

Relational Aesthetics:

**An extension of the 'spectacle' or a realm
of positive interactions?**

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Preface

My artistic practice comprises of a range of mediums, from video to performance and participatory installations; overall I usually allow the subject and context of a work to prescribe the form or the techniques used to create it. I am particularly interested in human relationships and behaviour; my practice over the course of my studies in Fine Art has utilised diverse methods to explore the connection we have to others, objects and media, and how the influence of those relationships can affect personalities, decisions and preconceived ideas about the world in general. As an extension of this, I have been especially interested in the relationship and dialogue that occurs between a viewer and a work of art.

In my current studio practice, I am exploring the idea of commodity and leisure time, and how this can be turned in on itself as a form of my own 'political' agenda. My intention is to use the concept of a theme park, which I feel to be iconic of consumerism (and by way of this, Capitalism), as a narrative for addressing 'soft' political issues. By creating a series of participatory 'stall-games', contained within a singular aestheticised narrative, I aim to propose a series of ideas about, what I feel, are issues in our current society.

My area of investigation for this dissertation is the realm of Relational art (or, as coined by Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*), a branch of arts practice in which the audience is invited, through techniques of a particular artists work, to act out a shared activity. Through an exploration of several artists producing this type of work, my intention is to evaluate the function of community experienced art, in a domain which is historically based on the commodification and individual consumption of the creative act.

I am also significantly interested in the relevance of relational art forms as a device for political discourse when considered in the context of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*. If we concur with his assertion that all of our directly lived social interactions have been replaced by their spectacular representation, through devices such as

advertising and the media, is it then possible to regard a Relational art, defined thus for its representation of social interaction, as genuine?

I feel that by contextualising these ideas through research, and consolidating them into a dissertation study, I will be able to define whether my work is no more than mere 'spectacle', or whether in fact it is possible to create a space of genuine interactive relationships.

Introduction

Artistic activity is a game, whose forms, patterns and social functions develop and evolve according to periods and social contexts; it is not an immutable essence.

(Nicolas Bourriaud, 2002, p.11)

In 2009, Nicolas Bourriaud curated an exhibition entitled *Altermodern* for the Triennial at Tate Britain, London. In a catalogue discussing the themes influencing the exhibition, Bourriaud describes what he feels is the transition from the movement coined 'Postmodernism' into something new; In what Bourriaud defines as the '*Altermodern*' age, artists are now responding to the world as a globalised state. This evolution from local stimuli to global stimuli has not only affected the subject and contexts of works made by artists, but also the forms, tools and structures by which the art is presented to its audience.

Perhaps the most poignant of these new 'art models' is the gallery as 'laboratory' or 'Relational art' which has become increasingly popular since the 1990's and is now a significant part of exhibition culture (Bourriaud, 2002, P7). This model uses techniques such as; collective space, participation and combined activity to create a feeling of community within an exhibition or show, where there would have only been solitary contemplation before.

My intention is to explore the works of various artists using the gallery as 'laboratory' and other types of Relational models; specifically the works of Rirkrit Tiravanija, Santiago Sierra, Carey Young, Jeremy Deller, Marcus Coates and Tino Sehgal. I have selected these particular artists due to their diverse practices and nationalities; while each of them has been exposed to differing cultural environments, their resulting artistic practice can be applied to a global stage. Also, for their interest in tackling social and cultural issues, such as the lack of face-to-face interaction in this current era, through forms of relational art.

This dissertation is divided into 3 chapters, each focussing on a significant part of the structure of a relational art, namely 'Production', 'Consumption' and 'Participation'. This will allow me to thoroughly explore what the 'product' might be of a Relational art work, how we 'consume' this 'product, and what our role, as viewers, becomes defined as within the act of participation. To do this I will be looking specifically at -

Production; What is being produced by the artists? What is it they are manufacturing, if not objects then what else? Is the product a direct creation of the artist, or a by-product of a construct that they are suggesting within a work?

Consumption; What as viewers are we consuming? What are we acquiring from these works?

Participation; By participating do we become products of the artist, or consumers of the work? If we do become part of an 'action', do we then have to contemplate it, to consume it?

Production

In order to correctly explore the methods and outcomes in regards to what is being produced by artists using relational models, we must first define what 'Production' is in this context. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'production' as 'the action of making or manufacturing from components or raw materials, or the process of being so manufactured' (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2014). This suggests that the product of an artist's work is that which is constructed out of separate entities or materials, and drawn together in an arrangement in order to provide implied meaning and context. I would offer that there are two significant areas of evaluation for what is being 'produced' by artists using the concept of the gallery as 'laboratory, or other relational models. Firstly, the physical objects, scenarios and constructs created by the artist, (performances, installations, 'art-objects' etc) and secondly, as suggested by Bourriaud in his series of essays entitled *Relational Aesthetics*, that we must judge the 'relations' that are created by these types of works rather than the object we see before us.

The earliest forms of art productions were commissions for religious paintings or murals: 'art aimed at introducing ways of communicating with the deity' (Bourriaud, 2009, P27), through traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture. Since 1850, with the development of science overtaking the power of religion, 'Art...explored the relations existing between Man and the world.' (Bourriaud, 2009, P27), still mostly through painting and sculpture. Marcel Duchamp changed this significantly through the introduction of his 'Readymades'. 'Duchamp...is not a curator but an artist, because as a result of his decision to present the urinal in the framework of an exhibition, this urinal has become a work of art. This opportunity is denied to the curator.' (Groys, 2008, P43). Duchamp was seeking to challenge the role of the curator (earmarked for the selection of an artist's work and elevating its status by placing it in an exhibition), whilst still exploring the relationship between Man and the world through the exhibition of these 'profane' objects. This object

based production was reduced by the development of Performance art through the direction of the audience's attention away from inert objects and toward the artist's body. This sought to reflect '...conceptual art's rejection of traditional materials of canvas, brush or chisel, with performers turning to their own bodies as art material...' (Goldberg, 1979, P152). Although performance art made a move away from the use of 'traditional materials', the artist as performer still served as an object to be presented to a viewer for their individual contemplation. Bourriaud then suggests that since the 1990's, 'artistic practice is now focused on the sphere of inter-human relations' (Bourriaud, 2002, P28), art is no longer exploring Man's relationship with the world but is now navigating Man's relationship to Man. He further suggests that 'the artist sets his sights...on the relations that his work will create among his public, and on the invention of models of sociability.' (Bourriaud, 2002, P28). A clear example of these 'models of sociability' can be seen in the work of Thai born artist Rirkrit Tiravanija.

In 1992, Tiravanija created his now seminal show *Untitled (Free)* at 303 Gallery in New York (see Fig 1). He set-up a make-shift kitchen, including gas hobs, refrigerator, tables/chairs, cooking/ eating utensils and, most importantly, food. Using this structure, Tiravanija cooked rice and Thai curry for guests present at the gallery at scheduled times. Guests were invited to enter into the gallery space



Figure 1. Tiravanija, *Untitled (Free)*, 1992

- eat, relax, and talk freely, with the emphasis on the space as a place of social intervention.

It could be argued that the 'product' of Tiravanija's artistic practice in this instance is the 'kitchen' as installation. If this is the case, and we consider that traditionally an audience attending a gallery/museum would be faced with an art-object which attempted to visually represent a phenomenon of the material world, be it physical or abstract, then we must concern ourselves with whether Tiravanija successfully creates an embodiment of a kitchen environment.

Carey Young's *Nothing Ventured* (2000), also uses installation as a narrative platform. The installative element is comprised of an office desk and a telephone. A relevant text (see fig 2.) told the viewer that the work could only be accessed by picking up the



Figure 2. Young. *Nothing Ventured*, 2000

telephone receiver, and continued with a disclaimer (not unlike the modern day call-centres automated voice which tells us, pointedly, that our call 'may be recorded') that all calls were monitored and may be used for documentation by the artist. If

a viewer proceeded to pick up the receiver, they were then connected to an agent in an external call centre (set-up by Young), who gave them a range of options, which once selected offered scripted information about the artist.

While the aesthetic of Young's installed space (see fig 2.) may seem understated and 'minimalist' when juxtaposed with the busy kitchen-space aesthetic of Tiravanija's work (see fig 1.), the use of simple signifiers (the phone, the desk, the printed text) combined with a 'White-cube' exhibition space reinforces the institutionalised aesthetic of a modern day call centre.

In a video produced by MOMA in 2012 discussing the reproduction of *Untitled (Free)*, Tiravanija emphasises that the focus is placed upon the relationships created by the sharing of a meal within a gallery space as opposed to the aesthetic of the installation:

The work is a platform, for people to interact with the work itself but also with each other. A lot of it is also about the experiential relationship. So you actually are not really looking at something, but you are within it, you are part of it.

(Tiravanija, MOMA, 2012)

In the same video, curator Laura Hoptman also describes Tiravanija's practice: 'He takes... Marcel Duchamp's notion that a work of art is a work of art if the artist says it is.' (Hoptman, MOMA, 2012). This may be a misinterpretation of Duchamp's original notion (whether by Hoptman, or by proxy, Tiravanija himself) - which is in relation to 'Readymades', and the idea of the artist as the authority of what 'art' is, as opposed to the curator as authority. Yet, if we take what Hoptman is saying here as verbatim, and consider that Tiravanija suggests the 'experiential relationship' is the product of his art, it supports Bourriaud's claim that our judgement of relational works must be based upon the relationships that they create.

Similarly, in a text giving an overview of Young's artistic practice, the product of *Nothing Ventured* is described as the artist herself: 'In 'Nothing Ventured' Carey Young turned herself into a product...Callers could...acquire a fair bit of information about the artist and her work.' (Alex Farquharson, 2002, p.22) Here the emphasis is based not on the method of receiving the information (through the telephone), but on the subject of the information that is being iterated to the viewer. Farquharson also adds that 'by outsourcing the P.R role to a call centre rather than a gallery, she was, in effect, outsourcing her artistic identity to a corporate framework.' (Farquharson, 2002, p.22). By reducing herself to a product, whose information is to be divulged to the audience through a 'corporate

framework', Young is introducing a relationship between the viewer and modern-day corporate structures.

In contrast to Tiravanija's and Young's use of installations as a participatory platform, Tino Sehgal is a British-German artist whose practice is defined by an intended 'lack-of-object' and is one produced through social interactions that are born out of the conventions of theatre (albeit without a stage); the majority of his works containing no 'readymades', installations or crafted objects. Instead, Sehgal uses the structures already in place within a museum culture; As part of *The Unilever series* for Tate Modern, Sehgal contributed *These Associations* (2012) (see fig 3.). Situated in the Tate's Turbine Hall, a crowd of around 70 people intermingles with the audience. Dressed in ordinary clothing,

they approach the viewer as a stranger, and impart a short story or anecdote, most of which are focused on a choice or turning point in the strangers life. Swiftly, the pace changes and Sehgal's performers are racing around the space,



Figure 3. Sehgal. *These Associations*. 2012

running in between the onlookers. At (seemingly) pre-determined intervals, the crowd sit, whisper or begin to sing. They sing of the 'techno-logical' age and of 'human-nature'. (Laura Cumming, 2012)

With no 'objects' or platforms to contemplate, the audience is left with only the interaction between themselves and the performers as the significant method that Sehgal is employing to incite an idea. This 'lack-of-object' in Sehgal's work is by no means a petty slight at the tradition of the museum as institution;

His antipathy toward the object stems, for instance, not from any of form of institutional critique-or as a desire to subvert museological convention-but from a fierce political conviction about the excessive proliferation of goods in Western Culture.

(Nancy Spector, 2006, p89)

Here we can draw a similarity between Sehgal's disagreement with the 'excessive proliferation of goods' and Debord's suggestion that 'economy's domination of social life entailed an obvious downgrading of being into having...' (Guy Debord, 1967, p7). In this context Sehgal's work appears to be successfully combatting the proposed effects of Debord's 'spectacle' in that the product of his work is 'relationships', as opposed to objects made for consumption, or 'having'.

While these types of works seem to be successfully tackling the issue of social interaction in the age of new media, perhaps one criticism of them is that their authors (the artists as creators) have moved away from an object-based production, into the realm of a service based industry - this service being the creation of 'models of sociability'. Whether the artist creating a relational work uses an installation (Tiravanija, Young) or the context of a social space (Sehgal) as narrative, this is secondary to the interactivity taking place. However, it is notable that the installation/space is the initial springboard for the proposed interaction; the relationships created are a by-product of the narrative platform.

Consumption

Consumption; ‘the action of using up a resource’ or more specifically, in relation to this context, ‘the reception of information or entertainment by a mass audience’ (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2014) . Applying this definition to artists using Relational models, we must consider what the ‘resource’ is that we are ‘using up’; what ‘information or entertainment’ are we in receipt of when viewing Relational works?

In *Art Power*, Boris Groys asserts that ‘Under the conditions of modernity an artwork can be produced and brought to the public in two ways: as a commodity or as a tool of political propaganda.’ (Groys, 2008, p.4). For Groys, a work of art can therefore only be consumed either through its commercial value, or through the absorption of its political message. In regards to Relational art, it seems correct to assume that the majority of Relational works fall under the latter; after all, how do we define the commercial value of a relationship? Claire Bishop argues, however, that Relational arts ‘...begin to dovetail with an “experience economy”, the marketing strategy that seeks to replace goods and services with scripted and staged experiences’ (Bishop, 2006, p.52) This refers to B. Joseph Pine II’s and James H. Gilmore’s theory that with the evolution of the economy, businesses had begun to provide consumers with experience-products. This implies the commodification of Relational art, yet it does not deny its value as ‘political propaganda’.

In 2003, Santiago Sierra was asked to produce work to be a part of the Venice Biennial. His installative work, *Wall enclosing a space*, consisted of a brick wall, built from floor to ceiling, which sealed off access to the Spanish Pavilion (see Fig 5.). Those attempting to enter the



Figure 4. Sierra. *Wall enclosing a space*. 2003

space were then led around the Pavilion to a back entrance, which was guarded by security officers ('employees' of Sierra), who only allowed entrance to those carrying a Spanish passport. Inside the space, rather than being faced with a concealed work by Sierra, those allowed access found that it was in fact empty, but for leftovers of the previous year's show. In a 2004 article from BOMB magazine, it is said of Sierra that;

He increasingly relies on techniques of obstruction and concealment, creating a variety of artificial barriers that point to real, if often unremarked, accessibility issues...everyone's complicity in preserving the structures that keep classes and peoples separate.

(Teresa Margolles, 2004)

Presenting 'techniques of obstruction and concealment' to an audience, re-iterate the notion of these issues going unseen or unaddressed in society. *Wall enclosing a space* challenges a gallery goer's expectation of universal access, whilst also creating a sense of mystery about what is contained within the denied space. By limiting access to only

Spanish nationals, Sierra's work forces us to consider what is being consumed by those who cannot gain access. It could be argued that by denying access to an audience, that they are unable to consume the work, but given the fact that those who entered the space were faced



Figure 5. Sierra. *Wall enclosing a space*. 2003

with only remnants of the previous year's show, I would argue that the denied-viewer consume the feeling of exclusion, based purely on their nationality.

The idea of exclusion (taken out of the context of Sierra's work) is one of the central issues for Bourriaud's *Relation Aesthetics*. He observes that 'What strikes us in the work of this generation of artists is...the democratic concern that informs it.' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.

57). The 'democracy' that Bourriaud is referring to implies the opening up of the art arena to mass public consumption through Relational art works. However, Bishop in *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, an essay critiquing Bourriaud's theory, denies this 'democracy' because of the nature of those who might attend a gallery/museum showing this type of work. Bishop suggests that 'the relations set up by relational aesthetics are not intrinsically democratic, as Bourriaud suggests, since they rest too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as whole and of community as immanent togetherness.' (Bishop, 2006, p.67) Bishop supports this assertion by referring to an account of Tiravanija's *Untiled (free)* by art critic Jerry Saltz;

The gallery became a place for sharing, jocularly and frank talk. I had an amazing run of meals with art dealers. Once I ate with Paula Cooper who recounted a long, complicated bit of professional gossip [...] Another time I chatted with a young artist who lived in Brooklyn...

(Saltz in Bishop, 2006, p.67)

Bishop describes this encounter as 'informal chattiness', suggesting that though the review by Saltz considers Tiravanija's work to be good, it is only because 'it permits networking among a group of art dealers and like-minded art lovers'. She further states that while Tiravanija's work creates a dialogue between members of a certain elitist social group ('art-lovers'), this communication 'is not in and of itself emblematic of "democracy."' (Bishop, 2006, p67). Conceding to this evaluation, we must then consider that the 'democratic' consumption of a Relational art is relative to the space in which it finds itself presented; if its consumption is not wholly 'democratic' in a space that is associated with attracting an elitist audience, would it perhaps be considered more 'democratic' if presented in a context that directly confronts the mass public?

There are several artists exploring this issue of a universal 'democracy' of art, not only by presenting their works to a public realm, but also by collaborating with that public. As part of the Manchester International Festival (2009), Jeremy Deller led a parade of local

social groups through the streets of Manchester. For *Procession*, Deller worked with groups and individuals from the Greater Manchester area in order to produce a series of ‘floats’ and performances that would represent the spirit of the city. The line-up included traditional procession sights, such as the local Scout’s marching band, yet Deller also

focused on groups that otherwise went uncelebrated - but undeniably make up a part of the city’s social structure; ‘the artist also made a point of bringing together elements of society who might not normally get along, and included groups that typically annoy ‘average’ citizens, like a band of ‘unrepentant

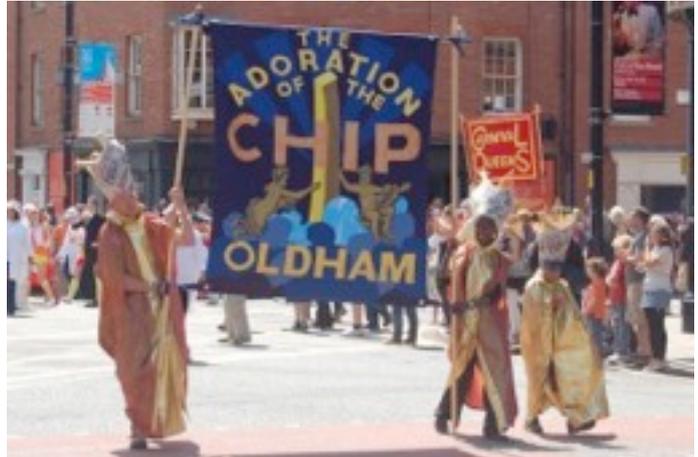


Figure 6. Deller. *Procession*. 2009.

smokers’...’ (Ralph Rugoff, 2012, p17). As well as the ‘unrepentant smokers’, other unusual groups included ‘boy racers’ who congregate behind a local Toys ‘R’ Us store and the staff of a fish and chip shop (see Fig 6.). Deller’s collaboration on a public project and its inclusion of uncelebrated social groups celebrates social diversity and allows for a more ‘democratic’ consumption of art.

Marcus Coates is another artist who works directly with the public; a film entitled

Vision Quest - a Ritual for Elephant & Castle (2010) documents Coates’ endeavours into discovering an alternative vision for the future of a Heygate Estate in London, which is a site of proposed re-development (see Fig 7.). Coates invokes Shamanistic



Figure 7. Coates. *A Ritual for Elephant & Castle*. 2010.

practices to channel ‘animal-spirits’, to whom he proposes questions to about the sites

future. While this practice may seem ridiculous response to corporate visions, what is interesting is the interaction and development of relationships between Coates and residents from the estate. This interaction with the public is a theme that underpins Coates' artistic practice - in an interview with Bourriaud for the *Altermodern* exhibition catalogue Coates states;

I am interested in the potential of the artist to:

- Use their unique skills on behalf of others.
- Be autonomous whilst having an immediate relevance to peoples lives.

(Coates in Bourriaud, 2009, p63).

Coates' concern with an artist's work having a direct, positive interaction with 'peoples lives' lends to the idea that he intends for his work to be consumed 'democratically'.

In an essay entitled **No Ghost*, Tom McDonough critiques the significance that Bourriaud places on the consumption of relationships created by Relational art over the production of them. He suggests that Bourriaud's postulation on the importance of consumption over production is based on a 'collation of [Karl] Marx and [Michel] de Certeau into the twin foundations of a 'culture of use' (that) is unstable.' According to McDonough this instability comes from Bourriaud's misinterpretation of Marx's *Grundrisse*, McDonough asserts that the relevant part of Marx's text speaks of production and consumption as equal; '...far from establishing the priority of consumption over production, Marx was actually attempting to demonstrate their mutual dependence...' (McDonough, 2004, p.118). McDonough further suggests that Bourriaud's suggestion for a 'culture of use' is unstable because he reads the relevant passage of Marx's text '...through the lens of Michel de Certeau's examination of everyday life...' (McDonough, 2004, p.118), adopting de Certeau's position that consumption is a subversive act.

Based on this, Bourriaud emphasises a move away from production toward consumption. The significance of this in regards to Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* is that he appears to be suggesting that the consumer of a relational work takes on a more significant role in the production of a work than that of the artist who has produced the platform for those relationships.

It appears that through Relational art comes a new form of consumption. This goes directly against Debord's opinion of consumption, he states: 'Innovation is ever present in the process of the production of things. This is not true of consumption, which is never anything but more of the same.' (Debord, 1967, p48). If we consider Bourriaud's assertion that a Relational art is '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' (Bourriaud, 2002, p14), this suggests that the implied meaning of a relational work is consumed collectively by an audience, as opposed to individually. Bishop, in an exploration of Bourriaud's definition, takes this further;

...rather than a one-to-one relationship between work of art and viewer, relational art sets up situations in which viewers are not just addressed as a collective, social entity, but are actually given the wherewithal to create a community, however temporary or utopian this may be.

(Bishop, 2007, P54)

I would argue that this evidences a form of consumption in which the network of relationships created by a Relational art deny a traditional 'one-to-one' consumption of art, and instead imply a myriad of levels of consumption through each individual form of relationship created by a work. Each separate relationship formed influences a viewer's experience of a Relational art work, allowing them to evolve within a given space and time as a community, but also on an individual level of personal consumption affected by the communal experience.

Participation

Put simply, 'Participation' is defined as 'the action of taking part in something' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2014). However, in the context of Relational art, I feel it necessary to pursue a more definitive explanation of what it means to 'participate' in an art work:

...calls for an art of participation tend to be allied to one or all of the following agendas. The first concerns the desire to create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation...The second argument concerns authorship... shared production is...seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability...The third issue involves a perceived crisis in community and collective responsibility...One of the main impetuses behind participatory art has therefore been a restoration of the social bond through a collective elaboration of meaning.

(Bishop, 2006, p12)

In *Participation* (a collection of essays documenting recent endeavours into participatory art, edited by Bishop), Bishop outlines the historical context that influenced the beginnings of art forms which ask that the viewer be physically active in a work; Bertolt Brecht's use of 'situations' in theatre (as opposed to a more linear narrative); 'Rather than presenting the illusion of action on stage and filling the audiences with sentiment, Brechtian theatre compels the spectator to take up a position toward this action' (Bishop, 2006, p.11). Designed to break the connection between the audience and the characters of a play, this technique created a 'critical distance' (Bishop, 2006, p.11) in which the audience could relate themselves to the action taking place, whilst aware that it was a constructed situation. This example may now seem far removed from the physically engaged participation involved in more recent Relational art works, yet it begins to underpin the emancipation of an audience from their passive role into an active one.

This 'critical distance', which Bourriaud suggests is a significant difference between the audiences consumption of art forms and other forms of a more passive, individual consumption (he mentions: 'TV', 'literature', 'theatre' and 'cinema');

At an exhibition, on the other hand, even when inert forms are involved, there is the possibility of immediate discussion, in both senses of the term. I see and perceive, I comment and I evolve in a unique space and time.

(Bourriaud, 2002, P16)

This implies that for Bourriaud the space of contemplation of an art work is no different whether the audience is passively viewing an 'inert object' or whether they are actively participating within a work. Bishop calls this into question by suggesting that '...relational art works insist upon use over contemplation.' (Bishop, 2004, P55) For Bishop, if a viewer is 'using' a Relational art work, this is then paramount to a viewers contemplation of the proposed experience. Taking the concept of a Relational art work's 'use' further, we must consider that the interactivity which takes place between the viewer and a work is a suggested construct by the artist; to some extent an artist is asking us to take on a pre-determined role. For example, in Tiravanija's *Untitled (free)* the interaction that takes place between the viewers is suggested by the installed 'kitchen' set-up, and the offering of a meal. An 'ideal' participant recognises the space as a social environment and thus acts socially (see fig 8.). What Bishop disregards here is a viewers potential, as Bourriaud suggests, to 'comment' and 'evolve' and therefore to contemplate whilst the 'participation' is taking place.



Figure 8. Tiravanija, *Untitled (Free)* (reproduction), 2011.

This leads us to the question of 'Authority'. While an artist may suggest the role of a viewer within their work, each viewer having their own set of past experiences, cultures and opinions can only be controlled to a certain extent. Jacques Rancière suggests that;

We learn and teach, we act and know as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamt. There is no privileged medium as there is no privileged starting point.

(Rancière cited in Bishop, 2006, p.16)

Bishop further suggests that Rancière is implying that 'we are all equally capable of inventing our own translations' (Bishop, 2006, p.16). For Bishop the 'starting point' that each potential participator comes from implies the relinquishing of an artist's authorial status to a more '...egalitarian and democratic...creation of a work...' (Bishop, 2006, P12). This 'democratic' creation of an art work can be seen in the collaboration between Deller and the members of the public involved in *Procession*. Essentially, Deller plays the role of 'curator'; whilst the sum of *Procession* is Deller's proposed work, he acts as consultant to the individual social groups on what they are creating and then curates those works (and their creators) into an exhibition within the public domain.

Bishop suggests that the third provocation for interactive art forms is '...a restoration of the social bond...' (Bishop, 2006, P12). For Bishop this 'restoration' seeks to directly combat the proposed



Figure 9. Deller. *Procession*. 2009.

effects of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, she specifically cites;

The specialization of the mass spectacle constitutes [...] the epicentre of separation and noncommunication.

(Debord cited in Bishop, 2006, p.12)

For Debord, the 'separation' of individuals from directly lived relationships is the dominating effect of the 'spectacle'. He also suggests that the 'spectacle' unifies us by this 'separation' and therefore determines our relationships with the world; it is both cause and effect. In *Toward a Situationist International*, Debord describes the proposal of 'constructed situations' to combat the effects of the 'spectacle'; '...the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate nature.' (Debord (1957) in Bishop, 2006, p.96). This suggestion of 'constructed situations' is mentioned by both Bourriaud and Bishop as a historical context for Relational art forms. Bishop suggests that Debord's situations 'aimed to produce new social relationships and thus new social realities.' (Bishop, 2006, p.13), she then adds that 'constructed situations' have been one of the main impetuses for subsequent artists direct engagement with '...specific social constituencies, and...participatory forms of mass media entertainment'. Bourriaud, however, asserts that 'The Situationist "constructed situation" concept is intended to replace artistic representation by the experimental realisation of artistic energy in everyday settings.' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.84). Whether Debord intended for 'constructed situations' to be played out within the form of art, or whether the concept did, in fact, seek to 'replace artistic representation' appears irrelevant if we consider that it has inspired a generation of artists to create participatory works that aim at combatting the effects of the 'spectacle' by producing genuine relationships - whether it be in a more 'everyday' or 'democratic' manner, or contained within the realms of art institutions.

Conclusion

A Relational art relies equally on the elements of Production, Consumption and Participation in order to create successful forms of sociability. Production, as the artist's proposed model for interaction, is equally as necessary as the consumption of the work through the potentially diverse interpretation and subsequent interaction of each viewer. The degree of Participation in a work, while equal in importance, is relative to each individual Relational art work.

Production of a Relational art is made up of the creation of a narrative platform, and the subsequent relationships created within that narrative. In viewing a Relational work we are not only consuming the relationships created within it, but also the opportunity to become producers of such relationships. By consuming a Relational work, we are both consumer and producer at once, yet on a sliding scale; sometimes we consume more, other times we produce more, depending on the role that the artist is proposing we 'act-out'.

While artists working in this area have made a significant move away from the production of inert objects, it is undeniable that there is still a certain extent to which the narrative for a Relational work still relies on a level of object based visual-aids. However, whilst these 'objects' inform the viewer of their role within a work, they become secondary to the interaction that they produce.

Relational art forms provide a conscientious approach to resolving the issues of an ever-progressing culture and increasingly reclusive state of sociability present in the new, globalised society. With each step taken forward in Modern technology, whether it be faster lines of communication, more direct travel routes or the increasing invention of solitary leisure activities, a multitude of possibilities for a direct social interaction are destroyed. The 'models of sociability', which Bourriaud suggests is the dominant concern of artists working within the realm of *Relational Aesthetics*, are positively countering the effects of Debord's 'Spectacle'.

There are several issues with Bourriaud's theorising of *Relational Aesthetics*, firstly he suggests that we must judge Relational art works based upon the relationships that they create, but then offers no significant criteria in which we should begin this judgement. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, he insinuates that because an art work is interactive it is therefore automatically more 'democratic'. However, if we concur with Bishop's assertion that Relational art works that are placed within a gallery context cannot be defined as 'democratic' as their only exposure is to the elitist group of 'art-lovers', we must concede to the idea that these works are complicit with the 'spectacle' and therefore become its contemporary extension. I would suggest that in order to re-define Relational art forms as 'democratic', and to evolve Debord's 'constructed situations' into a realm of positive social interactions, artists must seek out new ways of representing their ideas to a mass proletarian audience.

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Figure 1. Tiravanija, Rirkrit. 1992. *Untitled (Free)*.
[Photograph: Installation view of Tiravanija's work at 303 Gallery, New York]. At: <http://glasstire.com/2011/03/02/the-ten-list-food-and-art/> (Accessed on 02/02/2014)



Figure 2. Young, Carey. 2000. *Nothing Ventured*.
[Photograph: Installation view of Young's work at Fig-1 Gallery, London] At: <http://www.careyyoung.com/past/nothingventured.htm> (Accessed on 02/02/2014)



Figure 3. Sehgal, Tino. 2012 *These Associations*.
[Photograph: Participation performance at Tate Modern, London.] At: <http://www.theweeklings.com/mpope/2012/11/18/wish-you-were-here-tino-sehgal-at-the-tate/tino-sehgal-by-erase-1/> (Accessed on 02/02/2014)



Figure 4. Sierra, Santiago. 2003. *Wall enclosing a space*.
[Photograph: Entrance to Spanish Pavilion obstructed by wall, Venice Biennale] At: http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/zenakos/zenakos8-2-05_detail.asp?picnum=3 (Accessed on 02/02/2014)



Figure 5. Sierra, Santiago. 2003. *Wall enclosing a space*.
[Photograph: Installation view, Venice Biennale] At: <http://bombsite.com/issues/86/articles/2606> (Accessed on 02/02/2014)



Figure 6. Deller, Jeremy. 2009. *Procession*.
[Photograph: Local fish and chip shop staff and their banner, Deansgate, Manchester] At: <http://www.creativetourist.com/articles/art/manchester/dont-rain-on-our-parade/> (Accessed on 02/02/2014)



Figure 7. Coates, Marcus. 2010. *A Ritual for Elephant & Castle*. [Photograph: Coates wearing 'Shaman' costume in front of Heygate estate, London] At: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/apr/08/marcus-coates-artist-elephant-castle> (Accessed 02/02/2014)



Figure 8. Tiravanija, Rirkrit. 2011. *Untitled (Free/Still)*. [Photograph: Installation view of a reproduction of Tiravanija's 1992 work, at MOMA, New York]. At: <http://uat.moma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/194/1039> (Accessed on 02/02/2014)



Figure 9. Deller, Jeremy. 2009. *Procession*. [Photograph: Deller and local collaborators, Deansgate, Manchester] At: <http://www.thisistomorrow.info/default.aspx?webPageId=1&catId=197&pageNumber=1> (Accessed on 02/02/2014)