in modeling intermittency.



Plates 80 and 81 □ CANTORIAN TRIADIC BAR AND CAKE (HORIZONTAL SECTION DIMENSION $D = \log 2 / \log 3 = 0.6309$). SATURN'S RINGS. CANTOR CURTAINS.

The Cantor dust uses $[0,1]$ as initiator, and its generator is

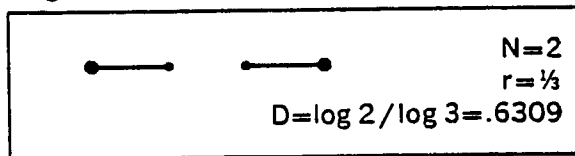
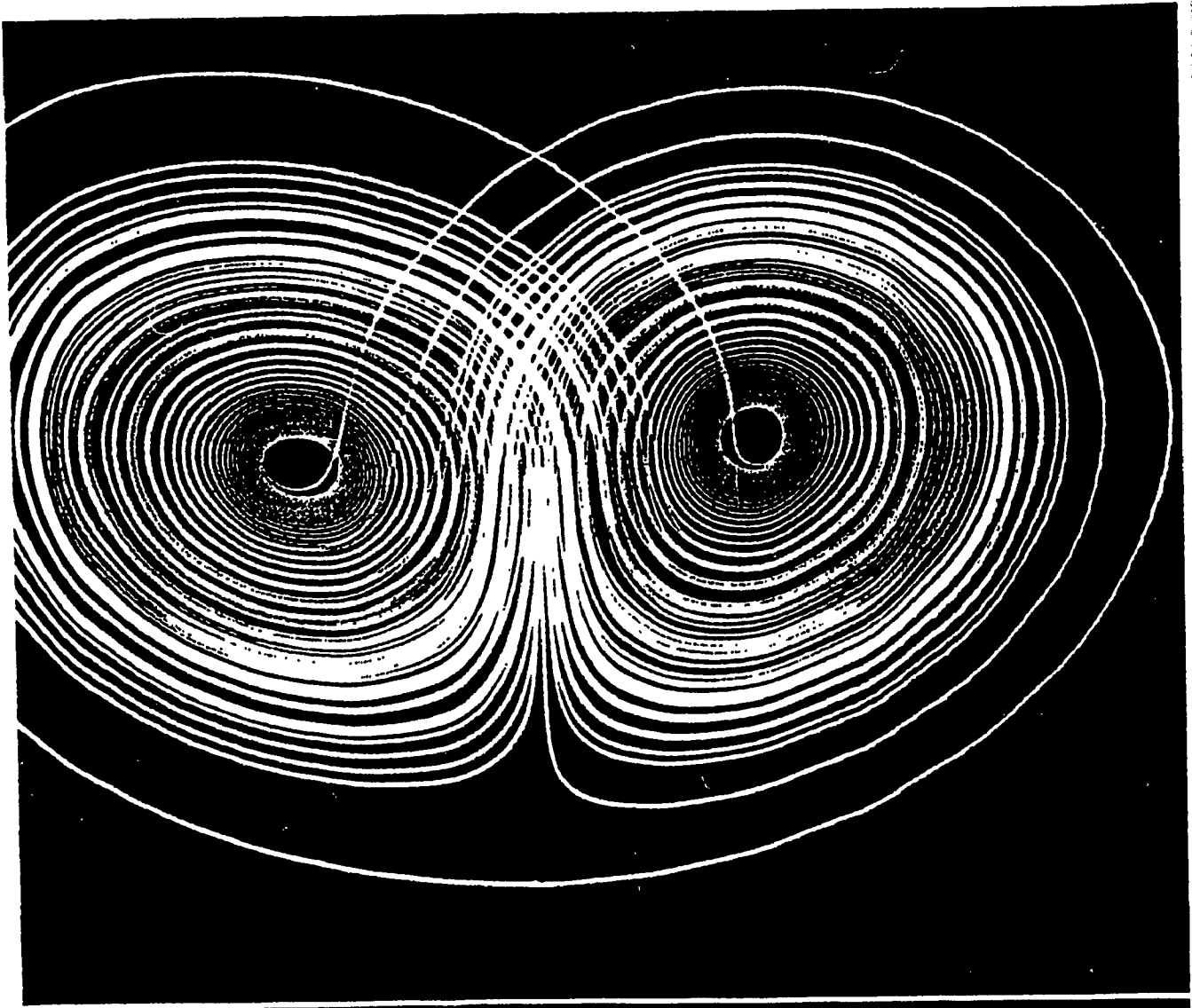
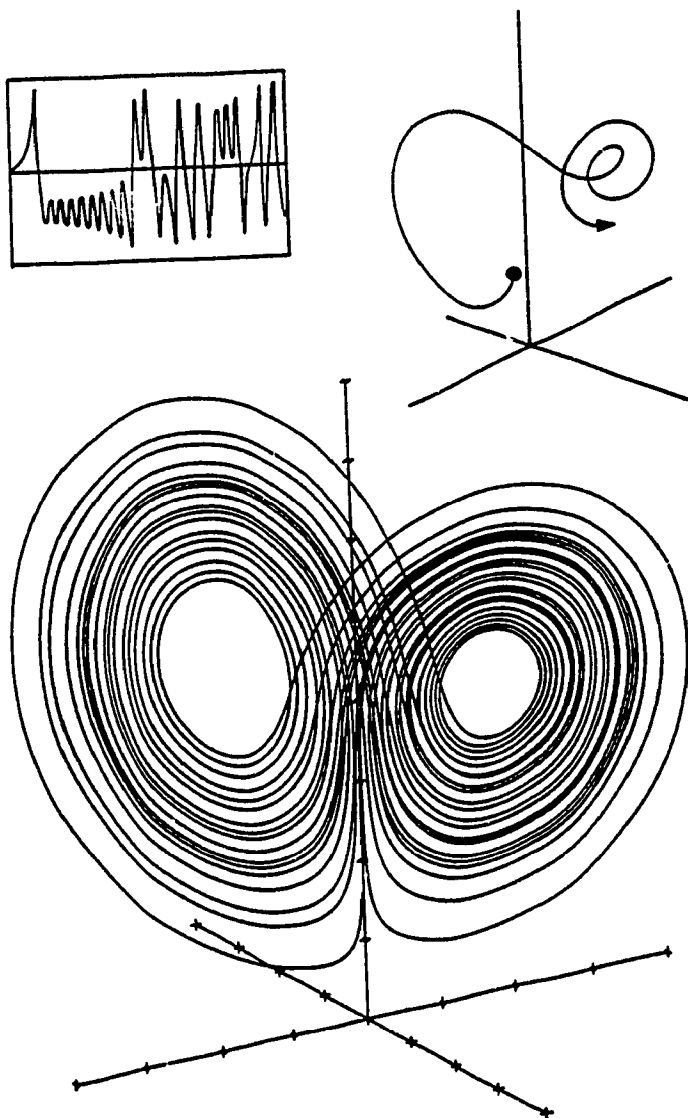


PLATE 80. The Cantor dust is extraordinarily difficult to illustrate, because it is thin and sparse to the point of being invisible. To help intuition by giving an idea of its form, thicken it into what may be called a Cantor bar. ◀ In technical terms, this is the Cartesian product of a Cantor dust of length 1, by an interval of length 0.03. ▶

CURLING. The construction of the Cantor bar results from the process I call *curdling*. It begins with a round bar (seen in projection as a rectangle in which width/length=0.03). It is best to think of it as having a very low density. Then matter "curdles" out of this bar's middle third into the end thirds, so that the positions of the latter remain unchanged. Next matter curdles out of the middle third of each end third into its end thirds, and so on ad infinitum until one is left with an infinitely large number of infinitely thin slugs of infinitely high density. These slugs are spaced along the line in the very specific fashion induced by the generating process. In this illustration, curdling (which eventually requires hammering!) stops when both the printer's press and our eye cease to follow; the last line is indistinguishable from the last but one: each of its ultimate parts is seen as a gray slug rather than two parallel black slugs.



LORENZ ATTRACTOR.



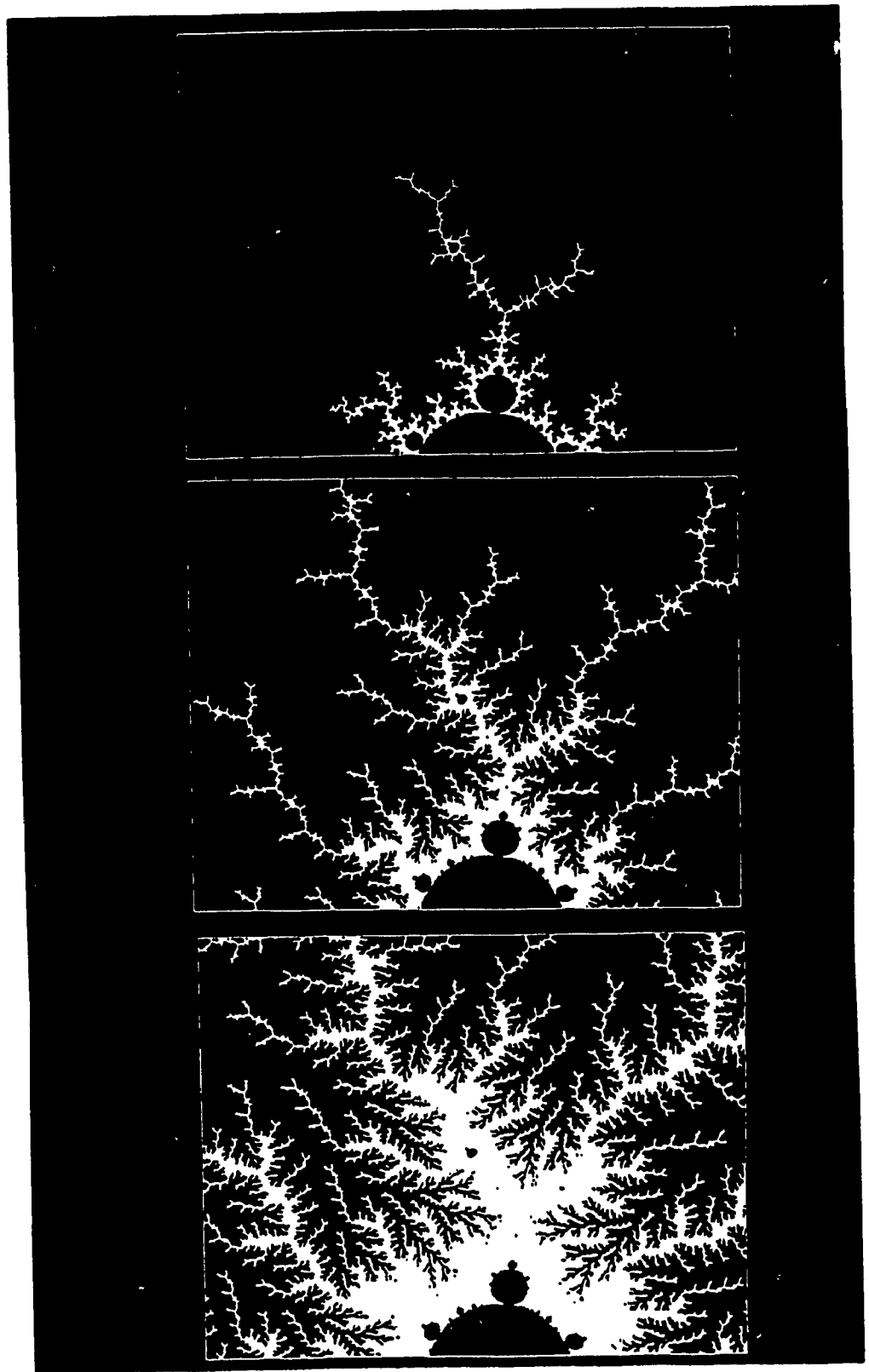
cal dynamo, the ancestor of modern generators, where current flows through a disc that rotates through a magnetic field. Under certain conditions the dynamo can reverse itself. And some scientists, after Lorenz's equations became better known, suggested that the behavior of such a dynamo might provide an explanation for another peculiar reversing phenomenon: the earth's magnetic field. The "geodynamo" is known to have flipped many times during the earth's history, at intervals that seem erratic and inexplicable. Faced with such irregularity, theorists typically look for explanations outside the system, proposing such causes as meteorite strikes. Yet perhaps the geodynamo contains its own chaos.

Another system precisely described by the Lorenz equations is a certain kind of water wheel, a mechanical analogue of the rotating circle of convection. At the top, water drips steadily into containers hanging on the wheel's rim. Each container leaks steadily from a small hole. If the stream of water is slow, the top containers never fill fast enough to overcome friction, but if the stream is faster, the weight starts to turn the wheel. The rotation might become continuous. Or if the stream is so fast that the heavy containers swing all the way around the bottom and start up the other side, the wheel might then slow, stop, and reverse its rotation, turning first one way and then the other.

THE LORENZ ATTRACTOR (ON FACING PAGE). This magical image, resembling an owl's mask or butterfly's wings, became an emblem for the early explorers of chaos. It revealed the fine structure hidden within a disorderly stream of data. Traditionally, the changing values of any one variable could be displayed in a so-called time series (top). To show the changing relationships among three variables required a different technique. At any instant in time, the three variables fix the location of a point in three-dimensional space; as the system changes, the motion of the point represents the continuously changing variables.

Because the system never exactly repeats itself, the trajectory never intersects itself. Instead it loops around and around forever. Motion on the attractor is abstract, but it conveys the flavor of the motion of the real system. For example, the crossover from one wing of the attractor to the other corresponds to a reversal in the direction of spin of the waterwheel or convecting fluid.

The Lorenz Attractor



FAÇON ÉBLOUISSANTE

Neils Bohr

(a Danish physicist and 'father' of quantum mechanics)
is quoted as saying that language for the atomic scientist can
only be used as in poetry, as a way of creating approximate
imagery and mental connections.

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os cu late (os'kyoo-lat'), *v.t.* & *v.i.* [-lated, -lating], [*L. osculari < osculum, kiss, dim. of os, a mouth*], 1. to kiss. 2. to touch closely. 3. in *biology* to have (characteristics) in common.

(Webster's New World Dictionary - Concise Edition)

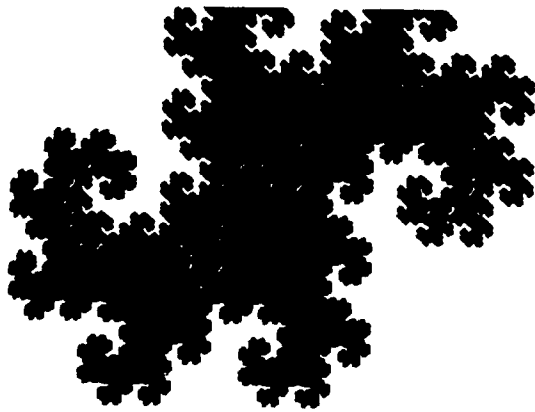
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osmose *n.f.* (1861; gr. *ôsmos <<poussée, impulsion>>*). 1o Phénomène de diffusion, qui se produit lorsque deux liquides ou deux solutions de concentrations moléculaires différentes se trouvent séparés par une membrane semipermeable laissant passer le solvant mais non la substance dissoute. 2o *Fig. et littér.* Interpénétration, influence réciproque.

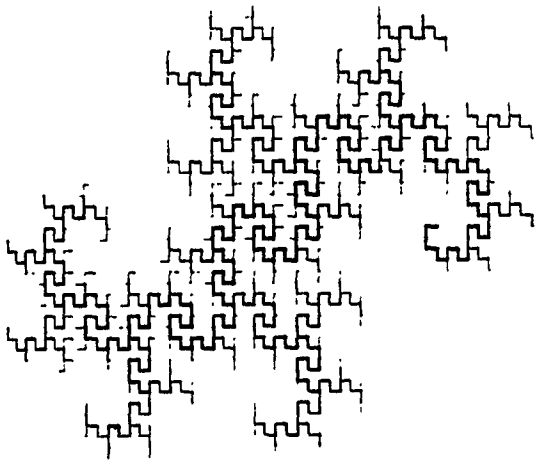
<< Il se fait comme ça, entre les rêves et la conscience éveillée, des échanges mal définis:

une sorte d'osmose >> (Aragon).

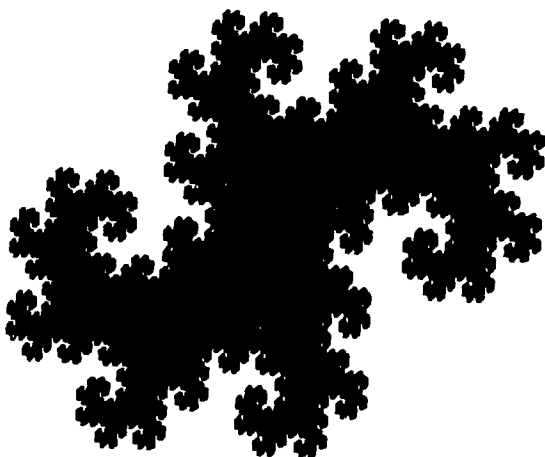
(Le Petit Robert dictionnaire de la langue française)



TWINDRAGON RIVER. After the streams near the source are erased (for legibility), the river tree of a twindragon looks like this.



A twindragon can be tiled by reduced size replicas of itself, like this.

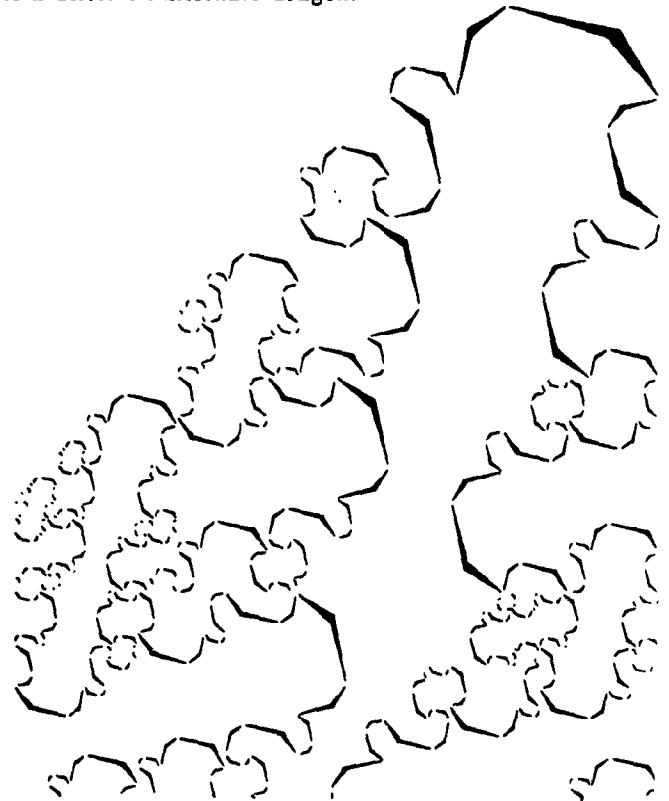


TWINDRAGON SKIN. This is a Koch curve with the following generator



The short and long intervals here are of lengths $r_1=1/\sqrt{2}$ and $r_2 = (\frac{1}{2})(\sqrt{2}) = r_1^3$, respectively. Hence, the dimension generating function is $(1/\sqrt{2})^D + 2(2\sqrt{2})^D = 1$, showing that the quantity $2^{D/2}$ satisfies $x^3 - x^2 - 2 = 0$.

ALTERNATE DRAGONS. (Davis & Knuth 1970.) Pick any infinite sequence x_1, x_2, \dots , where each x_k can be either 0 or 1, and use the value of x_k to determine the first position of the generator during the k -th stage of construction: when $x_k=1$, a generator is first positioned to the right, but when $x_k=0$ it is first positioned to the left. Each sequence generates a different alternate dragon. ■



self-similarity is symmetry across scale





**THE
S
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REGIONAL INDICATORS

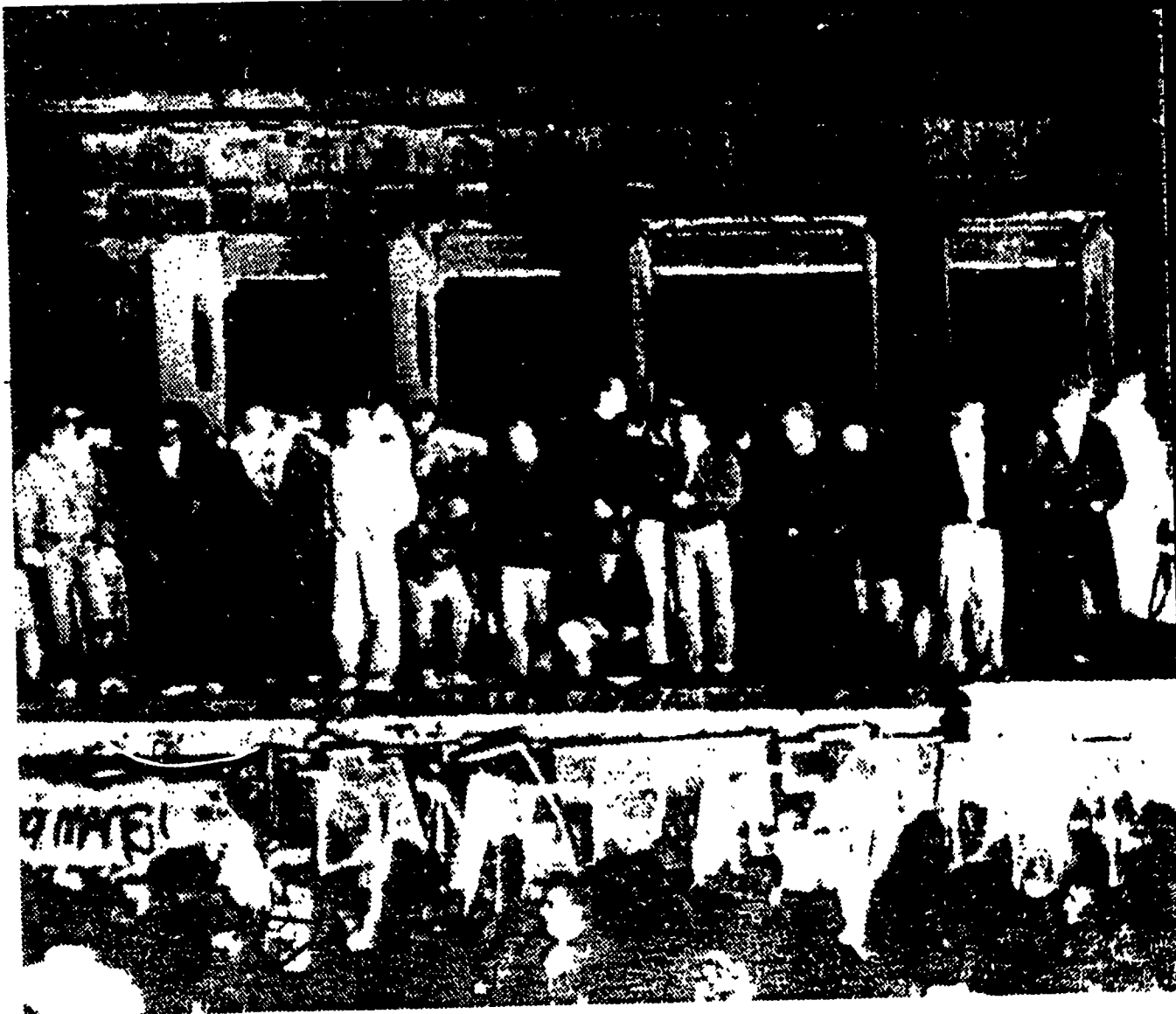


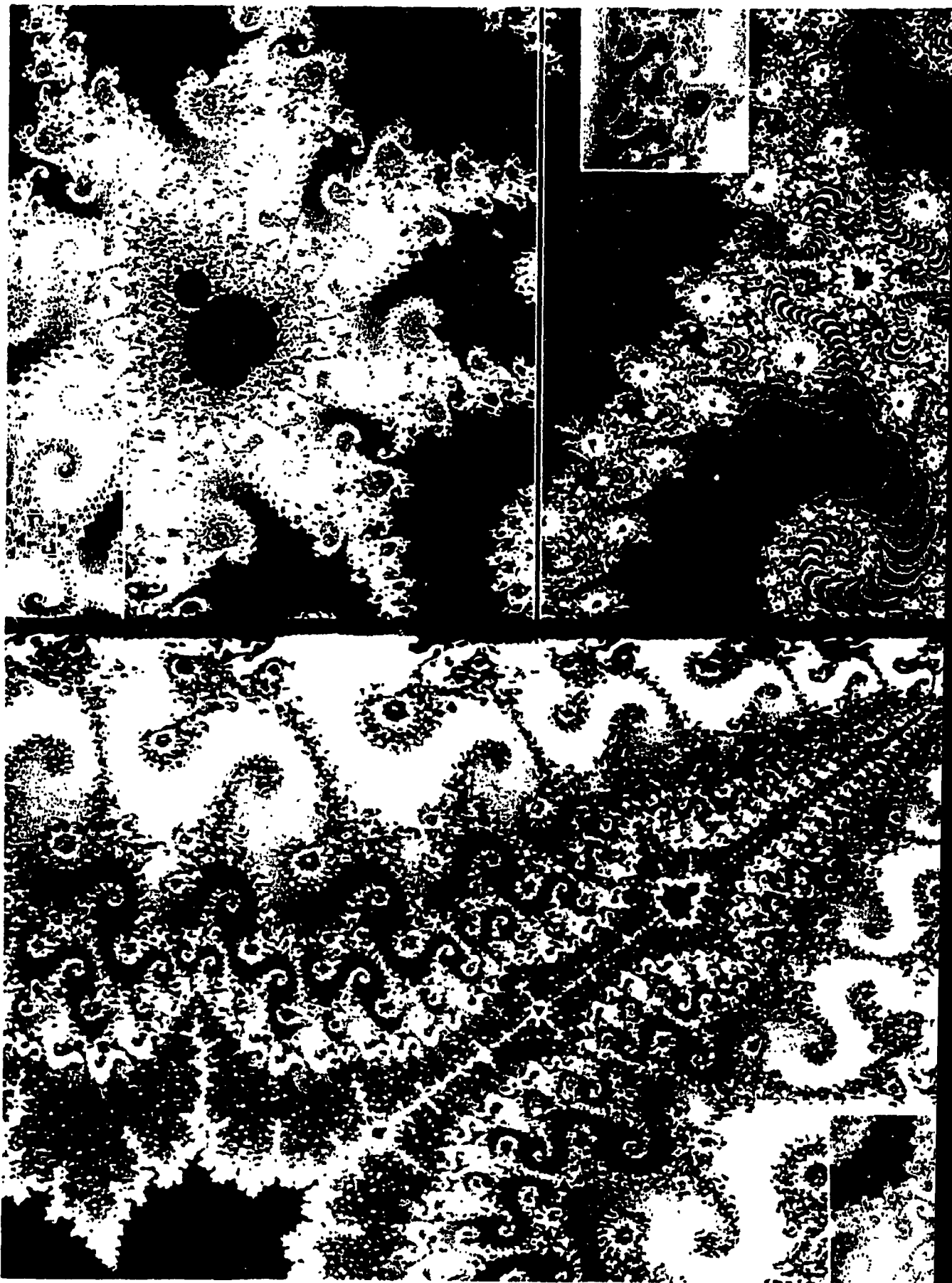
Montréal - Bonaventure
Laval - Chomedey 149

novembre 1989

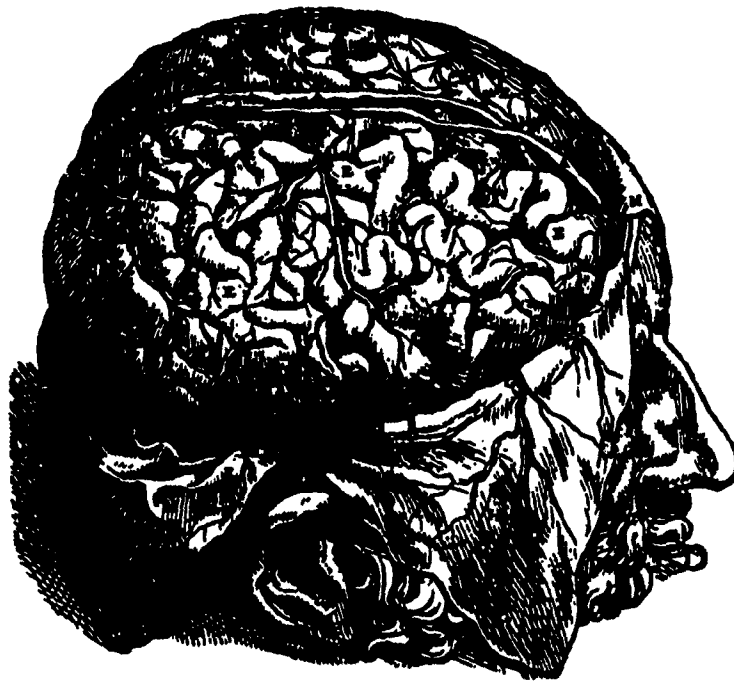
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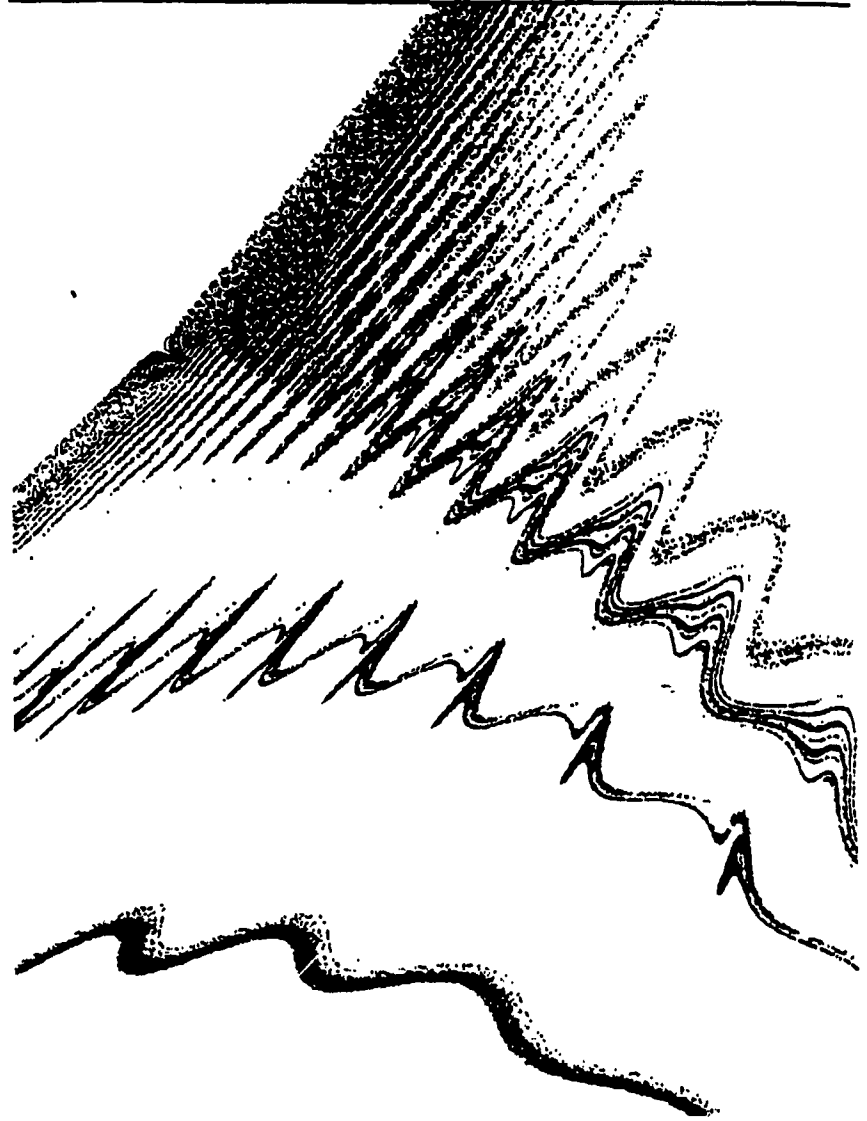




Tiny differences in input could quickly become
overwhelming differences in output-- a
phenomenon given the name
"sensitive dependence on initial conditions."
In weather, for example, this translates into
what is only half-jokingly known as the
Butterfly Effect--the notion
that a butterfly stirring the air today
in Peking can transform storm systems next
month in New York.



CHAOTIC HARMONIES. The interplay of different rhythms, such as radio frequencies or planetary orbits, produces a special version of chaos. Below and on the facing page, computer pictures of some of the "attractors" that can result when three rhythms come together.



Chaotic Harmonies

For Buddhists there are two modes of consciousness: rational and intuitive

derived from our experience
with objects and events in our every-
day environment = intellect whose function is
to discriminate, divide, compare, measure, & categorize,
creating opposites which is why the Buddhists call this type
of knowledge "relative". - Abstraction is a crucial feature of this
type - we cannot take all of the features into account, but select a few
significant ones. We construct an intellectual map - in which things are reduced
to their general outlines. Rational knowledge is thus a system of abstract concepts &
symbols characterized by the linear sequential structure which is typical of thought & speech 1

Probably my favorite Buddhist
is John Cage.

He would be my favorite because he has been a conduit for many new ideas
in music and he has pervasively influenced most art disciplines. This
influence has been part of my formation and his "voice" was included in the
installation Susurratio through the utterance of his words by a young
Francophone woman recorded on an audio cassette tape which played as a
susurratio. It was kind of Cagey.

I first saw John Cage at London's Sadler's Wells Theatre, in 1985. It was a
spectacular evening with the Merce Cunningham dance company. Because
my seat was "among the gods" Cunningham and Cage appeared to be not
more than a few inches tall. This seemed ironic to me - seeing two masters of
the twentieth century in such a grand setting given the perceived smallness
of the images.

The second time I saw John Cage was à Montréal November, 1989 . . .

I sat at the front of the balcony à la Chapelle du Bon Pasteur. The occasion was an evening à consacrer un Musialogue exceptionnel à

John Cage. Music/dialogue very Cagey.

C'était une expérience très différente de la première fois parmi les enfants du paradis . John Cage was human scale.

Between these two events, I produced Susurration.

Maybe John Cage was already rendered human scale

Two monks came to a stream. One was Hindu, the other Zen. The Indian began to cross the stream by walking on the surface of the water. The Japanese became excited and called to him to come back. "What's the matter," the Indian said. The Zen monk said, "That's not the way to cross the stream. Follow me." He led him to a place where the water was shallow and they waded across.²

LE TEXTE POUR SUSURATION (la bande sonore)

Pour les Oiseaux - John Cage, Les Bâtisseurs du XXe Siècle, Pierre Belfond, 3 bis, passage de la Petite-Boucherie 75006, 1976

Oui, mais ce n'est pas comme dans les sciences : il est possible de modifier la distance focale, mais une fois que c'est fait, on s'aperçoit qu'on n'a pas obtenu plus d'exactitude. On peut choisir un niveau plus poussé de précision : c'est encore flou. C'est toujours flou. Comme si l'échelle bougeait sans cesse...

Nous allons maintenant aborder vos rapports avec la technique ou la technologie. Je crois pouvoir déceler chez vous une logique, une continuité dans ce domaine...

Vous oscillez consciemment entre la vie et la mort...

Comme nous le faisons tous...

Il faut pour cela mettre en présence beaucoup d'événements qui chacun ont leur propre temps et vivent leur propre vie.

Il est très difficile d'en discuter, parce que l'expérience de la vie est différente pour chacun d'entre nous. Mais nous cherchons à faire éprouver à chacun, selon sa propre manière, sa propre expérience.

Cela m'a donné l'idée d'un théâtre sans littérature. Les mots et la poésie, bien sûr, peuvent toujours y entrer. Mais tout le reste, tout ce qui est en général *non verbal*, peut y entrer aussi. Ce qu'il faut éviter, c'est qu'une chose en supporte trop directement une autre : par exemple, que le texte soutienne le geste.

La circulation restait libre entre les triangles et dans le centre ; cela permettait de rendre mobile l'action autour du public. L'idée était aussi d'autoriser les gens, dans la [galerie], à se voir les uns les autres. L'art devait nous introduire à la vie... Eh bien, dans la vie, nous nous voyons!

Mais le principe...est profondément différent et m'intéresse également beaucoup : c'est celui d'une relation flexible, d'une flexibilité de relations

Voici quelques jours, nous parlions ensemble...

C'est cela! Je maintiens mon esprit vif et alerte, ou du moins j'essaie.
Résultat : tout ce qui est dissonant, je l'entends comme consonant. *Je n'entends pas seulement le chiffre deux, mais la pluralité du chiffre un.*

Je n'entends pas seulement le chiffre deux, mais la pluralité du chiffre un.

Bien sûr, il y a une différence! Mais elle n'est pas telle qu'il faille l'approcher en termes de valeur. Ce que j'essaie d'approcher, c'est le son en lui-même, tel qu'il est.

Je maintiens mon esprit vif et alerte, ou du moins j'essaie.

Résultat : tout ce qui est dissonant, je l'entends comme consonant.

Je puis accepter la relation entre une diversité d'éléments, comme nous le faisons lorsque nous regardons les étoiles, découvrons un groupe d'étoiles et le baptisons la << Grande Ourse >>. Alors, j'en fais un objet. Je n'ai plus affaire à l'entité elle-même, visée comme ayant des éléments, des parties séparées. J'ai devant moi, à ma disposition, un objet fixe, que je pourrai faire varier précisément parce que je sais à l'avance que je le retrouverai identique à lui-même...

Pour cela, il me faut revenir à la réalité, à cette entité-ci, à cette constellation qui n'est pas encore, pas tout à fait une constellation. Ce n'est pas encore un objet. Je puis fort bien voir comme un groupe de choses différentes et distinctes, cela même qui configure, sous une autre perspective, un objet unique. Ce qui fait de la constellation un objet, c'est la relation que je pose entre ses composantes. Mais il m'est permis de ne pas poser cette relation, de penser les étoiles comme séparées et cependant proches, *presque* réunies en une constellation unique. J'ai alors, simplement, un groupe d'étoiles.

C'est que je ne suis pas un philosophe...grec! Jardis, nous souhaitons des expériences logiques ; rien ne nous importait plus que la stabilité. Aujourd'hui, à côté de la stabilité, nous admettons l'instabilité. Ce que nous souhaitons, c'est l'expérience de ce qui est. Mais <<ce qui est>> n'est pas forcément le stable, l'immuable. Nous savons en tout cas plus clairement que la logique, c'est nous qui l'apportons. Elle n'est pas déposée devant nous, attendant que nous la découvriions. <<Ce qui est>> ne dépend pas de nous, c'est nous qui en dépendons. Et nous avons à nous en rapprocher.

Et malheureusement pour la logique, tout ce que nous construisons sous cette rubrique <<logique>> représente une telle simplification par rapport à l'événement et à ce qui arrive réellement qu'il faut que nous apprenions à nous en garder.

C'est cela, la fonction de l'art actuel : nous préserver de toutes ces minimisations logiques que nous sommes tentés à chaque instant d'appliquer au flux des événements. Nous rapprocher du processus qu'est le monde.

Nous rapprocher du processus qu'est le monde.

...Ce silence que vous réclamez, vous nous avez appris qu'il n'existait nulle part et jamais...

Ce que je veux dire, c'est que les conditions de la spatialité même de l'œuvre n'ont pas été respectées...

Ainsi, d'une part les œuvres empiètent sur l'espace, elles l'investissent, et, de l'autre, l'espace vient en retour <<dans>> les œuvres, il s'infiltré au sien des œuvres elle-mêmes.

Et puis, il y a un espace du fait que les œuvres sont superposées, et accumulent *leurs* espace. Il n'y a pas un espace unique, finalement : il y a plusieurs espace, et ces espace tendent à se multiplier les uns par les autres.

<<La signification, c'est l'usage.>>

Le dialogue, c'est donc avant tout l'espace.

In Noise: the Political Economy of Music,¹ Jacques Attali examines and enunciates the social/political constructions of music and environmental sounds at several historical junctures. Attali posits a progressive and future looking theory about composition through incorporating what he calls "noises of the body". Such music would not claim to transcend the body or its desires.

However, it must be noted that his attraction to theoretical nihilism in discussions around the suicide of form, the ritualized disappearance of the body through repetition and stockpiling, the imminence of catastrophe, are positions from which I am disengaged.

The material body is very present in late capitalism. It is a body which can be celebrated at the same time that it can be neglected, beaten and denied. My position on the indulgences of theoreticians like Attali is that they reflect a lament for the potential loss of phallogocentric Power. Attali's vision suffers leaps of logic and has a totalizing tendency which begins with his complete unashamed neglect of women, as theoreticians, as composers, and as noisy juicy bodies which comprise one of the others of *le quotidien*.

Attali's text, despite its striking absences, has value when he ventures a utopian vision of the physical body as a materially based self-empowered producer.

Concerns for the material body as an active creative agent were present in the installation Susurratio as the potential for transformation replaced information. It was necessary to signal the work as a time-based event; since time/space can not be separated time could connote a 'space' for transformation.

So what was presented? Susurratio, was traversed by two concepts of dissonance. One was *le quotidien* as integral to the work of art. This was imaged through the use of French text written on the windows and wall (while English text, on paper, was attached to surfaces in a perceivably less permanent way); and through the inclusion of sound. Sound as it affirms concrete existence.

And new physics, as it endows noise with form and as it represents the dissolution of classicism (art/science/geometry), is a dissonance. New physics affirms the possibility of new and unlikely understandings. It is about connections that are dissident to tradition. New physics is like dancing on the wall between where art/society/the material world is now and where they might be perceived to go . . .

There were slide projections of fractals, viewer controlled. These could mark a non-linear time through the imaging of new physics and through the occasional clicking sound as a gallery goer changed the slide. The sound track could index a notion of sound fields as ordinary sounds of the gallery became more perceivable in an attempt to hear the recorded voice.

Susurration embraced noise and the everyday as it embraced the viewer. Problems arise for a visual practice which wants to claim difference and so dissonance. "No organized society can exist without structuring differences at its core. No market economy can develop without erasing those differences in mass production."² The artist/producer must "compose" in a way that embraces difference against assimilation or erasure of the body.

se duce (si-dooz', -dus'), *v.t.* [-duced, -ducing],
[<L. < *se-*, apart + *ducere*, to lead], 1. to persuade to do something disloyal, disobedient, etc. 2. to tempt to evil or wrongdoing; lead astray.
3. to induce to give up one's chastity.

Leibnitz wrote,

Great composers very often mix dissonance with harmonious chords to stimulate the hearer and to sting him...so that he becomes concerned about the outcome and is all the more pleased when everything is restored to order.³

The "hearer" has sovereignty as he defines dissonance and harmony. He decides what amount of each is perfect for the maintenance of his equilibrium so carefully prescribed carefully measured in detailed consonance. How is it possible to engage and yet to challenge . . . How can I make my self visible⁴ . . . How is dialogue possible . . . How can I make the viewer visible to her self or his self in new spaces . . . Certainly not with harmony . . . How to circumvent fear . . . How to produce a sting . . .

A seduction?

December 7, 1989

One of the threads of Attali's text is that in contemporary society music is used to channel violence. It is the ultimate tool authority uses to anaesthetize society in general. Music, as repetition, stockpiled against the body, is the ultimate instrument of control.

Today is my birthday. I was born on December 7, 1948. It was/is the anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, an action which forced the Americans into World War II.

Today's newspaper headlines read:

Un forcené tue 14 femmes
à Polytechnique et se suicide

C A M P U S M A S S A C R E

GUNMAN KILLS 14 WOMEN
BEFORE SHOOTING HIMSELF

'YOU ARE ALL FEMINISTS!'
HE SHOUTS AS HE FIRES

A mad gunman made connections between his pain and fear and how he witnessed cultural feminism. His desires are too horrible to understand. His actions can not be rationalized.

The fear that women carry with them, from experienced violence in the streets, in the home and/or from the systemic violence of institutions, rises to the surface and screams for answers, or at very least, it is named.

As I recently re-read Attali's text the violence which he analyses and speaks about was an abstraction. It is well known that rock music channels violence, he pushes this "common knowledge" nowhere special. Yet he does make clear the pervasiveness and the ordinariness of violence. That is always important to state.

The end of his text presents a utopian vision. A future where "production melds with consumption, and violence is not channeled into an object, but invested in the act of doing". I, of course, assume this future includes women as those doing.

Susurration was about making connections. Writing about the installation is making connections. I am doing. Yet it occurs to me that perhaps I propose a utopian vision. A space where women are "doing". Where what I "do" is connected, has connections which expand possibilities and meanings into the light of day. Where fear, hate and rage, disorderly streams of data against the lie of social harmony, are expressed as discord that becomes a production before it kills.

My "doing" is for the connections/survival of dissonance as they/it might develop into understandings and respect for the differences which form societies. The elimination of dissonance, which is the denial of differences, leads to institutional violence and the systems which sanction it.

Those who have power in Western culture, white-middle-and-upper-class-men, design apparatuses which benefit their desires. Others who can pass themselves off as one of the club may also benefit. Those remaining must live somehow within the existing framework.

To "succeed" can mean that in obvious ways the "successful" support this system of profits for a few. The "sting" of the great composers, might allude to the recognition by the "hearer" of how he fits. The "sting" is a familiar register for him. If in no other way, he has a gender identification with what is "great". Dissonance - difference - change - dissidence - become his greatest enemy and his greatest fear. Woman - the body - can easily be read as that sign.

The tragedy of yesterday - women murdered - is a shock that disturbs greatly. It is very close to home.

A reality of disappearances and murder are part of the everyday in most parts of the world. (Including the United States, Guatemala, El Salvador, Eretria, South Africa, the Philippines, Lebanon, Iran, Bangladesh, Columbia) Punishment of the body - any body - is an act of misogyny. Rape, torture, dismemberment is the expressed fear and hate of women - of the Other.

In ways that can be analyzed but not fully understood, these horrific realities are sanctioned. They are sanctioned by governments and by institutions of Power, whether those institutions are cultural or corporate.

One male caller to an open line radio show this afternoon expressed it most concisely. "It is ok to hate women but we're not suppose to go that far. That's too far."

It is "too far" because the killer created a noise, a dissonance, which exposes the stinging harmony sustained through a bonding of common hatred across the female body and signals how that hatred repeats itself in social codes.

There are no clear dichotomies.

Certainly, it is not only men who act violently and who perpetuate systems of violence. But. . .it is certain that women are the ones who can and must transform our societies. Yet. . .this is not only the work of women in a world where often it is only men who can be heard by other men.

Today I am having great trouble writing. The intrusion of the everyday has affected what I can do. What I do has been affected - by the imagined sound of a high Powered gun - by somehow imagining the faces and families and community - by the voices of survivors and witnesses - by the horror of reality and by the fear and deep sadness which rises to the surface in me.

Today is a day of mourning

I must wait

to begin again

Making connections and finding the interstices

Processes of rupture

Discovery over process

These have been notions of where my work comes from and where it might go. I have thought already about the culmination of this thesis project. It is full of contradictions and ironies. To say discovery over process is to limit possibilities at the very same moment that it might open new ones.

Just as the value of philosophy is not what is said but what is not said, the future of art is not in its existence but rather in what is not yet visible.

Susurration, the installation, had a sound space as index. The words of John Cage, an American composer, were spoken in French by a woman. His thoughts were edited and isolated from their original context to provoke certain meanings. These sounds, at a low register, were sent out into the gallery from large speakers which functioned almost like pieces of furniture. The name of the equipment rental company was visible on large metal plates attached to the speakers. The incessant low sound emitted was a murmur, a noise, which emphasized the notion of every sound having its own space.

Attali states that recording thoroughly shattered representation.

Right from the beginning, machines invented to counteract temporal erosion, to constitute a *speech* that would be indefinitely *reproducible*, to overcome the ravages of time by means of the construction of mechanical devices, were moving in the direction of a death blow to representation.⁵

In Susurration, the use of an endless tape-loop represented just such a disappearance of the material body as is alluded to in the above quotation; but with a difference. A re-construction of the "hearer's" body took place. The words of the tape could not be discerned unless listened to from a very close proximity to a speaker. Positioning the body in such a way also caused the listener's displeasure. The whirrrrrrrrr of the slide projector's motor disrupted a linear succession of words and meanings.

If the viewer/listener stayed positioned at that juncture, it would be possible to observe the sounds of the gallery. The squeaking floor boards, the whispering of other gallery goers, sounds from the office, the noise of the clicking slide carousel and noise from the streets below.

susurratio [ad. L. *susurratio*, *ōnent*, f. *susurrāre* : see prec. and -ATION.]
Whispering ; *occas* . a whisper ; in early use, malicious whispering, tattle.
b. *transf* . A rustling murmur.

susurratio [sysyrasjö]. *n.f.* (1797; h. XVIe, << médisance >>; bas lat. *susurratio*). *Rare*. Bruit de ce qui susurre. *La susurratio des moustiques*.

In French, the verb *susurrer* is not commonly used; but it can replace *murmure*. A murmur is unmistakably a sound of the body.

Susurrer takes on the meaning of a voice too soft to be believed; the kind of small "feminine" voice of a woman who is seducing.

Presented was a paradox of easy seduction. Curious.

Beyond a mechanically re-produced discourse is a rupture of the transcendental project of harmony against the body. As the sound fields varied each day, the passing time was an attempt to create meaning, to signal a space. The infinite tape loop was infinite because it was connected to real life.

Not a monologue. . .A possible dialogue. . .Interconnections originating in the body. . .In the mind. . .Against Baudrillard's Blues. . .Reclamation projected. . .

Susurration simulated the words of Cage. Following a philosophy of chance questioned the status in quo. Power was relinquished and a social contract was presented. A common space could be formed for

...a process of inclusion which becomes a way of taking as a whole the difference of one group from an other and replacing it with the differences within groups...

...a process of inclusion which becomes a way of taking as a whole the sameness of one group to another and adding to it the samenesses within groups.

Unlike Attali, I do not buy the package which would sell me a notion of Power as located outside any incarnation of MAN. A floating sign. A floating power where no one is accountable and where crumbs are stockpiled and sold at discount prices.

There is a locus of Power. It is located in the well-oiled body of patriarchy's late-capitalist/military/industrial/complex. Power is not fluid and the sites of Power are not as fluid as some would believe.

There are those individuals who are the locus of power.

There are those individuals who maintain Power.

There are those who know, who understand that locus.

There are those who make connections between the maintenance of centres of Power and the monstrous consequences in the actions of Mad Gun Men.

My ambition is to transform
that which is signaled by the sound
space into writing

Eric Satie, the dadaists, Bertolt Brecht, John Cage, Marcel Duchamp composed against the most perfect harmony/silence of the bourgeois concert hall and museum.

They each directed the spectacle of harmony to give way to dissonance. Their music/noises broke out of its/their codes. They understood that the absence of meaning is nonsense and a direct invitation to any and all new meanings. "Composition is inscribed...in the permanent fragility of meaning after the disappearance of usage and exchange."⁶

Nothing has more fragility of meaning than to be an Other within a dominant culture. To understand how we are placed and then to use that knowledge to position ourselves beyond usage and exchange is political action. It is an act of empowerment.

Listen to the sounds . . .

The distance between actual space and that of the installation was minimized. The resulting multi-layers foreground space and bodies co-determining each other. This co-determination could signal sameness in difference, could signal an agenda of gender issues, could signal a space for women to compose against the most perfect harmony/silence of the bourgeois order . . . could signal a space/body which does not speak for the observed . . . but rather a space where each body . . . speaks.

Employing a conceptualist presentation which at the same time constructed its own disruption, Susurration forced displeasure as a demand that each viewer also be a composer and create relationships of pleasure . . .

Susurration attempted to designate the un-sayable and the un-predictable as sites of desire: a mutation in the possible relationships of one's self to oneself, and to one's body, a modification in the meaning of form as a course of process and of production, a possible continuation of this process into the everyday moving toward a sense of pleasure in

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. An interesting discussion of the intentions in installation works of the 1970's is presented in an article written by Chantal Boulanger entitled "*au - delà de l'in situ*", *Parachute*, No.42, 1986, pp.16-20.
2. *ibid.*, p.54 (translation provided with the text).
3. *ibid.*, p.54.
4. Battcock, Gregory, Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, E. P Dutton, New York, 1966. It was with surprising recollection that I re-read this influential text after many years. Where I was once very influenced, especially by the Michael Fried essay, which contains his memorable statement "what lies between the arts is theatre."; I now understand forms of theatre as struggle, and as possible interdisciplinary breakdowns of ideological apparatuses.
5. Fried, Michael, "Art and Objecthood", Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, p.141.
6. *ibid.*, p.141.
7. Boulanger, Chantal, "*au - delà de l'in situ*" *Parachute*, No.42, 1986, p.18.
8. Gleick, James, Chaos: Making a New Science, Viking, New York, 1987, pp.116-117.

Art which surfaces

1. "Hear me with your eyes", Geneviève Cadieux, Galerie René Blouin, Montréal, 29 April to 27 May, 1989.

space and bodies

1. The quotation used is from John Cage.
Cage, John, Pour les Oiseaux, Les Bâtisseurs du XXe Siècle, Pierre Belfond, 3 bis, passage de la Petite-Boucherie 75006, 1976.
2. Notions of interactivity, using a new science metaphor of interconnections, jagged edges and interstices, were first developed in an unpublished essay titled "The Spin-off Effect", May 1988, solicited by Renée Baert for Critical Paths.

Discontinuity, bursts of noise...

1. Gleick, James, CHAOS: Making a New Science, Viking, New York, 1987, p.94.
2. Plante, David, The Francoeur Novels, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1983.

Susurrations the site specific

1. Attali, Jacques, Bruits essai sur l'économie politique de la musique, presses universitaires de France, 1977.
2. Lamoureux, Johanne, "Le Musée en Pièces Détachées", Public: Some Uncertain Signs, Public Access Collective, Toronto, No. 1, Winter 1988, p.53.
3. *ibid.*, pp.61-62.

There is something quite delicious

1. Gleick, James, Chaos: Making a New Science, Viking, New York, 1987, p.98.

2. *ibid.*, p.98.

3. *ibid.*, p.3.

4. *ibid.*, p. 97, This system for measuring reality was put forward by the mathematician, Benoit Mandelbrot concurrently with researchers in other disciplines.

Théâtre

1. John Willet, The Theatre of Bertold Brecht, Methuen & Co., London, 1959, p.153.

2. *ibid.*, p.77.

3. *ibid.*, p.112. Said of Meyerhold in the diary of the Soviet producer Vakhtangov, 1922.

4. Meyerhold on Theatre, edited and translated by Edward Braun, Methuen, London, 1969, p.56.

5. John Willett, The Theatre of Bertold Brecht, p.179.

On the far side

1. Spivak, Gayatri, In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics, Methuen, London, 1987.

2. Belsey, Catherine, "The Romantic construction of the unconscious", Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-84, ed. by Francis Barker et als., Methuen, London, 1986, p.58.

3. Belsey, Catherine, Critical Practice, Methuen, London, 1980.

4. Belsey, "The Romantic construction of the unconscious", p.62.

FACON ÉBLOUISSANTE

1. Schmitt, Natalie Crohn, Actors and Onlookers: Theater and Twentieth-Century Scientific Views of Nature, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1990.
2. *ibid.*, p.88.
3. *ibid.*, p.88.
4. Montreal Mirror, March 1 - March 8, 1990, p.11.
5. "*haut parleur*", Galerie Chantal Boulanger, Montréal, 24 February to 24 March, 1990.
6. Youngs, Christopher, Claude Mongrain, Art Gallery of Windsor, 28 May to 17 July, 1988, p.13.
7. Cage, John, Silence, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Conn., 1961, pp. 46-47.
8. Gleick, James, Chaos: Making a New Science, Viking, New York, 1987, p.86.
9. *ibid.*, p.186.
10. *ibid.*, p.162.
11. *ibid.*, pp.163-164.

For Buddhists

1. Capra, Fritjof, The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism, Shambhala, Berkeley, 1975, p.27.
2. Cage John, A Year From Monday, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Conn., 1967, p.135.

In Noise

1. Attali, Jacques, Noise: the Political Economy of Music, trans. by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985. This work was originally published under the title, Bruits: essai sur l'économie politique de la musique, 1977.

2. *ibid.*, p.5.

3. *ibid.*, p.27.

4. The discussion undertaken is one which permeates my production. I believe that art does not exist outside of dialogue. Dialogue is meant to echo the notion from John Cage and from new physics of "interpenetration".

Of interest here is the ongoing feminist research into the ideological uses of sound, and how we as listeners are interpellated. For example, Kaja Silverman examines a trope used in the cinema, where the maternal voice as sonorous envelope grows out of a powerful cultural fantasy. This fantasy builds on the image of infantile containment, of the child being held within the environment of the mother's voice. She connects this use of the maternal voice in classic cinema with psychoanalytic theory. Through profound ambivalence, this fantasy can range from "the first model of auditory pleasure" to "the terror of an 'umbilical night'".

Silverman, Kaja, The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988, p.72.

5. Noise: the Political Economy of Music, p.85.

6. *ibid.*, p.147.

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