

Multisensority as Medium

An Analysis of Curatorial Practice

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ABSTRACT

During the 1990s, two developments transformed the world of museum curation. First, “installation” art became a regular feature of museum exhibitions. Second, curation, in the sense of “installing” artworks, gained in prominence as an independent form of artistic creation. Curators began to focus on integrating all the senses of museum visitors, even their bodies, into the museum experience. Nevertheless, many museums and curators still find themselves relying on the stereotypical “white cubes” and “black cubes” in their curatorial practice.

In this Thesis, I suggest new direction for curation based on the theoretical perspectives of Deleuze and Guattari and Laura Marks, among others. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblages and “smooth” and “striated” spaces offer fresh perspectives for analysing the use of space and the display of artworks in museums. Mark’s idea of ‘haptic’, originating with her analysis of video art, stresses the opportunity for museum visitors to experience artworks in a more intimate and embodied fashion. These perspectives helped inform the conference “Hold Me Now – Feel and Touch in an Unreal World”, held at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 2018. Using the theoretical perspectives advanced at that conference, including Karen Archey’s notion of curation as “practising care” within an intersectional setting and Jack Halberstam’s ideas of the “fray”, I analyse the curatorial choices of two exhibitions at the Stedelijk which followed the conference.

I find that although the curators attempted to engage visitors in a multisensory fashion, allowing close approaches to the artworks and productive auditory/visual interaction between them, the exhibitions still left some potential avenues unexplored. In my critique of these exhibitions, and in further theoretical discussion, I suggest more ways in which a ‘haptic’ curator can break away from museum clichés and encourage a more multisensory and autonomous experience on the part of museum visitors.

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INTRODUCTION

To cure and care is the beginning principle of a curator. The idea of the curator is that she or he is responsible for the well-being of artists, the installation of artworks, the exhibition structure, and the narrative documentation of the exhibition, as in (for example) an exhibition catalogue. Beginning in the 1960s, the notion of a curator began to expand rapidly. Today, a visitor to a museum exhibition learns more about ‘who’ the curator is and ‘what’ she or he actually does than was the case in the 1950s. The collective memory of recent artistic practice now includes more and more images of curators and their exhibition concepts, such as Szeemann’s *Documenta 5* (1972) and *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), Lucy Lippard’s *557-087* (1969), or Obrist’s *Manifesta 1* (1996). Many of the landmark exhibitions which started to transform the role of the curator took place in the late 1960s. These exhibitions gained international recognition for both artists and curators, and marked a period in which curating began to acquire a different meaning, in which the exhibition itself becomes and an artistic medium, and the curator its author.

As O’Neill states, ‘the exhibition became clearly identified with a specific exhibition maker, or with the signature style of the curator-producer and by his or her ability to contextualise a range of work as a whole entity’ (O’Neill, 2012, p. 16). The profession also generated broader perspectives owing to the many metaphors for curation which appeared over the years, such as; ‘medium’, ‘DJ’, ‘agent’, ‘manager’, ‘platform provider’, ‘self-promoter’ and ‘scout’, to name just a few.

The most important result of this expansion of curatorship in the 1960s, known as the ‘curatorial turn’, which culminated in the 1990s. This turn marked the beginning of the modern history of curatorship. The reaction to this ‘curatorial turn’ was that the notion of ‘curatorial practice’ became – in addition to a space for the curator’s creativity – also a potential focus for the critic and a means to add cultural meaning and value to the artworks on display.

Upon entering any contemporary art museum, it becomes immediately apparent that contemporary artists are no longer restricted to a single medium such as painting, sculpture or video. Rather, they draw on any medium suited to express their ideas. The general term for this practice is ‘installation art’. This artistic medium entered established museum spaces in the West around the same time as the role of the curator became more creative. This is one reason why the history of ‘installation art’ and the history of the ‘installation of art’ are intertwined. Characteristics of installation art, such as ‘closeness’, ‘physical participation’, and ‘emphasis on sensory experience’, make it a multisensory medium. One would expect that with the expansion of curatorial tools, the installation *of* art by the curator could be a multisensory medium as well. However, the Western philosophical tradition displays a certain neglect for touch, smell, and taste, and this resonates in curatorship. In Western philosophy, as Laura Marks argues, ‘only distance senses are vehicles of knowledge, and Western Aesthetics, in which only vision and hearing can be vehicles of beauty’ (Marks, 2008, p.1). If the curator embraces a more multisensory approach, would this imply a kind of deconstruction of the hierarchy of the senses, as perceived in the Western artistic tradition? The main question addressed by this thesis is, accordingly, what there is to gain (in the context of art curation) from a multisensory approach that deconstructs the hierarchy of the senses.

Philosopher Laura Marks, known for her innovative work on embodied aesthetics, argues in her 2008 article *Thinking Multisensory Culture* that: ‘to include sense experience in our cultural analysis we need to revisit the sensory hierarchy — while trying to retain the capacity for aesthetic judgement, knowledge and ethics associated with the “higher” senses’ (Marks, 2008, p.1).

Installation art specifically aims to heighten viewers’ awareness of (1) how objects are positioned and installed in space, (2) the relationship between objects and (3) the spectator’s bodily response to the installation. More traditional media (sculpture, painting, photography or video), on the other hand, address the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space. Installation art, as Claire Bishop notes in *Installation Art, a Critical History* (2005), ‘presupposes an embodied viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound are heightened as their sense of vision’ rather than ‘imagining the viewers as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance’ (Bishop, 2005, p.6). The installation of artworks, and the specific nature of installation art, blur the distinction between artist and curator. This aspect was highlighted during the ‘curatorial turn’ of the 1990s, when the curator became much more of a creator than organiser, and when some exhibitions were also curated by artists.

In this Thesis, I focus on the potential of the curator to invoke multisensory in relation to the artwork-installation with the end goal of affecting the viewer. Affect, a concept first coined by Spinoza, can be understood as intensity, an excess, or a suspension in the linear progress of narrative, as Brian Massumi argues in his book *The Autonomy of Affect* (2002). Deleuze and Guattari elaborate on this theory in their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). They describe affect as a moment of gathering force, which may or may not be acted upon. Marks describes affect as a ‘volatile moment (...) It’s when a person feels the great pressure and potential of the virtual—of the broad realm of possibilities one of which can be summoned into being. It is not yet communicable’ (Marks, 2008, p. 9).

Works of art can challenge divisions of cultures and the coherency of the body image owing to the affect they engender in the viewer, but can curatorship do this as well? In my research I work towards ‘multisensory as curatorial medium in the museum’ because I am convinced of the potential of curatorship as a strategy of affect (in the philosophical sense) and as a strategy to de-hierarchise the senses as perceived in the West and thereby deconstruct optic visibility (distant vision) as the primary conduit of knowledge.

My research is divided into three main chapters, each of which contains four subchapters and a short conclusion. Each chapter deals with a different facet of the main research question as outlined above.

In chapter one, I focus on how the multisensory quality of installation art challenges the hierarchical ordering of the senses as perceived in the West. I connect the multisensory quality of ‘installation art’ with the ‘installation of art’. After introducing a brief history of installation art, I introduce the material that will resonate through the other chapters of this thesis. This material consists of the four-day conference *Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World* (2018) organised by the Stedelijk Museum (of which I am a regular visitor) in collaboration with the Gerrit Rietveld

Academie, where I obtained my bachelor degree in Fine Arts. I feel a strong connection with both institutions, which was my personal reason to put them at the centre of my analysis. The theoretical reason is that *Hold Me Now* focused entirely on touch and the haptic, which showed that the Stedelijk Museum has a strong interest in the topic. The curators and art critics who spoke at the conference described many conceptual tools to think through concepts such as intersectionality (Karen Archey), flesh as haptic value (Rizvana Bradley) and the idea of violence within the erotic and the politics of the handmade (Jack Halberstam). I will flesh out these concepts further in the first chapter by applying them to two exhibitions held at the Stedelijk Museum shortly after *Hold Me Now*. One of these exhibitions was curated by the Stedelijk curator of contemporary art for time-based media, Karen Archey, who was also the first speaker at *Hold Me Now*.

I will assess the curatorial approach of both exhibitions with a view to examining the possibilities for curators to embrace a multi-sensory approach. How does Archey conceptualise her theories in her exhibition *Freedom of Movement*? And what kind of curatorial tools does Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen draw on in his exhibition *Spirits of the Soil*? What kind of possibilities are there for curatorship which explores in the direction of the multisensory? Which of these possibilities can already be found in the ideas which animated the curation of these two exhibitions? I touch briefly upon these questions in the first chapter, but explore them in much more detail in Chapter Three, after analysing the possibilities inherent in the museum space itself in the second chapter.

The differences between ‘the smooth space’ and ‘the striated space’ are the primary focus of the second chapter, in which I question how a museum can become a space in which the curator challenges institutional restrictions on freedom, and how the curator can challenge traditional exhibition practices. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explain the smooth and striated space in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Invoking their conceptual schema, I discuss the qualities of both spaces, both to separate the smooth qualities of the museum space from its striated qualities and to focus on the difference, and to explore what possibilities this difference itself offers. The exhibitions I touched upon in Chapter One will be addressed again in Chapter Two, but now under the rubric of as ‘exhibition as form’ and ‘space as material’.

An aspect of my approach is Laura Marks’ theory of haptic visuality, which will also be analysed in Chapter Two. According to Marks, the haptic exists within Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space. Haptic visuality is a visual tool or strategy within the artistic realm on which Marks bases much of her analyses of video art. Haptic visuality is a close vision that does not draw upon distant vision or a clear separation between *what* is viewed (on the screen) and *who* is viewing (standing in front of the screen). Haptic visuality is about tactility, touch, and embodiment between the artwork and viewer. In her article *Video Haptics and Erotics* (1998) Marks speaks of a ‘caressing gaze’ in relation to haptic visuality. According to Marks, the caressing gaze is an intimate, detailed and erotic gaze that does not accentuate a masochistic, phallogocentric model of vision.

Marks was the first to relate haptic visuality with a contemporary art form, namely video art. Marks describes and examines the seductive effect that haptic visuality has on the spectator by inviting her/him to relate bodily with the screen. This seduction stands in stark contrast to optic visuality. Marks argues that in optic visuality, there is always a clear separation between the screen and the spectator, because the viewer makes use of only one sense, namely sight. Marks invokes the

concept of ‘haptic’ space articulated by Alois Riegl at the turn of the twentieth century. Deleuze and Guattari point out a certain ambiguity within Riegl’s theory, which I will elaborate on in order to understand its relevance to a framework which approaches the museum space as a smooth space in which the haptic exists.

Chapter Three further explores the promise of ‘haptic curatorship’. It begins with some of the historical developments in art curation which make it possible to think today about ‘haptic curatorship’. I then return to the conceptual framework of Karen Archey, addressed at *Hold Me Now*, which sees ‘care as an umbrella of intersectionality’. How does the ‘haptic critic’ resonate with the idea of the curator? I engage with Marks’ theory, focusing in particular on her idea of ‘haptic criticism’. Curatorship has changed rapidly in recent years, and the curator has become a creator. Haptic criticism can become a new standpoint for the curator when he or she is designing an exhibition. This strategy of curatorship goes beyond ‘curator as author’ and more towards ‘curator as haptic critic’. Drawing on Archey’s exhibition *Freedom of Movement* and on the concept of flesh as a haptic value (which Bradley addressed at *Hold Me Now*), I will explore the potential inherent in the exhibition, linking ‘flesh as haptic’ to ‘flesh as a material’. The concept of intersectionality will be explored in relation to the concept of ‘assemblage’. I will also examine the exhibition structure (as an assemblage) as a sort of outcome in practice, and engage with the ideas of queer theorist Jasbir Puar, who perceives intersectionality together with assemblage as an eventful happening instead of an intersectionality that produces robust new paradigms and political identities. According to Puar, the danger of these new fixed elements can limit a person in her/his thinking and acting if they are treated as being of main importance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Art historian Beti Žerovc argues ‘there can be little doubt that today the curator of contemporary art is a figure of extraordinary influence in the art system (Žerovc, 2015, p. 17). The curator’s rapidly expanding responsibilities and powers create a new field of play whose potentialities are worthy of exploration. My research in the expansion of the curator’s role draws on art theory, feminist theory and philosophy.

I engage with art critics and curators who themselves also take a heterogenous position within the field, such as Claire Bishop (art historian and critic), Julie Reiss (art critic and lecturer) Hans Obrist (curator, critic, editor and art historian) Beti Žerovc (art historian, art-critic and lecturer) and Paul O’Neill (curator, writer, artist, and educator). I engage with these figures primarily on the basis of their writings. However, the curatorial concepts employed by Rizvana Bradley, Karen Archey and Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen offer additional resources to illustrate the art-theoretical concepts, as realised in their curatorial concepts and exhibitions. I use their concepts and exhibitions further to connect feminist theory and philosophy with curatorship.

In Chapter One, I draw on Claire Bishop’s work on the history of installation art and the history of the installation of art, as presented in *Installation Art: a Critical History* (2005). I then turn to the main subject of the thesis, which is (1) the *Hold Me Now* conference, which addressed feminist

subjects such as intersectionality, flesh as haptic, and the multisensory, and then turn to the solo exhibition *Spirits of the Soil*, which showed works by Raquel van Haver curated by Van Nieuwenhuyzen, and the group show *Freedom of Movement*, which showed works of twenty artists based in the Netherlands.

In Chapter Two, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of smooth and striated space serves as a poststructuralist theoretical framework within which to analyse concepts as 'difference', 'becoming', 'nomadism', 'body without organs', 'assemblage', 'rhizome', and 'event'. These concepts all derive from Deleuze and Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The first concept, 'difference', is not addressed explicitly, but is rather inherent in the structure of my arguments. During my research into the theory of gender and ethnicity, I have become increasingly interested in the concept of difference, which I have addressed in essays during my undergraduate studies, in particular on the reworking of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610) by Aimé Césaire (*Une Tempête*, 1969), in which Césaire constructs a new identity for the play by stressing the differences between the old and new version. This method can be called structuralist since, according to Saussure, meaning is produced by the systematic arrangement of difference. Vowels and particles are different from each other, the subject arranges things together and examines differences and similarities, and identity is constructed through that difference. I have also drawn on the concept of difference in relation to the feminist idea of 'intersectionality' (coined by feminist thinker Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989). Intersectionality describes a method of analysis that does not analyse hierarchical oppression by a single-axis analysis but inspires one to look at how the axes of race, gender, nation, and class operate simultaneously. Crenshaw holds that a fundamental problem with how the legal system analyses discrimination claims is that it focuses on individual persons, and individual instances of discrimination based on particular characteristics. Crenshaw argues that this rational, analytical, logical approach fails (whether intentionally or not) fails to grapple with complex, overlapping, systemic obstacles faced by persons from minority groups, especially when they are simultaneously classified as belonging to more than one oppressed group. Crenshaw's idea of "intersectionality" has since become a powerful analytical tool in many contexts far beyond the original field of American anti-discrimination law. In previous writings, I have analysed the concept of 'difference' as another axis within the intersectional approach by which I was inspired by Susan Stryker's essay (*De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies*, who argues that difference 'cannot be subsumed to an object-choice model of antiheteronormativity' (Stryker, 2006, p. 7).

The other main ideas (becoming, nomadism, body without organs, assemblage, rhizome and event) are fully explored in the second and third chapters. They are all related, and serve the function of ensuring 'continuity' in smooth space. The 'smooth' space posited by Deleuze and Guattari is further elaborated by Mark's theory of the haptic, who also draws on the work art historian Alois Riegl.

Riegl's findings relate to the observed development of physical tactility and the rise of figurative space in art. Marks expands the concept of hapticity to include video art. Marks argues that video art is broadly perceived as a "cool" medium, in that the video is generally experienced as an optical visuality which draws on distanced vision – a clear separation between what is viewed and who is

viewing. Conversely, haptic space is about tactility, touch, and the embodiment of emotional experience.

The videos she examines questions our common understanding of 'vision'. They address the viewer's capability to let their eyes function as 'organs of touch', and encourage a bodily experience, i.e., an involvement of the body with the video, brought about by haptic perception. The videos do not invite the viewer to look for identification with the figurative, or to find a point of orientation. The difference between the second and third chapter is that the second is more theoretical, while the third chapter examines ideas in a more practical context. The third chapter also draws again on art theory, but this time especially in relation to curatorship. The last chapter presents a theory which combines ideas of the haptic, assemblage, event and intersectionality as a new standpoint for the curator. This chapter interlinks feminist theory with art theory and poststructuralist philosophy.

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS

My hand glides through
I slowly lean in
My eyes observe

feel
my fingers
in between

The space is clean, separated, isolated

external sounds and audiences are gone

everything is dark

The white cube I previously walked
through with the white plaster
works is past

My attention goes to the enormous screen showing a young man driving a
motorcycle on an island with a trumpet on the exhaust pipe

The sound penetrating

I perform
and the others are as well

Figure 1: Experience Fragment from *Returning a Sound* (Vondeling E., 2018).

Before moving on to more theoretical aspect, I wish to elaborate on the more creative pieces of writing situated among the theoretical discussions. In every chapter, I address my own personal experience of certain museum shows. These sections are, so to speak, fragments of my notes on

exhibitions, including *Spirits of the Soil* and *Freedom of Movement*. I reconstruct my experience of being in the midst of the installation of the artworks in these shows.

The first recollected experience (fig. 1) is from the 2008 solo exhibition *Never Mind That Noise You Heard* (2008), which took place at the temporary Stedelijk Museum while the new museum was under construction. *Never Mind* exhibited the works of artist duo Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla. I choose specifically to share this experience of the artwork *Returning a Sound* (2004) because it revealed to me the possibility of the curator, not just the artist, adopting a multisensory approach.

Turning to the context which inspired the piece, it becomes clear that the work embodies a certain aesthetic of resistance, as hinted at in the following description provided by the museum:

Returning a Sound addresses not only the landscape of Vieques, but also its soundscape, which for the residents of the island remains marked by the memory of the sonic violence of the bombing. The video follows Homar, a civil-disobedient and activist, as he traverses the demilitarised island on a moped that has a trumpet welded to the muffle, acoustically reterritorializes areas of the island formerly exposed to ear-splitting detonations (Stedelijk on Allora & Calzadilla, 2008).

The explanatory texts which are usually displayed next to the artwork are always limited in various ways, for instance by length restrictions. I did more research on the work, to better understand its political dimension. I learned that Vieques, an island in the northeast Caribbean which is part of the United States territory of Puerto Rico, had been under consistent colonial control from 1493, shortly after Columbus' arrival, until 2003. During this period, the island had been variously a Spanish, Scottish and Danish colony. In the middle of the 19th century, black immigrants came to Vieques and began to form an important part of the island's society. After the Spanish-American war, Vieques became a US territory. During the Second World War, sugar plantations failed, and the US subsequently used the island purely as a United States Navy bombing range and testing ground. The US Navy withdrew from Vieques only after multiple protests and lobbying by political leaders, musicians, writers, sportsmen. *Returning a Sound* (2008) was thus a symbolic representation of reclaiming land and returning the 'sound' of the inhabitants.

After discovering this work in 2008, I became interested in the multisensory qualities of artworks (materialised by the installation of the artwork) and in the creative role of the curator.

I will now turn to the exhibition and the exhibition experience. *Returning a Sound* (2004), a video installation, was situated in a black cube separated from the rest of the works, which were displayed in a large white cube. The video showed a young man driving a motorcycle with a trumpet attached to the exhaust pipe. The floor of the black cube was covered with soft black carpet. Recollecting this experience, I realise how fragmented it actually was. The fragmentation arises from the fact that *Returning a Sound* (2004) involved different senses – touch, hearing, smell and seeing – which only together formed the complete experience. When I recollect this installation, my memory focuses not only on what I see (vision), as it might when recollecting a painting, but on the entire multisensory experience. An installation asks the viewer to move around the work, to become involved with it in

a bodily fashion. Recollecting, for me, means going back in time and following the steps I took and the senses involved in experiencing the artwork. This recollection, in turn, raises questions related to all the senses: How did the artwork and the space make me feel and affect me? What did I smell, hear, see or taste? Could I interact by touch, and if so, how did it help me recognise something and what kind of pleasure did it give me?

The experience of *Returning a Sound* was multisensory because the viewer was called upon to use multiple senses and to integrate the emotional experience of the installation of the artwork. Some viewers became uncomfortable and left soon. Others gave in to the artwork, sat down and embraced the experience. I remember that I felt an urge to lay down, gaze up into the dark ceiling, and give in to the intense sound that came from speakers placed in each corner of the ceiling. The high tone of the trumpet – loud, though meditative and consistent – penetrated the room. The projection of the young driver’s face showed resistance and anger. All I could do was listen, watch and touch the carpet. I was overwhelmed and gave in to a feeling of fearlessness that overtook my body. I wondered why the man driving the motorcycle was so angry. Why did he have this urge? Why was he so persistent? What did the island mean to him?

The overall experience relied on the video, the carpet and the positioning of the speakers. As the video looped, I meditated on the curatorial decisions made while installing this work of art that helped to realized its complete (multisensory) experience. It was hard for me to distinguish between the artist’s decisions relating to the content of the artwork and the curator’s decisions relating to the artwork’s installation. This lack of clarity spurred me to question the curator’s role in the domain of contemporary art. I realised that the curator’s role had shifted from ‘exhibition organiser’ to ‘exhibition creator’.

The recollected fragments of the exhibitions *Freedom of movement* (2018) and *Spirits of the Soil* (2018) are recorded in a fragmentary, poetic form of creative writing inspired by the work of poet Trish Salah. Her work inspired me to embrace a form of writing which is an experiment in the possibility of writing which is ‘multisensory’ in the sense that it requires the reader to involve with his or her body while reading. In 2017 I attended a workshop/symposium organised by NOG (Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies) entitled *Writing Identity’s Trans-latedness*, hosted at the university of Leiden (NL) by Trish Salah.

Trish Salah is an assistant professor of Transnational Studies in Gender, Sexuality, Race and Minority Cultural Production at the Department of Gender Studies, Queen’s University (Kingston, Ontario, Canada). After being part of this symposium/workshop, which focused on how one might write down identity at a site of trans-latedness, I thought of the possibility of poems being haptic. While reading her poems, my eyes move over signs that become words, sentences, and shapes which contour the presence of ghostly line breaks on the paper. It is as if she wrote her body against the paper; her poems can perhaps be seen as a ‘composition’ of her own self. The poems strongly evoke feelings of in-betweenness and desire which function on different levels. I am inspired to use language in a playful manner, my eyes ranging over the page, making a composition of the words myself. Her poems struck me, initially, by how my own body related to them; how I embodied them myself. Salah’s poems became a lens through which to explore the possibilities of her (trans)body, as sentiments and movements of becoming.

The aesthetic play of words has an evocative visual strength and makes me, the reader, an *affective* reader, someone who reads with a caressing gaze like the one Marks discusses in relation to her concept of haptic visibility. This gaze, as briefly noted above, is an intimate, detailed and erotic gaze that does not accentuate a masochistic or phallogocentric model of vision. My eyes move like fingertips caressing the signs on the paper, as on the lush texture of a piece of embroidery, or like someone gazing on a desert, watching out for traces and points or segments. This effect arises from Salah's use of different sides of the page, and the spaces she leaves between words. The reader's eye becomes accustomed to the italic on the right opposite of non-italic letters on the left. The reader enters into a certain rhythm, not focusing on meaning but rather becoming immersed in the artist's stream of expression. The reader constructs a vague idea of Salah's identity, which is fluid and difficult to pin down. While the reader constructs, the poem simultaneously deconstructs owing to missing words, line-breaks and the lack of commitment to either side of a binary identity (male, female, boy, girl, daughter, son etc). The poems leave you floating on the line breaks, actively creating an identity out of the two sides.

I want to pick up the challenge of writing while engaging with the haptic, to create fragments that interrupt my theoretical discussion, which one reads with optical vision, with an attempt at a more 'bodily' way of reading. I also believe that the description of artworks or exhibitions often fail to convey a sense of experience. By using a kind of writing that engages with the haptic, I hope to break with vision as optical sense and with writing as a 'cool' medium which demands only distanced vision.

My intention is not so much to imitate Salah, but to use her writing as an inspiration for parts of my research that embody my experiences of the exhibitions of the Stedelijk Museum, and to let the reader forge an idea and identity of the experience of the exhibition for her or himself.

CHAPTER ONE: INSTALLATION ART AND MULTISENSORITY ENTERING THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

This chapter will demonstrate how the multisensory quality of ‘installation art’, which asks the viewer to not only engage with vision but with multiple senses and to engage with her/his body, challenges the hierarchical setting of the senses as posited by Western philosophy.

In her article *Thinking Multisensory Culture* (2008), philosopher Laura Marks notes that Western philosophy treats the ‘distance’ senses, such as vision and hearing, as vehicles of knowledge. If we want include a more sensory experience in cultural analysis, in this case the analysis of installation art in Western art museums, ‘we need to revisit the sensory hierarchy - while trying to retain the capacity for aesthetic judgement, knowledge and ethics associated with the “higher” senses’ (Marks, 2013, p.144). What is important to note here is that Marks explains that sense experience operates as a membrane between the sensible and the thinkable, drawing on the ideas of art philosopher Jacques Rancière, who maintains that art exacerbates this relationship.

Scholars Bettina Papenburg and Martha Zarzycka explain in their book *Carnal Aesthetics: Transgressive Imaginary and Feminist Politics* (2013), which is the starting point of my engagement with the question of the hierarchical setting, that there have been many scholars in the field of performance studies, film studies and philosophy who have ‘challenged the idea of the dominance of vision prevailing in Western epistemes as well as the conceptual split of the sensorium into five senses’ (Papenburg and Zarzycka, 2013, p. 3). I ask how these interventions (challenging the hierarchical setting and including sensory experience) can be used to engage the viewer more deeply with the exhibition (the installation of the artworks).

In 2018, I attended the four-day conference dedicated to the theory of ‘touch’ in Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum. This contemporary art museum is the pioneer museum in the Netherlands. In addition to exhibitions, Stedelijk Museum regularly organises symposia and happenings addressing current topics in the art world. At this conference entitled; ‘Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World’ curators, critics, philosophers of contemporary art and artists spoke about their practice in relation to the haptic. These discussions highlighted new ways to approach the installation of artworks and the museum space in itself. Guided by the theory and ideas discussed at the conference, I will look at two exhibitions that took place at the Stedelijk Museum shortly after the conference. I use my own experience of spectatorship, translated into pieces of creative writing. I use this strategy of writing because I believe, with Bishop and Reiss, in the integral role of the spectator in completing the installation. In Reiss’ words (quoted by Bishop) the spectator is ‘so integral to installation art that without having the experience of the piece, analysis of installation art is difficult’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). I therefore use my own experience of being part of the art installation, but also the experience of being part of the installation of artworks – that is, of the exhibition as a whole.

The introduction to this chapter has shown that there is a very thin line between these two ‘kinds’ of ‘installations’. The history of ‘Installation Art’ and ‘the installation of art’ is an intertwining one, thoroughly explored by Claire Bishop in her book *Installation Art: a Critical History* (2005). In the first part of this chapter (1.1 Historical Facts of Installation Art and the Multisensory Quality) her book is the main source of inspiration, as I further explore this thin line. In the second part (1.2

‘Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World’, a conference on touch) I engage with the conference at the Stedelijk Museum and address the theories of the conference that will echo further in the chapters of this thesis. In the third and fourth part of this chapter, I revisit a solo and group show at the Stedelijk Museum, which I will analyse using the theoretical approaches discussed at the conference, and which will also be the centrepiece of my discussion of curatorial practice within the Stedelijk Museum.

1.1 Historical Background of Installation Art and the Multisensory

In the 1960s installation art developed as a form of art. It became a medium that could encompass any other artistic medium, such as painting, video, photography, or sculpture – but also other activities, for example cooking or music; the possibilities were (and are) endless. Instead of classic paintings, the wide range of artistic possibilities afforded by ‘installation art’ ask the viewer to use more than one sense, and address the viewer as a direct presence in space, making the viewer an active participant. The ‘role of the spectator’ in installation art is crucial. In *History of Installation Art* (2005), art critic Claire Bishop maintains that installation art is driven by ‘the desire to heighten the viewer’s awareness of how objects are positioned (installed) in a space, and of our bodily response to this’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). She describes the way installation art addresses the viewer as a direct presence in space as follows:

Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality. Installation therefore differs from traditional media (sculpture, painting, photography, video). (...) Rather than imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an embodied viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision (Bishop, 2005, p. 6).

Addressing the viewer directly as a literal presence in space can be understood as the main characteristic of installation art. Bishop notes that she is not the only art critic emphasising this characteristic, but Bishop (together with curator Julie Reiss) places special emphasis on this aspect. Reiss writes in her book *From Margin to Centre: The Spaces of Installation Art* (1999) that ‘the spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the work’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). Paul O’Neill argues in a similar vein in his book *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures* (2012). He argues that completion of the work by the spectator can already be found in the earliest forms of twentieth-century installation art, where ‘the work was regarded as being completed by the viewer through his or her participation’ (O’Neill, 2012, p. 10). The first significant art installations were exhibited in pioneer museums such as Tate London and Guggenheim New York during the 1990s. However, the installation as medium had been developing since the 1920s, in tandem with art curators’ capacity to deal with this specific medium in the museum.

The arrival of installation art in the museum allowed the spectator to have a multisensory experience. Bishop describes how the first introduction of the term ‘installation art’ in the sixties

referred to the way ‘in which an exhibition was arranged’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). This notion refers more to the way the exhibition is organised, the installation *of* works of art. The distinctive feature of ‘installation art’, however, is that the installation is not secondary in importance. Rather, according to Bishop, (...) the space and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity. Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality’ (Bishop, 2005 p. 6).

In the late 1950’s, artists such as Marcel Duchamp, El Lissitzky and Kurt Schwitters created the first well-known pieces that can be called installations, and gave their signature to this way of working. However, installation art only became institutionalised in the 1990s. Bishop claims the change became most evident in spectacular exhibitions in the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the massive Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in London. She describes the diverse influences on the history of installation art coming from various art forms, such as architecture, cinema, performance art and sculpture, to name just a few. This variety of histories is again reflected in the wide diversity of works that fit under the umbrella ‘installation art’. To manage this diversity, Bishop classifies works according to the viewer’s experience instead of focusing on materials or themes:

Some installations plunge you into a fictional world - like a film or theatre set - while others offer little visual stimuli, a bare minimum of perceptual cues to the senses. Some installations are geared towards heightening your awareness of particular senses (touch or smell) while others seem to steal your sense of self-presence, refracting your image into an infinity of mirror reflections or plunging you into darkness. Others discourage you from contemplation and insist that you act - write something down, have a drink, or talk to other people (Bishop, 2005, p. 8).

Installation art activates the viewing subject and decenters her/him. The experience of installation art is different from traditional painting and sculpture because it does not represent (objects, texture, light, space) but rather presents elements ‘directly to experience’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 11). It ‘introduces an emphasis on sensory immediacy, on physical participation (the viewer must walk into and around the work), and on a heightened awareness of other visitors who become part of the piece’ (Bishop, 2005, p.11).

The idea of the ‘decentred subject’ has to do with disrupting the hierarchical model of the relationship between the painting and the viewer. As Bishop explains, the 1960s saw an increase of critical writing on the idea of the panoptic/masculine gaze. Bishop cites the arguments of art historian Erwin Panofsky:

Renaissance perspective placed the viewer at the centre of the hypothetical ‘world’ depicted in the painting; the line of perspective, with its vanishing point on the horizon of the picture, was connected to the eyes of the viewer who stood before it. A hierarchical relationship was understood to exist between the centred viewer and the ‘world’ of the painting spread before him. Panofsky therefore equated Renaissance perspective with the rational and self-reflexive Cartesian subject (‘I think therefore I am’) (Bishop, 2005, p.11).

The disruption of this relationship between the place of the viewer and the work of art was challenged by Cubism, in which several viewpoints coexist in a single painting. Installation art, which gained prominence in the 1970s, is concerned with the idea of de-centering the subject. Bishop accordingly argues that installation art is poststructuralist. The theories which emerged simultaneously in the 1970s sought, as she explains, ‘to provide an alternative to the idea of the viewer that is implicit in Renaissance perspective (...) poststructuralist theory argues that each person is intrinsically dislocated and divided’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 13). The spectator’s viewpoint in installation art can be said to be never complete, one can never see everything at once from one point of view.

As a medium, installation art is also an outcome of the growing awareness in the 1970s of the links within the art ecosystem (patrons, trustees, politics, business). As Bishop explains, artists started ‘to question their role within the museum system and consciously avoid the production of discrete, portable objects on which the market depended’ (Bishop, 2005, p.32) and Paul O’Neill notes that ‘artists of the historical avant-garde began to criticise art as an institution in need of counterattack and confrontation’ (O’Neill, 2012, p.10). The main question for these artists was how they could bring the viewer into play. Alongside this new consciousness among artists, curatorial criticism emerged in the late 1960s and focused, initially, on the idea of ‘curators-as-authors of their exhibition text’ (O’Neill, 2012, p.9). Curators started to work outside the museum space and became independent. This unfolding of the curatorial role – from dependent figure within the museum institution to independent author on which the museum and art collector depend – will be more fully addressed in Chapter Three.

The developments in art curation from the 1920s to 1990s created the conditions for modern spectators to observe with heightened awareness. The spectator is urged by the curator to take note (for example) of the arrangement of the exhibition, or the way works of art are hung on the wall or occupy space. He/She might also think about the lighting and the layout of the space(s) within the museum, or about the space as a whole. All these decisions, made by the curator while installing the artworks, determine the perception of the spectator of the art on display.

As briefly noted in the introduction, there is a thin line dividing the history of ‘installation art’ from the history of ‘installation of art’. The possibilities opened to modern curators blur this line yet further. Bishop notes that art magazines started to use the word installation to ‘describe the way in which an exhibition was arranged’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). The term ‘installation shot’ (a photograph of an installation) eventually ‘gave rise to the use of the word for works that used the whole space as “installation art”’ (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). The exhibition itself became the art of installation, I maintain, and this way of working asks the curator to engage multisensorially and with one’s own body.

But is this something that is really happening in the Stedelijk Museum, the contemporary museum of Amsterdam? The conference in 2018 *Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World* indicated that curators and others are indeed developing a new way of working, that is, a multisensorial approach that tends to decentralise vision as the primary sense used to produce knowledge.

1.2 Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World, a Conference on Touch

In March 2018, the Stedelijk Museum, together with the Gerrit Rietveld Art Academy, organised a conference entitled *Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World*. This four-day conference focused on the multisensory, the haptic and new models of curatorship. Shortly after the conference, the Stedelijk Museum presented a solo show by the painter Raquel van Haver curated by Martijn van Nieuwenhuizen, and a group show, *Freedom of Movement*, curated by Karen Archey (who also spoke at the conference). While visiting these shows, I was able to consider and apply the theories presented during the conference. These shows are discussed in Sections 5 and 6 below.

The conference *Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World*, was organised around the question of how touching and touch resonate in daily life, in art, in the surroundings and in theory. Each day was curated by an art critic or curator who organised the day around her/his specific research on the subject. This conference raised important questions about the role of the curator in contemporary art. Each day's activity was arranged by a different curator/art critic, who elaborated on her/his exhibition concepts. Each art critic/curator invited artists and thinkers to discuss her/his ideas about 'touch' and her/his involvement with touch in her/his practice. The fact that the conference was organised in this manner strengthens the idea that, today, exhibitions no longer revolve around the experience of a (single) artwork or of artworks of one artist, but about the authorship of the curator and her/his exhibition (the installation of artworks) as a work of art. *Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World* clearly dealt with this approach, which sparked my interest in analysing its themes in relation to exhibitions held near the same time at the Stedelijk Museum and questioning the curatorial methods used these exhibitions in relation to the theory, thoughts and ideas that came to the foreground during the conference.

The theories that came to the foreground and that I will involve while revisiting the exhibitions, were (1) Karen Archey's concept of the curator and intersectionality, (2) Rizvana Bradley's concept of thinking through the flesh as a haptic value, and (3) Jack Halberstam's idea of violence within the erotic and the politics of the handmade. I will now shortly summarise these three topics to engage with them more in depth while looking at the exhibitions held afterwards at the Stedelijk Museum.

Karen Archey's concept of the curator and intersectionality

The first day entitled *Practicing Care*, was curated by Karen Archey, current Curator of Contemporary Art for Time-Based Media at the *Stedelijk*. She spoke about care as an umbrella under which we can connect intersecting issues relating to race, gender, class, sexuality and ability. In doing so, she drew upon the increasing diversity of the world of contemporary art, in which artists from formerly marginalized communities – persons of colour, women, sexual minorities, and persons from the global South – are increasingly seeking and being allowed representation in the privileged spaces of Western artistic institutions. As a curator, she not only cares for art objects, but also for the artist's wellbeing. In Chapter 3 of this thesis I will further elaborate on this intersection in relation to curatorship.

Karen Archey invited artists to the conference whose identity involves an intersection of two or more of previously mentioned discourses, and whose work also relates to communication, access

and care. In the group exhibition *Freedom of Movement*, twenty artists who are based in the Netherlands exhibited their work. An exhibition of works by twenty artists might be expected to give the curator considerable scope to combine, connect and intersect. I further discuss this exhibition in Section 6 of this chapter and reflect on Archey's conceptual curatorial framework of intersectionality.

Rizvana Bradley's Concept of Thinking Through the Flesh as a Haptic Value

Curator Rizvana Bradley curated the third day, entitled *On the Haptic through the Resonance of Touch*. Bradley, Assistant Professor of the History of Art and African-American Studies at Yale, studies the moving image, performance art, and especially mixed-media art installations. She focuses her scholarly research on the black diaspora, and expands and develops curatorial frameworks for thinking across different artistic mediums in global and transnational contexts. Bradley spoke about her thinking through the 'flesh as a haptic value'. This idea resonates through my experience of the solo exhibition of Raquel van Haver entitled *Spirits of the Soil* (Section 5 below) and of the exhibition *Freedom of Movement* (section 6 below).

The study of the flesh is framed by ways of precise distinction between body and flesh, Bradley states. Inspired by postcolonial thinker Hortense Spillers, she explained at the conference how she has also thought about flesh as a haptic value and a re-evaluation of sight. According to Bradley, Spillers sees the captive body as being marked by the absence of a subject position: It is a completely abject, disempowered body. However, she continued, the flesh is distinct and prior to the body, the body can be written, the flesh cannot. The theory of the haptic is drawn from Marks' ideas (discussed in the Introduction, above).

Jack Halberstam's idea of violence within the erotic and the politics of the handmade

Jack Halberstam organised the fourth day, entitled *Reach out and Touch (Somebody's Hand): Feel Philosophies*. He also follows Spillers' thought, arguing that violence is already in place within the erotic. Does this collide with or contradict Marks' theory of haptic as erotic? Can these theories be thought together, and if so, could they strengthen the idea of vision as a form of contact? Jack Halberstam takes a leap to formulate an idea of touching that holds within it all kinds of different textures of violence. He refers to 'the force of un-making'. When we think of making, we move away from high cultural forms of making and move towards low cultural modes of making. Halberstam addressed the politics of the handmade and Julia Bryan-Wilson's theory of the fray in her book on textile art. Halberstam notes that in that theory, 'fray', 'is both the fray edge, but also being in the fray, in the thick of things, edge and centre piece, the making and also the place in which what we began to make, begins to fall apart' (Halberstam, 2018, conference). This idea of continuity is rhizomatic, always becoming and never static.

Hortense Spillers' essay *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe*

In her essay *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe* published in 1987, Hortense Spillers explains her view on intimacy in relation to the captive body (held captive by slavery). According to Spillers:

1) the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; 2) at the same time — in stunning contradiction — the captive reduces to a thing, becoming being *for* the captor; 3) in this absence *from* a subject-position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of “otherness”; 4) as a category of “otherness”, the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general “powerlessness,” resonating through various centers of human and social meaning (Spillers, 1987, p.67).

In order unleashing the body from its imposing meanings and uses, Spillers needs to separate the body from the flesh. By undoing, the flesh can become intimate, a ‘profound intimacy of interlocking detail’. But this is interrupted by the above four processes. Spillers continues by saying:

I would like to make a distinction (...) between “body” and “flesh”, and impose that distinction on the central one between captive and liberated subject positions. In that sense, before the “body” there is “flesh” (...). If we think of the flesh as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship’s hole, fallen or escaped overboard. (ibid., p.67)

Before the body, there was already the flesh, which is a ‘zero degree of social conceptualisation’ and which does not ‘escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography’ (ibid., p. 67). Flesh resists discourse. I would like to continue with these thoughts in mind, to wit: the distinction between body and flesh, the resistance of discourse, and the flesh as haptic. In my view, the separation between body and flesh to which Spillers refers indicates a possibility of coming closer to the work of art (embodying it), and being intimate with it – discourse, by contrast, only distances on from the experience.

Spillers, who was also present at the conference, spoke of touch as a gateway to the most intimate experiences and to mutual exchange between subjects. Touch, in her view, is a fundamental element of the absence of self-ownership and an important feature of slavery. Spillers also referred to ‘touch as violation’. In the first instance, this appears to oppose Marks’ ideas about haptic visuality (eyes as organs of touch) as a kind of promise of a positive embodiment of artworks, a way of working towards a ‘de-hierarchisation’ of senses, and a re-evaluation of sight as a ‘distant’ sense. In my view, however, the paintings of Raquel van Haver unite these two opposing approaches to the realm of touch.

1.3 Solo exhibition of Raquel van Haver entitled *Spirits of the Soil*

As noted above, shortly after the *Hold Me Now* conference, the Stedelijk museum organised a solo show of Raquel van Haver curated by Martijn van Nieuwenhuizen entitled *Spirits of the Soul*. Almost every painting in this show is exhibited in a separate room, which gives the viewer the chance to experience each work one on one. The monumental paintings visualise human subjects of colour in spaces reminiscent of public spaces such as cafés, markets and the street. The subjects are

frivolous, upbeat and sometimes seem to be tipsy. They drink, eat, talk, celebrate, make music and overall convey an impression of ‘togetherness’.



Figure 2: Detail from Raquel van Haver's painting (Vondeling E, 2019).

The thickness of the oil paint (see detail fig. 2) and the scale of the work bear down inescapably on the viewer, in both a figurative and literal sense. Azu Nwagbogu, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Zeitz Museum of African Contemporary Art in Cape Town, South Africa, writes in his essay in the exhibition catalogue that the spectator must ‘submit without trepidation’ to this ‘overwhelming sensory experience’ (Nwagbogu, 2019, p. 19). There is no doubt about the tactile quality of these paintings – jute sacks are prepared with a tar and glue base, upon which underdrawings are made in charcoal and chalk. The surface is then textured in a collage of plaster, oil paint, spray paint, plastics, paper, hair, and even ashes to create high relief images. I view and approach these paintings more as sculptures, although I cannot walk around them which would be possible with sculpture. The artist has sculpted her way through these paintings – I would argue that van Haver initially formed part of each painting, and only later drew away from it. The paintings have the same effect on the viewer, making him or her want to be close to the paintings, to smell the oil, get lost in the texture, and only then retreat some distance to view symbolic references, see the subjects in their wholeness, and experience the scale.

As Nwagbogu notes, the complexity of the material evokes not merely ‘sound but noise, and many varieties of it’. He mentions the ‘ferocious barking of squat, muscular pit bulls; the bass-heavy rhythms of rap music being recorded in a studio; the raucous laughter of drinkers at the bar; the whispered threats of neighborhood toughs’ (Nwagbogu, 2018, p.19). These paintings have a multisensory quality which is enhanced by curatorial decisions. For example, in the last room of the exhibition, three paintings are exhibited, and curator Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen placed black sculptural structures beneath them (see Fig 3.). The audience can step on these structures to get closer to the paintings and connect with them. These curatorial decisions allow a close and embodied view and will further be addressed in chapter 3.



Fig 3. Raquel van Haver, *We do not Sleep as we Parade all Through the Night...*, (Van Rooij G.J , 2018).

A scene from Spillers’ essay ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe’ comes to mind while standing on these structures and being so close to van Haver’s work. The female body is ‘strung from a three-limb, or bleeding from the breast on any given day of field work because the “overseer”, standing the length of the whip, has popped her flesh open’ (Spillers, 1987, p. 68). Spillers speaks of the ‘captive body’ and ‘captive flesh’. The paintings become tangible through my eyes, women’s breasts are fleshy bulbs of oil paint, the bodies are unveiled from their skin. As a viewer, you see subjects but do not categorise them into male or female. The pieces of clothing which appear fragmented throughout the painting do not have this bulky quality; they are drawn by pencil and smoothed out. In every painting, Van Haver is very consistent in how she uses different materials. Hair is used for hair, thick oil paint is only used for the bodies of her subjects and aesthetic elements, such as an earring, are used in the ear of a subject. It becomes apparent that Van Haver is not trying to escape symbolic meanings – rather, she keeps the optical in place. Being so close to the work and moving my eyes

along the skin of it, I recognise these elements as points of recognition, they are optical elements, points of segments. The material she uses reflects the maker's actions, and the image becomes something of a historical object, a container of happenings that have materialised either in Van Haver's studio or in public spheres. The element of the jute-sack adds an element of history, bringing a note of travel and trade to the overall experience. The subjects bodies are made captive in Van Havers' sculptural paintings, and therefore also in the flesh.

In her distinction of body and flesh, Spillers refers to the body as discrete, and relates the flesh to eroticism and desire. Touch is an element of the absence of self-ownership which, according to Marks, is an important factor in the 'erotic'. In the introduction to her book *Touch, Sensuous Theory and Multitasking Media*, she says:

The ability to oscillate between near and far is erotic. In sex, what is erotic is the ability to move between control and relinquishing, between being giver and receiver. It's the ability to have your sense of self, your self-control, taken away and restored – and to do the same for another person (Marks, 2002, p. xvi).

This flow between symbolisation that requires distance with the mimesis of the painting is a constant duet. A duet between the optical that is needed for symbolisation, which can be deeply explored purely by sight, and close vision, which requires haptics. I argue, in this sense, that the flesh can be seen as a beholder of haptics, whereas the body is a repository of cultural hieroglyphics and discourses. By the separation of the two – on the one hand, flesh as haptic, and on the other hand, body as cultural hieroglyphics – one can think of flesh as ungendered, gender being a hieroglyphic and sex being a part of that hieroglyphic. As Spillers states in her essay '(...) female flesh — of female flesh “ungendered” — offers a praxis and a theory, a text for living and dying, and a method for reading through their diverse mediations' (Spillers, 1987, p. 68).

One can also go a step further and view all senses (sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing) as hieroglyphics on the body, and thus rethink all those 'qualities' of the body. In discussion with Bradley during the 2018 conference, Spillers discussed her concern that what we understand as intimate today may be troubled in the same way. The 'messaging up' of our intimacies, as Bradley reframes her words, is something that 'actively haunts the present'.

1.4 Exhibition Freedom of Movement and Karen Archey's curatorial concept

The group show *Freedom of Movement*, curated by Karen Archey, was also organised by Stedelijk shortly after the 'Hold Me Now' conference.

Freedom of Movement involved video work, internet art, performance, choreography, sound art, and workshops. In the information sheet the inspiration for the title is explained as follows:

“Freedom of movement” is a phrase that describes the right of a person to travel within a country, or to go abroad, whether as a refugee, immigrant, or vacationer. It is commonly used in a legal context to describe human and mobility rights. While the phrase often refers

suit reflects a stereotypically male idea of an inflated muscular body. While being inflated, the avatar seems to get sick, and shows scars and wounds on her body. The overall impression the video generates is suffocating and extremely violent. Cooper's centralisation of the inflicted body in her video brings to mind Susan Stryker's argument, in her essay *(De)Subjugated Knowledges*, that systems of power 'operate on actual bodies, capable of producing pain and pleasure, health and sickness, punishment and reward, life and death' (Stryker, 2006, p.3).

Relating further to Spillers' separation of the body and the flesh, Cooper's work illustrates how the body and its contours are a property of society, which decide which shapes are permissible, and which are not. I will analyse this work in relation to Spillers' contoured body and the theories of Judith Butler. Butler, known for her theories of 'gender performativity', maintains that gender is not simply an act but a 'reiterative and citational' practice. The discourse of gender produces effects, and the performativity of gender ensures that the binary understanding of (male or female) sex cannot be distinguished from this performativity. Gender cannot be understood as a fact or static condition of a body, it is rather a process by which ideals become materialised through reiteration of norms. The fact that gender needs to be reiterated shows differentiation by 'sex difference' alone is incomplete. This condition leads to instabilities in gender difference. According to Butler, gender is not something natural, which means that it may be subject to 'dematerialisation'. In a very literal sense, the unnatural suit in Cooper's video is suffocating the avatar. The avatar is trying to push the walls of the space she is in; the movements of her body are fixed within this space, as are the outline/the contours of her skin (which suffocates in the gender performative suit). Butler argues that sex is not a given, but is rather materialised just as gender is, and thus sex and gender cannot be separated. Sex is 'one of the norms by which the "one" becomes viable. Sex qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility' (Butler, 1993, p. 2). The body undone from its skin, undone from its gender and sex, can be seen as a disabled body within the domain of cultural intelligibility. The flesh that is left is the 'zero degree' of social conceptualisation to which Spillers refers.

Another work in the same room, Isabelle Andriessen's *Tidal Spill*, occupies the left and right sides in front of the video screen. It is an installation of sculptural elements which resemble bones, or the remains of some creature. The sculptures evolve throughout the exhibition, showing symptoms related to metabolism and disease. The similarity between Cooper's and Andriessen's work is obvious: both explore disease, discomfort and a feeling of alienation. Like Cooper's avatar, the sculptures exist in their alienated spaces, and the viewer views their evolution just as the viewer sees the process of the avatar getting ill and bruised within its own space.

The video documentation of Michelle Rizzo's performance was displayed on a video screen on the wall next to Andriessen's work. The video shows dancers repeating the same dance steps to a background of techno music. In doing so, they achieve a trance state, characterised by the artist as a 'transcendental state'. The bodies of the performers Rizzo chose for this piece displayed gender ambiguity, i.e. it was not obvious whether they were 'male' or 'female'. During the live performance that took place on several occasions during the *Freedom of Movement* exhibition, this ambiguity became even clearer. Viewers could stand next to the performers and observe their bodies closely in their state of transcendence throughout the duration of the performance.

Juan Arturo Garcia's *Non-Linear Trajectories* relates differently to the issues of 'state of being' and 'gender'. Garcia's work is a three-channel video installation consisting of three-dimensional scans based on pictures Garcia took at the Immigration and Naturalisation Services office in Amsterdam. The viewer, entering a space which represents the office, immediately experiences alienation. The work consists of large plastic sheets, a material that is often used in refugee camps. When you enter the closed space of Garcia's installation, it offers a new view on the exhibited works around it. For example, Cooper's video appears blurry, and its sound fades away. Inside Garcia's installation space, the observer is confronted with three-dimensional objects which seem fragmentary. From the outside you cannot see these screens, only light flashes that interrupt Cooper's video and distract spectators viewing Andriessen's sculptural objects. Once again, the objects are alienated within their space.

Joy Mariama Smith's installation *Free Fou Fou* uses the American children song "Little Bunny Foo Foo" to explore how freedom is a construction. The music the viewer hears describes a rabbit hopping through a forest, harassing field mice by hitting them on the head. A fairy reprimands Little Bunny Foo Foo three times, threatening to turn the rabbit into a goon unless it stops tormenting the mice. The rabbit persists and is transformed at the end of the story.

Like Cooper's work, this song speaks to the fixed character of the body within the domain of cultural intelligibility. Philosopher Michel Foucault, a main inspiration of Butler, speaks in this context about the 'effect of power'. The body is not free; it is a materialised body that represents sex, gender and identity, which are the effects of the power structure.

Freedom of Movement shows Archey's interest in the intersection of discourses on race, sex, gender, ability and class within her conceptual framework. Her exhibition requires viewers to connect the works and try to discern Archey's authorship, and the exhibition, as her own work of art, reflecting her ideas. She dismantles binaries by bringing in different artworks with the same basic ideas, but different approaches. What is problematic, in my view, is that the exhibition becomes an illustration of the curators authorship, the works themselves do not challenge the viewer enough to engage on a multisensory level. It is also not clear how Archey used curatorial tools to deal with the restrictions of her freedom as a curator within a museum. The large space that contains the works of these five artists was the one which combined different pieces, yet they were still alienated from each other; the interaction was minimal. This exhibition contained many video pieces, but all of them (except the one displayed in the large communal space) were exhibited separately, in the familiar conservative 'black box'. The other art installations were also presented separately in generic 'white cubes'.

1.5 Conclusion

Once installation art entered the museum space in the 1990s, there was no turning back to a single way of perception, namely, that of vision. From that time on, the visitor was called upon to use more than one sense, and addressed as a direct presence in space. Many installations required visitors to enter an enclosed space designed by the artist him- or herself. While inside, the visitor

may perceive odors: wood used to construct the enclosure, chemical odours from glue, tape, or certain artistic media. The temperature may change ‘organically’ – such as when heat from a monitor is trapped in a small room – or may be artificially changed. Many artists began using light installations, foam, reflective surfaces, or artificial fog to add complexity or ambiguity to the visitor’s experience of the museum space. The installation of additional buildings allowed artists to take control of the experience of their work: They would create the discrete spaces in which their work was experienced according to their own priorities and conceptions.

The arrival of this new medium in museums was accompanied by the emergence of the curator as an active participant. Curators began to adopt and adapt some of the techniques of installation artists, turning the museum space itself into a sort of ‘installation’. The curator was now called upon to articulate an independent vision, and to find ways to harmonise the experience of diverse artworks in a single space (or to allow productive conflict to characterise the visitor’s experience). In this way, the curator became the ‘author’ of the installation of artworks. ‘Installation art’ or the ‘installation of art’ de-centers the viewing subject – she/he experiences an immediate sensory experience and physical participation. The deconstruction of the panoptic/masculine gaze, which started with cubism, reached the highest point (until now) with the advent of installation art and the new freedom of curators in the 1990s.

The *Hold Me Now* conference, which was organised by art curators and critics on behalf of the art school of Amsterdam and the Stedelijk museum, made it clear that the focus of curatorial work today is on the curator’s concept, which may sometimes even overshadow the works of art themselves. Artworks now seem to become a part of the curator’s view, the exhibition-concept and the artworks may seem to be relegated to the status of mere illustration. This development suggests that the task of enhancing the ‘multisensority’ of the exhibition of works of art now seems to lay more and more with the curator. Curators are taking a more multisensory approach. The fact that the Stedelijk Museum and the local art school organised this conference further supports this argument.

The ‘multisensory’ quality of ‘installation art’ and the ‘installation of art’, by decentralising the sense of vision, challenges the hierarchical setting of the senses, as established in Western philosophy. This new approach focuses on the body as a direct presence, as exemplified most clearly by the display of van Haver’s work, where the curator focused on ‘getting close to the object’ to highlight the visitor’s experience of the tactile quality of the paintings. The fact that the sound of one exhibition overlapped with other nearby works also created a dynamic among the exhibitions focused not merely on vision but rather on hearing, and the visitors’ movement through the space(s).

The conference at Stedelijk Museum also drew on ‘haptic visuality’, a different approach to vision which engages the body and the senses during the act of viewing, instead of ‘optical visuality’, which posits a clear separation between viewer and art object. Curator Archey focused on intersectionality (race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability) that again opens up a space of new connections and multiplications. Bradley, Halberstam and Spillers gave tools (thinking through the flesh, politics of the handmade, being in the fray) that can open up space for the viewer to view haptically – a form of interaction with artworks which is, in itself, multisensory.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MUSEUM AS SMOOTH SPACE

How can a museum become a space in which the curator challenges institutional restrictions of freedom? How can the curator challenge traditional forms of exhibitions? To achieve this goal, curators should explore traditions based on an initial approach of intimacy, which invite the spectator to cast a small, intimate, human-scale caressing gaze, rather than invoking the phallogocentric idea of vision, which casts the viewer in a passive role. As Jack Halberstam said at the *Hold Me Now* conference, we need to be at the fray-edge and at the centre piece at once. Philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari discuss in their book *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) the theory of the 'smooth space'. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the 'smooth space' of late Roman and Gothic art is a space of freedom that existed before the advent of Cartesian space. My question is, how can one think of the museum as a smooth space? In this chapter I will discuss the theory of the smooth and the theory of the striated as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, to explore the possibilities for the museum and the new approaches offered by this theory. The Stedelijk museum of contemporary art in Amsterdam, and the two exhibitions exhibited near the time of the conference (*Spirits of the soil* curated by Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen and *Freedom of Movement* curated by Karen Archey) remain my principal material for explorations of the theory.

First I will explain the theory of Deleuze and Guattari as it appears in *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) (2.1). I will then address Laura Marks' theory of the haptic (2.2). Marks, a curator, philosopher and media theorist, discusses her ideas in *Touch, Sensuous Theory and Multisensory media* (2002). She derives her theory of the smooth from Deleuze and Guattari. Her theory of the haptic, which derives from the 'smooth', as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari, is a tactile space in which the eye can function as an organ of touch, instead of its traditional role mediating vision as optical visibility, in which the eye remains at a distance from the object regarded. After the examinations of these theories, I will discuss the ambiguity within the theory of architect Alois Riegl, on whose ideas both Marks and Deleuze and Guattari draw.

While this focuses primarily on the theory of the smooth, I will also address the main question of how the curator and the spectator can approach the museum as a smooth space, and thereby integrate the qualities of the smooth space into the process of creating and viewing. The exhibition forms that were briefly addressed in chapter one (the white cube and the black cube) will be addressed again here. I will initially leave out the artworks that are discussed in the previous chapter, focusing solely on the 'space as material' in which these artworks were situated, before returning to the artworks in this space and the dialogue between these two kinds (space and artworks) of materials.

2.1 Smooth and Striated Space According to Deleuze and Guattari

The curator in the museum seemed to be doomed to grand compositions, important subjects and an exalted position of the viewer, something that changed during the 1990s with the arrival of installation art in pioneer museums. In installation art, the spectator is addressed as a direct presence in space and became an active participant in the artwork.

Nevertheless, if one looks at how curators and spectators approach the museum space itself, it is evident they approach it as a striated space, with smooth qualities required to change the space. This approach is taken because the museum space is perceived as a space in which optical vision, rather than close vision or a sensorial approach to the space itself, is most important. The striated can be found, for example, in the clear routes which are usually signposted through the space of the museum. There are also clear divisions between spaces, made by walls which may change with each exhibition. These walls slice up the space rather than following a logic of continuation. Also, the space carries clear restrictions: that is, there are signs everywhere telling the viewer how to behave. Above all, the space imposes a clear separation between spectator and space. This is due, again, to the distance between the material of the space and the material of the human body, so to speak. Striated spaces are also associated with social control; with segmented, rationalised, particularized geometries which reflect and impose societal distinctions and classifications. Smooth spaces, on the other hand, do not impose many external constraints. Actors within them navigate an open landscape under conditions of comparative equality.

Looking specifically at the Stedelijk Museum, we see a museum space which embodies the logic of categorisation of the artworks, for example by year, artist, and movement. The space is literally marked by policies and its construction navigates the visitors through the exhibitions. These navigations and markings do not invite the viewer for a close-up view or give her/him a choice in how to navigate through the space: there are different possibilities, but these are limited and follow the same logic.

What would be different if the striated became smooth? For that, we first need to define the difference is between striated and smooth space, and what emerges from the ‘difference’ between the two? Difference is created by comparison. In a way, as this chapter will demonstrate, the smooth and the striated space cannot be seen/examined separately, they depend on one other.

Deleuze and Guattari developed the concepts of striated space and smooth space in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, originally published in 1980. This thesis will use the most recent edition of the 1987 English translation by Brian Massumi. In chapter fourteen, Deleuze and Guattari describe the characteristics of both spaces (smooth and striated) by using different models, namely the Technological, Musical, Maritime, Mathematical, Physical and Aesthetic Model: Nomad art. To approach the museum as a smooth space, I will explain these specific models. The last model I will discuss, the Aesthetic Model, is embraced by Laura Marks in her theory of ‘haptic visuality’ and ‘haptic criticism’, as presented in *Touch, Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002). I will integrate her ideas as well in the explanation of the Aesthetic Model.

The four characteristics of striated space in the Technological Model are described in *A Thousand Plateaus* as follows: first, it is constituted by two parallel elements, for example the horizontal and the vertical. These two elements intertwine and intersect in a perpendicular fashion. Secondly, the two elements have different functions; one is fixed, the other is mobile, passing above and beneath the fixed. Thirdly, the space is necessarily delimited; closed on at least one side: the fabric can be infinite in length but not in width. Finally, the space has a top and a bottom.

While the striated space is delimited, the smooth space is ‘infinite, open and does not assign fixed and mobile elements, but rather distributes a continuous variation’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 553). In the Technological Model, the body is said to be moveable in the smooth space while fabric (which is striated) integrates the body and the outside into a closed space. The smooth space is not to be understood as homogeneous but ‘it is an amorphous, nonformal space prefiguring Op-art’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 554). Op-art is a short term for optical art. Op-art uses optical illusions, it is a form of (often two dimensional) abstraction which give an idea of movement in the image, I believe Deleuze and Guattari refer here to art that is incorporating optical phenomena/illusions.

The Musical Model invokes time, another important quality of both spaces, which is also relevant to the museum space. In the smooth space, the ‘time’ that one occupies is not counted. Counting is about measurements, in the case of music it is about the rhythm and intervals between the notes. In relation to the museum one can think about the measurements of the distance between paintings, or the measurements of how high a work should be hung. Museums use the same formula to decide and calculate the position. In the striated space, ‘time’ is counted in order to occupy the space, thus one could say in the striated museum this technical formula of calculating the position of the painting is used. Deleuze and Guattari summarise themselves the qualities of both spaces in the Technological Model as following:

(...) The striated space is that which intertwines fixed and variable elements, produces an order and succession of distinct forms, and organises horizontal melodic lines and vertical harmonic planes. The smooth is the continuous variation, continuous development of form; it is the fusion of harmony and melody in favour of the production of properly rhythmic values, the pure act of the drawing of a diagonal across the vertical and the horizontal (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 556).

The Maritime Model adds that in striated space ‘lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to another’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 556). Conversely, in the smooth space the points are ‘subordinated to the trajectory’ (idem). Another important point mentioned in the Maritime Model is that the smooth space is, I quote; ‘a space of affect, more than one of properties’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 557). It is said to be a haptic perception – that is, a close vision – rather than optical perception that requires distance.

The smooth space is said to be an intensive space, a ‘body without organs’ (BWO), totally occupied by intensities such as wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities. The theory of the BWO refers to the idea of an assemblage, which will be addressed in Chapter Three as a potential

curatorial strategy within the smooth space. The BWO has no organisational principles, and is characterised by movement and change. It dismisses measures and properties. This quality of movement and change brings me to two important terms mentioned in the 'Mathematical Model', which is 'multiplicity' and the 'rhizomatic'. In this model, the authors argued that the smooth can never create a pyramid, which is a form of hierarchy. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari argue, 'what defines smooth space (...) is that it does not have a dimension higher than that which moves through it or is inscribed in it; in this sense it is a flat multiplicity, for example, a line that fills a plane without ceasing to be a line' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p.566)

In the Physical Model they add that the striated space is perfect when it is running not only vertically and horizontally, but, as they say in 'every direction subordinated to points' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 568).

The last model; the Aesthetic Model: Nomad Art, is taken up by Laura Marks' theory of the haptic, specifically in relation to video art. In this model, a distinction is made between close-range vision and long-distance vision, tactile/haptic and optical space. The striated space relates to distant vision and the optical space. However, a visitor can only become lost in the smooth space, since this space does not have the landmarks which characterise the striated space. Marks explains her ideas on the haptic by separating the smooth and the striated by vision. Haptic criticism, which will be further discussed in Chapter Three, functions as a mimesis, as a flow of closeness and symbolic distance. The haptic critic, as Marks says 'rather than place herself within the "striated space" of predetermined critical frameworks, navigates a smooth space by engaging immediately with objects and ideas and teasing out the connections immanent to them' (Marks, 2002, p.xiii). In *The Passive Eye, Gaze and Subjectivity in Berkeley* (2003), Brank Arsić argues that if the 'eye becomes haptic, then the dept becomes tactile' (Arsić, 2003, p. 173). In the smooth space, without landmarks, the spectator and curator's approach focuses more on the tactility of the space. As Arsić notes, 'a hand touches a body unknown to the eye in a space through which it moves "blindly." The blind body that is the sense of touch thus becomes "the function" of the haptic. It moves through a haptic space "guided" only by the space that is without foreseeable marks. In haptic space, every encounter between two bodies is therefore a crash.' (Arsić, 2003, p. 173). Arsić speaks of bodies as in human bodies, but I approach the space itself as well as a body, as a material like the artworks and all other elements (the bodies of the viewers included) in the space. Each element plays a role in the experience of the space. Again, I will elaborate further on this possibility in Chapter Three when I address curatorial discourse.

Deleuze and Guattari explain that in opposition to the striated space, the smooth space is in continuous variation. This variation goes step by step. Here Deleuze and Guattari take as an example desert, steppe, ice, sea, and local spaces of pure connection. According to Deleuze and Guattari, in these spaces:

(...) one never sees from a distance in a space of this kind, nor does one see it from a distance; one is never "in front of," any more than one is "in" (one is "on"...). Orientations are not constant but change according to temporary vegetation, occupations and precipitation (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 573).

Marks' book *Touch, Sensuous Theory, and Multisensory media* (2002) contains essays on her theory of the haptic, illustrated by case studies of video artworks. She discusses the haptic qualities of these video works, which make use of close vision; the viewer cannot look from a distance because the artist uses the camera in such a way the eye of the viewer is always viewing up close. Marks makes use of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the smooth and striated space, but also draws her ideas from the theory of Alois Riegl, an Austrian art historian and architect who was at first a curator of textiles.

As explained in Chapter One, like cubism, installation art was concerned with the idea of de-centring the subject. According to Marks, Riegl points out 'that the ascendancy of optical representation in Western art represents a general shift toward an ideal of abstraction' (Marks, 2002, p. 5). One consequence of this was renaissance perspective. According to Marks, renaissance perspective 'reinforced the visual mastery of an individual viewer' (Marks, 1998, p. 5). She notes that 'optical representation makes possible a greater distance between beholder and object that allows the beholder to imaginatively project him/herself into or onto the object' (Marks, 2002, p.5). On the other hand, haptic space as she notes 'may be considered abstract in the line and form of the image do not set out to depict as much as to decorate, is concrete in that it creates a unified visual field only on a surface' (Marks, 1998, p.5).

Although Deleuze and Guattari admire Riegl's philosophy of the haptic, they observe a certain ambiguity in it which, in my view, should be taken into consideration in thinking about 'change' (in relation to the museum space) from striated to smooth or, rather (if one wants to emphasise the smooth qualities of the museum space), in thinking about the museum space as a smooth space which has become striated. I will now first explain Marks' adaptation of the theory of Deleuze and Guattari and the importance of Riegl's theory within her adaptation (which she dedicated solely to the analysis of video art). After this examination, I will return to the ambiguity in Riegl's theory pointed out by Deleuze and Guattari, and explore this in detail.

2.2 Laura Marks' Theory of the Haptic

The word 'Haptic' comes from Greek 'haptein' which means 'to fasten' which afterwards changed into 'haptikos', meaning able to touch or grasp. Today, 'haptic' is a generic term for all forms of interaction involving the sense of touch. Laura Marks uses the term 'haptic' to theorise about the tactility of video-art.

Haptic video art is multisensory, since it calls upon vision as a form of touch. According to Marks, multisensory art is a promise of coming closer to the object and establishing a dialogue. If the video artwork makes use of haptic visuality, the viewer who is standing in relation can embody the artwork. This is because one is not only viewing through the eyes but also with one's skin. In haptic visuality, the eyes move along the screen instead of separating themselves from the screen. In her book *Touch, Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002), Marks pays special attention to how video art can be haptic and how touch can be involved in viewing video art. She also analyses the eroticism to which the haptic image appeals. According to Marks, it is the 'visual character of the medium, which appeals to a tactile, haptic, visuality' (Marks, 2002, p.2).

Aside from aesthetic analysis, Marks also uses the concept of the haptic to criticise video art. In her article *Video Haptic and Erotics* (1989) she speaks of ‘haptic critique’ and of her objective of restoring ‘a flow between the haptic and the optical’ (Marks, 2002, p. xiii). She believes our culture lacks such a flow. Instead of understanding vision as a form of contact, vision became ‘disembodied and adequate with knowledge’ (Marks, 2002, p. xiii). I follow Marks in her ideas that the ecosystem of the Western art-world can benefit from an understanding of vision as embodied and material. Haptic criticism can be understood as a state of perceiving the artwork, while haptic visuality can be understood as an artistic tool. Haptic criticism is more of a critical tool that can be used by both the viewer and the curator. How the curator can embody haptic criticism is further explored in chapter three. For now, I will focus on the viewer.

Instead of being cool-headed or disinterested, haptic criticism calls upon a mimesis, a flow between sensuous closeness and symbolic distance, which Marks considers erotic. The embodied view asks the viewer to not only perceive through vision (sight) but through the skin:

(...) the eyes themselves function like organs of touch. Haptic visuality, a term contrasted to optical visuality, draws from other forms of sense experience, primarily touch and kinesthetics. Because haptic visuality draws on other senses the viewers body is more obviously involved in the process of seeing than it is the case with optical visuality (Marks, 2002, p. 2).

With ‘installation art’ being an important medium of modern museum exhibitions and the ‘installation of the art’ (the total exhibition) becoming the curator’s art form, the curator can benefit from a more sensorial approach, a haptic visuality that expands the bodily involvement of the viewer which is already present within the medium of installation art itself, new curatorial strategies may evolve and new ways of curatorship.

Marks’ refers to the bodily experience of haptic visuality in which the ‘eyes function as organs of touch’. This leads me to question the overall hierarchical setting of senses which our Western system relies upon when we experience art. Marks herself advocates revisiting the hierarchy of the senses. She argues that the optical and the haptic are not opposites but instead need each other.

Marks focuses on video-art because this form of art is considered to draw on the division between the video screen and the spectator. Marks believes haptic visuality can change this approach. I believe the processes a curator engages her/himself with can also be haptic and involve ‘haptic criticism’. Optical visuality asks for a distant view; as soon the image becomes blurry and out of focus one’s body is encouraged to play a role in viewing, since the eyes can no longer make ‘sense’ of what they are viewing.

As noted above, Marks’ ideas draw on Alois Riegl’s concept of haptic space. Riegl’s observations, made at the turn of the twentieth century, concerned the development of physical tactility in art, and the rise of figurative space. Marks broadens the concept to include the experience of video art which, she maintains, is experienced as a ‘cool’ medium – in the sense that a video is generally experienced as an optical visuality that draws on a distant vision, a clear separation between what is viewed and who is viewing. The haptic space, in contrast to the optical, involves tactility, touch and

the embodiment (the 'graspable') of emotional experience. The videos she examines all question the customary idea of 'vision' and critique it by showing the limitations of 'representing reality'. This happens she argues 'by pushing the viewer's look back to the surface of the image. And it enables a embodied perception , the viewer responding to the video as to another body and to the screen as another skin (Marks, 1998). The haptic cannot achieve 'the distance from its object required for disinterest, cool-headed assessment, nor does it want to (Marks, 2002, p. xv). Marks is saying in a way that cinema lacks this capacity of embodiment.

These haptic video pieces draw on the viewer's capacity of seeing not only as a distant way of sight. She is recapitulating the critique which the videos themselves present. The videos move towards a bodily experience, that is, the involvement of the body with the video that relies on haptic perception as a cinematic tool, a way of filming done by the artist. For example, Marks discusses the video works of artist Seoungho Cho among which *Cold Pieces* (2000) was also exhibited at the *Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst* as part of the Installation entitled *In The Midst of* (1997) in 2004. Marks argues 'the image gives up its optical clarity to engulf the viewer in a flow of tactile impressions' (Marks, 1998, p.1) and she speaks of the disappearance and appearance of the video image which 'resolve into layers whose relations to the foreground of the image and the position of the camera lens are uncertain' (Marks, 1998, p.1). Seoungho makes further use of tools such as long-exposure, slow motion and luminous images to encourage an embodied view.

In this case, these video pieces, instead of inviting the viewer to look for identification with the figurative (deriving from Renaissance ideals), invite her or him to find a point of orientation. The embodied perception these videos evoke leads Marks to the idea, which I find especially illuminating, that in these pieces, video screens function as another skin. She concludes her argument by saying that a visual erotics (haptic visibility) 'offers its object to the viewer not only on the conditions that its unknowability remain intact, and that the viewer, in coming closer, give up his or her own mastery' (Marks, 1998, p. 20).

2.3 Ambiguity of Riegl's Theory

Art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905) started his career as a curator of textiles and later became the director of the textile department of *Osterreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie*. As Marks notes 'one can imagine how the hours spent inches away from the weave of a carpet might have stimulated the art historian's ideas about a close-up and tactile way of looking' (Riegl, 1998, p.4). Riegl is considered one of the founders of contemporary art history and theory. As an influential formalist, he focused on sculpture, paintings and metal works. In his book *Late Roman Art Industry* (1927) he describes the difference between Byzantine and late Roman mosaics as following:

remained always a plane, from which individual objects were distinguished by colouring and relief (...) However, the gold ground of the byzantine mosaic, which generally excludes the background and is a seeming regression (...), is no longer a ground plane but an ideal spatial ground which the people of the west were able subsequently populate with real objects and to expand toward infinite depth (Riegl, 1985, p. 13).

Riegl thus highlights shift from optical representation towards abstraction. He was of influence of other art historians such as Otto Rank and Wilhelm Worringer. Especially his concept of *Kunstwollen* is of importance, also today since it allows for a multicultural, secular and open-minded approach of art history. Riegl's *Kunstwollen*, often translated into English as the 'will to art', is a way of understanding the impulse to create and transform the perceived world:

All life is a constant antagonism between the individual ego and the surrounding world, between subject and object. Man in the state of culture finds a purely passive role towards a world of objects impossible, and sets out to regulate his relation to it as one of independence and autonomy. He sets out to do this by seeking a further world outside himself by means of art (in the widest sense of the term) alongside that natural world that was none of his doing." (Iversen, 1993, p. 45).

Riegl's idea of *Kunstwollen* privileges the individual creator's will and intention in manipulating objects in physical space, making it the fulcrum around which interpretation should turn. This perspective also tends to downplay the notion of artistic 'progress' or a possible hierarchy of forms, schools, models, or techniques. In Riegl's conception, there is no endpoint to artistic production, or to art history, Riegl invites us to accord equal status to the artistic productions of different ages, purposes, types, or styles (Iversen, p. 45). Later artists and theorists, including Walter Benjamin, have invoked the concept of *Kunstwollen* in many different contexts and formats. Some of these may have been orthogonal, or even foreign, to Riegl's initial conception, but this is merely a testament to the richness of his conception.

Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge the influence of Riegl's work, especially in its implicit repudiation of simplistic notions of artistic progress and hierarchies. but also point out a certain ambiguity of Riegl's perception of the haptic. As shown by the models they use to explain smooth and striated space, Deleuze and Guattari make a clear distinction between the two kinds of space. The striated space is the one of the logos, the ordered conception of existence, which offers a picture of space which is essentially divided in various ways, and which includes intrinsic boundaries. The smooth space corresponds to the 'nomos', which has no intrinsic organisation, and can be considered to be 'open'. They explain that '(...) the great imperial religions need a smooth space like the desert but only in order to give it a law that is opposed to the *nomos* in every way and converts the absolute'. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, 575). This observation points to what Deleuze and Guattari find ambiguous about Riegl's perception of the smooth. Deleuze and Guattari state that Riegl (as do art historians Worringer and Maldiney) 'they approach haptic space under the imperial conditions of Egyptian art' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 575). According to Deleuze and Guattari, Riegl merges both spaces, the smooth and the striated, under the imperial conditions of Egyptian art. This is problematic because Egyptian art elaborated on the horizon-background. They argue that this involves the '(...) reduction of space to the plan (vertical and horizontal, height and width); and the rectilinear outline enclosing individuality and withdrawing it from change' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 575). This means that the smooth space exists only within the striated which

is a space that encloses individuality and makes change difficult if not impossible. Riegl's haptic space is always in consideration with the optical (existing in the striated space).

I will now turn to the difference between Riegl's perception of haptic space and the perception of haptic space by Deleuze and Guattari, whose model is based on their distinction between smooth space and striated space. Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the way the striated space — such as the space of the state that is striated with walls, or roads which show a constant orientation — emerges from the smooth space, such as the spaces occupied by nomads (for example an igloo, or the desert). The space of the state (as in government organisation) is treated as homogeneous, while the spaces occupied by the nomads are smooth and heterogeneous. Not only the spaces are different, but also the way the people treat and use materials. Deleuze and Guattari illustrate this by giving an example of a woven fabric. Woven fabric is striated, woven by threads of wool, while felt — used, for example, by Mongolian nomads for their dwellings and clothes — is smooth, since it consists of entangled fibres. The spaces inhabited by nomads in the desert and steppes are also smooth. In these smooth spaces, orientations, landmarks, and linkages vary continuously. They are in a continuous 'becoming', while between the city walls these orientations are fixed (closed) and based on progress, which is, in itself, also defined by points of orientation. Deleuze and Guattari's vision of the haptic lies in the smooth space, one occupied by nomads without considering the qualities of the striated space while defining the smooth space.

Riegl's haptic space, on the other hand, is based on the characteristics of dynastic Egyptian art, which reduces space to a plane. Imperial Egyptian art needed a smooth space in order to serve the striated space of the representation of government and order. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the striation of the earth implies as its necessary condition this double treatment of the smooth: on the one hand, it is reduced to the absolute state of an encompassed horizon, and, on the other, it is expelled from the relatively encompassed element. The great imperial religions thus need a smooth space like the desert, but only in order to impose on it a law that is opposed to the nomos in every way, and converts the absolute (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p.575).

By nomos, Deleuze and Guattari mean the way elements are arranged (people, thoughts or space itself), not an organisation or a permanent structure. Nomos connotes a free distribution, rather than a structured organisation, or certain elements of an organisation. Examples in dynastic Egyptian art are pyramidal shapes against the background of a desert. I would also argue that the Palette of Narmer, from Hierakonpolis (see fig. 5), exemplifies these characteristics.



Fig. 5 Hierakonpolis, Palette of Narmer, P. Pasini [ed.], *Kemet: Guide all mostra* (Ravenna 1998, p.15, British Museum).

In this example, one sees that creatures are no longer represented as scattered images floating in an unbounded void – or rendered as flat, unarticulated silhouettes – but rather presented as characters standing on a stable line. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this as the ‘rectilinear line’, a line that ‘encloses individuality and withdraws it from change’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 575). From this moment until further on in the Renaissance, Riegl argues, we see an increasing separation of the optic and the haptic space, in which the optical makes the striated space tighter and more perfect. This is, for example, the case in the oil painting *San Giobbe Altarpiece* from 1487 by the Italian Renaissance master Giovanni Bellini (see fig.6).

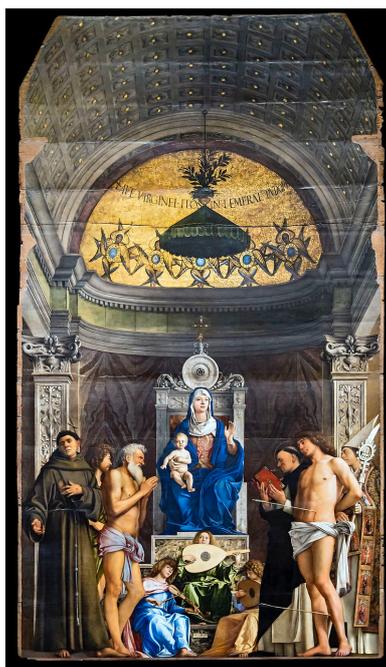


Figure 6: Bellini, *San Giobbe Altarpiece* (Gallerie dell’Accademia)

The saints stand as an informal group in a single unified space, which brings the saints closer to the spectator, and represents them as a much more than a mere pictorial presence. These are figures a spectator can identify with, which create an optical distance between the artwork and viewer. The figures' eyes, however, gaze into another, indeterminate space. Deleuze and Guattari set out to define the smooth and the striated in and of themselves before moving towards these binaries of haptic-optical, close vision-distant vision, abstraction-concreteness, and gothic-rectilinear. They argue that in the smooth space there is no line separating earth and sky; there is no intermediate distance, no perspective or contour. Visibility is limited; and yet there is an extraordinarily fine topology that relies not on points or objects, but rather on haecceities, on sets of relations (winds, undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand, the creaking of the ice, the tactile qualities of both) (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 579).

Thus, it is important to examine striated space and smooth space separately, to define their differences before moving towards an examination of both of them together, as Riegl did. In this separate view, the smooth is not reduced to the striated. Rather the focus shifts to what the differences between these spaces might create 'in between'. The possibilities for museums can be exploited by the systematic arrangement of the difference of the two types of space. By putting them together one can look at the differences, the identity of a museum (striated) as smooth can be constructed through that difference.

2.4 Contemporary Art Museums as Smooth Striated Spaces

Today, pioneer museums and galleries in the West such as the MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art) in Los Angeles, MoMa and the Whitney Museum in New York, The Tate Modern and Serpentine Gallery in London, Pompidou in Paris, Guggenheim in Bilbao, Kunsthalle Hamburg, S.M.A.K in Belgium and the Stedelijk Museum, to name just a few, use exhibition forms based on the typical white-cube or black-cube model. As briefly noted in chapter one, the white-cube model is a more 'classical model' with a characteristic aesthetics of a square or oblong shape, white walls and artificial lighting, usually coming from the ceiling. The black-cube model is used by museums which focus primarily on digital art, installation art and video art. Both are designed to minimise distraction from the artworks. In the white cube, the white walls also function as a kind of frame (borders) for the works. In the black cube, the darkness of the space becomes the frame of the video pieces. The dark space allows the viewer to concentrate on the light coming from the artwork (projection or digital screens, for example). In an article of the online art platform *e-flux* (an archive, artist project and curatorial platform founded in 1998) curator Simon Sheikh revisits the idea of the white cube, calling it:

(...) a place free of context, where time and social space are thought to be excluded from the experience of artworks. It is only through the apparent neutrality of appearing outside of daily life and politics that the works within the white cube can appear to be self-contained-only by being freed from historical time can they attain their aura of timelessness (Sheikh, 2009 February, web)

The question is not whether the white cube or a black cube is a good or bad thing. The ‘cubes’ represent necessary solutions to curatorial problems, and in some context are surely the most appropriate way to display art. However, it is critical to avoid their unthinking use. To accomplish this goal, we need to see the smooth and the striated separated from each other again and to create from the difference in between. For Sheikh, who revisits the white cube as a positive form, the white cube is designed to also free the artworks from historical time so they can ‘attain their aura of timelessness’. In this sense, the white cube is expected to be smooth, since in the smooth, one ‘occupies without counting’. But the striated space, which is much more at the foreground in relation to the white cube, is (to summarise the previous points): (1) is a closed space, (2) has a top and bottom, (3) is not infinite and open but fixed and without continuous variation (4) is homogeneous and not an amorphous conformal space (5) produces an order and succession of distinct forms (artworks), and (6) integrates the body and outside into a closed space. The striated museum white cube organises horizontal melodic lines and vertical harmonic planes and only allows a distant vision. But can one recapture the notion of the white cube as a smooth space? A space that is infinite, open, has a continuous variation, that is non-formal, in which one occupies time without counting, in which intensities can take place and the body is moveable?

Developing the argument, I now address the artworks exhibited in the space of Stedelijk Museum discussed in the first chapter. At *Spirits of the soul* by Raquel van Haver, the curator decided to place black constructions under the paintings (see fig. 3). These constructions allowed the viewer to be lifted to an equal height, and closely approach the paintings. The viewer’s feet are on the same level as the painting – both viewer and painting are elevated, and there was no line (string or markings of a line) that kept the viewer in a certain distance to the painting, a customary element of many museum exhibitions. The absence allowed the spectator to get closer to the work and thereby get closer and ‘embody’ the paintings more than is usually permitted, allowing the space to be viewed and experienced differently. These black curatorial constructions were, nevertheless, still guiding the viewer to certain points of the painting and space, chosen by the curator. I started to wonder what specific purpose these structures served. They seem to guide the viewer even more than no structures at all; they gave her/him even less freedom of movement than before. Except for their aesthetic value, what did these structures add to the experience of the painting, except the chance to come closer? What if the exhibition space, instead of being cut up into numerous small spaces, had been one open space, not guiding the viewer from room to room but allowing her/him decide the path of viewing, without walls separating works of art, situating the painting the space-floor level?

With regard to the artworks and the space, the paintings have smooth qualities, such as the texture of the oil paint, the line of the segment which appears when the viewer follows the movement of the brush. The white walls of the white cube, however, are separated from the works, instead of entering into relation or dialogue with them. There is, in my view, no continuity between the artworks and the space. The quality of ‘movement’ is present within the paintings because of the way Van Haver painted, but the space that guides the viewer from one white cube to another makes them rather static objects. The curatorial decisions seem to be in between, in between doing and passivity, presence and absence, the actions of the curator and distance of the curator.

The exhibition *Spirits of the Soil* was exhibited together with *Freedom of Movement*, in which rhizomatic qualities of the smooth were enhanced by the curation. *Freedom of Movement* was curated by Karen Archey, who spoke at the conference of the importance of an intersectional approach within the context of art. In the exhibition *Freedom of Movement*, there was one open space, exhibiting works of five artists. This space allowed the viewer to interconnect the works in a self-chosen order and to interpret them as one within the conceptual frame of the curator. The viewer is asked to make/find the connections, turning the viewer into an active adaptive participant instead of a passive passenger. In the rest of the exhibition this was less the case: visitors were moved from one black cube to another black cube, with walls separating the works. Every video had its own sound system with headphones, so they would not interfere or overlap. To emphasise the smooth qualities of the striated museum space, what is needed is, first of all, more (bodily) freedom in the space, so that the visitor can lose him or herself, without being overly restricted by ‘curatorial landmarks’.

However, there was also a presence of a rhizomatic quality in the decision to let the sound overlap between spaces. As I argued in Chapter One, the exhibition space was divided into black and white cubes, but the black cubes were not closed-off spaces. As one walked from one space to another the sound of one video overlapped with the sound of the others. Yet this logic was not applied everywhere, since some videos used headphones.

Standing at the Van Haver paintings, the visitor could hear the sound of the video of Russian-Dutch artist Polina Medvedeva:

here in this country
cruelly speaking
if you don't deceit you don't survive
you need to somehow look for loopholes
the government is deceiving people
and people are trying to deceive the government instead

Fig. 7: Experience Fragment from *Freedom of Movement* and *Spirits of the Soil* (Vondeling E, 2018).

This continuity (rhizomatic quality) is what Halberstam discussed during the conference: the force-of-unmaking, being in the fray, in the thick of things. The sound of the videos overlapping the experience of Van Havers’ exhibition has something of this continuity and ‘always becoming’. In the final room (or the first room, depending on which side the viewer enters) of the show, the Van Havers paintings, one is confronted with this curatorial decision: the curator(s) allowed the sound from the Medvedeva work, entitled ‘*The Champagne Drinkers: Russia’s Informal Economy from the Back Seat of a Taxi*’, to interact with the paintings. A voice-over (by the artist herself) provides a simultaneous translation of the unlicensed Russian taxi-drivers interviewed for the piece. The interviewees describe their profession and how, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, they started using their cars as taxis to make money. While standing in front of van Haver’s paintings, in-between the rough sculptural paintings and the voiceover, the observer hears a voice clearly not

associated with the paintings, which intervenes in the observer's experience of them. The visitor recognizes an identity of the exhibition in between the two works – it is not the experience of the paintings alone, or Medvedeva's video alone, but an experience *in between* those works.

Although there is this rhizomatic quality, it is so slight that the visitor cannot be sure whether it is intentional or incidental. This is not a problem in itself, but this quality would be much stronger if it had been made explicit. Questions about its intentionality become a problem only if one cannot get out of the striated, if one is not able to continue to create identities in between the works, because if one cannot create from the difference then there is an elimination the possibility of going beyond the artworks as individual works of art. This smooth quality could be emphasised, for example, by the creation of a rhythm, hints of chaos, or a kind of melodic line in between exhibitions. There was, I would argue, a potential in-between the black boxes to realise this possibility. Art videos could be allowed to collide and interfere with each other more explicitly, and sound could interfere with the space itself in different ways, to create a different experience of space(s).

The striated space is said to be divided in various ways, and thus to include intrinsic boundaries. Looking at *Freedom of movement* and *Spirits of the Soil*, this quality can clearly be discerned. But the question is now how to discern the qualities and possibilities of the smooth within these shows, especially the quality of openness and lack of any 'intrinsic organisation'.

This point brings us back to the discussion of Riegl's perception of the smooth. It is not necessarily a problem that he combines the two spaces (smooth and striated), because this is something which I consider may offer opportunities in the museum context. The problem, rather, lies in the fact that in his theory, based as it was on the qualities of Egyptian art, the smooth (existing in the haptic) exists only within the striated. In my view, in order to bring change, it is necessary to see the striated museum space as an emergence from the smooth space. The white cube, under this view, is the 'smooth' original state in which the artwork is freed from historical time.

I believe the museum can work towards a way of exhibiting which draws on the qualities of the smooth without reducing the smooth to the pre-existing walls of the striated museum space. In prestigious museums in the West, the art forms 'installation art' and, in particular, the 'installation of art' have become increasingly prominent since the 1990s. This form of art (the installation of art as art) is, as discussed in chapter one, involves (1) approaching the spectator as a direct presence in space, (2) has a multi-sensory quality, in that it requires the viewer to use more than one sense, (3) allows the curator become an author, and (4) de-centres the viewing subject, in that she/he is plunged into an immediate sensory experience and is obliged to physically participate. It seems evident that this form of art cannot flourish within rectangular lines of striation; it needs change, not a 'withdrawing from change'.

The installation of the Van Haver's paintings include (1) sensory experience, (2) tactility, and (3) embodiment. In *Freedom of Movement*, the curation drew on the concept of (1) intersectionality (namely the intersection of the axes of race, gender, identity, ability and sexuality), and (2) artworks which embrace the politics of the body. The conference *Hold Me Now* was entirely dedicated to

haptics. All of this indicates that the Stedelijk Museum should include the smooth in its curatorial framework – I would argue this inclusion is an absolute necessity.

2.5 Conclusion

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the smooth and the striated space are completely different, but also that they cannot be seen separately. Deleuze and Guattari highlight the difference by noting that ‘the state’ is striated and ‘the nomad space’ smooth: ‘The striated space needed a smooth space like the desert but only in order to give it a law that is opposed to the nomos in every way, and converts to the absolute’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p.575). Riegl analysed the haptic ‘under the imperial conditions of Egyptian art’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p.575). They maintain that these conditions exemplify a ‘reduction of space to the plane (...) and the rectilinear outline enclosing individuality and withdrawing it from change’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 575). I have discussed several elements van Haver’s solo show and the group show *Freedom of Movement* such as (in Van Haver) the black structure under the paintings, and (in *Freedom of Movement*) the white and black cubes, and the overlapping sound between Van Haver’s exhibition and ‘Freedom of Movement’. In the museum space in which several paintings of Van Haver were shown could have emerged a curatorial strategy to move away from the striated space, but the striated qualities of the curatorial decisions made these ‘potential smooth’ elements striated again, by reduction.

The smooth space promises haptic and tactics. If the museum is approached as a striated space which evolved from the smooth, it becomes possible to examine the original haptic tactile qualities. The striated space should return to an open space where intensities can take place. Marks’ call to revisit the hierarchical setting would also require the curator to view the space not only through the optical sense, which implies distance, but also to involve a more sensory approach to the space itself and to the artworks. The curator can contemplate the inclusion (as Marks explained in relation to the approach to video art by the artists she analyses) of a critical view which shows the limitations of the space and the limitations of the embodiment of a striated space.

In the next chapter, I will address the theory of ‘assemblage’, originally posited by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). The English term, derived from ‘*agencement*’ (arrangement), describes the process of organising, fitting together and arranging. The concept is addressed in relation to intersectionality by queer theorist Jasbir Puar in the essay *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007). I will draw on her ideas while examining the role of the curator and the potential to create assemblages within an exhibition.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HAPTIC CURATOR

Creation is all about mediators. Without them nothing happens. They can be people – for a philosopher, artist or scientists; for a scientist, philosophers or artists - but things too, even plants or animals (...) Whether they are real or imaginary, animate, or inanimate, you have to form your mediators. It's a series. If you're not in some series, even a complete imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own (Deleuze, 1990, p. 125).

Curators are mediators. Curators Soren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen translate 'the mediator' into 'middleman' in their essay *The Middleman: Beginning to Talk About Mediators* (2007). In the modern era, they claim, the middleman was initially seen as them a conformist and a suspect character, a parasitical agent who short-circuits authenticity. Later, however, she/he shifted into someone who no longer merely displays objects within a space, but rather 'brings different cultural spheres into contact', according to curator Hans Obrist (Obrist, 2014, p. 24). On this view, a curator's role is also that of a mediator/middleman between artworks, objects and ideas. The curator, who translates and mediates the artwork, brings different artworks together in such a way, that it supports her/his idea (or the institution's idea), understanding the relationship and dialogue between the artworks.

For Deleuze and Guattari, mediators are indispensable; they consider mediators important to participation in continuity. I understand Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the mediator as the nomad who occupies the 'smooth space', the space I discussed in Chapter Two. The space of the nomad has orientations, landmarks and linkages that are in continuous variation. The smooth space is 'becoming' rather than static and fixed, and this also describes the way nomads treat materials. In his book *Negotiations* (1972-1990), Deleuze explains how Guattari and him are mediators for each other. He explains this in relation to a certain falsification; '(...) each of us falsifies the other — which is to say, each of us understands in his own way notions put forward by the other. A reflective series with two terms take shape. And there can be series with several terms, or complicated branching series' (Deleuze, 1990, p. 125). This falsification seems for them to be the essence of mediation, which is enacted by the other. Therefore, change and continuous variation require that one never operates alone, but always in pairs of two or more.

As explained in the previous chapter, Marks' 'haptic critic' tries to move along the surface of the object instead. Haptic criticism is mimetic. But can the curator move away from traditional exhibition forms in which she/he keeps a distance from the work, such as the group show, the solo show, or the topical show? Can she/he treat the space as a nomad, a mediator who never operates alone? Can she/he move away from aesthetic forms, such as the white cube and the black cube? The white cube was first introduced in the early twentieth century. It is a cube, a space in which all the walls are white and lighting comes from the ceiling. This aesthetic of the space in which

artworks were exhibited was meant to increase the abstraction of modern art, to emphasise the colour and illumination of the artworks. The idea of the white cube, the white walls and lighting is that it minimises every possible distraction to the minimum. The white cube is also free of all adornment, like buildings in the International Style, in which many contemporary museum buildings were designed and built. There are no arches, moulding, wainscoting, murals, frescoes, niches, or other forms of decoration or embellishment.

The black cube on the other hand, also referred to as 'black box' relates to an exhibition-space in which mostly installation art, video art, and digital art can be exhibited. The emergence of the modern 'black cube' in the 1990s was a reaction to the white cube. Curators realised that white cube was unsuitable for new art forms which were then entering the museum and gallery space. These new works, which often required video projection and sound reproduction technologies, required different conditions to be optimally appreciated. A white space with artificial lighting does not work when the artworks themselves emit light as part of their artistic conception. The walls of a black cube are completely black. Generally, there is no light source in the black cube except for that which emerges from the video projection or screen itself. If there is an additional light source (for instance, for safety reasons or to help visitors navigate the space), it is generally kept to a bare minimum. Entrance to the black cube is generally through a thick hanging cloth, or through a recessed entryway, to minimise sound 'bleed-out' into neighbouring exhibition spaces.

The white cube and the black cube have their place in modern curation. For some works, they may indeed be the optimal settings. However, the utter dominance of these ways of structuring museum space has come in for increasing criticism in recent years. They have been decried as excessively cool, isolating, and clinical, privileging a conception of art as a 'clean', 'elegant', 'analytic' activity. It is clear that the dominance of the white and black cube needs to be contested, not least because many new works, and new kinds of works, cannot be best appreciated in this context. In this chapter, I will look one potential response: the chance of the curator to embrace the concept of the haptic and thereby creating exhibitions as 'assemblages' which derive from smooth space.

I will begin with a short history of modern curatorship, outlining important developments that make it possible today to move towards haptic curatorship (3.1). I then return briefly to Archey's concept on care (3.2) and then look at the possibility of a curator as a haptic critic (3.3). In the fourth part I will approach the theory of assemblage and examine the potentiality of the exhibition as an assemblage (3.4). In the third and fourth part of this chapter I will revisit the exhibitions discussed in Chapter One and explore the possibilities of the curator being a haptic critic/curator within these exhibitions. In the third part I will focus on Stedelijk Museum curator Karen Archey's concept of intersectionality, as explained at the conference *Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World*, as it relates to the theory of assemblage. I will conclude with a brief exploration of the possibility of moving beyond traditional forms, while keeping in mind that the Stedelijk Museum is a Western institution and business, depending on funds, trustees, patrons and politics.

3.1 History of Curatorship

In his book *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures* (2012), Paul O'Neill states in the first chapter (entitled *The Emergence of Curatorial Discourse From the Late 1960s*) that 'ever since the 1960s there has been a growing understanding and acceptance of curators as having a more proactive, creative, and political part to play in the production, mediation, and dissemination of art itself' (O'Neil, 2012, p. 9). O'Neill identifies three main historical developments in curatorial practice: (1) the 'demystification of the curatorial role' in the late 1960s; (2) the 'primacy of the curator-as-author exhibition model' in the late 1980s; and (3) the 'consolidation of a curator-centered discourse' (O'Neil, 2012, p.9) in the 1990s. In the following text I will summarise these three developments.

In the late 1960s, the curator became a creative factor within the exhibition. He/She took on a creative role by producing texts alongside the exhibition, blurring all the categories within the art world. American gallerist, art dealer, and curator Seth Siegelaub argues that breaking down these categories such as the curator, dealer, critic, writer, etc., was 'part of the 1960s political project (...) The information society was up and running, and many of these different areas were very touch and go, people were moving between things and doing many different things' (Siegelaub in an interview with Paul O'Neil, 2012, p. 19). Siegelaub described the demystification of the curatorial role as 'a process in which curators and artists attempted to understand and be conscious of our actions; to make clear what we and others were doing (...) you have to deal with curating consciously as part of the exhibition process, for good or bad' (Siegelaub, 1999, p. 56). During the 1960s, it became clearer what the curator was actually doing and what he/she was capable of, and the curator's role became active and visible. According to O'Neill, this visibility made the 'differentiation between author of the work of art and the independent curator increasingly complicated' (O'Neill, 2012, p. 19).

Artists, who were questioning their role within the museum system, were changing their way of working, producing more artworks which were not saleable concrete objects. Artworks became more dematerialised, the concept was the message. The viewer was approached in the space as a direct presence, becoming active. The curator's job was to mediate between the viewer and artwork – the curator was making the work perceptible.

In the curator Beti Žerovc's book *When Attitudes Become the Norm: The Contemporary Curator and Institutional Art* (2015), Harold Szeemann states, in an interview with Žerovc, that it was a historical moment in 1969 for him, when the 'image of the creator/curator became conscious and evident' (Žerovc, 2015, p. 84). Szeemann organised *When Attitudes Become Form*, a famous 1969 exhibition at the Bern Kunsthalle. Originally surrounded by scandal, the exhibition is now considered iconic for its time, and was even assimilated into the Venice Biennale of 2013. Szeemann invited artists to come to the exhibition space and install their work, creating specific artworks:

Beuys put his grease on the walls, Heizer made a hole in the public sidewalk, Artschwager distributed his "blps" in the city, Barry put the building under radiation, Weiner removed a square meter of the wall, Ruthenbeck ruined the wooden floor with his wet ashes, Serra threw melted lead against the wall (...) This was no longer perceived as an art exhibition

but as an anarchic provocation - not by the artists, but by the curator who allowed this (Žerovc, 2015, p. 84).

The follow-up to these changes was the 'primacy of the curator-as-author exhibition model'. The curator's role moved even further away from displaying works of art, and grew increasingly creative. As the 1970s progressed, O'Neil argues, the role encompassed 'the production of knowledge (...), [and] the development of cultural circulations and translations that shape other forms through which art can engage' (O'Neil, 2012, p. 22). The focus turned from the production of art to its framing and mediation, making the curator ever more visible.

According to O'Neill, Curator Szeemann overemphasised his curatorial concept in his exhibitions (among them Documenta 5) instead of putting the focus on the artworks. This led to a true power conflict between the role of artist and the role of curator.

The idea of an art exhibition as a "curated" space made it apparent that there was a remit in operating beyond the interest of artists, which occasionally closed down art's semiautonomous function or opened it up to new alignments. This proved a space of critical contestation that extended beyond a centralised critique of works of art - which, ironically, increasingly concerned themselves with mediation and the language of mediation as already outlined - and began to address the curated exhibition as its own entity, as an object of critique (O'Neill, 2012, p. 27).

The late 1980s saw the advent of 'institutional critique', which aims to undermine dominant regimes within the art world. Although art is always institutionalised by the context in which it functions, art depends on those who are involved in its creation and exhibition. It is judged, and valued, by those within the artistic ecosystem. In the late 1980s, the curator became an insider, providing the framework, the production, the conditions and institutional space of artworks. Curating shaped the exhibition and gave meaning to the artwork.

The consolidation of a curator-centered discourse which O'Neil calls 'super-visibility' took place in the 90s; this, he claims, is when the real history of curatorship actually began. Before, this period the changes were concerning shifting the boundaries of the curatorial space, but in the 90s, as Michael Brenson says in *The Curator's Moment: Trends in the Field of International Contemporary Art Exhibitions* (published in *Art Journal* 57) curators are:

(...) able to think imaginatively about the points of compatibility and conflict among them, must be at once aestheticians, diplomats, economists, critics, historians, politicians, audience developers, and promoters (...) The new curator understands, and is able to articulate, the ability of art to touch and mobilise people and encourage debates about spirituality, creativity, identity, and the nation. The texture and the tone of the curator's voice, the voices it welcomes or excludes, and the shape of the conversation it sets in motion are essential to the texture and perception of contemporary art. (Brenson, 1998, p. 16).

In light of the radical shifts between the 1960s and 1990s in the perception of what the curator does, it is remarkable to see that curatorial criticism and the critical discourse around these changes did

not change dramatically. From the professional museum curator in the 1960's there was a shift to *Ausstellungsmacher* (in German) and *fraiseur d'expositions* (in French) to describe the figure that represented an intellectual who operated 'counter to the museum and who organised large-scale, independent exhibitions of contemporary art' as Anne Fletcher states in an interview with O'Neil (Fletcher, 2007, p. 12). The career changed, and curating was no longer an 'accidental' career choice. Even the general public got aware that the curators role was not just choosing 'nice things'.

3.2 Curatorship as Care

The current curator of contemporary art for time-based media at the Stedelijk, Karen Archey, spoke at the conference *Hold Me Now - Feel and Touch in an Unreal World* (2017), about care as an umbrella under which we can connect intersecting issues relating to race, gender, class, sexuality and ability, as mentioned in the first chapter. Her freedom to use such broad language emerges from contemporary curators' freedom to criticise the institution and to go beyond it. She presents herself not as part of the museum's conceptual framework but rather as an individual autonomous author of her own. She explains the necessity to think about the intersectionality of various discourses within the institution, which includes the museum, the art-school, the gallery and the exhibition in general. As she states, 'their very architecture both physical, and ideological, can make them quite intimidating places' (Archey, Stedelijk Conference, 2018). She addresses the personal needs of the artists, and budget constraints which restrict the ability to care for artists with special needs. She sees it as her task to confront white ethnocentrism and supremacy: 'only by opening space by confrontation can the most privileged be forced to listen', she maintains.

Archey also emphasises the need for curators to take into account artists with special needs or physical disabilities. Many contemporary artists in fact draw upon these aspects of their lived experiences in their creative work. They may address how they have come to deal with personal traumas, or how they implement their own psychiatric care regimens. They may also seek to illuminate how persons with disabilities perceive and navigate the world. They may even address the accommodation – or lack of accommodation – of the very museum spaces in which their work is exhibited. In Archey's conception, the role of the curator definitely extends to engaging with these issues. Curation is first and foremost concerned with 'care' of artworks, but the concept can only profit from being expanded, so that it also addresses 'caring' for artists and museum visitors as well. And 'care' of course strongly implies touching, or 'haptic' interaction.

I am intrigued by Archey's standpoint on curatorship as care. Archey posits it as the beginning principle of the curator, but it seems to have expanded from this core to include the idea of the authorship of the curator, in which artists and their artworks are less visible as individual entities, but became a part of the curatorial concept. This imbues them with an additional layer of significance, in which they not only convey their primary message, but also illustrate the curatorial concept. Can a haptic approach to curatorship become a new standpoint from which to curate, simultaneously embodying the notion of care in an intersectional way? By this, I mean that the curator's 'care' would be expressed in a way respecting aspects of intersectional theories, and the

exhibition becomes a happening/event that is based not on a linear, static model, but on continuous variation and mediation which can only exist in pairs or multiples.

Therefore I would like to think through Archey's ideas with Marks' ideas of the 'haptic critic' in mind and see what they might mean for each other.

3.3 The Curator and Haptic Criticism

As discussed, haptic criticism functions as a mimesis, as a flow of closeness and symbolic distance. Marks' 'haptic critic' tries to move along the surface of the object instead of relying on the model of optical visibility, where there is always a clear separation between the screen and the spectator. Haptic criticism is mimetic, 'It presses up to the object and takes its shape. Mimesis is a form of representing based on getting close enough to the other thing to become it (...) the point is not to utterly replace symbolisation, a form that requires distance, with mimesis. Rather it is to maintain a robust flow between sensuous closeness and symbolic distance (Marks, 2002, p.xiii). Haptic criticism is so sensitive to its object that it 'takes on a form of subtle complexity, building toward its object, brushing into its pores and touching its varied textures' (Marks, p.xiii). Critical observations published in the 1980s emphasise the role of the critic. The artistic turn was the start of a new form of curatorial work, in which the artist shifts her/his role into that of a curator, and the exhibition becomes a form of art practice. The exhibition became the medium through which the artist-curator exploits material (artworks) through which to think. The role of the curator, now artist-curator, is to create new narratives through and alongside already existing narratives, c.q. artworks of others. The act of curating and exhibition-making, as an established and traditional practice, is thus questioned. The prominence of the curator's role has since grown rapidly. Art criticism became the domain of the curator, and the exhibition a reflection of a curatorial concept. Accordingly, the principal issue is no longer the artistic qualities of artworks, but rather the analysis of the exhibition as a whole, and its guiding curatorial concept.

One One One
 One by one
 One One One
 as I Step
 One One One
 alone walking
 from one to another
 One One One
 never together

Figure 8: Experience Fragment from Freedom of Movement 2 (Vondeling E, 2018).

In the group-show *Freedom of Movement* (2019) at the Stedelijk Museum, the spectator was instructed to follow a strict path set through the museum space, which was divided into numerous small black cubes for the videos and several white cubes.

Surrounded, as it were, by the white cubes, the small black cubes gave the impression of being small solo shows surrounding a group show of videos. These one-person-show spaces held the work of better-known artists such as Jonas Staal and Yael Bartana. The bigger white cube space described in chapter one was the only room that grouped the work of several artists (in this case Andriessen, Cooper, Arturo Garcia, Smith and Rizzo). As discussed above, the spectator could discern a shared concept in this room (Archey's interest in the intersection of discourses on race, sex and gender, and identity as an effect of power structures). But further exploration of the concept becomes complicated by the black cubes or 'solo-shows'. Archey seemed to be restricted by museum policies, which mandated a certain hierarchy (famous names get bigger spaces, lesser-known artists grouped together in one space, videos in black cubes, etc.) which indicates the curator in the Stedelijk Museum today may not be as autonomous as one would expect after the curatorial turn.

But what, then exactly is a haptic curator? Rizvana Bradley, speaking at the *Hold Me Now* conference, addressed flesh as a haptic value and as a re-evaluation of sight. This has inspired me to think about the possibilities for the contemporary curator to move away from traditional curatorial strategies. Bradley argues that flesh is distinct and prior to the body and that it cannot be written. Both curators of the exhibitions *Freedom of Movement* and of the solo show *Raquel van Haver* treat the artists artworks with optical vision as most important. From exhibition to catalogue, language has too much power. As soon the visitor enters, he or she is confronted with texts from the curator everywhere, giving context and explaining the conceptual framework. Even though curator Van Nieuwenhuyzen placed black structures beneath Van Haver's paintings (see fig.3, in 1.4) they are still guiding/directing the spectator where to approach and look, and where to keep one's distance.

Bradley has inspired me to think of the curator/middlemen/mediator as haptic, she/he should think of art objects as alive and as producing change by being a part of a web of materials and of active bodies, bodies as flesh, dematerialised from any objectification.

A human body is material, but this vital materiality is not entirely human; the human body consists of the flesh which is a material in process, as Jane Bennet notes:

Vital materiality better captures an “alien” quality of our own flesh, and in so doing reminds humans of the very radical character of the (fractious) kinship between human and nonhuman. My “own” body is material, and yet this vital materiality is not fully or exclusively human. My flesh is populated and constituted by different swarms of foreigners. The crook of my elbow, for example, is a “special ecosystem, a bountiful home to no fewer than six tribes of bacteria (Bennett, 2009, p.112).

I argue the flesh of the curator is populated and constituted by different ‘swarms of foreigners’. The curator, if she is to be a haptic curator, should move towards being more than one, being part of the web, being less human. ‘More material’ is a strategy towards curating with the flesh as haptic, as a smooth and continuous variation which is never static. Solo shows as outcome of this process, or group shows in which spaces hold only one piece of artwork are ruled out in this strategy; there should be no hierarchy and no singularity. Catalogues containing language or written text about the exhibition also do not have a place in this strategy, since they again invoke the optical. The exhibition should become an outcome of a less rational, less narrative, less personal, less psychological, less objectifying (if not totally non-objectifying) way of working. The exhibition as a whole is a different installation, it is an event that includes different milieus. Here I rely on Erin Manning and Brian Massumi’s thoughts on the idea of the ‘event’. They speak about connecting on a level of process and about thinking in the act in their TED-Talk *Relational Soup*:

The art could never be looked on as an illustrating of a concept but always enacting concepts actively, the philosophy could never be looked upon as commenting or judging the art (...) at the level of their processes, they are pointing to potentialities that were not yet fully unfolded in the world, that could be followed further as part of a potential politics (...) so if we are talking about something in the act, bringing things together differently, then we are talking about a practice for making events and generating events differently (Massumi, TED, September, 2014, Lecture).

An event is always in the making, it is never static. Massumi and Manning explain that they started to think about the conditions that are necessary for an event, calling them ‘techniques of relations’. They argue that one needs to think about the way humans come together, and about how to bring people together. If the curator starts to think about the ‘how’, this could open up a space for the curator to move beyond optical visibility, to start thinking about all the aspects of the public and how each viewer (the body and the presence of the viewer) brings in different changes in the artwork. How can the curator affect the spectator? She/he must take all elements in consideration, all foreign elements (for example; weather, floor, ceiling, walls, every ‘body’ of the spectator).

3.4 The Exhibition as Assemblage

To further explore the possibilities inherent in the ‘event’, I will look now at Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the ‘assemblage’ and the theory of assemblage proposed by queer theorist Jasbir Puar, who conceives of intersectionality and assemblage together as an eventful happening. Her ideas afford new perspectives on Archey’s curatorial ideas of intersectionality.

In *The Deleuzian Dictionary* (2005), architect Graham Livesey describes the assemblage as follows:

(...) through its multiplicity an assemblage is shaped by and acts on a wide range of flows. Assemblages, as conceived of by Deleuze and Guattari, are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning (Livesey, 2005, p. 18).

As noted above, assemblage is the English translation of the French word ‘*agencement*’. However, many critics have critiqued this translation, while simultaneously admitting the extreme difficulty of finding a workable English equivalent. One author provided the following more detailed description of an assemblage:

An assemblage is not just a mixture of heterogenous elements; this definition is far too simplistic. The definition of the French word *agencement* does not simply entail heterogenous composition, but entails a constructive process that lays out a specific kind of arrangement. All assemblages may be singular and heterogenous but they also share three features that define their arrangement: their conditions, their elements, and their agents, or what Deleuze and Guattari call their “abstract machine,” their “concrete assemblage,” and their “personae” (Nail, 2017, p. 24).

The ‘abstract machine’ is the set of conditions, the ‘network of specific external relations that holds the elements together’ (ibid.). The abstract machine is usually referred to by a capitalised proper name which describes the overall set of conditions holding the assemblage together. The ‘concrete assemblage’ refers to the concrete elements within the assemblage. They are not abstract, but real entities. Yet they are constantly changing, some exiting and some entering the assemblage based on changing conditions. The third element of the assemblage is its agent, which Deleuze and Guattarie call its ‘persona’. ‘Personae,’ Nail observes, ‘are not autonomous rational subjects, nor are they simply decentered or fragmented subjects incapable of action. Rather, the personae of an assemblage are the mobile operators that connect the concrete elements together according to their abstract relations.’ (ibid., p. 27).

An assemblage has two tendencies or forms, to wit: one of ‘strata’ and one of ‘body without organs (BWO)’. These can be visualised as follows: at the total end of a line, there is, at the left edge, the BWO and at the edge of the right side, there are strata. ‘Strata’ are what makes an assemblage steady while BWO makes it change. Livesey explains ‘the territorial aspects of assemblages deals with those forces that unmake and make territories, what Deleuze and Guattari define as

deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation' (Livesey, 2005, p. 18). The state, which is an ultimate example of a striated space, has the tendency to be static, to reterritorialise. Yet the state is not totally fixed – nothing in the theory of Deleuze and Guattari is totally static or fixed, everything changes continuously.

The Stedelijk Museum is a stratum, although this museum space is less of a stratum than, for example, a chair. This is because a chair has a fixed form and does not change easily, as the space of the museum does. With each exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum, curators can change the position or colour of some walls; the experience of the space, thus, can be very different with each exhibition, although the main structure of the building stays the same.

The smooth and the striated need each other because in order to change, the striated needs the smooth (otherwise it remains static and change is simply impossible) and the smooth needs the striated because one cannot always stay in the smooth. Striated spaces are necessary concomitants of organisation and hierarchy, without which higher social functions become impossible. Laura Marks explains that we cannot always stay in the smooth because 'it is hard to drive a car with haptic vision' (Marks, 2002, p. 3). The question for Deleuze and Guattari is 'why' something changes. Their theory of 'emergence' goes beyond the scope of this Thesis.

However, a simplified form of the relationship can be imagined as follows: To keep the city in change, the city needs a counter, which is the smooth space. The nomad is this counter-figure of the striated space. The nomad brings the smooth in the striated state/city. Every change will get swallowed again and again by the striated, but the smooth can make the striated smooth again, it is a continuous movement and change.

Puar invokes Massumi's ideas and the theory of assemblage in her essay *I Would Rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess, Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory* (2012). As she says, 'Massumi has been less interested in how grids happen than in asking how they can un-happen, or not happen' (Puar, 2012, p.50). Her work concerns intersectionality and assemblage. In this article, she asks how the intersectional approach can be 'complicated and reconceptualized - by a notion of assemblage' (Puar, 2012, p. 50). Intersectionality as a concept was introduced in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her article *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race & Sex: a Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory & Antiracist Politics* (1989), which set forth an analysis of the forces of race, class, sex, gender, and nation how they intersect. She compared these simultaneous influences to a kind of 'traffic accident' in which it is impossible to tease out the order in which collisions took place. Puar re-examines and re-conceptualises intersectionality by approaching the concept in tandem with the concept of the 'assemblage'. In her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), she states:

Intersectional identities and assemblages must remain as interlocutors in tension (...) intersectional identities are the by-products of attempts to still and quell the perpetual motion of assemblages, to capture and reduce them, to harness their threatening mobility (Puar, 2007, p. 213).

Keeping in mind Archey's curatorial concept of intersectionality, I would like to invoke the ideas of Puar, who thinks intersectionality and assemblage through and with each other. What might this

mean for the curator working with intersectionality as a concept? She maintains that intersectionality needs the 'assemblage' because intersectionality reduces and captures. Assemblage, on the other hand, 'seems to inspire doubt about its political "applicability," while intersectionality seems to hold fast as a successful tool for political and scholarly transformation' (Puar, 2012, p. 50). Despite their opposed characteristics, Puar says; 'As analytics, they may not be reconcilable. Yet they need not to be oppositional but rather, I argue frictional' (Puar, 2012, p. 50). How, then can a curator whose concept is derived from intersectionality also employ the concept of the assemblage?

Since the 1980s, intersectionality has been more effective as a feminist strategy to de-centralise whiteness than as 'a critical race intervention to disrupt masculinist frames' (Puar, 2012, p. 51). In my view, intersectionality seems to be constructed on narratives. These narratives, such as 'women of colour', 'the disabled' or 'transgender', are part of bigger narratives such as 'feminism' or 'queer politics'. As Puar argues, if I understand her correctly, these new narratives centralise and re-assure, despite the fact that intersectionality argues that 'all identities are lived and experienced as intersectional - in such ways that identity categories themselves are cut through and unstable' (Puar, 2012, p. 52). It seems logical, therefore, that intersectionality needs more of the characteristic of assemblage. Puar suggests, in my view persuasively, that:

Assemblages are interesting because they de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing. As Haraway notes, the body does not end at the skin. We leave traces of our DNA everywhere we go, we live with other bodies within us, microbes and bacteria, we are enmeshed in forces, affects, energies, we are composites of information. Assemblages do not privilege bodies as human, nor as residing within a human animal/nonhuman animal binary. (Puar, 2012, p. 57)

Puar suggests that we focus on the question of 'what are the affective conditions necessary for the event-space to unfold?' (Puar, 2012, p. 61). According to Puar, to think of intersectionality together with assemblages, can raise doubts about the political effectiveness of intersectionality. This is necessary because intersectionality, as I understand from Puar's article, creates robust new paradigms and political identities. These fixed elements can limit a person in her/his thinking and acting if they are treated as being of main importance. Puar also argues one should doubt these fixed notions and never take them for granted. Subjecting such paradigms and identities to doubt also fosters awareness of how societies of control form and create 'bodies as matter'. Puar observes:

To dismiss assemblages in favour of retaining intersectional identitarian frameworks is to dismiss how societies of control tweak and modulate bodies as matter, not predominantly through signification or identity interpellation, but rather through affective capacities and tendencies (Puar, 2012, p.63).

I would therefore suggest that the curator who has shifted into the role of author of the exhibition and 'curator as artist' should take a next step, towards haptic curation, which disrupts the existing 'grid' of intersectionality.

My suggestion would also be for the haptic curator to situate him/herself as a nomadic or doubting figure, thinking through and working with artworks while questioning how the (art) objects affect the curator and the spectator, how the spectators body changes the work, and how the curator her/himself embodies the artworks. The curator can also mediate between the striated and smooth characteristics of museum space, seeking to capture the necessary and productive aspects of each one.

3.5 Conclusion

Modern curation focuses on the curator's ideas and conceptual framework, in which the artworks on display become illustrations of the concept. Curation, therefore developed together with a strong necessity and need for interpretation. In a very short period of time, curators emerged as a species of meta-artist. Their concepts became the artistic product on view, and the actual artworks from the artists themselves became illustrations of that curatorial concept. As I have noted above, the curatorial turn did not happen in a vacuum, or without opposition. Some artists and critics felt that curators had imposed themselves and their ideas too aggressively. However, new theories of curation may allow this dispute, or difference in visions, to be transcended. To explore the possibilities of a curator following a 'haptic' practice, I have revisited the exhibitions discussed in Chapter One and examined the difficulties of the existing exhibition structure. This allowed me to propose haptic curatorial tools such as (1) being part of a web of materials, (2) bodies as flesh, and (3) thinking of art objects as alive.

The Stedelijk Museum *Freedom of Movement* exhibition discussed above gave the spectator little freedom to move. This may have been an intentional decision by the curator, but the division of the spaces did not further refine the curatorial concept. Like the spectator, the curator also seemed to be hindered by museum policies, which are mainly about keeping distance and prohibiting any form of touch.

There is much to gain if curators appropriate the topics addressed at the conference and think them together and bring them into practice. The vastly expanded opportunity which curators enjoy today allows them to move beyond the 'striated' museum space to embrace sensorial spectatorship, which highlights intensities of the space, the artworks, the human bodies involved and to see the exhibition's character as an event.

CONCLUSION

Every chapter of this thesis ended with a short conclusion on the issues addressed in the subchapters. These questions functioned as a part of the overall analysis of a multisensory approach within curatorship. I worked towards answering the main question; what is there to gain, in the context of art curation, from a multisensory approach that deconstructs the hierarchy of the senses as perceived in the West? To answer this main question of this thesis I started to think about a hypothetical exhibition and the way I might curate it. This thinking started with going back to each chapter and recapitulating what kind of curatorial tools actually emerge from the analysis and could be useful in a practical sense while curating a show.

Therefore I will now draw on the concepts discussed in each chapter and elaborate further on them. I will create a sort of lexicon or toolkit of strategies which might function in practice for the curator that would take haptic criticism as a kind of new standpoint. This lexicon invites future analysis of these tools. For example, with each description of each tool, I include a part of the hypothetical show which emerged from my examination of the difference between the actual exhibitions *Freedom of Movement* and *Spirits of the Soil* that were exhibited in the Stedelijk Museum in 2018 and the potential of haptic criticism as a new standpoint within these shows. As explained in the introduction, my undergraduate studies revolved around the concept of 'difference', especially researched in relation to the rewriting of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (1610) by Aime Cesaire who called his play *Une Tempête* (French for 'a Tempest') in 1969.

To recapitulate the research questions and the tools I found in my analyses, in Chapter One I tackled the issue of how the multisensory quality of installation art challenges the hierarchical setting of the West, by de-centering of the sense of vision. I concluded that de-centering of the viewing subject, which happens when one enters a work of installation art, brings the viewer to an immediate sensory experience and a physical participation. This implies a deconstruction of the panoptic/masculine gaze. Instead of being encouraged to stand at one point and direct one's gaze toward a specific object, many installations seek to immerse the viewer in multiple, refracting sensory impressions. This 'multisensory' quality of 'installation art' and the 'installation of art', is challenging the hierarchical setting due to the mediums' approach on the body as a direct presence. Installations can also engage the visitor as an active participant in creating the meaning of what is seen, by leaving the visitor free to choose the perspective from which he or she experiences the work.

In practice, I reviewed two exhibitions at the Stedelijk and examined the curatorial tools that were used within these exhibitions. The first such tool I discussed was the (1) approach of considering the body as a direct presence. This was reflected by the curator in the way of displaying van Haver's paintings: The curator focused on 'getting close to the object' to highlight the visitor's experience of the tactile quality of the paintings. I further noted the multisensory element of sound, coming from one exhibition which overlapped with other nearby works. This overlap created a dynamic among the two exhibitions which focused not merely on vision but rather on hearing, and on the visitors' movement through the space(s). Thirdly, I analysed the idea of (2) haptic visuality, which is a different approach to vision which engages the body and the senses during the act of

viewing, instead of ‘optical visibility’, which posits a clear separation between viewer and art object. I also examined different tools that were spoken of during the conference *Hold Me Now* (2017), these tools resonated through the other chapters. Such as (3) care as an umbrella of ‘intersectionality’ (along the axes of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability, among others) coined by curator Karen Archey, which again opens up a space of new connections and multiplications. Also important are the concepts elaborated by Bradley, Halberstam and Spillers, such as (4) thinking through the flesh, (5) the politics of the handmade, (6) being ‘in the fray’. These approaches can open up space for the viewer to view haptically, which is in itself a multisensory phenomenon.

In Chapter Two, I focused on the museum space and the potentiality of the space itself to grant the curator the power to challenge institutional restrictions of freedom and traditional forms of exhibitions. The curatorial concepts in this chapter were derived from in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari who describe ‘smooth space’ and ‘striated space’. These spaces are not tools in themselves. Rather (I would argue) the concept of smooth and striated space give rise to concepts which a haptic curator can make use of, such as (7) intensities and a focus on the smooth space, which give rise to a (8) conceptual critique which show the limitations of the embodiment of a striated space. Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of ‘smooth space’ also encompasses other ideas that were worked out partly in chapter two but not specifically mentioned in the conclusion of Chapter Two. I would like to add (9) the rhizomatic quality of continuity and (10) the continuous development of form.

These last two ideas were further worked out in Chapter Three, in which I addressed art-curation as a potential outgrowth, or field of application, of haptic criticism. As possible tools elaborate on this initial conceptual framework, I would like to invoke the notion of (11) artworks and the museum space as part of a ‘web’ of materials, (12) the conceptualisation of bodies as flesh, and (13) conceiving of art objects as living entities. These are all notions which, I argue, can offer curators tools for innovation in the design of exhibitions. This latter group of ideas are an outgrowth of further analysis of and reflection on the initial concepts of ‘assemblage’ and ‘intersectionality’.

I imagine my hypothetical not so much as a distinct use of a segregated space, but rather as part of a web of all the materials present in the museum. In the coming text that is part of teach term described in the dictionary, I try to imagine how a haptic curator moves through the space of the museum and works with the space and the artworks.

To work within a frame and not get lost in total abstraction, I continue my thinking between the walls of the Stedelijk Museum and continue to think through the artworks displayed in the exhibitions *Spirits of the Soil* (2018) and *Freedom of Movement* (2018).

A LEXICON FOR THE HAPTIC CURATOR

A

Art Objects Living Entities:

This refers to the change an artwork goes through when the viewer interacts and involves him or herself with the object of art. The visitor participates in the construction of the work's meaning. The artwork therefore is seen as a living, interacting entity embedded in a network of perception (by visitors and others) and interconnection (with other displayed works, and with the museum space).

Hypothetical Show: Guidance for the visitor should be kept subtle and non-intrusive. If there is any guidance for the viewer, it should be brief explicit. The curator may create structures which require the viewer to approach the works of art closely (if appropriate) and then distance him or herself from them. Every change of the artwork in these different circumstances of viewing must be taken into consideration. All characteristics of the group of spectators must be considered; what are they wearing? What is the weather like? How tall are they? What is their cultural background and native language? If possible, there should be no lines (string or wire markings) of separation between viewer and object. How do the artworks affect relations between visitors? Do they provoke discussion, or cut it off?

B

Being in the Fray:

The making, and the undoing of the making, opens up a space to view with a small caressing gaze which is active and corporeal, embodied. This can be put into practice by exploring traditions that are themselves based on an initial approach of physical, tactile, haptic intimacy such as embroidery, weaving, playing a musical instrument, or engaging in sports which make use of objects.

Hypothetical Show: Where feasible, the viewer can be allowed to touch the works of art with different body parts. When the viewer first enters the space in which objects are on display, there is no light. The experience is initially a bodily one, in which senses such as hearing, smell and touch navigate the visitor through space without sight. The longer the viewer stays in the space, the more he sees and the less his body will be involved. Sight functions as a secondary input. This changes the hierarchical setting of the senses in a manifest and unmistakable intervention. One instructive example are the immersive installations of artists such as Gregor Schneider, which use cramped, closed, maze-like environments with dead ends and 'cold rooms' to give visitors a direct and unmediated experience of how space can be used as to impose forms of social control.

Bodies as Flesh:

The body is dematerialised from any objectification and unmoored from all cultural hieroglyphics (gender and sex, for example). The body as flesh offers different methods for reading through diverse mediations.

Hypothetical Show: The museum space is a space where a diverse group of people traverse the rooms and spaces. The awareness of categorisation of bodies should be made explicit before entering this space – but only so that it can later be challenged and deconstructed.

Body as Direct Presence:

The body of the viewer, as a whole, should be treated as of main importance to the art-experience. The curator should take into consideration the changes the visitor's body experiences while traveling through the exhibition. Further, drawing on Archey's idea of care, the curator can and should occupy him- or herself with accommodations for gallery visitors with disabilities, acting as a practical advocate within the institutional framework of the museum.

Hypothetical Show: The viewer's body does not wander through the museum space as a passive entity. Instead, the body is treated as an active participant. The curator can attempt to address the visitors' bodies on a direct, pre-verbal level, as with subtle changes in temperature or the acoustic environment. The visitor can also be granted freedom of movement, allowing him or her to explore the museum space on their own, and discover unique ways of engaging with the works on display.

C

Care:

Care for the artist and artworks functions as the foundational principle of the curator's work. This principle derives from an intersectional approach which functions as an umbrella of intersecting issues such as race, gender, class, sexuality and ability. This emphasis on care creates an autonomous ethical system in which harmful or insensitive institutional policies can be criticised, and unnecessary limits or restrictions transcended.

Hypothetical Show: The exhibition would be primarily conceptualised as an event. Events are based on variation, change and mediation. Events are never about an individual or singular object, or a static, always-repeating experience. An event is only an event if there is always more than 'one': plural perspectives, plural experiences. Artists can be invited to join a conversation about how their work should be displayed in a more collective, communal, and fluid setting.

Continuous Form:

The form of the space in which the curator creates is constantly developed and altered in responsive ways. The emphasis is on 'becoming' rather than on fixed qualities and existing rules. The principle is based on progress in perception of the artworks, and the continuity between them.

Hypothetical Show: The curator emphasises connections between the works. This goes far beyond mere subject-matter, to encompass unexpected or challenging continuities which emerge naturally from the juxtaposition of one artwork with another. The artworks function as points of segments,

like traces. The sound between video artworks overlaps if the viewer stands in between the works. The movement of the viewer's body may direct the rhythm between the sound of the video artworks. Installation is not done with a set of rules (one sound louder than the other, walls separating works) but the installation is perceived as a 'work in progress' which is continuously being 'remade'. This means the curator creates with the material (artworks) that he or she is given. The materials in this show are not treated on the basis of their 'outcomes', such as the exhibition, the conference, the catalogue etc. Rather, they are connected to each other on the communal level of process. Chance reflections, contrasts, or overlaps which emerge precisely because of the juxtaposition of the works can be exploited, in an ongoing process, to explore and deepen relationships between the works.

F

Flesh:

Erotic and desirable, flesh is conceived of as being uncoupled from the body and thus unwritten and 'blank' which allows flesh to respond in a profoundly intimate way, drawing on interlocking details. This conception of flesh reflects resistance to any discourse and asks the viewer to come close to the artwork as an embodied thing, and experience it in a more intimate fashion.

Hypothetical Show: Curation can become a kind of pathfinding during the act of curating/making. Curating can become a guidepost to new ways of seeing and feeling.

H

Handmade:

Moving away from high cultural forms of making towards the 'low cultural forms of making' that are an invitation of touch. Such as; gardening, embroidery, knitting, or cooking for example. Many contemporary artists have begun to explore these more traditionally humble forms of creation as a way of questioning the boundary between 'high' and 'folk' or 'outsider' art.

Hypothetical Show: The curator may include artworks that make use of, or are based on, these cultural forms of making that move away from optical vision. The curator could also include information about the practical details of how certain artworks (textile, painting, or sculpture) are created. This may serve to 'disenchant' the idea of the artwork as especially valuable because of its unique, non-interchangeable, and 'handmade' quality: in fact, people are constantly creating artefacts with exactly these properties worldwide. The emphasis on handmade things and activities drawn from the needs of everyday life can include a participatory component.

Haptic Visuality:

Haptic visuality is a strategy within the artistic realm, it is a close vision that does not draw upon distant vision or a clear separation between what is viewed (on the screen) and who is viewing

(standing in front of the screen). Haptic visuality is about tactility, touch, and embodiment between the artwork and viewer.

Hypothetical Show: Including artworks that make use of this strategy.

I

Intensities:

An exhibition might include elements that unsettle and are unpredictable, or which change and flow, responding to factors not traditionally considered relevant to the museum experience, such as temperature, weather, or ambient noise.

Hypothetical Show: The weather can be allowed ‘into’ the museum space, to interact with and change the intensity of the light and sound environment of the gallery. The exhibition space can be constantly subtly changed to according to prevailing weather conditions. Visitors can be encouraged to discover for themselves how transitory elements such as weather, traditionally considered a distraction, can instead be viewed as components of how the artwork itself is experienced.

L

Limitations of the Striated:

This concept implies a critique of the traditional conception of Western museum space as a space which limits the capacity of a body. The imposition of clean, flat walls and strictly segregated spaces is considered, at most, as a necessary evil. Even when they cannot be altered, the structure of the exhibition can at least encourage the visitor to become aware of their limitations, and the limitations they impose on visitors, museum staff, and artists.

Hypothetical Show: The curator might treat the walls, ceiling and floor as limitations of continuity of the experience. The curator should think carefully about how many walls and separations need to exist within the museum space, and should be open to the possibilities created by allowing a Deleuzian ‘multiplicity’ of forms to flourish within a more ‘smooth’ non-hierarchical spatial organization.

R

Rhizomatic Continuity:

The exhibition emphasises the interconnection of the artworks in a self-chosen order and their interpretation within the conceptual frame of the curator. The viewer is asked to make or find connections, with only limited guidance from the curator. This approach turns the viewer into an active adaptive participant instead of a passive object or passenger.

Hypothetical Show: The exhibition might contain no other walls than the walls that hold the striated space. The notion of the rhizome encompasses the notion of multiplicity, of a scattered distribution of meaning, and multiple entry and exit points. Works of art could be arranged in way that make them seem to ‘sprout up’ at seemingly random points or in configurations reminiscent of nature. They can also be arranged in ways that highlight a subtle conceptual interdependence and development among them, while always leaving the visitor to draw any ultimate conclusions about the nature of their relationships.

W

Web of Materials:

The curator/middlemen/mediator employs a haptic mode of perception which posits that art objects are alive and, like living things, are subject to a process of constant change as a result of being a part of a web of materials and of being a part of active bodies (bodies as flesh, dematerialised and thus free from any objectification).

Hypothetical Show:

The strategy of variation which is always plural and never static. There is no hierarchy and no singularity. The model is not so much a disciplined space as a ‘rhizomatic’ organic profusion, not imposed from above, but following its own internal logic. Exhibition strategies which permit change and adaptation are favoured; the exhibition is undergoing a constant, subtle process of re-evaluation and change which is guided by the new forms and connections which have emerged as the result of the interplay between the various works.

Final Thoughts

This list is, of course, partial and conditional. It is intended as a spur toward further reflection on the role of the curator. As I have repeatedly noted throughout this thesis, curation, in Western museums, takes place within a fixed institutional context in which many interests must be reconciled: artists, administrators, accountants, the visiting public, museum staff, sponsors, local authorities, etc. Further, exhibitions are often still staged within built spaces from previous eras, which reflect different and sometimes outmoded or questionable priorities.

Nevertheless, even within this context, I believe we can recapture spaces for exploration and reflection, and critical questioning of paradigms which may no longer be relevant. The advent of installation art brought with it a new understanding of museum space. Visitors began to be seen as a participatory and reactive element in exhibitions. Artists radically changed the ways in which they interacted with and exploited the spaces in which their works were ‘installed’. Museums and galleries, working closely with artists, sought to engage more of the visitors’ senses than mere sight or hearing. The reception of Deleuze and Guattari’s ground-breaking insights within the fields of art criticism and artistic practice encouraged the critical questioning of accepted boundaries between

art and non-art, between visitor and work, and between the closed hermetic space of the museum and the outside world.

The result has been a rich body of theoretical work which has called for a reevaluation of many fundamental categories of thought and practice in the world of contemporary art. However, much of this work has been applied primarily to artistic creation and art criticism. Its relevance to curation has received less attention, something the 2018 Stedelijk *Hold Me Now* conference was intended to remedy. *Hold Me Now* reflects another element of the curatorial 'turn' in which curators seek not just to engage with, but to directly apply concepts which have been circulating in art-theoretical and art-historical circles.

The 'curatorial turn' has granted curators increased control and opportunity to implement their own autonomous conceptions. I argue that they should draw on the theoretical insights of the authors discussed in this paper to bring fresh perspectives to the work, and the aspirations, of museum curation in the 21st century. Museums can become a place for new ways of thinking about how art is displayed, perceived, and consumed. Some of this new thinking may be controversial at first, and conflicts will inevitably ensue. Artists may have very different ideas than curators about how their work is displayed, and visitors may be challenged at first by ways of displaying artworks which differ dramatically from what they have been accustomed to.

However, the potential benefits are manifold. Museums can be made more inclusive, more democratic, more organic spaces. They can be a location for exploration and debate concerning the experiences of marginalised and oppressed peoples which have normally been ignored within mainstream artistic discourse. Visitors may experience new forms of curation and presentation as liberating, and as more relevant to the rapid changes taking place outside the museum environment. Finally, the museum itself may be more deeply integrated into the life of the surrounding community, encouraging people to perceive a vital continuity and interplay between the museum and the 'real' world.

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