

# Studies in Material Thinking



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Faculty of Design and  
Creative Technologies  
Auckland University of Technology  
Auckland 1142, New Zealand

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Eml [info@materialthinking.org](mailto:info@materialthinking.org)  
Web [www.materialthinking.org](http://www.materialthinking.org)

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## Volume 08 Experimental Arts

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**Experimentality: Theories And Practices**  
**Opening remarks to NIEA Experimental Arts Conference, University of  
New South Wales, August 17-19, 2011**

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**Terry Smith**

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*Abstract: "Experimentality" is explored in three related senses: experimental procedure in the natural sciences, exploratory approaches to making works of art, and the trialling of new forms of social organization. In each case, relevant works of art that treat experimentality as their subject, or are themselves experimental in form, are discussed. These include artworks produced in the eighteenth century, the 1960s and 1970s, and now.*

*Key Words: Experiment, experimentation, experimentality, scientific experimentation, Joseph Wright of Derby, Robert Boyle, Bruno Latour, experimental arts 1960s and 1970s, expanded cinema, Light and Space movement (California), Experiments in Art and Technology, Donald Brook, Clement Greenberg, Post-Object Art, Experimental Art Foundation (Adelaide), society-wide experimentation, contemporary art, contemporaneity, Jean-Michel Bruyère and LFKs*

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Author(s)

Terry Smith, FAHA, CIHA /

Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh / Distinguished Visiting Professor, National Institute for Experimental Arts, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales / tes2@pitt.edu / <http://www.terrysmith.net/web/>

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Introduction

Let us take “experimentality” to mean the experimental quality, or set of qualities, of a procedure, an artwork or a state of affairs. There is, of course, a vast range of meanings associated with the term “experimental”. It could stand for anything except that which is entirely predetermined—and there are even contexts in which entire predetermination could be experimental in character (Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianism, for example). I will confine myself to three senses of the word that, I believe, will be of most use to us in our deliberations during this conference, and, I hope, of value to the kinds of experimentality to which NIEA seeks to commit itself. I will discuss experimentality first as a procedure that has been definitive of Western science since the 17th century; second, as an essential element in art’s self-questioning during the modern period, especially that which came into prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, then retreated, but has recently returned to relevance among artists and curators, and third, as an aspect of social policy and planning—or, more precisely, guess-work—in governmentality today that is becoming increasingly evident as globalization fails around the world. I will conclude with some remarks about the implications of the conjunction of these three senses for what we might understand “experimental arts” to be today. These remarks will be tentative, not only because they are newly minted but also because they contain ideas that will be modified in the course of this double conference. In this broad sense, we might regard the conference itself as experimental.

Scientific Experimentality

For art historians, the instinctive starting point for any consideration of this topic has to be Joseph Wright of Derby’s oil painting *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (1768, National Gallery of Art, London). It shows a white cockatoo fluttering in panic as the air is slowly withdrawn from a vessel by a pump. It illustrates the kind of experiment introduced a century earlier by Robert Boyle, specifically one of his experiments to determine the effects of air on various phenomena (combustion, magnetism, sound, insects and animals) using what was then called a “pneumatic machine” (that we name a vacuum pump). Boyle’s book *New Experiments* of 1660 describes many such: number 41 demonstrated the reliance of living creatures, such as birds, mice, eels, snails and flies, on air for their survival. While Boyle used a lark, Derby used a much more exotic cockatoo, probably brought back from one of Cook’s voyages to the South Pacific.

Wright’s painting not only depicts an experiment taking place, it also, and more importantly, pictures the quintessentially modern idea of experimentality as such. Modern science is not based on a divinely given canon of revealed knowledge, nor is it a set of laws based on the authority of ancient lawgivers. Rather, as Bruno Latour has argued in his theory of the modern constitution, it is a set of theories about the natural world shared between rational men, constantly open to improvement through testing against facts from that world.<sup>1</sup> Truth about natural phenomena (Nature), especially the operations of invisible forces, is revealed through a demonstration of observable effects. However, these become scientific only if other rational men witness the demonstration. To be scientific, observation must observe itself observing—or, in principle, be able to do so. The repeatability test follows from this. It is a form of secondary witnessing. Science, on this model, separates humans from nature, but forms a contract with it to observe it at a distance. Its ideal point of observation is the contract between observers—that is, a social contract, albeit a very bourgeois one.

Painted a century after Boyle’s series of breakthrough experiments, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* shows us this social contract in affective operation. The witnesses



display various emotions, or ostentatiously withhold emotion, according to age and gender. One of the girls is concerned about the fate of the bird, while the other looks away fearfully and is comforted by her father; the young lovers have eyes only for each other, while a boy looks on with interest, as do two gentlemen, one of them dispassionately timing the experiment. Although the figures are stereotypes rather than individuals, it has been suggested that the figure timing the experiment was based on Erasmus Darwin, doctor and natural historian, author of a poem on evolution, and grandfather of Charles Darwin. The scientist himself looks directly out of the picture, as if inviting viewers to participate as witnesses.

It has been noted often that Wright had no objective reason to stage the experiment at night, and that his doing so was a deliberate evocation of such settings in religious paintings of miraculous revelation—including, to be specific, the moment of holy judgment over the fate of the living. He has, of course, substituted a scientific demonstration, making his painting an awe-struck celebration of Enlightenment rationalism, of the values held within his circle of friends and acquaintances. Wright pursued this setting in a number of his paintings between 1765 and 1768, including, in the latter year, *A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery* (Derby Museum and Art Gallery). His *The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone*, 1771, shows an alchemist bowing before the dazzling light spilling from a modern beaker: modern science itself is revealed as the transformatory talisman. (The painting literally illustrates a rather mundane experiment in which the alchemist, boiling urine, discovers a way of generating phosphorescence.) We might say that this broad-scale, visual indirection, this substitution of one value regime for another on the level of subject matter, is Wright's experimentality as an artist in his context. Viewed from the perspective of the standard art historical narrative, his work has little else that is experimental about it relative to the development of English art of its time, a fact underlined by his insistence on maintaining a provincial setting throughout his career.<sup>2</sup>

These comments lead us to the second sense in which a work of art may be said to be experimental: the innovations that it attempts with respect to the parameters of art as they stand at the moment of its creation. How might this sense of experimentality be more exactly understood? Does it have to bear some relation to experimentality in the natural sciences? These are questions asked in Steven Meucke's paper, "Was *Two Laws* Experimental?"<sup>3</sup> They are at the core of the idea of "experimental art," which depends, in part, on seeking their resolution in particular circumstances, while at the same time sensing their limits as generalities, thus leaving them unresolved, and to be explored again later, as different circumstances arise.

### Experimental Art, 1960s and 1970s

Like the word "contemporary," the term "experimental" hovered in art discourse in many parts of the world throughout the twentieth century as a synonym for avant-garde art. It was favored especially when one of the arts—poetry, theatre, cinema, dance, architecture, art—"experimented" with the necessity of one of its core conventions, rendered it provisional or risked dispensing with it altogether in the interests of a higher goal (such as greater expressive power, more direct engagement with an audience, etc.). I give just two examples of the latter, drawn from what came to be called "expanded cinema."

Jeffrey Shaw's *Corpocinema*, 1967, as described by Ann Marie Duget:

This was an expanded cinema performance presented in a series of open-air performances in Rotterdam and Amsterdam in 1967. The basic structure was a large air-inflated transparent PVC dome onto which film and slides were projected from outside. These projections were made visible by physical events and performed actions that created temporary conditions materializing the projected imagery within and on the surface of the dome. [These events] also caused dramatic transformations and reconstructions of those images. For example, white polythene tubing was inflated until it filled the interior of the dome, thus creating a complex, growing surface on which the image appeared and then the dome was deflated over this tubing. Fire-extinguishing foam was sprayed over the entire inner surface of the dome, building up an opaque white projection surface. As the



foam dripped off the dome, the projected image disintegrated [...] Some of the films used in the were: *Continuous Sound and Image Moments*, a documentary about the wartime occupation of Holland, *Wasmiddelen Van Nu*, a documentary history of washing powder, *In De Schaduw Van de Mens*, a film about rats, *Duel in Fiet Luchtruim*, a documentary about aircraft dogfights, *De Morgenster*, a film about tramps scavenging through the streets of Amsterdam.<sup>4</sup>

Michael Bielicky describes Josef Svoboda's *Polyecran*, an audio-visual experience presented in the Czech Pavilion during Expo 1967 at Montreal in these terms:

One entered a large room and sat on the carpeted floor where you watched a wall of 112 cubes whose ever shifting and changing images moved backwards and forwards. Inside each cube were two Kodak Carousel slide projectors which projected still photos onto the front of the cubes. In all there were 15,000 slides in the 11 minute show. Since each cube could slide into three separate positions within a two foot range, they gave the effect of a flat surface turning into a three-dimensional surface and back again. It was completely controlled by 240 miles of memory circuitry which was encoded onto a filmstrip with 756,000 separate instructions.

Viewers watched a wall of 112 projected cubes while seated on the floor. The show was about *The Creation of the World of Man*. On the 112 part screen, the earth came awake, flowers bloomed, tigers suddenly appeared, the first men walked the earth, then machinery was invented. Sometimes the image sequences would first appear complete, then be broken up abstractly in a modern art composition. It was pure multi-visual technique that enchanted the viewer.<sup>5</sup>

There was another, slightly different sense of "experimental" emergent at time: that of art created in ways that echoed the creativity of scientific experimentation, including that made in direct cooperation with scientists or engineers. Well-known instances include Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Larry Bell, Maria Nordman and Eric Orr, members of the Californian "Light and Space" movement, many of whom joined Experiments in Art and Technology at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art 1967-71, where artists were paired with scientists and engineers to explore perceptual phenomena. Turrell and Irwin worked with psychologists Edward and Melinda Wortz. One outcome of Turrell's introduction to the Ganzfeld chamber (a total visual environment) is works such as his series of *Perceptual Cells* created during the 1990s. "These self-contained, perception capsules serve as individual, experience spaces for one person at a time. They make it possible to experience changes in one's perception by way of altered lighting conditions. To a certain extent, the frequencies, colors, and intensities of light, can all be controlled by the viewer. The perceptual experiences produced in this way are not only sensed visually, but also through one's body."<sup>6</sup>

These works are outcomes of experimental cooperation between an artist and a scientist, both of whom have shared yet specific interests in the outcome. Such relationships have rarely found institutional form. Turrell was benefiting from an interesting exception: the Experiments in Art and Technology organization, founded in New York in 1966 by engineers Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer and artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman. E.A.T. was a non-profit organization that grew out of *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering*, an event in which 40 engineers and 10 contemporary artists worked together on performances that incorporated new technology.<sup>7</sup> Klüver felt that achieving ongoing artist-engineer relationships would require a concerted effort to develop the necessary physical and social conditions. E.A.T. saw itself as a catalyst for stimulating the involvement of industry and technology with the arts. The organization worked to forge effective collaborations between artists and engineers through industrial cooperation and sponsorship. By 1969, membership numbered around 4,000, divided roughly evenly between artists and engineers willing to work with each other. A number of projects were pursued, notably the Pepsi Pavilion at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan.<sup>8</sup>



Australia's leading theorist of experimental art, Donald Brook, was aware of such initiatives when he formulated his ideas during these same years. The most developed expression of his theories may be found in his "The Flight from the Object," the second John Power Memorial Lecture, delivered in 1969, from which a greater contrast to the first, "Avant-garde Attitudes," delivered the year before by Clement Greenberg, could not be imagined.<sup>9</sup> In a profoundly conservative move, Greenberg devoted himself to retrofitting modernist avant-gardism backwards into the quality concerns of the Old Masters. In contrast, Brook launched a full-scale attack on modernist formalism, including that of Greenberg and Michael Fried—and on the nationalist humanism that he saw as the prevailing ethos in local art criticism. Both, he claimed, obscured the grounds on which art might, indeed *should*, go forward.

Brook began by defining seven different ways in which contemporary art critics were using the term "object." He dismissed as logically incoherent (and, less obviously, as historically retrogressive) the "expressive object" much favored by Australian writers, and the formalists' preference for "hermetic objects," those that reveal their secrets only to the critic properly disposed to receive them. Instead, he strongly favored the "the object as process," that is, "the flight of painters and sculptors from objects towards processes that deny one, or most, or even all of the characteristics of [immutability and immanence that typify previous art]—and in extreme cases that deny even the condition that some part of the action or the product shall be visible."<sup>10</sup> Process art, he argued, satisfied a core "principle of exploration":

Art activities are most properly thought of as the locus for free exploration, invention, and creative imagination. The arts are chronically prone to sclerosis, and they should be encouraged to resist the inflexibilities that are threatened by exclusivist aesthetic doctrines, of prescribed forms and styles, of alleged historical necessities, and of absolute aesthetic judgements.<sup>11</sup>

This principle underlay genuinely experimental art, which in 1971 he called "Post-Object Art."<sup>12</sup> He was soon to add one further enemy to this experimental openness: institutionalization of any sort. Thus his support for Inhibodress, the serendipitously named, non-commercial, artist-run space in Sydney. Peter Kennedy, Mike Parr and Tim Johnson were key drivers of this initiative.

The fabled foundation of the Experimental Art Foundation (EAF) in 1975 is usually evoked through stories about Donald Brook, recently arrived in Adelaide, squatting on a blazing hot beach during the summer of 1974, gently but relentlessly persuading a group of local artists, critics, curators and publishers that the local art scene needed a place more "experimental" than what the few commercial galleries, the Contemporary Art Society and the Art Gallery of South Australia could provide. Inhibodress was his model for "an arena of open experiment," a laboratory for art that would be free, democratic and co-operative in its modes of operation, and separate from (indeed "dispositionally hostile to") the state art institutions and the commercial art market. In various ways, and to variable degrees, the EAF embodied his principle that "the distinctive centre of the concept of art is the experimental role that it has in human life."<sup>13</sup> I am not alone in believing that asseverations such as these, as general and vague as they were—and perhaps *because* they were so general and vague—encouraged a variety of artists, curators, critics and others to produce more interesting work than they may otherwise have produced, and that the EAF was, for some years at least, an important element within contemporary art practice in Adelaide, and in Australia. There remains a sense in that city that if there is a distinctive quality to "Adelaide art" it lies somewhere in a refusal of easy interpretation and a preference for multivalence of meaning, these being qualities that the EAF promoted, and that Adelaide artists, in turn, brought to their exhibitions and activities there.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1970s Donald Brook developed a more elaborate idea of what "experimental art" means than the let's-try-anything liberalism taken up by the EAF itself. Dismissing the "naturalistic" sense that the term might have in ordinary language or in art discourse, he



argued for a “rational” interpretation of it as a key component of what amounts to a philosophical aesthetics, or, more accurately, a theory of art in society. It is a highly specific one, that depends on the precise conjunction of a set of terms, each of which he defines in particular ways, such that they make sense only as elements within a whole. The closest one gets to a summary concept is what he has labeled the “transinstitutional unintentional modeling theory of art.”

Art objects are public constructions that have been recognized in the course of a transinstitutional appraisal to be useful and radically new models of some actual or possible thing or state of affairs in the world.<sup>15</sup>

If we put aside the “unintentional” for a moment, this definition would apply to much political art, socially-concerned art, community art, participatory and relational work since the 1960s. It highlights the ethical and social responsibilities of experimental art, its capacity to imagine better ways of being in the world. This constitutes its core value and its continuing relevance.

On Brook’s reading, however, “transinstitutional appraisal” does *not* include artworld discourse, which he sees as institutionally myopic. To him, its appraisals, its claims for criticality, and for social and political relevance, are simply delusions. Its institutions, being focused on fostering a narrow practice that it labels *Art*, are not public. Therefore, almost all the artworks produced within its confines, actual and conceptual, are not art in the sense meant. Certainly, very few will constitute “radically new models of some actual or possible thing or state of affairs in the world.” If they do so, it would have happened accidentally. No artist can intend to produce such models, nor can anyone else without limiting the authenticity of their proposal, which must appear involuntarily. After his praise of Christo’s wrapping of Little Bay in 1969 as absolutely exemplary of his conception of what art should be, Brook ceased to discuss particular, actual works of art, except those that are referenced in self-deluded accounts of art writers. Instead, he has preferred to deal in categories of creativity, such as that which might occur in a school class where students study “Representation” rather than “Art.” More recently, he has added Richard Dawkins’ theory of cultural memes into his system.<sup>16</sup>

What happened to the combative, critical yet open-hearted response to interrogatory art that he was offering in Sydney up until 1974? It was under his direct influence that I wrote two of the key “Propositions” in *The Situation Now: Object or Post-Object Art?* for an exhibition I organized for the Contemporary Art Society in Sydney in 1971.:

6. Post-object art is tremendously various. It is not a mere reaction to object-emphasizing art, but the positive assertion of myriad new forms of making art. It has not been a clean break with object art, but rather a series of take-offs, via the mid-1960s work of Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, and the even earlier work of Joseph Beuys. It ranges through scatter pieces, buried sculpture, earth art, ecological art, systems art, process art, body sculpture, mail art, auto-destructive art, the art of nominating part of the world as art, conceptual art, performance art, language art, and many more.

7. The only major idea shared by all post-object artists (it is not the defining idea, nor does it characterize the most important aspects of more than a few pieces) is that art is an activity continuous with life, not a special sort of activity separate from life. Art should draw its form and content from our life systems, our social communications systems, our ideas of what we are in the world. And, in doing so, it has the real option of changing the ways we see ourselves, rather than giving mere symbolic equivalents in a special code of this or that perception.<sup>17</sup>

By 1974, Donald had lost interest in the art-historical force (about which he was always skeptical except when it came to the art of the present) of proposition 6, and would have regarded the art within the exhibition, indeed any art made within professional artworlds, as not able, except adventitiously, to fall under proposition 7.<sup>18</sup>



**Contemporaneity:  
Experimenting on a  
Social Scale**

In the summary of his paper to be presented at this conference, he continues to posit that “art” may be only accidentally found in “works of art” but nonetheless promises to say something about “the attraction that has been felt by ambitious artists toward the cultural domains of science and technology.” This heartens me. If, as I have said, we put aside the odd sense of intentionality within Brook’s definition, his description of art activity as a kind of prospective social modeling would apply to much political art, socially-concerned art, community art, participatory and relational work since the 1960s. He reminds us how important it is to emphasize the ethical and social responsibilities of art, its capacity to imagine aspects of the material world, as well as better ways of sentient being in the world, and its willingness to test these projections against all others. Art does this, uniquely, through imaginative visual projection, whereas the sciences aim to better understand the interactions between materialities in the world, and do so by imagining patterns of such interaction, then testing the world to see if it conforms to such projections.

*Experimentality* was the 2009-10 Annual Research Programme of the Institute for Advanced Studies, Lancaster University, UK. It was a year-long collaborative exploration of ideas and practices of experimentation in science and technology, the arts, commerce, politics, popular culture, everyday life, and the natural world. Their recent conference (July 2010) addressed a number of questions of relevance to our concerns. Three of them may be rephrased for our purposes as follows:

Is experimentality becoming a key trope of contemporary society? Is it taking new forms, and if so with what implications?

How do notions of experimentality intersect with other conceptions of change in contemporary societies, such as societal reflexivity, postmodern liquidity, globalizing capitalism, decolonial transition, cosmopolitanism, complexity and contemporaneity?

What can we learn from the differences between the modes of experimentality operating within science, the arts, politics and the wider culture in the past and today?

We have already set the stage for some answers to the last question by our consideration of Wright’s painting and of “Experimental Art” during the 1960s and 1970s. However embattled, even side-lined, such innovations might have seemed during the ascendancy of Spectacle culture (including what I call Retro-Sensationalist art) since the 1980s, in recent years we have seen a resurgence of art that takes up these innovations, including those introduced by Expanded Cinema, notably in the work of iCinema, here at this university. Experiential, participatory, immersive and interactive art is now at the heart of much contemporary practice, thus the enormously popular work of Olafur Eliasson through to the widespread practice of d-i-y postings on YouTube. A huge amount of the affect of Eliasson’s installations depends on their “laboratory-like” look or atmosphere. Indeed, he routinely builds into his larger scale exhibitions a room that evokes his studio, full of models, drawings, diagrams—all of the paraphernalia of an experimental situation. The danger, of course, is that this can become a mere aesthetics of scientificity: apparently participatory, but actually a passivity-inducing, and thus a terminal experience, quite devoid of the “criticality” at which he claims to be aiming. GOMA may have got it right by inviting him to do the *cubic structural evolution project* in Brisbane in 2004, a project for kids that toured the state for a few years, and then was massively expanded for their *21st Century* show last year.

The main issue to be confronted as a result of these questions is whether the quintessentially modern conception of experimentality *has* changed significantly in contemporary circumstances. If so, we would expect this change to be manifest in both science and art. It seems to me that the Lancaster conveners, who are primarily social scientists, are right in their observation that experimentality has become a key trope of contemporary society. They pose the key question as follows:





The idea of experimentation was at the heart of modernity's promise of human freedom and self-determination. But is the experiment now too complicit with power to act as a carrier of hope? To close the yearlong Experimentality programme, which involved collaborations with the University of Manchester, the Royal Society, FutureEverything and a range of academic and art organisations, participants at this international conference debated different visions of an experimental society in which the emancipatory potential of the experiment could be renewed.<sup>19</sup>

What is meant by the idea that "the experiment may be too complicit with power to act as a carrier of hope?" The Lancaster conveners spell it out quite clearly:

In performing the split between nature and culture that Bruno Latour calls the 'modern constitution', the experiment thus started its long relationship with social ordering, technology and power, which has helped to legitimise the instrumental paradigm of modern political action (Ezrahi), drive forward the grand projects of 20th century high-modernist statecraft (Scott), and shape the contemporary world of evidence-based policy, clinical trials and audits. Critiques of this development include early warnings about the iron cage of instrumental rationality (Weber), twentieth century unease about technocracy and the scientisation of politics (the Frankfurt School) and autonomous technology (Ellul, Winner), and contemporary concern about the proliferation of states of exception in which experimental subjection and the reduction of the human to 'bare life' becomes the norm (Agamben).

There are many artworks that address this new state of being. I will illustrate just one, *La Préau d'Une Seul (The Prisonhouse of the One)*, a performance, video and environment installation by Jean-Michel Bruyère and LFKs, staged on various sites between 2008 and 2010.<sup>20</sup>

The proliferation of states of exception, to the extent that they have become the rule in contemporary life, is the context in which the Lancaster sociologists go on to say that:

It is time to ask whether the experiment is now too complicit with power to act as a carrier of the hopes of (post)modernity, or whether its emancipatory potential can be renewed through a sustained inquiry into the different forms that it takes in science and technology, in the arts and in wider culture. If experimentation and innovation have become too integrated with imaginaries of technological control, and thereby with consequent externalisations (Wynne and Felt), then further large questions arise not only for politics, but also for environmental sustainability.

To these very good questions I would add one further observation. It is often said that capitalist democracy, socialism and fascism were the three large-scale social experiments undertaken during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to test which would serve as the ideal form for all human societies. However effective each may have been in certain local circumstances, and however much their competition prevented any one of them from prevailing, it is now evident that each, in varying ways and degrees, failed to demonstrate its *universality*. If this is so, then in contemporary conditions, while "big ideas" remain necessary, universality is no longer possible, in theory, practice or fantasy. Therefore, governments and non-governmental formations are obliged to, quite literally, *experiment* with modes of social organization that they know are partial, untested, and hypothetical. We see that everywhere around the world today. External models against which progress or achievement might be measured no longer exist; we are all, like or not, inside one or another partial experiment. It is this contemporaneity of difference, of deep incommensurabilities about what it is to be, and what it should be to be, that defines our current world (dis)order.

Within this disarray, the Lancaster conveners nevertheless discern a contemporary



change in the nature of experimentality as it is practiced across cultures today, within and beyond the reach of governments. It may be the state of affairs that Jean-Michel Bruyère and LFKs have in mind in their 2008-2011 work *La dispersion du fils* (*The dispersion of the son*), created with the input of Matt McGinity, for years a key figure at iCinema here at UNSW. The Lancaster sociologists say that we need:

...to be sensitive to ways in which the key role played by experimentation in the ordering of society seems to be shifting away from the *special* to the *general* experiment – from the experiment as a bounded episode situated in time and space, to a generalised, performative experimentality. Driven by pervasive informationalisation, we can observe a number of interlinked trends, including: the acceleration and proliferation of feedback loops between action and reaction; the displacement of fixed structures by networks and dissipative structures; the abandonment of fixed goals for continuous repositioning; and the carrying out of knowledge-work in the context of application. Such trends can be observed in domains as disparate as science and innovation, network-centric digital warfare, finance capitalism, product design, software engineering, new media and popular culture. Do these add up to a systemic transformation of how society is being ordered? Are humans no longer in control of their experimental 'projects', and, if so, what does this mean for our conceptualisation of the human and of politics? Does this create the conditions in which a new kind of experimental society might be possible? How might we imagine this, and perhaps influence its form?<sup>21</sup>

These are, indeed, the questions before us. One way that we might help answer them is to work towards bringing together, in theory and practice, the three kinds of experimentality profiled in these remarks. We might, in so doing, work our way through some of the divisive differences that increasingly shape contemporary conditions, and move towards an openness to future possibility that is shared on a planetary scale.



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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>2</sup> The classic study of Wright is Nicholson, B. (1968). *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light*. New York: Pantheon. See also Helmers, M. (2000). Painting as Rhetorical Performance. *Journal of Art Criticism*, Vol. 20(1), 71-94.
- <sup>3</sup> Meucke, S. (forthcoming). *Was Two Laws Experimental?*. Screening the Past.
- <sup>4</sup> Duguet, A.M., Klotz, H. & Weibel, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Jeffrey Shaw—a user's manual: From Expanded Cinema to Virtual Reality*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz., 66f.
- <sup>5</sup> Bielicky, M. (2003). Prague—A Place of Illusionists. In J. Shaw & P. Weibel (Eds.). *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 99.
- <sup>6</sup> Helfert, H. Retrieved from <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/perceptual-cell/>
- <sup>7</sup> See <http://www.9evenings.org/> for a Rauschenberg video of the events.
- <sup>8</sup> See Klüver's account at <http://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=306>; Klüver, B., Martin J. & Rose, B. (Eds.). (1972). *Pavilion: Experiments in Art and Technology*. New York: E. P. Dutton; Shanken E.A., (2009). *Art and Electronic Media*. London: Phaidon.
- <sup>9</sup> See Brook, D. (1975). The Flight from the Object. In B. Smith, (Ed.). *Concerning Contemporary Art: The Power Lectures 1968-1973*. (pp. 16–34).Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 28.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 32.
- <sup>12</sup> See Brook, D. (1971). Donald Brook, interview with Terry Smith. In T. Smith & T. McGillick, (Eds.). *The Situation Now: Object or Post-Object Art?*. Exh. Cat.. Sydney: Contemporary Art Society (16 July-6 August), 15-16, and Brook, D. (1973). Post-Object Art: Is It Wicked or Is It A Revision of Our Concepts?. *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Vol. 49(9). (February), 275–282.
- <sup>13</sup> Brook, D. (1975). The Experimental Art Foundation. *Art and Australia*, 12(4). (April-June), 378-380. See also Britton, S. (Ed.). (1984). *A Decade at the EAF*. Adelaide: Experimental Art Foundation.
- <sup>14</sup> See Bilsk, M. (2000). Unsentimental Experimental: The Experimental Art Foundation 25 Years On. *Artlink*, 20(3), (September), 64-67.
- <sup>15</sup> Brook, D. (1992). What? Even Mona Lisa?. In D. Brook. *Art, Representation, Education: A Selection of Writings on Related Themes*. Perth: Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. pp. 17-18
- <sup>16</sup> Brook, D. (2010). *The Awful Truth About What Art Is*. Adelaide: Artlink.
- <sup>17</sup> Smith, T. & McGillick, T. (Eds.). (1971). *The Situation Now: Object or Post-Object Art?*. Exh. Cat., Sydney: Contemporary Art Society (16 July-6 August).
- <sup>18</sup> On Brook's thinking during this entire period see Barker, H. & Green, C. (2009). Flight from the Object: Donald Brook, Inhibidress and the Emergence of Post-Studio Art in Early 1970s Sydney. *emaj*, 4, 1-25. Retrieved from [www.melbournartjournal.unimelb.edu.au/E-MAJ](http://www.melbournartjournal.unimelb.edu.au/E-MAJ).
- <sup>19</sup> From ExperimentalitySocietySecondCall.pdf. Retrieved from <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/experimentality/event/international-conference-experimental-society>.
- <sup>20</sup> To access the work of Bruyère and LFKs, see <http://www.epidemic.net/fr/art/bruyere/index.html>.
- <sup>21</sup> ExperimentalitySocietySecondCall.pdf. Retrieved from <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/experimentality/event/international-conference-experimental-society>.



**Terry Smith, FAHA, CIHA /**

Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh / Distinguished Visiting Professor, National Institute for Experimental Arts, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales / [tes2@pitt.edu](mailto:tes2@pitt.edu) / <http://www.terrysmith.net/web/>

Terry Smith was the 2010 winner of the Mather Award for art criticism conferred by the College Art Association (USA), and is the 2010 Australia Council Visual Arts Laureate. During 2001-2002 he was a Getty Scholar at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, and in 2007-2008 the GlaxoSmithKlein Senior Fellow at the National Humanities Research Centre, Raleigh-Durham. From 1994-2001 he was Power Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of the Power Institute, Foundation for Art and Visual Culture, University of Sydney. He was a member of the Art & Language group (New York) and a founder of Union Media Services (Sydney). He is the author of a number of books, notably *Making the Modern: Industry, Art and Design in America* (University of Chicago Press, 1993; inaugural Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Book Prize 2009); *Transformations in Australian Art, volume 1, The Nineteenth Century: Landscape, Colony and Nation, volume 2, The Twentieth Century: Modernism and Aboriginality* (Craftsman House, Sydney, 2002); *The Architecture of Aftermath* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), *What is Contemporary Art?* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), and *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (Laurence King and Pearson / Prentice-Hall, 2011). He is editor of many others including *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity* (Power Publications and the University of Chicago Press, 1997); *First People, Second Chance: The Humanities and Aboriginal Australia* (Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1999); *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photogenic Era* (Power Publications and the University of Chicago Press, 2001), with Paul Patton; *Jacques Derrida, Deconstruction Engaged: The Sydney Seminars* (Power Publications, 2001, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005); *Contemporary Art + Philanthropy* (University of NSW Press, 2007), and (with Nancy Condee and Okwui Enwezor) *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, postmodernity and contemporaneity* (Duke University Press, 2008). A foundation Board member of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, he is currently a board member of the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. See [www.terrysmith.net/web/](http://www.terrysmith.net/web/).

