

ART AND THE EVERYDAY

THE EPIC IN DAILY LIFE

JULIETTE DESEILLIGNY

VISUAL STUDIES 2013

EXTENDED ESSAY (RESEARCH REPORT)

JANUARY 25th 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of illustrations.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1.....	8
Chapter 2.....	16
Conclusion.....	21
Bibliography & word count.....	23

ILLUSTRATIONS
(SOURCES, *IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE*)

<http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/la%20société%20du%20spectacle>

<http://paris-ile-de-france.france3.fr/2013/01/16/roissy-les-oeuvres-de-rodin-s-offrent-une-nouvelle-vitrine-181997.html>

<http://www.google.fr/imgres?>

[q=Bronnie+Ware+book&um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1059&bih=684&tbm=isch&tbnid=XJ3RAuIJOP9WaM:&imgrefurl=http://www.penguin.com.au/products/9781401940652/top-five-regrets-dying-life-transformed-dearly-departing&docid=sy6EE1wlwcWr3M&imgurl=http://www.penguin.com.au/jpg-large/9781401940652.jpg&w=1481&h=2244&ei=vY8CUfyPGcbOhAewooCgBQ&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=172&vpy=105&dur=822&hovh=276&hovw=182&tx=108&ty=122&sig=113520856919622643130&page=2&tbnh=145&tbnw=95&start=23&ndsp=29&ved=1t:429,r:24,s:0,i:156](http://www.penguin.com.au/products/9781401940652/top-five-regrets-dying-life-transformed-dearly-departing&docid=sy6EE1wlwcWr3M&imgurl=http://www.penguin.com.au/jpg-large/9781401940652.jpg&w=1481&h=2244&ei=vY8CUfyPGcbOhAewooCgBQ&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=172&vpy=105&dur=822&hovh=276&hovw=182&tx=108&ty=122&sig=113520856919622643130&page=2&tbnh=145&tbnw=95&start=23&ndsp=29&ved=1t:429,r:24,s:0,i:156)

<http://www.google.fr/imgres?>

[q=mass+observation+archive&um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1059&bih=684&tbm=isch&tbnid=abPyhZ89L-gq4M:&imgrefurl=http://yulcollections.wordpress.com/2008/08/18/mass-observation-online/&docid=24TOMCSgC0w78M&imgurl=http://yulcollections.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/mass-observation-online.png&w=992&h=703&ei=35ECUeT0PISi0QWVIYDYBA&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=433&sig=113520856919622643130&page=1&tbnh=127&tbnw=179&start=0&ndsp=24&ved=1t:429,r:1,s:0,i:82&tx=79&ty=18](http://yulcollections.wordpress.com/2008/08/18/mass-observation-online/&docid=24TOMCSgC0w78M&imgurl=http://yulcollections.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/mass-observation-online.png&w=992&h=703&ei=35ECUeT0PISi0QWVIYDYBA&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=433&sig=113520856919622643130&page=1&tbnh=127&tbnw=179&start=0&ndsp=24&ved=1t:429,r:1,s:0,i:82&tx=79&ty=18)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/breakwell-the-walking-man-diary-t07701>

<http://sallymann.com/selected-works/family-pictures>

<http://jfranrivero.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/fontaine-marcel-duchamp-1887-1968.html>

<http://www.cittadellarte.it/attivita.php?att=6>

ABSTRACT

In this draft, I will be looking at how sociology, philosophy and art correlate in the study of everyday life, how we – as artists – can make sense of it and help others to notice and understand it, in order to gain a general better understanding of social life as it can be established that daily moments are, together, what we know of as social life.

Why, however, would individuals benefit from having this understanding? I will attempt to answer this through the study of the paradox of death as seen by the Fluxus group, in terms of becoming aware of and appreciating the potential of each moment of the Everyday before the imminent promise of life's closure.

I will also be looking at Art existing within daily life, rather than in the enclave of specialized spaces but also as an experience in the wider sense, and what the implications of this are.

ART AND THE EVERYDAY: THE EPIC IN DAILY LIFE

Introduction

A rising interest in daily life – as shown by the ever increasing numbers of tabloids, reality TV or published diaries – is, in today's Western societies at least, slowly leading to a very uni-lateral consumption of mere facts regarding other people; the main objectives of these published accounts seems to be to satisfy public curiosity, provide entertainment and, occasionally, be informative.

However could this increasing mediation of daily life, apart from conveying a form of escalating

voyeurism, not make us experience and observe it in a less critical way? And could this not in turn develop into a *spectacularization* of everyday life?

This refers to Guy Debord's theory of a Society of the Spectacle. According to this theory, which makes strong references to Marxism, society is reified, that is to say there is a role reversal between commodities and consumers: the latter become passive and determined by the former, turning people into pure spectators of a media Spectacle. (SI, 2013)



However rather than to constantly focus on the select few handpicked by the media, would it not be more rewarding to look inwards and attempt to throw a light on and understand ourselves as individuals, and, to a greater extent, society as a whole?

After all, the trivial things we do day in and day out, individual actions or interactions, which we may regard as “automatic” and unworthy of our attention, are what shape our whole life; Freud, for example, in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, distinguishes the conscious, preconscious and unconscious mind, stating that the latter is the most complex and therefore interesting to study, as, although it manifests itself through daily “surface level behaviours” (Scott, 2009: 11), it consists of much deeper emotional states and drives – too deep for our conscious mind to encompass. We will be exploring Freud's views in the next chapters.

These “surface level behaviours” are generally extremely widespread within a certain cultural environment, forming a set of unspoken rules which are followed out of convenience for the stability of social order that they procure (Scott, 2009: 19). However they could also be followed simply out of individuals' unawareness of them, and therefore inability to challenge them – indeed most of us won't be conscious of the fact that we are conforming through carrying out actions which maintain social order such as queuing or minding table manners – we do these things because we have all gone through socialization and been formatted to accept them as social norms and part of daily routine.

This link between the micro-level – individuals and their (inter)actions – and the macro-level, or social order, is one found repeatedly throughout the many theories of everyday sociology. These differ in their interpretations of this link: to what degree it is a conscious and accepted one, if at all? with whom does the power lie? or how precarious or established is it? (Scott, 2009)

However the mere existence of these countless different theories proves there are many ways of understanding and interpreting everyday life, and therefore various ways of responding to it (which we shall examine subsequently). Amongst these is art.

Considering, for example, the modernist definition of the practice of art, which claims to involve “the artist's disciplined effort to observe, engage and interpret the processes of living (...)” (Kelley, 1988: 12) – could we not wonder whether, as an artist, it is possible to make sense of everyday life, and do so through experiences of daily life as art, without forgetting the fundamental question of why should we be trying to understand the Everyday – in other words seeking enlightenment?

In the first chapter we shall explore these last questions, looking at routine, how that might limit us or evolve into artistic intention (Kelley, 1988: 12), understanding the different sociological approaches addressing these issues, and consider how art can reveal everyday life to reveal the latter's traits to the “masses”.

We will also consider Sophie Calle's work in its “*Concept de Première et Dernière Fois*” (*First and Last Time Concept*) and how that relates to ideas of the temporality, beauty and equality of daily moments (Calle, 2012). These concepts are also found in Zen and, by adoption, the Fluxus group, whom we shall also be looking at.

In the second chapter we will be looking at how art can exist within daily life, partly in opposition to specialized art spaces, but also as an active experience to be consumed (Kelley, 1988: 18) instead of a passive activity or object.

We will touch on making art more popular by making it accessible to all in places they are likely to pass through, like the temporary and free exhibition of Rodin sculptures in one of the passenger terminals at Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport, rather than in specialised (and frequently fee paying) spaces which require that the person make a conscious effort to seek enlightenment through art.



In this logic, the artist can also be seen as an educator, and we will look at the ideas Allan Kaprow

and John Dewey share, concerning the importance of participation, play and enactment (whereby they consider that “Doing is knowing”, so to understand the meaning of everyday life it needs to be enacted every day), all linked with the idea of “non-art” (Kelley, 1988: 21), a form of supreme art where so much experience would be “art” that boundaries would be blurred down.

However in the eyes of a neutral individual, would this engulf them totally in art as Kaprow seems to suggest? Or is this a Utopian idea, the reality of the situation being that this art of the daily within the daily would in fact annihilate itself by not standing out at all – becoming, in some ways, invisible? Which maybe would not be the case in the protected and neutral enclave that a specialized art space offers...

But then if art was considered as a vehicle for the meanings of life and not an end in itself, would it actually matter if art itself went entirely into non-art, so long as it continued to convey the meanings of life?

Chapter I:

How & should we research the individual and social worlds?

Ontology, a branch of metaphysics, is the study of determining what really exists, what the fundamental entities of which the world consists are (Stanford, 2013). This can either be approached from a purely ideological point of view (philosophical approach), or a theoretical one (sociological approach). Both though seem to concur that the core of all things lies in an ongoing oscillation between conscious and unconscious states, societal and personal levels. Indeed, consciousness and unconsciousness are distinct areas of the human psyche, just as individuals are integral components of society, but it is the relations between these parts, and from part to whole, as well as the different entities on their own, which need to be considered in order to comprehend the world we live in on a daily basis.

In French sociologist Emile Durkheim's theory of Structural Functionalism, the concept of a *conscience collective* is introduced: it states that individual and social consciousness and unconsciousness are inextricably linked, as the weaker individual, through a process of socialization

becomes unconsciously governed in everyday life by “law-like social forces”. The individual's behaviour is not his but is governed by society (SF, 2013). But if an individual becomes conscious of this he needs to make a choice: is individual freedom more desirable than social order? Or would this freedom, were it to become widespread, simply create a new, no less orderly social order, but one based on conscious choices and actions rather than unconscious social forces? For the philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, this revolution was not only desirable, but fundamental, because he saw it as a greater conflict opposing capitalism and self-expression, which would undoubtedly see capitalism win if nothing was done to encourage individuals' critical awareness.

Other theories of the Everyday, however, explain similar observations in a different way: Erving Goffman, a proponent of Symbolic Interactionism, suggests that society is comparable to a theatre as individuals, just like actors, are conscious that the part they play is a “coherent fake”. The actors in Hamlet, for example, would not deliver their lines as well on their own without a sense of the context of their part in the bigger picture of the play on stage, their performances would be shallow

L'Opéra côté coulisses

Sur la vingtaine de spectacles produits chaque année, l'Opéra national de Paris en présente sept nouveaux en moyenne. Différents métiers interviennent dans leur conception, du metteur en scène à l'éclairagiste, de la perruquière au menuisier... Certains opéras réclament jusqu'à trois ans de travail.

L'OPÉRA BASTILLE

La grande salle peut accueillir 2703 spectateurs. Tous les sièges sont orientés face à la scène, pour un bon confort « visuel » du spectateur.

La scène peut accueillir jusqu'à 400 personnes. C'est le cas de *La Guerre et la Paix*, de Serge Prokofiev.

Les toiles d'un décor sont peintes à plat en raison de leur taille – souvent plus de 300 m². Les peintres utilisent des pinceaux à manche long.

L'éclairage accompagnant la mise en scène, est étudié avec soin par un concepteur-lumière, ou éclairagiste, choisi par le metteur en scène. 12 à 16 techniciens installent les projecteurs nécessaires aux effets lumineux.

Dans chaque loge d'artiste ou de chanteur, un piano permet de répéter en toute tranquillité.

L'Opéra Bastille dispose d'une salle de répétition, aux dimensions de la scène : la salle Gounod. Pour mettre les artistes dans l'ambiance, une partie des décors est montée sur la scène.

L'arrière-scène est équipée d'un plateau tournant, que l'on retrouve à l'étage inférieur. Il permet d'orienter les décors avant de les installer sur le plateau de scène.

Les décors sont assemblés sur des chariots roulants, les Marel, qui mesurent 6,50 x 6,50 m. Il en faut neuf, assemblés mécaniquement, pour obtenir la superficie de la scène.

Chaque nouveau décor, tel un puzzle, est conçu pour être démonté et stocké dans des conteneurs. 590 conteneurs sont actuellement archivés dans un entrepôt.

Dans le poste de commandement, local situé à proximité de la scène, un stage manager donne les commandes pour l'éclairage, les mouvements de décors, la fermeture du rideau. Toutes ces indications sont répertoriées sur la partition de l'œuvre.

Le directeur de scène coordonne choristes, chanteurs et techniciens.

Le régisseur technique, sous la responsabilité du directeur technique, veille à ce qu'aucun problème technique n'entraîne le déroulement du spectacle.

LES COSTUMES

La création des costumes se fait en collaboration avec le décorateur et le metteur en scène. Ils définissent l'ambiance du spectacle et précisent leurs souhaits.

Un soin particulier est accordé au choix des étoffes. Des échantillons de tissu sont collectés auprès des fabricants, puis certains sont sélectionnés en fonction du spectacle présenté.

Un styliste dessine les costumes, précisant couleurs, matières.

Comme dans les maisons de haute couture, le chef d'atelier réalise la « taille », modifie en tissu de lin ou de coton, servant à l'élaboration du patron. Les différentes pièces ou « bûches » sont ensuite coupées.

Tailleurs et couturières assemblent les pièces du costume. De la coupe au montage, il faut en moyenne une semaine pour terminer un costume. Les perruques, quant à elles, sont fabriquées à l'opéra par des perruquières.

LA CONCEPTION DES DÉCORS

L'Opéra-Bastille fabrique ses propres décors et ceux du palais Garnier dans ses divers ateliers : menuiserie, tapisserie, peinture, sculpture... On compte 46 personnes pour une production. Mais certains spectacles nécessitent l'intervention d'une centaine de professionnels.

Décorateur, metteur en scène, éclairagiste réfléchissent aux décors (forme, couleur...) puis les représentent à une échelle réduite. Ils les intègrent ensuite à une maquette au 1/25.

Le bureau d'étude prépare les plans des décors, avec leurs cotes et prévoit dès cette étape, leur démontage pour le stockage en conteneurs.

Les ateliers techniques entreprennent la fabrication, s'aidant des plans et de photos réalisées à partir de la maquette.

Les décors sont assemblés sur des structures métalliques conçues par l'atelier de serrurerie, puis démontés et acheminés au sous-sol. Ils sont alors remontés sur scène, laquelle fonctionne comme un ascenseur.

UNE MUSIQUE SANS MESURE

L'opéra, c'est le théâtre chanté. La musique y tient donc une part essentielle. L'Opéra national de Paris emploie 170 musiciens, plus 16 régisseurs.

Un atelier de copies prépare également les partitions des divers intervenants : chef d'orchestre, soliste, musiciens, choristes...

Pour certaines œuvres, un orchestre de scène complète l'orchestre principal. Les deux chefs d'orchestre sont en relation via un moniteur TV.

Opéra national de Paris

le journal de Carrefour - décembre 2000 - n°69

Conception et réalisation : Communication rédactionnelle Carrefour et Art Presse.

le journal de Carrefour - décembre 2000 - n°69

and empty without complex emotions fluctuating deep inside each of them, and the play would be a failure without large amounts of preparation beforehand, be it the hours of rehearsals, the work of a costume and set team, or the actual writing of the play.

The complexity involved in understanding all these theories has led to much more focussed and specific directions of study concentrating on the idea that some connections and drives may be more important than others.

Psychogeography, as a very specific example of this, aims to explain daily behaviour through our environment: an external force acting upon our unconscious. It was defined in 1955 by Guy Debord as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals."

Still very specific, but more wide-spread as it covers the study of the individual, is psychoanalysis, one of whose leading proponents is Sigmund Freud. In his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, he focused on the links and subsequent battles which exist between the (apparent) conscious and (much more substantial) unconscious mind on a daily basis, as seen when individuals commit 'mistakes' (psycho-pathologies), that is to say when the conscious mind wanders for a moment leaving the unconscious mind in the foreground.

For Freud, every single daily occurrence is an important event which has a lot to tell; what we call routines or completely mundane gestures are in fact all the moments in a day when the unconscious surfaces – that is to say when the core of who we are as individuals is exposed. (Freud, 1901: 3)

Notwithstanding, we may wonder whether the intricate explanations of every single moment of life, as the examples in *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* show, all contain constructive information... Indeed, does it actually matter to know why this slip of the tongue occurred or why we forgot this word in that Latin quote as long (Freud, 1901: 9) as we understand that there are reasons for doing what we do all day, whatever they may be, highlighting the weight of what we generally seem unaware of – just as the submerged part of an iceberg is its most important component?

Could this understanding not suffice without needing to analyse, as the shift from our subconscious to our conscious changes the whole picture of the Everyday, from nothingness punctured by sporadic moments to an accumulation of equally significant moments?

Drawing attention to ordinariness by framing and staging it is something being done through art as a

means of encompassing all other methods in a holistic approach - pure observations of the Everyday, where nothing especially needs to be understood, but simply to be noticed, to raise questions and lead us to analyse and answer them (if they even need an answer) ourselves. This is where art diverges from sociology in that it does not attempt to bring definite answers, though without refuting rationality altogether: the mere development of psychoanalysis as a subject has proven, if anything, how keen human beings are to get to know themselves and find rational answers to their daily behaviour, but the mere depth of the concepts faced calls for a collaborative approach to tackling them.

The theoretical and ideological studies developed by sociologists and philosophers resulting in a very dense mass of information and ideas may require art to act as a mediator for society to make all this information and these ideas more accessible.

Lefebvre, alongside Michel de Certeau, suggested estranging the familiar to be able to make sense of it all, with the possibility of doing so through art and its framing and staging qualities. This echoes Max Weber, an advocate of Interpretivist Sociology, who also highlighted the difficulty of the sociologist to study something he is a part of. (Scott, 2009: 20)

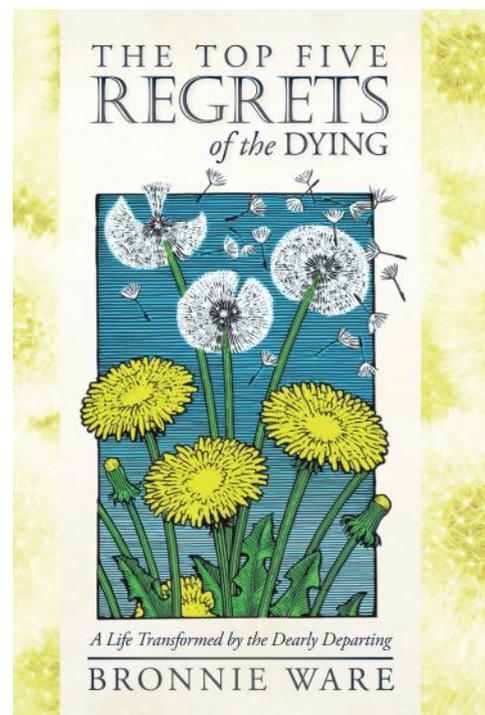
This idea of putting ordinariness on a pedestal as a means of thinking about it in other terms was heavily endorsed by the movement of Readymades, initiated by Marcel Duchamp. Arte Povera, much later on, developed this concept by emphasising the ordinariness of the materials used – items of the everyday – and by putting them to “greater”, more traditional ends, creating a contrast – contrast which served as the Readymades' pedestal.

Emerging from these different perspectives is the idea of the involvement of a process necessary to understanding the Everyday — Lefebvre and de Certeau more specifically distinguish Rituals and Daily Practises (stage of plain observation), the social control they indicate (analysing and drawing conclusions from the observations), and the opportunities they offer for challenge and resistance (reaction to the conclusions made) as the three stages of the process of making sense of Daily Life. (Scott, 2009: 25) Unable to exist independently, they remind us of the necessity of a holistic approach to this sort of analysis, not unlike the modernist practise of art which claims that any art is only meaningful if it Observes, Engages and Interprets the processes of living. (Kelley, 1993: 11)

Why though, should art, or sociology, or philosophy, preoccupy itself with analysing these processes of living at all?

Almost seeing this as a social duty, Lefebvre and de Certeau developed the concept of “Enlightening the masses” through art in their critique *La Vie Quotidienne*. Their view however was criticized for seeming to differentiate between “enlightened thinkers” on the one hand and “duped masses” on the other, in so doing creating an established hierarchy within society. (Scott, 2009: 30) In their thinking, this is desirable from an epistemological point of view, epistemology implying a shift from (uninformed) opinion to justified belief: through a better understanding of the processes of living, suggested to them by art, individuals would gain wisdom, that is to say an ability to consciously judge daily actions and carry them out knowingly rather than out of ignorance, opening up the possibility of challenging the previous “socially set” order of things.

Allan Kaprow, along with Modernism, summarised the idea saying: “*These bold creators [will] show us [...] the world we have always had about us but ignored*” (Kelly, 1988: 20). This statement not only places the artist as an educator, just as Lefebvre and de Certeau do, but also implies through the word “showing” the reason for art being involved in this enlightenment process. Its simplicity and versatility make it an invaluable tool for joining all ends together, bringing the theoretical and practical together, the micro-level and the macro-level, and all in a spirit of optimum solidarity – just as showing a child how to solve a problem implies working together with him, going through the whole process for it to be fully understood.



On a deeper level still, we may wonder what, in fact, there is to be gained through enlightenment? Why not just remain in blissful ignorance?

The answer to that is actually quite simple – “enlightenment” as such is brought about by what the Fluxus group named “Death's paradox”, which is an inevitable part of life: “*Death's paradox is that it underscores the potential of each moment by reminding us that, at another moment we cannot foresee, all our moments will be gone.*” (Fluxus, 2013) The ultimate goal of art of the Everyday would then be to replace death as an eye-opener sooner in life, as a reminder of the temporality of our lives and the importance of every single moment within it (we notice here the influences on the Fluxus group of Zen and Buddhist teachings, which state that no single moment is to be more important than another in life). Coming to this understanding when there is still time to appreciate

life would enable one to live it to the fullest. Art, used as a tool of enlightenment before death fulfils that role, would therefore enable us to appreciate what we have while we have it as opposed to when we are about to lose it.

Sophie Calle does this for example through her piece *Concept de la Première et Dernière Fois*, which uses photography and installation to focus on the individuality of present moments. Her work shows us that by not assuming that certain moments of the Everyday are just mundane when they are in fact truly unique and not available to everyone, would enable us to see the poetry - and by extension the epic quality - of our Everyday.

By saying “*la beauté est ce qui nous rend différents des ordinateurs,*” (*beauty is what differs us from computers*) she states that it is aesthetics, in their most general sense, that distinguishes the mechanical automatism of a machine such as a computer from the apparent automatism in our daily behaviour and situations. (Calle, 2012)

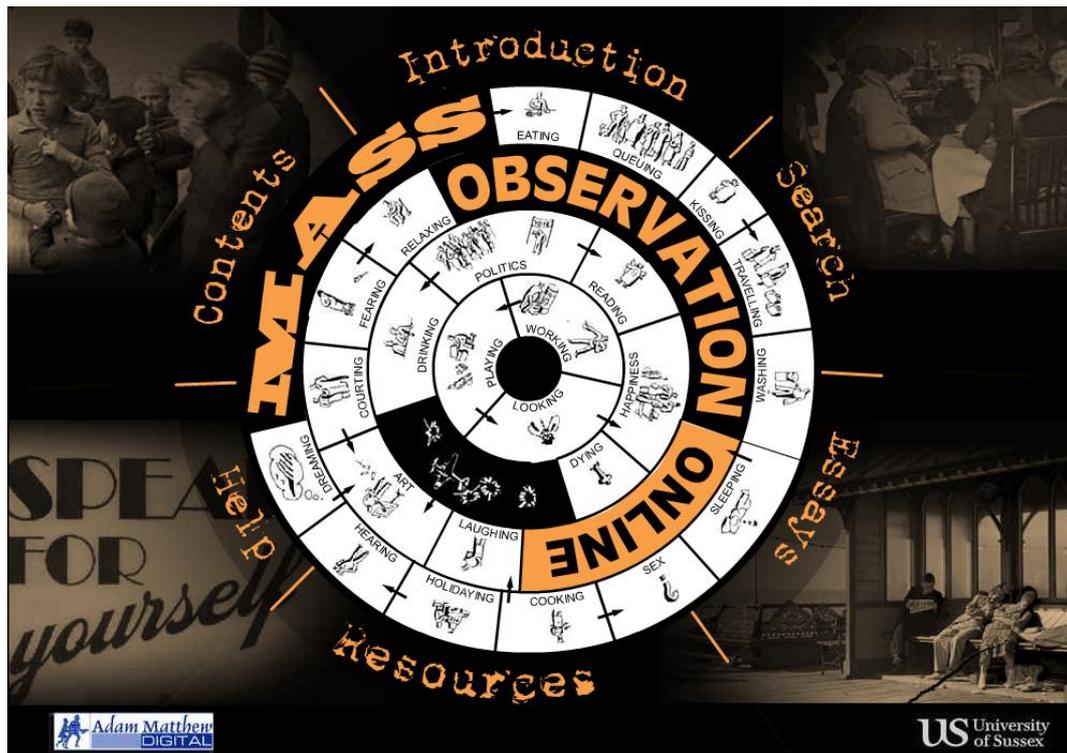
All of the above has assumed that it is indeed possible to make sense of the Everyday, but is this belief shared by all?

Gillian Wearing's work refers much more to the impossibility of doing so: “*(her work) holds an exacting and often unbearable mirror to the absurdity, ennui, and anxiety of everyday life, demonstrating the maddening impossibility of ever truly understanding the complexity of the human psyche*” (Molon, 2002: 11) - the Everyday does not make sense, and not even art can force sense into it; art must be content with showing its inexplicable complexity.

She does this through her quite straightforward documentary approach of collecting and creating data based on observations of inner-most circles, conferring a somewhat ethnographic turn to art – or rather which results in a form of art which emulates ethnographic practice, as explained by the artist herself, which, similarly to the Mass-Observation project, attempts to give a voice to that which we would usually overlook. Mass-Observation was an ethnographic study initiated in the 1930s of the British population, which, by so doing in opposition to the more usual exotic nature of ethnography or anthropology, was “challenging any assumed superiority of Western culture.”

Could this approach of giving the mundane a voice, seeming to greatly prize unbiased first-hand accounts, be considered an attempt at *hyper-objectivity*? Indeed whether it is Gillian Wearing's *Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to*

say or Mass-Observation's May 12th 1937 bulletin (coronation of George VI), a clear and direct voice is given to mundane people, the author of the work simply acting as a mediator for them.



However, no matter how much desire for complete objectivity is put into a piece, this can never be attained if only for the fact that the author of the piece is responsible for undertaking a selection process. Mass-Observation tried to counter this by not selecting the information presented and putting forward an unimaginable quantity of things – though impressive, it still didn't cover everything. Not only would it be physically impossible to collect impressions of George VI's coronation day from every single person in the Commonwealth, but also the “National Observers” collecting the data were, as stated by the movement itself, “*a predominantly middle-class group, generally above average in intelligence and education, and on the whole more than usually socially conscious,*” (MOM, 1937) that is to say not a neutral and objective group, representative of society as a whole. Gillian Wearing also had to make choices in her work – what aspect of the Everyday to focus on? where? through whom? etc.

Regardless of the extent to which the author of this documentary practise succeeds in being removed from the work in an endeavour to be objective, does it not convey a humble approach to art of the Everyday?

We can indeed observe a low level of involvement of the artist due to the fact she puts herself on the

same level as those she is studying, delegating speech to them (voices of the Everyday to give a sense of the Everyday), in the logic of observer and the observed becoming joint collaborators; the artist is not all-knowing, and though he can show others certain things they might have bypassed, the subjects he is dealing with are too extensive and complex to make sense of by himself.

The general sense which emerges from this humility is that art and artist are removed from the foreground. What they are communicating, or wanting to communicate, stands there instead.

This ties in to Allan Kaprow's view, for whom the meanings of life are superior to the meanings of art: art is at the service of life, not an end in itself. (Kaprow, 1993: 1)

Chapter 2:

Art existing within daily life

Art in its traditional restrictive sense has no reason to be because it is defined as art purely by its aesthetic qualities rather than by its communicative functions. The form gets in the way of the content.

Following this logic there would be no more need for individual categories of artists – poets, painters, musicians... but just one nomination of “artist” which would encompass all. These “old” (traditional) denominations are much too descriptive, too specific to what the artist physically produces rather than the overall experience he is providing – the aim remains common to all: stating the real meaning of the ordinary.

“Young artists of today need no longer say 'I am a painter' or 'a poet' or 'a dancer'. They are simply 'artists'. All of life will be given to them. They will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. They will not try to make them extraordinary but will only state their real meaning. But out of nothing they will devise the extraordinary and then maybe nothingness as well.”
(Kaprow, 1993: 9)

Form aside, Kaprow advocates Experiences of Daily life (to Observe, Engage and Interpret the processes of living) (Kelley, 1993: 11) as the best communicator of life – so, by extent, the most desirable form of art, if it can be classed as such – stressing the importance of keeping it grounded

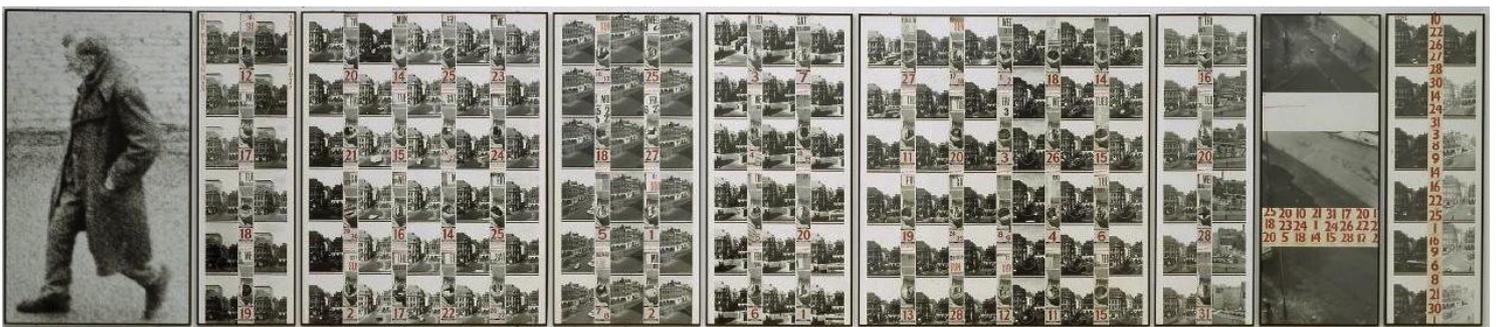
in actual common experience which is much easier to relate to and thus a better communicator than an object deprived of experience. This means that the form art takes shouldn't really matter as long as it is a vehicle of experience. The quality of this experience does partly or even sometimes, heavily, depend on the form – conferring some importance to its role – but the actual physicality of it – how it fulfils this role – does not.

The exact nature of this Experience, however, remains quite obscure... Could it in fact be described as constituting ways of optimising how, when and where to communicate best?

An example might help elucidate things here: let us look at composer and conductor Benjamin Zander's approach to classical music.

He deems that people need to be shown what (and how) to *observe* and how to *engage* with it before being able to appreciate the *interpretation* of it (or interpret it themselves); most of the time people will simply attempt to latch onto the interpretation, and therefore be unable to live the (musical) experience. In his talks, he therefore literally takes his audience step by step *through* the whole experience. For Zander, no one dislikes classical music – there is nothing to dislike – they simply have never known what there is to like, never living it as an holistic experience encompassing Observe, Engage and Interpret, limiting themselves to just the “Interpret” part (Zander, 2008).

Exactly the same processes are involved in the artist showing people what there is to see and appreciate around them – all the moments which make up a Life Experience – therefore inviting them to engage with it, instead of simply presenting them with the material product of their interpretation of it. This distinction between looking and understanding is something Ian Breakwell stresses in *Walking Man*, highlighting voyeurism and how little we gain from it. (Breakwell, 2013)



In the Epistemological approach which makes a “*distinction between justified belief and opinion*”

(ODP, 2013) the artistic experience would count as a *justified belief*, because it is made up of one process of thought backed up by another thereby creating a coherent and justified entity; *opinion*, on the other hand, a “view or judgement made about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge,” could be seen as only the *interpretation* part of the artistic experience, i.e. with no quality of being “informed”.

Many artists and thinkers have agreed that providing people with an experience to fully engage with, in opposition to the passivity of voyeurism for instance, greatly enhances what is to be gained. As suggested by Kaprow – “*Meaning emerges not from the enactment of high drama but from the low drama of enactment*” (Kelley, 1993: 11) – enacting even very simple things could provide a much more meaningful experience than passively receiving information, often overly-complicated or served in indigestible quantities. This distinction between passivity and activity, with all it implies, is very obvious in the opposition Kaprow highlights between the cessation of an activity (passive) and the consummation of an experience (active): consuming something implies that it goes from outside a body to inside it, never coming out the same — it has been appropriated by the body; this is not the case when ceasing something. The body has merely been interacting superficially with it, never making it his to live, own or engage with. Again we notice the importance of part-to-whole relationships; as Guy Debord states, “*Knowledge of empirical facts remains abstract and superficial as long as it is not made concrete by being related to the whole situation.*”

This is very often the problem with “self-indulgent” artwork in that it only creates part-to-part interactions; this doesn't necessarily happen if the work is very personal, but rather if it doesn't expand from the micro-level to the macro-level. If we look at Sally Mann's work for example, the blurring between her personal life and her art is quite extreme, but in a very abstemious way. The photographs of her intimacy serve as general life examples (Mann, 2013), which is far from being the case of artists whose work is an actual form of meditation of their life – in the first case the artist's everyday life is at the service of a bigger picture by offering an experience: that of enabling viewers to make more sense of their own Everyday; in the second case however, an individual is simply exhibiting facts about his life which the public can neither engage with nor learn anything from. Hence the importance of holistic experiences.

However even if artists communicate well because their work is holistic, do their specificities such as delimitation of space and time (happening, performance, event) lessen their communicative



qualities? Indeed, to consume an experience you need to have it, but how can it be encountered if it is not in the reach of your day-to-day?

Should there not be more concern with the practicalities of physical places where these different territories may or may not cross over within the Everyday?

On a macro-level, does this mean that art being physically, so literally, present within people's everyday makes it a better communicator of the daily than when present in the enclave of specialized spaces, such as museums and galleries? Obviously one could raise the debate of all spaces being considered specialized, in which case this would be about limiting art to the streets; however “context of daily life” here implies mundane locations and contexts, and as most meaningful art is placed on a cultural pedestal this approach is about bringing it down to the level of the mundane without removing its meaningfulness but enhancing it instead.

This boils down to the question of whether it is better for the artistic expression of Everyday life to

exhibit it in the context of daily life (streets, shops, public transport zones..) or, on the contrary, in specialized areas (museums and galleries)?

The latter offer a very passive and neutral zone, with the ability to make everything stand out, even the most common (Duchamp's *Urinoir* being one of the first examples of this), is counter-acted by the fact that the space in itself is not commonplace – it requires the visitor to make a physical detour and perhaps even to pay, and it implies prior acknowledgement of the enlightenment sought.

The context of everyday life, on the other hand, is as ordinary as could be and so accessible to all – the artist goes towards the 'masses', the 'masses' don't need to make a special effort to seek art out.



This is seeing things from a point of view which is purely physical, which we could consider a horizontal space. Considering where artistic experiences may be more efficient depending on their positioning within this horizontal space, should we not also consider their efficiency on a vertical space of the Everyday– what if art were present in every category of society: social, economic, political, etc.? Would this not be a way, all physicality put aside, of offering an experience of the Everyday in its truest sense to all individuals in society?

However does art of the Everyday expressed within such a daily context not run the risk of becoming non-art because there is no more separation between art and everyday life? (Kaprow, 1993: 11) Would the lack of boundaries make it impossible to distinguish the two so that we would then fail to notice art altogether? Or, would we, on the contrary, introduce it into our Everyday?

John Cage, prominent composer of *4'33"* and an original member of the Fluxus movement, said: "*Art is everywhere, it's only seeing it which stops now and then.*" (Fluxus, 2013) If people were to see it by autonomously introducing a framing process in their day-to-day there would be no need for the perimeter of the gallery or museum space.

Interestingly, the direction artists seem to be taking suggests a gradual return to the prehistoric roots of artistic expression which was very much of the spiritual order in its links to ritual, magic, life... It was at the service of something greater: a better understanding of the surrounding world and the world beyond that. (Kaprow, 1993: 7)

The stained glass of Reims cathedral or Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper* would have fulfilled similar purposes in their respective times. Epochs change however, as do our ways of trying to

make sense of them, because the methods for doing so and the focus differ and are getting increasingly abstract. Our questions are even becoming possibly more difficult to answer because technological and scientific advances, amongst others, enable rational answers to be given where the metaphysical domain of art might have served in the past.

Conclusion

Art can be seen as a holistic method for studying the everyday, as a synthesis of all other theories and methods; it offers an ontological perspective on life: Everyday life. Through its narrow correlation to our unconscious, and generally the deeper level of things, it is inextricably linked to the fundamental entities of which the world consists. Determining and understanding these enables us to make more sense of metaphysical questions. However, we must bear in mind that rational answers to everything may not be desirable because the very complexity and depth of these questions suggests a (near) impossibility to ever answer them fully. Essentially this comes down to maintaining a certain level of humility in the face of the cosmos.

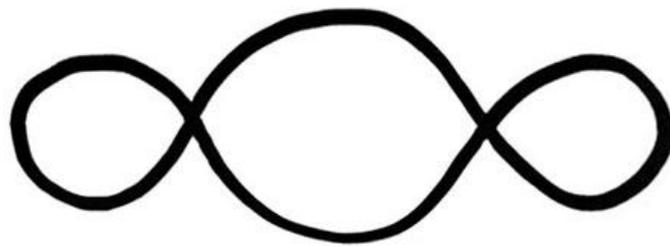
French philosopher Voltaire developed this theory in his short book *Candide*, by highlighting the fact that we may be better off being content with simple answers — even if these are in fact still questions to a certain extent — than in trying to see rational explanations all around us (the character of Pagloss impersonating and ridiculing this point of view). (Voltaire, 1759)

Simply paying closer attention to our daily lives would enable us to live more fully by seeing how every moment combines together to make an Epic, Life.

Could the complexity of the issues we are facing require those attempting to make sense of them to work hand in hand? Could one see The World as a Collaboration, with all aspects of society working together to attempt to answer all these questions? (Pistoletto, 1994)

This is what Michelangelo Pistoletto is attempting to install through his project of the Fondazione Pistoletto, *Il Terzo Paradiso*: by exploring the presence of reality in an equilibrium between nature and artifice he calls for a consideration of all individual things as part of a whole; this implies a necessity for sustainability and collaboration – art which is politics, religion, economy... all categories homogeneously mixed within daily settings. (Pistoletto, 2013)

Is this a Utopia? Yes, obviously, but at the same time time it is a real suggestion worth taking into consideration, and a positive example of initializing projects which go with, not against, the current trend of offering out small doses of Utopic thinking into society, via community events, social networks, or actual policies at a local and international levels. And though these remain ideals they give a meaning to Everyday life: their very nature suggests that they will never be reached, but we can tend more and more towards them, close enough to keep hope, and keep living.



Tengo Paraíso - P. Solís

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Scott, Susie. (2009) *Making sense of everyday life*. 3rd ed. Polity. (Scott, 2009:)

Kaprow, Allan. (1993) *Essays on The Blurring of Art and Life*. In: Kelley, Jeff ed. *Introduction*. University of California Press.

Baker, Nicholson. (1988) *The Mezzanine*. 1998 ed. Granta Books. pp. 3-57.

Molon, Dominic. (2002) Observing the masses. In: Gillian Wearing, *Mass Observation*, 1st ed. Merrell, pp. 11-25. (Molon, 2002:)

Freud, Lucian. (1901) *The Psycho-pathology of Everyday Life*. 1972 ed. In: Strachey, James ed. Tyson, Alan trans. Ernest Benn Limited. (Freud, 1901:)

Mass Observation Movement. (1937) *May 12th 1937: Mass Observation Day-Survey*. 1987 ed. In: Jennings, Humphrey ed. faber and faber. (MOM, 1937:)

Voltaire. (1759) *Candide ou l'Optimisme*. 2005 ed. Pocket (Voltaire, 1759:)

Mass Observation Movement. (1948) Christmas bulletin: Recipe for Christmas. [Bulletin]

Online essay/article

Stallbrass, Julian. (1994) The Scene of a crime, 'The Epic of the Everyday', essay on photography as art based around exhibitions at the Barbican and the Hayward. Available from:
http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/people/stallbrass_julian/PDF/Epic.pdf

Pistoletto, Michelangelo. (1994) Progetto Arte. Available from:
http://www.cittadellarte.it/userfiles/file/materiali/pdf/progetto_arte_ita.pdf (Pistoletto, 1994)

Stallbrass, Julian. Reflections on Art, Poverty and Time: An Interview with Michelangelo Pistoletto. Available from:
http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/people/stallbrass_julian/essays/Pistoletto_interview.pdf

Podcast

Calle, Sophie. Clark, Pascale int. on *Pour la dernière et pour la première fois* (exhibition, Paris) Thursday 27 September 2012, available at:
<http://www.franceinter.fr/emission-comme-on-nous-parle-sophie-calle> (Calle, 2012)

Presentation

Zander, Benjamin. (2008) The transformative power of classical music. Available from:
http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html (Zander, 2008)

Websites

Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy, available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/> (Stanford, 2013)

Oxford Dictionaries Pro, available at: <http://english.oxforddictionaries.com/> (ODP, 2013)

On structural functionalism, available at:

<http://www.integratsociopsychology.net/structural-functionalism.html> (SF, 2013)

Breakwell, Ian. *The Walking Man Diary*, available at:

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/breakwell-the-walking-man-diary-t07701/text-summary> (Breakwell, 2013)

On the Fluxus movement, available at:

<http://www.theartstory.org/movement-fluxus.htm>

<http://imaginepeace.com/archives/16344> (Fluxus, 2013)

Streuli, Beat, available at:

<http://www.beatstreuli.com/home.html>

DiCorcia, Philip-Lorca. on *Heads*, available at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpawWn1nXJo>

Kentridge, William. On his process, available at:

<http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/356>

<http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/audio/20>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1oK5LMJ3zY&feature=relmfu>

Mann, Sally. On her practise, available at:

<http://vimeo.com/25115631>

<http://sallymann.com/selected-works> (Mann, 2013)

Pistoletto, Michelangelo. On *Cittadellarte/Fondazione Pistoletto*, available at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZQaj7r6Px0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3TJqydtNGM>

<http://www.cittadellarte.it/> (Pistoletto, 2013)

Situationist International. Portal, available at:

<http://www.nothingness.org/index.html> (SI, 2013)

WORD COUNT: 55057