**Bodies | Objects | Rituals**

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Posture & Balance
The control of movement, balance and posture involve:
- All the major CNS structures (cerebral cortex, cerebellum, basal ganglia, brainstem, spinal cord).
- Controlling a large number of muscles and joints with many degrees of freedom.
- Interpreting sensory information from diverse sources.

The Visual System
Tells the brain what’s out there in the world for the motor systems to negotiate:
- Relative motion between the eyes and the world – useful for balance system.
- Brain interprets input as forward self-motion.
- Compensates with backward sway.

Somatosensory Input
Signals motion of joints, muscle state, contact forces:
- Muscle spindles – muscle length and velocity
- Golgi tendon organs – muscle tension
- Joint receptors – joint angle
- Skin receptors – contact force between body and environment...

The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. J.J. Gibson 1979
Affordances do not exist as a function of either the environment or the observer alone, but only
on this one, as in the exhibition we are not actually showing the jacket itself. The jacket is a collaboration with Stone Island, who are well known for being quite forward thinking in terms of functionality and experimentation with materials. It is quite interesting as it turns the whole idea of creating jackets through machine production on its head because every single panel of this down-jacket, which to us really seems quite everyday is a single piece, hand sewn and then put back together. The way that we will be showing this, will first of all show the design process and secondly the relationship to the body through animation... I will also be showing a stiffened pattern so you can also trace some of the ideas behind it. In terms of the rest of the exhibition there are many things that will be shown and should be shown, but there are only very few that I can highlight. I’d love to be able to do this for every single object...

...The other way that I want to bring in the idea of the human presence is I’ve commissioned a Norwegian artist who solely works with smell. She used to be a professor of chemistry before she turned her hand to art, she believes it’s the one sense that we do not deal with in any way, even though we rely on it in so many ways... Being a scientifically minded she has found a way in which she embeds the scents in wall paint or in less obvious places for the visitor to experience when they come into the exhibition...

18 – I want to focus on two case studies, which engage with the sense of movement and the body. One of the designers is Atio Tragop, who recently graduated from the RCA. His approach to design is very interesting because he never uses standard patterns, he always creates a patterns based around the particular physicality of the figure. I will focus

we’d arrive with tracksuit with our individual names and our sponsors on them, sweatshirts the whole lot. And part of that was the ritual of turning up, so the lesser team would feel intimidated. There was a terrific kind of ritual of turning up and that was driven internally so ‘sports-gear’ became a fashion within the sport and a semiotics...

18 – I had originally decided to talk about museum objects from an anthropological perspective, so I came up with four ways people are thinking about the object in recent theorising...

1. Biographical objects – objects as part of the social life of things...

2. Entangled objects – which is this move that we’ve seen of thinking about the object, not necessarily just museum objects, as part of networks, and there I was interested in this shift to looking at stories... So anthropologies are increasingly written through material culture, taking the material things as a focus instead of beginning from populations. People’s classifications of things are so complex and that is increasingly recognised so trying to tell stories through things has become a good strategy for telling stories about people’s lives, about the very messy nature of the world of connections. This links into museum objects and this ‘return of the object as curiosity’ that we’ve seen with the Wunderkammer or the ‘Cabinet of Curiosities’ being recreated in some form. Stephan Bay has written about this very interestingly as being a way for using objects for ‘their typological exuberance’. You can say an awful lot with a single thing rather than through a pre-defined framework...

3. Animate objects – how objects speak to us or even compel us

The idea of objects as animate has really come back into the social science and cultural studies in all sorts of ways in recent years, in the work of Bruno Latour... looking at objects as having some kind of agency, to look at how objects act upon us... what is it about certain kinds of materials or features of objects that maybe relate to us in more specific ways, so we could
talk about this in terms of their 'affordances'.

The sort of language that I've been talking about in some of my work is the way in which there are particular material suggestions or prompts or hints...

...I've been working in Nuremberg; the broad project has been about Cultural Policy in the City post 1945, especially in relation to architecture. My real interest was the space built by Hitler for staging the Nuremberg rallies, much of which is still there. This is a space that is very calculated; the language that Hitler used was to 'speak to the eyes', and the idea was that this would make an effective, direct impact that wouldn't go through the brain. Your rationality wouldn't be part of it. There were quite sophisticated psychological ideas about scale relative to the human body, about repetition of motifs. One thing that I was interested in as part of this site is what's happened to it and how people have negotiated it since, but also in terms of how people now engage with it – one of the questions is does it still have that kind of capacity to speak to the eyes?...

...The ideas about the human body, or particular kind of aspects of bodily features can play into these things. For example, the fact that we find across cultures, that very often things to do with the right hand side get more highly valued. What seems to be happening is the idea of a bodily distinction that's just a sort of statistical feature within the population then gets built upon symbolically...there can be quite different sensory regimes in different cultures, some may even invert it...

2. The Sense-able Object – or – Objects and the Senses – Not so much the visual as we have talked about so much – but putting in the tactile, the olfactory, the auditory, which we have started to see being done in exhibitions. There are some interesting early, historical examples in 17th and 18th Century collections where the other senses were quite important to the way that you actually apprehended objects, and then in the modern museum, which was predominantly visual, and now we are seeing the return of some of that...

...Effective communication: how do we communicate with audiences through the non-textual and the non-visual and pick up on some sort of accnet of things rather than a whole language and build that into the design of exhibitions? I am working on a project at the moment with designers, artists and computer scientists to look at questions of effective communication and also an idea of personalisation within exhibitions...creating a technological mode for exhibiting different content, and personalisation being that what a person attends to most at a certain point in an exhibition will then create the next stage of the exhibition as they move through it – a different kind of interactivity than what we usually see...

...The last idea to mention, is the interesting arguments first made by German theorist and curator Rosemary Byer and what she calls a shift to 'staging' in exhibitions and the 'performativeto try and tap into individual experience and to the bodily through thinking very theatrically about how you put on an exhibition, making the sensory object really work with the senses and so on...

CB – the way that exhibition visiting relates to other experiences in life. A lot of research already done on audiences and exhibitions focuses purely on exhibition space, unconnected to the shopping that might happen before, the sleeping that might happen after and how this fits into a sense of a life story...

CV – Is there something about the nature of the glass cabinet and how the mind works with it, which does something that we don't quite understand? Obviously when there were 'Wonder Cabinets' you had this direct access to objects and then with the mass use of objects in museums and the invention of big sheets of glass this barrier came in.

V&A – This is a subject that has been much discussed and people who have been making exhibitions over the last 30 years have discussed greatly the impact of 'the plinth' and 'the case'. We know it is highly significant. There is no question that the public react hugely differently to things that are not in cases for a variety of reasons including the fact that you can see in considerably more detail the object that you are looking at...

BH – there's an enormous lack of consideration for what is coming up as a knowledge base in terms of developing museum web sites and extensions to the museum space and it's easy to understand why as everything has moved so quickly in terms of technology. But there does require to be generational top to bottom investigation and understanding...and the demographic of that...geographically and culturally as well as in terms of time and the extension of that time, it's a huge field and an enormous challenge, as you know these things are very expensive and require a huge investment of time and money...

LM – I think it's interesting to look at technology and how it's impacted on people over determining what was it like to be able to turn on a light switch instead of lighting a candle or something that was filled with gas and what effect did that have on people's perception of the room or in a creative way what sort of images did that pull you can find examples all over history of technology impacting on people and how they adapt or else how they become alienated from their world

CB – or alienated from their bodies it would seem...the physical environment is being taken away with the online experience...

M – so you talk about 'the case' and the divide of the glass and how that actually changed the physical experience... this is a metaphor for the screen and what is happening between a person and a computer...

AC – Aperture was trying to find ways of showing the transitional and the ephemeral I started looking at old fashioned meteorological apparatus which allows things like the wind speed to be logged. This is a Campbell-Stokes sunshine recorder which I originally saw in the Science Museum. The sun comes through the glass sphere and then burns a line on the strips at the back which are changed every day. I was interested in the idea of some kind of unique finger print of the day so I transferred it through laser technology onto these sheets of stainless steel, of about two months
up to the longest day... I put the dates on the back of these sheets and it was made and exhibited in the same area where it was seen so people had a very direct relationship with the days. There were days when there was sunlight but no sunshine because of the cloud... it was quite interesting that some of the people who were looking at it became very emotionally engaged with the sheets which showed absolutely no sunshine...

I was trying to work out how you could be inside a cloud, how you could make that and how it would feel to be there. I made a series of works recreating clouds photographically. And then a series which was part of this work which was part of an exhibition called *Out of the Ordinary* at the New Porter Gallery. I worked with a meteorologist to capture 12 months of typical clouds in and around London. The piece is about 40 cm high 15 cm square, and made of very solid, dense glass. They are very much something that you look into

and don’t touch (having said that I’m not a lover of people touching my work at all), I was trying to get a core section of the sky – as if you had cut it out and brought it down. They were meant to be very ordinary clouds, nothing spectacular at all... This was done with subsurface etching, and working with 3D scanning... That whole idea of making something visible that you can’t normally see in that kind of way, so that the viewer is actually able to analyse it in a way that they could never normally do as it’s making time stand still...

...Areeze was about that whole threshold about being inside and outside the body and the whole idea of where that space begins and ends. And also thinking about the manner in which this has been made, through blowing glass so that the organ of air makes the sculpture, which is the lungs...

...I was really interested in the aesthetics of something transitory, something that you actually wouldn’t know what it was... when you were looking at ‘Seeing’ for example you are experiencing that sense within your own brain while you were looking at the object. MK – in a way this relates to how we’ve been thinking about how you can get other senses there even by suggestion or implication or other actions and reactions, as you were talking about seeing yourself seeing... how do you smuggle in these other sensory experiences when you’re not present?...

AC – The metal piece, *Aperture*, which was very prosaic to me in some ways was extraordinary to see people very emotionally affected, and the thing that affected them was actually the date... they looked at the date and they remembered.

You could see them looking and seeing something that happened on that day and it was very powerful actually. I didn’t anticipate it, but I think perhaps there is that in most of what I do, there is something set up and perhaps it’s a little unknown to me what’s happening, it’s like the clouds are just clouds but something happens as a result of isolating them in that you can see them in a different way...

MW – What you showed testifies to how complex the whole processes about perception, reactions to objects, whether they are, as you call them transitory and ephemeral and I think... your talk was necessary to talk about the complexity of these reactions...

VAA – The process of putting the scientific model into a state of material manifestation that actually adds content or emotional overtones that are not normally present in a scientific model which in turn, makes you think about scientific models in a different way... your work is about a transposition from a purely rational, scientific, analytic framework into a material substantiation which will inevitably bring with it this emotional impact...

AC – The facts change all the time and I like that... something that someone really totally believed in at one stage is the next year, not discredited but questioned and developed. Nothing is finite...

GW – I was very interested in what you were saying about staging exhibitions and what I want to do with the show is to create three immersive environments, not in the kind of traditional display at all but more to do with stage craft or shop window design and to create a kind of mix-en-scene or a kind of character for each of these places drawing on story-telling ideas or conventions and narratives. So we’ve got these very fairy-tale titles: *Forest Glade; Enchanted Castle and Heaven & Hell* which are looking at the development of narrative and mapping/collecting some objects together which suggest those developments in narrative...

...The Dutch designer, Jurgen Bey, creates these structures from forlorn old furniture and latches them all together to create these imaginative little cottages he says of them ’my garden house is made up of all kinds of odds and ends, jumbled up in a different place from where you would normally find them. Still, they speak a recognisable language; they’re just in a different combination than what you would normally see. A new world is created from some of the things we recognize. Building sheds, sleeping under the starry sky on a solid bed, everyone knows what you are talking about when you speak of these things and they represent a certain feeling’...

...This I think has an interesting relationship to something Susan Sontag wrote in *Mix-en-Camp* – she argued that ‘In the 19th Century people of taste either patronised nature in the form of Strawberry Hill or attempted to remake it into something artificial for example Versailles. They also interfacelated the past, today’s camp taste effaces nature or else contradicts it outright and the relationship with camp taste and the past is extremely sentimental’...

...The whole Telling Tales project is to try and reconnect with rights of passage and rituals so you can
see the whole story of the show itself goes from birth, through life to death...

CA – Something that struck me about your presentation is that not only Telling Tales seems to re-propose in exhibitions a key narrative, but that the objects that you are representing reverse the function of objects, or ‘things’ as they are currently called in critical theory within narrative. So I could actually see metonymies, I could actually see metaphors, I could actually see symbolism, I could actually see the fetishism of objects that are played out in the process of narrative and constructing a narrative story that moves from the mimetic notion of the object in fairy tales to the much more loose use of metonymy in 18th Century novels. There are these signs that are very loosely played out to actually the closure of the metonymy in the narrative control of the metaphor and the symbol and that is replayed out into the fetishism that is part of this use of object in narrative...

LM – So, how did I first arrive at painting objects? A tutor on my foundation course at St. Martins advised me to draw what I loved. I took up his suggestion and made some large drawings of a sea shell I had brought with me to London from my home in Vancouver. The seashell was of course beautiful to look at which gave me pleasure. As a souvenir my seashell served up a happy sense of connection to Vancouver but it also served to remind me of my separation from home. When I looked at my drawings I felt something of a replay of these feelings which to me artistically was very exciting. I then used the sea shell as a bench mark to locate other objects to draw and paint, objects that triggered the same set of feelings – of connection and loss, presence and absence, of fullness and emptiness...

...My arm made an instinctive sweeping motion in an attempt to describe and capture it. Painting linked together feeling and thinking with acting and looking. As such, painting injected me with a wonderful, heightened sense of being alive...

...In the early 1990’s I began to re-evaluate my relation to the object. I wondered how to paint objects that existed more as a concept than a material thing – like atoms or stars or even a traffic jam. These objects are defined for me not so much by their appearance but by their disposition within a group: when I think of stars what I think of is so much a single star but pinpricks of light scattered against the night sky...

...Throughout the 1980’s I used repetition as a form of celebration, to confirm an objects presence. Here it is and here I am, over and over again...At the same time I was also expressing anxiety about loss, let’s paint this again and again to make sure it won’t disappear...

...However sometimes objects do disappear – here’s the kind of objects you would see in an attic, abandoned or forgotten, hidden here in black...

...I felt that you, like Annie and Russell you were talking...of your lives and of your feelings and were talking about how you approach and prepare yourselves in the ritual of producing certain things and I saw an incredible complexity in this process...

...The subject of repetition is vast and I only mentioned the aspect of it in terms of celebration and also anxiety about loss. To repeat something again is to try and reclaim it. As soon as you’ve finished painting an object it disappears, it’s no longer at the tip of your brush but you can get it back by describing it again. But there’s also something...

LM – In terms of titling, it was always a very sensitive issue of how to title something and I was never just happy with Untitled, in the paintings from the 80’s it was very straightforward, here was ‘a book’ and here was ‘a map’, it was obvious to make it a kind of match, a knee jerk reaction to what you were actually looking at and how to identify it. I made one mistake in the 80’s by titling a painting of white shirts in a grid, all folded up, I called it Regiment, and I really regretted it because I felt that it added a layer of interpretation and it was too prescriptive to the viewer of how to think, of how to respond to that...

...But when it was a matter not of defining an object just in relation to the noun that it was, it became a more interesting challenge and there seemed to be a way of mirroring with words, some kind of emotional weight or some kind of sense of what the painting was about. The image that comes to mind is if you have a balance with feathers on one side and metal on the other - how do you get the two to equal out if words and images have different kinds of presences...

...Also there’s something about desire and about wanting and about not being able to touch, and just being able to look and feel a longing for something, or feel what it’s like not to have something...

...I have a huge existential horror for example of going to a market and seeing a vast number of objects spilling all over the place - you think how could anybody want – who could want all this stuff, it’s just jamming our world so much and again I think that’s something to do with a sense of emptiness...

Shoes, 1990. Lisa Milroy. Oil on canvas, 203.2 x 290 cm

about greediness... you put down one luscious sweep of white paint across the canvas and you just want to have it again and again so there’s something about satisfaction. But in terms of the mass-produced thing, I also have a horror of a kind of endlessness like that, that because I so enjoy painting it can kind of go on for ever and ever and ever and sometimes there’s a kind of horror that paintings could keep on flowing up and flowing up, it just kind of drains, something is draining its meaningfulness or its value...
SR – Whenever I talk about Quilts I always refer to them as very potent symbols of shared cultural experience...it’s very much about these objects being devices for women, particularly women, to get together and tell their stories...

...I think it’s quite important what Jane said and to pick up on the last generation, again of women in particular, who were taught to sew. I remember with my grandmother we would sit down and stitch and learn about our own personal narratives and our own personal histories. My grandmother would tell me stories about how she’d met my grandfather and when my mother was born and I think they are very potent symbols of that kind of personal narrative...

...What’s also interesting in the course of research when looking at these objects is the way in which the mythology of the object overrides the actual evidence...

...I’ve always had a very clear idea of how I wanted the exhibition to look and so many quilt exhibitions show historic quilts on walls...I wanted to show these objects on beds or on three dimensional mounts as that’s how they were designed to be seen. They were functional objects – these were men and women who did not consider themselves to be artists, they were making functional objects, even if they were very decorative in terms of the patchwork rather than the quilts that were made for keeping warm. So I wanted them to be seen as they were designed and made to be seen.

MM – but equally I think it begs the question of when did they become art objects and collectible objects as part of the history of the exhibition...the large number of objects we see in museums of course, were not meant to be seen as art objects and that’s a huge responsibility we all have towards sharing these objects...

LM – do you think there’s something in the nature of stitching, that there’s something about people wanting to carve out a kind of intimate time, to spend time with themselves in which they can make sense of their life, they can explore problems, share joys, it’s really to make the suspension from our normal flow of time...

WW – There is much more that we could explore...It seemed quite clear that we could have had a structural engineer, we could have had an architect, we could have had a psychoanalyst, we could have had a policeman, a forensic photographer...it seemed that all this kind of thing about the intention of reconstructing environments, seeing where things happen, of documenting...

CA – There is a lot that is around the borders which could be brought in quite profitably...

Contact

Dr. Caterina Albano
Artakt, Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design
The Innovation Centre
Southampton Row
London, WC1B 4AP
T: +44 (0)20 7514 8718
M: +44 (0)7748 648 383
E: caterina@artakt.co.uk
W: www.artakt.co.uk