Ephemeral Art:

A Philosophical Proposition about the Nature of Time and Being

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Camberwell College of Arts

University of the Arts London

December 2007

Abstract

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The subject of this thesis is ephemeral art; a phenomenon which has surfaced repeatedly in Western art history since the middle of the last century. The research begins from the premise that in order to understand ephemeral art it must be approached as a philosophical proposition concerning the nature of time rather than simply another movement, style or genre to add to the established art canon. As such, this is a cross-disciplinary enquiry which references both Western and Eastern philosophy as well as art theory and practice with a view to exposing how the concept of impermanence has been constructed within contemporary art and the consequent implications. It is also a practice-led enquiry in which my own creative work provides a concrete point of reference for discussing abstract philosophical concepts.

The thesis is structured in two parts. My aim in Part I is to explore how certain sorts of artistic practice have promoted a philosophically dubious and problematical understanding of impermanence based on dualistic principles; an understanding which has come to dominate critical consciousness and define what is thought of as ephemeral art. It also considers how this way of thinking about time paradoxically constrains the ability of ephemeral art to act as an effective critique of the museum and art institutional system.

Part II investigates whether ephemeral art is inevitably determined by a dualistic temporal perspective. It introduces a variety of other ephemeral practices which

uncharacteristically appear to disrupt this perception of time. By appropriating key features from these examples, I develop a hybrid ephemeral artwork; a performance/installation piece entitled *Dust*, in order to analyse and evaluate whether an alternative ephemeral practice can successfully negate a dualistic temporality and facilitate a non-dualistic understanding of time.

Drawing on thirteenth century Japanese philosophy regarding impermanence and non-duality, this research makes a significant contribution to the field of art theory and practice bringing a new interpretation to bear on ephemeral art.

Acknowledgements

Research projects are always the product of more than one person alone. Many different individuals and organisations both in a professional capacity and in an informal context have supported and encouraged me during this process. I owe them all a huge debt of gratitude. I am especially grateful for the support of my supervisors; Professor Oriana Baddeley, Susan Johanknecht and Richard Osborne. Each has made a unique contribution to this thesis and without their guidance and expertise it would never have reached fruition. Thanks are also due to others at Camberwell College of Arts: Linda Sandino; the staff in the Conservation Department for their generosity in allowing me to mess around with chemicals in the science lab and pester them endlessly for information and equipment, and; Dr Athanasios Velios for his invaluable friendship, patience and practical assistance.

The creative practice aspect of this thesis would not have been possible without the generosity of the four institutions which hosted my performance/installation work. In particular, I thank Julie Carr and other staff in the Education and Conservation Departments at the Horniman Museum; Jane Ellis, Housekeeper at Fenton House as well as Helen Lloyd, Katy Lithgow and Sally Stafford at The National Trust; Sir Colin Renfrew, Dr David Barrowclough, Dr Lesley McFadyen and all the staff at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; and the staff at Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, especially Anne Taylor and Chris Chippendale. Each venue offered a warm and enthusiastic welcome and provided the opportunity for exciting and challenging inter-disciplinary dialogues.

Other individuals to whom I am grateful for sharing their time and expertise include

Professor Peter Brimblecombe and Young Hun Yoon at the University of East Anglia, not least for introducing me to their 'dust library'; Rachael Barker, Conservator at Tate Britain and; Richard Gagnier, Conservator at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. I am also indebted to the artist, Savage, for so many stimulating conversations and to David Singleton and Sandra Stancliffe at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery.

Friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues have been an endless source of encouragement as well as practical assistance throughout this process. Particular thanks go to Stuart Oliver, Karin Schuck, Rachael Evans, Roden Richardson, Stewart Payne and Kofi Owusu.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the University of the Arts for the studentship I received in support of this project.

Author Declaration

I declare that I was not registered for any other academic award or qualification during the period of registered study in which the research was carried out. None of the material contained herein has been wholly or partially submitted for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Zoë Tillotson

December 2007

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Appendix 4 **Digitally Formatted Documentation of Creative Practice on DVD (Video Footage)**

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Introduction

This is a practice-based thesis about ephemeral art – art which is *intentionally* impermanent, temporary and transient. My interest in this subject can be traced back to a series of private photography lessons with an independent photographer in the 1980s which introduced me to Ansel Adams' *Zone System*; a precise technical system of taking, developing and printing black and white photographs. Amongst other things, Adams advocates a philosophy of permanence. Those following his method practice a variety of archival conservation techniques such as selenium toning and acid-free storage, aimed at elongating and preserving the life of the photograph indefinitely. Some years later, finding myself working with instant Polaroid film, renowned for its unstable and impermanent qualities and usually restricted to use by professional photographers for the purpose of previewing composition and lighting prior to shooting the final image on more durable film stock, I began to question this approach. Consciously experimenting with the perishable and fugitive qualities of the film, baking negatives in the oven and making work which faded, changed tone or disappeared, prompted me to interrogate the necessity of art to be permanent. Thus began a love-affair with all things ephemeral.

The concept of ephemerality itself has a long and culturally diverse history evidenced, for example, in the tradition of Native American Indian sand painting and in the rice and pigment Rangoli patterns associated with Sikh and Hindu religious practices. However, within the mainly Western art trajectory, which forms the context for this thesis, the term *ephemeral* has been applied loosely to identify a general trend

pervading cultural production throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, and is therefore a relatively recent phenomenon.

This period has witnessed the birth of an enormous variety of co-existing groups, movements and activities of diverse complexion, all of which could legitimately lay claim to the term "ephemeral". In The Gutai Manifesto (1956), for example, Jirō Yoshihara speaks despairingly of the way in which the art object has become little more than an embalmed 'corpse'; an irrelevant relic residing in the sterile environment of museums and galleries. Implicit in his claim that 'materials have been murdered and can no longer speak to us' is a call for a new form of vibrant, active, kinetic artistic practice in which 'the spirit does not force the material into submission' but can 'keep[ing] the life of the material alive'. Whilst acknowledging 'the beauty of decay' in architectural ruins, Yoshihara asks: 'is it not perhaps the beauty which material assumes when it is freed of artificial make-up and reveals its original characteristic?' He suggests that 'the cracks and flaking surfaces' are in fact 'a sign of the material taking revenge, having recaptured its original life'; a life which is inherently fleeting and impermanent (1996 p.695).

Similarly, in 1957 Guy Debord described the Situationist International programme as 'essentially transitory', declaring that: 'Our situations will be ephemeral, without a future: passageways'. He adds; 'The permanence of art or anything else does not enter into our considerations . . . Eternity is the grossest idea a person can conceive (1996 p.706). Another example can be found in George Manciunas' letter to Tomas Schmit dated 1964, in which he clearly aligns Fluxus with the ephemeral:

> Fluxus is definitely against art-object as non-functional commodity – to be sold and to make a livelihood for an artist. It could temporarily have the pedagogical function of teaching people the needlessness of art including the eventual needlessness of itself. It should not therefore be

permanent.

He concludes: 'These Fluxus concerts, publications etc. – are at best transitional (a few years) and temporary until such time when fine art can be totally eliminated' (1996 p. 726).

As early as 1949, fifteen years prior to Manciunas' letter, Christian Dotremont had presented a handful of shrivelled and decomposing potatoes in the Brussels CoBrA exhibition; *The Object Through the Ages*, and by the mid-1960s a plethora of impermanent artworks and practices had been unleashed. These included: Environments and Happenings which adopted 'perishable materials such as newspaper, string, food, toilet paper and adhesive tape' (Reiss, 1999 p.21); performance art, described as 'ephemeral, time-based, and process-orientated' (Brentano, 1994 p.32); and latterly, installation art 'not based on physical permanence . . . but rather on the recognition of its unfixed *impermanence*, to be experienced as an unrepeatable and fleeting situation' (Kwon, 2000 p.34). Such statements might equally serve to describe elements of Viennese Actionism, Conceptual Art, Land/Earth Art, Kineticism and Arte Povera.

Conflicting versions of ephemerality distinguish the above statements, residing alternately in materiality, process, performance events and ephemera. This is notwithstanding the rise of new technologies which explore the concept of impermanence in terms of virtual reality, or purely time-based mediums that continue to expand the territory in new and different dimensions. Were the thesis to take as its rationale the problem of definition, these complexities would need to be unravelled. However, I begin from the premise that ephemeral art, rather than being viewed as a

discrete movement, style or genre, is more profitably envisaged as a strategy, or range of strategies, closely allied with an ongoing critique of the art object and art institutional system itself. Therefore a traditional art historical approach which proceeded by addressing the origins of ephemeral art with the intention of mapping out a linear and sequential pattern of practices situated in a precise historical or political moment, or geographical location, is inadequate here, not least because, as Brett (1995a) argues in the context of Kineticism, this categorical way of thinking merely serves the commercial interests and ideologies of those institutions ephemeral art intends to critique.

Significantly, I suggest furthermore that ephemeral art may conceivably be understood as a critical proposition concerning the nature of time. As such, this is an interdisciplinary research project: a philosophical inquiry as much as an artistic one, largely based on the analysis of abstract concepts. It is pursued simultaneously in what follows through textual analysis (art history, art theory and philosophy) as well as through my own creative practice and that of other artists.

This research has two main aims. The first aim is to bring to light different types of ephemeral art practice. Seven distinct ephemeral strategies are identified within the thesis which I have termed; *Dissolution*, *Dispersal*, *Decay*, *Suspended*, *Transubstantiation*, *Dialogic* and *Ritual Ephemerality*[1]. The second and more important aim is to critically examine these strategies (including my own creative practice) from

[1] An eighth strategy; Destruction, was also acknowledged. However, since comprehensive research has been undertaken in this field, arguably it has come to be recognised as a genre in its own right and therefore, on the grounds of space, has been excluded. Despite which, it is worth noting that the principles propelling artists to make work of this nature and the corresponding philosophy of time inscribed in destructive practices, hold much in common with the initial four ephemeral strategies discussed in Chapter 3.

the perspective of two contrasting philosophies of time; a predominantly Western and dualistic philosophy of time and an Eastern non-dualistic approach. Despite an ongoing fascination with the notion of ephemerality in the last sixty years, scant critical attention has been directed towards examining the precise nature of time and the concept of impermanence which inform perceptions of ephemeral art, an omission which prompts Brett to comment that 'the new experiences generated by . . . linear and cyclical senses of the passage of time in relation to the work of art have barely been discussed' (2000 p.35). My intention here is to address that gap.

The thesis adopts a two part structure dealing respectively with the concepts of dualistic and non-dualistic time in relation to ephemeral art. Part I comprises four chapters of which the first three review the art-historical and philosophical context for the research and establish the specific nature of the research problem. The aim of Chapter 1 is to examine a critical moment in cultural history when temporality became a controversial issue in art. An initial discussion of Michael Fried's (1967) renowned article Art and Objecthood provides a starting point. The chapter explores the notion of the transcendental, durationless temporality which Fried identifies and values in modernist painting and sculpture, and argues that, in their eagerness to repudiate this doctrine; his critics become advocates for a contrasting durational perception of time which Fried rejects in the Minimalist project. Secondly, the chapter raises questions about the philosophical premise of a durational perception of time in relation to the art object, whose origins, rooted in Aristotle, are deeply problematic.

Chapter 2 refines this general overview, concentrating on how a certain notion of impermanence predicated on this Aristotelian understanding of time has been

inextricably entangled with the debate about the dematerialisation of the art object within the context of Conceptual Art. It suggests that there may be some mileage in reconsidering the much maligned concept of dematerialisation in terms of furthering an understanding of the emergence of ephemeral art as a strategic device.

Chapter 3 narrows the focus of discussion further still, considering in greater depth how specific examples of "the ephemeral" have been constructed around an Aristotelian understanding of time. It addresses the issue through a survey of four ephemeral art strategies; *Dissolution*, *Dispersal*, *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality*, with reference to key artworks, artists' statements and critical commentaries. This cross-section of artworks and practices is restricted to those that emerge from, or intersect with British, European and American Conceptual Art during the period 1965–1975, extending to the Neo- or Post-Conceptual practices that followed in its wake and continue in present times.

The argument which runs throughout the thesis is that these four strategies are united by a common understanding of time; an understanding which has come to define and dominate what is thought of as ephemeral art, yet one which is based upon philosophically flawed principles. Moreover, in subjecting certain kinds of ephemeral art to philosophical interrogation, not only is the conception of time evinced by this work exposed as problematic in itself, but in addition, the efficacy of ephemeral art to critique the discourse of permanence and preservation propagated by museums and art galleries is considerably weakened by the fact that upon closer examination, this particular philosophy of time is one that the institutions themselves subscribe to, albeit

from the opposite end of the spectrum[2].

Having established the historical context of ephemeral art in the West and the prevailing philosophy of time which informs it, Chapter 4 introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis and reflects upon the philosophical consequences which flow from the Aristotelian-based temporal perspective outlined earlier. It argues specifically that the way in which time is conceived within the four ephemeral art strategies described in Chapter 3, (as well as within an art institutional context), is essentially dualistic. The chapter provides a succinct explanation of the terms duality and non-duality, with reference to David Loy's (1988) comparative philosophy, which offers an extensive survey of the subject. The chapter pursues two aims. Firstly, it clarifies the research problem at the core of the thesis, raising the question of whether ephemeral art is inevitably shackled to a dualistic temporal perspective or whether it is possible for a different type of ephemeral art practice to articulate a *non*-dualistic understanding of time. Secondly, it determines the methodology of the research and sets up the terms of the discussion for the remaining three ephemeral strategies, as well as establishing a framework for both the creation and analysis of my own practice in Part II of the thesis. In his writing, Loy (1988) argues that non-duality functions through negation, hence the methodology follows this approach, outlining the key principles of Aristotelian time which must be dissolved.

Part II contains six chapters. The first five chapters follow the same structure, each addressing; three outstanding ephemeral strategies, my personal creative practice and an

[2] Throughout this thesis I use the terms "art institution", "museum" and "gallery" interchangeably to signify a shared ideological stance insofar as time is percieved to be a threat to the durability of art objects and artefacts in public art galleries and museums whereby a range of conservation practices are invoked in an attempt to counteract or retard this alleged process of decay.

exemplary non-dualistic philosophy of time. The main purpose of the second part of the thesis is analytical and evaluative. It applies a non-dualistic understanding of time to my practice and the three other ephemeral art strategies under discussion, critically assessing the extent to which these practices reflect a non-dualistic temporality.

The introduction to Part II provides an overview of the final three ephemeral strategies; *Transubstantiation*, *Dialogic* and *Ritual Ephemerality*. The thesis proceeds by arguing that despite the dualistic character of the earlier four strategies, there is evidence to suggest that the remaining three strategies offer an alternative understanding of time, an understanding which appears to defy the three principles associated with Aristotelian temporality. This observation acted as a stimulus for the development and re-shaping of my own creative practice. Hence, the introduction continues by delineating both the pragmatic aspects of my practice and the rationale behind its design, explaining the links between my work and the other three strategies. The function of my practice could best be described as the *invention* or *creation* of data, as opposed to the concept of *collecting* pre-existent data associated with traditional social science or humanity-based doctorates. Alongside the work of other artists, my own creative practice provides a concrete context to facilitate the discussion, application and analysis of a non-dualistic understanding of time.

Although this research is practice-led, there are legitimate reasons why my own artwork is not introduced until the second part of the thesis. When I initially embarked upon this doctorate my artistic output represented a similar kind of ephemeral artwork to that which I have criticised in Part I of the thesis for inferring a dualistic understanding of

time[3]. As the research progressed and my grasp of the philosophical issues at stake developed, it became clear that continuing this sort of practice was untenable. Consequently, the philosophical framework determined the nature of the practice rather than the reverse, and therefore, it was not until after the research problem had been clearly identified and the theoretical/philosophical framework established that the practice could respond. As such, the internal logic of the thesis demands that my practice be situated in the second part, alongside the three alternative strategies which inform its construction. Located here, it can be interpreted as part of the attempt to find a solution to the central problem the thesis addresses, namely; whether ephemeral art is predestined to advocate a dualistic conception of time.

To this end, Chapter 5 through to Chapter 9 inclusively, draw on the non-dual philosophy of the 13th century Japanese Zen monk; Eihei Dōgen. This thinker was selected not least because his writing provides a radical critique of the hegemony of rationality in Western philosophy, but significantly because the concept of time and impermanence is one of the major vehicles through which he articulates his concept of non-duality.

Turning to Eastern philosophy in search of an effective critique of a dualistic Aristotelian conception of time may appear to be a somewhat unnecessary and/or idiosyncratic decision. Indeed, while sharing a linear view of time, Descartes, for instance, presents a significantly different understanding of duration, which, amongst

[3] The work I was making during this period amounted to text-based textile pieces; embroidered "sampler" type hangings which appropriated words or phrases from conservation discourse. Each work was cross-stitched in different fibres such as silver thread which tarnished upon prolonged exposure to light. Other pieces were constructed in such a way that the exposed threads of every completed letter were attached to test tubes containing damaging chemicals. Through capillary action, the threads soaked up the liquid causing the coloured text to disintegrate, bleed or bleach, disappearing against the white fabric

other things, challenges Aristotle's perception that time functions like a container. If this Cartesian perception of temporality ultimately remains within a dualistic frame of reference, arguably Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger and Gilles Deleuze each offer a radical alternative, which on the surface at least, appear to share a *non*-dualistic temporal perspective with this potentially outdated and obscure Zen monk. At times the congruency is so great that one might suspect these three figures of simply re-presenting key aspects of Dōgen's understanding of time in terms more familiar to a contemporary Western audience.

Bergson, for example, is in total agreement with Dōgen regarding the misleading and delusional common-sense understanding of time. Both reject the notion of time as a form of quantification and both embrace a non-conceptual approach to the problem of temporality. Bergson's articulation of "immediate consciousness", as distinct from "reflective consciousness" bears remarkable resemblance to Dōgen's notion of "pre-reflective consciousness" in which being and time are one (a subject explored in depth later). Guerlac describes "immediate consciouness" as 'the way something feels to us directly, before we stop and think about it, try to communicate it to someone, or represent it symbolically in any way'. For Bergson, she continues, this is the antithesis of "reflective consciousness", which 'objectifies experiences' and 'treats them the same way it considers objects in space' (2006 p.62). If Bergson's apparent rejection of the subject/object dichotomy is indicative of a non-dualistic approach, his concept of duration as something which 'can only be lived' further reinforces the uncanny similarity with Dōgen's unification of time and existence.

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background ensuring illegibility. See Section 1of Illustrations; Examples of Early Creative Practice: Work in Progress Based on Decay.

In re-working and extending Bergson's philosophy in terms of "virtual" versus "lived" time, Deleuze reinforces these sentiments. Furthermore, Heidegger's lecture addressed to the Theological Society in Marburg: *Der Begriff der Zeit* (1924) [The Concept of Time, 1992] sounds suspiciously like a reiteration of Dōgen's non-dualistic perspective, particularly when he poses the question; 'Am I myself the now and my existence time?' (1992 p.5)[4].

Other parallels might easily be drawn between Dōgen's position and these three modern thinkers. Olson (2000) correctly notes, for example, that time "presences" for both Heidegger and Dōgen. Bergson echoes this idea in his book; *Durée et simultanéité* (1922) [Duration and Simultaneity, 1965], in which he asserts that the present and past arise simultaneously. Again, building on Bergson's earlier work, Deleuze launches a similar critique of causality in which he rejects notions of "before" and "after" in favour of a continual process of becoming. In his critical appraisal of Bergson, he writes that duration is 'a case of a "transition," of a "change," a *becoming* . . .' (1991 p.37).

In the end however, Dōgen's original understanding of time, I suggest, is the *only* understanding which survives critical scrutiny and can genuinely claim to be non-dualistic. After interrogation, neither Heidegger, Bergson or Deleuze completely escape the chains of duality and individualism which characterise Western philosophy. Even Heidegger, who moves very close to Dōgen's way of thinking in his latter work which is unashamedly influenced by Daoism and other forms of Eastern philosophy, never manages, as Abe points out, to completely transcend his earlier anthropocentric and subjectivist stance; 'For whereas Being can be thought without beings, time cannot be

[4] The second date and pagination reference the first published English translation of this lecture by William McNeill, which later became part of Heidegger's seminal work: *Sein und Zeit* (1927) [Being and

thought apart from the human self', consequently 'Heidegger's understanding of the identity of Being and time is not universally applied to all beings-trees, animals, mountains included-of the universe' (1992 p.142). Dōgen, by contrast, as will be seen later, leaves *nothing* out of the equation.

Bergson mirrors Heidegger's fallibility here. In his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1888) [Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness, 2001], 'He invites us', observes Guerlac, 'to respect an absolute difference between conscious, living beings on the one hand, and things, on the other, and teaches us to distinguish between the discourses' which pertain differentially to each (2006 p.43). From Dōgen's perspective this kind of dichotomy is unthinkable. For this Zen philosopher, there is only sentience itself.

Moreover, in the same essay, Bergson describes time as a "force", effectively substantialising temporality and leading to the dualistic perception that time is a separate "thing". This objectification of time enables Bergson to logically pursue the idea of time and space as totally independent concepts. By contrast, Dōgen precludes any such bifurcation by identifying Being, not *with* time but *as time itself*, and by implication, as space too. All that subsequently remains is impermanence. As such, Dōgen avoids the teleological imperative evident in Bergson and Deleuze's notion of "becoming" and in Heidegger's orientation of *Dasein* as being *towards something in the future*, or as Olsen puts it; 'an anticipatory drive-towards-being, representing its own potentiality' (2000 p.152). As will become clear later, for Dōgen there *is* no future, insofar as the future is distinguished from existence. The complete intersection of time

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Time, 1962].

and being in Dōgen's thought, disallows any concept of duration, of a linear passage between two points and thus prevents dualistic oppositions to surface between "before" and "after", birth and death or past and future. Consequently, although Bergson's concept of simultaneity may *appear* sympathetic to Dōgen's interpenetrative temporality, in actuality, Bergsonian time flows in an irreversible, future-oriented direction. Heidegger's thinking is similarly flawed. As Abe notes, despite genuine philosophical convergence between this pair with regard to the co-existence of past, present and future, Heidegger is unable to make the final leap; 'reciprocity of time is realised, but reversibility of time is not clearly grasped'. Abe attributes this, in part to Heidegger's inability to accept the ultimate 'beginninglessness and endlessness of time' (1992 p.137).

Paradoxically, for Deleuze, repetition is the factor which both unites past, present and future and simultaneously demarcates them. Unlike Dōgen's union of time and being in which past, present and future interpenetrate, Deleuze's concept of *Aion* signifies the splitting and *disunion* of temporality. Olson describes *Aion* as 'a locus of incorporeal events that is characterised by effects and is unlimited', and as 'a subverted and subverting instant without place' which 'represents a return of pure events, representing a process of a displacing and subverting instant that continually divides into past and future'. He goes on to argue that such thinking 'is far more radical in terms of flux than anything conceived by Dōgen' and 'is purposely defined to lack depth because he is solely interested in what occurs on the surface and not some imagined depth' (2000 p.159).

However, this kind of criticism indicates a misreading of Dōgen's position since there

is no 'imagined depth' in this Zen philosophy either. In fact, Dōgen's comprehension of impermanence and 'Being-Time' *is* radical precisely because, like Deleuze and other postmodernists, he categorically dismisses any suggestion of an *essential* nature. Olson himself recognises that 'Zen Buddhist philosophers and most postmodernists agree that there is no substantial self. Both parties also agree that time and history are characterised by a radical contingency' (2000 p.18). Despite these commonalities, in the context of this research, Dōgen's Zen philosophy is ultimately preferable to a postmodern perspective. In addition to the problems outlined earlier regarding anthropocentrism, teleology and so on, Deleuzian self-conscious 'lack of depth' is arguably little more than cynical vacuity and the only logical conclusion to this so-called "radical" relativism is nihilism. Thus, postmodernism remains stuck in a dualistic mode of thinking which simply replaces "something" with "nothing". By contrast, Dōgen's Zen philosophy of time and impermanence is more sophisticated. Rather than merely substituting permanence with impermanence, leaving the duality intact, Dōgen transcends this opposition entirely by asserting the impermanence of permanence and impermanence.

Consequently, what might at first sight appear to be an outmoded or esoteric theoretical framework, in actuality offers an extremely pertinent critical perspective; one which illuminates a number of fault-lines in Western philosophical thinking, prone to persistently tripping up even those who consciously set out to pioneer new ways of doing philosophy. In addition, the fact that over the centuries, time and impermanence have been a consistent *leitmotif* within Zen Buddhism, immediately suggests a relevant philosophical context within which to pursue any research project concerning

ephemeral art. Importantly, Dōgen's unique interpretation of these issues provides a positive alternative to the inevitable nihilistic cul-de-sac which characterises much fashionable Western philosophy. Moreover, it is significant that Dōgen, *because* he is operating from within an entirely different paradigm, is able to successfully negotiate a complex passage between nihilism on the one hand, and grand narratives, essentialism, rationalism and individualism on the other. While the disciples of postmodernism have rightly been anxious to escape the latter, they have invariably failed to liberate themselves completely from ingrained historical and cultural patterns of thinking.

All the dimensions of Dōgen's philosophy of time briefly raised here are examined thoroughly in the second part of this thesis. The first five chapters each proceed by critically examining different elements of my practice and others' in relation to one central aspect of Dōgen's theory of time. They interrogate if and how each of these specific facets are mirrored or realised in the creative practice.

The final chapter returns to reconsider the relationship between the museum and/or art institution and ephemeral art, asking whether, in the light of the three additional strategies and my own practice, anything has changed since the related discussion at the end of Chapter 3. It pursues the question of whether alternative kinds of ephemeral art rooted in a non-durational conception of time, have the potential to succeed as an effective critical tool where the initial four strategies falter. Moreover, this chapter explores the possibility that far from undermining the ability of ephemeral art to function as a critique, such practices, differentiated by their understanding of time, actually extend and enhance the work's critical viability, although not necessarily on the same terms as before.

The thesis concludes by assessing the aims of the research. It evaluates whether the creative practice is able to resolve the philosophical issues raised, considering to what extent the practice fulfils the criteria of pointing to a non-dualistic perception of time. The conclusion also contemplates problems arising from the research and considers its limitations. Finally, it outlines how the research makes an original contribution to knowledge and reflects on the wider significance of the thesis, ending with suggestions for areas worthy of further investigation.

Part I

The Art of Dualistic Time

Chapter 1

When Time Becomes Attitude: Art and Temporality in the 1960s

It seems reasonable to presuppose that any artistic practice which flirts with impermanence inevitably offers a philosophical statement about the nature of time. However, if ephemeral art *is* to be understood as a critical proposition concerning the nature of time, the first question which arises pertains to the precise nature of time itself. In order to interrogate how and why ephemeral art has tended to envisage time in quite the way it does, this chapter addresses the manner in which time is conceptualised within the general context of the late 1960s when temporality came to the forefront of art criticism. Michael Fried's seminal text Art and Objecthood, originally published in *Artforum*, 1967, is taken as a starting point for discussion. The article provides a vehement defence of modernist "high art" (painting and sculpture), against what the author perceives as the encroaching 'theatricality' of a 'literalist sensibility', represented by Minimalism. Foster has implied that 'the temporality of perception'; the conjunction of temporal matters and artistic practice in this period, was a radically new phenomenon, arguing that 'minimalism did in effect release temporal concerns into art (process, performance, the ephemeral, the allegorical, etc.)' (1986 p.170). In actuality the time-frame and breadth of these 'temporal concerns' is far more extensive than suggested. During the decade prior to both Fried's article and the Minimalist enterprise,

time had increasingly become a focal point, as the statements issued by and in connection with Gutai, Situationist International, Fluxus and Happenings and Environments, referenced in the introduction, bear witness. The same criticism is levelled at Fried himself: 'The belatedness of this [his] observation is striking, for since the advent of Happenings and Fluxus in the preceding years, the integration of temporal flow, prompted by Cage's performances, had become commonplace in avant-garde practice' (Meyer, 2000 p.71).

Despite these anomalies, Fried's article remains significant not least because Fried himself has come to epitomise a particular expression of modernism and therefore represents a wider ideological position. Importantly, the article's specific relevance to the thesis lies in the author's conscious articulation of two apparently distinct modes of temporality: "presentness" – a quality pertaining to the modernist work Fried admires and which on the face of it ephemeral art might be said to refute, and "presence" – an attribute of the "literalist" work he disdains, which arguably, ephemeral art becomes articulated through. Moreover, while the criticisms of Fried's polemic; of the kind of temporality acclaimed by the author to which modernist art aspired, are well rehearsed, the ill-defined notion of "real" or durational time derided by Fried in his account of Minimalism, has received less scrutiny. In revisiting the debate, the main purpose of this chapter is to trace the philosophical foundations underpinning the understanding of durational time originally articulated by Fried and subsequently appropriated by his opponents in their response to the publication of Art and Objecthood. This understanding of time, as will be argued later, is predominantly what comes to define *impermanence*, and *ipso facto*, ephemeral art.

The chapter is organised in three sections. The first section provides an overview of the two kinds of temporality raised by Fried's article. The second section considers how Fried's critics have commandeered the notion of duration*al* temporality as an alternative to Fried's duration*less* temporality. The final section addresses the philosophical origins of this way of thinking about time.

1.0 Fried's Two Temporalities

In Art and Objecthood Fried outlines two seemingly irreconcilable perceptions of time which he ascribes to two different kinds of aesthetic production; modernist art on the one hand and Minimalist ('literalist') art on the other. Fried frames his understanding of time through the concept of *duration.* His central proposition is that modernist art is authentic because it is inscribed with a duration*less* temporality, whereas Minimalism, defined in contrast through *durational* time, is inauthentic. The authenticity of great modernist art, Fried purports, is dependent on its ability to absorb and incorporate the viewer completely, invoking 'a moment of aesthetic recognition or what he called "conviction"' (Fer, 2000 p.72). This is exemplified, he argues, by the way in which someone encountering a Caro sculpture is 'eclipsed by the sculpture itself', an experience facilitated by the suspension of what might be termed "real", "everyday" or "commonsense" temporality: 'One's experience', of modernist painting and sculpture, he continues, '*has no* duration . . . because *at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest*' (Fried, 1967 p.22). In fact, it would be more accurate to characterise this durationless phenomenon as *a*temporal, for it appears to transcend time altogether. Fried writes:

> It is this continuous and entire *presentness*, amounting, as it were, to the perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of *instantaneousness*, as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a singly infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it (1967 p.22).

The mystical style and the choice of vocabulary in this passage reads as something akin to a religious conversion: 'Absolute presentness being the attribute of Divinity, to experience "the work in all its depth and fullness" as within "a single, infinitely brief instant", is,' Michelson posits, 'to dwell in Presence, in "conviction" as in Revelation' (1969 p.19). Implicit in Fried's text is the claim that modernist art, or the contemplation of it, facilitates access to some divine, other-worldly state or being. The sense of an all-pervasive 'continuous and entire *presentness*' is redolent of an encounter with an infinite, absolute entity beyond time and space; and in being 'forever convinced by it', the beholder acquires faith and receives salvation. As such, durationless temporality discloses a notion of eternalism for even if 'Presentness *is* grace', (grace assuming a temporary state, one bestowed and not therefore 'assured' as Meyer (2000) argues), it permits 'the condition . . . of existing in, indeed of secreting or constituting, a continuous and perpetual *present*'; a timeless, transcendental, eternal realm (Fried, 1967 p.22).

By contrast, Fried's argument with the kind of Minimalist sculpture exemplified by the work of Robert Morris and Donald Judd, is that it lacks this transcendent dimension, being grounded instead in durational time. Durational temporality is particularly abhorrent to Fried because it blatantly manifests and celebrates conditions in which 'the spectator perceives an object as that which it literally is, something existing in space and time' (Harrison & Wood, 1993 p.191). He writes:

> Literalist sensibility is theatrical because to begin with it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work . . . the experience of literalist art

> is on an object *in a situation* – one which, virtually by definition, *includes the beholder* (Fried, 1967 p.15).

For Fried, the introduction of a spacio-temporal element demarcated by 'the presentiment of endlessness . . . essentially a presentiment of endless, or indefinite, *duration*', such that 'the experience of the work necessarily exists in time' thoroughly degrades the whole art experience (1967 p.22). Where 'presentness' bestowed through 'grace' constitutes a redemptive temporality; the end of time, its counterpart, 'presence', more resembles a spell in purgatory; continuous time without end. Citing Tony Smith's account of a drive on the New Jersey Turnpike, Fried describes the experience of things passing in time, or of time passing by *things*, hurtling headlong into the future: 'the constant onrush of the road, the simultaneous recession of new reaches of dark pavement illuminated by the onrushing headlights', as essentially 'theatrical':

> The literalist preoccupation with time – more precisely, with the *duration of the experience* – is, I suggest, paradigmatically theatrical: as though theatre confronts the beholder, and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of objecthood but of *time*; or as though the sense which, at bottom, theatre addresses is a sense of temporality, of time both passing and to come, *simultaneously approaching and receding*, as if *apprehended in an infinite perspective* (1967 p.22).

Above all, Fried mourns the tragic 'loss of the sense of self which he associates with absorption in the enduring "present" of the work of art' (Harrison & Wood, 1993 p.191). From his perspective the literalist project ultimately fails for it constructs a 'situation' located in what Foster terms 'mundane time' (1986 p.173). As such, the spectator is condemned to a temporality which 'makes him a subject . . . and establishes the experience itself as something like that of an object, or rather, of objecthood' (Fried, 1967 p.20). Rejecting the beholder, 'distancing him, isolating him', literalist 'theatre'

precludes the possibility of conviction, of 'presentness' and therefore, of 'grace' (Fried, 1967 p.21). It is, in short, an experience of alienation (Brockelman, 1993).

Fried's thesis is not a denial of everyday temporality *per se*, but an attack on the idea that art should endeavour to participate in such a debased mode of temporality. This is evidenced in the article's final paragraph where Fried notes 'the utter pervasiveness – the virtual universality – of the sensibility or mode of being which I have characterised as corrupted or perverted by theatre. We are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace' (1967 p.23). In other words, although subject, on a day to day level, to a notion of durational temporality, of things happening 'in' time, *true* (modernist) art offers a reprieve; lifting the subject out of and beyond conventional experience of time, into a time*less* realm, even if only momentarily. Hence, while Fried does not *deny* the "normal" experience of time he associates with Minimalism, in his eyes it is an inappropriate context for authentic art. Indeed, art is obligated to provide a *special* and *different* experience, one not contaminated by the substance of everyday life rooted in "real" time. Thus, he finds the 'literalist sensibility' unpalatable for it ties the viewer to something with which they are already too familiar.

More insidious still, from Fried's perspective, is the democratic impulse implicit in durational temporality. Antithetical to the formalist aesthetic he champions, which addresses itself to a sensitised elite, it challenges his belief that:

> Certain modes of seriousness are closed to the beholder by the work itself, i.e., those established by the finest painting and sculpture of the recent past. But, of course, those are hardly modes of seriousness in which most people feel at home, or even which they find tolerable (1967 p.16).

Not only has Minimalism 'in insisting on placing the artwork "in time" with the spectator . . . betrayed art to the realm of theatre – where the player can pretend to exist

in the same temporal dimension as his audience', but worse, it is a temporal dimension accessible to all (Brockelman, 1993 p.52).

In sum, Fried suggests that contemporary art offers two alternative experiences of time. On the one hand, the uplifting durationless experience of time indicative of the best modernist art. On the other hand, the degenerative, objectifying durational temporality proffered by Minimalism, which inextricably binds the viewer to the mundanities of this world. The following section considers critical responses to Fried's durationless temporality. It looks at how, in rejecting the elitism identified in Fried's position, the desire for a democratic and accessible art situated in "real" time (and space), becomes articulated through a commonsense notion of "everyday" or "ordinary time".

1.1 Rejecting Atemporality, Embracing Durational Time

Over the intervening years since the publication of Art and Objecthood, critics such as Wood (2002), Brockelman (1993) and Foster (1986), as well as numerous artists, have repeatedly challenged Fried's affectation with the notion of durationless time. Robert Smithson, for example, issued an immediate response by way of a letter to the editor of *Artforum*, stating: 'The terrors of infinity are taking over the mind of Michael Fried. Corrupt appearances of endlessness worse than any known Evil . . . Non-durational labyrinths of time are infecting his brain with eternity' (1967 p.4).

Reasons for such vehement condemnation of Fried's position included a growing interest in the *process* of artistic production; an awareness that artistic practice does not occur in an atemporal vacuum, coupled with concerns about the commodification of art. Smithson makes this connection in his essay A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth

Projects, published in *Artforum*:

> For too long the artist has been estranged from his own "time". Critics, by focusing on the "art object", deprive the artist of any existence in the world of mind and matter. The mental process of the artist which takes place in time is disowned, so that a commodity value can be maintained by a system independent of the artist. Art, in this sense, is considered "timeless" or a product of "no time at all"; this becomes a convenient way to exploit the artist out of his rightful claim to his temporal processes (1968 p.50).

Secondly, Fried's concept of atemporality provoked a critique which went beyond the art object and the circumstances of its creation to the institution itself, raising questions about the role of the museum and its associated ideology of permanence. Famously, Daniel Buren's article; Function of the Museum, extended the assault on the 'illusion of eternity or timelessness' writing:

> The museum was designed to assume this task [perpetuating the illusion] and by appropriate artificial means to preserve the work, as much as possible, from the effects of time – work which would otherwise perish far more rapidly. It was/is a way – another – of obviating the temporality/fragility of a work of art by artificially keeping it 'alive', thereby granting it the appearance of immortality which serves remarkably well the discourse which the prevalent bourgeois ideology attaches to it (1973 p.38).

In the penultimate paragraph, Buren argued: 'The work of art is always limited in time as well as in space. By forgetting (purposefully) these essential facts one can pretend that there exists an immortal art, an eternal work' (1973 p.38).

Thirdly, as intimated in Buren's statement above, the elitist sentiments expressed in Art and Objecthood were subject to widespread condemnation. Rejecting the reification of both the processes of artistic production and the art object itself, more inclusive, democratic models of artistic practice and criticism were demanded. Those, like Morris, who objected to Fried's denial 'that art should have . . . any kind of allusion to time or subject matter' and his insistence that art 'be very, very transcendent in one way or another – very removed from life', imbued their work with a kind of temporality which on the surface directly contradicted Fried's position (quoted in Alberro & Norvell, 2001

p.67).

In this section I argue that while raising wholly legitimate concerns, Fried's adversaries have indiscriminately accepted the oppositional terms of the debate as he established it. Fer, for example, notes that despite the widespread influence of Kubler's 1962 book, *The Shape of Time*, which presented durational time as a multi-faceted phenomenon, Fried's own interpretation was to inaugurate 'a singular and monolithic sense of duration, so as to give greater emphasis to his own opposition between duration and that moment of "presentness"'. Importantly, she continues: 'This binary opposition has tended to stick even when commentators have taken issue with Fried's critical purpose' (2000 pp.71-72). Hence, where Fried argues for an atemporal aesthetic, opponents of his thesis merely invert the equation and advocate the kind of continuous and situational temporality he rejects. Recalling work from the late 1960s and early 1970s, Adrian Piper, for instance, writes of her intention 'to explore objects . . . in new conceptual and spacio-temporal matrices', and to 'draw attention to the spacio-temporal matrices in which they're embedded' as an antithesis to Friedian 'abstract atemporality' (1988 p.145). Capturing the *zeitgeist*, Burton's review of experimental work at the Whitney and Guggenheim in the summer of 1969 observed this 'alignment or identification of the viewer's time with the work's. The two became continuous; the fictive time of art gives way to *our* time, to "real" time' (1969 p.40). The italicised use of the word 'our' is no accident. It encapsulates the ideal of a participatory and *in*clusive art in contrast to the *ex*clusive 'bourgeois' experience Fried had outlined in Art and Objecthood.

Art which embodied a sense of durational time, the kind of spacio-temporality Fried identified in 'literalism' – "real" time – thus became synonymous with "real" life and

the "real" world. Michelson, for example, argued of Morris's work that 'its comprehension not only demands time; *it elicits the acknowledgment of temporality as the condition or medium of human cognition and aesthetic experience*' (1969 p.23). Likewise, Burton's review appropriated Fried's vocabulary while subverting his thesis. 'Temporal dimension', he writes, 'is crucial to both concept and appearance. All art exists in time, of course, like everything else'. In the comments which followed, the reviewer identified an embryonic Conceptual Art, emerging from its Minimalist roots and defined by a new-found, self-conscious celebration of durational temporality:

> Perversely, artists, trained in the reorganisation of physical matter to produce art objects, are today going against the grain of their mediums, so that what was once painting and sculpture has now become as important for duration in time as for location in space. "Literalism" has been extended to modes of temporal existence (1969 p.40).

Hence, if Fried defined Modernism against 'theatricality'; against 'the subjugation of the artwork to a temporality not belonging to it', and despaired at 'the experience of the object [which] maintains the normal temporality of the viewer, who really seeks the suspension of time in pursuit of "presentness"', the emerging avant-garde claimed situational temporality – "real time" – as it's *raison d'etre* (Brockelman, 1993 p.52).

However, the concept of durational time itself is problematic. The choice of vocabulary adopted by Fried's critics indicates a spurious, ill-defined, universal and commonsense notion connoting vaguely democratic principles. Brockelman for instance, speaks of 'the *normal* temporality of the viewer' and of how 'presentness stands forth against the denial of our *everyday* temporality' (1993 p.52 & p.58, my emphasis). Meyer describes the 'spectatorship of literal objects occurring in *real* time and space' (2000 p.82, my emphasis). Foster (1986), as noted previously, refers to 'mundane time', and Smithson in his letter to *Artforum* accuses Fried of being 'a naturalist who attacks *natural* time'

(1967 p.4, my emphasis). Nevertheless, the philosophical significance of 'normal', 'everyday', 'real', 'mundane' and 'natural' time remains unquestioned. Precisely what is meant by this sort of temporality is never explained. The following section interrogates the philosophical origins of what, for the moment, will continue to be referred to as "real", "common-sense", or "ordinary" time.

1.2 The Philosophical Origins of "Real" Time

> For time is just this – number of motion in respect of 'before' and 'after'.
> Clearly then 'to be in time' has the same meaning for other things also, namely, that their being should be measured by time . . .
> Now, since time is number, the 'now' and the 'before' and the like are in time, just as 'unit' and 'odd' and 'even' are in number, i.e. in the sense that the one set belongs to number, the other to time. But things are in time as they are in number. If this is so, they are contained in time as things in place are contained in place.
> . . . A thing, then, will be affected by time, just as we are accustomed to say that time wastes things away, and that all things grow old through time, and that there is oblivion owing to the lapse of time, but we do not say the same of getting to know or of becoming young or fair. For time is by its nature the cause rather of decay, since it is the number of changes, and change removes what is (Aristotle's *Physics IV*, quoted in Stambaugh, 1990 p.69).

Arguably, the concept of durational or "real" time articulated by Fried and advanced by his critics, can be traced to its ancient Greek origins in Aristotle, via Newtonian seventeenth century scientific philosophy. Condensing Aristotle's theory of time quoted above, Stambaugh identifies three core principles. Firstly, time is perceived to function like a 'container', a repository which holds or frames things: 'Time is separate from the things in it; it contains those things in a way analogous to the way space contains the things in it'. This analogy is also encountered in Newton's concept of time. The second principle, which again recurs in Newtonian time, is measurement: 'Time is essentially calculation, calculating motion or change with respect to before and after'. Finally, 'Time is the instrument or cause of decay and destruction, eventually destroying what is

in it' (1990 p.69). I examine each of these precepts in turn.

In the first instance, the container analogy of time is evidenced in Fried's choice of vocabulary; 'persistence', 'duration' and 'continuousness', and in his statement that the Minimalist experience '*persists in time*, the presentiment of endlessness which . . . is central to literalist art and theory is essentially a presentiment of endless, or indefinite, *duration*' (1967 p.22, my emphasis). This 'idea that things are in time', Stambaugh argues, is 'almost ubiquitous' and reaches a pinnacle with Newtonian philosophy. Such an understanding of temporality is based, she continues, on the notion that time is a 'static container *in which* events occur' (1990 p.25). For Fried, it is what prescribes the boundary for the encounter between beholder and object. In a way, 'theatricality' becomes a metaphor for common-sense time. It is the 'container' in which things happen: 'Theatre is the common denominator that binds a large and seemingly disparate variety of activities to one another' (1967 p.21). Thus, 'theatrical' time is merely a version of what Aristotle describes as things existing 'in time as they are in number . . . contained in time as things in place are contained in space'. Moreover, as with Aristotle's spacio-temporal location, time in Newtonian terms is also *situational*:

> times and spaces are, as it were, the places as well as of themselves as of all other things. All things are placed in time as to order of succession; and in space as to order of situation. It is from their essence or nature that they are places (quoted in Stambaugh, 1990 p.65).

Consider now Fried's statement that 'the experience of literalist art is of an object *in a situation* – one which virtually by definition, *includes the beholder*' (1967 p.15). In both cases time is a place that circumscribes the location of people, objects and events. For Newton, this aspect of time is what passes unimpeded by any exterior influences. It is a time which is 'truly "absolute" in the sense that it is absolved and separated from

anything in it. It is mathematical, i.e., uniform and calculable, and by another name is called duration, which means that it persists and is continuous' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.66). A distinction must be made here between Fried's use of the term 'duration', and Newton's. In the latter, 'absolute' time (not to be confused with Fried's instantaneous, timeless realm) is the continuous and persistent experience Fried identifies in literalist art which 'confronts the beholder, and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of objecthood but of *time*' itself (1967 p.22). Where Newton speaks of 'duration' or 'perseverance', Fried deals in 'persistence' and the 'presentment of endlessness'. Despite subtle linguistic nuances, the interchangeable perception of time as container, at stake, cannot be concealed.

Next, Stambaugh notes that 'Time – and ultimately eternity as its counterpart, [Fried's durationless, instantaneous presentness] as what "overcomes" time – has been almost exclusively conceived in *quantitative* terms' (1990 p.68). Again, Fried's characterisation of literalist temporality is not incompatible with Newton's interpretation of Aristotle's second principle that 'Time is . . . number of motion in respect of 'before' and 'after' . . . being should be measured by time'. When reflecting on Tony Smith's account of his journey; 'The constant onrush of the road, the simultaneous recession' of the passing urban landscape which so concerns Fried, is the very same passage or flow of time central to Newton's rendition of 'common time' which amounts to a 'measure of duration by means of motion . . . such as an hour, a day, a month, a year' (quoted in Stambaugh, 1990 p.65).

From a Newtonian perspective, the juxtaposition of time as a framing device with the idea of time as measure leads to a somewhat awkward and ambiguous coexistence;

'here we have a picture of time as the immovable place in which things occur, a container, *and* as something flowing equably' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.66). This ambivalence is mirrored in Fried's text. As well as the object and viewer being 'suspended' in time, so too time apparently flows forwards and backwards. Witness his statement that: 'the sense which, at bottom, theatre addresses is a sense of temporality, of time both passing and to come, *simultaneously approaching and receding*' (Fried, 1967 p.22).

The confusion Stambaugh identifies 'as to whether time is the static container in which events occur or whether it is itself what occurs in a linear succession running from the future into the past', is further exacerbated by the fact that time 'is often conceived of as starting with birth and progressing forward inevitably to death, which can terminate the forward progression at any time and must do so eventually' (1990 p.25). The sense of time 'progressing forward' towards death completes Aristotle's third and literally *final* component of ordinary temporality in which 'time wastes things away . . . For time is by its nature the cause rather of decay, since it is the number of changes, and change removes what is'. If Fried confirms an initial suspicion that a common-sense understanding of "real" or durational time has an Aristotelian complexion, his critics corroborate this supposition by overtly linking durational time with death and decay. Smithson, for example, in his thinly veiled critique of Art and Objecthood, argues that 'Many [i.e., Fried and colleagues] would like to forget time altogether, because it conceals the "death principle"' (1968 p.50). Thus, to *remember* time, is also to remember or confront death. Wood makes the same association arguing that Fried's appreciation of Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski and Frank Stella's paintings was based

on the fact that they offered a transcendental experience: 'one could be carried by it into a state of "grace", and by implication out of the world of time, death and decay' (2002 p.31). If therefore, Fried's timeless, atemporal realm is *out* of this world, *beyond* 'death and decay', then durational temporality must be located conversely *in* this world, defined in terms of death and decay. Hence, instead of concealing the 'death principle', "common-sense" or "real" time reveals it.

A further example which characteristically conceives of time as 'the instrument or cause of decay and destruction' is found in Buren's (1973) article, quoted earlier, wherein the author equates 'the effects of time' with the fugitive nature of materials which 'perish' over a given period. By interfering with the supposedly "natural" temporality of an artwork, the transitory status of the object, and by implication, one's own mortal condition, he argues, is conveniently hidden from view: 'The work is always limited in time', however, by concealing this 'one can pretend that there exists an immortal art, an eternal work'. In other words, through conservation, the museum is able to suppress and deny the durational quality of time, thereby removing all possibility of observing and calculating the process of decay; of the object's demise "in" time. Buren's comments, either overtly or covertly reference all the three aspects Stambaugh highlights in Aristotle's theory of time; as container, quantification and as the facilitator of decay.

Similarly, the implications of Brockelman's terminology when he speaks of the 'denial of a *continuous* temporality' and the 'removal from temporal *progression*' of the artwork in Fried's thesis, clearly represents the perspective of those seeking to critique formalist aesthetics and establish a different concept of time for both artistic practice

and criticism (1993 p.59, my emphasis). This alternative temporality is durational; it flows. Moreover, it is a motion *towards* something, as signalled by the word 'progression'; essentially, a movement towards death. Despite being keen to reinstate the polyvalent dimensions of durational time, Fer herself further reinforces this interpretation in her comments on Smithson's 1996 essay, The Crystal Land, in which the artist discusses a work by Donald Judd. His take on the piece, she states, expresses the work's 'conscious durations, indelibly casting it in the direction of death' (2000 p.73).

Conclusion

To conclude, the assumptions implicit in the common-sense or ordinary understanding of time, framed by both Fried and his critics, in opposition to the atemporal, 'instantaneous presentness' of modernist art, envisage time as a place or 'container' in which things happen. Moreover, time is a mode of measurement and calculation and flows in a linear, sequential direction, irreversibly from birth to death. The following chapter argues that within the context of Conceptual Art and other related practices which intersected with the Conceptual project between the mid 1960s and mid to late 1970s, ephemeral art becomes constituted through a particularly nihilistic understanding of impermanence, founded on the principles of "real time", outlined above; a legacy which has continued to find expression in elements of Neo-/Post-Conceptual practices to date. One aspect of Conceptual Art which illustrates this phenomenon is the discourse surrounding the notion of dematerialisation. The next chapter argues that dematerialisation provided a fertile infrastructure for an emergent model of ephemeral

art based on precisely this kind of Aristotelian temporality.

Chapter 2

To Be or Not To Be? A Little Matter of Dematerialisation

The idea that Conceptual Art practices were 'grounded in often seemingly opposed responses to a common situation: the crisis of modernism', is a common one (Osborne, 2002 p.18)[5]. In particular, that Conceptual Art continued the Minimalist project and flourished 'in opposition to formalism'; an ideology associated with the influential critic Clement Greenberg and latterly, as noted, his protégé, Michael Fried (Godfrey, 1998 p.219)[6]. One specific response to formalism – dematerialisation - has been characterised alternately as a move towards 'reductivism . . . push[ing] the conventional objectness of the artwork towards the threshold of complete dematerialisation' as well as 'the negation of material objectivity as the site of the identity of the artwork by the temporality of "intermedia" acts and events' (Alberro, 1999 p.xvii, and Osborne, 2002 p.18).

This chapter reassesses the concept of dematerialisation. My aim is to demonstrate the congruence between the "real" (Aristotelian) time encountered in the previous chapter, and an understanding of impermanence which emerged via the discourse of

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[5] See Wood (2002), Bird & Newman (1999), Stiles & Selz (1996), Goldstein & Rorimer (1995), Brentano (1994) and Sayre (1989).

[6] Although popular, this interpretation is not universally accepted. Patrick, for example, argues that such analyses have advanced a 'predominantly American reading of Conceptualism [which] traces a specific lineage of artists responding to Clement Greenberg's formulations of Modernism', marginalising other models such as those found in Eastern Europe (2001 p.26). Alternately, Harrison claims that while 'the moment of Conceptual Art now figures as a point of significant change - the hinge between artistic modernism and the postmodern', it may be more accurate to describe Conceptual Art as the onset of 'significantly different phases of modernism itself' (2001 p.35). Colpitt also observes that 'Paradoxically, the oppositional, anti-formalist strategies of Kosuth and Art & Language resulted in work with considerable formalist dimensions' (2004 p.33).

dematerialisation. The first section considers definitions of dematerialisation. Section two examines why the concept has been so controversial. The third section explores a re-reading of the term. The chapter concludes by suggesting that despite the various problems associated with dematerialisation, the concept remains both useful and valid insofar as understanding *ephemeral* art is concerned.

2.0 Defining Terms

The term "dematerialisation" can be traced to John Chandler and Lucy Lippard's now seminal and oft-quoted article published in *Art International* in February 1968, entitled The Dematerialisation of Art, and the subsequent appearance of Lippard's (1973) book: *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972.* In their article, Chandler and Lippard identify Conceptual Art as a 'trend . . . provoking a profound dematerialisation of art, especially of art as object, and if it continues to prevail, it may result in the objects' becoming wholly obsolete'. The article proceeds by noting two particular developments: 'art as idea and art as action', explaining that 'In the first case matter is denied, as sensation has been converted into concept; in the second case, matter has been transformed into energy and time-motion' (1968 p.31). There is a clear distinction here between, on the one hand, matter 'denied' – an argument which centred on the observation that the solid, enduring art object was no longer tenable and as such was being replaced by ideas – and on the other hand, the notion that matter was undergoing transformation 'into energy and time-motion', implying a material *process*; the art object's mutability in time. However, this distinction has been curiously overlooked both by those who upheld Lippard and Chandler's position as well as by

those who contested (and continue to contest) the concept of dematerialisation. Consequently, the debate has largely been framed in terms of the first definition; as the *removal* or *replacement* of the art object by something ideational; of the objects' general irrelevance to the changing art world of the time, rather than in terms of the transformation or decomposition of matter.

The comments of various artists and critics highlight this. Meyer, for example, states that 'From a Conceptual standpoint, material properties and aesthetic qualities are secondary and could be dispensed with' (1972 p.xv). Likewise, Dan Graham, addressing the Art Workers' Coalition argued that 'The conceptual artist conceives of a pure art without a material base, conceived simply by giving birth to new ideas' (1969 no page numbers). Similarly, Sol LeWitt, in his influential text, Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, suggests that the material properties of the art object are largely obsolete and merely a means to an end. He writes:

> Three-dimensional art of any kind is a physical fact. This physicality is its most obvious and expressive content. Conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eyes or emotions. The physicality of a three-dimensional object then becomes a contradiction to its non-emotive content. Colour, surface, texture, and shape only emphasise the physical aspects of the work. Anything that calls attention to and interests the viewer in this physicality is a deterrent to our understanding of the idea and is used as an expressive device. The conceptual artist would want to ameliorate this emphasis on materiality as much as possible or to use it in a paradoxical way. (To convert it into an idea) (1967 p.83).

2.1 Dematerialisation: An Oxymoron?

These views however, were, and remain, far from unanimously accepted. Terry Atkinson issued an almost immediate response in a letter to Chandler and Lippard, contesting their assertion that the art object was in any sense becoming dematerialised. His reply problematised the term in two related ways. Invoking the dictionary definition of dematerialisation as 'to deprive of material qualities', Atkinson argued firstly, that if

matter constitutes

> a specialized form of energy which has the attributes of mass and extension in time, and with which we become acquainted through our bodily senses [then] it is more than plain . . . that when a material entity becomes dematerialised it does not simply become non-visible (as opposed to invisible), it becomes an entity which cannot be perceived by any of our senses. As far as material qualities go it is simply a non-entity. Thus . . . if you are talking about art objects dematerialising, then you would be obliged to talk about objects of which there is now no material trace (2002 p.220).

His second point, a logical continuation of the former, stated that if, in absolute terms, *nothing* dematerialised, then all art retained some material dimension, in whatever tentative or unconventional form. Atkinson continued:

> if, on the other hand, you are talking or implying, by virtue of the metaphorical license, that some artists today are using immaterial entities to demonstrate ideas, then you would be talking of ideas that never had any material concretisation. It certainly does not follow that because an object is invisible, or less visible than it was, or is less visible than another object, that any process of dematerialisation has taken place.

Therefore, he added, 'All the examples of artworks (ideas) that you refer to . . . are, with few exceptions, art-objects. They may not be art-object as we know it in its traditional matter-state, but they are nevertheless matter in one of its forms, either solid-state, gas-state, liquid-state' (2002 p.220). Atkinson's argument has been reiterated in differing forms over the years. Most recently, Colpitt has claimed that the concept of dematerialisation was 'largely an invention of the critics' (2004 p.39).

In order to argue that ephemeral art denotes a philosophical proposition concerning the nature of time, moreover, that the conventional understanding of ephemerality and impermanence is closely aligned with the concept of dematerialisation, it is important to address these criticisms. In the first instance, those like Colpitt who persist in referring to dematerialisation as a 'myth' (while continuing to generate articles on the subject), do so from a particular standpoint which arguably, is not so much inaccurate as irrelevant to *ephemeral* art specifically. Irrelevant, because it is rooted in a narrow

interpretation of Conceptual Art which centres on the linguistic and/or serial-based elements represented for example, by Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner, Douglas Huebler, Sol LeWitt and Art & Language, (the latter being one particularly cerebral manifestation of Conceptual Art to which Atkinson subscribed). This mainly but not exclusively, text-orientated or photographic work invariably embraced the document as either a radical new site for the artwork, or a record of it[7]. As such, the conventionally "visual" aspects of the work, criticised by LeWitt, were replaced by supposedly non-visual, textual elements. In the jargon of structuralist criticism, Morgan describes this linguistic strand as the 'structuralist method' of Conceptual Art:

> contingent on the absence of the signified (object) in relation to the function of the signifier (idea). The signifier may exist, in the form of a document – a typographic statement, a map, a photograph, a news clipping – which presents itself as evidence of the signified (1996 p.17).

Hence, this is not so much, it is argued, the absence or dematerialisation of the object, as its redefinition; its movement into a different sphere.

From this perspective then, Colpitt (2004) and sympathisers, are correct to take issue with the notion of dematerialisation as outlined by Chandler and Lippard. Statements representing this interpretation of dematerialisation referencing, for example, 'the abolition of the art object'; stating that 'From the conceptual standpoint, material properties and aesthetic qualities are secondary and could be dispensed with', or declaring that 'The shift from object to concept denotes disdain for the notion of commodities', have been duly criticised (Meyer, 1972 p.xv & p.xx). Mel Bochner articulated a common view when he wrote: 'Outside the spoken word, no thought can exist without a sustaining support', and; 'My disagreement with dematerialisation goes

[7] See Moseley (2001).

beyond a squabble with terms. There is no art that does not bear some burden of physicality' (1970 p.70 & p.73). A similar argument was made by Lawrence Weiner:

> When artists are dealing with so-called "dematerialisation of the object", and they present large sheafs of paper, photos, objects, all signed, sealed, delivered, insured, they haven't dematerialised anything, they've just substituted six reams of paper and six reams of photos for a large stone sculpture (quoted in Colpitt, 2004 p.40/1).

To speak, therefore, of the 'abolition of the art object' or the elimination of 'material properties' is somewhat erroneous, a point conceded by Robert Barry in his declaration that 'we are not really destroying the object, but just expanding the definition' (quoted in Meyer, 1972 p.36). This 'expansion' was realised through the abandonment of certain *types* of object and materials, and the simultaneous adoption of others. For example, the rejection of traditional materials such as stone, marble, metal – what Meyer calls 'hardware art' – in favour of printed matter, and the consequent transition of the object from signi*fier* to signi*fied* (1972 p.xvi). In this sense the art object, as 'support', became *ephemera*; defined by the Penguin English Dictionary as 'items of short-lived duration, use, or interest, especially those that subsequently become collectible'. Thus, when responding to Lippard's definition of Conceptual Art as 'work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or "dematerialised"', what is really being challenged here is the conflation of ephemera with dematerialisation (and by implication the *ephemeral*) (1973 p.vii). Moreover, it is the collapse of the terms *ephemera* and *ephemeral* which enables Colpitt (2004) to assess Chandler and Lippard's comment that 'since dealers cannot sell art-as-idea, economic materialism is denied along with physical materialism', as representative of a naive and failed political agenda (1968 p.34).

On this basis, dematerialisation has indeed proved to be a 'myth' as critics and artists such as Goldstein and Rorimer (1995), Foley (1981) and Smithson (1996), amongst others have since argued.[8] The idealistic intention of appropriating the document in order to circumvent the commercialisation and commodification of the art object and institution has been far from successful. Sarah Charlesworth writes:

> To the extent that Conceptual Art is dependent upon the very same mechanisms for presentation, dissemination, and interpretation of art works, it functions in society in a manner not unlike more morphologically orientated work . . . art as idea as art product, alas, moves in the world of commodity-products and hardly in the realm of "idea" (quoted in Colpitt & Plous, 1992 p.15).

2.2 Re-thinking Dematerialisation

However, while accepting Atkinson's conclusion – that *technically* the concept of dematerialisation *is* an oxymoron – it has significant symbolic resonance when applied to artworks in which the material object was not merely the 'support' for an idea but an integral part of the concept, even the idea itself. Importantly, this alternative reading of dematerialisation addresses the condition of ephemeral art specifically, as distinct from *ephemera.* Lippard's reflective comments in response to Atkinson's criticisms suggest that dematerialisation may be understood somewhat differently:

> Since I first wrote on the subject in 1967, it has often been pointed out to me that dematerialisation is an inaccurate term, that a piece of paper or a photograph is as much an object, or a 'material', as a ton of lead. Granted. But for lack of a better term I have continued to refer to a process of dematerialisation, or a de-emphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness) (1973 p.5).

Lippard's reassessment of the term is crucial. It suggests that what is at stake is a

[8] The recent exhibition of documents pertaining to Conceptual and Performance-related activities: *Extra Art: A Survey of Artists' Ephemera, 1969-1999* at the ICA, London between November 2002 and January 2003, is a case in point. The supposedly "disposable" exhibits, carefully preserved in acid-free mounts, presented behind protective plexi-glass frames or laid out in museum display cabinets, hardly 'disrupt[s] the legacy of unique artworks and their structures of authenticity', as the accompanying leaflet claimed.

process. This moves away from an understanding of dematerialisation predicated on the object's *obsolescence*, or material becoming, in Atkinson's words; 'radiant energy . . . the only form in which energy can exist in the absence of matter' (2002 p.220). Moreover, it relates 'process' to impermanence. When Lippard writes of a 'de-emphasis' on the *usual* things we associate with materiality, she is not therefore speaking of a de-emphasis on material *per se*. However, by highlighting 'permanence' as one of the material aspects to be *de-emphasised*, she implies a shift towards impermanence and ephemerality. Returning to Chandler and Lippard's initial definition of dematerialisation and focussing on the second, more marginalised meaning, it is evident that the association of 'art as action' with 'matter' and 'time-motion' is commensurate with her reinstatement of dematerialisation as process. Time and motion studies, a popular management technique of the early twentieth century, were used to assess the efficiency of a business by measuring the sequence and speed at which tasks were carried out. Thus, it can reasonably be assumed that by the use of 'action' and 'time-motion' the authors are referring not only to things happening "in" time but also to the *rate* at which they occurred. Coupled with the notion of 'process' and impermanence, or even the process *of* impermanence, it is not a great leap to redefine dematerialisation as the sequential and quantifiable movement of matter "in" time towards decay and destruction, notwithstanding the linguistic inadequacy of the term.

Tarsia in her essay Time and the Immaterial, reinforces this interpretation. 'Rather than considering dematerialisation as a result', she argues, 'it would seem more productive to view it as a process, enacted through the disintegration and transformation of a physical presence, or the use of immaterial elements such as water, air and particularly

light' (2000 p.17). Despite having to concur with Atkinson, that Tarsia's conflation of the term dematerialisation with the 'immaterial' is in fact a misuse, as Lippard herself conceded, what remains relevant is that, like Lippard, the author understands dematerialisation to be a process. Furthermore she overtly connects that process with durational temporality and ultimately with death, decay and destruction. 'Disintegration' is what occurs to an object or material as it enters the time stream. She adds:

> Implicit in this process was a conspicuous refusal to provide any sense of closure or fixed atemporal meanings. Instead, the definition of meaning itself was revealed as a shifting and mutable process. Time was introduced as a recurring subject; not as an alternative to space, but as a fourth dimension that (materially and conceptually) redefined the spatial possibilities of art (2000 p.17).

Hence, for Tarsia, 'meaning itself' becomes a relative concept because it is dependent on a contingent object or material – a contingency conferred by its removal from a static, Friedian-like, atemporal context. Thrust into a world of durational temporality, the object's status becomes impermanent and subject to the passage of ("real") time "in" which things disintegrate. In the preceding passage she argues that meaning should not be tied to the materiality of a work, either by 'presence' or 'absence', yet this is precisely where her account leads, for if dematerialisation is a 'process enacted through the disintegration and transformation of a physical presence', it is a process *from* presence *towards* absence and disappearance, at least metaphorically, if not in the terms prescribed by Atkinson. Ironically, from her postmodern perspective, the 'closure or fixed atemporal meanings' Tarsia wishes to avoid, are the inevitable fate of any temporally based work characterised by her understanding of dematerialisation 'enacted through disintegration', since in this narrative of time there is nothing more final than

death. Furthermore, it is pointless to bifurcate 'meaning' and 'materiality' for when 'time is introduced as a recurring subject' it is the very material itself which makes time visible (assuming, for the sake of argument that time *is* substantial, persistent and objectifiable), precisely through the processes of disintegration Tarsia herself outlines.

Conclusion

Semantically, the term "dematerialisation" is clearly unsatisfactory. In a purely scientific sense, according to the law of conservation of matter, ultimately nothing ever goes away. However, dematerialisation is only a figment of the critical imagination if taken to its literal extreme. Viewed metaphorically, the revised, secondary understanding of dematerialisation as *process*, evinced by Lippard and Tarsia, suggests that the concept remains valid. In the first instance, it facilitates a construction of ephemeral art as something intrinsically constituted by a process of *disappearance*, or at least, the *appearance* of disappearance[9]. On this basis it becomes perfectly legitimate to 'talk about objects of which there is now no material trace', contrary to Atkinson's statement (quoted previously). Paradoxically, the object, or at least some form of material presence was a prerequisite. Something had to be there in the first place in order for it to "disappear". In the second instance, it confirms the understanding of "real" time established earlier, since this process of disappearance is founded on a conception of time which is durational – a separate, linear, sequential and calculable entity – in opposition to the duration*less* atemporality of modernist art. The next chapter

[9] The exhibition *Disappearing Acts*, a group show at Leslie Tonkonow and Bound and Unbound galleries New York, 1999, explicitly references this understanding of ephemerality thus demonstrating its continuing contemporary relevance.

illustrates how these Aristotelian principles of time are exemplified in four different but related approaches to ephemeral art, originating in the conceptual practices of the1960s.

Chapter 3

As Time Goes By: Four Strategies of Ephemeral Art

In March 1969 Seth Siegelaub chaired a New York art event entitled *Time: A Panel Discussion.* A transcript of the dialogue was subsequently published in *Art International.* During the debate three artists collectively referenced the key principles of Aristotelian time. Douglas Huebler invoked the notion of time as a container, defending a 'definition of time as something . . . which frames us' (Lippard, 1969 p.39). Michael Cain equated the concept of time with measure in terms of the formula "time equals distance divided by speed", stating that 'A certain quantity of distance is known in terms of time. If you look across a long field, and can't decide how long it is, you walk across it' (Lippard, 1969 p.21). Last, Robert Barry linked the idea of time as a measure of motion and change with the idea that time causes decay and destruction. Addressing Carl Andre, Barry observed; 'you were talking tonight about work which will rust or change; you also said you don't want people to maintain it the way it looked when it was first made'. He concluded: 'this is a direct confrontation with time. Someone once said we know there is such a thing as time because we can see change' (Lippard, 1969 p.23). Thus, by connecting change with metal fatigue, Barry implies that time is made visible through physical processes of deterioration.

The principle intention of this chapter is to consider how these abstract expressions of Aristotelian time are disclosed in certain materially-based ephemeral artworks, informed by the process-led, metaphorical interpretation of dematerialisation discussed previously. A further intention is to initiate an informal taxonomy of ephemeral art in

order to differentiate those practices which subscribe to Aristotelian perceptions of time (discussed here) from those which infer other ways of thinking about time (examined in Part II). In this chapter, four distinct but interrelated tendencies are identified within ephemeral art since the late 1960s. These tendencies are hereafter referred to as *strategies*. This term both avoids defining ephemerality as merely another art historical movement, style or genre and, in addition, benefits from implying the strategic manoeuvring of the art object for the purposes of political critique; an issue motivating many artists choosing to work with concepts of ephemerality.

The chapter is organised in five sections. Focusing exclusively on the relationship between time and the ephemeral, the first four each deal with a different strategy: *Dissolution*, *Dispersal*, *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality*. Each commence by identifying the key features of the strategy in question. Relevant examples are introduced and analysed in terms of how they actualise the three principles of Aristotle's theory of time: time as measure (quantification and calculation); time as a container (substantial and objectified); time as the cause of decay and destruction (linear and sequential). In general, the artworks considered in the first two sections; *Dissolution* and *Dispersal*, mainly but not exclusively coincide with the high point of Conceptual Art, taken from the late 1960s to mid-late 1970s. One consequence of this is the limited availability of visual documentation and textual references. Frequently these examples are associated with the early stages of an artist's career trajectory. Moreover, the status and practice of documentation has changed substantially in the intervening years, leading some such as Oppenheim to recall the blasé approach he took towards recording the ephemeral work he produced during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Despite often signifying polarised theoretical positions, Oppenheim's attitude is incommensurate with the considered political stance towards the documentation of impermanent art adopted by artists a decade or so later[10]. Also, in many instances, such work occurred outside the mainstream gallery system in alternative spaces, beyond the reach of critical coverage. Hence, the artworks within both these strategies are given a more cursory treatment but to substantiate the argument, more examples are provided. The remaining two strategies; *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality*, reference later works more closely allied with what has been termed Neo- or Post-Conceptualism and are examined via detailed studies of three specific artworks.

The final section examines the relationship between these strategies and the museum. The chapter concludes by comparing the understanding of time held by the institution with that evinced by the creators and critics of ephemeral art. It also raises an important philosophical problem concerning these perceptions of time; a problem which forms the core research question addressed by the thesis.

3.0 Strategy One: Dissolution

The concept of *Dissolution* exemplifies Marx's axiom that 'all that is solid melts', since the reduction of material by melting or dissolving typically characterises this strategy. Solid three-dimensional sculptures or embossed relief works, crafted with ice and snow or wax are erased through the transformation of a defined mass to an anarchic and amorphous liquid state. For example, a text-based poster, exhibited at Pasadena Art Museum, California in 1967, recorded the construction (and destruction) of Allan

[10] Two contemporary but antithetical positions towards the documentation of ephemeral art are outlined in Birrell (1999).

Kaprow's event, *Fluids* (1964). It read: 'During three days, about twenty rectangular enclosures of ice blocks (measuring about 30 feet long, 10 wide and 8 high) are built throughout the city. Their walls are unbroken. They are left to melt.' Godfrey cites *Fluids* as a precursor to much of the process-led work appearing in the following years which engaged specifically with 'the concepts of disappearance, impermanence, change and destruction' (1998 p.160). By linking 'impermanence' with 'disappearance' and 'destruction', Godfrey indicates the Aristotelian principles at work. The sense that time wastes things away literally flows through these pieces. Moreover, the word 'change', anticipates Aristotle's precept that time is the measure of things, of motion, and is demarcated by states of 'before' and 'after'.

Other commentators similarly implicate themselves in this understanding of time. Tarsia's assessment of the British artist, Bruce McLean, who took up the thread of site-specific ice works in the urban environment, is a case in point. His series *Vertical Ice Sculptures* (1967) 'consisted of "found", melting slabs of ice' (2000 p.17). Her conclusion that 'McLean's water and ice sculptures occupy an ultimately finite spatial and temporal dimension' typify the way in which the concept of ephemerality both in this and the following strategies is discussed, namely; as a process of extinction (2000 p.19). Where time is construed as the cause of decay and destruction, impermanence becomes constructed around the passing away of things and associated with finitude. Thus, in McLean's work, for example, the sense in which the ice is absorbed by the canal, which in turn flows into a river, and river into sea, is lost. The transition from sculpture to non-sculpture, from ice to water, form to formlessness is demarcated as the *ending* of something rather than one phase of identity in a larger, ever-changing whole.

The same principle is at work in Rafael Ferrer's untitled ice and leaves installation, included in the 1969 exhibition *Anti-Illusion: Procedures and Materials*, at the Whitney Museum. Critic, Peter Schjeldahl's review in *Art International* described the piece which was situated close to the museum's entrance, as follows:

> Upon a bed of leaves he [Ferrer] placed two and one-half tons of ice in great blocks. A physicist consulted for the occasion estimated that the ice would last not much longer than a day in the summer heat; but there was a cool spell, and the work lasted 73 hours. The last little lump of ice was delivered with mock ceremony into the hands of a well-known critic, where it melted (1969 p.70).

In the same year Paul Kos' similarly confrontational sculpture *Richmond Glacier* (1969), comprising 7,000 pounds of ice and salt blocks, measuring 60 x 60 x 60 feet was sited directly outside the main entrance of the Richmond Art Centre, California, preventing access. The gesture proved controversial and 'After twenty-four hours, *Richmond Glacier* was demolished and removed by the Richmond Fire Department – as a FIRE HAZARD'. Characteristically discussing the work in terms of disappearance, the writer continues, arguing that contrary to appearances, the ice functioned not so much as a 'barrier' but as a 'threshold' . . . 'existing – precariously – along a razor's edge of form and decay. On a hot summer's day, it has already lost the battle' (Meyers, 2003 p.97). To speak of a 'threshold', positions the work symbolically between life and death at the edge of an abyss; the void. Life itself is the 'battle' lost. Hence, form disintegrates as time decays the substances it "contains".

Continuing this theme, one year later Kos staged *The Sound of Melting Ice* (1970), a floor sculpture installed in the Museum of Conceptual Art. It consisted of two enormous ice cubes each weighing 25 pounds encircled by high-tech microphones recording the noise or absence of noise as the object gradually disappeared. Similarly,

Kos' pen and ink drawings titled *Kinetic Ice Block (salted top)* (1969), document six phases in the dissolution of another large ice sculpture; *Untitled (kinetic ice block with salt)* (1969), the upper surface of which was liberally sprinkled with flint-like chips of salt. His record is a testimony to the serial relation embedded in Aristotelian time. Durational temporality is represented diagrammatically in stages. Stage one shows a perfectly illustrated cube with each successive image depicting the cube gradually diminished in size. By stage six the ice has wasted away to a pool of water. The artist's thin black horizontal pen line denotes the remaining puddle; the object's absence. Kos further references the reductive quality of time in a hand-written text at the base of his sketch illustrating *Kinetic Ice Sculpture* (1969). Here, a block of ice systematically melts on its descent down a stepped incline 'all the time diminishing in scale by friction, environmental temperature *and time'* until reduced to an isolated drip at the lowest point. Significantly, the artist's final note concludes that the piece signifies 'the antithesis of the myth of Sisyphus' (quoted in Meyers, 2003 p.102, my emphasis). In rejecting the circular time to which Sisyphus is 'condemned', Kos subscribes to a linear temporality from which nothing can be resurrected.

Like Kos' work, elements of Dennis Oppenheim's snow performance/installation pieces also depend upon a concept of impermanence determined by duration in which time devours the things it contains leaving a void[11]. Oppenheim remarks on the 'reductive process' and 'subtractive procedure' of his more popularised earthworks which prefigured the snow series by a year. In the same interview he adds: 'It became clear that what I did had nothing to do with accessibility or permanence. The work was

[11] Not all conform to this understanding of time. As Bourgeois (1969) points out, pieces such as *Time Line* and *Time Pocket* actively disrupt the durational and measurable qualities of time

ephemeral and didn't have that classical rigidity. I began to consider . . . activities that were durational and required long spans of time' (Herschmann, 1973 p.196). The phrase 'long spans of time' betrays the artist's acceptance that time is indeed a linear phenomenon.

In the following work, 'durational' becomes synonymous with time's gradual effacement of the artist's marks upon the landscape. Oppenheim's *Gallery Transplant* series (1969), a targeted political critique of the art institutional system, involved a number of pieces in which the artist 'took the dimensions of a gallery, then marked off a similarly bounded space outdoors. A cognitive reversal is involved; the real world index ironically was derived from the gallery, and then transposed to the outside world as a rejection of the reality of the gallery' (McEvilley, 1992 p.17). One specific *Gallery Transplant* work, a collaboration with Cornell University sited in an adjacent bird sanctuary, repeated this procedure but mapped out the architectural gallery plans in the snow. McEvilley's interpretation of this and one other work from Oppenheim's "snow period" raise pertinent issues. He writes:

> Various works of the period investigated siting art within the agricultural and climatic time cycles of nature. The *Gallery Transplant* in the bird sanctuary, for example, was done in winter and disappeared when the snow melted. It was like a part of nature in other words, and passed with the changing of the seasons. In *One Hour Run* (1968), Oppenheim parodied Action Painting by cutting snowmobile tracks intuitively or expressively in the snow for one hour. Such pieces flaunted both their ephemerality and their conditionality, operating against the Modernist crypto-religious belief in the artwork as eternal and autonomous like a Platonic Idea. The work is subject to the conditions of nature like everything else, in opposition to Modernist work, which was conceived as outside nature and not susceptible to its rhythms of change and decay (1992 p. 20).

Accepting that the 'crypto-religious' Modernist is a thinly disguised reference to, and attack on, Fried's aforementioned Art and Objecthood, 'nature' becomes a euphemism

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evinced in the examples given here.

for the kind of durational time despised by adherents of formalist aesthetics. As such, 'change and decay' are reminiscent of the two Aristotelian principles of time which reference time as quantification and as the cause of destruction. Moreover, despite McEvilley's claim, in this linear narrative neither of Oppenheim's pieces have any commonality with the cyclical time of nature, for where nature's annual ritual contains the seeds of its own rebirth, *Gallery Transplant* and *One Hour Run* do not posses any such feature. Snow may well fall again but the artwork's disappearance in time is absolute and finite. Snow will never again settle in Oppenheim's embossed patterns without further artistic agency. Hence, the critic might well have written 'The work of art is subject to the conditions of *time*', in the sense of "natural", or "real" time discussed in Chapter 1.

If time is perceived as sweeping everything into oblivion within the four strategies under discussion, in the art of *Dissolution*, oblivion is procured through the specific act of heating a solid substance to the point of liquefaction. Whether through exposure to ambient temperature, as in the case of ice and snow sculptures, or by more intensive, deliberate artificial methods as in *Aging* (1974); Oppenheim's installation of wax dummies lined up against a wall at varying distances from infra-red heat sources, the end game is the same. A catalogue accompanying *The Snow Show*, a recent exhibition in Lapland, suggests that such interpretations of ephemerality remain prevalent. In the words of one contributor 'snow/ice is the material of lack' (Fung, 2005 p.156).

3.1 Strategy Two: Dispersal

The second strategy, *Dispersal*, denotes the scattering and dissipation of a material

substance to achieve the breakdown and eventual eradication of the object. The proclivity of artists here is towards the use of particulate matter such as dust, graphite, chalk, flour, soil, salt, sand, sawdust and dry pigment. As with *Dissolution*, distinctions can be drawn between acts of dispersal occurring naturally - due to weather conditions, for example - and those which are human interventions; either the predetermined or the inadvertent result of audience interaction with the work. Some combine both aspects.

Lothar Baumgarten's pigment pyramids - *Tetrahedron (Pyramid)*, (1968), from a series comprising cobalt blue pigment placed in piles on a concrete floor, and *Stacked Pyramid*, (1968), a red pigment pyramid located on a forest pathway - fall into the first category, subject to natural rather than human forces of dispersal. Rorimer reports that 'After a number of weeks, these geometric shapes fall apart of their own accord. If touched they disintegrate into a pile of dust'. Her further comment that Baumgarten's pigment pieces 'made the process of time visible' assumes not only that time *is* a process; a movement towards something, but also, that this process is one of decay and disintegration (2001 p.259). Once again, ephemeral art and the critical language employed to discuss it are inscribed with certain Aristotelian suppositions about what time is and the way in which it functions; in this instance, that time is the cause of death and decay, marching forward in a linear fashion destroying all contained within it.

Another example subject to environmental dispersal is a lesser known untitled work from Marcel Broodthaers' expansive project *Musée d' Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1970). Paralleling Oppenheim's *Gallery Transplant* series, the artist, in collaboration with Herman Daled, drew a temporary museum plan in the sand on the beach at Le Coq that was later washed away by the tide. William Wegman's *OR* (1969)

and Jan Dibbets *12 Hours Tide Objects with Correction of Perspective* (1969) epitomize other beach-based works dependent on nature's intervention to effect their dispersal. The former, enacted one August day, involved the artist visiting a number of coastal locations in Maine and marking out the word 'OR' by sprinkling masonite dust at each site. Dibbets' more ambitious but no less temporary piece was executed by physically ploughing lines into a sandy Dutch beach, an act transmitted on live television as part of Gary Schum's *Land Art* exhibition. In the accompanying catalogue Dibbets described the event thus: 'The project will be made at the beach when the water is low. It will be wiped out when the water is coming up again. It takes about eight hours (flood-tide) . . . When it is finished, the work of art no longer exists' (quoted in Kastner, 1998 p.181). Oppenheim's tripartite work *Salt Flat* (1968), one aspect of which involved 1,000lbs of fine rock salt spread in a large rectangle over the asphalt surface of a Manhattan car park, relied similarly on the elements to disseminate the artwork. The second (unrealised) part was designed to use exactly the same amount of salt, deposited in blocks to the ocean floor off the Bahamas coast. The duration of this particular component, like Broodthaers' sand drawing, *OR* and *12 Hours*, is determined by the tidal ebb and flow. Paradoxically, the cyclical lunar rhythms of the tide (an ancient, non-mechanical method of measuring time) are countered by the linear trajectory of the artwork, marking its erasure - it's disappearance by and 'in' time.

In other examples involving floor-based sawdust installations, human agency plays a greater role in determining the dispersal and longevity of the work. Jan Dibbets' *Sawdust Removal and Perspective Correction* (1967), part of a 24 hour exhibition of temporary art at Galerie Loehr, Frankfurt, lasted just two hours, conforming to the

exhibition subtitle: *19:45-21:55*. Rorimer describes the work as 'a sawdust ellipse on the courtyard cobblestones outside. From the entryway to the courtyard, the ellipse appeared to be a tipped up circle rather than an oval lying parallel to the ground'. She records how the artist 'photographed the piece at ten-to-fifteen minute intervals as it was gradually destroyed by throngs of visitors entering without heed to, or angry about the work underfoot' (2001 p.124).

In each of these four ephemeral strategies, photography is commonly used to document transience, subconsciously reinforcing the perception of time as measure, of cause and effect, by quantifying the deterioration and decay of matter suspended within it. The fact that Dibbets' photographed this piece every quarter of an hour augments this theory, since it is through the photograph itself that material change, transformation and destruction is systematically represented and quantified. Like Kos' drawings, each image forms part of a linear sequence endorsing both Aristotelian assumptions that time is durational *and* destructive. Iain Baxter's untitled water fountain (1969) is another case in point. Described in Artforum as:

> What looks like a periscope from the underground activities of an espionage rotorooter group is . . . [a] steel pipe that pours water out onto the dirt surrounding it and eventually erodes away the mound, which remains only a destroyed but theoretically more artistic fragment of its former physical self (Shirey, 1969 p.42).

The destruction and displacement of this mini soil mountain is typically captured by a linear sequence of photographs.

Arguably, Douglas Huebler's *Duration Piece No. 6* (1969), shown in the seminal exhibition *January*, curated by Seth Sieglaub, represents one uncharacteristic exception. Despite mirroring Dibbets' ellipse by creating 'a large square of sawdust (about 2m or 7ft on either side) . . . which, as people walked in and out, changed constantly', Huebler

disrupted the linear perception of time by simultaneously presenting the work through a *non-consecutive* sequence of photographs taken at half-hourly intervals over a six hour period (Godfrey, 1998 p.200). Nevertheless, in both instances, a perfect formal arrangement becomes fragmented and eventually obliterated through audience participation over a given period. Moreover, Huebler's famous statement that 'The world is full of objects, more or less interesting: I do not wish to add any more. *I prefer, simply, to state the existence of things in terms of time* and/or place' (my emphasis), suggests that the artist has not strayed too far from Aristotelian principles (1969 p.43). To state the existence of things 'in' time presupposes that time necessarily functions like a container and is itself a substantial entity; 'things' exist and happen within it.

Two further illustrations of Aristotelian temporality can be identified in the late 1960's works of Bill Bollinger and Barry Le Va. Discussing his *Untitled (Studio Piece)*, (1968) comprising a 5ft square floor installation of sifted flour in *Avalanche* magazine, Le Va reflects: 'this residue seemed much more interesting than what I was making. It had exactly what I was after. Not so much indications of a specific process, of what had been done to the material, as of *marking off stages in time*'. Later, he adds 'I started using materials that were more ephemeral. Since chalk and flour were easily dispersed . . .' (1971 pp.66-67, my emphasis). Such comments not only confirm the notion of time as measure but also closely tie the idea of ephemerality to particular types of material. Some materials are more ephemeral than others, Le Va implies, since their destruction in time is faster and therefore more readily observed and calculated in comparison with other more 'substantial' matter.

This theme is reiterated by different artists and critics across all four strategies.

'Material instability creates impermanence', writes Burton in an article entitled Time on Their Hands (1969 p.41). His review of Bollinger's *Graphite Dust* (1969) at the Bykert Gallery states that it is the artist's choice of materials which propel the artwork 'a further step toward impermanence'. Thus, the ephemeral is once again conceived as a nihilistic phenomenon, spearheaded by disappearance; the cessation of material existence, of 'vacancy and absence' caused by the "passage" of time (1969 p.42). Even more flagrantly, Meyer's comments extol Bollinger's work as 'a revolutionary statement leading into Satre's "Nothingness"' and 'a confrontation with the very non-existence of the object' (1969 p.21).

Despite concentrating in this section on the 1960s, the work of contemporary artists such as Erwin Wurm substantiate the fact that neither the strategy of *Dispersal*, nor the attendant perceptions of time can be written off as an antiquated aberration. Although the critical language has taken a postmodern turn, Wurm's dust "sculptures" tangentially invoke the same concepts of time as measure, container and decay. Whether outside the museum, as a rectangular configuration of house dust spread over a New York street, reminiscent of Oppenheim's *Salt Flat*; or inside, posing as 'museum display cases from which the objects have been removed', leaving the imprint of the supposedly missing artefacts in stencilled dust patterns; ephemerality, three decades later continues to be articulated in terms of disappearance and void (Wäspe, 1996 p.12). Dufour's commentary is littered with such references and phraseology: 'Absence and emptiness pervade these rudimentary constructions' . . . 'the imprint of the no longer present . . . the residual record of an action' . . . 'absence as a continuous theme' . . . 'trace evidence' . . . 'the absence of a body becomes equivalent to the form presented',

and so on (1991 pp.33 & 34). Likewise, Wäspe's account links 'the temporal structure of the work' with 'the fading form' and 'the missing body' (1996 p.16). Significantly, he also draws attention to the processural aspect of Wurm's work, an element which has been central in redefining dematerialisation. In his gallery pieces, Wurm's work performs a double disappearing act: once in the perceptual illusion which leads the audience to believe they are observing the detritus resulting from the removal of valuable historical artefacts, and again as environmental dust accumulates and settles during the course of the exhibition, obscuring the very traces or 'negative' spaces themselves. Time thus 'marks off' the process of effacement. Despite contrasting methods and materials, these artists are united ideologically in counterpoising longevity with a concept of ephemerality defined by the artist as a process of disappearance; time, being for them, the ultimate cause of destruction.

3.2 Strategy Three: Decay

This strategy is distinguished by decomposition and like the previous two, emphasises the dematerialisation of the physical object in the sense discussed in Chapter 2, connoting a process leading to the ultimate disintegration of the artwork and its apparent disappearance over a given period of time. Here, artists appropriate the auto-catalytic behaviour of (mainly) organic substances such as foodstuffs, flowers and vegetable matter. Examples which illustrate this strategy include Zoe Leonard's *Strange Fruit (for David)* (1993-1998); a floor-based installation shown at Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1998, composed of the dried fruit skins and rinds of over 300 oranges, lemons, grapefruits, bananas and avocados strewn across a large space.

Describing the process and appearance of the work, Temkin states:

> After the artist ate, or others had eaten, the meat of the fruit, Leonard allowed the skins to dry out and then 'repaired' and adorned them - literally sewing up the seam she had opened - with coloured thread, shiny wires, and buttons; bananas, for example, are neatly closed up with stitches or zippers that run from top to bottom (1999 p.45).

Secondly, three pieces from Anya Gallaccio's *preserve* (1991) flower series consisting of fresh flowers pressed between sheets of glass; yellow narcissi in *preserve cheerfulness*, 800 gerbera in *preserve beauty* and 101 sunflowers laid out side by side in rows in *preserve sunflowers* are considered. Finally, two sculptural items of clothing from a triptych by Savage, a young British artist are discussed: *The Unattended Funeral* (1997), a jacket saturated with cultivated mould, rendered seductively attractive by its velvety texture and shades of mint green, turquoise and duck egg blue, lies poised between the needle and teeth of an old-fashioned hand sewing machine, and *Dorian* (1997), a similar garment, hanging from a solitary wire coat hanger. The complete triptych, alongside fourteen other works by the artist, were installed at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery during the winter of 2000/2001 in an artistic intervention entitled *a nice cup of tea (& other fragments).*

Aristotle's conviction that 'time wastes things away, and that all things grow old through time . . . for time is by its nature the cause of decay, since it is the number of change, and change removes what is', quoted previously, is vividly manifest here, and again, presumed to be closely connected with certain choices of materials. Each artwork begins life in pristine condition, until, subjected to the one-way passage of time, is visibly altered beyond recognition and eventually destroyed. Leonard's fruits blacken, shrink and eventually crumble; Savage's mould attacks fabric, while rust eats away a

steel sewing machine; Gallaccio's flowers wilt, fade and 'rot down slowly into a kind of putrefied marmalade, the reassuring olfactory pleasures of scent replaced by the festering stench of decay' (Watney, 2003 p.6).

Artists adopting *Decay* as a strategy appear to value accident and coincidence. For example, Rugoff remarks that Gallaccio's methodology depends on 'setting up a situation in which a material process outside her control slowly unfolds over time' (1999 p.10). Savage concurs; 'It's not about me being in control', he argues, 'It's allowing the course of actions to take place as they happen. It's not a forced thing' (2002b). Both comments equate relinquishing control with embracing chance and unpredictability, but this is not entirely borne out. Despite not knowing precisely *how* the material will decay, how Aristotle's 'change' will appear from moment to moment, there is a fatal inevitability built into work of this type, which depends upon the idea that time, in the end, will consume or 'remove' what is 'in' it. The idea that the artist relinquishes control over their creation through a symbolic and sacrificial offering up of the artwork to the ravages of time, implies that time does indeed have terminal consequences.

Savage insists that 'ephemerality is a process', however, like Tarsia (2000) and Lippard (1973) before, this is a process moving inexorably towards death. The ephemeral artwork, he states, 'will die because everything dies. Everything has a lifespan'. The actual cultivation of mould and the oxidization of steel, in *Dorian* and *The Unattended Funeral* are secretive and concealed procedures, procured *before* the audience access the work. Contrarily, Savage argues that because 'Nobody ever sees the process, the actual *process* of decay wasn't relevant. It was the fact that decay had happened . . . that

things have died, as opposed to witnessing the death of something' (2002c). Nevertheless, the process of decay remains central to the efficacy of the triptych. The demise of these pieces is guaranteed as the interaction between the mould and the textile renders them precarious, unstable and unwearable. According to the artist, other mould works 'are now completely lost because they have deteriorated or been eaten by bugs', and Savage informs private collectors that he is unable to guarantee the longevity of the work. 'Ephemerality', he argues, 'is a human thing . . . it relates to human concerns . . . so anything that a human creates or works with or touches, will no doubt suffer from ephemerality in the end' (2002a).

The notion that ephemerality is something that we 'suffer from' recalls Stambaugh's earlier summation of impermanence as a concept based on a durational perception of time: 'Birth is the inception of a life that extends over a period of time and terminates in death' (1990 p.72). Discussing the motivation for his work, Savage notes that not only do we suffer from death itself, we also suffer the anticipation of death: 'I have this thing about death. It's basically about fear of mortality and anything to do with ephemerality is trying to laugh in the face of death' (2002c). The second issue Savage's statement raises is the anthropocentric premise of this interpretation of impermanence. Ephemerality is a *human* 'problem', suggests the artist. This position lies in marked contrast to the Japanese Buddhist view, explored later in the thesis, which maintains that *everything* is impermanent.

The process of material decay lies equally at the heart *Strange Fruit*; 'a piece that will visibly alter in appearance' (Temkin, 1999 p.50). But unlike Gallaccio's unequivocal commitment to impermanence, realising the inevitable mortality of *Strange Fruit*

precipitated Leonard to enter into negotiations with Christian Scheidermann, a German conservator, lasting two years, in an effort to forestall the inevitable demise of the piece. However, by the time Scheidermann had successfully developed a technique involving shock freezing and Paraloid treatment, 'Leonard surprised herself and found that she recoiled at Scheidermann's hard-won results. She realised that the appearance of decay was not enough for her, the metaphor of disappearance was insufficient' (Temkin, 1999 p.47). Leonard states that she really wanted the fruit 'to have a room somewhere where I could install them and then leave them to be. Just let them decay' (quoted in Temkin, 1999 p.46). In the end the artist came to the conclusion that 'The very essence of the piece is to decompose' (quoted in Buskirk, 2003 p.145).

The languid and melancholy transition from life to death witnessed in *Strange Fruit* is hastened in Gallaccio's decomposition series, providing the audience with a more immediate and spectacular experience. The installation is presented as a tangible process of physical degradation played out over a period of days ensuring that 'our encounter with this art, as the work we witness today will have changed in a week's time' (Rugoff, 1999 p.12).

With Leonard and Savage the time span is elongated to a few years, requiring the work to be revisited in order to observe and appreciate its more gradual disintegration. In recognition of this, Philadelphia Museum of Art, which purchased *Strange Fruit*, 'agreed to try . . . to show the piece for periods of time with a certain cylindrical regularity, which seemed in the spirit of the work's sense of marking time' (Temkin, 1999 p.48). Again, the concept of 'marking time' serves to highlight the quantifiable dimension of temporality, referenced earlier by Aristotle's statement, describing time as

'number of motion in respect to "before" and "after"', and proclaiming that 'being should be measured by time'. Paradoxically, time marches forwards in a linear fashion, causing the decay and destruction of the fruit it 'contains' while the cyclical display of the work references an entirely contrary understanding of temporality, explored later in the thesis.

Implicit in the title of Savage's jacket, *Dorian* – a blatant reference to Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* - is the same notion that time is the agent of destruction *and* a quantifiable process. Alluding to his own youthful participation in a drug and club subculture, Savage reflects: 'I *was* Dorian . . . whilst my jacket, my real persona, was taking on all the ageing of life' (2002c). Hence the decaying jacket functions as both a metaphor and a literal representation of the idea that time wastes things away, as the effects of a decadent lifestyle are physically and symbolically manifest in the garment's deterioration over time.

This measurable transition from being to nothingness is explicitly documented by Gallaccio in the "before" and "after" photographs of the *preserve beauty* series which record the duration of the gerbera's demise. Similarly, the process of decay in *preserve sunflower* is captured by four sequential images reproduced in *Chasing Rainbows*, depicting impermanence as a linear life to death trajectory; from vibrant yellow petals to mushy blackened remains. Hence, despite Rugoff's insistence that Gallaccio's 'decomposing flowers do not conjure death and extinction' but instead focus one's attention on 'transformative processes', it is a series of transformations which invariably *conclude* with death and extinction. This is endorsed by the final simile in the writer's own description of the work:

> Trapped behind glass, which accelerates their decomposition, her floral compositions move from

> being brightly coloured and coherent tableaux to fascinating factories of change: mould blossoms, tiny flies appear and depart, sap drips and oozes, and humidity fogs the glass while the flowers themselves turn hard, brown and crispy, like petrified bog people (1999 p.12).

Moreover, the critic points out that Gallaccio's artworks are 'archived with two sets of dates; of destruction as well as creation', confirming the finality of such processes (Rugoff, 1999 p.13).

Significantly, in his consideration of Gallaccio's practice, Rugoff invokes Fried's text, Art and Objecthood, clearly aligning himself with the kind of temporality advanced by Fried's critics, celebrating the 'real time' aspect of her work. Although he links 'real time' with attention to the moment – the now – this must be distinguished from the 'right now' (*nikon*), discussed in connection with Dōgen's non-dualistic understanding of time in the second part of the thesis. In this instance, it references one moment in a linear series of moments, demarcated by the '"here today, gone tomorrow" status' of the work (1999 p.12). Rugoff's comments endorse the argument outlined in Chapter 1, which connect the historical origins of ephemeral art with a particular way of thinking about time. He writes:

> if temporality was implicit in Minimalism, [the focus of Fried's critique] it soon became an explicit part of the vocabulary used by performance and conceptual artists . . . who created site-based works of limited duration – a tradition to which Gallaccio is an heir (1999 p.12-13).

Once again, impermanence is defined through a notion of *durational* temporality which is ultimately destructive. The decomposition in both Gallaccio and Leonard's creations is inevitable and despite Leonard's repairs to the fruit skins in *Strange Fruit*, no amount of mending can prevent the artwork's demise. In addition to the physical aspect of decay and destruction, Buskirk notes how:

> the multiple references of the title – to the Billy Holiday song, with its powerful image of lynched bodies, to Leonard's friend, David Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS in 1992, and to the pejorative use of the term "fruit" as slang for gay – suggest specific associations that support a general sense of loss (2003 p.145).

This theme is reiterated in Watney's catalogue essay title: Loss is More: The Work of Anya Gallaccio, in which the author suggests that 'gradual physical disintegration and eventual disappearance is fundamental to its effect' (2003 p.4). Chapman and Falconer also associate Gallaccio's ephemerality with 'tragedy' and the 'aesthetics of loss', although, exceptionally, in contrast to other reviewers, they are critical of such a durational and nihilistic perception of time grounded in 'a succession of entities between beginning and ending' and the artist's 'use of temporal scale, calibrated by the diminishing moments of decay' (1994 p.53).

3.3 Strategy Four: Suspended Ephemerality

The term *Suspended* refers to a *latent* rather than *actual* ephemerality, referencing a potential rather than a realized condition. The works discussed occupy a liminal space; a state of purgatory. Such ambivalence demarcates *Suspended Ephemerality* from the previous strategies while paradoxically justifying its inclusion. These objects masquerade as both permanent *and* impermanent, seated on the margins, wholly committed to neither state, their identities are fragile, tentative and fraught with tension, for if activated their status is irredeemably transformed; permanence becomes mutable and impermanence achieves stasis. In material terms, the work draws on all three previous strategies incorporating ice, particulate matter and organic substances.

Three representative artworks in this category each address the body in different ways. Marc Quinn's sculpture, *Self* (1991) is a frozen cast of the artist's head made with nine pints of Quinn's own blood, extracted over a five month period. Displayed in a perspex and stainless steel refrigerated cabinet, it 'depends on its own support system' to

maintain it (Kemp and Wallace, 2000 p.170). As the title suggests Jana Sterbak's *Vanitas, Flesh dress for an Albino Anorectic* (1987), is a garment constructed from raw meat, variously described as 'a chic sleeveless shift' (Lypchuck, 1991 p.88) and as:

> a grotesque perversion of a fashionable ensemble sewn together from 60 pounds of raw flank steak. Glistening red and richly marbled with white veins of fat, the meat dress gruesomely approximates a flayed body, a being turned inside out (Spector, 1992 p.95).

Hamad Butt's *Familiars Part 3: Cradle* (1992), forms the last in a series comprising three works. This triptych, based on a triangular configuration, involves three chemicals; chlorine, bromine and iodine, three corresponding colours; green, orange and violet, and three states of matter; gas, liquid and solid. *Cradle* itself consists of 'giant glass bubbles containing deadly chlorine gas . . . suspended from the ceiling in sets that resembled Newton's Cradle, the executive toys of the 1980's' (Morgan, 1995 p.66). In contrast to *Self* and *Flesh Dress*, rather than representing the body directly, *Cradle* refers to it obliquely, inducing an existential crisis by confronting the viewer with the fragility of the physical self: 'As observers we become more and more uneasy as we sense comparisons between our own biological chemistry and that of these volatile substances' (Page, 1995 p.40-41).

Of the three Aristotelian principles, the notion that 'time wastes things away' combined with the perception of time as a container, are particularly prevalent in these examples. Ellis's summation that Quinn's practice is 'about the passing of time, the inevitability of death', belies a substantialized perception of time. For time to *pass*, time must have an existence independent of things (2003 p.212). As Stambaugh (1990), quoted earlier states, such views are dependent on the idea that 'Time is separate from the things in it' and functioning as a container, 'contains those things in a way analogous to the way

space contains the things in it'. Moreover, from this perspective, the passage of time *does* 'inevitably' result in death, for time, being the cause of decay and destruction, eventually sweeps everything away. Quinn's own statement that *Self* is 'definitely to do with life and death and the fragility of the line between them. If it defreezes it will disappear, and that is an indication of life's terminality', encapsulates the finality of this position (quoted in Brown, 2002 p.1). Time is construed as an irreversible phenomenon. In Butt's case, the threat of decay and destruction "in" time is more than simply a metaphor referencing the change of state from solid to liquid, for in *Cradle* the audience genuinely face potential annihilation: 'confronted with a conceptual problem, overcoming the fear of death while simultaneously being presented with it' (Page, 1995 p.40). As Morgan points out, by 'concentrating on the family of halogens - iodine, bromine and chlorine - and putting them on display in ways which emphasized their natural instability . . . Butt was taking very real risks' (1995 p.66). Again, in Foster's words, 'the relationship between highly toxic, unstable chemicals and the fragility of their presentation is a deadly serious matter' (1996 p.11).

Both Morgan and Page characterise *Cradle* as a kind of psychological talisman, warding off mortality. Following the artist's contraction of AIDS and the loss of his partner to the disease, Morgan suggests that the piece has a therapeutic function as 'a defence against the prospect of death' (1995 p.67). Similarly, 'these spheres of deadly gas', Page argues, 'threaten to deprive us of any or all of our happenings. By distancing this menace, by apprehending fear, Butt procures a temporary relief from fear, forming a defence against death' (1995 pp.39-40). If so, this defence is articulated through an attempt to pause time; to *neutralise* the agent of decay and destruction. From another

perspective, it is not 'fear', but time itself, that Butt is 'apprehending', for arrested time is impotent time; time unable to waste things away. Hence, in isolating and containing the constituent chemicals, *Cradle* does not 'initiate[s] a rite of passage in which fear symbolically overcomes death', rather it is the act of annulling time's passage which secures the illusion that death can be defeated (Page, 1995 p.35).

Flesh Dress also attends to the mortal condition, once again referencing time as the cause of decay. The 'linear time frame' which Noble invokes in relation to another of Sterbak's creations, equally applies here (1995 p.57). In keeping with both *Self* and *Cradle*, the critic observes how 'the particular notion of subjectivity . . . present in Sterbak's work, presupposes a notion of mortality as the end of human life'. His additional comment that, 'it does so because it conceives subjectivity as a project which proceeds from the individual's will, and acquires its meaning and significance solely in the light of this', gives further credence to the conception of time as something separate from a "subject" contained within it (1995 p.70).

However, in contrast to the former works, Noble observes that this lump of meat appears to parallel our physical demise: 'The work's process, its desiccation, tracks the trajectory of the human body towards its mortality', rather than merely referencing this contingent state (1995 p.62). As such, *Flesh Dress* appears out of place here, having all the attributes outlined under the strategy of *Decay* - an organic material in the process of disintegration. Spector's talk of 'the horrific process of decay made manifest in the *Vanitas Dress*', and her description of how 'while on display, the piece slowly desiccates, its sinewy substance shrinking into a hardened, leathery material, a blackened carcass like shroud', do little to challenge this assumption (1992 p.96).

The artist seduces her audience into believing that they are witnessing a genuine process of rotting flesh; the initiation of a performance of decay, when the reality is quite contrary. Antithetical to Quinn and Butt's pieces, the dress, rather than posing as a durable object, actually presents only a veneer of mutability, inverting the concept of the *Suspended* state. In spite of appearances, *Flesh Dress* is secretly subject to a process of preservation. The meat has been impregnated with salt and cured and therefore conceals an inbuilt safety guard guaranteed to arrest the "progress" of time. Thus, what is *latent* in this instance is not ephemerality but eternity. Hence, 'The lifespan of this piece depends upon the length of the show, but as the meat is salted and cured, *it could virtually last indefinitely*', a fact confirmed by Richard Gagnier, conservator at the National Gallery of Canada closely associated with Sterbak's creation (Spector, 1992 p. 99, my emphasis). However, he disagrees with Spector's assessment of the work, arguing that although 'people are not made aware of the salting process' neither are they led to believe that it will decay because 'they will never see any traces of rotting and hardly any smell either'. Instead, he suggests that 'depending on the moment of their visit during the exhibition they will experience different stage of the meat's change of appearance' (2003). Arguably it is precisely this experience of the meat's changing appearance which dupes the audience into perceiving the dress to be in a state of disintegration, not least because the material transformation is deliberately foregrounded by juxtaposing the real artefact with a photograph of the freshly made meat dress, modelled by a young woman.

In a sense the spectator is confused by what is, after all, a genuine *process*. As Gagnier admits: 'a change is happening during its presentation that will alter its appearance'

(2003). However far from being a process of entropy, this change merely corroborates the longevity of the work, for as each moment passes the flesh creeps towards perpetuity. In little over a week, 'the object will dry out completely', suggesting equivalence with Rugoff's metaphorical 'petrified bog people', quoted previously (Gagnier, 2003). On this basis, Nemiroff's assertion that 'Sterbak's use of an organic substance like meat can be likened in this sense to Beuys's use of fat to embody the movement between life and death', is only partially accurate (1991 p.30). Metaphorically this may be true, but ultimately, what is negotiated is not the transition from life to death but rather a transition from mortality to immortality, although, contrary to Spector's (1992) earlier assertion, since *nothing* lasts forever, this process will never be completely realised. While appearances may suggest the *reversibility* of time's passage – a regressive motion – in actuality it is, as Stambaugh (1990) indicates, merely confirmation of a perception of time which is irreversible, linear and progressively destructive, but in this instance, a progression which is artificially halted. The audience is confronted with an embalmed corpse, partially decayed flesh *suspended in time* and it is this factor which enables *Flesh Dress* to be placed legitimately alongside *Self* and *Cradle*. All three clearly deal with the ephemeral but they do so at a *symbolic* level, alluding to mortality and impermanence yet refraining from ever living it out. *Flesh Dress* does not '*embody* the movement between life and death' because its materiality is restrained and suppressed, ensuring that death is never really an option. Thus, the significant issue here is not whether the artwork does indeed "die", but the fact that all three pieces depend upon a particular understanding of time which places life and death at opposite ends of a linear spectrum.

Despite the artists' choice to *allude to* rather than *enact* the ephemeral, both Quinn and Butt's works *do* conceal an authentic possibility of transmutation. For the moment these works are static, immobile, but tomorrow that might not be. As Gisbourne rightly observes of *Self*: 'through some accident or other exigency, the refrigerator might be turned off and that which was is no more; having ebbed away, it would become amorphous and indistinct' (1998 no page numbers). With *Cradle*, the invitation to *play* is a sinister offer, made in the knowledge that any such engagement with the game will surely be the last. These two pieces are united by a state of suspended impermanence, defined in terms of negation. Precariously poised, *Self* and *Cradle* are held in abeyance by what *must not* happen. The switch *must not* be flicked, the game *must not* be played. Both taunt the museum with the possibility of accident. Conversely, with *Flesh Dress* the call to impermanence is deliberately managed by the affirmative action of refrigeration, salting and curing. Omitting such a procedure is fatal.

These three pieces represent an uncanny re-enactment of the two temporalities debated by Fried and critics outlined in Chapter 1. On the one hand, the durational aspect of time; the terminal slide towards decay and destruction is subtly present, yet on the other hand, the suspension of time - the *literally* frozen moment (in Quinn's case) – procured through refrigeration, salting and the containment of precarious chemicals, is redolent of Fried's duration*less* temporality; 'untainted by time and atmosphere' (Kemp & Wallace, 2000 p.171). Nevertheless, whether literal or symbolic, the critical point is that the notion of impermanence at stake remains inextricably bound up with the assumption that time is the cause of death and decay, albeit something upon which to meditate rather than to directly witness or participate in. Appropriately, Kemp and Wallace

describe *Self* as 'a contemporary *memento mori*', suggesting a modern day rendition of a Dutch seventeenth century Vanitas painting (2000 p.170). Sterbak also makes this connection explicit in her title and through the manner in which *Flesh Dress* 'draws our attention to the inevitable decay of all animate things and thus to the transience of earthly pleasures', although Morris points out that the Vanitas genre intended to induce spiritual contemplation from a hierarchical philosophical perspective which divided body and soul, elevating the spiritual and suppressing the carnal, whereas Sterbak's piece differentially, equalizes that relationship (1995 p.124).

Other critics note that both Butt and Sterbak are intent on overcoming the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. Of the *Familiars* series, Page writes that 'through fear, fear of death or disease, the subjectivity of the body is emphasised, and the operations of the mind and body become inseparable' (1995 p.33). Similarly, Koh argues that 'Animating the classic philosophical dualism between mind and body, Sterbak's work implies that in this mortal battle the mind remains irrevocably tied to and influenced by the body it perpetually seeks to transcend' (1998a p.164). Ironically, while defeating one 'classic philosophical dualism' (the bifurcation of mind and body), another is simultaneously reinforced: the division between time and being in which the subject remains removed from the temporality it supposedly inhabits and which eventually causes its demise. This theme, which is central to the rest of the thesis, is developed later.

3.4 Ephemeral Art & the Museum: Critique or Collusion?

In the final section of this chapter I briefly examine the relationship between the ephemeral art strategies presented above and the "museum", in the broadest sense

defined earlier. Recalling Buren's attack on the museum referenced in Chapter 1, there is an implicit assumption that ephemeral art is *inherently* transgressive because it challenges and disrupts the notion that art should be permanent and that value is intrinsically dependent on longevity. Consequently, in seeking to formulate an effective critique artists have inevitably been drawn to working with concepts of impermanence, motivated by the apparently subversive qualities accredited to ephemeral art.

Two different approaches can be detected in the four ephemeral strategies outlined above. The earlier 1960s and 1970s artists described under *Dissolution* and *Dispersal* are apt to take a confrontational stance towards the museum when not ignoring it altogether. Whilst seductive to many practitioners, this tactic has been derided in equal measure by others who represent the interests of the institution. For example, in his article Impossible Art, Messer vilifies the spread of impermanent artwork and the particular challenge it presents to the conservation profession identifying the

> extreme fragility of objects evidently possessed of a death wish and thus capable of thwarting the most ingenious efforts of a skilled and technically proficient cast of conservators – a fragility that eventually moves towards invisibility, disembodiment and sheer non-existence.

The author (then director of the Guggenheim Museum), goes on to argue that such art interrogates 'the entire intermediary machinery consisting of dealers, critics and museums' and 'will not support institutions or galleries, for it will most likely not be bought or sold'. Furthermore, 'through absence, negation and unwieldiness [it] assumes a threatening posture toward the art establishment' (1969 p.31).

Differentially, artists affiliated with *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality* gravitate more towards institutional critique: an interventionist approach, requiring working from within the system to deconstruct ideological positions. Summarizing this tactic,

Papastergiadis states that 'To be radical no longer presumes you will be outside'. It is, he argues, a 'strategy of the weak' which works 'like capillary action'[12].

Limiting discussion to the latter tactic, it appears that the capacity of ephemeral art to function as a critique is borne out by the often tense relationship between the six artworks described above, and the host institutions. The efficacy of Gallaccio's work, for example, depends on the rapid properties of decay inherent in the organic materials she selects, which, *of themselves*, present a challenge to the institution because they 'test the knowledge and patience of conservators' (Horlock, 2002 p.11). As Schama writes, her practice utilizes 'the mutability of nature as the essence of its resistance to the museum aesthetic' (2002 p.22). Where the *raison d'etre* of the institution depends on a tacit understanding that the art object should be permanent, that its existence should be preserved for future generations, and therefore where it's function is to guard against anything which interferes with that durability, an encounter with objects and practices predicated on an entirely antithetical value system is deemed threatening. Working alongside Gallaccio on *Beat*, a recent installation at Tate Britain, Horlock, a museum employee, recounts her anxieties: 'I noted with some relief that these materials were mutable but not in such a dramatic way as ice or flowers', however, she remained concerned about 'the worrying implications for other works of art nearby' (2002 p.12). Gallaccio thus positions herself as an *agent provocateur*, threatening the longevity of traditional artworks via their mere proximity to her own impermanent offerings.

Strange Fruit attacks the institutions' Achilles heel from another angle, raising issues about cataloguing, classification and the storage requirements placed on conservators.

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[12] From a paper entitled Spaces and their Afterlife, presented at the British Museum conference: *From Material Things: art and artefact in the 21st century*, February 22nd - 23rd, 2002.

Temkin, a curator of twentieth century art at Philadelphia Museum of Art, directly involved with the work, outlines:

> the discomfort some [colleagues] had in assigning it an acquisition number. How can you give a number to something that won't always be there? To me this revealed our collective belief in the sense of permanence bestowed by an inventory (1999 p.48).

She goes on to reveal conservators' attitudes to the ephemeral as a sickness requiring treatment, stating that *Strange Fruit* is 'an affront to the whole profession. It is like bringing to a surgeon a patient with an inoperable disease' (1999 p.49). Leonard's work is an exceptional example of ephemeral art in that the museum actually purchased the piece; a controversial transaction which almost failed to materialize due to the sensitive conservation issues raised. Museum acquisition policies state specifically that objects collected should be of a permanent nature. In section 3.1 under 'Acquisitions to Museum Collections', the International Council of Museums (ICOM) *Code of Professional Ethics* (2001) pronounces that a museum's collection policy 'should state clearly the areas of proposed collecting and include guidelines for maintaining the collection in perpetuity', as well as placing 'a restriction against acquiring material that cannot be catalogued, conserved, stored or exhibited properly'. The following paragraph continues: 'All objects acquired should be consistent with the objectives defined in the collection policy and selected with the expectation of permanency and not for eventual disposal'. These sentiments are reiterated in the Museum Association's pamphlet *Ethical Guidelines: Advice from the Museums Association Ethics Committee, Number 1, June 1996.* Paragraph 2c advises: 'A museum should acquire and accession an item only after thorough consideration of its long-term value. The museum should intend to retain the item in perpetuity'.

Although characterising his work as 'a gorilla tea party' rather than all-out 'guerrilla

warfare', Savage also adopts a provocative attitude to the museum. He describes his work as 'rather subversive' because of the way it 'literally infiltrated the museum. The curators would always eye you with deepest suspicion. There was a concern that I was going to make a mockery of the profession . . . What do you not want in a museum? Mould!' (2002a). Again, the institution's mounting anxieties were expressed in direct relation to the material properties of the work. David Singleton, Registration & Assessment Officer in the Conservation Department at the museum, reflecting upon the arrival of *Dorian* and *The Unattended Funeral*, recalls observing 'all the material that was coming in, including a lot of organic material quite likely to house pests of one sort or another'. He continues, stating that 'We were concerned about the amount of mould spores that could be deposited, even though it wouldn't normally be damp enough in the museum that anything would happen to them' (2002).

Singleton, newly appointed to his position, described a variety of preventative treatments which could theoretically have been applied to the triptych, ranging from placing the jackets in a carbon dioxide bubble, to fumigation and blast freezing. All had problems, the main one being the sheer lack of time available before the exhibition opened. In the event, the conservation department decided to place 'anything that was remotely dubious' into sealed glass cabinets and set up a strict monitoring programme. *Dorian* and *The Unattended Funeral* had only been on display for a matter of days when webbing clothes moths were spotted. In Singleton's words: 'as soon as we saw them we knew we had to get them [the jackets] out of the museum' (2002).

The immediate ejection of Savage's work as the institutional response to this potentially devastating insect infestation, serves to illustrate how ephemeral art, at least on one

level offers a challenge to the ideology of the museum, albeit, in this case, a purely unintentional one by the artist. From a conservation perspective the incident reaffirmed the department's belief that preventative conservation is essential:

> It's a shame that there wasn't somebody in post at the time this exhibition was organized . . . Arriving to find that a potential disaster occurred because my job wasn't filled proved that my job was necessary (2002).

Questioned as to how he felt about ephemeral art being admitted into the museum, Singleton reiterated throughout the interview, that despite being challenging, he was: 'very happy with it, *provided, obviously, that we* [the conservation profession] *are involved from the very beginning*' (my emphasis). It became clear that the reason he didn't object to work of this nature being on the premises, hinged on the fact that the conservation department had it in their power to control it's behaviour: 'if we considered it too dangerous we would have to stop it' (Singleton, 2002). In other words, anything is welcome in the museum on the condition that any "danger" associated with its ephemeral status can be paralysed prior to entry.

Education Officer and co-organizer of *a nice cup of tea*, Sandra Stancliffe, confessed that the whole event had instigated 'quite drastic' changes in policy and procedure:

> We are very, very, rigorous now. A curator and conservator are involved in appraising the work before it comes into the museum [especially] if it's the work of an artist. We've got a set of clear exhibition procedures that are followed and applied to everything that's brought into the museum, whether it's the work of a practising professional artist or not. That has changed the way we work. It's a lot more effective now (2002).

Like Singleton, Stancliffe insists that the exhibition and resulting moth outbreak was, in the end, an entirely welcome experience, since 'Something that was very negative actually ended up being a very positive learning process for the museum' (2002). In effect, Savage's intervention served to reinforce existing values and beliefs through tightening up policy and practice, ensuring that the museum continues to fulfil it's

functions, more stringently than ever. From Savage's point of view, the museum are 'never going to let anything ephemeral in again . . . well, not unless it's been freeze-dried and nuked first' (2002c). These statements illustrate the apparently transgressive nature of this strategy. Out of place, behaving in unpredictable and undesirable ways (from the museum's perspective), such work perplexes professionals and challenges the established methods, routines and ideology of the institution.

By contrast, artworks pertaining to *Suspended Ephemerality* are not only designed for the museum but wholly *dependent* upon its mechanisms to maintain their survival. Only by calling upon the procedures, regulations and professional skills located in such contexts can these works be realised. Discussing the contingency of Quinn's refrigerated flower pieces which echo aspects of *Self,* Gisbourne points to their dependency on the machine and thus 'a necessary reliance on the administrative will of others to guarantee its continuation' (1998 no page no.'s). Quinn himself comments:

> The thing about the preservation of *Self* is that it is reversible. It is simply kept frozen and thus totally dependent every moment on the freezing mechanism to keep its form. That is dependent on the infrastructure of electrical supply, so it is kept preserved by our society, one moment at a time (quoted in Kemp & Wallace, 2000 p.171).

The health and safety issues presented in Butt's *Cradle*, the 'toy that cannot be used because it will smash and release its deadly contents', are equally in keeping with the ordinary demands placed upon the institution in its role as guardian of the nation's cultural heritage, dealt with by a hands-off policy and implemented through warning labels, ropes, glass display cabinets and high-tech security systems (Foster, 1996 p.11). Where these works differ, and where their inventiveness lies, is in pushing this limit to the absolute extreme, thus rendering explicit what is usually overlooked or taken for granted.

Arguably, Sterbak's work is less of a challenge since the transmutation which occurs within *Flesh Dress* moves in a linear direction towards stasis and as Brett rightly asserts: 'Museums favour the static . . . Museums (together with galleries and the conventional system of the art world) are themselves an expression of a static concept of seeing and understanding and they impose this upon everything in their care' (1995a p.39). However, such allusions to the eternal are double-edged, and while it may appear relatively anodyne, Sterbak's work, like that of her cohorts, is also dependent on the mechanisms of the museum not just to maintain the suspended state but also to create it. Not only is the work sold as a package: 'the dummy, the photo of the fresh meat dress worn by a young woman, and the copyright and the instructions necessary to make it', 'the piece has to be made for each venue to present its "performing" drying process'. As chief co-ordinator, intimately involved with the refabrication of the work, Gagnier noted the technical demands imposed on the five people working together for a whole day to construct a fresh *Flesh Dress* in time for the evening opening (2003).

While collection policies disallow mainstream museums/galleries from acquiring ephemeral art, thus restricting display to temporary exhibitions, the issue of conservation is conveniently circumvented by Sterbak. Conversely, in consciously buying into the concept of stasis, the strategy of *Suspended Ephemerality* parodies the function of the museum, playing it at its own game *and* upping the stakes in the process. Whether *Flesh Dress* evinces the same irony as *Self* and *Cradle* is debatable. Certainly, in the latter, the museum is placed under duress to fulfil their maintenance, health and safety and conservation obligations at new intensified, even absurd levels, in an atmosphere of heightened unease.

Conclusion

Four complexions of ephemeral art have been examined here. Despite strategic differences in method and material, all are united by a common understanding of impermanence derived from an Aristotelian conception of time. The *potential* for, or *actual*, disappearance, decay and destruction wrought upon the material artwork as time wastes away the things it contains constitutes a linear and irreversible process from something to nothing, from being to non-being. Moreover, considering time as measure, it is a transition which is calculable in terms of before and after. As such, the progression of this wastage - the linear temporal slippage – is frequently quantified in sequential drawings and photographic documentation. Upon this notion of time and impermanence, the kind of ephemeral art examined here has built its critique.

Although the political efficacy of ephemeral art is not directly subject to scrutiny in this thesis, it functions as a sub-text throughout, because arguably, the object of ephemeral art's critique - the museum and art institutional system - paradoxically countenance the same Aristotelian conception of time as the ephemeral art strategies under discussion. Dōgen, the Japanese philosopher (whose alternative theory of time is examined in Part II), refers to 'lifeless permanence' and 'eternalism' – something akin to Fried's durationless atemporality - as the counterpoint to the sort of nihilistic *impermanence* associated with these four strategies. Significantly, he argues that these positions are merely two sides of the same coin; 'two extremes to be avoided at all cost' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.20). In other words, while ephemeral art may challenge and provoke the institution in ever ingenious ways, as seen above, it fails to question the philosophical

premise of this perception of time since it is one in which it partakes, albeit from the opposite end of the spectrum. Both presuppose a common conception of time as measure; as persisting and substantial (the container analogy), and as durational (linear, sequential and irreversible).

Despite apparent irreconcilability, there is no significant divergence between the institutions' understanding of time and that of an artist like Savage. The only genuine discrepancy lies in the diametrically opposed *responses* to this state of affairs by each party. The conservator will call upon a wide range of scientific procedures to calculate, for example, the deleterious effect of environmental agents such as humidity, light, temperature and air pollution, upon the artwork, in order to devise controlled interventions designed to counteract the cause of decay and destruction by time[13]. By contrast, artists who traffic in concepts of ephemerality tends to make this quantification the *raison d'etre* of their work, celebrating the 'effects' of time. As Savage states, unlike the 'museum environment' where conservators are 'constantly fighting the degradation of materials by bugs and light, by anything . . . I just accept the inevitable' (2002a). From this perspective it could be argued that the function of the museum, through preservation and conservation, is to *conceal* the nature of time, whereas the purpose of ephemeral art is to *reveal* it. The nature of time itself, however, is never in question.

One serious problem with this conception of time and also, therefore, the construction of ephemerality which emerges from it, is that it is fundamentally dualistic, a fact which

[13] It should be noted, however, that ephemerality is a controversial issue for the institution. Within the conservation profession there exists a broad range of opinion both about the ethics of preserving ephemeral artworks and even whether they have a legitimate place in the museum at all. These arguments are outlined in Corzo (1999), Hummelen & Sillé (1999) and Heuman (1995).

threatens to undermine the strength of the critique and the legitimate concerns of artists who have engaged with impermanence. If Quinn's *Self* belongs to 'a world of forms expanding into a universe of opposites', then so too do all the pieces considered in these strategies, for all participate equally in a narrative which juxtapose life and death, before and after, eternity versus nihilism (Thorp, 1998 p.2). Where Fried's thesis induced reactive and polarised responses, conventional ways of reading ephemerality have proved equally dualistic. The next chapter explores what is meant by dualism and examines the consequences of uncritically accepting such perceptions of time.

Chapter 4

Duality, Non-duality and Aristotelian Time

The central question this research addresses emerges from a dissatisfaction with the particular conception of impermanence identified with the four ephemeral strategies; *Dissolution*, *Dispersal*, *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality*, explored in the previous chapter. In view of the fact that this interpretation of ephemerality is dependent upon an Aristotelian perception of time - a way of thinking which is fundamentally problematic because it is dualistic - the question arises as to whether it is possible to develop an ephemeral art practice which, by contrast, discloses a *non*-dualistic understanding of time.

However, before pursuing this line of inquiry further, various issues require explication. Firstly, what is meant by the term "duality"? Secondly, how precisely is this dualism reflected in Aristotle's philosophy of time? Furthermore, how is this dualistic temporal perspective expressed in practice, both within the four ephemeral strategies discussed, as well as in the museum? And finally, what are the consequences of uncritically accepting such an understanding of time? In other words, *why* is it an undesirable philosophical perspective?

The purpose of this chapter is to respond to these points. I commence with a general introduction to the subject of duality and non-duality, providing in addition, a broad philosophical context to the topic. The three subsequent sections each review one relevant dimension of "duality" and its inverse; "non-duality", in order to elucidate what the thesis is rejecting as well as to highlight what the creative practice is

attempting to divulge. These concepts are interrogated simultaneously on the basis that the philosophical thinking which informs this discussion approaches the subject of non-duality as a refutation or negation of duality; consequently one cannot be discussed in isolation from the other.

4.0 Non-duality: The Negation of Duality

There are certain precedents in Western philosophy for systems of thought which embrace a non-dual perspective: the pre-Socratic thinkers such as Heraclitus, Parmenides and Plotinus; Meister Eckhart, William James and Jacob Boehme within the Christian mystical tradition, and more contemporary advocates like Heidegger, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. However, since the ancient Greeks the Western philosophical trajectory has largely marginalised the issue of non-duality, tending to reject pre-conscious, intuitive and mystical interpretations of the world in favour of rational, intellectual explanations, whereas Eastern thought, less encumbered by arbitrary distinctions between religion and philosophy, provides a continuous and systematic exposition of the subject. What then is to be understood by the term "non-duality"?

In his comparative study, Loy (1988) presents a comprehensive survey of non-duality within Buddhism, Vedanta and Taoism. He begins by identifying and summarizing five varieties. The first three are: 'the negation of dualistic thinking', 'the non-plurality of the world' and 'the non-difference of subject and object'. The remaining two types; 'the non-duality of duality and non-duality' and 'the possibility of a mystical unity between God and man' lie beyond the scope of this thesis (1988 p.17). For Loy, the

philosophical nexus of non-duality lies in the third manifestation - the non-difference of subject and object. However, he stresses that, in actuality, the non-difference of subject and object is a cumulative and tri-partite concept which incorporates all the variant forms. It is this composite sense which Loy identifies as the binding foundation of the Asian philosophies he interrogates; united in the belief that 'the appearance to the subject of something objective is what constitutes . . . ignorance or delusion'. Furthermore, from this perspective, *because* this is a deluded state, an "authentic" way of being in the world is *always* a non-dual one. Hence:

> It is not correct to say that our usual experience is dualistic, for all experience is actually non-dual. The spiritual path involves eliminating only the delusion of duality. However variously the different systems may otherwise characterize this non-dual reality, the goal is simply to *realize* and *live* this non-dual nature (Loy, 1988 p.27).

Consequently, in later chapters "non-duality" is understood in these terms, as encompassing all three dimensions, although despite the ultimately unified nature of the concept, it is worth examining Loy's definitions of each component part here in order to illustrate their congruence with Aristotle's theory of time and how it incrementally succumbs to a dualistic approach. Also, each aspect suggests certain criteria that must be met in order for any alternative ephemeral art to genuinely point to a non-dual understanding or experience of the world, and of time in particular. In this chapter therefore, I continue to differentiate these three phases.

Before entering into a more detailed examination of what these three types signify, it is important to recognise that within the context of Eastern thought, non-duality is conceived as an alternative, counter-intuitive way of contemplating, understanding, and being in the world, accessible only through direct experience, not by conceptual or intellectual means. Despite this, Loy is at pains to point out that the non-dual systems

he examines never completely deny

> the dualistic "relative" world that we are familiar with and presuppose as "commonsense": the world as a collection of discrete objects interacting causally in space and time. Their claim is rather that there is another, non-dual way of experiencing the world, and that this other mode of experience is actually more veridical and superior to the dualistic mode we usually take for granted (1988 p.3).

Besides Loy (1988), those such as Grigg (1994), Kapleau (2000), and Suzuki (1993) who have attempted the difficult task of communicating this 'other mode of experience' consistently note that the limitations of language are apt to defy attempts to grasp what is essentially a non-conceptual phenomenon by conceptual means. Loy, for example, states that 'our usual conceptual knowledge is dualistic in at least two senses: it is knowledge *about* something, which a subject *has*, and such knowledge must discriminate one thing from another to assert some *attribute* about some *thing*' (1988 p. 4). Consequently, paradox and negation are methods frequently invoked in order to disabuse the recipient of these teachings of their delusive, common-sense and dualistic views and to induce a receptive state whereby an alternative non-dualistic reality can be directly apprehended. Hence, Loy's non-dual typology is advanced in each case by refuting familiar dualistic interpretations of the world.

Having established a general philosophical context, the following sections each examine one definition of Loy's three interdependent dimensions of duality before proceeding to consider how collectively, this 'delusion of duality' is integral to Aristotle's theory of time, as summarised by Stambaugh (1990) and referenced in Chapter 1, and by extension, to the ephemeral artworks examined in the previous chapter as well as to the museum.

4.1 Dualistic Thinking in Aristotelian Time

The first manifestation of non-duality is described by Loy as 'a critique of "dualistic thinking", that is of thinking which differentiates that-which-is-thought-about into two opposed categories: being and non-being, success and failure, life and death, enlightenment and delusion' (1988 p.18). A non-dualistic perspective therefore embraces what Loy refers to as 'the theory of not-two . . . meaning neither of two alternative views' (1988 p.28). Conversely, thinking in dualistic or conceptual terms is predicated upon mutually exclusive oppositions. Ironically, one inescapable consequence of dualistic thinking, Loy argues, is that by attempting to promote one concept at the expense of another, the alternative is inevitably validated in the process, because:

> the problem with such thinking is that, although distinctions are usually made in order to choose one or the other, we cannot take one without the other since they are interdependent; in affirming one half of the duality we maintain the other as well (1988 p.18).

Aristotle's comprehension of time repeatedly evidences this kind of dualistic thinking. For example, the principle that time wastes things away, as Stambaugh (1990) points out, is based on the conceptualisation that birth (or life) and death, are two opposing points on a linear time-scale with a calculable duration between them, birth being conceived as a beginning "in" time and death as an end. Moreover, the notion that time is the quantifier of 'motion or change', presupposes that temporality can somehow be spliced up into separate units of measure on a linear scale and thus engenders mutually exclusive concepts such as "before and after" and "past and future". Significantly, time does not function as the quantifier of just *any* unspecified altered state, but of decay and destruction in particular – the *specific* change it allegedly precipitates.

A typical allusion to this Aristotelian principle is provided by Goldstein and Rorimer in their discussion of Baumgarten's pigment pyramids, characterised as 'a direct response to the commercialism he experienced at the Cologne Art Fair of 1967', which 'privileged perishability over portability and the temporal over the timeless'. By clearly aligning ephemerality – 'the temporal' – with death, decay and the ultimate demise of the object through 'perishability', the dualistic subtext the critics reinforce is the dichotomy between permanence and impermanence (1995 p.74). Defined as the measurable duration between the inception of an artwork and its demise through various means of decomposition or dissipation to the point of non-existence, this understanding of ephemerality has become so pervasive that Temkin is led to observe how contemporary art is preoccupied with a discourse of 'disappearance' and 'absence' (1999 p.47).

While the institution therefore unfailing pursues the immortality of art via conservation, artists contrarily protest the artwork as a mortal entity, however, in so doing, they replicate the same pernicious kind of conceptual thinking which endorses the bifurcation of birth and death, and polarises impermanence, in the final nihilistic sense, and permanence, meaning lifeless permanence or eternalism. Thus, each represent two opposing categories generated by dualistic thinking; a duality around which the Getty Conservation Institute framed its 1998 Los Angeles conference: *Mortality/Immortality? The Legacy of 20th-Century Art*[14].

Furthermore, Aristotle's conviction that time functions like a container validates an additional form of dualistic thinking via the concept of causation, engendering the

[14] See Corzo (1999).

binomial categories of cause and effect. As Stambaugh states; 'causation itself requires a kind of continuous substratum to guarantee the connection between cause and effect' and Aristotle's conception of time as a universal, persistent and substantial entity, provides just such a 'continuous substratum' (1990 p.60). This is exemplified in the strategies of *Dissolution, Dispersal, Decay*, where time functions as (or, in the case of *Suspended Ephemerality*, is temporarily *prevented* from functioning as) the *cause* of decay and destruction. Death – the death of the object – is its *effect*.

4.2 A Pluralistic World in Aristotelian Time

The second form of non-duality; the non-plurality of the world, is based on the conception that 'all things "in" the world are not really distinct from each other but together constitute some integral whole' (Loy, 1988 p.21). In contradistinction, the corresponding common-sense dualistic approach to "things" - a logical consequence of thinking which divides the world up into opposing categories - is, according to Loy, characterised by three specious beliefs. The first comprises the fallacy 'That objects are material' in the sense that 'they are composed of matter' and thus signify both 'visual' and 'impermeable' qualities. The second misnomer is that 'a physical object is self-existent', meaning 'it has an existence of its own which is not dependent on other objects or on subjects (a consciousness that is aware "of" it), although it may be affected by them' (1988 p.74 & p.75). For example, the table at which this thesis is composed is distinct from the paper on which it is written, which in itself is distinct from the author, and so on. The third misapprehension, Loy argues, is 'A corollary of the previous characteristic' which maintains 'that the object tends to persist unchanged

unless affected externally by something', in much the same way, for example, that the ice and snow works of Kos, Oppenheim and McLean, examined previously, are granted a notional existence as three-dimensional sculptures until they melt, or in the case of Leonard and Gallaccio's organic constructions, until they rot (1988 p.75).

This returns us to Aristotle's understanding that time functions like a container, because in this instance, the external 'something' Loy references, is *time* itself. Hence, the sort of dualistic thinking which erects a division between impermanence and permanence, reinforces a pluralistic view of the world, for while what happens "in" time is rendered temporary due to the cause/effect factor, time itself is envisioned as an absolute, 'continuous' and eternal phenomenon. Time ends the things "within" it, but time itself is everlasting. It is, in the biblical sense, *time without end.* As such, time is perceived to be a substantial and objectified entity, appearing to exist independently, 'separate from the things in it' and 'contains those things', thus creating an opposition between the container (time) and the contained (the objects within it). As Loy states:

> *in order for time to be a container, something must be contained within it: objects. And for objects to be "in" time, they must in themselves be non-temporal – i.e., self-existing.* In this way a delusive bifurcation occurs between time and "things" generally, as a result of which each gain a spurious reality (1988 p.219-220).

From the museum's perspective the notion of a 'non-temporal', 'self-existing' object is firmly enshrined within conservation codes of ethics. Professional codes issued by the International Council of Museum's (ICOM, 2001), the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (ECCO, 2002), the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators (CAC & CAPC, 2000), the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM, 1986) and the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation

(UKIC 1996) all make reference to the 'integrity' or 'authenticity' of the object[15]. These expressions, rooted in Cesare Brandi's (1963) seminal treaty *Teoria del Restauro*, represent the desire to return an object to an idealised original condition (van Wegen, 1999). Discussing the concept of integrity, Clavir argues that:

> If the goal of conservation can be said to be the safeguarding or preservation of material cultural heritage, the objective is to do this within an ethical framework which ensures that the intrinsic nature of the object is not altered (1998 p.1).

Setting aside the ethical issue, the presupposition that an object *possesses* 'an intrinsic nature' which may or may not be 'altered' poignantly illustrates the kind of duality inscribed in the understanding of time as separate from the things it contains. The consequence - that objects appear to be non-temporal and self-existing - is explicitly articulated in the AICCM code of ethics in which preservation is defined as 'All actions taken to retard deterioration . . . in order to maintain an object in *an unchanging state*' (my emphasis) (1986 p.6). Similarly, until very recently the UKIC code stated that 'Conservation is the means by which the *true nature of the object* is preserved' (my emphasis)[16].

Nevertheless, while it is relatively straightforward to demonstrate how the museum, via the discipline and practice of conservation, subscribes to the fallacy of 'non-temporal', 'self-existing objects' (the manner in which objects are generally apprehended as prescribed by the container approach to time), it remains doubtful whether the same can be said of artists working with concepts of impermanence. As demonstrated, such individuals are highly likely to insist that, on the contrary, it is precisely the *non-*

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[15] Discussed in Phillips (1997)

[16] The liberal end of the spectrum of conservation theory is beginning to question this orthodoxy. See Clavir (2002) and (1998), and Viñas (2002). The most recent UKIC Code of Ethics, published in 2004 has dropped any reference to the 'true nature' of cultural property.

temporality of objects which their artworks and practices (considered in the last chapter) set out to question. However, returning to Buren's article; Function of the Museum, cited in Chapter 1; it is clear that these four strategies advance an understanding of ephemerality determined by an equally dualistic interpretation of time. If, as Buren claims, impermanence is a consequence of the way in which time wastes things away thus making 'the effects of time' visible upon the art object, and that 'the work of art is always limited *in* time' (my emphasis), the art object, therefore, is not perceived as something which is *inherently* temporal. Time and object is not *one and the same thing*, rather the object's impermanent status is contingent on the (dubious) reasoning that time independently *acts upon* its material constitution. This, in turn, is dependent on the idea that matter is accepted as 'independent, self-existing stuff', (notwithstanding the fact that the 'self-existing' materials selected for ephemeral art are perceived to be *more* susceptible, *more* vulnerable to 'the effects of time'), giving further credence to the argument that time is perceived as a container, separate from what it contains (Loy, 1988 p.74).

The container analogy of time also reinforces the notion of time as measure since it is only insofar as objects are perceived to be self-existing entities that they become subject to quantification. Antithetically, the world, understood from an undifferentiated non-dualistic perspective, would preclude any possibility of measurement or comparison between things: no container; no contained. Likewise, the concept that time acts as an agent of decay is only credible from a pluralistic perspective in which matter has a separate, independent existence.

Thus, on the one hand we are presented with a substantial and objectified

comprehension of time, and on the other hand, a substantial and objectified comprehension of the object, co-existing like parallel lines. On this basis, it becomes utterly irrelevant whether one's ideological orientation lies towards permanence, as in the case of the conservation profession, or towards impermanence, as with the artist's examined so far, since both conceive time as an external force which either subjects the self-existing art object to a short, sharp shock or to an elongated process of deterioration, depending on a combination of perspective, intention, materiality, and intervention (or lack thereof).

The extent to which time is interpreted as separate from the things within it, symbiotically generates an increasing illusion that 'the self is a would-be permanent entity . . . confronted by the rolling stream of time which threatens to carry it off, ultimately to extinction' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.43). Focussing for the moment on the division between *things* and time generally, rather than the *self* and time specifically (an issue discussed next in connection with Loy's third dimension of duality), being carried off to extinction represents another version of Aristotelian time perceived as the instrument of death and decay. Insofar as ephemeral art provides one example of the 'discrete objects' or "things" which subsist "in" and separate from time, the extinction of the object is clearly an idea to which many artists subscribe. From this flows a linear and durational understanding of time, whereby time as calculation is the measure of the gap between extinction and non-extinction. Through a specious notion of *process*, the kinds of ephemeral art encountered so far emphasise the interval between these points, monitoring and recording motion and change to illuminate both the before and after-effects of time's quantifiable passage. The museum, by contrast, is at pains to conceal

the latter: 'In a museum, it often seems, we are dedicated to preserving something larger than individual works of art; we are dedicated to preserving the fiction that works of art are fixed and immortal' (Temkin, 1999 p.50). These trenchant positions echo Loy's critique of dualistic thinking, whereby one extreme spawns its opposite and as Stambaugh affirms, the concept of extinction (nihilistic impermanence), is meaningful only when counterpoised against an idea of *non*-extinction (lifeless permanence/eternalism). The practice of removing from public display and "remaindering" objects which reach a certain point of deterioration on the basis that scientific "progress" will eventually provide the means to resurrect them at some unspecified point in the future is a prime example of the latter doctrine. Museums are highly reluctant to de-accession *anything*. Objects which are no longer considered presentable are relegated to one of two categories or places. Work in extremely poor physical condition is stored in a controlled, stable environment, held in abeyance until such time as technological advancements or finance becomes available to enable conservation. Alternately, objects deemed beyond conservation are transferred to a library or study collection and made available for educational purposes.

The dualism discussed above precipitates a perception of "things" as dislocated *from* time, which, in turn determines that time itself is conceived as merely another differentiated object. Besides this disunity, Stambaugh references an additional duality, congruent with a pluralistic perception of the world, for not only is time apprehended as distinct from other things in the world, it is also divided *within* itself. Parts of time are mentally parcelled up, severed from each other, rendering past, present and future as self-contained, disconnected slices of temporality. Drawing on Heine (1985), she argues

that:

> This conception sees time as a linear series of now-points isolated from each other by gaps that separate the past as something gone by and the future as something not yet arrived, from the present. The present shrinks and contracts to a dimensionless now-point having no connection with past and future (1990 p.42-3).

Olson suggests that these two separations, *from* and *within* time, associated with common-sense perceptions of time, of which Aristotle's model is one representation, are not necessarily distinct. If anything, the duality which bifurcates time and objects arises implicitly from the same duality that renders past and present as self-contained individual units. Reflecting Stambaugh's critique, he asserts that: 'time is thus conceived as a linear series of connected now-points without true unity. Such an inaccurate view of time falsely conceives it as something substantial or objective, as reducible and as differentiated' (2000 p.154). It is this lack of unity and the ensuing experience of discontinuity and isolation which the Asian philosophies Loy examines, seek to counteract via the second dimension of non-duality; a non-pluralistic viewpoint in which the world is characterised by an integral sense of wholeness and interconnection.

4.3 The Divided Self in Aristotelian Time

The third expression of non-duality; the non-difference of subject and object is explained as a negation of:

> our usual distinction between subject and object, an experiencing self that is distinct from what is experienced, be it sense-object, physical action, or mental event. The corresponding non-duality is experience in which there is no such distinction (Loy, 1988 p.25-6).

As signposted earlier, for Loy, the non-difference of subject and object must be

apprehended as an accumulation of the previous two types of non-duality and *vice-versa*. In other words, due to our dualistic thinking about the world (type one), we invariably 'perceive the world pluralistically' (type two), which leads to a sense of self as separate from our experience of the world (type three), because our perception of the world 'as a collection of discrete objects' necessitates that 'one of them ... [is] *me*' (1988 p.25 & p.21). Therefore, a truly non-dual perspective cannot be intuited until all three dualities are overcome.

In the same way that the container aspect of Aristotelian temporality cultivates the illusion of substantial, self-existing objects, so it subsequently determines Loy's third form of duality; the experiencing self as merely another substantial, self-existing "thing". Consequently, the bifurcation of self and time results not only in the objectification of time but also renders the perception of subjectivity as yet another discrete non-temporal entity, engendering a delusive construction of the self. As Loy states:

> The first reified "object", and the most important thing to be hypostatized as non-temporal, is the I, the sense of self as something permanent and unchanging. So the "objectification" of time is also the "subjectification" of self (1988 p.219-220).

Olson concurs with this analysis observing how:

> This everyday view of time conceives of it as anthropocentric in the sense that time is limited to human experience. From this everyday perspective, time seems to fly by us. But this is not only an inaccurate view of time, this type of perspective also separates a person from time as experienced (2000 p.154).

Reinforcing the fact that one consequence of this particular subject/object duality is that time appears to disappear, Loy goes on to reflect that:

> Time "flies away" when we experience it dualistically, with the sense of a self that is outside and looking at it. Then time becomes something that I have (or don't have), objectified and quantified into a succession of "now-moments" that cannot be held but incessantly fall away (1988 p.221).

One example of the objectification of time Loy references above as 'a succession of "now-moments" that cannot be held but incessantly fall away' is illustrated by Leonard's collusion with the museum's decision to exhibit *Strange Fruit* at regular intervals. Endorsing Aristotle's notion that time causes the decay and destruction of what it contains, with each display, the audience is invited to keep a mental account of how much time has *gone* by: 'Look how much *more* has been lost *now*'. Moreover, in this scenario, the audience function as a *constant*; a static backdrop against which to measure this variable change. Thus, by casting an audience as observers of "something *happening over there* to something which is *distinct from you*", the separation of subject and object is complete. Besides being embodied in the actualisation of this sort of ephemeral art work, the falling away of time is also inscribed in its documentation. Linear sequences of photographs serve to visualise the succession of now-moments and arguably function as a lame attempt to possess that which 'cannot be held', in addition to revealing the Aristotelian perception that time is a form of quantification.

If the *modus operandum* of the kinds of ephemeral art encountered in Chapter 3, capitalises on and exploits the idea that time 'flies away', *accepting* the slippage or passing away of time as, in Savage's terms, 'inevitable', the museum by contrast, is intent on retarding and suppressing time's incessant passage. Time is something which the institution lacks, for as time 'flies away' so it is perceived to systematically destroy the cultural property it contains; a concept encapsulated by Ward's (1986) book title: *The Nature of Conservation: A Race Against Time.*

Museum practices revolve around a discourse of permanence and preservation which symbolise 'an ongoing attempt to cope with the fact that time goes by'. Winzen

continues, citing two quotations which are emblematic of such sentiments: Stefan Hoderlein's statement that 'Time is constantly being lost', and Adorno's argument that 'The will to possess reflects time as a fear of loss, of the irretrievable nature of everything. What is, is experienced in relation to its potential non-existence' (1998 p.22 and p.23). Deconstructing this kind of dualistic temporal perspective, Loy appropriates the term 'clock-time' which he associates with the development of capitalism. One repercussion of societies dictated by clock-time, he argues, has been the objectification and commodification of time itself which 'convert[s] everything into a marketable resource valued according to their exchange value' (2001 p.274). However, as demonstrated, this analysis is not confined to the institution. Despite the fact that ephemeral art has traditionally grappled with the commodification of *things* and has indeed refrained from producing what Loy describes as 'objects as we usually conceive of them', arguably these artworks have nevertheless failed to challenge either the commodification of time or the commodification of the object (1988 p.221). Ephemeral art may well have attempted to usurp the 'exchange value' by making the object physically disappear, however, by reacting within the same dualistic temporal frame of reference, the concept of 'clock-time' itself remains intact. Simply making a virtue out of reducing the commercial value of art by diminishing its durability fails to transcend the duality of time/object and time/self. As such, the artwork (albeit a disappearing one), the audience, *and* time retain their commodity status in the sense that each is objectified. Time is still perceived by a disconnected spectator as separate from and acting upon a discrete object, regardless of any reduction in market value.

This particular expression of duality exerts an insidious influence over how the present

is experienced:

> Instead of past and future being understood as a function of present memories and expectations, the present becomes reduced to a single moment within a "time-stream" understood to exist "out-there" – a container, as it were, like space, within which things exist and events occur (Loy, 1988 p.219-220).

Understood in these terms, the present, experienced as Loy's 'single moment' (synonymous with the 'now-point' articulated by Stambaugh and Olson), becomes devalued such that life is never fully lived in the moment.

Ironically, Loy's description of a subject experiencing itself as separate from time whilst simultaneously observing that separation, seems to vindicate Fried's criticism, quoted in Chapter 1, that 'theatrical' art based on a durational temporality, i.e., of time that "flies away", 'makes him [the audience] a subject – and establishes the experience itself as something like that of an object, or rather, of objecthood'. Undeniably there is a significant aspect of "theatre" to much of the art under discussion. Taking Gallaccio's practice as one example, the artist herself describes her installations as 'theatrical work'[17]. Rugoff explicitly states that she 'has extended the theatricality of Minimalism' (1999 p.14)[18]. Similarly, Reitmaier refers to her work as a 'performance' (2002 p.37). Such "theatricality" seems to demonstrate quite acutely Loy's 'sense of a self that is outside [time] and looking at it'. Despite Conceptual Art's determination to challenge

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[17] Lecture by the artist at Camberwell College of Arts, London, 9th December 2003.

[18] Rugoff's understanding of time, advanced in his essay *Leap of Faith* in which he discusses Gallaccio's work, is inherently contradictory. On the one hand, his notion of a 'real-time experience' is a classic example of the durational, linear and irreversible concept of time discussed in Chapter 1 and defined as dualistic in this chapter. On the other hand, statements such as 'Gallaccio's art . . . encourage[s] a leap of faith into the open spaces of the present, that paradoxically timeless moment which is forever changing', suggests a very different perspective (1999 pp.15 & 16). This is certainly not the dualistic "container" time, Loy referenced earlier, in which the present becomes 'reduced to a single moment within a "time-stream"'. Indeed, these words anticipate the 'right now'; a concept which plays a significant part in the *non*-dualistic theory of time propounded by Dōgen, the Japanese philosopher introduced in Part II of the thesis.

the hegemonic notion that art is essentially a visual medium, and despite the olfactory elements of some of Gallaccio's work, for example, overall the relationship demanded of the audience by this kind of ephemeral art is primarily that of a spectator (subject), *observing* the durational process of time (object) wasting away the other material objects it contains. Unlike certain manifestations of Performance Art, there is little which is interactive or participatory about these pieces to suggest any possibility of transcending that divide. Although Godfrey maintains that the sort of 1960's and 1970's ice works considered in the last chapter, present a 'critique of a spectacle', each engender an experience which separates time from it's beholder (1998 p.382). On this issue then, Fried may well have a point, although, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 8, his own interpretation of temporality is equally inadequate since, for other reasons, it also reinforces a dualistic perception of time.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to define what is meant by the terms "duality" and "non-duality" and to demonstrate the dualistic nature of an Aristotelian conception of time in particular. In addition, I have shown how a certain construction of ephemerality founded upon such principles, in tandem with the ideology of the museum, perpetuates this duality. By uncritically accepting the bifurcation of subject and object through a shared perception of the nature of time, ephemeral art has failed to significantly disassociate itself from the erroneous values of the art institution.

In sum, the philosophical consequences which follow from this position are in the first instance, that both permanence, represented as a kind of eternalism, and impermanence,

its polar opposite defined in terms of absence or a nihilistic nothingness, are conceived as absolutes. Both are determined by a conception of time understood as a continuous, durational, persisting and substantial phenomenon. Dependent on this notion of durational time is the idea that impermanence is a measure of the temporary interval that occurs between life and death. In this way of thinking life is viewed as 'the beginning of a continuous process . . . and death is its end' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.74). In its capacity to waste things away, time causes the deterioration, decay and destruction of the things it contains, eventually effecting their annihilation. Conceived in these terms, time the container, is separated from the objects within it, including the self. Perceiving itself as merely another object, the self identifies time as an external force whose linear passage flows in a sequential and irreversible direction. As such the present exists as a 'now-point' rather like luggage on a never ending conveyor belt, glimpsed for a second passing in front of the eyes. One consequence of this is that 'the present is not grasped as something meaningful in itself, but as something significant only as a means to arrive at the end projected in the future' (Abe, 1992 p.31).

Having exposed how a certain understanding of impermanence and of ephemeral *art* specifically, is predicated upon a dualistic experience and understanding of time, the question of what complexion an ephemeral art practice based on a *non*-dualistic approach to time would adopt, remains to be discussed. Recalling the principle that non-duality functions through negation, any such practice must seek to negate each of the above points, although not in a way which merely serves to establish another dualism, but rather by dissolving the opposing categories completely. Part II negotiates this problem.

Part II

The Art of Non-dualistic Time

Introduction

Up to this point I have argued that the predominant model of ephemeral art since the 1960s discloses an inherently nihilistic concept of impermanence based upon the physical or symbolic disappearance, decay and ultimate death of the material artwork "in" time. Importantly, I have suggested that the particular idea of impermanence identified with *Dissolution*, *Dispersal*, *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality*; the taxonomy of ephemeral strategies reviewed so far, presupposes a common-sense and dualistic perception of time, characterising time as measure (a means of quantification and calculation), persisting and substantial (the container analogy), and durational (linear, sequential and irreversible). It would seem therefore, that contemporary ephemeral art and a dualistic notion of time are synonymous; that ephemeral art necessarily embodies a dualistic understanding of temporality and is in fact, defined by it. However, it would be erroneous to conclude that this is the *only* model or interpretation of impermanence found within ephemeral art. In this second part of the thesis I examine three further co-existing strategies identified during the course of the research; *Transubstantiation*, *Ritual* and *Dialogic Ephemerality*, as well as my personal creative practice, which, on the surface at least, appear to reject such thinking. I begin here by defining and describing these alternative strategies, commenting briefly on the obvious features which distinguish them from their predecessors. I proceed to introduce

my own installation/performance work; *Dust*, which, contextualised against these practices, represents a hybrid model, borrowing elements from across all three strategies.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to observe that these alternative practices differ significantly from the former strategies, and quite another to claim that they actively embrace a non-dualistic viewpoint as a result. Hence, the primary purpose of Part II is analytical and evaluative; to ascertain whether or not this body of work does indeed advance a non-dualistic understanding and experience of time.

At this stage I have engaged only with a very general concept of non-duality, outlined in Chapter 4. In each of the following five chapters I address this omission, examining a non-dualistic philosophy of *time* specifically. From this perspective, I concurrently interrogate my own "composite" practice alongside those associated with *Transubstantiation*, *Dialogic* and *Ritual* ephemeral strategies, in order to demonstrate their congruity. I argue that there is a weight of evidence here to suggest that ephemeral art is not inevitably chained to a nihilistic notion of impermanence arising from dualistic perceptions of time.

Aberrant Ephemeral Strategies: Transubstantiation, Dialogic and Ritual

This initial section introduces the three new ephemeral strategies. It commences with a brief definition of each, followed by examples of artworks/practices by three different artists which fulfil the established criterion. Although each piece or practice (including my own) has been selected to illuminate the deviation from common-sense, durational notions of time seen in the former strategies discussed in Chapter 3; *Dissolution*, *Dispersal*, *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality*, I confine myself here to simply

describing the work. The philosophical issue of time and its manifestation in these practices is addressed fully in each subsequent chapter.

The first new strategy which flouts Aristotelian temporality is *Transubstantiation*. In the context of Christianity, transubstantiation traditionally refers to the consecrated sacraments of Holy Communion (bread and wine), which, for believers, either literally or metaphorically (depending on interpretation), take on the flesh and blood of Christ. Hence, *Transubstantiation* is an apposite metaphor to describe a strategy in which artists eschew an idea of ephemerality united by the intentional erasure of certain types of material, in favour of a concept of impermanence defined as dynamic energy. Rejecting the linear disappearance of the object of art over a given period, these artists redefine ephemeral art as a living, breathing entity; undoubtedly an entity in a continuous state of transition, but one whereby a change in substance or appearance does not signify total annihilation. One of three works which exemplify this is Argentinean artist, Victor Grippo's *Analogia 1* (*Analogy 1*) (1971), from his series *Analogia* begun in 1970. Reconstructed for an exhibition at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery in 1995, Casanegra's catalogue essay describes *Analogia 1* as:

> an experiment based on a battery of potatoes connected to electrodes, cables and a voltmeter, by means of which the energy generated by the potatoes could be measured. This was accompanied by a text pointing to the analogy between the potato and human consciousness (1995 p.37).

Brett's essay *Equilibrium and Polarity*, speaks of Grippo's choice of the humble potato as 'a means of making visible energy latent in this prosaic and apparently un-dynamic object' (1995b p.12). In *Analogia 1* the potato is also a symbol of political consciousness; a caustic reminder about the staple food of an impoverished population and a representation of 'the repressed potential of the Latin American peoples' (Brett, 1990 p.86). Both the analogy of consciousness and the physical energy of Grippo's

potatoes are echoed in the next *Transubstantiation* example; Gilberto Zorio's *Rosa-blu-rosa* (*Pink-blue-pink*) (1967), which typifies 'the morphology' of his creations 'made of aggregates of matter that tend to possess an emotional, dynamic quality . . . to represent the metaphor of life and its transformations' (Celant, 1992 p.12). Shown at the Sperone Gallery, Turin, in Zorio's first solo exhibition, Christov-Bakargiev describes this piece as 'comprising a long asbestos lumber semi-cylinder filled with gesso plaster and a cobalt chloride mixture' (1999 p.39). Fluctuations in ambient temperature and atmospheric moisture induced a visible chemical reaction in the sensitive composition of cobalt chloride leading the piece to change colour in cyclical phases from pink to blue and blue to pink as humidity levels rose and fell.

The final example is American based artist, Peter Hutchinson's *Apple Triangle*, Mexico (1970). As the title indicates, this piece comprises a 6' x 6' x 6' triangle of small yellow crab apples laid out on a bed of near solidified black lava dust and volcanic ash surrounding the erupted Mexican volcano, Paricutin, a site originally populated by abundant apple trees.

The second strategy to renounce death, decay and destruction as a *modus operadum* is *Dialogic Ephemerality*, defined here as a process of social exchange and communication, whereby debate and discussion constitute the artwork itself. Three works considered here are firstly, *Eskimo Carver* (1977) by David Medalla which he declared to be dialogic in nature; 'that is, involving a dialogue between himself, his media and his collaborators/audience' (Dare, 2002 p.1). Hosted by Artists for Democracy at the Fitzrovia Cultural Centre in West London, the piece is described by Brett as a multi-faceted event involving Medalla's drawings, transcriptions of Eskimo poetry, a performance piece entitled *Alaska Pipeline*, which critiqued the racist

reportage of a pipe laying operation by trans-national companies mining for Alaskan oil, and finally: 'an invitation to visitors to make knives (or drums) out of non-perishable garbage which had been collected in the neighbourhood'. Brett goes on to report that, 'over a period of four weeks each knife and drum . . . was signed, titled by its author, and added to the collection on the walls in a playful parody of ethnographic museum displays' (1995a p.110). I focus on this latter participatory aspect of the project.

The next example comprises two works from the series *Inserções em Circuitos Ideolõgicos* (*Insertion into Ideological Circuits): Projeto Coca-Cola, (Coca-Cola Project*) and *Cédula*, (*Banknotes*) (1970) by Brazilian artist, Cildo Meireles. The *Coca-Cola Project*, based on chain letters and messages in bottles, comprised silk-screened labels, replete with political messages such as 'Yankees Go Home', transferred onto empty Coca-Cola bottles and returned to circulation. The slogans remained practically invisible on the transparent glass until the recycling process at the factory was complete, whereupon the message became legible against the dark brown liquid as the bottles were refilled. Consequently they re-entered the marketplace for all to read. Similarly, in *Banknotes*, the artist rubber stamped the question: 'Qeum matou Hertzog?' (Who killed Hertzog?) on paper currency which passed through his hands. The question referred to the suspicious death in police custody of journalist, Wladimir Hertzog, reported by the authorities as suicide but commonly believed to be the result of torture by the repressive Brazilian regime that came to power under a military coup in 1964. Interviewed by Mosquera, Meireles asserts that; 'the texts on the Coca-Cola bottles and the banknotes functioned as a kind of mobile graffiti' (1999 p.13). Despite expressing concern about 'political art where the emphasis was on discourse and the work became

similar to propaganda', Meireles acknowledges the importance of dialogue in his most political works, stating that: 'I wanted to create or locate objects which would . . . have a real effect, setting up an alternative form of communication'. In spite of his reservations, he concludes that 'Discourse also becomes material. Life turns into raw material' (quoted in Enguita, 1999 p.136).

Lastly, in *Untitled (free)* (1992), artist Rirkrit Tiravanija appropriated the office and storage space at 303 Gallery in New York, transferring its contents into the actual gallery space itself, in order to construct a temporary kitchen in which to prepare and serve Thai Green Curry, free to unsuspecting audiences. Restaged on several occasions with variations, the event at London's ICA in 1993 involved the artist establishing a 'make-shift café within the gallery, preparing the same dish each day of a plain "street" type Thai food' (Brown, 1993 p.5). The accompanying catalogue reports that: 'Tiravanija left the installation half-way through the show, and consigned the shopping and cooking to a rota of ICA staff . . . ensuring subtle daily variations in the recipe' (Brown, 1993 p.5).

The final strategy; *Ritual,* gains its title from the procedures of artists who base their practice around almost fanatical, repetitious and ritualistic behaviour. In the following examples this takes the form of walking, cleaning, collecting and arranging, making it particularly difficult to consider any one artwork in isolation from the totality of each practice. The continuing pollen works of Laib, begun in 1977, provide the first example of this type. Laib's pollen pieces fall into three types; glass jars containing pollen, small conical mounds of pollen and lastly, the main concern here: pollen which is sieved directly onto the gallery floor in rectangular configurations. Dandelion, hazelnut, pine and moss pollen is patiently collected by the artist from source and sifted through

different grades of muslin. At the end of an exhibition it is gathered together, resifted and recycled. The vibrant orange and yellow tonal nuances of each pollen piece are determined by their origins in different plant matter. Fragile in the extreme, the compositions are susceptible to the slightest breath or touch, dispersing the fine particles and potentially destroying the work. The fresh pollen also stimulates olfactory senses, exuding a heady aromatic fragrance which fades during the course of each exhibition.

Mazeaud's seven year project *The Great Cleaning of the Rio Grande River* (1987-1994) provides the second example. For seven years on the same day of each month, the artist contrived to clean up the polluted Rio Grande River, removing discarded rubbish. During this period Mazeaud kept a diary which recorded not only her finds but also her changing attitude to the river and the evolving personal meaning and significance of the project. Gradually her motivation altered from overt ecological consciousness raising to a more spiritual quest, marking a shift in focus from object to relationship: 'I stopped collecting the so-called treasures of the river. It was OK at the beginning, but today I feel it was buying into the present system of art that's so much object-orientated' (quoted in Gablik, 1991 p.121).

Finally, there is Richard Long's walking practice which originated with work such as *A Line Made by Walking* (1967): 'a line made by walking up and down in a field until the flattened grass caught the sunlight from a different angle and became visible as a line' (Fuchs, 1986 p.44).

Arguably, what unites this body of work and distinguishes it from that encountered in Chapter 3, is a significantly different conception of time. Precisely *how* this perception of time differs is analysed in detail following the introduction of my own work. For the

moment a few general observations suffice. Firstly, in none of the examples provided above is the concept of ephemerality constructed around the idea of a disappearing object. Whether or not these pieces are self-consciously engaged in a critique of the commodification of art, the whole notion of an object is side-stepped rather than confronted in a reactionary manner by being made to disappear. As a result, the very idea of time as a durational and linear phenomenon is also circumvented since there is no object as such, to pass through this life to death passage. In fact, the opposite is true; a sense of cyclicality, of cyclical temporality is assimilated into the work. Movement, change and transformative processes are in operation, but at no point does this lead to the destruction or decay of the work. This is examined in detail shortly.

The Creative Practice: A Hybrid Ephemeral Work

Although my work differs substantially in appearance from the examples discussed above, it evolved, in part, by identifying the main features associated with these strategies, and attempting to incorporate them within my own practice: material as energy in *Transubstantiation*; dialogue and participation in *Dialogic Ephemerality*; ritual and repetition within *Ritual*. The rationale for amalgamating these signature features into one hybrid practice lay in the supposition that due to their individual ability to signify a perception of time at odds with the common-sense and dualistic Aristotelian temporality, the probability of facilitating a non-dualistic experience and understanding of time when combined, would be even greater.

Entitled *Dust,* my creative work constituted a live performance/installation piece sited in a variety of institutional contexts. It involved the collection, separation, categorisation, display and documentation of site-specific dust obtained from every

institution hosting the event[19]. In each case one full vacuum cleaner bag of dust was acquired by negotiating with cleaning supervisors, building staff and others responsible for co-ordinating the project in advance of the performance.

During the performance itself I remained seated at a pristine white table wearing a starched white lab coat, medical face mask and protective rubber gloves, evoking a clinical, laboratory environment. Against this backdrop I continuously dissected the dust contents of the vacuum cleaner bag located on the table using a fine pair of tweezers. The work was conducted at the level of what the eye could naturally observe, without the assistance of ophthalmic aids such as microscopes or magnifying lens. As the dust was sorted, the contents were systematically classified according to material, placed in individual petri dishes or larger glassware and displayed on the table. The overall appearance was of a scientific experiment in progress. Institutional type chairs were provided and audiences/visitors to each venue were invited to join me at the table in order to observe and discuss the process, touch and smell the components and actively participate in identifying and categorising the dust. Following the event, each identified fragment was labelled and documented photographically. It is important to note that documentation occurred solely for research purposes and is therefore to be viewed as a record of the work rather than part of the artwork itself.

Three institutions participated providing four venues in all. Cambridge University offered two venues; The McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research and Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology where I worked mornings in the former and afternoons in the latter. The third performance took place at

[19] At the beginning of the project I also considered conserving each of the items recovered from the vacuum bags, still with the intention of throwing everything away in the end. However, besides being extremely time consuming and involving expertise I lacked, it would have inevitably involved processes

the Horniman Museum, Forest Hill, London, and the final event was hosted by the National Trust at Fenton House, a historic property in Hampstead, London. Each event lasted between two and three weeks and was conducted between April and September 2004.

When approaching venues to host the project, the institutions I targeted each had a specific relevance and met different criteria. In the case of Fenton House, securing a National Trust property such as this seventeenth century country manor maintained the domestic dimension of the project, and the related gender issues associated with dust, whilst at the same time moving the work out of the private and autobiographical sphere into a public space. By contrast, the Cambridge venues were selected because of the methodological parallels between archaeology and my own practice. In a sense the performance/installation functioned as a contemporary site-specific archaeological excavation. The Horniman Museum differentially was approached, in part, for reasons of expediency. There are established links between the Conservation MA course at Camberwell College of Arts and the conservation department at the museum. Given that I had spent a considerable time in the conservation labs at college learning about the practical processes and treatments undertaken by the profession, in order to appropriate the scientific methodology with the intention of subverting the discourse and pedagogy, it seemed appropriate to locate the practice in a venue which functioned as a training ground for the discipline.

In addition, each venue facilitated the concept of "contamination" in that dust is an unwelcome presence in the museum environment. From a conservation perspective, dust conceals the potential to obscure the historical, cultural, aesthetic and educational

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which could not be carried out in public therefore relegating the work to a private, inaccessible and

dimensions of the artefacts on display and contributes to their physical degradation. Consequently there was a mischievous element to the performance/installation in seeking to foreground what the institution is at pains to efface and control. This is discussed further in Chapter 10.

Dust reflects the key features of the three aberrant ephemeral strategies in various forms. In the first case, the notion of material as dynamic energy is represented in both the selection of the material itself (dust), and in my intervention which effectively re-cycles the substance. Secondly, the concept of art as a process of social exchange is built into the project by inviting audience participation and dialogue during the event. Finally, ritual and repetition are inscribed in the work via the continuous and obsessive actions of dissecting, sorting and classifying the contents of the vacuum bag. These aspects are considered in depth in the following chapters.

Since the seminal 1920 work *Dust Breeding* (*Elevage de poussière*); a collaboration between Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp, dust has been a regular feature in contemporary art and themed exhibitions have been devoted to the subject[20]. It may seem somewhat perverse therefore not to contextualise my own practice against this body of work. However, I have chosen not to do so because dust *per se* is not the subject of interrogation in this research. The focus is specifically on the philosophical questions of time, impermanence and non-duality in relation to ephemeral art. A cursory survey of some representative artworks featuring dust over the last fifteen years will highlight the discrepancy between these pieces and my own practice. For example, a critique of modernism is an implicit motivation for artists such as Vik Muniz, Rivane

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invisible space.

[20] Emmanuel Latreille curated two exhibitions on dust: Poussière at FRAC Bourgogne in 1998 and Dust Memories at the Swiss Institute, New York in 2003.

Neuenschwander and Suchan Kinoshita. The press release heralding Muniz's exhibition; The Things Themselves: Pictures of Dust at the Whitney in early 2001, addresses a typical concern of postmodernism, namely; 'representation and appropriation' (Whitney, 2001 p.1). In this body of work, the artist uses dust as a drawing material to re-create photographs of Minimalist sculptures at the museum. He subsequently photographs his drawings and exhibits these images. This is an investigation into reality and originality, underscored by the artist's own statement; 'I'm not interested in fooling you but in revealing the mechanisms of illusion' (quoted in Dykstra, 2001 p.23). Moreover, Muniz declares his attraction to dust in a quotation featured in the press release in which he states that 'Minimalist art is orderly', whereas 'dust is chaos' (Whitney, 2001 p.1).

The notion that dust is a symbolic antidote to the metanarratives of modernist discourse is taken up by Neuenschwander at the São Paulo Biennial in her 1998 installation *Day's Work* (*O Trabalho dos Dias*). The work is described by Martinez in her catalogue essay as 'two perfectly cube-shaped, white twinned cubicles' entirely covered with 'square pieces of self-adhesive plastic. Stuck to each piece is a trace of dust and other remains – breadcrumbs, hair, scraps of onion, carpet fluff – from the floor of her house in London' (1998 p.2). If Man Ray and Duchamp's fascination with dust at the beginning of the twentieth century, was an expression of the mysterious concealed in the prosaic, by the close of the century Neuenschwander's attempt at 'dignifying common waste', is seen differentially as an 'urge to articulate, in meaningful terms, existential, aesthetic and political confines without resorting to grand story-telling' (Martinez, 1998 p.3). The constantly evolving nature of the work which changes in response to audience interaction and presence is typically understood from a postmodern perspective as a

statement which 'shuns the essentialism that defines identities as stable' and thus forms a 'reflection on becoming' (Martinez, 1998 p.1 & p.2).

Another celebration of 'the ethics of humble materials' can be seen in Catherine Bertola's dust installation *Sweeping it Under* (1999), exhibited in Pattern Crazy at the Crafts Council, London in 2002. Constructed with household dust and glue, this work is a floor-based re-creation of an ornately decorated patterned carpet and echoes the domestic dimension of Neuenschwander's work. Both artists share an interest in identity and the trace elements of human life. However, where Neuenschwander collates forensic evidence of the present, Bertola is concerned primarily with the past and how 'dust holds a microscopic history of the place' from which it is gathered. Her motivation, she continues, derives from an interest in:

> the ordinary and the everyday, the hidden and the unnoticed traces and marks of human activity and identity that surround us everywhere. What I try to do is draw attention to these marks and traces; make them seen important and valuable, no matter how insignificant the 'moment' was in which they created (Bertola, 2003).

In the catalogue accompanying her exhibition Avoided Objects at Chapter Gallery in 1996, Cornelia Parker also highlights the forensic aspect of her slide projection *Exhaled Blanket*, comprising dust and fibres from the blanket covering Freud's couch. 'I was interested in the idea of being able to find a tiny bit of forensic information'; evidence of personal narratives (1996 p.61). Like many of the above artists, Parker is fascinated by the minutiae of dust particles. Dust, she says, 'is the material within the universe that we cannot see and we cannot quantify. We know it exists but we can't measure it. It's immeasurable, unfathomable' (1996 p.63).

Richard Torchia similarly employs light projection to make visible the unseen, to know

the unknowable. In *Limelight* (1997-98) he creates an artificial dust storm of lime and dust particles by mechanical means which causes dust alternately to be churned up then temporarily settle; a process which is repeated in cyclical phases and viewed on a large Mylar screen.

If there is one "dust" work which cannot be dismissed so lightly when it comes to my own practice, it is Suchan Kinoshita's installation *Stuff* (1995), exhibited at London's White Cube in the summer of 1996. On the surface, this installation bears the close affinity to my own work *Dust*. There are clear parallels in the dissection and classification of vacuum bags and in the implicit pseudo-scientific methodology. Kinoshita's Japanese ethnicity, combined with the two text-based illuminated cardboard boxes which reveal the message 'Nowhere', may even suggest a Zen "here and now" treatment of time, which in itself is a recurring theme for this artist. However, I suggest that there are important aspects of this piece which are indicative of a different approach to temporality as well as another agenda, in-keeping with Muniz and Neuenschwander's work.

In the first instance, the work is cited in a traditional "white cube" gallery space and displayed as an object of contemplation. There is no live or participatory element to engage the audience as active collaborators in the work. Despite the appearance of chaos, this piece is static and complete. Kinoshita also uses domestic dust, representing individual subjects, collected prior to the exhibition rather than site-specific dust. The combination of these factors present viewers with something resembling "the remains of the day". The gallery's online account of the exhibition claims that the artist 'subtly gauged the passage of time converting the hair and fluff into fragile "evidence" suggestive of past events and experiences'. Furthermore, the reference to 'detritus' and

the statement that Kinoshita draws attention to 'the frailty of our bodies by revealing the dead matter we shed on a daily basis' further suggests a dualistic and linear conception of time which opposes life and death (White Cube, 1996). This work is about something that has gone before rather than an event in which the tenses of time arise simultaneously, as I shall claim for my own work in the following chapters. As such, dust is perceived in conventional terms as an inert waste product, marking the end of something vital and audiences are invited to ponder this detritus as evidence of their own impending mortality. From this perspective, 'Nowhere' might be interpreted as the fragmentation of identity and self. This would be commensurate with Kinoshita's 2006 exhibition The Fragment Itself at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, in which she voices the postmodernist mantra; 'No grand cohesive story, more the appreciation of fragments' (Ikon, 2006 no page numbers).

Undoubtedly, there are points of intersection and commonality between my performance/installation work *Dust* and the pieces outlined above. Torchia's *Limelight*, for instance, alludes to the circularity of time; a theme which also appears in the work of Neuenschwander and Bertola. Similarly, the small, ordinary and seemingly insignificant nature of dust is a *leitmotif* which traverses my own practice as it does with almost all the artworks discussed here. Furthermore, there is some congruence between the forensic dimension of Parker, Bertola, Kinosha's and my work. However, despite a certain level of accord, the fundamental philosophical investigation which informs this thesis (theory and practice), is fundamentally antithetical to the postmodern project and issues such as representation, originality, identity and fragmentation. Consequently, my argument is best pursued with reference to artworks which resonate with the philosophical intentions rather than being confined to the material element of

dust alone. It would be illogical to argue that all oil paintings or marble sculptures because they share a common medium *ipso facto* represent a unified and coherent body of work. The same might be said of artworks in which the material basis is dust.

Dōgen's Non-dualistic Philosophy of Time

If *Transubstantiation, Dialogic* and *Ritual Ephemerality*, alongside my own hybrid practice, do allude to a different understanding of time - an understanding which rejects the Aristotelian precepts outlined in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 – it remains to be decided whether this perception is interchangeable with *non-dualistic* time. I have intimated in the preceding passages that what distinguishes these three strategies is that in each case, time is envisaged in one way or another as a cyclical phenomenon in contrast to the linear and durational perception exemplified by *Dissolution, Dispersal, Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality*. Nevertheless, despite the fact that these cyclical features represent a significant departure from the disappearing artwork (or threat of), characteristic of the former strategies, it requires a leap of faith to equate cyclicality with non-duality *per se*. Even if a cyclical perception of time *does* appear to repudiate the first Aristotelian principle of dualistic time, the further two principles; the notion that time functions as a container and that time is measure, must also be negated.

Two outstanding questions remain. Firstly, what is meant by *non*-dualistic time? What are the fundamental principles which differentiate this conception of time from the dualistic Aristotelian model and how do they successfully negate the notion that time is the cause of decay and destruction; that time acts like a container; and that time is a measure of before and after, cause and effect? Secondly, is this non-dualistic temporal perspective reflected both within the alternative ephemeral strategies

Transubstantiation, *Dialogic* and *Ritual* as well as within my own practice, and if so, how?

In order to answer these questions I turn next to the philosophical writings of the thirteenth century Japanese Zen master Dōgen. Buddhism in general has always engaged with the idea of impermanence. However, Dōgen's deliberations on time and impermanence provide a particularly pertinent theoretical framework for the thesis since the notion of non-duality lies at the heart of his teaching. Although Dōgen's philosophy of time permeates all his writing, the majority of which are presented in the comprehensive volumes of his lectures and teachings, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (Shōbōgenzō), there are certain fascicles (teachings) in which he explicitly articulates his thoughts on temporality. Hence, these form key reference points in what follows. Of these, the most important is *Uji*, translated by Abe and Waddell (2002) and Stambaugh (1990) as 'Being-Time'; by Tanahashi (1985) as 'The Time-Being', and by Kim (1985) as 'Existence-Time'[21]. Other relevant fascicles include *Busshō* (Buddha-nature)[22], *Shōji* (Birth and Death), and *Genjōkōan*, translated by Abe and Waddell (2002) as 'Manifesting Suchness'; by Kim (1985) as 'The Realisation Koan', and by Tanahashi (1985) as 'Actualising the Fundamental Point'[23].

Arguably, the application of Dōgen's thought in this context offers a fresh perspective in developing an understanding of ephemerality which transcends both the entrenched positions of Fried and the supporters of the dematerialisation thesis on the one hand,

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[21] 'Being-Time' is the term selected here.

[22] 'Buddha-nature' is a phrase frequently found in both Dōgen's writing and academic commentaries on his work. Dumoulin defines Buddha-nature as 'the universal unity of reality' (1979 p.102). As Kim (2004) points out, for Dōgen, 'the universal unity of reality' refers to the condition of non-duality, which is how the phrase is understood throughout the thesis.

[23] The thesis references different translations of these texts in order to find the clearest articulation of Dōgen's thought with regard to the current context.

and the ideology of the art institutional system and artists whose ephemeral artworks and practices have attempted to critique this, on the other. Dōgen's philosophical contribution conceivably provides a third way to negotiate or think through these oppositions.

It should be stressed that Dōgen's philosophy of time presents temporality, impermanence and existence as interdependent phenomenon. However, in order to develop and critically examine both my own creative practice and others' in the context of his thought, I have attempted to artificially extract five core principles or themes from Dōgen's position: being-time, permanence and impermanence, life and death, the passage of time, and causality. Each of the following five chapters is therefore structured around one of these themes and contains two parts. The first part comprises an initial abstract philosophical discussion of the non-dualistic principle in question, responding in turn to each of the points raised at the end of Chapter 4, demonstrating incrementally how the entire ensemble of Dōgen's thought refutes the Aristotelian model to arrive at a non-dualistic perspective by a process of systematically negating dualistic conceptions of time. The second part of each chapter contains an analysis of whether that principle is successfully reflected in the three aberrant ephemeral strategies and ultimately, in my own hybrid ephemeral work, *Dust*.

Chapter 5

The Non-duality of Time and Existence in which Container Time is Negated

It was established in Chapter 4 that one of the fundamental principles a non-dualistic perception of time must negate is the idea that time functions like a container, for this erects a clear duality between time as an objectified entity and the matter it contains, be that animal, mineral or vegetable. I begin this chapter by exploring how Dōgen seeks to overcome this bifurcation at a theoretical level before going on to consider how the various artistic strategies negotiate this duality in practice.

5.0 Non-dualistic Time in Theory

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Dōgen argues that time and *things* are in fact identical. Consequently, time cannot *contain* anything at all since it is defined *through* substances, people and events. He names this condition *Uji* (Being-Time). As a concept, *Uji* is pivotal to understanding Dōgen's philosophy of time; everything he has to say on the subject regarding, for example, impermanence, life and death and the passage of time, are all, in one respect or another, derived from this fundamental principle. As such, all five chapters in Part II ultimately explore the same concept from different angles.

Dōgen states unequivocally that Being-Time (*Uji*) 'means time itself is being, and all being is time' (Tanahashi, 1985 p.76). In a footnote, Waddell and Abe's translation add that: 'Since the original Japanese does not differentiate between singular and plural, being and time can be both singular and plural: e.g., being(s) are all time(s)' (2002

p.48). As Kasulis argues, 'Dōgen's composite term, being-time, signifies the inseparability of beings and times. That is, we experience neither time nor being *per se*; we experience temporal existence' (1981 p.79). For Dōgen then, if all existence/being is time and all time is existence/being, everything in the universe, without exception, is an expression of, or is constituted through this being-time relation. In *Uji* Dōgen writes:

> Mountains are time. Oceans are time. If they were not time, there would be no mountains or oceans. Do not think that mountains and oceans here and now are not time. If time is annihilated, mountains and oceans are annihilated. As time is not annihilated, mountains and oceans are not annihilated (Tanahashi, 1985 p.81).

To state therefore, that 'Whatever happens is, or is not *in* time, but *is* time', is to radically undermine the Aristotelian conception of time as a substantial and objectified phenomenon'. Time is no longer a container *in which* things happen, rather 'Time is the taking place (passage, *kyōryaku*) of all beings. It is the way they are' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.24 & p.26). In this totalistic 'passage' there is a fusion of time and self and of time and things. Time and existence interpenetrate. They are completely unified and inseparable. Thus there is nothing *beyond* either time or being: 'There is no time apart from the mutability or appearance-disappearance [passage] of things in the universe. Nor is there anything apart from time' (Abe, 1992 p.70). Commenting on Dōgen's position, Kasulis notes that:

> Primordially, there is simply the process of experience itself: self and object are subsequent abstractions arising out of that originally unified experience. Thus, in speaking of things, Dōgen is not separating the object from the experience. "Things" . . . are directly experienced things, given in pre-reflective experience without the bifurcation between self and object (1981 p.90).

If the traditional bifurcation between self and *time* and between object and *time* is simultaneously dissolved by Dōgen's assertion that 'time itself is being and all being is time', how is this experienced? Loy argues that in order for this dissolution of opposites

to take place:

> we must destroy the thought-constructed dualism between things and time. When we wish to express this, we must describe one in terms of the other, by saying that either objects are temporal (in which case they are not objects as we usually conceive them), or, conversely, that time is objects - that is, that time manifests itself in the appearance that we call objects.

Quoting Reiho, Loy points to Dōgen's illustration of these phenomena in his statement that 'The time we call spring blossoms directly as an existence called flowers. The flowers, in turn, express the time called spring. This is not existence within time; existence itself is time' (1988 p.221).

Hence, if ephemeral art is to escape the limited nihilistic definition prescribed by the dualistic understanding of time evinced so far, the first criteria it must demonstrate is the ability to breakdown the discrete categories of self and time, and of things and time, and show in Loy's words, that 'either objects are temporal . . . or, conversely, that time is objects'. Notions of impermanence and ephemerality must successfully distance themselves from those located in the work surveyed previously, which, I have argued, present an object (artwork) and a subject (artist/audience) bounded by temporality, contained in time, which acts externally and independently upon them.

5.1 Non-dualistic Time in Practice

In this section I suggest that the alternative ephemeral strategies dissolve these dualisms by circumventing the very notion of the *object* itself, regardless of its perceived status as either a durable and static thing, or a perishable and evanescent one. In his writing Dōgen's consistently stresses the principle of *insubstantiality*. He demands that we abandon the common idea that things are 'inert or static' objects and instead embrace the concept of 'an *occurrence* – or better, an *occurring*'. For Dōgen, 'this occurring,

this "movement", transcends the dichotomy of stasis and flowing. It neither stays still nor does it flow past' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.130). Echoing Loy's second dimension of duality, discussed in Chapter 4, in which a pluralistic perception of the world facilitates the concept of discrete, self-existing things, Stambaugh argues, that within our conventional frame of reference 'we tend to think of things as separate, stable entities at best related to each other, but certainly not interfused with each other. A tree or any other object stands next to another tree, each firmly localised in time and space'. However, from Dōgen's Buddhist perspective, 'not only is the tree not necessarily an object, it is not even a thing in the ordinary sense of the word. It is more aptly described as *an event* than as an object or thing. The tree is not static; it is constantly changing. Things are going on in it; it is impermanent' (my emphasis, 1990 p.106). I argue here that the latter ephemeral practices jettison the concept of self-existing substantialised objects and replace them with something akin to Dōgen's understanding of '*an occurring*' or 'an event'; different terms which express the same phenomenon. I examine four instances which ratify this.

Firstly, the concept of 'an *occurring*'; the manner in which something *takes place*, is uniquely expressed in each example of *Transubstantiation* through the perception of material *as energy*. There is neither a sense of time flowing past or receding, causing the decay and destruction of the artwork as in the initial four strategies, nor of stagnation and dormancy as with more traditional forms of art, there is just what Stambaugh terms, the way in which a thing 'presences' or 'exerts itself'; the kind of 'movement' witnessed in Grippo's potatoes, Zorio's fluctuating chemical composition of cobalt chloride, and Hutchinson's apples (1990 p.130). Linking Zorio's work explicitly with the concept of non-duality, Zacharopoulos clearly embraces this idea,

arguing that when approaching Zorio's work we must overcome notions of 'subject and object and think instead of music, where the aspect of the performance is co-extensive with that of the score' (1999 p.277).

Secondly, the reinvention of the object of art *as an event*, interfused in time and space, aptly describes *Dialogic Ephemerality* and dove-tails neatly with Loy's (2001) use of the phrase 'event-time' to reference Dōgen's non-dualistic Being-Time in contradistinction to dualistic 'clock-time'. Art conceived as *an event* as opposed to a *thing*, such as Meireles *Insertions*, Tiravanija's meals, Medalla's *Eskimo Carver* and my own work, *Dust*, invoke 'event-time' in part by refusing to create anything which provides the preconditions necessary to objectify either artwork, audience, artist or time. Instead, the idea of *relationship* facilitated by an event, takes precedence. Whilst not interrogating the concept of ephemerality specifically, Bourriaud has recently identified a 'culture of interactivity which posits the transivity of the cultural object as a fait accompli' (2002 p.25). Coining the term 'relational aesthetics', he defines such work as: 'A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space' (Bourriand, 2002 p.113). Distinguishing his position from, for example, Lippard's initial attempt at articulating the dematerialisation of the art object (discussed in Chapter 2), Bourriand insists that 'these works in no way celebrate immateriality' and do 'not dodge materialism, but deconstruct[s] the methods of making the art object into a series of events' (2002 p.47 & p.54).

Sympathetically, De Bon has noted that contemporary ephemeral art in particular, is shifting attention 'from object to relationship', and concludes that this is another

tactical manoeuvre in the long trajectory of transitory artwork intent on challenging the economic value of the art object (1997 p.2). Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that these pieces function as a political critique, (an aspect to which I will allude and one not to be dismissed), I suggest that there are additional implications which impact specifically upon the way in which *time* is understood; implications which subvert the nihilistic construction of impermanence and ephemerality encountered previously.

What evidence is there to support the notion of ephemeral art as a relational event and what motivates different artists to develop these kinds of practices? Of the three strategies, *Dialogic Ephemerality* is the best exemplar since communication and social exchange are a central feature of these practices; dialogue displaces both impermanent and permanent (art) object. Tiravanija's work for example, is based on 'providing structures that will encourage open-ended social relations' (Koh, 1998b p.171). Speaking of *Untitled (free)*, Tiravanija comments that the piece:

> is always interactive, or it is orientated towards a situation where a lot of people get involved, that's really more my interest; that it encourages exchange or a kind of gathering . . . the food may be the frame for things that happen inside or outside of it. In that sense food is just a minor part of what I'm really interested in (quoted in Brown, 1993 p.31).

In choosing to eat, audiences also opt to enter into relationships with unknown persons of unfamiliar status and cultural background. Koh speaks of the meal as a parallel 'interaction that fuels cultural actualization', arguing that the *quid pro quo* entailed in the free lunch is an unspoken demand that people 'engage with strangers' (1998b p. 172). Tiravanija's event, based on dialogic exchange, launches a subtle but multi-faceted critique whose targets include social stratification, inequality, hunger and the institution itself. The latter point escapes the attention of Melo who comments that; 'Even though the installations take place in spaces or venues within the system of

contemporary art, Tiravanija's intervention consists of inverting or physically effacing the elements of elitist differentiation and classist exclusion' (1995 p.105). In fact the conventional gallery context is no accident and *Untitled (free)* is, in part, successful *because of* not *despite* this fact.

Meireles also thwarts the definition of impermanence as a gradually disappearing material substance and eschews the object as the end product of some individual creative act in favour of art as a mechanism which facilitates a discursive exchange. Referring to *Insertions*, Brett observes that 'The art work itself began to be valued less as a discrete object and more as an act of communication, an imaginative insertion into ideological and social circuits already existing' (1990 p.47).

Similarly, the same strategic device of bringing people together based on a desire to develop a shared, co-operative and democratic practice which dissolves the traditional artist/audience divide is also foregrounded by Medalla and reflected in his critique in *Eskimo Carver* and other types of discursive work which occupied the artist in, for example, various versions of *A Stitch in Time*, between 1968 and 1972. Medalla speaks of

> a deep dissatisfaction towards all art that derives solely from one person, and is determined by one person's ideas and wishes . . . I wanted to share my thoughts and feelings with the spectator, who has been kept at an almost unreasonable distance by the established art of our time. I wanted to break down the invisible barrier between 'creator' and 'spectator', [for art to become] a living process (quoted in Brett, 1995a p.68).

In his discussion of *Eskimo Carver*, Brett makes it clear that Medalla's critique of the object as well as his desire to raise broader political questions is intrinsically linked with his move towards power sharing and co-authorship between audience and artist:

> The process of recycling was seen by the more radical critics . . . as implying a critique of capitalist society. For Medalla, however, the problems of consumerism and commodity production could not be illuminated by the mere creation by the artist of a new object, since they were bound up in the relationship between artist and spectator. A situation where many people

> are alienated by the business of gaining a livelihood from discovering their capacities as artists is paralleled by one in which the work of art becomes a super-fetish. The two phenomena are intimately connected. That was why Medalla's propositions for taking the waste objects and materials from the flux of everyday life into complex imaginative realms involved an invitation to passers-by to work this transformation themselves (1995a p.116).

Although the facilitation of dialogue between artist and collaborators/audience was not an original intention, *Dust* evolved into a relational event. In its embryonic stage, the project began with the entirely private, unseen dissection of my domestic vacuum cleaner bag, containing six week's worth of detritus from my home[24]. However, by choosing to work in this solitary manner it became clear that the only way to publicly share the work would be to exhibit the findings. This option was rejected on the basis that it objectified the contents of the dust and placed all emphasis on the end product, totally obscuring the processual dimension and precluding opportunities for dialogue; both pre-requisite components if the work was to accurately reflect the signature features of the latter three ephemeral strategies. Hence the decision was made to take the work out of a private domestic environment and into an institutional context where ready-made audiences/participants were available.

In the three *Dialogic* examples discussed above, commentators have tended to draw attention exclusively to the political implications arising from the participatory element

[24] At this early stage of the research, having rejected the "aesthetics of decay", I was exploring the ethics of ephemeral art in relation to Heidegger's concept of dwelling. The contiguity between his notion of guardianship/letting things be and the Chinese Daoist attitude of non-interference guided me towards Zen Buddhism, non-duality, time and impermanence. Initially I had set out to understand Heidegger's thinking by deliberately developing an artistic project which pursued a contrary approach exercising maximum coercion, control and suppression, expecting this would eventually lead me to articulate an alternative practice. In deciding what 'object' to select, what I could force to become something other than it was, I settled on dust and elected to clean and conserve the contents of my vacuum bag. The absurdity of washing, polishing, dusting and preserving dust suggested the complete antithesis of what Heidegger was intending to convey when he wrote about nurturing things so that they can become themselves. Moreover, a convenient irony lay in the fact that cleaning is a corner stone of conservation and museum culture; a culture ephemeral art set out to critique. Therefore to appropriate and combine the two methodologies; the collecting, classifying and display practices of the curator and the scientific examination, interventive treatment and documentation of the professional conservator seemed apt. Visual evidence of this developmental stage of the creative practice is provided in the Illustrations section of the thesis.

- the focus on communality - a social base from which dialogue arises. In particular, emphasis has been placed on how the artist, by removing him/herself from the usual privileged position as sole author and individual "genius", facilitates the creation of an inclusive and democratic practice, empowering an audience and equalising not only the participants but also the artist. Regarding Tiravanija's work for example, critics have honed in on his personal involvement in the preparation, serving and sharing of the meal, from which, Melo argues, 'self-centredness yields to total openness, and what could be an individual exercise becomes a collective activity'. Melo continues: 'The artist no longer has to be concerned with the form in which he must relate to other's, to the degree that he stops thinking about himself as a subject blessed with special attributes and tries instead to be like any other person' (1995 p.105). Similarly, Saltz observes that unlike Joseph Beuys who 'was always at centre stage . . . Tiravanija is strangely absent, even invisible' (1996 p.85). Likewise, in relation to Medalla's work, Brett states that communality and communication transcend individual interests: 'The device of mass participation, the elements of giving something of oneself in return rather than merely taking, was the key to this experiment' (1995a p.113). Considering Bourriand issued his description of 'a *relational* art (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space),' over three decades after Meireles initiated *Insertions*, this phenomenon hardly 'points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by modern art', at least insofar as *ephemeral art* is concerned (2002 p.14).

However, besides the valid political dimension, the relevance to the thesis of such

collaborative practices established between artist and participants extend beyond the politics of democracy and access, to broader philosophical questions concerning the dualism of subject and object "in" time. As Tiravanija's position demonstrates, by relinquishing control and subduing the role of egotistical artist/creator, the traditional divide between the authorial self and audience as external spectator is dissolved, as is the bifurcation between the artist/audience and the art object. If Meireles, Medalla, Tiravanija and myself are each responsible for initiating a project, once an idea has taken root the artist becomes simply one part of the community they create; one voice in the ensuing dialogue. Hence, the transition 'from object to relationship' identified by De Bon, and latterly Bourriand, is significant, not only due to the overtly political agenda associated with commodification on the one hand and democratic access on the other, but because it illustrates one way in which to 'destroy the thought constructed dualism between things and time' that Loy points out must take place in order to experience Being-Time. Where art is conceived of as a relational event, there is no *thing* to form one half of this opposition. Boundaries between artist, audience and artwork are dispelled such that the temporality of all three are combined.

The key factor which unites these works and distinguishes them from object-based art is that they not only demand engagement and participation; they are defined *through* it. An examination of the practices described reveal that unlike many contemporary works in which an audience is required to *complete* the work, the question here is not so much one of completion as one of *being*, in which 'artists consider[s] inter-subjectivity and interaction . . . as a point of departure and as an outcome', to the extent that 'The artwork is presented as a *social interstice*' (Bourriand, 2002 p.44 & p.45). Consequently, it becomes impossible to distinguish where art/artist/audience begin and

end. In Meireles words: 'The work only exists to the extent that other people participate in it' (1999b p.112). By disseminating the requisite information and instructions for copying and continuing the project, *Insertions* did not preach a message so much as actively enlist an anonymous audience in creating their own ideological insurrection, supporting a 'clandestine tactical action of political resistance' (Herkenhoff, 1999 p.50). While Bourriaud traces the history of relational aesthetics from human/God, via human/object to contemporary 'inter-human relations', his theory can usefully be extended to understanding the dissolution of the duality between *all* factors involved; time, self and object, which transcend limited *human* relationships (2002 p.28). Where art is conceived as an event, the location of 'art'; the creator, the audience *and* time interpenetrate, becoming indistinguishable. In successfully recasting art as an impermanent *event* rather than a *thing* made impermanent by the fact of its apparent disappearance, Kasulis' 'original unified experience' is engendered, and Loy's notion that non-duality means time is objects or objects are temporal, flourishes. Where there is no 'object' in the traditional sense of the word, there can be nothing from which either artist or audience is separated from, *including* time. Bourriand recognises how *Dialogic Ephemerality* 'prompts us to envisage the relations between space and time in a different way' (2002 p.48). Like Dōgen's description of spring, these events do not have an existence *within* time but *become* time itself as artist, audience, artwork and temporality are collapsed into one. Time moves through everything all at once and is not perceived by a detached, estranged spectator as an external factor pressing down upon and destroying an object, rendered instable by this fact. Time, object and experience are united in '*an occurring*'.

A third expression of 'event-time' (Dōgen's Being-Time), in which the duality between

time, object and self is circumvented, embodies the practice of renewal and re-enactment, a practice which Loy identifies in both "primitive" and Non-Western societies where 'time is not a content-less container but essential to the way that most traditional societies try to bring this world into harmony with a higher one'. This harmonious relationship is attained, Loy asserts, by rejecting the idea of time 'as empty continuum' in favour of 'time as pattern to be renewed or re-enacted'. Radically different, he continues, 'to our linear succession of cause-and-effect events, this is an associative temporality in which history and cosmology are inseparable, for time and what happens in time are not to be distinguished' (2001 pp.26-7). This characterisation of non-dualistic time (*Uji*) as 'a pattern to be renewed or re-enacted' implies both repetition and ritual.

Arguably, the work under examination facilitates such an experience of the interpenetration of time, self and (art) object through a primordially repetitious and ritualistic event or action. The notion of renewal and re-enactment manifests itself firstly, as an integral phenomenon associated with the private ritualistic methodologies of the artist, and secondly, as an external design feature connected with re-making or re-staging events, both of which are congruent with DeBon's assertion that 'many artists are currently appropriating aesthetic strategies from past societies' which were 'based on community interaction and ritual' (1997 p.1).

An obvious example of the internal practice of renewal and re-enactment is found in the *Ritual* strategy where time is repeated and re-lived through the incessant and obsessive circular nature of the actions undertaken by individual artists. A more detailed discussion of *Ritual Ephemerality* is deferred to the next section. However, in brief,

Laib's work exemplifies this kind of internal re-enactment from the initial stage of collecting pollen to the necessity of re-creating an installation due to the fact that the substance 'disperses with the movement of the air, and must be swept up and laid down again' (Rowell, 2000 p.37). As such, his entire practice; the collecting, sifting and scattering pollen are far more than simply a process which culminates in a grand exhibition opening. It represents a complete life-style enacted through cycles of seasonal change. For Laib, time really is being. Time is not a linear trajectory with high points and low points made up of finished products and public acclaim, but something which is made meaningful through continuous rituals. Art and time, art and self, and time and self are not a triangulation of different polarities but coalesce, as Loy says, in 'a pattern to be renewed'.

Similarly, Mazueaud's physically arduous and repetitive cleansing of the river is also based on the concept of renewal and re-enactment; a symbolic gesture performed at the same time on the same day of each month for seven years. Through this ritual the dualities of time, object and self are transcended, again rescuing 'art' from something that exists in a contained time warp and redefining it in terms of an event which functions at the intersection of temporality and being. As Mazeaud states:

> All rivers are connected . . . They feed each other, or connect through currents of invisible energy, memory carriers of the interconnection of all life. People function in the same way. One way to activate these currents is through ritual. Rituals are icons of connections. They are the art of our lives (1994 p.1).

The ritualistic dimension of collecting dust as well as of continuously separating, sorting and extracting fragments during the actualisation of the work, parallel this concept of re-enactment and renewal. In the first instance, cleaning/vacuuming is itself a ritual which is constantly re-enacted, renewing the domestic environment; suctioning away what has gone before and creating a clean space to begin again, to make another

mess. Furthermore, each item extracted creates a re-play of a time which supposedly exists *before* the time that is conceived as *now*. For example, the identification of different items within each dust bag prompted both myself and audiences to recall and re-live previous events, renewing memories and sharing and re-enacting scenes and situations through dialogue. I discuss this idea further in the section on the non-dualistic understanding of how time passes or moves.

Another manifestation of renewal and re-enactment is expressed within *Dialogic* work via repetition in the form of re-making or re-staging a complete artwork/event which transforms the whole piece into a ritual occasion on a more communal scale than in the solitary nature of *Ritual Ephemerality*. Evidence of this can be seen in Tiravanija's meal, for example, in which the endless preparation, eating and clearing up reflects a cyclical process repeated globally on a daily basis, in addition to the accompanying renewal and re-enactment of relationships. Likewise, Meireles system of *Insertions* is potentially open to infinite re-enactment. Situating his work alongside other Brazilian artists in the 1960s, Meireles states:

> Most of my works can be reconstructed; they don't have to be unique . . . we were concerned with how to make works freed of the author, the brushstroke, the corporeality which legitimates the original . . . interested in making works that could be reproduced and remade . . . and escape from the aura of the original (quoted in Mosquera, 1999 p.20).

Meireles stated intent may well be to circumvent the materialism and commerciality of the unique art object and a belief that through seemingly insignificant but persistent and repetitive collective acts, the struggles of oppressed individuals bring change; solidarity can overcome. However, there is more at stake. If the endless stamping of banknotes and transference of messages connects the artist to an unseen community, a symbol of resistance through the shared act of voicing dissent, this is achieved by introducing

repetition through re-enactment into the work, consciously or unconsciously corroborating a concept of time which negates the dualistic temporality of other types of ephemeral art. It is not without significance therefore, that none of these artworks can ever be said to reach total completion. Bourriand, for example, speaks generally of relational art as 'a forever unfinished discursiveness' (2002 p.26). In particular, Tiravanija's meals constitute 'a long poem that will never be finished', always in a constant state of fluidity and circularity (Hainly, 1996 p.98). Remarking on the analogous inconclusiveness of *Eskimo Carver*, Brett notes that 'what has been labelled as work is often itself only a stage of some larger concept which is essentially unpredictable and open-ended . . . Medalla's are by nature unfinished propositions' (1995a p.23).

Dust also conveys a concept of time as something to be repeated and renewed through the re-making of the artwork. The event has been re-staged in the four venues outlined earlier, prior to which the project, in prototype form, was trialled in an exhibition at Camberwell College of Art, before seeking appropriate independent institutions to host the work. In addition, the piece has been re-created for two distinctive educational events. The first occasion comprised part of a professional training day for school governors in a London local authority. The second occasion followed the initial performance event at Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology when I returned, by invitation, to repeat the work as part of a variety of National Science Week events hosted by the University. Children were invited to join me in dissecting and categorising the dust. To coincide with this event, the contents of the vacuum bag from the previous occasion were exhibited in a dead-pan traditional museological style. Each identified and sorted element was displayed within a glass

museum cabinet in the archaeology section, carefully labelled and dated, mirroring the "authentic" archaeological finds exhibited close by.

As with the *Dialogic* examples provided, the simplicity of the concept and the low-tech requirements circumvent ideas of originality, skill and authorship, enabling anyone to re-create *Dust*. Similarly, the notion of completion is deflected by the fact that at none of the above venues was the dissection process of any of the vacuum bags ever finished. Moreover, cleaning, being a chore of infinite proportions, there was/is always *more* environmental dust available. Significantly, like Meireles *Insertions*, the dialogue prompted by *Dust* extended beyond both the duration of the actual performances and beyond what might traditionally be designated as *an audience*, to engage those at all levels of each institution, facilitating discussions with, for example, contract cleaners, café staff, conservators, caretakers, security attendants, volunteers, visiting academics and educational personnel at different venues. As such, the location of art; where the work actually *is*, is not limited to the action of dissection, sorting and categorising dust fragments, tied exclusively to the individual artist but continues to *occur* in other spaces and times.

Importantly, within each example, repetition in the form of both ritual, and renewal and re-enactment, discloses a perception of time which challenges the life to death processes associated with earlier strategies. Although every meal, every Coca-Cola drink, every piece of rubbish and each dust bag is either created or appropriated in the full knowledge that it will be consumed and/or wiped away, this erasure is significantly different from the nihilistic erasure of the artwork illustrated in the initial strategies because, through cyclical repetition, it embodies the prospect of rebirth. It might be objected that Sterbak's *Flesh Dress*, discussed in Chapter 3, is also designed to be

reconstructed and therefore reveals the same sense of cyclicality. However, what distinguishes Sterbak's work is that any evidence of cyclical time is essentially neutralised and cancelled out by the linear process each individual garment undergoes, marking a passage from instability to stasis, as discussed previously.

Conclusion

The notion of art as 'an occurring' or an event rather than object, whether expressed through the concept of material as energy, a relational event, renewal and re-enactment manifested as ritual, or through the reconstruction of artworks, all demonstrate how the duality between self, object and time is dispensed with. Each practice, including *Dust*, dissolves the concept of "things" (artworks) as substantial entities and the attendant 'obstruction' *between* things that inevitably proceeds. None create or conceive art as independent objects suspended in packages of time. Together artists, audiences and events interpenetrate to realise the original Japanese pluralisation of Being-Time whereby 'beings are all times'. As such, time does indeed become objects, and objects become time, although as Loy notes, not in the way objects are ordinarily construed.

Chapter 6

The Non-duality of Permanence and Impermanence in which Container Time is Further Negated

There is a further dimension to Being-Time which demands attention; a dimension which adds weight to Dōgen's refutation of the idea that time functions like a container. Abe points out that

> Dōgen does not simply identify being and time. Their common denominator is mutability, or impermanence. For Dōgen all beings without exception are impermanent, just for this reason all beings are the Buddha-nature for he rejects an immutable Buddha-nature beyond impermanence (1992 p.70).

The purpose of this chapter is firstly to examine Dōgen's understanding of impermanence and its relationship to *Uji* (Being-Time) outlined in the last chapter. The second aim is to evaluate if/or to what extent this principle can be identified in the alternative strategies.

6.0 Non-dualistic Time in Theory

Dōgen returns in many fascicles to the universality of impermanence (mujō). In *Uji*, for example, he uses the analogy of spring again to describe impermanence in terms of 'flowing'. However, "flowing" is not to be understood in the conventionally progressive sense but is intended to convey the totalistic and interpenetrative character of impermanence. Dōgen exhorts his students:

> Do not think flowing is like wind and rain moving from East to West [i.e., in a linear sequence]. The entire world is not unchangeable, is not immovable. It flows. Flowing is like spring. Spring with all its numerous aspects is called flowing. When spring flows there is nothing outside of spring . . . spring invariably flows through spring. Although flowing itself is not spring, flowing occurs throughout spring . . . (Tanahashi, 1985 p.80).

A significant section of the fascicle *Busshō* (Buddha-nature) is similarly devoted to discussing impermanence. A frequently cited passage is Dōgen's statement: 'If you wish to know the Buddha-nature, you must realise that it is nothing other than temporal conditions themselves' (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.66). In other words, for Dōgen, the true nature of reality (non-duality) *is* impermanence. The underlying theme that *everything* is impermanent informs Dōgen's unification of time and being and is indicative of his non-dualistic approach to temporality in general. From a conventional viewpoint, impermanence and permanence represent opposite extremes, characterised by Dōgen in the appendix to Busshō, as 'nihilistic impermanence' and 'lifeless permanence' (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.98). In contrast, Dōgen dissolves the dualistic thinking which gives rise to these opposing categories, with what Stambaugh describes as a Heraclitian dialectic in which 'one opposite is or becomes the other', arriving at a non-dual paradox: the impermanence of permanence and impermanence (1990 p.19). On the one hand, everything in the universe exists as flux, defined by change, while on the other hand, *because* impermanence is an all pervasive constant, *ipso facto* it paradoxically guarantees an element of predictability or permanence to this state of affairs, engendering a kind of "permanent impermanence". As Stambaugh states, 'Dōgen never accepts a fixed permanence beyond or outside impermanence. True permanence and true impermanence as Dōgen conceives them differ from previous conceptions, and are ultimately identical' (1990 p.55). This is deftly demonstrated at the end of Busshō wherein Dōgen relates a story in which Hui-neng, Sixth Patriarch and leader of a Zen school, explains the meaning of permanence and impermanence to the puzzled monk Hsing-Ch'ang:

> If the Buddha-nature were permanent, what would be the need to preach beyond that about all

> dharmas good and bad? Even in the passage of an entire kalpa, there would not be a single person who would ever raise the mind of enlightenment. That is why I preach impermanence, and that itself is the way of true permanence preached by the Buddha. If, on the other hand, all dharmas were impermanent, then each thing would have a selfhood and take part in birth-and-death, and there would be areas to which true permanence did not reach. Therefore, I preach permanence, and it is just the same as the meaning of true impermanence . . . (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.98).

It is clear that when Dōgen speaks of the pervasive nature of impermanence, this extends to the question of subjectivity. In *Genjōkōan*, for example, Dōgen explicitly warns a person not to 'make[s] the mistake of thinking his own mind, his own nature, is permanent and unchanging', adding, in the following sentence: 'all things have no selfhood' (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.42). Kasulis explains that:

> Dōgen would reject our commonly held notion that change is in the things outside us – that is, a (metaphysical or physical) attribute of objects. Although we often say "everything is changing", the change cannot be located either in the self or in the object. Rather, the change is a constituent of phenomena (dharmas) as they are pre-reflectively experienced.

Like Olson (2000) and Stambaugh (1990), Kasulis emphasises the pre-reflective, phenomenological and experiential condition of Dōgen's impermanence in contrast to the metaphysical. He continues:

> when projecting our experience of change onto some external noumenon, we falsely assume the experiencing self to be unchanging; but when we take the experience of change *as it is* and make no projections beyond what is directly given, there is simply the unending experience of flux (1981 p.81).

Consequently, time can no longer be construed as a container, separate from but acting upon the objects within it, for all "objects" (including the self) are no longer static phenomena. It follows then that neither can time be viewed as the continuous and external *cause* of the decay or destruction of these objects for the same reason; time and object, time and self interpenetrate. Paradoxically, the types of ephemeral art considered earlier which typify Conceptual Art's response to the crisis in Modernism (a critique of

meta-narratives and the myth of the substantial self), endorse the standard view of impermanence and change depicted by Kasulis above. Change *is indeed* perceived to be in 'the things outside us', namely in the endless variety of objects which dissipate, decay and dissolve before our very eyes. Thus, this construction of ephemerality inadvertently upholds the idea of the self as a changeless essence since the unchanging self becomes the static background against which to measure the transformation purportedly occurring in the art object. Hence, if change or impermanence is *the* defining reality, as Dōgen asserts, everything, *without exception,* participates in this equation. Time does not react with, or upon anything suspended "in" it's sphere. Times's "sphere" is the unbounded totality of existence itself. This is the complete meaning of *Uji.*

Given the above, the second criteria emerges as a problem of whether impermanence, defined as an 'unending experience of flux', can be engendered through other types of ephemeral practice without overlaying or obscuring it with what Loy, referenced in Chapter 3, terms 'conceptual thinking'. Kasulis goes on to suggest that the Soto Zen practice of zazen (concentration) provides a means of overcoming this problem and of realising Dōgen's understanding of impermanence[25]. He writes:

> To practice zazen . . . is to experience directly the universality of being-time . . . of impermanence. For that moment, there is nothing more to be achieved; one has authenticated what is. If zazen is interrupted, however, if reflective thought . . . is superimposed onto the experience, temporal categories arise and the realisation is lost . . . This does not imply, though, that the Buddha-nature is destroyed by reflective thought. Impermanence is always present, but reflective thought (insofar as it objectifies and transforms experience into static, inflexible

[25] Dōgen presents his guidelines for zazen practice in two key fascicles translated by Abe & Waddell (2002). These are: *Fukanzazengi* (Universal Promotion of the Principle of Zazen), and *Zazengi* (The Principles of Zazen). Although zazen is frequently referred to in Buddhist literature as a form of meditation there is only one short mention of this in *Fukanzazengi,* in which Dōgen categorically distinguishes zazen from any form of meditation. He writes: 'The zazen I speak of is not learning meditation'. In the preceding sentence he refers to zazen instead as 'Non-thinking' by contrast with the dualistic categories of 'thinking' and'not-thinking' (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.4). Kapleau (2000) also presents a persuasive argument as to why "meditation" is an inaccurate characterisation of zazen.

categories) prevents the Buddha-nature from being experienced as it is: as impermanence (1981 pp.82-3).

The relevance of this statement to the thesis lies not in whether the creative practice should incorporate some version of Buddhist "meditation", rather, that an authentic experience of universal impermanence (i.e., of non-duality), is dependent upon relinquishing reflective thinking and must embrace what Kasulis variously describes as; 'pre-reflective consciousness', entering a 'without-thinking mode', and, as referenced earlier, 'mak[ing] no projections beyond what is directly given', to articulate the alternative (1981 p.80). In-keeping with these comments, Olson adds to the list the importance of not *objectifying* phenomenon. From Dōgen's non-dualistic perspective, he argues, 'there is a ceaseless unfolding of directly experienced impermanence, a flow of temporal events that represent the presence of things as they are without objectifying them' (2000 pp.77-8). The question here then is whether it is possible for an ephemeral artistic practice to dissolve reflective thinking and facilitate 'pre-reflective consciousness' in order to arrive at something akin to Dōgen's radical concept of impermanence. To some extent, this question has already been addressed in the previous chapter through the concept of art as a relational event which embodies the notion of impermanence as 'an occurrence'. However, the artists discussed in this chapter approach what is essentially the same problem from a different angle, demonstrating that there is more than one way to overcome the conventionally perceived duality between time and being. Moreover, their work also reinforces the centrality of impermanence to Dōgen's explanation of how time and existence interpenetrate.

6.1 Non-dualistic Time in Practice

In the next part of this chapter I argue that closer inspection of the artworks and accounts of artists associated with the *Ritual* strategy in particular, reveal that dissolving reflective thinking is, whether consciously or unconsciously, integral to these practices. I suggest that the cyclical temporality inscribed within such repetitious and ritualistic practices lends itself to a non-dualistic perception of time because of the manner in which subject and object are continuously conflated, leaving no gap for reflective thinking to arise. In what follows I identify three recurrent features of *Ritual Ephemerality* which operate collectively to negate reflective thinking. These features comprise a kind of *meditative attitude* to the work that engenders an experience of *unity* between artist and materials, which in turn, is dependent on, or symptomatic of, the artist's ability to *relinquish attachment to egotistical desires* in terms of concern with the final product and conventional notions of success and failure.

Taking the first scenario, in each example of *Ritual Ephemerality* there is an uncanny resemblance between Kasulis' description of Zen practice and the contemplative disposition of these artists. Laib, for instance, speaks of collecting pollen almost as an act of zazen: 'You reach a point where you are no longer conscious of your own concentration' (quoted in Farrow, 1996 p.11). With Mazeaud, the level of absorption and depth of concentration which accompanies her repetitive and ritualistic behaviour also verges on the mystical. This is evidenced not only her dedication to the cyclical monthly cleaning she undertakes, described by Carde as 'a pilgrimage', which commences with a prayer for the river, but is also endorsed by the artist's own diary entry stating that 'on and on, it's like a devotee doing rosaries' (quoted in Carde, 1990

p.5). Similarly, Long recounts how his walking practice 'is never a performance' but 'usually a very quiet activity' which he is 'happy to make [it] in solitude' because 'the power and energy comes from being alone in that place'. He continues, referencing the Buddhist notion of emptiness to describe his 'repetitive walking' as 'a certain way of emptying out or simplifying my life' (quoted in Seymour, 1991 p.248 & p.251).

Setting aside the overtly spiritual connotations expressed above, my experience of dissecting vacuum bags mirrored Laib, Mazaud and Long's description of their activities in terms of giving undivided attention to a repetitive act. The activity of extracting minute fragments with a fine pair of tweezers from a vacuum bag for up to eight hours at a stretch in *Dust*, involved the same continuous slow, precise and focussed regard to detail. Maintaining concentration was important in retrieving often extremely delicate and fragile items such as tiny disembodied, translucent slivers of insect wings, finger nails, feathers and eyelashes. The work struck observers as an excruciatingly tedious task prompting frequent comments along the lines of "I don't know how you can do that, it must be *so* boring". However, despite appearances, little effort was required to sustain concentration whilst dissecting the vacuum bags. The activity itself proved immensely absorbing and I often became so engrossed that the presence of visitors wishing to engage in conversation about the piece were sometimes felt as an unwelcome intrusion. A geologist at Cambridge University, upon encountering *Dust*, was struck by the analogous nature of her own fieldwork in Egypt. She spoke at length not only of her experience of sitting on the banks of the Nile sorting through sieved soil samples with tweezers, extracting small clasts from river sediments, but also of the kind of trance-like state that accompanied her total immersion in the

work.

Arguably, the state of mind described in these accounts testifies to Dōgen's 'non-thinking' or Kasulis' 'without thinking' frame of reference. In each case there is simply the action; the act of doing, unhindered by conscious reflection or over-laid with a stream of thoughts categorising, commenting on or judging the activity.

A second closely related factor indicative of a pre-reflective thinking mode concerns the inimitable relationship between artist and subject, expressed as an experience of merging *with* their "materials". This is more than just a sympathetic identification with the physical properties of something and fulfils Loy's criteria of non-duality demarcated by an 'action in which there is no bifurcation between subject and object' which 'requires that there be no differentiation between agent and act; in other words, no awareness of an agent as distinct from its actions' (1988 p.96). Long's work, for example, is demarcated by 'a sense in which the artist not only walks the path or the line, but is the path itself' (Seymour, 1991 p.26). The same contiguity is witnessed in Laib's comment that whilst collecting pollen 'You become not just a part of it but the same' (quoted in Hutchinson, 1992 p.30). He describes a state of being "lost" in the work, observing that 'From the outside the work seems repetitive, but when you are doing it, it doesn't seem so. You don't even realise it's repetitive. It's just, that's what it is' (quoted in Rowell, 2000 p.37). Mazeaud also references this notion of oneness, framing her experience in terms of *being* rather than *doing*, stating that 'my meditation directed me to go and be with the river and *not do* anything' (quoted in Carde, 1990 p.122).

Total concentration and focussed attention to the actions of walking, collecting rubbish and pollen combined with a sense of unity between artist and subject matter accurately

reflect Olson's requirement, referenced above, to avoid objectifying phenomena as a pre-requisite for negating reflective thinking. Significantly, it indicates that the conventional bifurcation of self and object is overcome. Where Long becomes 'the path itself' and Laib becomes the pollen, symbiotically, in my own practice, I am dust and dust is me. This is both concrete and metaphorical. In the first instance there is a very literal sense in which dust and being are inseparable since both my personal dust - my free-floating dead skin cells - collide and combine with those of passing visitors, which, in turn, become intermingled with the institutional dust under scrutiny containing amongst other things, additional dead skin flakes of persons long since vacuumed up. Hence the artwork/event is no longer the objectified and substantial object so familiar to other types of ephemeral art – the removed and separate lump of matter an audience is presented with to observe decaying or disintegrating.

At another level, the performance/installation de-objectifies the self because the dust is not only a collection of ever changing particles comprising parts of ones physical being, but also represents the memories, thoughts and emotions of both artist and audience manifest in the forensic debris. In that sense, self (or *selves* as in Dōgen's *beings*) and dust are one and the same. The dust is not something external to me (the artist) but is actually a part of me (and my audience's) consciousness, and conversely, our collective consciousness is also a part of the dust. For example, the bloodied plaster extracted from the Horniman vacuum bag called to mind shared experiences of childhood accidents, and aromatic lavender seeds located in the Fenton House vacuum bag stimulated memories and conversations about underwear drawers with fragrant lavender sachets; homemade presents given by elderly relatives. Thus multiple selves are present; the self who fell over and hurt their knee as a child, the self who was given old-

fashioned gifts, and so on. Consequently multiple *times* are present too; the time of the accident co-mingles with the time of the gift received. Moreover, these multiple selves co-exist with the multiple selves of others – my memories (the memories of the artist) and your memories (the memories of the audience/participants). Similarly, multiple times co-exist; my "pasts" (the "pasts" of the artist) co-exist alongside your "pasts" (the pasts of the audience/participants). Hence, multiple "selves" are present alongside multiple times, not separate but integrated. As such, *my* time (the time of the artist) is also *your* time (the time of the audience/participants), and my "self/selves" is/are also your "self"/"selves". This understanding negates the possibility of objectifying time. Time is no longer an independent self-existing phenomenon which cocoons us and our actions but something which is interwoven and, as Dōgen says, 'flows' through everything. Time impregnates the dust and the fragments of events and people therein. Therefore, neither the self (mine or audience), nor the art object/event is objectified because there is a profound and fundamental convergence between material and artist, material and audience, and between artist and audience. Laib expresses these sentiments well when he states:

> If you believe only in the individual, in what you are, then life is a tragedy that ends in death. But if you feel part of a whole, that what you are doing is not just you, the individual, but something bigger, then all these problems are not there anymore. Everything is totally different. There is no beginning and no ending (quoted in Farrow, 1996 pp.22-3).

If we examine Laib's statement within the context of Dōgen's non-dualistic temporality, not only is there no beginning and no ending to the artwork as in no birth and no death *in time*, (a subject reserved for the next section), neither is there a beginning or ending to the *self*; no boundaries or limitations to what is conventionally delineated as *myself* and *yourself*. This is significant because it meets Kasulis' criteria

of dispensing with fixed 'temporal categories' which prevent that unification and merging to occur.

Dōgen's radical concept of impermanence is thus realised in this deep interpenetration of time and existence. Change is not just something which happens *to* us or *to* objects (in the example of my work; dust). Change *is* us, change *is* objects; all times are all beings. Impermanence permeates our (human) being as impermanence permeates the beingness of dust. From this perspective the self is not a permanent entity. If I pose the question 'where am I?', I have to answer; 'everywhere'. Physically I am dust floating in the universe and emotionally I am dust as my memories. Agnes Denes writes in her artists' bookwork: 'All things . . . were made of dust and will one day become dust again before they begin another cycle of transformation . . . a transitory state . . .'. Yet, like Dōgen, Denes is mindful of the paradox of impermanence which contains its opposite, for while dust is a transitory and circular phenomenon it also represents stability and permanence since it 'symbolises the elements of the ultimate, unchanging laws and dynamics that govern the fate of the universe' (1989 p.5).

The third factor is an extension of the above point. It builds on the commitment to avoid objectifying things and might be described as the subjugation, or abandonment of the self by these artists. In *Genjōkōan*, Dōgen speaks about the experience of non-duality being dependent on the ability to forget the ego-self in order to transcend the usual subject/object dichotomy and become one with the universe. Commenting on this passage, Loy states that '"Forgetting" ourselves is how we lose our sense of separation and realise that we are not other than the world' (2002 p.7). Arguably, forgetting oneself is precisely what is reiterated throughout these practices and compounds the interconnection between artist and material, removing the barrier of reflective thinking

to engender a non-dualistic experience of impermanence. While the emphasis in *Ritual Ephemerality* is skewed more towards the direct communion between artist and subject, as with Laib whose 'art is an act of participation and sharing – participation in nature and sharing that experience with others', the relational dimension associated with the *Dialogic* artists outlined in the previous section, also functions as an expression of this interconnection (Ottmann, 2000 p.20).

Loy argues that :

> As long as there is the sense of oneself as an agent distinct from one's actions, that act can only be partial and there will be a sensation of action due to the relation between them. In such a case there is a perspective from which an act is observed to occur (or not to occur), whereas in non-dual action there is no sense of ego-consciousness outside the action. When one *is* the action, no residue of self-consciousness remains to observe that action objectively (1988 p.107).

Evidence that egotistical motivations are abandoned in *Ritual* practices can be seen in various comments by both artists and critics. Laib, for example, expresses awe and humility in his declaration that 'The pollen is what pollen is, and I am somehow participating in that, and trying to get close to these things. I could not create something like this . . . I know that here is much, much more than myself' (quoted by Farrow, 1996 p.29). Farrow notes that Laib adopts 'the role of mediator rather than creator' symbolising his 'position of acceptance, of working with and respecting things as they are' (1996, p.30 & 31). She continues, writing:

> just as the process of collecting the pollen is controlled by the rhythm of the seasons and the weather, so the actual making of the work – the time of making, the fineness of the muslin used for sifting, the size, colour and material consistency of the rectangle – is determined by the organic substances themselves. The artist, in this sense becomes more of a servant than a dictator (1996 p.32).

For Hutchinson, Laib's work displays 'no signs of effort or ambition, and no evidence of the artist's personality' (1992 p.29). Similarly, in Long's case, Seymour suggests that the consequence of situating himself in such direct relationship to the ground (a theme

which also pervades Laib and Mazeaud's practices), 'gets rid of inflated ideas and ego and puts the subject in a humble position in relation to the objects of his intentions, allowing connection rather than confrontation'. She goes on to note that this connection is an antidote to the 'fragmentation' of the self (1991 p.16). Comparable sentiments are also disclosed by Mazeaud's habit of beginning each day of ritualistic cleansing by meditating, an act of tuning in, guiding her to work *with* the river rather than imposing her will upon it. As DeBon argues, 'the function of the work is the interaction between artist and subject' (1997 p.2). From Dōgen's perspective, this is not so much a question of 'interaction' as of coagulation, wherein two previously divided principles coalesce. Mazeaud rejects a judgemental and moralistic attitude to what might conventionally be perceived as rubbish and pollution, imposing neither her physical presence nor her mental preconceptions on the environment, pursuing instead a sense of union, demarcated by reverence and respect for the river. According to Carde:

> her experience of the river has changed the direction of her own path . . . She began in earnest to form a dialogue with the river. Instead of picking the trash clean, she now found that to the river, some things were not such an insult as others. An iron pipe might add minerals, a rug remnant hugging a rock had become home to new grass, bugs and spiders (1990 p.5).

Dust incorporated the same deferential spirit in terms of respecting the nature of the "material". This should not be misconstrued as a statement to the effect that dust, pollen or whatever, has some definitive and unchanging "essence". Rather, the ethos is one of acceptance; of working *with* rather than *against* the unique identities of transient matter. Like both *Dialogic* and *Ritual* artists, *Dust* foregrounded the notion of relationship. On the one hand the relationship engendered between artist and audience and on the other hand, the relationship engendered in the process of working with the material itself. At times this was a difficult idea for audiences to grasp and some individuals encountering

the work assumed that the dissection was merely a precursor to making a "real" artwork, possibly a collage combining the fragments extracted from the vacuum bag. Moreover, the project rejected any desire for alchemical transformation; of manipulating a base material (dust) into some auratic, reified art object; of turning something profane and prosaic into something sacred, or of searching for value elsewhere. I was also frequently asked whether I had found anything 'precious', 'valuable' or 'important' yet. In fact the whole piece challenges the very idea of value and the belief that some things are more valuable or significant than others, not least, relationships. It invited people to look more closely at the minutiae of life and to reconsider something frequently viewed as unworthy of attention with renewed awe and wonder. Although the performance/installation comprised sorting the contents of the dust into classified groups, the classification system was democratically predicated on physical properties comprising sub-sections within them, rather than any hierarchical system which ascribed more or less worth to an item according to either its aesthetic appearance or perceived monetary, functional or age value[26]. This contrasted strongly with the archaeological exhibits surrounding me at Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, authorised by an academic community as either representative, large enough, interesting enough or valuable enough to warrant display, a fact which was poignantly endorsed by the small Roman pottery sherds identified in the vacuum bag at the McDonald Research Institute, designated as "rubbish" and discarded. Differentially, in *Dust*, no components were dismissed. From dead skin cells to used plasters, eyelashes to carpet fibres, everything was validated and displayed. Like Mazeaud's

[26] This is not to deny the culturally determined codes of classification adopted. I consistently invited audiences to change and "re-classify" the sorted fragments. Children frequently chose kinaesthetic methods based on colour, texture, shape and smell, for example.

river excavations, nothing was treated as inconvenient; everything belonged and had a valid place in the overall scheme of things.

In their respective quests for a relational art defined by a meaningful dialogue with matter, each of the above artists in different ways cultivate and express a co-operative disposition towards their chosen media, refusing either to dominate or manipulate the land or to create extraneous objects. Neither do they categorise aspects of their materials as good and bad, useful and useless, ugly and beautiful, relevant and irrelevant. Everything is accepted for what it is. Things may be moved about a bit but only in order to celebrate or value what is already there. The pollen, the river, the land and the dust are what they are. The significance of these attitudes lies with the fact that they facilitate or reflect Kasulis' exhortation to 'experience change as it is and make no projections beyond what is directly given', quoted earlier. His statement that a non-dualistic perception of time is predicated on the belief that there is 'nothing more to be achieved' is acutely demonstrated by these artists as a policy of non-interference.

Conclusion

The three reciprocal factors; meditative concentration, the union of artist and material, and the abandonment of ego driven motives, suggest that the interpenetrative nature of impermanence in Dōgen's *Uji* is realised within these practices. Boundaries between artist, artwork and nature/material are dispelled, creating an experience of Being-Time which arises via the synchronisation of self, action and object. Moreover, ephemerality is redefined from a mutating form based on disappearance, to impermanence as 'the unending experience of flux'; change simply is as it is. Long's walking practice encapsulates this; 'the sculpture became part of the world, an articulation of it - not an

addition, not a stable object. While being made the sculpture was also moving along, it had form but not an unalterable permanence of form' (Fuchs, 1986 pp.46-7). In addition, Long's comments on visibility and invisibility suggest a certain sympathy with Dōgen's paradoxical understanding of permanence and impermanence:

> In making *Line* he discovered that its visibility depended only on the quality of walking. Walking once he left almost invisible footprints in the grass; walking up and down many times left a visible path. He realised that between the two 'states' there was no real 'conceptual' difference. It led him to think about visibility and permanence. Even the visible line would in the end disappear (Fuchs, 1986 p.46).

Or, as Rowell says of Laib's work: 'the eternal in the transitory' (2000 p.32).

Chapter 7

The Non-duality of Life and Death in which Time as the Cause of Decay and Destruction is Negated

Dualistic Aristotelian time, as discussed previously, is premised upon the principle that time is durational. This chapter considers how Dōgen's approach to the issue of life and death effectively negates this common conception. Again, his thoughts on the subject intersect with, and are a coherent extension of his understanding of impermanence as *the* defining reality. After examining the philosophical concepts I look at how these are played out both within my own work and in the three alternative strategies.

7.0 Non-dualistic Time in Theory

Where Dōgen neutralises the opposition between 'nihilistic impermanence' and 'lifeless permanence', so too he collapses the conventional dualism which typically characterises birth/life as the beginning of a process and death as its end. To reiterate Stambaugh:

> Fundamental to the common conception of birth and death is the idea of duration between them. Birth is the inception of a life that extends over a period of time and terminates in death. This is also what most people would call impermanence: the limited life span between birth and death (1990 p.72).

It is this conception of birth and death which defines the examples of ephemeral art considered so far; the creation of an object which extends over a period of time and terminates in disappearance. In contrast, Dōgen characteristically undermines this duality by asserting that life and death are mutually arising, co-existent phenomenon. Stambaugh quotes Nishiyama and Stevens' translation of the *Shinjingakudō* fascicle (Learning Through Mind and Body) in which Dōgen maintains 'the instantaneous co-

existence of life and death, heaven and earth in each moment' (1990 p.74). Similarly, Kim's translation of the fascicle *Shukke-kodoku* (Merits of the Monastic's Life), reads: 'life arises and perishes instantaneously from moment to moment and does not abide at all' (2004 p.154). Stated simply; the dualistic concept of birth and death is a misnomer because there is only continuous impermanence. As such, Dōgen removes any basis for presupposing the durational quality of time since there is no longer any temporal distance "between" these two states. They interpenetrate. This is clear in *Shōji*, for example, where Dōgen writes:

> It is a mistake to suppose that birth turns into death. Birth is a phase that is an entire period of itself, with its own past and future. For this reason, in Buddha-dharma birth is understood a no-birth. Death is a phase that is an entire period of itself, with its own past and future. For this reason, death is understood as no-death. In birth there is nothing but birth and in death there is nothing but death (Tanahashi, 1985 p.75).

Commenting on the first sentence of this passage Abe remarks:

> To view life as passing from birth to death is nothing but an outsider's view in which we observe our own life and death objectively and conceptually from without. If we grasp our life and death not from the outside but non-objectively from within, we realise that life and death are not two different things, but rather that we are living and dying at one and the same time. In this non-conceptual, existential understanding, there is no living apart from dying and there is no dying apart from living. Living and dying are like two sides of one sheet of paper, and are two different verbal expressions of one and the same reality. Usually, however, people are not clearly aware of this human reality and think they pass from birth to death (1992 pp.111-112).

However, there is an additional complexity to Dōgen's thought here which emerges in the remainder of the *Shōji* quotation above. On the one hand birth and death co-exist; 'death is not an external power; it is rather co-present with life . . . death is not an event that puts an end to one's life, but it is rather an intimate part of one's life' (Olson, 2000 p.171). Yet on the other hand, birth and death are not identical. Each retain their separate identity; 'Birth is a phase that is an entire period of itself'. To continue Abe's metaphor; two sides of a single sheet of paper contain different information. Dōgen emphasises this independence at the end of a crucial passage in *Genjōkōan* which

accentuates the discontinuity of time (discussed under the next theme), stating: 'Life is a stage of time, and death is a stage of time. It is like winter and spring. Buddhists do not suppose that winter passes into spring or speak of spring passing into summer' (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.42).

The immediate relevance of Dōgen's thoughts on life and death lie in his categorical negation of the conventional durational perception of time. As Stambaugh puts it: 'Life does not come first with death following; there is no series, no serial relation'. Moreover, she continues, 'when the understanding of life and death is stripped of its conceptual framework of durational time, we are dealing with non other than *Uji*' (1990 p.75). In other words, by removing any possibility of *transition*, of conceptualising life and death in terms of before and after, Dōgen returns us again to his first principle; there is only existence-time, the total interpenetration of time and being, occurring *now*, in *this* very moment. Where the kinds of ephemeral art surveyed so far have constructed impermanence in nihilistic terms through a process inevitably resulting in the absolute disappearance or "death" of the object, 'for Dōgen, death is not understood as the end of life in any sense, or as a possibility of becoming *Nothing* . . . but is grasped as an *actuality* at the core of one's present existence' (Abe, 1992 p.118).

Given that life and death have been closely associated with the materiality of the art object in the kinds of ephemeral art considered previously, for example; the dissolution of ice and snow, the decay of organic matter and so on, it is to the material properties of these alternative ephemeral practices to which I turn my attention now. In claiming to articulate a non-dualistic understanding of time such practices must embody the notion of co-existence; 'that there is birth-and-death in every moment, with the arising and

passing away of each thought and act', as opposed to either symbolically referencing or physically acting out the complete annihilation of the artwork (Loy, 1988 p.222).

7.1 Non-dualistic Time in Practice

In this third chapter on the realisation of non-dualistic temporality, I contend that by adopting a cyclical structure of one form or another, artworks and practices across the three alternative strategies, as well as my own practice, subvert the idea of an object situated on a linear time-line which progresses from birth (or life) to death. Variations on the theme of circularity inherent in these pieces consistently reject a beginning or an end point, a time of birth or a time of death connected by a durational passage, and are therefore responsive to the notion that life and death are mutually arising, not mutually exclusive concepts. This is articulated in different but interconnected ways; through what is done, how the artist constructs a piece of work and interfaces with the "material/subject" matter in such a way as to negate any notion of durational time, as well as through the careful selection of specific materials/matter, whose constitutional features actively promote the notion of the co-existence of life and death. I consider three exemplary scenarios; the transference of energy between materials, the practice of re-cycling materials, and the notion of internal material reconstitution.

One strategy artists working with the ephemeral have adopted which effectively destroys any concept of durational time and embraces a principle of cyclicality is evident in Zorio, Grippo, Long and Laib's work, expressed as the transmission of energy between one material and another, and back again. To some extent this parallels the cyclical process of *social exchange*; the human equivalent evidenced in the *Dialogic* strategy discussed in Chapter 5. Here energy transference takes the form of chemical,

physical and/or biological processes. Zorio's *Rosa-blu-rosa*, for example, is predicated upon the chemical properties of cobalt chloride inducing chromatic variegations from pink to blue and *vice-versa*, described by the artist as 'a piece about time . . . a living thing, a continual mutation' (quoted in Bandini, 2001 p.326). Consequently, the notion of ongoing, unremitting change; 'the circular metamorphosis of materials' which 'shift between opposite, complimentary polarities that slip through each other's fibres, producing an intense continuous pulsation', rescues impermanence from the nihilistic interpretation encountered in the previous four strategies (Celant, 1992 pp.13-14). Ephemerality, for Zorio, is not predicated on the demise, decay or destruction of a thing in time, but, as Christov-Bakargiev notes: 'is keyed towards the release of energy in the transformation of materials' such that 'energy, when it is consumed, is not lost . . . but simply transferred from one element to another' (1999 p.39). Celant agrees that there is 'neither a beginning nor an end. Every part is simultaneously subjected to calm and to turmoil, because what is important is the exchange between opposites' (1992 p.16).

Where Zorio uses chemistry to embody the cyclical concept of energy transference, in *Analogia 1* Grippo exploits the principles of physics, generating an electrical current from a vegetable. Significantly, in both examples, while material as energy symbolises change, it is demarcated from the waning and dissipating material transformations occurring in the earlier strategies. Energy is not something which is used up and disappears or a metaphor for life and death but a vibrant thriving force. As Ballasteros remarks of Grippo's potato power station; 'Behind the apparently permanent, there is . . . a Heraclitean process of change, an infinite chain of transformations which transcends individual lives and deaths' (1995 p.75). Thus, *Analogia 1* abstains from the terminal conclusion of the previous strategies; the linear movement of something to

nothing, redefining ephemerality as the circular transformation of something to *something else*.

Similarly, both Long and Laib's nature-based practices reference the idea that life and death are mutually arising phenomenon. Speaking of Long's walks, Codognato, for example, notes the 'interchangeability and complementariness of beginning and end' because 'To advance -as defined in the Tao- means "to move farther away", to move farther away means to come back to the opposite' (1994 p.23). And Seymour confirms that Long's walks incorporate 'both end and beginning simultaneously' (1991 p.25). By repeatedly walking a line up and down a grass field the notion that impermanence constitutes a process of being to nothingness is circumvented: 'creation and destruction are one and the same' (Codognato, 1994 p.18). Downtrodden grass is transformed not annihilated; space and texture are redefined but not obliterated. Therefore, Long's practice is *not* based on a 'principle of "disappearance"', as Fuchs asserts, although, it *does* challenge 'the dominant belief in most cultures that art is not only there to be used and enjoyed in the present but should also promote that present into an eternal future' (1986 p.45).

Again, for Laib, the cycles of growth, pollen collection and arrangement mean that 'the end is also the beginning' (Farrow, 1996 p.10). Laib's work *encompasses* collecting as well as the re-sifting and re-making that occurs during the exhibition period, continuing after what conventionally would be considered the main *event*, with the recycling of the material, only to begin again with yet more collecting in an unending cyclical process.

In my own performance/installation practice, the transference of energy between materials is directly linked with the nomination of dust as the infrastructure of the work, rather than anything actively done to it. Like Zorio and Grippo's work, it was more a

case of revealing what was already there, since dust exists in a constant state of evolution and therefore the concept of cyclical time is inherent in its very nature:

> All things in the universe – the galaxies, the planets and all matter – were made of dust and will one day become dust again before they begin another cycle of transformation. This chaotic, haphazard material produces everything ordered and coherent, and transforms itself into a multitude of substances. Everything in our life is but a transitory state and a recombination of this primordial dust (Denes, 1989 p.5).

Steedman's observation that the infinitive form of the verb "to dust", 'performs an action of perfect circularity, and arrives to denote its very opposite. If you "dust", you can remove something, or you can put something there', affirms this idea (2001 p.160). Paradoxically, each day the dust was both added to and subtracted from. On the one hand, my personal dust as well as that of visitors', combined with the deposition of general atmospheric dust, all added to the designated pile in front of me. If the research Holmes reports is accurate - that over a twelve hour period personal dust cloud monitors capture '150,000 to 200,000 skin flakes'- then my minimum daily six hour presence alone made a significant contribution to the overall content (2001 p.165). On the other hand, as the dust I was working with was stirred up, particles were continually returned to the environment from whence they came, as well as adhering to the clothing of passing audiences and to my own person.

Notably, the material was not manipulated in order to choreograph a performance of disappearance. Nothing decayed or dissolved leaving an absence or void. Each institution's daily cleaning schedule ensured that even dust particles originating from the selected vacuum bag which inadvertently became dispersed during the dissection process, were recollected in the hoovering process, distinguishing the performance/installation piece from artwork allied with the *Dispersal* strategy. By selecting dust as the "object" to dissect, no attempt was made to make it *go away*. In

fact the reverse is true; as it is redistributed and reformed its very presence is foregrounded and valorised thus confirming Steedman's concept of 'perfect circularity'. Like Zorio's cobalt chloride, each vacuum bag symbolised 'a continuous transfer and perpetual mobility of representation' (Celant, 1992 p.14).

Brett's observation that the movement and flow evidenced in *Analogia 1* is symptomatic of a 'common interest shared by Grippo and Joseph Beuys in "materials as energy" rather than as passive vehicles for the artist's sense of form' is equally built into my work since the dust is neither manipulated or shaped into some kind of impassive, motionless sculptured object, nor is its identity repressed or restrained (1995b p.15). Elements are merely *re*-moved, re-ordered or redistributed; an act which might be viewed simply as participation in a pre-established process, integral to the nature of the material. The symbiotic cumulative and diminutive aspects ensure that the dust - the artwork - is ultimately uncontrollable and always on the move. From a scientific perspective:

> the dusts that whirl around us are so small that gravity has to fight to get control of them. Forces on the surface of a piece of dust – static electricity, even the interaction of one atom with another – can overpower the call of gravity. Dust can perch on the ceiling as easily as on the tabletop (Holmes, 2001 p.7).

Thus, in selecting dust as a medium there is a certain acceptance or relinquishment of control over the fact that dust has no boundaries. Despite arbitrarily designating the paper vacuum bag as a provisional limitation on the *amount* of material involved in each performance, in reality the actual quantity and constitution of the dust was always altering.

Moreover, the notion that time is durational; conceived in terms of beginnings and endings, life to death passages, is consistently undermined by the cyclical temporality embedded in the practices of re-cycling which figures as both an internal feature linked

with the specific content or material properties of the work itself, as well as in a symbolic and immaterial form, manifested in the exchange of ideas and dialogue as discussed earlier.

By contrast, the literal re-cycling of physical objects is foregrounded in *Dialogic Ephemerality* such as Meireles' Coca-Cola bottles and paper currency - whose political success depended on the community to copy and continue the action - and in Medalla's reuse of rubbish. Notably, this dimension is also incorporated in my own practice, illustrated in *Dust* by the transformation from uselessness to utility and back again. For example, the process of dissection, the picking apart of vacuum bags, brings attention to bear on the latent dynamism inherent in the work by restoring functionality to items such as paper clips, pins, rubber bands, string and gravel which all emerged relatively unscathed from the amorphous mass of odorous grey matter. Hour by hour, day by day, the performance/installation temporarily reincarnated colourful, commonplace objects from an apparently filthy, fetid lump, before being recombined and returning again to formless and unnamed discarded matter. In challenging the traditional conception of dust as dead matter, this transmutation denies an interpretation of impermanence which references the finality of life, embracing instead an ephemerality akin to Zorio's unfolding 'scenarios of metamorphosis' (Lumley, 2001 p.53).

Finally, the mutual co-existence of life and death is encapsulated in the reconstitution or regeneration of matter, another dimension of the concept of renewal and regeneration, explored in Chapter 5. Associated particularly with the *Transubstantiation* strategy, this idea is exemplified in Hutchinson's *Apple Triangle* where the re-enactment of time is realized through the life cycle of a simple apple. In the exhibition catalogue *Works*, the artist describes the piece as: 'A project that brings life back to a devastated area'

(Hutchinson, 1974 p.5). By locating his triangular formation on the inhospitable barren wasteland of an erupted volcano, Hutchinson offers up his work to the forces of nature with the expectation that the genesis of a new life dormant in the decomposing fruit will flourish and regenerate the land; 'An intrusion of organic material in coherent form into a poisoned, dead environment' which 'might reintroduce a grove of trees into their former territory' (Hutchinson, 1972 p.66).

Despite any superficial resemblance between *Apple Triangle* and the strategy of *Decay* due to the decomposition of organic substances, the perception of time in operation is significantly different. With *Decay*, the evanescent object is subject to a process of rapid disappearance or disintegration. When the rot sets in, the process is a one way street; a linear movement from life to death. By distinction, although Hutchinson's apples *will* decay, they are intentionally positioned in such a place (effectively planted), to ensure their transformation is continuous. Hence, decomposition is merely one phase in a cyclical process. As the artist himself said of *Apple Triangle*: 'This was not so much a dissolution piece as a renewal one' (Hutchinson, 1977 no page numbers).

In fact the overall conceptual thrust of *Transubstantiation* is reconstitutive, not finite, indicating a distinctly cyclical conception of time which banishes the tendency to pinpoint moments of birth/death or beginning/ending located on a durational time line. Although matter changes, the art object does not breakdown or vanish. Instead, in *Apple Triangle*, apples become trees and trees become apples. In *Rosa-blu-rosa*, pink becomes blue and blue becomes pink, and in *Analogia 1*, potatoes become energy and energy becomes potatoes, *ad infinitum*. It might be objected that theoretically, in the strategy of *Dissolution*, for example, melted ice also has the potential for reconstitution in that it can be refrozen. However, while this option exists as a physical possibility, it

is neither the artists' intention, nor an aspect assimilated into the actual construction of the works in question.

The concept of interior material reconstitution and regeneration is represented in *Dust* through the somewhat serendipitous discovery of a variety of organic matter concealed within each institution's vacuum bag. At Cambridge for example, two species of seeds were identified by a botanical archaeologist at the McDonald Institute as types of birch and willow. At Fenton House, lavender, geranium, delphinium and alstromeirea (Peruvian poppy) seeds were also identified. To some extent, the unforeseen experience of extracting undamaged, perfectly formed seeds in each aggregate of dust compliments Hutchinson's intentional placement of apples in a seemingly hostile and 'dead' environment. Presupposing the common perception that dust is one form of extraneous rubbish, lacking in value and 'associated with the lowliest of things, with what is broken, discarded and formless', Hutchinson's *wasteland* equates to my *waste* (Amato, 2000 p.4). Nothing good, desirable or of value is expected to arise from either such depleted or abandoned environments, yet upon closer inspection, undisclosed potential is revealed in the ungerminated organic matter. At one level, cyclical renewal is thus signified within both projects as the reiteration of dormancy to dynamism. The conventional view that dust is 'dry and desiccated, divested of animation, antithetical to life' and ultimately 'identified with death and decay' is challenged by the work since the act of sorting and classifying the dust revealed a veritable microcosm – a mini ecosystem in its own right (Amato, 2000 p.24). Even limiting the definition of "life" to strictly organic matter, ungerminated lavender seeds, willow pods and fruit pips all await redistribution and re-birth. In addition, fragments of biscuits, chocolate, bread crusts and sweets were identified, providing sustenance for a variety of insects, some of

whose corpses or body parts were also recovered, notwithstanding the microscopic and unidentified but inevitable active presence of millions of dust mites and other bacteria.

Conclusion

Arguably, through the three elements; energy transference, recycling and reconstitution, *Dust* challenges the conventional equation that dust equals death and instead demonstrates Abe's tenet that from a non-dualistic temporal perspective, 'Death is grasped as an actuality at the core of one's present existence'. Dust is not synonymous with the remains of something. Dust is not what occurs when something/someone dies. It is not a by-product or *consequence* of life. As Steedman makes clear, dust

> is not about rubbish, nor about the discarded; it is not about a surplus, left over from something else: *it is not about Waste.* Indeed, Dust is the opposite thing to Waste, or at least, the opposite principle to Waste. It is about circularity, the impossibility of things disappearing, or going away, or being gone. Nothing *can be* destroyed. The fundamental lessons of physiology, of cell-theory, and of neurology were to do with this ceaseless making and unmaking, the movement and transmutation of one thing into another. Nothing goes away (2001 p.164).

On the one hand, what is traditionally conceived as dead matter; dislocated skin cells, lost eyelashes and strands of human hair, share the same temporality as that which is perceived to be *living*, thus illustrating the notion of co-existence. Things interpenetrate in the present moment. Yet, on the other hand, neither is any individual fragment of the dust *exclusively* dead or *exclusively* alive. Contemplating the vacuum bag clarifies what Dōgen means by his statement that 'life is a stage of time and death is a stage of time'. A seed is not a shoot, a tree or a piece of fruit. It is a stage of time true to and complete in itself and does not make the transition to something else. Similarly a "dead" skin cell is only dead insofar as it is perceived from a durational point of view. In Dōgen's terms it is simply at a different stage of time from that which it was when attached to a human

body, which doesn't make it dead in a finite sense. It has a discrete and authentic identity in its current form. As the opening statement of Agnes Denes artists' book reads: 'Dust is the beginning and the end; The essence of existence' (1989 p.5). Dust is not the beginning *then* the end, not life proceeded by death but, as Abe (referenced earlier) states, is 'Living and dying at one and the same time'. As birth does not turn into death so dust is not something which comes *after* life; it is a loop of constant evolution and continuous change – impermanence (*Uji*) itself. For Denes, as for all the artists above; 'Beginnings and endings (death and finality), are anthropomorphic concepts that exist in human dimensions only' (1989 p.105). This is an idea constantly reiterated within these practices, expressed in Celant's statement that Zorio's works 'exclude the idea of linear time . . . as form and time mingle, they have neither a beginning nor an end' (1992 pp.15-16).

Chapter 8

The Non-duality of Past, Present and Future: Discontinuous Time in which Time as the Cause of Decay and Destruction & Time as Measure are Negated

The next theme under discussion concerns Dōgen's perception of how time *moves* or *passes.* In this chapter I consider how Dōgen's thoughts on this subject are consistent with his characterisation of life and death as co-present, mutually arising phenomenon and, as before, deny all possibility of durational time proceeding in a linear and sequential fashion. In addition, his views on the passage of time reiterate the idea that while moments of time are in some way connected, time is not *continuous* in the usual sense, nor is it irreversible. Moreover, because of this discontinuity, time is not a quantitative concept for there is nothing available to measure.

8.0 Non-dualistic Time in Theory

Dogen's conception of how time passes, as might be expected, represents a significant departure from Aristotelian temporality predicated on the notion that time is a substantial entity, functions like a container and acts as an instrument of calculation in which:

> temporal units [days, hours, minutes] are represented only quantitatively, abstracted from their experiential contact with felt qualities of life; events are but episodes or appearances on the stage of the impersonal passage or duration of time. Time and events are divorced from one another (Kim, 2004 pp.148-9).

As noted, common-sense perceptions of time are based on two related principles. Firstly, that 'time is a kind of entity, or a thing, in itself, that moves, apart from and independent of, the flow of events and vicissitudes of life in the world' and/or secondly,

that 'the things and events of the world move against the background of time' (Kim, 2004 p.148). According to Dōgen, both scenarios are fundamentally flawed since they falsely distinguish time from what happens "in" time. However, says Kim, the idea that time passes by what it contains, or alternatively, that what it contains moves like actors on a stage against a static temporal stage set or backdrop, is thoroughly embedded in everyday consciousness and evidenced in expressions such as 'time flows' and 'time flies'. From Dōgen's perspective the notion that time can fly away is nonsensical. In *Uji* he admonishes:

> Do not think that time merely flies away. Do not see flying away as the only function of time. If time merely flies away, you would be separated from time. The reason that you do not clearly understand the time-being is that you think of time only as passing (Tanahashi, 1985 p.78).

Later, in the same text, he adds:

> You may suppose that time is only passing away, and not understand that time never arrives ... People only see time's coming and going, and do not thoroughly understand that the time-being abides in each moment (Tanahashi, 1985 pp.79-80).

Consequently, as Shaner observes:

> The notion of linear time as flying from the past, through the present, towards the future thus appears to be abstracted from concrete experiences of being-time. To think that time flies away is to separate ourselves from time-as-experienced. Dōgen asserts that time appears to fly away only if there is a "gap" (between oneself and time) (1985 p.150).

If there is no 'coming and going', or flying away aspect to time, how does Dōgen think time is experienced? Through his concept of *Uji*, the complete unification of time and existence outlined earlier, Dōgen categorically undermines the duality which separates self, things and events from time, and in doing so, presents a radical reappraisal of time's passage or movement. In *Uji*, Dōgen elucidates two inter-related dimensions of Being-Time which, as Shaner points out, collectively overcome the duality of Aristotelian time; the separation or 'gap' between time and experience. In the first

instance, *nikon*, the right nowness of time, represents 'a concentrated effort and a narrow periphery' (1985 p.151). In the second instance, *keireki* or *kyōryaku*, 'time presents a different profile: one of ranging or flowing' (Kasulis, 1981 p.79)[27]. Dōgen explains the subtle distinction between these perspectives via the analogy of someone going rambling in the countryside. Commonplace thinking, he argues, would understand this journey as a series of unrelated, sequential events, each superseding the one before:

> This is like having crossed over rivers and climbed mountains. Even though the mountains and rivers still exist, I have already passed them and now reside in the jewelled palace and vermillion tower. These mountains and rivers are as distant from me as heaven is from earth (Tanahashi, 1985 p.77).

Not only does this interpretation characterise time as flying past, it also presupposes a permanent self (Stambaugh, 1990). Dōgen goes on to dismiss such thoughts:

> It is not that simple. At the time the mountains were climbed and the rivers crossed, you were present. Time is not separate from you, and as you are present, time does not go away. As time is not marked by coming and going, the moment you climbed the mountains is the time-being right now. If time keeps coming and going, you are the time-being right now. This is the meaning of *the time-being* (Tanahashi, 1985 pp.77-78).

Shaner points out that the concept of "right-now" is more complex than simply a 'theory of moments in which the present aspect is continually reaffirmed. To the contrary, "right-now" is intended to underscore the individual's immersion in experience as it is given to consciousness' (1985 p.151). Kasulis echoes these sentiments arguing that, for Dōgen, *nikon*

> does not imply the notion of logically derived "moments" . . . nor does it imply the metaphysical idea of an eternal now. It is simply a label for the appearance of being-time as experienced in our release from considerations of past and present, our total involvement in the nowness of temporal events (1981 p.79).

From the 'ranging', 'flowing' or 'passage' (*kyōryaku*) perspective of Being-Time,

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7 *Stambaugh (1990) refers to kyōryaku* as 'passage' rather than 'ranging'.

'being at the top of a mountain is an entirely different situation than climbing one. Rather than being immersed in the project of climbing, one can sit back . . . relax and enjoy the view'. Shaner contrasts this 'expanded periphery' with the 'limited periphery' that characterises the right-now. He states: '"Ranging" refers to the non-directional, continuing and connected aspect of time wherein an entire range of mountains (beings-times), for example, may be presenced in toto' (1985 p.151).

This raises two issues. Firstly, although Dōgen himself states that 'time-being has the quality of flowing', it is clear that his use of the term does not represent a relapse into linear, durational time for he goes on to stress the uni-directionality of existence-time: 'So-called today flows into tomorrow, today flows into yesterday, yesterday flows into today. And today flows into today, tomorrow flows into tomorrow'. Furthermore, although Dōgen wishes to convey something of the connectedness of *kyōryaku,* in contrast to the series of disjointed, serial "now-points" (referenced in Chapter 4 in the context of *dualistic* time), again he warns against interpreting this connectedness as an indication that time is durational. Continuing the paragraph above, he states; 'moments of past and present do not overlap or line up side by side' (Tanahashi, 1985 p.78). Stambaugh expresses concern that the term 'flowing' is open to misinterpretation if understood conventionally. Dōgen himself is keenly aware of this and consequently devotes a number of passages in *Uji* to ensure the reader does not misconceive his intentions. The following excerpt exemplifies Dōgen's negation of both common-sense durational and container conceptions of time, and of time's passage. He writes:

> Do not think flowing is like wind and rain moving from east to west. The entire world is not immovable. It flows. Flowing is like spring. Spring with all its numerous aspects is called flowing. When spring flows there is nothing outside of spring . . . Spring invariably flows through spring. Although flowing itself is not spring, flowing occurs throughout spring. Thus, flowing is completed at just this moment of spring . . . In your study of flowing, if you imagine the objective to be outside yourself and that you flow and move through hundreds and thousands

of worlds . . . you have not devotedly studied the Buddha way (Tanahashi, 1985 p.80).

Confusingly, some commentators emphasise the *discontinuity* of time whereas others stress the *continuity* of time in Dōgen's thought, while Olsen (2000) uses both terms. Kasulis, for example, in summarising the double-sided aspect of *Uji*, states that 'One may either look around and see a series of peaks, each a knife-edge right-now of being time; or one may see a vast range of mountains, *the continuous ranging* of being-time throughout past, present and future' (my emphasis, 1981 p.80). Alternately, Stambaugh categorically asserts that, for Dōgen, 'The passage of the present moment takes place within the present moment; it does not make a transition into future, for the future is not "ahead" of it. *There is no transition or continuity*; nothing changes into anything else' (my emphasis, 1990 p.49). As Dōgen says near the beginning of *Uji*; 'Since there is nothing but just this moment, the time-being is all the time there is' (Tanahashi, 1985 p.77). Consequentially, Stambaugh argues, time cannot be conceived in quantitative terms: 'The idea that there is no duration completely blocks us from this kind of calculation. If time takes place at each and every moment, there is no stretch of time available for measurement' (1990 p.69).

Despite the apparent ambiguity regarding the continuity and discontinuity of time in Dōgen's thought, the problem is essentially due to the limitations of language rather than any fundamental philosophical disagreement. The key to clarification lies in Stambaugh's first sentence; 'The passage of the present moment takes place *within* the present moment' (my emphasis). In other words, it is possible to appreciate the legitimacy of the Kasulis' phrase; 'the continuous ranging of being-time throughout past, present and future', when it is fully grasped that from Dōgen's perspective, past,

present and future are not separate places on a horizontal time-line, experienced one after the other. Past, present and future interpenetrate. In the same way that life and death are co-present, mutually arising phenomenon, 'totally manifested' in the moment, so too *kyōryaku* embraces all *tenses* of time simultaneously. Thus, for Dōgen, 'Time does not move in the conventional sense at all. The whole world moves, passes, takes place within itself, again and again' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.45). On this basis it would be accurate to state that it is not just the passage of the *present* moment that takes place within the present moment, but also the passage of *past*, and *future* moments as well. Tanahashi's introductory comments to his translation of *Uji* reflect this:

> Time, according to Dōgen, is experienced from moment to moment; actual experience occurs only in the present. Past was experienced in the past as the present moment, and future will be experienced in the future as the present moment. Time passes and things do not remain unchanged. A moment seems to be an extremely small segment of a long span of time. Yet past is remembered as past in the present moment and future is expected as future in the present moment. Each moment carries all of time. Thus a moment has an aspect of timelessness. In this respect "now" is eternal (Tanahashi, 1985 p.13).

If Tanahashi's observation that the "right-now" dimension of being-time 'has an aspect of timelessness' and is, in a sense 'eternal', sounds uncannily similar to Fried's notion of a transcendental, durationless temporality explored in Chapter 1, closer inspection reveals that common terminology is where the congruity ends. Loy distinguishes the two positions. Discussing the paradoxical nature of Dōgen's Being-Time, he argues that 'we may say that there is only the present: not, of course, the present as usually understood –a series of fleeting moments that incessantly fall away to become the past– but a very different present that incorporated the past and the future because it always stays the same' (1988 p.222). In this way, he argues, Dōgen's 'eternal present of time' is comparable with the medieval *nunc stans* (standing now), which 'is eternal because there is something that does not change: *it is always now*'. Continuing, Loy suggests

that 'Alternatively, this non-dual way of experiencing time may be described as living in eternity: again, not eternity in the usual sense, an infinite persistence *in* time that presupposes the usual duality between things and time'. He concludes the passage quoting Wittgenstein by way of clarification: 'If by eternity is understood not infinite temporal duration but non-temporality, then it can be said that a man lives eternally if he lives in the present' (1988 p.223). The distinction between Fried and Dōgen's view is precisely that the critic *does* understand eternity as 'infinite temporal duration' and is unyielding in his belief in the capacity of modernist art to generate an aesthetic experience capable of transporting the audience beyond the mundanities of the immediate present and into this higher realm. In contradistinction, Dōgen's 'non-temporality' is realised paradoxically: because *everything* is time, time does not exist (as a separate entity). As Loy says, 'What transcends time (as usually understood) turns out to be time itself . . . This paradox is possible because . . . to forget oneself and become one with something is at the same time to realise its emptiness and "transcend it"' (1988 p.224). Again, if this seems to bring Dōgen into dangerously close proximity with Fried's notion of 'conviction', and his claim that the self is 'eclipsed' by the artwork, implying an experience of non-duality, any apparent similarity is destroyed when recalling that Being-Time is predicated on a phenomenological and experiential impermanence. Thus, where Fried's "self" is subsumed by a continuous, transcendent and eternal temporality, Dōgen's subject is merged with the ephemeral and discontinuous, immediate 'right-now'.

Stambaugh, like Loy, also draws parallels between Dōgen's right-now (*nikon*) and the Western medieval *nunc stans* in so far as both emphasise 'wholeness and entirety. Both

encompass everything, all at once, simultaneously' (1990 p.97). In the same passage, however, she is incisive in identifying points of departure where the *nunc stans* and *nikon* diverge, illuminating further differences between Fried and Dōgen's conceptions of time and eternity. In the first case, Stambaugh argues, the *nunc stans* 'belongs exclusively to the life of *God'* and therefore, 'is utterly transcendent to man', unlike any aspect of Dōgen's Being-Time. While Fried falls short of declaring any overt reciprocity between 'continuous and entire *presentness*' (the experience of 'instantaneousness' referenced in Chapter 1) and *God*, the zealous tone he adopts combined with the religious choice of vocabulary ('grace', 'conviction', and 'communion') suggests obliquely that there is indeed a correlation, as Michelson (1969) and Foster (1986) both imply. Moreover, the quotation Fried selectively places at the beginning of *Art and Objecthood* which aligns the continuity of time with the presentness of the moment and God's existence, adds further credence to the theory that Fried's atemporality is, in actuality, merely another version of the *nunc stans*.

In the second case, Stambaugh argues that

> In contrast to the Western medieval *nunc stans*, or standing now, Dōgen's right-now does not stand, nor is it opposed to the *nunc fluens*, or flowing now, nor does it itself flow. It lacks the transitional continuity with past and present that would enable it to flow. Nor is it lifted up out of the flow of time, belonging to a transcendent being. The immediate now neither flows nor stands, it *dwells* (1990 p.99).

Differentially, Fried's 'instantaneous presentness' *is* 'lifted up out of the flow of time' standing resolutely against the 'theatricality' of durational time defined by its persistence in time, and, as demonstrated, also appears to belong 'to a transcendent being'. Both Kim and Stambaugh adamantly resist the suggestion that *Uji* harbours any metaphysical dimension. Kim observes that being-time:

> subsumed space and time totally and exhaustively . . . In Dōgen's view, space and time were so inseparably interpenetrated that to see one without the other destroyed the fundamental understanding of his thought . . . Dōgen's view of "all times" and "all existence" was not comparable to "absolute time" and "absolute space" . . . temporality, for Dōgen, was not a manifestation of a timeless eternity to which a metaphysically inferior status was attributed. A dualistic –transcendental and static– view of eternity in contradistinction to time was alien to Dōgen's thought. A hasty association of "all times" with a dualistic conception of eternity (or any other notions of "everlastingness" or "timelessness" for that matter) was also to be avoided (2004 pp.150-151).

Stambaugh is similarly wary: 'In saying throughout his writings that all things are time, Dōgen is not submerging diversity in some abstract unity in a manner analogous to the metaphysical statement that "all things are one"'. She goes on to make the point that, in stressing universal impermanence, Dōgen is drawing attention to the constant flux which permeates and defines everything. 'Instead of viewing the world as replete with dead, static objects and statistically classifying living beings and people, we are to see *Uji* at work in all things' (1990 p.44).

Although Fried may well reject durational time, he has no theory to parallel Dōgen's existential and experiential equation of existence-time. He never embraces the complexity of Dōgen's dynamic impermanence. Therefore, while rejecting the durational time of Minimalism, Fried ultimately capitulates to the kind of eternalism or absolute time Dōgen describes as 'lifeless permanence'. Unlike Dōgen, there is no paradox to Fried's "timelessness". Stambaugh notes that 'endless time may well exist (. . . as the beginninglessness and endlessness of time for Dōgen), but to believe that this is eternity is to commit a grave error. Nothing can ever be together or entire or whole in an endless duration of time', precisely because of the linear succession of objects and events. Moreover, from the "right-now" (*nikon*) perspective of *Uji*, the world in its entirety, as 'a whole or a totality must be experienced *all at once*, and the only way to do this is to experience the totality of time and space in an instant'; an experience which

is not *conceptually* interchangeable with Fried's instantaneous presentness despite any superficial linguistic similarity (1990 p.97).

8.1 Non-dualistic Time in Practice

Having clarified a further dimension of Dōgen's thinking concerning the discontinuous and reversible nature of non-dualistic time, I proceed in the remainder of this chapter to examine whether the alternative ephemeral strategies, in tandem with my own practice, embody the interpenetrative nature of past, present and future. I argue that in fact both aspects of Dōgen's time - *nikon* (the right-now) and *kyōryaku* (ranging)- can be surmised in statements made by artists and critics alike, and in the construction of the work itself. I consider each aspect in turn.

It is apt that Shaner describes *nikon* in terms of 'concentrated effort' and 'the individual's immersion in experience as it is given to consciousness' because this accords precisely with the intense concentration displayed by the *Ritual* artist's discussed in Chapter 6. What Shaner references as the 'right-now' aspect of time is remarkably synonymous with the acutely focused attention to the moment in hand, demonstrated by Laib, Long and Mazeaud, throughout their respective practices. As too is Stambaugh's argument that to experience the interpenetrative nature of Being-Time it is necessary to suspend the sense 'of a supposedly permanent ego anxiously watching time fly past or slip away' and become time itself because 'As long as I am time, it does not slip away'. She continues, noting that 'Any activity involving intense concentration and absorption bears witness to this' (1990 p.36).

Earlier, I described the disposition of these artists as one of contemplative absorption

and loss of ego. Long explicitly links these attitudes with being fully involved in what is happening at any given moment, speaking of: 'living in the moment. No past, no future . . . being absorbed and intuitive, sort of unselfconscious' (quoted in Seymour, 1991 p.76). Moreover, it is not without significance that Ottman comments on Laib's antipathy to notions of progress and linear time, aligning himself instead with a kind of seriality, not as in Minimalism, but related to 'non-Western notions of repetition: the ideal of the eternal recurrence of the same is central to Buddhism', which focuses attention in the present (2000 p.22). Mazeaud similarly connects being and time with attention to the now, stating; 'I follow my vision (to clean up the river), but was open to seeing that a large vision must be filtered through an awareness of the present moment . . . My new vision is to learn to "be" fully in relationship to my river' (quoted in Carde, 1990 p.6).

In addition to individual artist's attitudes, 'concentrated effort' is also facilitated in many of these practices through audience participation. I have already spoken about the collapse of the various dualities between time, self, audience and artwork in relation to Being-Time, however, participation adds a further dimension in the current context. The strong sensory elements in many of these works assist audiences to fully engage in the moment. In Tiravanija's work there is the aroma and taste of exotic dishes, with Laib the heady smell of pollen and in Meireles' projects the handling of money or consumption of Coke. In my own practice, the fusty, stale odour of dust combined with the tactile experience of touching items like clumps of hair and broom bristles combined with the dialogic component, commands attention to the present. At one point a group of profoundly speech and hearing impaired children encountered *Dust* at the Horniman Museum and spent considerable time utterly absorbed in guessing what

each petri dish contained and identifying the substances by tactile means, communicating through gesture[28]. All these aspects signify the 'right-now' dimension of Dōgen's understanding of time since they close the gap between time and experience ensuring that there is no *observer* separate from *the observed.*

The 'ranging' dimension of Dōgen's temporal perspective (what Shaner calls the 'expanded periphery'), is also evident in both the construction of certain practices which demand renewal and reconstitution, mentioned previously, and/or in the material properties themselves. Hutchinson, for example, clearly aligns himself with the kind of discontinuous and reversible temporality Dōgen describes. In his article The Fictionalisation of the Past, he distances himself from a dualistic perception of time, arguing that 'concepts of "past", "present", and "future", are . . . lineal fictions that have given rise to feelings of hopelessness, nostalgia, that time is "slipping away"' (1967-68 p.31). His comments neatly echo Dōgen's exhortation, not to be deluded into thinking that time "flies away", quoted at the beginning of this section. Hutchinson goes on to state:

> It is a mistake to view the pyramids, fossils, old paintings and sculpture . . . as objects of the past. Their real significance is in their being objects of the present . . . By avoiding interpretation of relics, these can take on the same significance as contemporary works and so be incorporated into that world of the present (1967-68 p.33).

Thus, in addition to problematising the durational temporality encountered in the earlier strategies which fall prey to a process of disappearance ushered in by linear conceptions of time, Hutchinson's words also negate the notion of container time and time as measure. Through renewal and regeneration, he demonstrates the interpenetrative character of past, present and future because of the manner in which historical events

[28] See DVD documentation of the Horniman Museum residency in Appendix 2.

are not calculated in terms of distance backwards from the present moment but are incorporated into present experience; re-lived and re-connected with. In his exposition of kinetic art as a critique of the museum, Brett highlights this concept too, writing:

> In its broader sense 'kineticism' is a way of knowing reality as a process of continuous change, it implies a new take upon all phenomena, including the past history of art, and including art works which have always been presented as static entities. When the emphasis shifts to change and 'process', the work itself is redefined in many senses. Ancient sculptures and paintings, for example, are seen as part of performative ritual practices, not as self-sufficient monuments (1995 a p.39).

Hutchinson indicates that his work is very much a 'performative ritual practice' enacted on a sacred site which connected him and his co-workers to another time and culture: 'My Tarascan Indian helpers seemed to instinctively understand my "painting" and I imagined as they carefully laid out rows of fruit on the dust, that some racial memories existed of an exact mosaic work on the Mayan Pyramid (quoted by Cameron, 1997 p. 31)[29].

In a similar vein, the concept of an 'expanded periphery' in which all tenses of time are present is also found in *Eskimo Carver*, again linked with renewal and re-enactment, born out of the specific cultural function of the original objects. The act of carving and drumming affirms connections with past generations, associated with the rituals of hunting for food and communicating over great distances. Consequentially, *Eskimo Carver* is more than simply a political gesture because it facilitates 'a way of receiving information about another culture, and of another people's historical predicament, without objectifying it in order to alienate or control it' (Brett, 1995a pp.113-4). As such, the sectioning of time into discrete packages of past, present and future which Stambaugh ascribes to a dualistic understanding of 'time as a linear series of now-

[29] Were he writing today, Hutchinson would probably have prefered the term 'cultural memories', given how a contemporary perspective acknowledges that 'race' is a socially constructed concept, not a genetically fixed or essential reality.

points' (referenced in Chapter 4), is actively disrupted.

A further example of this phenomenon can be seen in Tiravanija's work. Hainley suggests that 'To describe the duration of Tiravanija's piece you would have to figure out a way to combine the temporality of forever, now, and never'. His meals, she continues 'approximate forever, having been created for a specific "now", but they also work against never – that this occurrence will never not have happened. Situated to resist conclusions, the only point of Tiravanija's art is to begin and to be begun again' (1996 p.56). Describing relational art such as Tiravanija's, Bourriand suggests that it 'touches on eternity precisely *because it is specific and temporary*' (2002 p.54). Arguably, Dōgen's understanding of time refers to the combined temporality of which both commentators speak, based as it is on the paradoxes of permanence and impermanence, life and death, beginnings and endings, now and forever.

In *Dust*, it is not only *nikon*, the 'right-now' aspect of time that is experienced through the inclusive participatory element, but also *kyōryaku*, the 'ranging' aspect too. The dialogue and the sensual/physical qualities of the work; the talking, looking, touching and smelling not only absorb the audience in the present moment, the immediate 'right-now', but also evidence the broader interpenetrative nature of time which arise out of the memories and expectations stimulated by the fragments and items extracted from the vacuum bag. Artist and audience do not so much *go back* to retrieve the past through *memories* of previous events and experiences, so much as revitalise and re-live the past in the present. The "forensic" dimension of *Dust* comprises both personal and corporate narratives; events, actions and memories. However, as noted in the context of previous discussions regarding the self, unlike the historian's time-line or the archaeologist's stratification, everyone's 'times' are not lined up, side by side, but

overlap and intersect, all mingled up together. Dōgen's concept of dynamic impermanence is poignantly reflected in the inchoate remnants of multiple lives; eyelashes, human and pet hair, clothes fibres, remains of meals eaten, the fabric of buildings, reading matter and so on, are, from a non-dualistic perspective, simply different *stages of time*, unceremoniously equalised as they are woven together. While it may appear that to separate, classify and categorise the individual components of each hoover bag, succumbs to representing points of time, the past and present, as lined up side by side, the reverse it true. It is a necessary process of deconstruction in order to reveal the relationships and interpenetration or 'flow' of time-being throughout. The dissected fragments are not labelled and dated in the manner of a museological object. There is no "time-line" on which to allocate each item a specific and fixed space-time dimension or identity. Arguably, the installation/performance piece, *Dust*, offers a means by which to grasp what Dōgen's seemingly obscure statement that 'So-called today flows into tomorrow, today flows into yesterday, yesterday flows into today. And today flows into today, tomorrow flows into tomorrow', referenced earlier. This functions both at the level of dialogue and through the structure of the work. For example, Roman pottery sherds located in the vacuum bag belonging to the McDonald Institute, share the same temporal dimension as a contemporary newspaper cutting, a plastic medicine capsule and cigarette butts. If we take 'yesterday', 'today' and 'tomorrow' to mean past, present and future, then the past represented by Roman pottery flows into the present as constituted by twenty first century detritus, and vice-versa. Even without the seemingly incongruous and extraordinary fragments of Roman ceramics, according to Holmes, dust 'contains everything from space diamonds to Saharan dust to the bones of dinosaurs and bits of modern tyre rubber', ensuring that the

pre-historic is also always the present (2001 p.12). Moreover, remembered, thought and felt memories of events past, and desires and hopes for the future, expressed by individuals sparked off by encounters with personally significant items in the dust, are all experienced at once as the *present*.

Conclusion

Arguably, Aristotle's understanding of time's passage; what might be termed the 'here today, gone tomorrow' philosophy, evidenced in the previous ephemeral strategies is absent in the practices outlined above. Unlike dualistic temporality, there are no gaps between different stages of time, nor between time and the audience/artist whose memories about what did happen, what is happening and what might come to pass, interpenetrate. In this sense, the paradox that 'Dust ... will always . . . be both there and not there; what is left and what is gone', can be understood (Steedman, 2001 p.163). Significantly, Meireles belief that 'the only possibility for the permanence of a work is memory' and that 'The transitoriness of time does not imply the absence of permanency' suggest the ability to continually experience the past in the present as well as reinforcing Dōgen's paradox of permanent impermanence (quoted in Enguita, 1999 p.163).

Chapter 9

The Non-duality of Cause and Effect in which Time as Measure, Container Time & Time as the Cause of Decay and Destruction are Negated

In this penultimate chapter I commence with an examination of Dōgen's negation of causality; a further consequence of his understanding of time as a discontinuous phenomenon, and his emphasis on the present moment as being the *only moment*, the *only time* experientially possible. His position negates all three components of Aristotelian temporality which typically characterise time as measure, as a container, and as a force which wastes things away through decay and destruction. As before, the second half of the chapter proceeds to consider whether Dōgen's non-dualistic perspective on the subject is successfully articulated in both my own practice and in those pertaining to the artists representing the three latter ephemeral strategies.

9.0 Non-dualistic Time in Theory

Returning to the issue of life and death in the fascicle *Shōji,* Dōgen explicitly states that there is no passage, movement, continuity or transition from one moment to another 'because in one moment all time is viewed simultaneously' (Olson, 2000 p.108). As such, says Dōgen, 'It is a mistake to think you pass from life into death. Being one stage of time, life is possessed of before and after . . . Being one stage of time as well, cessation of life also is possessed of before and after' (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.106). In this way, Dōgen destroys the conventional duality between the before and after, the cause and effect of an event occurring "in" time, by saying that in every event there is

both/neither before and after, cause and effect. He discusses this paradox in *Genjōkōan* via the metaphor of firewood and ashes:

> Once firewood turns to ash, the ash cannot revert to being firewood. But you should not take the view that it is ashes afterward and firewood before. You should realise that although firewood is at the dharma-stage of firewood, and that this is possessed of before and after, the firewood is at the same time independent, completely cut off from before, completely cut off from after. Ashes are at the dharma-stage of ashes, which also has a before and after (Abe & Waddell, 2002 p.42).

Commenting on and clarifying this passage, Loy emphasises that 'Firewood does not become ashes; there is the "being-time" of firewood, then the "being-time" of ashes'. Since there is nothing *beyond* Being-Time, he continues, there is no sense in discussing the past in terms of the *before,* or conceptualising it as the *cause* of an event, nor likewise, to conceive of the future as the *after,* or *effect* of an event; 'If there are no non-temporal objects, then the present does not gain its value or meaning by being related to past or future: each event or being-time is complete in itself' (1988 p.222). Hence, for Dōgen, the complete interpenetration of time and existence disables any transition or causal relationship between spring and summer, birth and death, or anything else. LaFleur cautions that this lack of transition should not be interpreted as a rejection of impermanence *per se,* but as 'the rejection of an interpretation of *mujō* [impermanence] which would see it merely as the equivalent of "process" or would limit it to the notion of "becoming" in contrast to one of being' (1974 p.238).

The relevance for the thesis of Dōgen's perspective on causality, lies in his ability to negotiate a passage between *process* on the one hand, and *progress* on the other. Dōgen's Being-Time denies a teleological view of the universe which emphasises the future and what is to be gained from it whilst simultaneously avoiding any sense that present time is some kind of inconclusive state of 'becoming'. This is a crucial point if

it is to be demonstrated that what might be termed *process ephemerality* – the kind of art based on decay, dissolution and so on, arising out of the discourse of dematerialisation, is actually predicated on the same dualistic and durational view of time held by the institutions it aims to critique[30]. There is a sense in which the notion of "process" in this context, is almost the inverse of teleological ideas of progress. It is a kind of backwards progress; the reversal of a goal-orientated approach, towards nothing. Conventional art forms and art institutions have tended to construct value through the longevity of the object, stressing the continuing presence of the object into the future and the accretion of worth which accompanies increased durability, harnessing conservation techniques to these ends. Contrarily, the kinds of ephemeral art discussed in Chapter 3, circumvent the future and the value enshrined in it by the very auto-catalytic nature of the artwork itself. However, in so doing, they authenticate a false duality between presence and absence.

Characteristically, Dōgen rejects both positions. As Abe states, '"Becoming," in Dōgen's sense, is not a synthesis that presupposes any duality as its basis, such as Being and Nothing' (1992 p.63). In his enthusiasm to forge a meaningful dialogue between Eastern philosophy and Western postmodernism, Olsen argues that Heidegger and Dōgen 'Within the context of their understanding of time and death, both . . . stress the importance of the process of becoming'. In fact, as far as *Dōgen's* conception of impermanence is concerned, Olson's statement is tautological. Despite suggesting that the concept of 'becoming' in no way 'negate[s] the fullness of time', it is misleading to speak of a 'process of becoming' *in any sense*, for it is precisely Dōgen's notion of 'the

[30] See also Kemp's (1999) definitions of process.

fullness of time' – the deep interpenetration and totality of time and existence – which mitigates against any durational connotations associated with either 'process' or 'becoming' (2000 p.171). If something is merely in a 'process of becoming' then it has not yet "arrived"; is not yet totally manifest and therefore is incomplete at some level. This is clearly a contravention of Dōgen's *Uji*. LaFleur is adamant that:

> For Dōgen, *mujō* [impermanence] is too important a matter to be limited to the idea that all beings are bound to change with the passing of time; it is not "becoming" because the notion of "becoming' negates the fullness of time which Dōgen attributes to each and every moment of time (1974 p.238).

He reinforces this with a quotation from Abe:

> The idea of anticipation or waiting for the fullness of time in the future, however dialectic it may be, is not entirely freed from a naturalistic view of time. Only by the realisation of the complete discontinuity of time and of the independent moment, i.e. only by negation of temporality, does time become real time. For Dōgen there is no time that is not the fullness of time . . . it is not that the fullness of time occurs at a particular time in history but that any moment in history is fullness of time because for him at every moment time fully manifests itself (quoted in LaFleur, 1974 pp.238-9).

Ephemeral art based on concepts such as dissolution, decay, dispersal and even suspension, typically inscribe 'the idea of anticipation or waiting for the fullness of time in the future', despite the fact that the future may be perceived as being in considerably greater proximity when compared with more traditional artworks such as oil paintings and marble sculptures. For example, in Kos' work, surveyed in Chapter 3, 'the fullness of time' is realised at the point at which cubes of ice are reduced to puddles of water, and evaporate; likewise with the transition and demise of Gallaccio and Leonard's flora and vegetable matter. Anticipation is built into spectatorship. In most instances audiences are offered only a tantalising snapshot of the negative 'process of becoming', and asked either to imagine the rest or to refer to photographic documentation referencing the before and after effect. In Leonard's case, the cyclical re-showing of *Strange Fruit*, presents the audience with the privilege of witnessing the 'becoming' at

different stages, mentally measuring the incremental process from before (fruit) to after (mould and dust). 'Waiting', as Abe says, is an integral part of the experience of time proffered by these pieces. The fullness of time has indeed not yet arrived and is continually deferred until the moment when time's continuous action concludes its ultimate destruction of the object. This deferral positions the audience in a state of suspended tension, unable to overcome the duality between subject and object because of the anticipation of what is about to happen in the future, rather than being one with what is happening in the present.

Although Abe is primarily interested in the moral and spiritual capacity of Dōgen's thought within a specifically theological context, his comments point to an important ethical dimension regarding the way in which time is understood which is equally applicable to artistic production and in particular to the types of ephemeral art portrayed here. He writes:

> In our individual and social lives we tend to set up an end or purpose in the future and think about how to live in the present in order to attain that end. This aim-seeking, or teleological, approach has been quite prevalent throughout history, but is most evident in the modern West. In the West, the notion of progress has been strongly emphasised, and the progressionist view of history has been predominant . . . In this view of history, and in the aim-seeking approach, the present is regarded simply as a step towards a future goal (1992 p.31).

While Abe speaks here of "progress" as opposed to "process", there is a unifying thread running between the two concepts which suggests that the 'process of becoming' is just as 'aim-seeking' and future-directed. Abe raises three concerns about this way of thinking. In the first instance, he states, 'The present is not grasped as something meaningful in itself, but as something significant only as a means to arrive at the end projected in the future'. Secondly, 'We are always "on the way" to the attainment of a goal and, although we may approach the projected goal, we cannot completely arrive at

it. Thus we are not free from a basic restlessness'. Lastly, 'This basic restlessness stems from the fact that in the aim-seeking approach we objectify or conceptualise not only the future but also the present, and thus we are separated from reality'. He concludes the passage by emphasising that Dōgen's negation of causality; the interpenetration of before and after,

> provides an entirely different view of the present and future. In the realisation of the oneness of means and end, each and every step of the present is totally realised as a means towards a future goal, because we are living at the dynamic intersection of the temporal-spatial dimension and the trans-temporal-trans-spatial dimension (Abe, 1992 p.31).

9.1 Non-dualistic Time in Practice

Having outlined Dōgen's position, it is clear that in order to embrace a non-dualistic understanding of time, any alternative ephemeral art must dissolve the polarities of cause and effect, before and after, *without* succumbing to notions of "process" and/or "becoming". In this final section I consider a factor which arguably, does enable these practices to overcome the problem of causality and thus to signify the totality of Dōgen's time and being (*Uji*); namely, the element of playfulness which pervades these artworks.

Problematically, many of the artists and critics associated with the latter three ephemeral strategies actively *embrace* the term 'process' in their attempts to define a practice or artwork. To cite just three examples: Brett notes that 'Medalla has always defended the "process" nature of his work, maintaining that its real vitality lies there and not in any final product' (1995a p.23); Zorio's early pieces like *Rosa-blu-rosa* are described by Christov-Bakargiev as 'process-orientated work' (1999 p.39); and Houston's remarks regarding Grippo's *Analogia 1* not only esteem the concept of process in his work but also implicitly connect *process* with *impermanence*, interpreting it as an artistic device to critique the conventional objectness of art:

> Grippo plays with the existence of the work of art as 'not-quite-product' through reference to the

> Dada movement in the use of 'ready-mades', found objects and everyday materials. In refusing to enter into a hierarchical system that informs the choice of artistic product represented, Grippo rethinks the relationship between product and process in the making both of food and art by simply choosing to valorise process (1999 p.1).

However, I contend that the way in which the term 'process' is used within the context of the latter three strategies is vastly different to Lippard and Tarsia's intended meaning, referenced in Chapter 2, where process is inherently linked with the disappearance of the artwork and a nihilistic interpretation of impermanence.

Although the concept of process in operation here remains intimately bound up with materiality, the material itself *is* process; constantly changing and transforming, rather than being *subjected to* a process (of vanishing). By contrast, therefore, unlike the first four ephemeral strategies it is not a process that ever arrives anywhere finite. This serves to reinforce Stambaugh's point that within Dōgen's non-dualistic understanding of time there is no *transition* from life to death, 'no serial relation', and thus no polarity between the two states. There is simply change and impermanence. Consequentially, I suggest that the interpretation of process associated with the latter three strategies is far from commensurate with the Penguin English Dictionary's various definitions which include: 'a moving forward, especially as part of a progression or development'; 'a natural phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead to a particular result', and 'a series of actions or operations designed to achieve an end'. As has been demonstrated, the 'progression', 'development', 'result', 'achievement' and 'end' of much ephemeral art is the annihilation of the art object. Dōgen would undoubtedly repudiate any conception of "process" as defined in the terms laid down above given that words like 'achievement', 'result', 'development' and 'progression' are inherently inscribed with the kind of linear and durational temporality and the separation of things *from* time, he

wishes to countenance. This is what Abe means when he states that:

> For Dōgen, in reality there is no "becoming" from firewood to ash, from winter to spring, and likewise from birth to death. This notion of "becoming" is a human projection based on the conceptualisation and objectification of the relationship of the two items involved (1992 p.113).

An appraisal of the work of these artists against such definitions makes it abundantly clear that the two uses of the word are not synonymous. On the contrary, there are various factors that point to an antipathetic understanding of process; one I would argue, which is in actuality highly sympathetic to Dōgen's position.

Firstly, Loy suggests that 'A genuine end to objectified, commodified [dualistic] time . . . implies a "new" understanding of life as play. That is because play is what we are doing when we do not need to gain something from a *situation*', he continues, adding that 'When we do not need to extract something from this time-place, we will not continue to devalue it by contrasting here-and-now with some other location . . . or time (the future) . . .' (2001 p.297). Arguably, these practices celebrate an attitude of playfulness which, as Loy says, inevitably injects a sense of purposelessness, a feeling that there is nothing to be gained and a lack of interest in achieving a specific result. Consequently, Being-Time is realised because there is no projection or anticipated outcome, no anxiety associated with a particular result, there is only the action in the moment. 'For Dōgen, total exertion is absolutely crucial, but it can never be for the sake of anything. This would entail a goal to be attained in the future, which is impossible from the outset because the "future" is not somewhere out there ahead of us; it is right now' (Stambaugh, 1990 p.59).

As discussed in relation to *nikon* (the 'right-now' aspect of Dōgen's temporality) in the last chapter, a focus on the present rather than on the future distinguishes *Ritual*

Ephemerality, for example, from the kind of Aristotelian time associated with the first four strategies which are inscribed with a teleological imperative, constantly projecting the imagination towards a mythical future point prompting questions such as What happened next? What did it look like before/after? How will it all end? By contrast, each artistic combination of material and action; river/cleaning, the ground/walking, the life cycle of plants/harvesting and distribution of pollen, dust/dissection, is directed by a sense of purposelessness derived from the cyclical ritual re-enactment. There is nothing to gain, no sense of progress and achievement such as that associated with linear time. Conventional definitions of process based on 'progression' and 'development' are usurped.

Loy suggests that when 'the self is completely involved in play . . . the self and its activity are completely non-dual' because 'there is no purpose outside the process itself' (1988 p.111). Arguably, the artists cited here evidence this state of being. For example, Laib insists, that 'there is no development for me . . . in the sense which one classically applies to an artist. I work more in cycles . . . I believe that there are not only linear developments, but rather cycles with the possibility of expansion, like crosses, simultaneously in several direction' (quoted in Sagmeister, 1999 pp.20-21). Moreover, his ritualized practice of pollen collecting 'might reasonably be described as useless, because it serves no obvious purpose and implicitly rejects the world's conventional value system' (Hutchinson, 1992 p.27).

Mazeaud also relinquishes any notion of progress or result in the Sisyphean task she sets herself: 'I redid a section in a very frequented part of the park, and there was as much garbage as the time before. So it's more the ritualistic aspect of doing it that's important' (quoted in Gablik, 1991 p.143). As such, her labour is less about achieving a

pre-ordained result (not least because this undertaking ultimately made little difference to the overall polluted condition of the Rio Grande), and more about experiencing value in the moment, gained through the ritual itself. Thus, 'Play is the free spirit of exploration, doing and being for its own pure joy' (Nachmanovitch, 1990 p.43).

The same situation can be witnessed in both Grippo and Tiravanija's work. For example, in *Analogia 1* the electricity generated from the potatoes is not harnessed; energy is not created *for* any particular function, it simply exists as energy. Similarly, there is nothing tangible to be gained from *Untitled (free)*. Everything is consumed and there is neither a financial reward nor an object of any kind left to mark the occasion.

For Dōgen, there is nowhere to go and nothing to attain because everything is mutually arising and complete in the present. By way of clarification, Stambaugh refers us to his analogy of fish:

> the movement of fish out of water and the crashing and smashing of all things are both examples of movement that does not go anywhere. We are accustomed to thinking of movement as local movement, as movement from one place to another. This is not the kind of movement that Dōgen wants to convey. We might look to some sort of growth, some development from potentiality to actuality, but Dōgen, totally against common sense, rejects this kind of "movement" altogether. For him, everything is already "there", presencing and expressing (*dōtaku*) itself in its own unique way (1990 pp.108-109).

Likewise, *Dust* is characterised by a playful attitude derived from the sheer absurdity of dissecting a vacuum cleaner bag with a pair of tweezers; a meticulous and painstaking task of utter pointlessness by any common standard. Hence, the same "uselessness" that attaches to Laib and Mazeaud's work can also be witnessed in mine. Moreover, being contrary to the usual practice of doing something for gain, for a reason, for some *future* investment, prompted perplexed visitors to believe I must be looking for something in particular. I was frequently asked whether I had found anything 'interesting', 'unusual', or 'precious', with examples cited including gold, diamonds, jewellery and coins.

Others asked what was the 'oldest' thing I had found, and more wanted to return (and did) to view and monitor the so-called "progress" of the project. However, like Long who insists that: 'My works, my actions have no meaning outside what they are', *Dust* was about the moment, the conversations and relationships that were engendered through the work and the activity of deconstruction itself (quoted in Seymour, 1991 p. 92). One passer-by who *did* understand the ridiculous and purposeless nature of the project expressed the sincere hope that I was not being paid to do it. Such attitudes are symptomatic of the kind of commodified and dualistic understanding of time in common currency and lends itself to the view that some things are a complete *waste* of time when time should be *used* usefully.

Another manifestation of art as "play" can be seen in the artist's willingness to relinquish control of their work and to embrace chance and uncertainty. This attitude is directly connected with the willingness of each artist to suppress their own egotistical desires as discussed earlier in relation to both *Ritual* and *Dialogic Ephemerality*. In the latter, this is expressed through the transfer of power from artist to audience, for example, Koh states:

> The corollary of Tiravanija's serving of others is his own self-effacement. Although this may seem surprising, since he is often physically present, his work is complete only with the audience's participation. He is able to focus on the act of sharing and on an abstract social exchange precisely because he cedes control (1998b p.171).

Hainley comments on the idea of unpredictability and chance in Tiravanija's meal; of making work which relies on unknown quantities of unknown people: 'Tiravanija has managed to base his aesthetic on the richness of such a possibility, on the chance of such confusion' (1996 p.59). Similarly, Meireles, in his *Insertions* statement, emphasises the importance of taking a back seat: 'When the object of art becomes a practice, it becomes something over which you can have no control or ownership'

(1999b p.112).

In *Ritual Ephemerality*, this loss of control is more about allowing the material (nature) to dictate the direction of the work and treating it as an active agent in the production of art. Long, for example, states that 'my outdoor sculptures and walking locations are not subject to possession and ownership' and goes on to explain; 'I like the idea of using the land without possessing it', not least because 'these works are made of the place, they are a re-arrangement of it and in time will be re-absorbed by it' (quoted in Fuchs, 1986 p.236).

Dust is an amalgamation of both approaches. On the one hand each participant directs the dialogue in a unique manner. There is no set "script" and every new encounter between artist and audience is an unpredictable exchange of experiences, thoughts, memories, opinions and so on. On the other hand, the content of the dust is also unpredictable and cannot be controlled. There is no knowing what will be uncovered, and what categories will emerge in the classification system. Moreover, the intention is to return the components of each vacuum bag to the relevant institution for disposal in the usual way following completion of the research process. Hence, like Long's philosophy, I have merely "borrowed" the dust for the duration of the research and, having re-arranged it, will allow it to be re-constituted for another incarnation. As such, the typical association of dust with a process of dying, with the ending of things, is challenged. Only from a dualistic temporal perspective is Amato able to conclude that 'Dust forms the ceaseless tides of the becoming and dissolution of things. Out of it things are made; into it they dissolve. So constant, so pervasive, dust aggregating and disintegrating, gauges matter on its way *to and from* being' (my emphasis, 2000 p.5). Such a statement reveals a linear and durational concept of time. It implies that there is

a distance between life and death that can be measured, whereas what Dōgen and the installation/performance piece testify to is that dust is about *being* not becoming; there is no 'to and from'; simply the "*is*ness" of things making themselves felt in the present. What is demonstrated here is that the element of play incorporated into these practices rescues the work from any notion of causality, of a before and after where things are turned into something else or where something is 'achieved'. There is no 'becoming', development or progression because 'As play, the act is its own destination. The focus is on process, not product. Play is intrinsically satisfying. It is not conditioned on anything else. Play, creativity, art, spontaneity, all these experiences are their own rewards' (Nachmanovitch, 1990 p.45). It is in this sense that the term *process* can legitimately be appropriated since it is clearly distinguished from the intention to disappear seen in the initial four strategies.

Conclusion

The previous five chapters have explored both my own creative practice and three further ephemeral strategies and suggested that, in contrast to the initial four strategies, this work distances itself from the dualistic Aristotelian perception of time examined in Part I of the thesis. Each chapter in Part II proceeded by outlining one core principle of an alternative Zen Buddhist non-dualistic philosophy of time and went on to critically examine the work in the light of this theoretical framework. It considered five related dimensions of Dōgen's thinking, asking to what extent these principles are reflected in *Transubstantiation*, *Ritual* and *Dialogic Ephemerality*, as well as within my own work, *Dust*.

In the introduction to Part II, I argued that despite the fact that there are obvious points

of departure between the two sets of strategies insofar as temporality is understood, this was not enough to conclude that the latter necessarily embody a non-dualistic understanding of time *per se*. However, by analysing the artworks from Dōgen's perspective, each of the previous five chapters have consistently demonstrated a certain unanimity between the two. Nevertheless, it could be argued that I have been selective in the examples I have offered as evidence in each chapter. In other words, that I have failed to establish a clear correspondence between each strategy, or even each individual practice, and *all five* dimensions of Dōgen's theory (Being-Time, impermanence and permanence, life and death, the passage of time, and causality). Hence, it might be said, I have created only a partial and therefore, unrepresentative picture. While this is undoubtedly true, I could protest that such criticism is immaterial on the basis that it is unnecessary for each strategy or practice to evidence all five aspects.

Earlier I stated that I had contingently sub-divided Dōgen's philosophy of time into five different factions for expedience, to aid clarity and structure. This inevitably does an injustice to Dōgen's thinking, since his concept of Being-Time is an integrated one and encompasses all dimensions simultaneously. Consequently, although there are differences both between the strategies themselves as well as between each artwork, and some strategies exemplify certain aspects more fully than others, I might suggest that all ultimately signify *Uji*. By this way of thinking, I could assert that the specific nuances which differentiate each artwork, do not detract from the fact that they spring from the same philosophical premise when it comes to the question of time. For example, the fact that there is a clear discrepancy between the strategies with regard to

audience participation, need not be the deciding factor in terms of assessing whether the artwork facilitates the dissolution of subject and object. It could be argued that subject and object are represented in *Dialogic Ephemerality* as audience and artwork, whereas in the *Ritual* strategy, subject and object are characterised by artist and material, and as was demonstrated in the Chapter 6 on impermanence, Laib, Long and Mazeaud do indeed transcend this duality.

However, the research poses the problem of whether an alternative ephemeral art practice can facilitate an experience of non-dualistic time. This, in turn begs the question of *who for*? Is it acceptable to argue that *Ritual* practices evidence non-dualistic temporality based solely on the relationship between artist and material? Does this designate such work as little more than therapy? Is art only art when it has an audience? Therefore, can non-duality only be validated when an audience are taken into the equation, when they too *experience* this state? Otherwise, it might be argued that this work is no better than that described as *Suspended Ephemerality* which is only capable of *referencing* impermanence as opposed to living it out. If this is the case, merely *illustrating* the abstract concept of non-duality is fatal. Dōgen's philosophy is an existential, experiential and phenomenological one. It must be lived, not conceptualised. Anything less remains firmly grounded within a dualistic universe.

Despite the fact that these are all legitimate concerns, they do not diminish the value of the research, primarily because, as a practice-led thesis, it is *my practice alone* which is accountable here and which must adequately address the research problem. Previously I stated my intention to create a hybrid practice which amalgamated the key features of each strategy, drawing together all the indicators pointing to a different understanding

of time in one artwork. This has been achieved and in each of the five chapters which comprise Part II, I have repeatedly demonstrated how my own practice has incorporated various dimensions of the three strategies. For example, I have examined how dialogue and the notion of a relational event based on audience interaction is foregrounded; how concentration and the unification of artist and subject material is evidenced; how the performance/installation and contents of the vacuum bags facilitate notions of recycling, regeneration and the reconstitution of matter; how kinaesthetic elements and memories are significant, and finally, how the concept of play features in the work. Consequently, by illustrating how each of these factors negate a different dimension of a dualistic conception of temporality, I have simultaneously shown how the work in its entirety reflects a non-dualistic understanding of time. Despite which, it is necessary to add the caveat that while the practice may appear to meet the criteria established by Dōgen's philosophy at a theoretical level, the condition of non-duality is not *experienced* consistently, either by artist or audience. To suggest otherwise would be both arrogant and unrealistic, since, in Buddhist terms, non-duality is synonymous with "enlightenment"; a state of being to which I sincerely doubt that either myself or my various audiences could legitimately lay claim. However, recalling Loy's statement, referenced in Chapter 4, that 'all experience is actually non-dual' but that in order to appreciate this it is necessary to see beyond 'the delusion of duality', arguably the practice does offer glimpses of such a phenomenon, both for me as the artist and for others as participants and co-creators. Undeniably there were occasions demarcated by irritation, fatigue and lack of inspiration, but there were also auspicious moments characterised by total absorption in the act of dissection or deep in conversation with a

visitor, when something akin to 'pre-reflective consciousness' did occur. As such, while the practice cannot claim to be a doorway through which to permanently enter an entirely different state of consciousness, at best, it does provide certain insights and access to a condition in which the delusion of duality is periodically suspended.

Chapter 10

Ephemeral Art & the Museum Revisited

Earlier in this thesis, I suggested that through unwitting complicity with the same dualistic philosophy of time as the museum, ephemeral art had dispensed with any prospect of formulating a penetrating or profound critique. However, in the light of the previous five chapters and the revised understanding of impermanence disclosed by the latter three strategies and my own practice, it must be asked whether this remains a fair appraisal. Despite having established that the alternative strategies dissolve the bifurcation of subject and object, affirming a non-dualistic perspective of time, the question persists as to *how* relinquishing a dualistic temporal frame of reference actually destabilises the discourse of permanence and preservation propagated by the art institutional system. The purpose of this final chapter therefore, is to review the relationship between ephemeral art and the museum, assessing the extent to which ephemeral art might recover its reputation as a subversive agent.

The chapter comprises two parts. The first section has a theoretical focus. It outlines from a conceptual point of view, how Dōgen's philosophy and its particular focus on totality, non-differentiation and interpenetration, is uniquely disposed to critically disrupt the ideology and associated functions of the museum. In the second section, I subsequently examine this critique in practice via three different manifestations of the principle of totality in the alternative ephemeral strategies.

10.0 All and No-thing: The Death of the Object (and Subject) in which Collection, Conservation, Classification & Display become Untenable Practices

The principle functions of the museum are consistently identified as the collection, conservation, classification and display of objects. In themselves, these issues are hardly new bait for artists, and my argument is not therefore, that ephemeral art which pertains to a non-dualistic perception of time addresses anything significantly original or distinct from previous critiques, but rather, that it advances from a considerably more radical philosophical premise and thus, (hypothetically at least) has the propensity to succeed where other forms of *ephemeral* art specifically, have proved deficient. Arguably, ephemeral artworks and practices which proceed from a non-dualistic understanding of time present a far reaching and cogent critique of the functions of the museum because they question the very manner in which objects themselves are conventionally conceptualised. I consider each function in turn, beginning with the activities of collecting and conservation.

At a theoretical level, Dōgen's non-dualistic philosophy ultimately dissolves the subject/object dichotomy by embracing a universal principle of totality, manifested as the non-differentiation of all phenomena. This single precept prohibits the emergence of any dualities. Influenced by Hua-yen Buddhism, his vision emphasises complete unity; 'simultaneous mutual identity and mutual inter-causality' (Cook, 1977 p.2). The central principle imported from Hua-yen which permeates Dōgen's thought is that 'all things are contained in each individual', although 'not only does the one contain the all, but at the same time, the all contains the one, for the individual is completely integrated into its environment' (Cook, 1977 pp.15-16). This however, Cook cautions, should not be

taken in a reductive sense to mean that everything becomes the same; 'Hua-yen insists that not only are things both identical *and* different, but, paradoxically, that they are different *because* they are identical' (1977 p.10).

One momentous consequence of a non-dualistic perception of temporality, as noted previously, is that the conventional conception of things/objects (including time) as substantial, self-existing entities becomes untenable. Dōgen would have us believe, alternately, that *everything* in the universe exists in a state of mutual interpenetration, co-arising in the moment. Existence, or being, re-defined *as* time, thus equates to a constantly reiterated fluxing occurrence, rather than something which takes place *within* time. Stambaugh explains this experience in terms of exertion, whereby 'To exert oneself is to pull free of attachment, to collect oneself into a simultaneous totality . . . the experience of penetration, totality and ultimacy' (1990 p.131). Chapter 5 explored how for example, the latter strategies displace the object with the notion of a moving event, *occurring*, *exerting itself* or *presencing*, articulated via a relational and dialogic artistic practice, and how ritual practices evaporate concepts of subject and object. Consequently the (art) object can no longer be understood as a self-contained, three-dimensional mass, occupying a particular and limited amount of space for a particular and limited duration *between* two restricted temporal points on a linear scale.

Ironically, it could be argued that, like the initial strategies, the kinds of work explored in Part II of this thesis, also augur the "death of the object". However, this is a vastly different "death" from the nihilistic concept associated with dematerialisation, and significantly, does not proceed by literally obliterating or annihilating the object, but begins from the premise that the whole concept of a substantial object is a delusional one in the first place. Taken to its logical conclusion, Dōgen's philosophy, as embraced

by the latter strategies, question the discourse and functions of the museum but from an entirely more sophisticated point of view than Buren's 1973 attack, referenced in Chapter 1. In the first case, given that 'The physical manifestation of collecting has formed the basis of most of the world's museum collections', if there is no object in the sense usually understood, neither can there be anything to collect, possess or hold onto (Caple, 2000 p.15). As such, the very foundations of museum practice are called to account. In addition, an essential duty incumbent upon the museum's role as collector of cultural heritage is to preserve what is collected. Both collecting and conservation, as Caple identifies, are motivated by discriminatory principles based on aesthetic qualities, an investment in the concept of value, and the veneration of age. He notes, for instance, that 'Much of what is collected and saved is not the mundane or ugly; but the beautiful', and that 'Attributes such as age, rarity, beauty, cost and associations with famous people and places can make an object valuable' (2000 pp.16-17). This vindicates Loy's observation (in Chapter 4), that by promoting certain qualities over others, invariably that which is rejected subsequently gains credibility too. Citing Nagajuna, he goes on to explain that:

> Without relation to "good" there is no "bad, in dependence upon which we form the idea of "good". Therefore "good" is unintelligible. There is no "good" unrelated to "bad"; yet we form our idea of "bad" in dependence on it. Therefore there is no "bad" (quoted in Loy, 1988 p.18).

Transposed to the museum context, it is clear that the concept of "value", for example, is meaningless without its inverse; the corresponding concept of worth*less*ness. Similarly, the notion of rarity only signifies when reciprocated by a sense of that which is commonplace and ordinary. Hence, where the museum is founded on practices which invite difference, exclusion, inequality, comparison and competition, Dōgen, by contrast, emphasises the unity, interdependence and non-differentiation of things; a

philosophy which makes a travesty of selectively acquiring certain types of objects, then conserving those deemed most important. As such, binary opposites such as beauty and ugliness, old and new are rendered both vacuous and obsolete ways of thinking.

Furthermore, Dōgen's concept that things 'presence' in the moment, completely undermines the first priority of conservation; to safeguard the objects that museums collect and 'to maintain them in an *unchanging state*', since any possibility of "things" as 'movement', as 'an occurring', is not only denied but forcibly suppressed (my emphasis, Edson & Dean, 1994 p.95)[31]. Ostensibly, what Dōgen's philosophy implies is that both the collection and conservation of objects are delusional practices because there is no substantial 'unchanging state' either to own or aspire to, instead there is simply a constant sense of *something going on* which defies any *essential* character. In addition, the assumption behind Edson and Dean's assertion that dependent on the function of museums to collect objects, the destruction of any such artefacts represents both the loss of 'a valuable asset' and 'an element of cultural and scientific heritage that may be irreplaceable', is inevitably brought into question too (1994 p.92). In problematising the very concept of objectness itself, this kind of reasoning *ipso facto* challenges the notion that *value* is inextricably linked with the form of a self-existing substantial object as well as querying the idea that history and learning can only be transmitted through such objects.

The museum and art institution are traditionally organised, and in turn organise and construct the world into differentiated, discrete (dualistic) and hierarchical categories; not this but that. Once preserved, artefacts are classified, labelled and grouped

[31] The attempt to impose an "unchanging state" upon an art object was poignantly illustrated whilst in situ at the Horniman Museum where a resident conservator was carrying out his own public "performance", painstakingly glueing down grains of sand on an ancient Native American Indian sand painting, intent on preserving what had originally been conceived as an ephemeral event.

according to different criteria prior to exhibition. Implicit in systems of categorisation is the notion of "otherness". Taxonomies based, for example, on different historical periods, different stylistic factors, different materials, different cultures and geographical origins all contribute to demarcating things and ensuring their separateness whilst suppressing whatever does not comfortably fit within any prescribed narrative. Thus what is absent from, marginalised and ignored by the museum is always therefore, as telling as what is visible. Arguably, the types of ephemeral art encountered so far do little to challenge these dualistic categories. Decimating the artwork hardly invites dialogue regarding the aspects of power and privilege which determine what is included and what is excluded, or who has the authority to make such decisions. It simply establishes another category of "other".

Differentially, Dōgen's philosophy of inter-causality demands that we understand the being-ness of things - of existence - as iterated *through* rather than *against* everything else in the universe. In fact, the idea of interpenetration itself calls into question the very notion that there is an "everything" or "anything" *else*. As such, neither mental nor physical lines of demarcation can be established *between* things because there is neither a spatial or temporal gap to facilitate the concept of a "between". For Dōgen, things as we perceive them only *appear* to be separated; an illusion fostered by a dualistic view of the world. Stambaugh emphasises how the idea that everything is already *there* and experienced as *Uji* (all beings are all times), leads Dōgen to think in terms of a kind of temporal unity but not in any transcendent or everlasting metaphysical sense. 'Dōgen speaks', she argues, 'not of infinity, but of totality; and this totality is not to be thought quantitatively, but qualitatively' (1990 p.110). As such, 'totalism refers to a manner of experiencing events in which room is allowed for all kinds of events, and in which

nothing is excluded as alien or "bad"' (Cook, 1977 p.16). One consequence of this egalitarian and inclusive perspective is that "objects", when no longer decreed to be separate *things* but conceived as mutually arising *events*, cannot sustain labelling in dualistic terms such as *better* or *worse*, *more* or *less* desirable. Logically, then, the act of classification must also be considered a dubious practice. If the boundaries between "things" no longer exist, and there is no demarcation between objects, then equally there is no possibility of categorising things based, for example, on spurious differences in value, age and provenance.

A corollary of redefining the whole concept of objectness, is that Dōgen's philosophy inevitably proceeds to overcome the bifurcation of subject and object *in* time as well. As Stambaugh points out, it becomes untenable to conceive of the self as a separate, isolated and contained unit once the notion of a self-existing object is abandoned: 'when things are not seen as objects, the person looking ceases to be a subject' (1990 p.110).

> I myself am not a substantial thing (*svabhāva*), nor is anything else in the world. This means that fundamentally there is no obstruction between me and anything else. I myself am being-time and so is everything else in the world. If I can stop my habit-energy from substantialising everything, including and especially myself, I will no longer see things exclusively as dead, static objects and I can slip out of the subject-object structure of experiencing (1990 p.110).

It follows from this that the other notable function of the museum - the display of objects – is also invalidated. To place something on display implies both a *viewer* – someone who "looks" (self/audience), and a *viewed* (object) – something which is "looked at", and yet, as we have seen, Dōgen's philosophy renders both defunct. Thus the alienated observer/witness to a distanced, self-existing "thing" in the process of decay, is circumvented. Vicarious experience is not an option. It is clear then that a non-dualistic understanding of time has the philosophical potential to eviscerate the very foundations of the museum. The ramifications of embracing a totalistic perspective in

which time and being interpenetrate, where self-existing, substantial objects and subjects are replaced by an experience of non-differentiation and the mutual arising or exertion of all phenomenon, are considerable. From this perspective, collecting objects and all that follows become entirely incongruous and anomalous practices.

10.1 Totality, Non-differentiation and Interpenetration in Practice

This final section contemplates three ways in which the latter ephemeral strategies, including my own creative practice embody Dōgen's notion of totality, interpenetration and non-differentiation and thus, by default, transcend the bifurcation of subject and object which lies at the core of museum philosophy and articulated, as evidenced above, via the practices of collection, conservation, classification and display. In the first instance, the alternative practices reflect the interconnectedness and non-differentiation of things in the types of materials/media selected. Traversing all three strategies lies a commitment on the part of each artist to work with simple unpretentious materials; materials traditionally defined as aesthetically inferior, of negligible value and therefore unworthy of artistic attention. Significantly, these "materials" function as an interface between the prosaic aspects of everyday life and the (usually) reified world of art and, importantly, their status is part of a whole/holistic practice, rather than being an end unto themselves.

Such sentiments are expressed by all the *Dialogic* artists. Meireles, for example, explains his fascination for utilitarian items: 'In much of my work there is interpenetration between the artwork and everyday life, and this affects the choice of material' (quoted in Mosquera, 1999 p.17). In Tiravanija's case, the domestic focus

accords him the title of 'impresario of the everyday', an accolade which Medalla, with his recycled, discarded objects, legitimately shares (Koh, 1998b p.169).

Similarly, Laib selects the 'universal' and 'anonymous', such that 'their aura is not defined by the individual who made them, but generated by the organic substance itself' (Rowell, 2000 p.37). The theme of modest and unobtrusive materials; a "nothing special", or rather "*everything* special" approach, is reiterated throughout these practices, encapsulated perhaps by Laib's use of 'very sparse amounts, to that one perceives the preciousness of the material – precious in a spiritual, not a material sense' (Sagmeister, 1999 p.19). Long also states his allegiance to the ordinary: 'I like the simplicity of walking . . . I like common materials . . . I like the common means given the simple twist of art' (quoted in Fuchs, 1986 p.236). In the *Transubstantiation* strategy, Hutchinson realises his work via the mundane apple, while Ballasteros notes the combination of 'poor' technology and 'minimal resources' in Grippo's lowly potato generator (1995 p.76). Implicit in the artists' choice is the rejection of any hierarchy of value either in terms of fiscal, aesthetic, cultural, scholarly or age criteria. As such, the distinctions upon which the museum's activities are founded, are dismissed as arbitrary and irrelevant.

In my own practice, choosing dust as the foundation of the work; a subaltern matter 'commonly identified with the trivial, meagre, petty, scanty, puny and picayune', assured an ordinary, unsophisticated and unassuming quality to the project (Amato, 2000 p.4). If mostly ignored and beneath contempt, dust remains a universal phenomenon, always and everywhere, respecting no social, economic or cultural boundaries; the great leveller, it is a truly democratic substance. Significantly, the

performance/installation work endeavoured to counteract the image of dust as ugly, worthless, uninteresting or contemptuous by demonstrating that it is part of, indeed, *infused with* everything in the universe from diamonds to memories, in the same way that diamonds and memories are also dust; identical but also different. Hence, both the dialogic nature and the institutional context of *Dust* facilitated critique, prompting discussion as to how objects and relational notions of value are perceived and understood, and who makes those decisions.

This body of work implicitly advances the belief that no particular material (or anything else) can be perceived as superior or more appropriate than any other if all are simply different expressions of one existence. Such thinking makes a nonsense of both collecting and conservation practice. Without separate objects which carry a hierarchy of value there is nothing *more* worthy of owning or preserving than anything else, notwithstanding the fact that Dōgen's concept of presencing and occurrence renders the collection and preservation of objects defunct anyway given their dependence on the illusory understanding that things are self-existing entities which occupy a durational time-span of differing lengths and have a circumscribed life and death *in* time.

In the second instance, another way in which the latter ephemeral strategies embody the principle of totality and demonstrate the interpenetration of all times and existences, is by actively bringing together that which is thought to be alien, separate and mutually exclusive. Artworks associated with *Transubstantiation* embrace these concepts by adopting an interdisciplinary outlook, which dispel oppositions such as art and science, matter and consciousness, animate and inanimate, body and spirit and organic and inorganic. Drawing attention to the sci-art aspect of Grippo's work, Brett, for instance, argues that:

> Grippo's work has the character of a prolonged meditation on one single theme: the relationship between art and science. His work has been an arena for considering the confluence of two streams, two systems of knowledge, or ways of knowing the world: the factual and the imaginative . . . Grippo's work tells us that these streams were united once and they may be united again (1995b p.10).

In addition, Grippo's attraction to 'methodologies which integrate art, science and religion' are more than merely a concern with the integration of narrow subject specific discourses, but extend to 'the possibility they have to "renovate" the field of aesthetics today, by promoting a "convergence" of human experiences as an antidote to fragmentation' (1990 p.86-7). In other words, the work demonstrates a concern with *non-duality*. Ballesteros upholds this interpretation writing; 'In Grippo there is a quest for integration and totality over and beyond oppositions and contradictions. He postulates a fundamental unity'. He goes on to quote Grippo's exhibition text:

> The word divide will have been forgotten . . . To come or to go will have the same value, and to look towards the East will also and simultaneously mean to look towards the West, the North and the South . . . action and contemplation will be one peaceful act which accompanies Nature in its unity (1995 p.77).

Again, in Zorio's work, the separation of science and art is also contested and ultimately replaced by a philosophy in which 'scientific and alchemical thought abandon their traditional opposition'. Moreover, 'His imagination works on an affective memory which allows him to continue to construct encounters between elements; they do not cancel each other out or oppose each other, but act as compliments' (Pacheco, 1994 p.102).

With Hutchinson's *Apple Triangle*, the concept of interpenetration is explored via the organic/inorganic; the inert black volcanic ash and the living fruit. Robbin references this unity in the way his works 'register ecological changes in the environments in which they are placed. They present us with the holistic idea that all of the world, organic and inorganic, is a functioning ecological entity' (1970 p.52). As a mini

ecosystem *Apple Triangle* poignantly expresses Dōgen's concept of temporal totality and interdependence because 'Hutchinson discredits the "technological/natural" dichotomy', postulating that 'there is no distinction . . . between technology that man sets up and natural events which exist and function indifferent to man' (Robbin, 1970 p.54).

In self-consciously appropriating classification as a scientific methodology, *Dust* also raised questions about the way in which museums accentuate the disparateness of things rather than emphasising connections. It engaged audiences in discussions about the nature of science and art, the urge to collect and classify, and about culturally and historically determined methods of pursuing these activities. This was particularly true of the residency at Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology where both archaeologists and geologists at the university commented on the methodological similarity between the artwork and their own academic disciplines.

On several occasions the excess of human hair recovered amongst the dissected items also stimulated debate around the issue of representation and inclusion. At both Cambridge University sites and at Fenton House the hair was almost entirely Caucasian; forensic evidence of a predominantly white audience and workforce, matching my experience of visitors passing through the buildings during the residencies. By contrast, the dust bag at the Horniman, an ethnographic museum proactively committed to collecting multi-ethnic artefacts and staging culturally diverse exhibitions which reflect the local community, revealed a significant amount of afro hair. In addition to which, the petri dishes of categorised dust fragments visually echoed the traditional glass display cabinets I had elected to position myself in front of which housed ancient pottery sherds, formally labelled and laid out according to age and

provenance, ossified "in" time.

In each practice outlined above, audiences are repeatedly confronted with the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate objects and discourses.

In the final example, a somewhat different expression of interpenetration and totality is evident in the *Dialogic* strategy, whereby each artwork is predicated on what, from a conventional institutional viewpoint, might be regarded as the contamination or defilement of the environment. Without recourse to disappearance, the tactic of contamination preserves a distinctly political dimension of the work. By introducing rubbish from the streets into a cultural centre, *Eskimo Carver*, for example, symbolically desecrates a space given over to more supposedly transcendental activities, besides making an ecological statement about 'the turning of the Arctic by heedless exploitation into a vast garbage dump' (Brett, 1995a p.111). For Medalla, rubbish 'presences' and 'occurs' in exactly the same way that 'high' art presences and occurs. From a non-dualistic perspective it is only our discriminating mind which leads one thing/experience to be considered superior and appropriate in certain contexts while others, within the same context, are perceived to be degenerate and taboo.

If Medalla contaminates an environment, Meireles not only defaces banknotes and bottles but appropriates, and in a sense, defiles and contaminates existing systems of economic exchange. In doing so he also juxtaposes uncomfortable narratives, bringing together conflicting information and opinions, permitting an expanded picture of political circumstances. In addition to imaginatively appropriating existing economic structures and subverting the way the media usually control what is placed in circulation, Meireles also implicitly undermines the museum's position as, to borrow an Althusserian term, an ideological state apparatus, by subverting its own 'system of

circulation and exchange', since this type of mobile and nomadic dialogic practice resists collection, categorization, conservation or display. Conscious that a living, breathing, moving, changing practice cannot be accommodated by the art institution, Meireles observes: 'In so far as museums and galleries form a sacred space for representation, they become like the Bermuda Triangle: anything you put there, any idea, is automatically sucked in and neutralized by the context of the display' (1999b p. 112). In a sense, Meireles permits banknotes and pop bottles to be exactly what they are; he does not suppress or alter their ordinary function, but allows them to 'occur', to circulate, in their ordinary fashion but with the addition of a cryptic political message.

Where Meireles operates from outside the institution, Tiravanija conversely 'contaminates the environment' from within, and in doing so avoids 'confrontation and substitutes a subversive, unsettling hospitality' (Saltz, 1996 pp.84-85). Over and above usurping the prescribed economic and aesthetic function of the gallery, the 'contamination' that Saltz speaks of – the introduction of a forbidden substance, the mess, the clattering of pans, the smells, the loud voices, the giving and sharing – all transgress the unwritten and repressive codes of conduct ordinarily placed upon audiences in such contexts. The artist, 'creates a social space . . . in an environment that is essentially inhospitable' (Brown, 1993 p.3). The unconditional, unpredictable and fluid nature of the exchange enables Tiravanija to formulate a highly sophisticated and effective critique from an interior standpoint. Moreover, in the ICA version, Tiravanija exacerbates the discomfort by removing a section of the gallery wall allowing diners a view across the park *and* by co-opting the labour of gallery personnel, whose elevated status ordinarily removes them from direct contact with the public. He demanded 'the involvement of ICA staff to cook on a daily basis, particularly those managers who do

not serve or meet gallery visitors as part of their duties . . . devices [which] conspire to expose the thinness of the membrane that is the museum' (Brown, 1993 p.3).

Staging *Dust* in an institutional context immediately exploited the potential for contamination, because, from the museum perspective, the presence of dust is irksome and inconvenient. On the one hand it causes embarrassment indicating substandard housekeeping practices and on the other hand it represents a serious threat, being a contributory factor in reducing the longevity of ostensibly valuable historical artefacts:

> Dust accumulation can cause damage to museum objects, and is a particular problem in historic houses and palaces where objects are on open display. Dust particles can act as nucleation centres for corrosion on metallic artefacts and removal of dust can cause damage to fragile historic materials, such as textiles (especially silk), leather, paper, lacquers and varnishes (Brimblecombe, Howell, Knight & Lloyd, 2002 p.8).

Consequently conservation teams expend considerable energy resolutely monitoring and attempting to control and minimise the deposition and concretisation of dust upon objects within their care. My residency at Fenton House arose indirectly from discussions with Professor Peter Brimblecombe, an atmospheric chemist at the School of Environmental Science at University of East Anglia (UEA), who at the time was working closely with The National Trust on a project analysing the specific location of dust, its mobility patterns and ultimately researching solutions to dust pollution in historic houses.

In Dōgen's terms, dust is prevented from 'presencing' or 'exerting' itself within the institution because it is actively suppressed and removed. As an unacceptable "dark material" it is labelled unsightly, abrasive and hygroscopic (attracting moisture and accelerating the corrosion of metal). Judgement and condemnation are even implied in the unit of measure, decreed a "soiling unit" by conservators. Hence, deliberately foregrounding relatively large quantities of dust in such an environment may therefore

be considered a provocative act, and indeed, one condition stipulated by the Horniman Museum's Conservation Department, dependent on the work's actualisation was that the vacuum bag selected should undergo an intense process of fumigation, ensuring that any "pests" present were completely deceased, prior to dissection. Moreover, the space offered to me for the performance was a pristine marble-tiled area, a kind of concourse and meeting place, from which galleries branched, ensuring the dust was contained in an area well-removed from any "important" artefacts. Again, at Fenton House, although I was located in the dinning room, furniture was re-arranged in order that the dust was positioned as far away as possible from historical paintings, musical instruments or other "valuable" objects.

Despite these limitations, the concept of contamination as a form of non-differentiation and interpenetration, making explicit the presence of dust; a potentially hazardous and undesirable substance within the museum environment, proved effective in stimulating dialogue around opposites such as exclusion and inclusion, dirt and cleanliness, rationality and irrationality, animate and inanimate, science and art, life and death, chaos and organisation, and so on, as well as further reinforcing notions of circular temporality by preventing the disposal of debris which would ordinarily have been made to vanish. It allowed dust to be 'an occurrence'. In Genjo-koan, Dōgen says;

> Those who know a speck of dust know the entire universe; those who penetrate a single dharma [truth] penetrate all dharmas. If you do not penetrate all dharmas, you do not penetrate a dharma. When you understand the meaning of penetration (tsū) and thereby penetrate thoroughly, you discern all dharmas as well as a single dharma. For this reason, while you study a speck of dust, you study the entire universe without fail (Kim, 2004 pp.155-156).

In other words, a speck of dust is not merely a *by-product* of existence, it *is* existence itself. As the quotation above illustrates, for Dōgen, a speck of dust symbolises the concept of totality. The performance/installation demonstrated that dust has the

propensity to raise fundamental philosophical questions about the nature of being, life, death and impermanence. Each vacuum bag revealed the interpenetration of multiple narratives and biographies; the totality and co-existence of the universe of which Dōgen speaks.

The idea of contamination in these examples facilitates the interpenetration of opposites. Every item; rubbish, money, food, drink and dust are all manipulated in a Brechtian manner in order to dislocate and disrupt the usual dualistic frames of reference. While Savage's mould work is also based on the idea of contamination (specifically in relation to the museum), arguably it does not profess the same non-dualistic temporal understanding since it clings to a nihilistic notion of impermanence. Both *Dorian* and *The Unattended Funeral* are not only designed to disintegrate themselves, but also had the added effect of causing decay and destruction amidst the surrounding cultural heritage. By contrast, the work described above emphasises the Being-Time of things, allowing them to exert and express their existence *in toto*. Nothing is at the expense of anything else.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have suggested that certain types of ephemeral art practice such as those represented by the latter three strategies and my own work, *Dust*, potentially reinstate the efficacy of ephemeral art as an institutional critique. This kind of work, because it embodies a non-dualistic understanding of time, is exempt from the charge of nihilism levelled at other types of ephemeral work which resort to disappearance as a tactic. However, ephemeral art of this nature, also pro-actively negates the ideology of permanence; the inverse temporality to which the art institution subscribes and by

challenging the very concept of a substantial object and its attendant substantial subject, refutes the validity of the four established functions of the museum; collecting, conservation, classification and display. In turn, this necessitates a critique of the location of value, disciplinary boundaries and the appropriateness or validity of certain materials/media in the context of art.

Writing about the relationship between science and art, Ede contrasts the traditional rationalist scientific world view as a 'vision of implicit order, coherence and constancy in the physical universe' with the postmodern artistic tendency to embrace 'fracture, fragmentation and disarray' (2000 p.46 & p.47). Conceivably, the former perspective encapsulates the ethos the museum/art institution while the latter statement symbolises the initial four strategies of ephemeral art. Arguably, Dōgen extends a bridge across this philosophical chasm. From his standpoint, interpenetration and non-differentiation result in an ordered and coherent universe, albeit one which is contingent on the permanent impermanence of everything. Consequently, what is unified in one moment is reconfigured in a different unity in the next. Arguably therefore, ephemeral art which embraces this kind of non-dualistic temporality is saved from the essentialism of Cartesian discourse whilst simultaneously avoiding the relativism evinced by much contemporary art, without sacrificing its integrity as an institutional critique.

Conclusion

This thesis began with the conjecture that ephemeral art, rather than being simply another discrete stylistic phenomenon, more significantly represents a philosophical statement concerning the nature of time and how it functions. Chapter 1 commenced by exploring a particular juncture in Western art criticism when the relationship between time and art prompted great debate. Using Fried's renowned article Art and Objecthood as a discussion point, I argued that, in their clamour to disassociate themselves from Fried's durationless and eternal concept of time, his opponents; artists and critics alike, rushed to embrace an antithetical common-sense notion of durational temporality. I went on to show how the language used by artists and critics to describe this kind of temporality is philosophically commensurate with Aristotle's theory of time. In the following chapter I outlined how this particular philosophy manifests itself within the context of Conceptual Art, articulated via the discourse of dematerialisation. This in turn, I suggested, was a defining moment in the emergence of ephemeral art and the corresponding understanding of impermanence, linking both to a certain interpretation of *process*, in particular, to the idea of a slowly disappearing material object.

Chapter 3 narrowed the parameters further, introducing four strategies of ephemeral art; *Dissolution*, *Dispersal*, *Decay* and *Suspended Ephemerality* and demonstrating in detail how they embodied the three main tenets of Aristotle's conception of time. I argued that despite the fact that a dedicated critique of the ideology of the museum and art institutional system is a common impetus of artists working with the ephemeral, whether operating tactically from within, or absenting themselves from conventional exhibition spaces, in fact, the understanding of time advanced by this type of work is

equally flawed. Not only is it problematic, I suggested, because of the fact that it is, in essence, merely the inverse expression of the same understanding of time advocated by the institutions themselves, more importantly, I stated that it is fundamentally deficient because it is dualistic. The central problem addressed by the thesis was therefore established, namely: Is it inevitable that ephemeral art be constructed around a dualistic understanding of time or is it possible to develop an alternative ephemeral artistic practice which facilitates a non-dualistic temporal perspective?

The next chapter proceeded to define the philosophical concepts of duality and non-duality; key concepts in Buddhism specifically and Eastern philosophy in general. This chapter framed the methodology of the research. It outlined the significant factors pertaining to a dualistic perception of the world, illustrating precisely how Aristotle's theory of time is dualistic, and by implication, how certain manifestations of ephemeral art predicated upon the same temporal perspective, are equally dualistic. It also considered how the museum merely reflects a mirror image of this kind of dualistic conception of time. The conclusion delineated the specific criterion any alternative practice would need to negate in order to dissolve a dualistic temporal frame of reference.

Where Part I concentrated on the philosophical issues associated with dualistic time and its expression in four ephemeral art strategies, Part II shifted the focus to non-dualistic temporality. It commenced by introducing a further three ephemeral strategies; *Transubstantiation*, *Ritual* and *Dialogic Ephemerality*, as well as my own creative practice; a performance/installation work entitled *Dust*. At the beginning of this section of the thesis I suggested that collectively, these practices allude to a different understanding of time, however, whether this difference amounted to a non-dualistic

perspective could not be assessed without simultaneously examining exactly what constitutes a non-dualistic philosophy of time and how this is able to negate the dualistic principles encountered in the first part of the thesis. In order to do this, Chapter 5 to Chapter 9 examined five related dimensions of the Japanese Zen monk Dōgen's philosophy of impermanence and non-dualistic temporality; time and being, permanence and impermanence, life and death, the passage of time, and cause and effect. Following an introduction to each aspect of time, I consequently analysed the final three strategies and my own practice in the context of this theoretical framework, concluding that, overall, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that all the practices discussed, consciously or unconsciously, successfully negate each aspect of Aristotelian temporality and align themselves with many, if not all, the criteria laid down in Dōgen's non-dualistic understanding of time.

Finally, in Chapter 10, I returned to the question of the museum. In this chapter, I considered how the notion of totality; the idea that everything in the universe exists in a state of interpenetration and non-differentiation, which permeates Dōgen's thought, is expressed in the latter ephemeral strategies. I proceeded to demonstrate how ephemeral art practices, when founded on these principles, inevitably present a challenge to the primary functions of the art institution and museum; collecting, conservation, classification and display.

A few issues remain outstanding. Firstly, this thesis will undoubtedly have given the impression that the relationship between art (practice and criticism) and time have invariably been approached from a dualistic standpoint. However, within the broader context of Conceptual Art lie the seeds of another narrative. Two artists in particular reference this. In his article published in *Artforum*, Ian Wilson speaks about space, time

and consciousness in a manner which points to a non-dualistic understanding of these issues. Formatting his position in a list of sentences, Wilson writes:

> When consciousness is related to place and time it is limited to place and time.
> Consciousness withdrawn from external references is beyond space and time.
> Conceptual art is beyond space and time . . .
> The true present is without references of space and time (1994 p.60).

There are clearly parallels here with Dōgen's concept of Time-Being. The statement; 'Consciousness withdrawn from external references is beyond space and time', might reasonably be interpreted as an expression of non-duality if the author's understanding is that the true present *is* space and time and doesn't *reference* it because it is not outside or beyond consciousness but *is* consciousness *itself.* Thus, space and time cannot be *externally referenced* since to do so immediately bifurcates consciousness (the self) and space and time, separating them into two objectified substances.

The other example concerns what appears to be an almost uncanny paraphrase of Dōgen's philosophy by Mel Bochner, which reads:

> Perception of an object is generally preconceived as taking place within a point-by-point time. This disconnected time, a lingering bias of tense in language, restricts our experiencing the conjunction between object and observation. When this conjunction is acknowledged, "things" become indistinguishable from events. Carried to its conclusion, physicality, or what separates the material from the non-material (the object from our observation), is merely a contextual detail (quoted in Meyer, 1972 p.52).

Again, there is a close resemblance between *Uji* in terms of 'event-time', where existence and time converge in a non-dualistic experience, overcoming the dichotomy of subject and object. Despite these isolated examples, within the specific terrain of *ephemeral* art (the concern here), it remains true, as Part I illustrated, that the hegemonic concept of impermanence is defined in nihilistic terms and subscribes to a dualistic perception of time derived from Aristotle.

Secondly, the whole thesis both trades upon paradoxes and is itself a paradox. With

regard to the former, if we are to accept Dōgen's philosophy of time and the idea of permanent impermanence, we are left with the dilemma of whether the very notion of "ephemeral" art *itself* is an oxymoron. If permanence and impermanence are in the end completely interdependent concepts, two sides of the same coin, is it still possible to distinguish the kinds of art discussed here from other, more traditional forms of creativity such as oil painting, drawing and sculpture, for example, as well as from each other? Indeed, is it even relevant or necessary to do so? Moreover, despite having implied in Chapter 10 that certain types of ephemeral art *do* present a successful critique, does this temporal convergence, this unification, inevitably mean that the perceived distinctions between the ideology of the museum/art institutional system in general, and the ideology of artists working with the ephemeral are ultimately an illusion, and therefore that the whole concept of a critique is superfluous? Ironically, the answer to these questions is both "yes" and "no". "Yes", because from Dōgen's non-dualistic perspective it is an illusion to conceive of permanence and impermanence in dualistic terms as opposite ends of a spectrum. There can be no such thing as absolute permanence or absolute impermanence, since, as we have seen, this leads to a transcendent metaphysics on the one hand and to nihilism on the other. Furthermore, for Dōgen, life and death, beginnings and endings, cause and effect, interpenetrate and are mutually arising, co-existing phenomenon. Hence, from a non-dualistic perspective, ephemeral art is no more or less fluid, fluxing, or impermanent than any other type of art. It is irrelevant how temporary or how permanent an artwork (or anything else) may appear to be if *all* objects, material, states of matter, forms of existence and times are equalised and co-joined through the principle of interpenetration. Even to speak in terms of flux and stasis is to enter the dualistic world of subject and object which

substantialises both time and things. The notion of permanent impermanence transcends this duality. Ultimately, both (everything) is impermanent. There is nothing outside of *Uji* (Being-Time) and the 'right-now'. Consequently, it is only when stepping into a dualistic temporal frame of reference that statements comparing the duration or stability of two objects can be made. This in itself necessitates a separation from the artwork and from time, inducing the notion that both objects and beings are self-existing and contained "in" time, as well as introducing the idea that time is calculation and can be measured. Alternately, if we accept Dōgen's position; that time is not durational and that past, present and future interpenetrate, it becomes both impossible as well as nonsensical to attempt these comparisons. If *everything* in the universe is impermanent and *all* existence is time, concepts such as a *faster* temporality and a *slower* temporality become a ludicrous proposition; nothing is more or less permanent than anything else. Thus, the psychological and political barriers that are erected between so-called *ephemeral* art and the more traditional, "enduring" artworks found in institutional collections, are dissolved. However, this presupposes that both artists who are self-consciously working with ideas of impermanence, and conservators and curators within the museum/art institutional system are functioning from a non-dualistic temporal perspective, which, as has been demonstrated, is, in general, highly unlikely. Therefore the answer is "no" as well as "yes".

In sum, it could be argued that a dualistic temporal perspective authenticates and legitimises the concept of *ephemeral art*, whereas a non-dualistic temporal perspective renders it redundant and meaningless. Reconsidering Wittgenstein's statement, referenced in Chapter 8, that 'If by eternity is understood not infinite temporal duration but non-temporality, then it can be said that a man live eternally if he lives in the

"present"', then the latter three ephemeral art strategies and my own creative work are paradoxically, more 'eternal' than either the initial four strategies or traditional artworks, since arguably, they *do* function fully in the present, actively embracing the 'right-now' (*nikon*) aspect of Dōgen's temporality. Their *raison d'etre* is to 'presence' or 'occur' in the moment, unlike either conventional art which is preserved for a spurious "future", or the ephemeral practices considered in Chapter 3 which are dependent on a durational concept of time that objectifies both artwork and audience, requiring the latter to contrast "more and less", "before and after". From Dōgen's standpoint, this sort of ephemeral art is, in effect, an entirely *inauthentic* confrontation with mortality/impermanence.

In the latter case, the thesis *itself* is a paradox because it strives to do the impossible. Chapter 6 demonstrated that in order to enter a non-dualistic perspective, 'reflective thinking' must be abandoned in favour of a 'pre-reflective consciousness' and 'without-thinking mode', to borrow Kasulis' terms. However, pursuing an academic project within the conventional boundaries necessarily requires *conscious* reflection which, in turn demands distancing oneself both from ideas and creative practice in order to critically evaluate them; taking a rational, intellectual approach to what, by mainstream Western philosophical standards, is essentially an irrational, non-intellectual issue. As Loy (1988) has shown, this inevitably involves adopting a dualistic frame of reference which automatically separates subject and object and therefore precludes the possibility of non-dualistic experience.

Arguably, the creative practice element of the research provides an opportunity to overcome this problem because of the way in which it functions almost as a participant observation methodology functions in social science research, allowing the researcher

to take up a subjective position within the study, joining in, taking part and experiencing a situation from the inside, so to speak. However, while the *participant* dimension may well facilitate the dissolution of what Loy describes as 'an experiencing self that is distinct from what is experienced' (quoted in Chapter 4), the *observational* role, by contrast, effectively negates this, engendering a kind of schizophrenic state causing the researcher to oscillate uncomfortably between two contradictory ways of being; dualistic and non-dualistic. On a personal level, this was something I found especially difficult to negotiate during the residencies. It was extremely hard to step outside of the persona of "artist", being at once fully involved both in the process of dissection and in stimulating dialogues with a constant stream of visitors. I recognised that to wholly engage with the performance, note-taking and reflection had to be postponed until later. This is consistent. Analysis can only be undertaken retrospectively because the paradox of observing the event makes one aware of it as a parallel and separate phenomenon and therefore causes a dislocation between performance (action), self and time, fragmenting the totality of experience and forcing one's consciousness to remain in a dualistic frame of reference.

Even the structural division of the thesis into two distinct parts, one relating to dualistic temporality and the other to non-dualistic temporality, in addition to the division between the theoretical, written component and the practice, creates its own paradoxical dualism of duality and non-duality. Interpreting Dōgen's non-dualistic philosophy, Tanahashi writes that 'The first step is discrimination, the second is denial of discrimination, and the third is beyond discrimination and denial of it' (1985 p.17). Whether this thesis (or *any* conceptual, academic contribution) is able to proceed to the third stage is debatable. A related problem concerns the fact that the thesis also requires

the reader to suspend the usual dualistic understanding of the world and allow for the possibility that a non-dualistic perspective is not merely an esoteric fantasy but a tenable proposition, which can be assessed legitimately within its own epistemological terms of reference.

Finally, what overall contribution does this thesis make? Of what consequence is either ephemeral art or a non-dualistic understanding of time in the grand scheme of things? From a purely art historical stance, one potential advantage to conceiving ephemeral art as a strategy, or variety of strategies, is that it leaves the way open to a more diverse, inclusive and representative art history. Instead of viewing ephemeral art as a limited Western genre or style, it permits the possibility of making cross-cultural links with other types of impermanent creativity in different times and places. Rather than closing off connections between what has historically been categorised as "civilized", "sophisticated", and invariably "superior", this is an opportunity for the Western art canon to build bridges with art in different cultural contexts which have all too often been labelled as "other"; primitive, exotic, infantile and/or inferior. In the same insidious manner that African histories have frequently been rendered either invisible or unreliable due to the prevalence of oral traditions, African, Asian and Native American ephemeral art, for example, has largely been denigrated or ignored. Yet there are a wealth of artistic practices, past and present which suggest common ground with the work discussed here insofar as a non-dualistic understanding of time is concerned.

From a philosophical standpoint, art which facilitates a non-dualistic perception of the world is invaluable since the consequences of adopting such a perspective inform the way in which we make fundamental decisions about how to live. If things (including people) are not substantial, self-existing objects and everything *does* interpenetrate in

time and space as Dōgen would have us believe, then there are major implications for how we view the universe, how we treat each other, the environment and animals, as well as so-called "inanimate" objects.

In his book *Religion Without God*, Billington asserts that non-duality is an amoral condition which transcends categories of good and evil. He writes:

> Liberation is awareness of *non-dual reality* . . . and is incompatible with assertion of personality, or injury to, or exploitation of others. This is the state beyond good and evil, and its significant feature is not that it leads to a disregard of other sentient beings, but that benevolent acts are viewed as an intuitive expression of oneness with all beings, rather than a painstaking observance of rules based either on rational arguments or authoritative commands (2002 p.122).

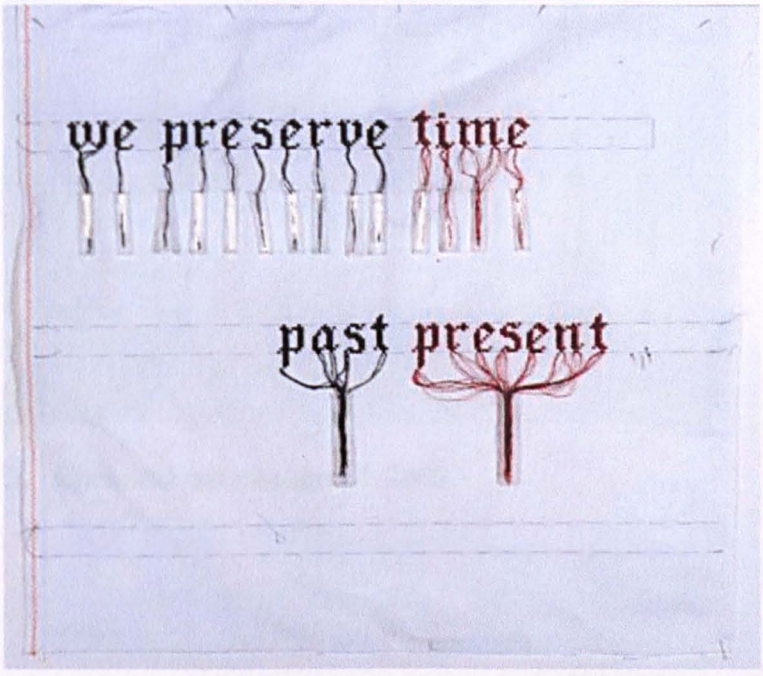
Dōgen would take this one step further because, for him, there are no 'sentient beings' as such, there is simply *sentience* itself. This adjustment is crucial since it moves us beyond a limited humanistic awareness and means that the whole universe is viewed from a position of non-exploitation. Consequently, *everything* demands to be treated with respect. As such, the philosophical issues at stake have far reaching significance[32]. In an age where ecological disaster looms large, where a growing percentage of the population are ill-nourished, poorly housed and economically exploited for the unjust advantage of a minority, far from being a merely aesthetic or intellectual puzzle, art, if it is to be of any consequence at all, must pose difficult questions and challenge us to think deeply about the choices we make. Arguably, the kind of ephemeral art typified by the latter three strategies has the potential to do just this and therefore is worthy of serious attention.

[32] See Cook's (1995) essay: Dōgen's View of Authentic Selfhood and Its Socio-ethical Implications.

Illustrations

Examples of Early Creative Practice:

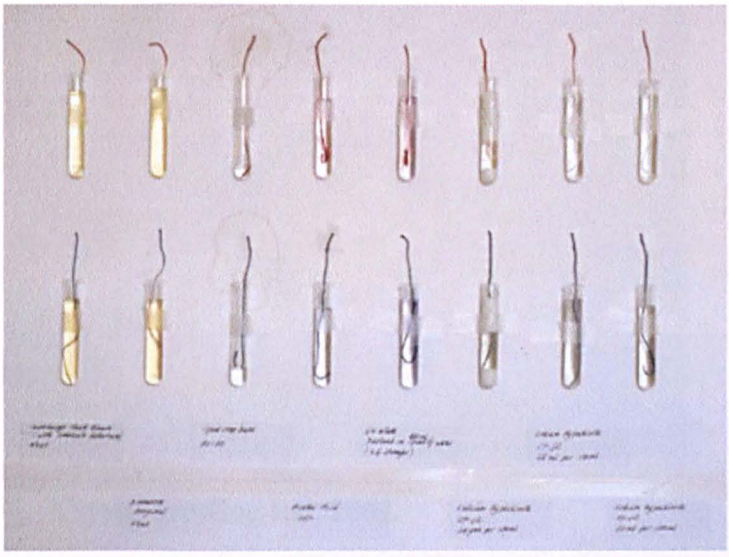
Work in Progress Based on Decay



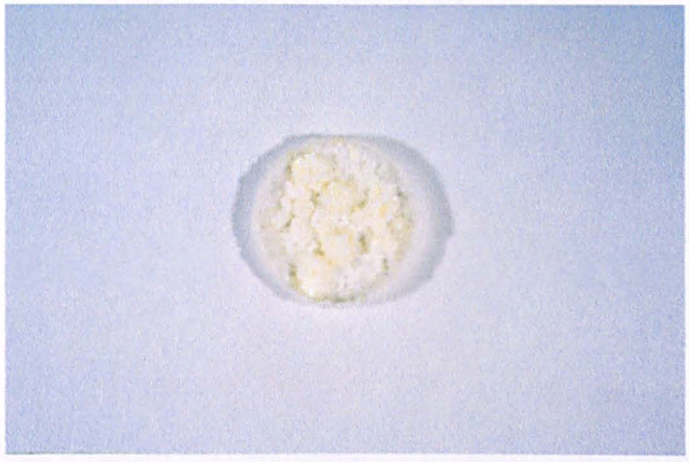
1. Test piece for embroidered sampler combining conservation and Zen Buddhist texts, before chemical activation, 2002.



2. Test piece for embroidered sampler combining conservation and Zen Buddhist texts, during chemical activation, 2002.



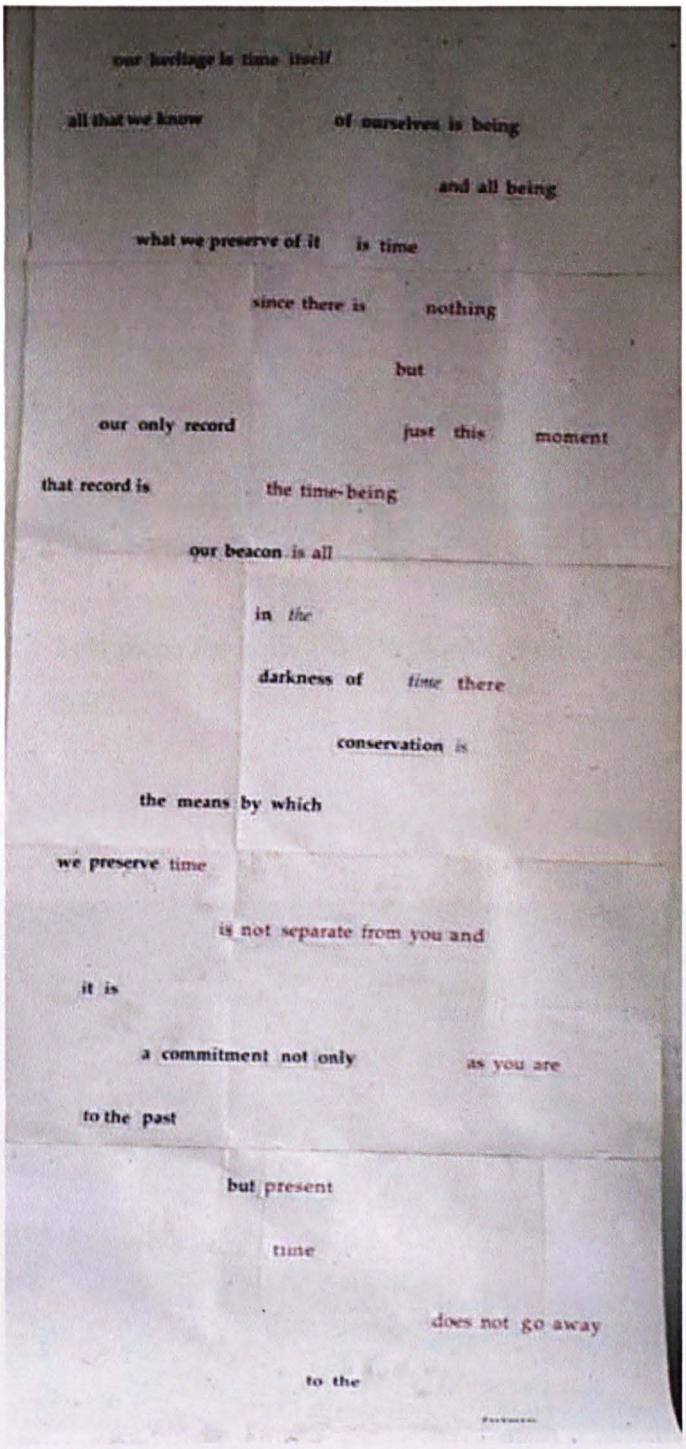
3. Chemical tests on thread, 2002.



4. Crystal growing test, 2002.



5. Crystal growing test, 2002.



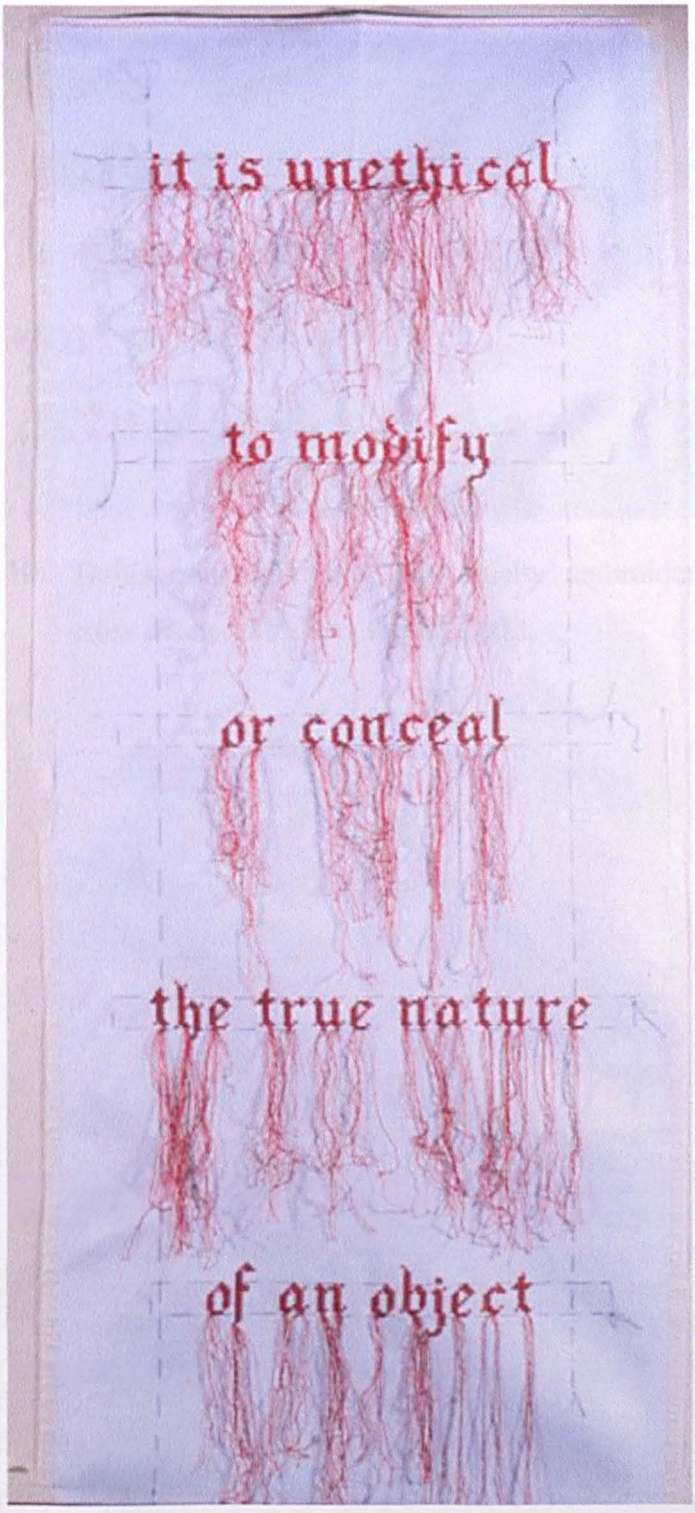
6. Design layout for full embroidered sampler combining conservation and Zen Buddhist texts about time, 2002.



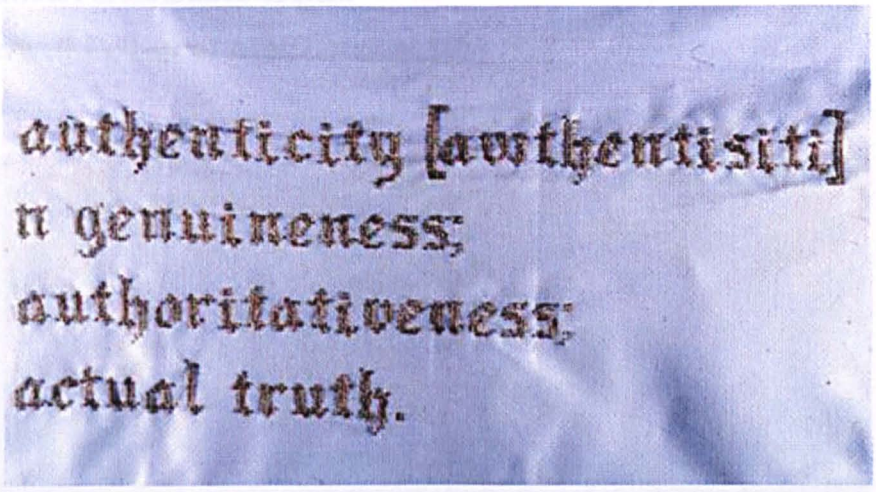
7. Test piece for embroidered sampler before chemical activation, 2002.



8. Test piece for embroidered sampler after chemical activation, 2002.



9. Embroidered sampler with conservation ethics text, 2002.



10. Tarnishing definition of 'authenticity' embroidered in cross stitch with silver thread, 2002.

Installation/Performance of *Dust*

Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003



1. Prototype performance/installation of *Dust*,
   Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003.



2. Prototype performance/installation of *Dust*,
   Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003.



3. Prototype performance/installation of *Dust* (detail), Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003.

Documentation of *Dust* Performance/Installation at Own Home

The Contents of a Vacuum Bag



1. The complete contents of my domestic vacuum cleaner bag



2. Afro hair



3. Shampooing hair



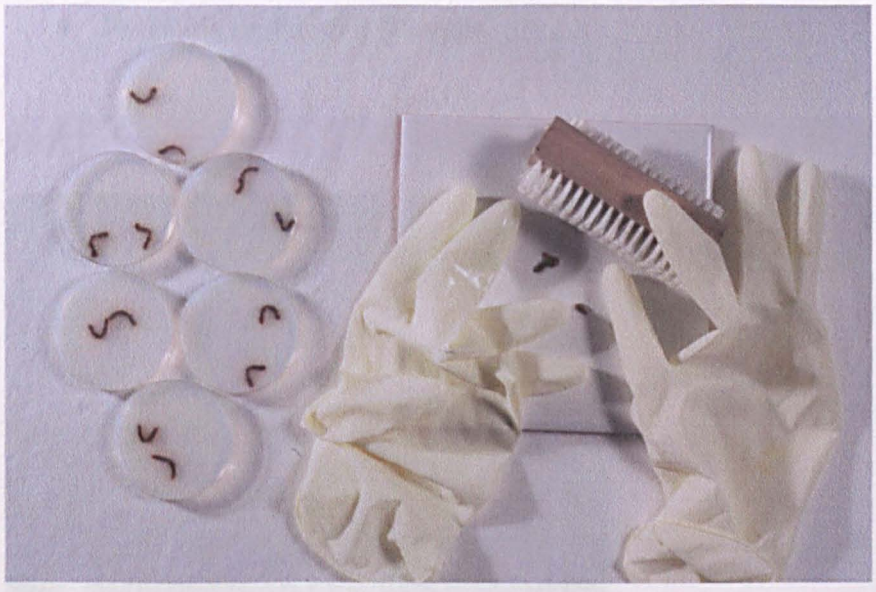
4. Food items
   (rice, onion skins, broccoli, apple pips, soya beans, etc.)



5. Rinsing food



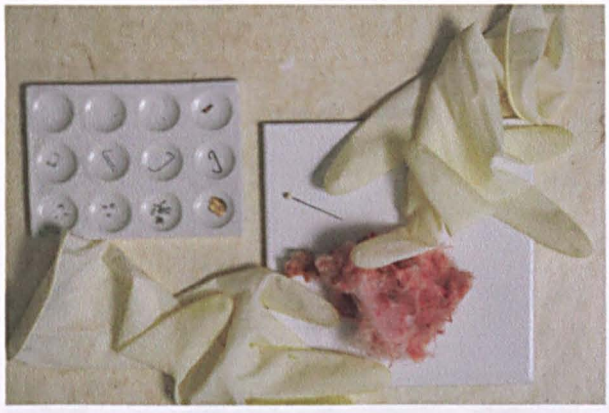
6. Carpet Fibres



7. Scrubbing carpet fibres with carpet shampoo



8. Metal and wood



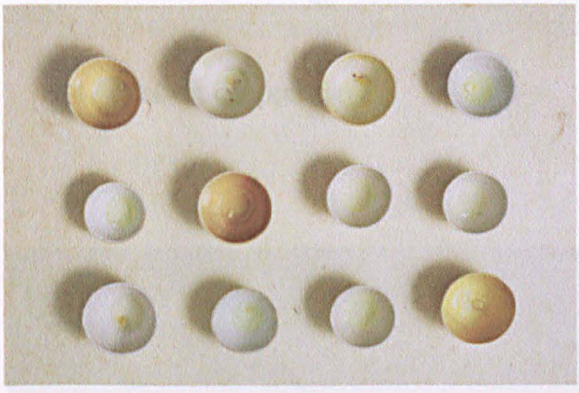
9. Polishing metal with Duraglit



10. Polishing wood fragments with antique wax polish



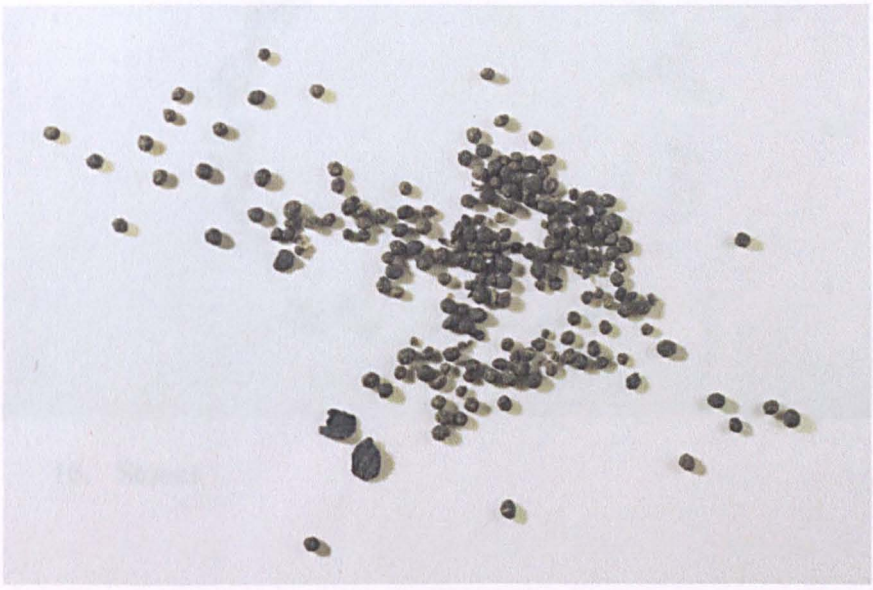
11. Polystyrene fragments and sponge particles



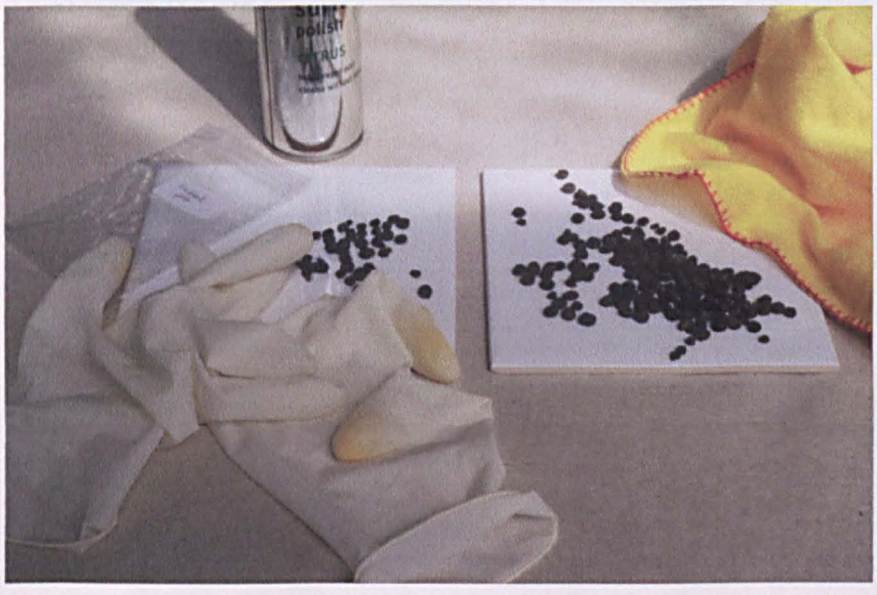
12. Soaking polystyrene fragments in bleach



13. Washing sponge particles with soap



14. Rabbit droppings



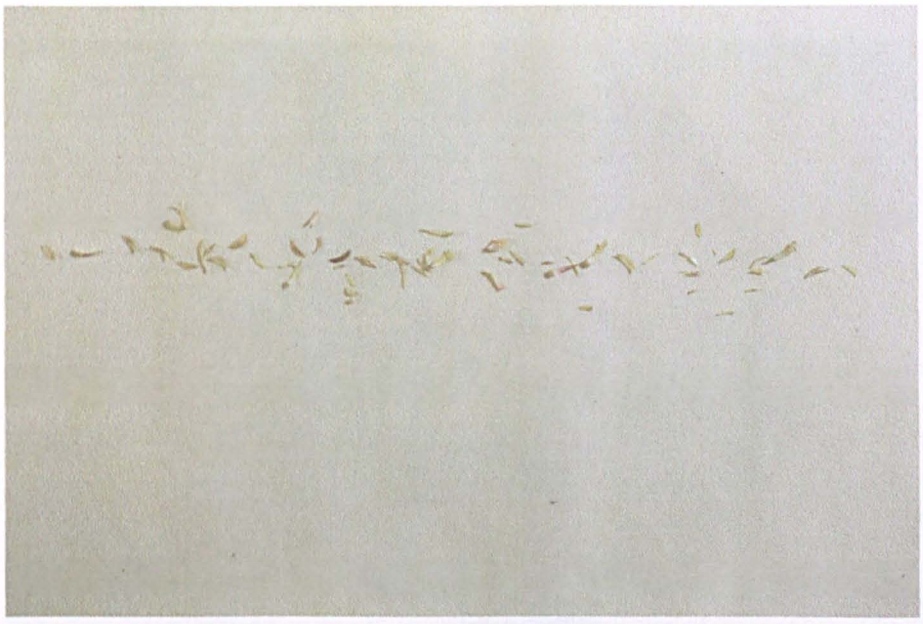
15. Polishing rabbit droppings with spray furniture polish



16. Stones



17. Cleaning stones with wire wool



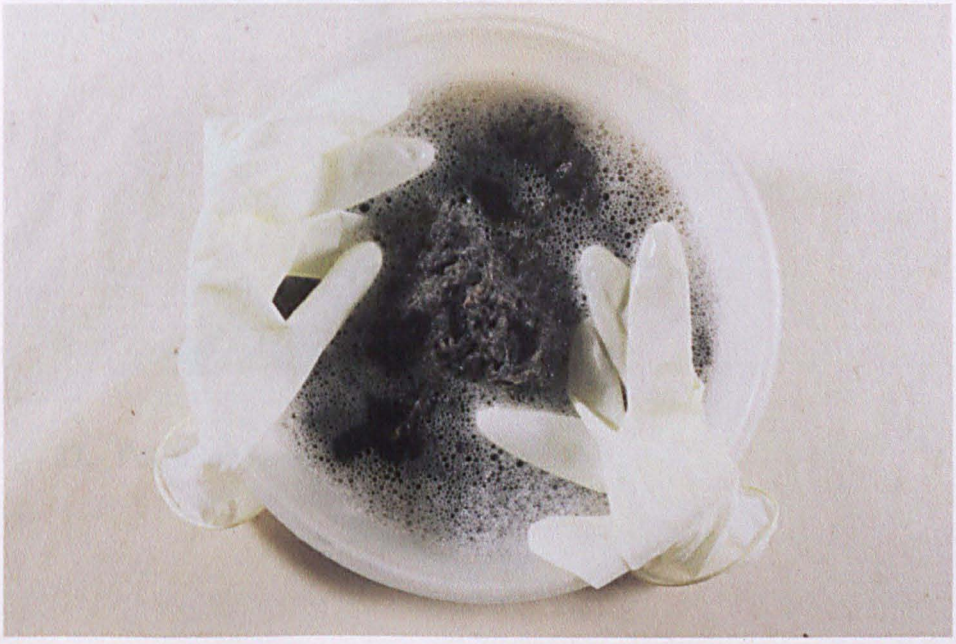
18. Finger nails



19. Scrubbing finger nails with soap and nail brush



20. Fluff (extremely fine clumped textile fibres)



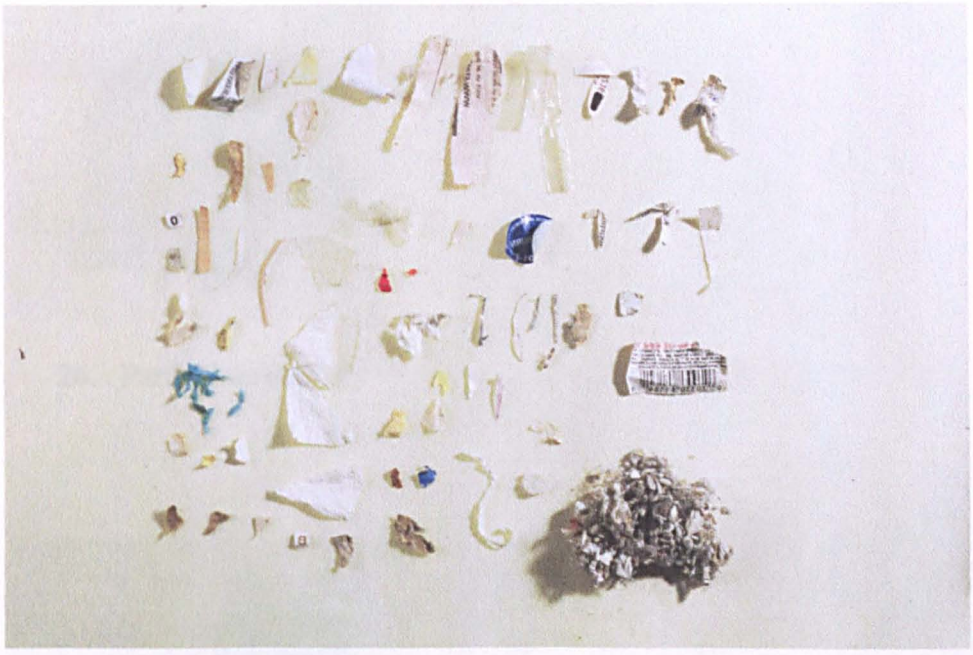
21. Washing fluff with washing powder



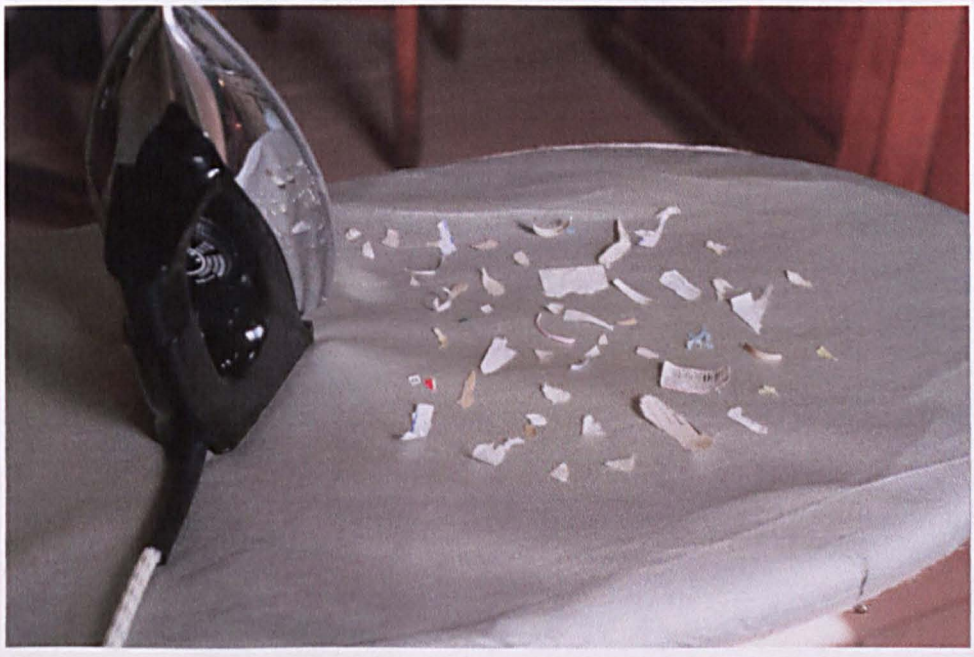
22. Fern leaves



23. Polishing fern leaves with leaf polish



24. Paper fragments



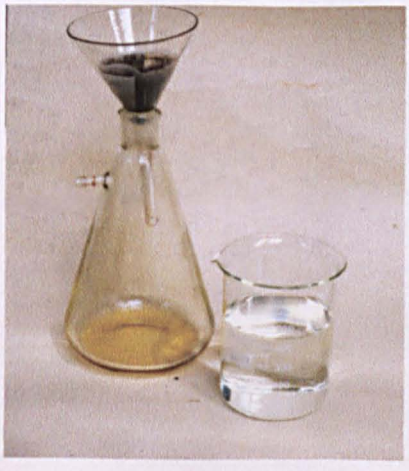
25. Ironing paper fragments after washing



26. Particulate matter



27. Filtering particulate matter (a)



28. Filtering particulate matter (b)



29. Rabbit litter



30. Fine gravel



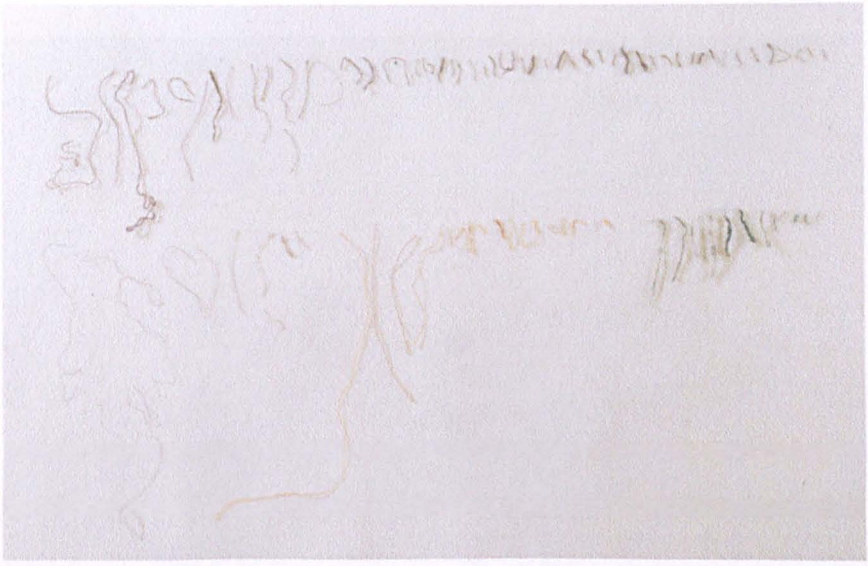
31. Washing fine gravel



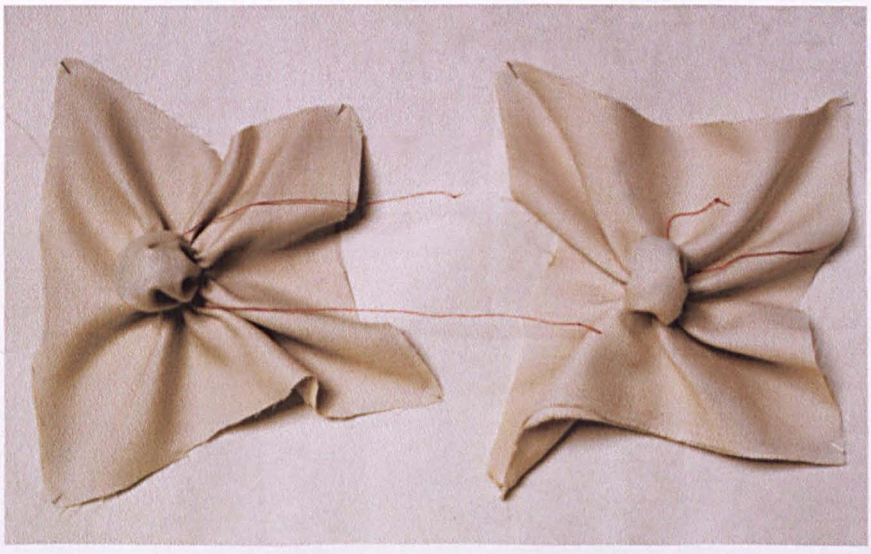
32. Feathers



33. Dusting feathers with a feather duster



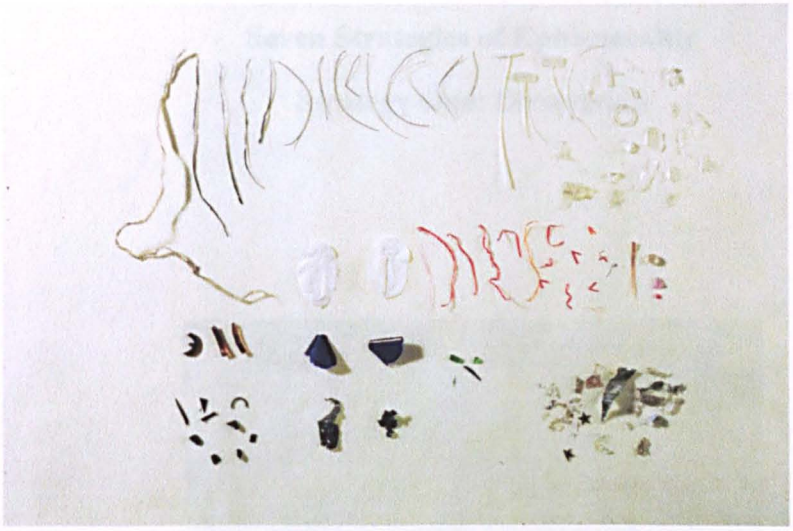
34. Textile fibres



35. Preparing textile fibres for the washing machine



36. Insect parts



37. Plastic



38. Washing plastic in washing up liquid

Seven Strategies of Ephemerality

Strategy One: Dissolution



1. Dennis Oppenheim, *Gallery Transplant*, 1967. Floor plan of a gallery transplanted to a bird sanctuary near Ithaca, New York.



2. Paul Kos, *The Sound of Ice Melting*, 1970. Two twenty-five pound blocks of ice surrounded by eleven sensitive microphones, Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco.



3. Paul Kos, *Richmond Glacier*, 1969. 7,000 pounds of ice and salt blocks; 60 x 60 x 60", Richmond Art Centre, California.



4. Paul Kos, *Untitled (kinetic ice block with salt)*, 1969. Gelatin silver prints.

Seven Strategies of Ephemerality

Strategy Two: Dispersal



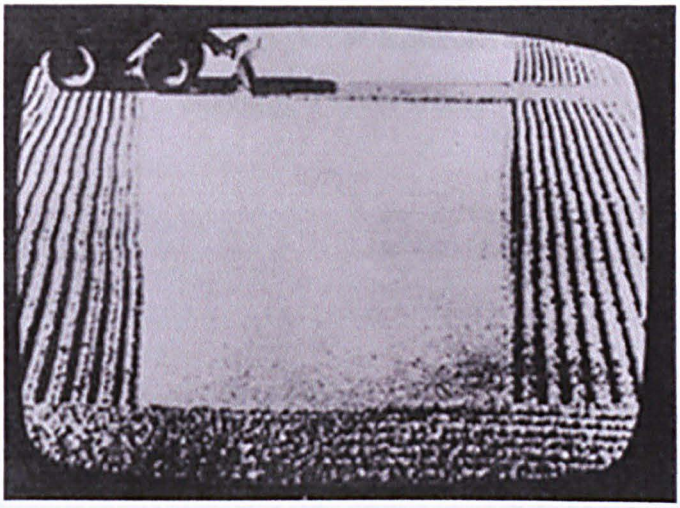
1. Lothar Baumgarten, *Stacked Pyramid*, 1968.

   Red pigment on forest pathway floor.



2. Erwin Wurm, *Staubarbeiten Dustworks*, from 1990.

   House dust in glass vitrine.



3. Jan Dibbets, *12 Hours Tide Object with Correction of Perspective*, 1969. Furrow ploughed in the sand, filmed on the coast of the Netherlands.

Seven Strategies of Ephemerality

Strategy Three: Decay



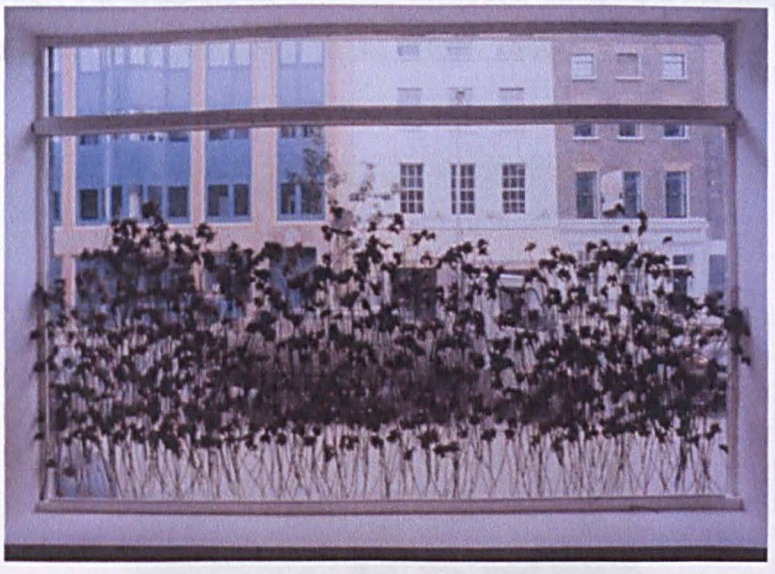
1. Zoe Leonard, *Strange Fruit (for David)*, 1993-1998. Installation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, comprising 302 banana, orange, grapefruit, lemon and avocado peels with buttons, zips, thread, wire and sinew needles, plastic, wire stickers, fabric trim, and wax, 1998.



2. Zoe Leonard, *Strange Fruit (for David)*, 1993-1998.
   Detail of installation, 1998.



3. Anya Gallaccio, *preserve 'beauty'*, 1991. 800 red gerbera (Beauty) pressed between the gallery window and glass at beginning of exhibition, Karsten Schubert Ltd., London.



4. Anya Gallaccio, *preserve 'beauty'*, 1991. 800 red gerbera (Beauty) pressed between the gallery window and glass at end of exhibition, Karsten Schubert Ltd., London.



5. Savage, *The Unattended Funeral*, 1997. Rusted sewing machine and jacket with cultivated mould, artist's studio.



6. Savage, *The Unattended Funeral* (detail), 1997, artist's studio.



7. Savage, *Dorian*, 1997. Jacket with cultivated mould, Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery, 2000.

Seven Strategies of Ephemerality

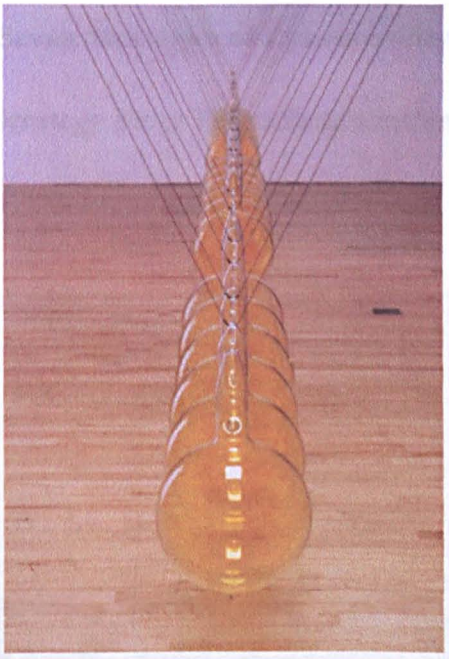
Strategy Four: Suspended



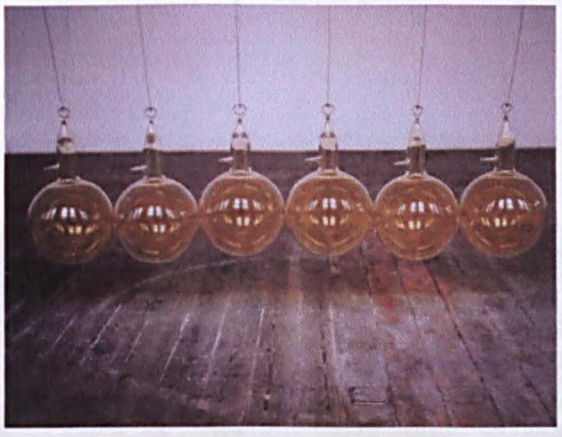
1. Marc Quinn, *Self*, 1991. Blood, stainless steel, Perspex and refrigeration equipment, Saatchi Gallery.



2. Jana Sterbak, *Vanitas, Flesh Dress for an Anorectic Albino*, 1987. 50 pounds of raw flank steak stitched together, National Gallery, Ottawa, Canada.



3. Hamad Butt, *Familiars Part 3: Cradle*, 1992. Glass baubles containing chlorine gas, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.



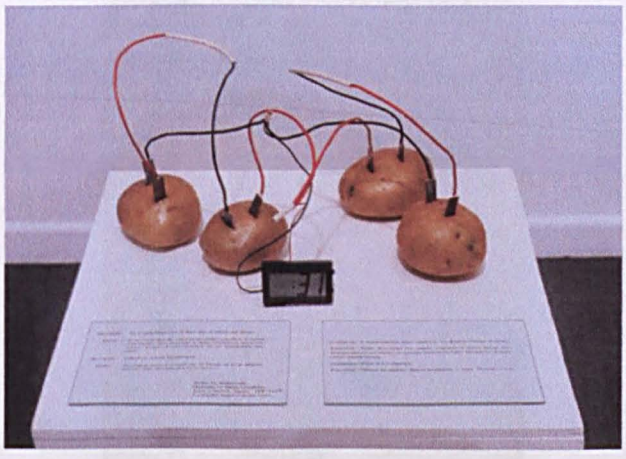
4. Hamad Butt, *Familiars Part 3: Cradle*, 1992. Glass baubles containing chlorine gas, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.

Seven Strategies of Ephemerality

Strategy Five: Transubstantiation



1. Victor Grippo, *Analogia 1* (*Analogy 1*), 1971. Potato battery, reconstruction at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 1995.

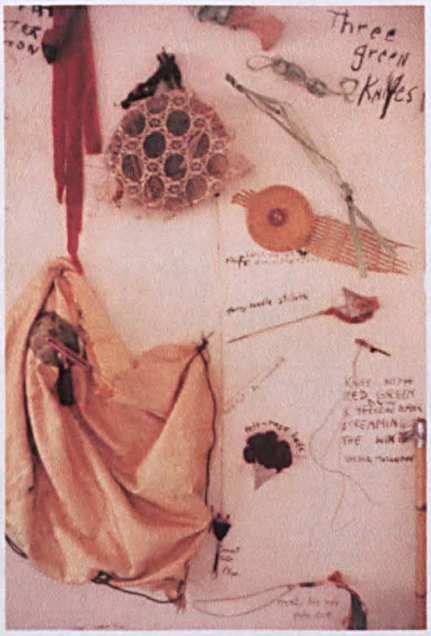


2. Victor Grippo, *Analogia 1*, (*Analogy 1*), detail, 1971. Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 1995.

Strategy Six: Dialogic



1. David Medalla, *Eskimo Carver*, 1977. Collaborative project, knives constructed with rubbish by visitors, Fitzrovia Cultural Centre, London.



2. David Medalla, *Eskimo Carver* (detail), 1977. Fitzrovia Cultural Centre, London.



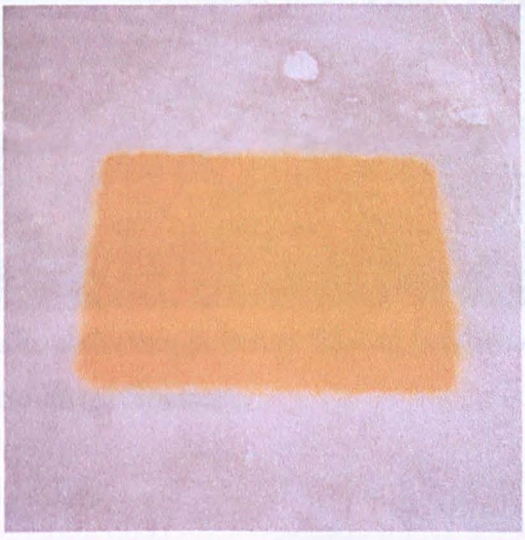
3. Cildo Meireles, *Inserções en Circuitos Ideologicos, Projecto Coca-Cola (Insertion into Ideological Circuits, Coca-Cola Project)*, 1970.
   Transfer text on glass bottle, metal and soft drink, Tate collection, London.



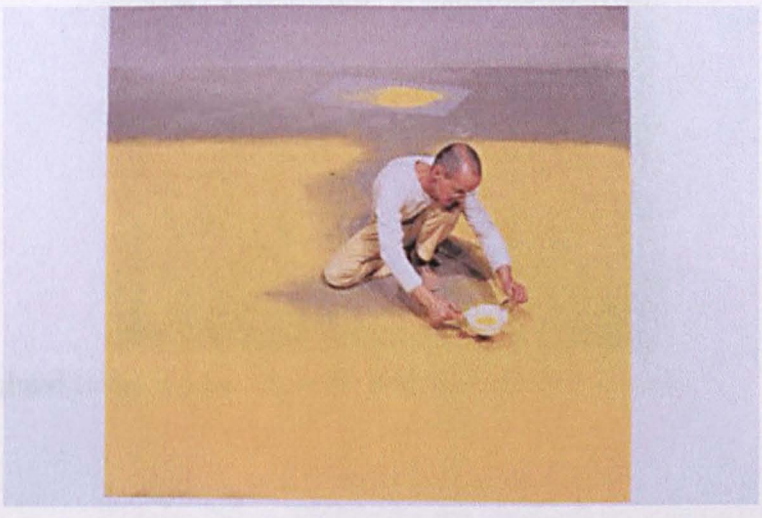
4. Cildo Meireles, *Inserções en Circuitos Ideologicos, Projecto Coca-Cola (Insertion into Ideological Circuits, Coca-Cola Project)*, 1970.
   Applying transfer message to bottles.



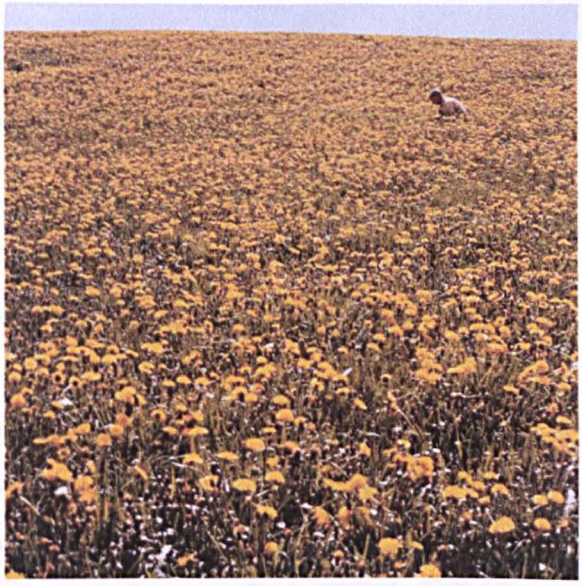
5. Cildo Meireles, *Inserções en Circuitos Ideologicos, Cédula (Insertion into Ideological Circuits, Banknotes)*, 1970. Rubber stamped banknotes.



1. Wolfgang Laib, *Pollen from Hazelnut*, 1992. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



2. Wolfgang Laib, artist preparing *Pollen from Hazelnut*, 1992. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



3. Wolfgang Laib, collecting pollen in field of dandelions, (not dated). Southern Germany.



4. Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967. England.

List of Illustrations

Section 1: Illustrations incorporated into the main body of the thesis

Examples of Early Creative Practice:
Work in Progress Based on Decay

1. Test piece for embroidered sampler combining a conservation text and Zen Buddhist text, before chemical activation, 2002.
2. Test piece for embroidered sampler combining a conservation text and Zen Buddhist text, during chemical activation, 2002.
3. Chemical tests on thread, 2002.
4. Crystal growing test, 2002.
5. Crystal growing test, 2002.
6. Design layout for full embroidered sampler combining a conservation and Zen Buddhist text about time, 2002.
7. Test piece for embroidered sampler before chemical activation, 2002.
8. Test piece for embroidered sampler after chemical activation, 2002.
9. Embroidered sampler of conservation ethics text, 2002.
10. Tarnishing definition of 'authenticity' embroidered in cross stitch with silver thread, 2002.

Installation/Performance of *Dust*, Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003

1. Prototype performance/installation of *Dust*, Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003.
2. Prototype performance/installation of *Dust*, Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003.
3. Prototype performance/installation of *Dust* (detail), Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2003.

Documentation of *Dust*, Performance/Installation at Own Home, London, 2003

The Contents of a Vacuum Bag

1. The complete contents of my domestic vacuum bag
2. Afro hair
3. Shampooing hair
4. Food items (rice, onion skins, broccoli, apple pips, soya beans, etc.)
5. Rinsing food
6. Carpet fibres
7. Scrubbing carpet fibres with carpet shampoo
8. Metal and wood
9. Polishing metal with Duraglit
10. Polishing wood fragments with antique wax polish
11. Polystyrene fragments and sponge particles
12. Soaking polystyrene fragments in bleach
13. Washing sponge particles with soap
14. Rabbit droppings
15. Polishing rabbit droppings with spray furniture polish
16. Stones
17. Cleaning stones with wire wool
18. Finger nails
19. Scrubbing finger nails with soap and nail brush
20. Fluff (extremely fine clumped textile fibres)
21. Washing fluff with washing powder
22. Fern leaves
23. Polishing fern leaves with leaf polish
24. Paper fragments
25. Ironing paper fragments after washing
26. Particulate matter
27. Filtering particulate matter (a)
28. Filtering particulate matter (b)
29. Rabbit litter

30. Fine gravel
31. Washing fine gravel
32. Feathers
33. Dusting feathers with a feather duster
34. Textile fibres
35. Preparing textile fibres for the washing machine
36. Insect parts
37. Plastic
38. Washing plastic in washing up liquid

Seven Strategies of Ephemerality

Strategy One: Dissolution

1. Dennis Oppenheim, *Gallery Transplant*, 1967. Floor plan of gallery transplanted to a bird sanctuary near Ithaca, New York.
2. Paul Kos, *The Sound of Ice Melting*, 1970. Two twenty-five pound blocks of ice surrounded by eleven sensitive microphones, Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco.
3. Paul Kos, *Richmond Glacier, 1969.* 7,000 pounds of ice and salt blocks; 60 x 60 x 60", Richmond Art Centre, California.
4. Paul Kos, *Untitled (kinetic ice block with salt), 1969.* Gelatin silver prints.

Strategy Two: Dispersal

1. Lothar Baumgarten, Stacked Pyramid, 1968. Pigment on forest pathway.
2. Erwin Wurm, *Staubarbeiten (Dustworks)*, from 1990. House dust in glass vitrine.
3. Jan Dibbets, *12 Hours Tide Object with Correction of Perspective*, 1969. Furrow ploughed in the sand, Filmed on the coast of the Netherlands.

Strategy Three: Decay

1. Zoe Leonard, *Strange Fruit (for David)*, 1993-1998. Installation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, comprising 302 banana, orange, grapefruit, lemon and avocado peels with buttons, zips, thread, wire and sinew needles, plastic, wire, stickers, fabric trim, and wax, 1998.
2. Zoe Leonard, *Strange Fruit (for David)*, 1993-1998. Detail of installation, 1998.
3. Anya Gallaccio, *preserve 'beauty'*, 1991. 800 red gerbera (Beauty) pressed between the gallery window and glass at beginning of exhibition, Karsten Schubert Ltd., London.
4. Anya Gallaccio, *preserve 'beauty'*, 1991. 800 red gerbera (Beauty) pressed between the gallery window and glass at end of exhibition, Karsten Schubert Ltd., London.
5. Savage, *The Unattended Funeral*, 1997. Rusted sewing machine and jacket with cultivated mould, artist's studio.

6. Savage, *The Unattended Funeral* (detail), 1997. Artist's studio.
7. Savage, *Dorian*, 1997. Jacket with cultivated mould, Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery, 2000.

Strategy Four: Suspended

1. Marc Quinn, *Self*, 1991. Blood, stainless steel, perspex and refrigeration equipment, Saatchi Gallery.
2. Jana Sterbak, *Vanitas, Flesh Dress for an Anorectic Albino*, 1987. 50 pounds of raw flank steak, stitched together, National Gallery, Ottawa, Canada.
3. Hamad Butt, *Familiars Part 3: Cradle*, 1992. Glass baubles containing chlorine gas John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.
4. Hamad Butt, *Familiars Part 3: Cradle*, 1992. Glass baubles containing chlorine gas John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.

Strategy Five: Transubstantiation

1. Victor Grippo, *Analogia 1* (*Analogy 1*), 1971. Potato battery, reconstruction at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 1995.
2. Victor Grippo, *Analogia 1*, (*Analogy 1*), detail, 1971. Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 1995.

Strategy Six: Dialogic

1. David Medalla, *Eskimo Carver*, 1977. Collaborative project, knives constructed with rubbish by visitors, Fitzrovia Cultural Centre, London.
2. David Medalla, *Eskimo Carver (detail)*, 1977. Fitzrovia Cultural Centre, London.
3. Cildo Meireles, *Inserções en Circuitos Ideologicos, Projecto Coca-Cola (Insertion into Ideological Circuits, Coca-Cola Project)*, 1970. Transfer text on glass bottle, metal and soft drink, Tate collection, London.
4. Cildo Meireles, *Inserções en Circuitos Ideologicos, Projecto Coca-Cola (Insertion into Ideological Circuits, Coca-Cola Project)*, 1970. Applying transfer message to bottles.

5. Cildo Meireles, *Inserções en Circuitos Ideologicos, Cédula (Insertion into Ideological Circuits, Banknotes)*, 1970. Rubber stamped banknotes.

Strategy Seven: Ritual

1. Wolfgang Laib, *Pollen from Hazelnut*, 1992. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
2. Wolfgang Laib, artist preparing *Pollen from Hazelnut*, 1992. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
3. Wolfgang Laib, collecting pollen in field of dandelions, (not dated). Southern Germany.
4. Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967. England.

Section 2: Digitally formatted illustrations in appendices

Appendix 1 **Digitally Formatted Documentation of Creative Practice on CD (Still Images)**

CD1: Performance/Installation of Dust at the Horniman Museum, Fenton House, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge University

Documentation of *Dust* Performance/Installation at the Horniman Museum

The Contents of a Vacuum Bag

1. Afro hair
2. Barley
3. Broom bristles
4. Cardboard
5. Cat's claw
6. Caucasian hair
7. Cigarette butts
8. Feathers
9. Finger nails
10. Fluff (fine textile fibres clumped together)
11. Food
12. Glass
13. Grass
14. Insects and insect body parts
15. Metal
16. Organic Matter
17. Paint fragments
18. Paper
19. Particulate matter (mainly skin cells)
20. Plasters
21. Plastic
22. Polystyrene
23. Potsherd
24. Rubber
25. Seeds
26. Stones
27. String
28. Textile fibres
29. Tissue
30. Wood

31. Performance/Installation in action

Documentation of *Dust* Performance/Installation at Fenton House

The Contents of a Vacuum Bag

1. Caucasian hair
2. Chocolate
3. Coir matting fibres
4. Fluff (fine textile fibres clumped together)
5. Glass
6. Gravel
7. Horse hair
8. Insects and insect parts
9. Lavender seeds
10. Metal
11. Finger nails
12. Organic matter
13. Paper
14. Plaster fragments
15. Plastic
16. Pot pourri
17. Particulate matter (mainly skin cells)
18. Rubber
19. Seeds
20. String
21. Textile fibres
22. Wood
23. Performance/Installation in action (i)
24. Performance/Installation in action (ii)

Documentation of *Dust* Performance/Installation at Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology

The Contents of a Vacuum Bag

1. Afro hair
2. Carpet fibres
3. Caucasian hair
4. Cigarette butt
5. Eyelashes
6. Feathers
7. Finger nails
8. Fluff (fine textile fibres clumped together)
9. Fruit pips and skin
10. Glass
11. Insect wing
12. Leaves
13. Metal
14. Metal & plastic combined
15. Organic matter
16. Paper
17. Plastic
18. Particulate matter (mainly skin cells)
19. Rubber
20. Seeds
21. Stones
22. Textile fibres
23. Wood
24. Performance/Installation in action

Documentation of *Dust* Performance/Installation at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge University

The Contents of a Vacuum Bag

1. Broom bristles
2. Capsule
3. Caucasian hair
4. Cellophane
5. Cigarette filter
6. Desiccated Birch Seeds
7. Drawing pin
8. Elastic
9. Eyelashes
10. Feathers
11. Finger nails
12. Fluff (fine textile fibres clumped together)
13. Food
14. Fruit skins and pips
15. Glass
16. Gravel
17. Leaves
18. Metal
19. Organic Matter
20. Paper
21. Particulate matter (mainly skin cells)
22. Plastic
23. Polystyrene
24. Roman potsherds
25. Sponge
26. String
27. Textile fibres
28. Willow seeds
29. Wood

30. Performance/Installation in action

Appendix 2 **Digitally Formatted Documentation of Creative Practice on DVD (Video Footage)**

DVD 1: Performance/Installation of Dust at the Horniman Museum

Appendix 3 **Digitally Formatted Documentation of Creative Practice on DVD (Video Footage)**

DVD 2: Performance/Installation of Dust at Fenton House

Appendix 4 **Digitally Formatted Documentation of Creative Practice on DVD (Video Footage)**

DVD 3: Performance/Installation of Dust at Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

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