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## Documents of Contemporary Art

In recent decades artists have progressively expanded the boundaries of art as they have sought to engage with an increasingly pluralistic environment. Teaching, curating and understanding of art and visual culture are likewise no longer grounded in traditional aesthetics but centred on significant ideas, topics and themes ranging from the everyday to the uncanny, the psychoanalytical to the political.

The *Documents of Contemporary Art* series emerges from this context. Each volume focuses on a specific subject or body of writing that has been of key influence in contemporary art internationally. Edited and introduced by a scholar, artist, critic or curator, each of these source books provides access to a plurality of voices and perspectives defining a significant theme or tendency.

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has offered a public platform for art and ideas. In the same spirit, each guest editor represents a distinct yet diverse approach – rather than one institutional position or school of thought – and has conceived each volume to address not only a professional audience but all interested readers.

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Whitechapel 

**Nicolas Bourriaud**  
**Relational Aesthetics//1998**

*Relational Aesthetics has come to be seen as a defining text for a generation of artists who came to prominence in Europe in the early to mid 1990s. The following text is a selection of excerpts from Bourriaud's collection of seven discrete essays originally published in magazines and exhibition catalogues.*

**The work of art as social interstice**

The possibility of a *relational* art (an art that takes as its theoretical horizon the sphere of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an autonomous and *private* symbolic space) is testimony to the radical upheaval in aesthetic, cultural and political objectives brought about by modern art. To outline its sociology: this development stems essentially from the birth of a global urban culture and the extension of the urban model to almost all cultural phenomena. The spread of urbanization, which began to take off at the end of the Second World War, allowed an extraordinary increase in social exchanges, as well as greater individual mobility (thanks to the development of rail and road networks, telecommunications and the gradual opening up of isolated places, which went hand in hand with the opening up of minds). Because this urban world's inhabitable places are so cramped, we have also witnessed a scaling down of furniture and objects, which have become much easier to handle: for a long time, artworks looked like lordly luxury items in this urban context (the dimensions of both artworks and the apartments where they were displayed were intended to signal the *distinction* between their owners and the *hoi polloi*), but the way their function and their mode of presentation has evolved reveals a growing *urbanization* of the artistic experience. What is collapsing before our very eyes is quite simply the pseudo-aristocratic conception of how artworks should be displayed, which was bound up with the feeling of having acquired a territory. We can, in other words, no longer regard contemporary works as a space we have to walk through (we were shown around collections in the same way that we were shown around great houses). Contemporary art resembles a period of time that has to be experienced, or the opening of a dialogue that never ends. The city permits and generalizes the experience of proximity: this is the tangible symbol and historical framework of the state of society, or the 'state of encounter', that has been 'imposed' on people, as Althusser puts it,<sup>1</sup> as opposed to the dense and unproblematic jungle of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's state of *nature*. Rousseau's jungle was such that there could be no lasting encounters.

Once it had been elevated to the status of an absolute civilizational rule this intense encounter finally gave rise to artistic practices that were in keeping with it. It gave rise, that is, to a form of art with intersubjectivity as its substratum. Its central themes are being-together [*l'être-ensemble*], the 'encounter' between viewer and painting, and the collective elaboration of meaning. We can leave aside the problem of the phenomenon's historicity: art has always been relation to some extent. It has, in other words, always been a factor in sociability and has always been the basis for a dialogue. One of the image's potentials is its capacity for 'linkage' [*reliance*], to use Michel Maffesoli's term: flags, logos, icons and signs all produce empathy and sharing, and generate *links*.<sup>2</sup> Art (practices derived from painting and sculpture and displayed in the form of an exhibition) proves to be an especially appropriate expression of this civilization of proximity. It compresses relational space, whereas television and books send us all back to spaces where we consume in private; and whereas the theatre or the cinema bring small groups together to look at univocal images, there is in fact no live commentary on what a theatre or cinema audience is seeing (the time for discussion comes after the show). At an exhibition, in contrast, there is always the possibility of an immediate – in both senses of the term – discussion, even when the forms on show are inert: I see, comment and move around in one space-time. Art is a site that produces a specific sociability; what status this space has within the range of 'states of encounter' proposed by the *Polis* remains to be seen. How can an art that is centred on the production of such modes of conviviality succeed in relaunching the modern project of emancipation as we contemplate it? How does it allow us to define new cultural and political goals?

Before turning to concrete examples, it is important to take a new look at where artworks are situated within the overall system of the economy – symbolic or material – that governs contemporary society: quite apart from its commodified nature or semantic value, the artwork represents, in my view, a social *interstice*. The term *interstice* was used by Karl Marx to describe trading communities that escaped the framework of the capitalist economy: barter, selling at a loss, autarkic forms of production, and so on. An interstice is a space in social relations which, although it fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, suggests possibilities for exchanges other than those that prevail within the system. Exhibitions of contemporary art occupy precisely the same position within the field of the trade in representations. They create free spaces and periods of time whose rhythms are not the same as those that organize everyday life, and they encourage an inter-human intercourse which is different to the 'zones of communication' that are forced upon us. The contemporary social context restricts opportunities for interhuman relations in that it creates spaces designed for that purpose. Superloos were invented to

keep the streets clean. The same line of thinking governed the development communicational tools while the streets of our cities were being swept clean of all relational dross. The result is that neighbourhood relations have been impoverished. The general mechanization of social functions is gradually reducing our relational space. Until only a few years ago, the early morning call service still used human voices; the responsibility for waking us up now falls to synthesized voices... The ATM has become the transit model for the most basic social functions, and professional behaviours are modelled on the efficiency of the machines that are replacing them. The same machines now perform tasks that once represented so many opportunities for exchanges, pleasure or conflict. Contemporary art is really pursuing a political project when it attempts to move into the relational sphere by problematizing it.

When Gabriel Orozco puts an orange on the stalls of a deserted market in Brazil (*Crazy Tourist*, 1991) or sets up a hammock in the garden of New York's Museum of Modern Art (*Hamoc en el MoMa*, 1993), he is operating in the heart of the 'social infra-thin' [*inframince*], or that tiny space for everyday gestures that is determined by the superstructure constructed and determined by large-scale exchanges. Orozco's photographs are an uncaptioned documentary record of tiny revolutions in ordinary urban or semi-urban life (a sleeping bag on the grass, an empty shoebox): they bear witness to the silent life (a still life or *nature morte*) that is now painted by our relations with others. When Jens Haaning uses a loudspeaker to broadcast jokes told in Turkish on a square in Copenhagen (*Turkish Jokes*, 1994), he instantly produces a micro-community of immigrants who have been brought together by the collective laughter that inverts their situation as exiles. That community is formed in relation to and inside the work. An exhibition is a privileged place where instant communities like this can be established: depending on the degree of audience participation demanded by the artist, the nature of the works on show and the models of sociability that are represented or suggested, an exhibition can generate a particular 'domain of exchanges'. And we must judge that 'domain of exchanges' on the basis of aesthetic criteria, or in other words by analysing the coherence of its form, and then the symbolic value of the 'world' it offers us or the image of human relations that it reflects. Within this social interstice, the artist owes it to himself to take responsibility for the symbolic models he is showing: all representation refers to values that can be transposed into society (though contemporary art does not so much represent as *model*) and inserts itself into the social fabric rather than taking inspiration from it). Being a human activity that is based upon commerce, art is both the object and the subject of an ethics: all the more so in that, unlike other human activities, *its only function is to be exposed to that commerce*. Art is a state of encounter... [...]

### Conviviality and encounters

A work can function as a relational device in which there is a degree of randomness. It can be a machine for provoking and managing individual or collective encounters. To cite a few examples from the last two decades, this is true of Braco Dimitrijevic's *Casual Passer-by* series, which disproportionately celebrates the names and faces of anonymous passers-by on posters the size of those used for advertisements, or on busts like those of celebrities. In the early 1970s, Stephen Willats painstakingly charted the relationships that existed between the inhabitants of a block of flats. And much of Sophie Calle's work consists of accounts of her encounters with strangers: she follows a passer-by, searches hotel rooms after getting a job as a chamber maid, asks blind people how they define beauty, and then, after the event, formalizes the biographical experiments that led her to 'collaborate' with the people she met. We could also cite, almost at random, On Kawara's *I met* series, the restaurant opened by Gordon Matta-Clark in 1971 (*Food*), the dinners organized by Daniel Spoerri or the playful shop opened by George Brecht and Robert Filliou in Villefranche (*La Cédille qui sourit*). The formalization of convivial relations has been a historical constant since the 1960s. The generation of the 1980s picked up the same problematic, but the definition of art, which was central to the 1960s and 1970s, was no longer an issue. The problem was no longer the expansion of the limits of art,<sup>3</sup> but testing art's capacity for resistance within the social field as a whole. A single family of practices therefore gives rise to two radically different problematics: in the 1960s, the emphasis was on relationships internal to the world of art within a modernist culture that privileged 'the new' and called for linguistic subversion; it is now placed on external relationships in the context of an eclectic culture where the work of art resists the mincer of the 'Society of the Spectacle'. Social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to day-to-day micro-utopias and mimetic strategies: any 'direct' critique of society is pointless if it is based upon the illusion of a marginality that is now impossible, if not regressive. Almost thirty years ago, Félix Guattari was already recommending the neighbourhood strategies on which contemporary artistic practices are based: 'Just as I think it is illusory to count on the gradual transformation of society so I believe that microscopic attempts – communities, neighbourhood committees, organizing crèches in universities – play an absolutely fundamental role.'<sup>4</sup>

Traditional critical philosophy (and especially the Frankfurt school) can no longer sustain art unless it takes the form of an archaic folklore, or of a splendid rattle that achieves nothing. The subversive and critical function of contemporary art is now fulfilled through the invention of individual or collective vanishing lines, and through the provisional and nomadic constructions artists use to model and distribute disturbing situations. Hence

the current enthusiasm for revisited spaces of conviviality and crucibles where heterogeneous modes of sociability can be worked out. For her exhibition at the Centre pour la Création Contemporaine, Tours (1993), Angela Bulloch installed a café: when sufficient visitors sat down on the chairs, they activated a recording of a piece by Kraftwerk. For her *Restaurant* show (Paris, October 1993), Georgina Starr described her anxiety about 'dining alone' and produced a text to be handed to diners who came alone to the restaurant. For his part, Ben Kinmont approached randomly-selected people, offered to do their washing up for them and maintained an information network about his work. On a number of occasions Lincoln Tobier set up radio stations in art galleries and invited the public to take part in broadcast discussions.

Philippe Parreno has drawn particular inspiration from the form of the party, and his exhibition project for the Consortium, Dijon, consisted in 'taking up two hours of time rather than ten square metres of space' by organizing a party. All its component elements eventually produced relational forms as clusters of individuals gathered around the installed artistic objects... Rirkrit Tiravanija, for his part, explores the socio-professional aspect of conviviality: his contribution to *Surfaces de réparation* (Dijon, 1994) was a relaxation area for the exhibiting artists, complete with a table-football game and a well-stocked fridge. To end this evocation of how such conviviality can develop in the context of a culture of 'friendship', mention should be made of the bar created by Heimo Zobernig for the *Unité* exhibition, and Franz West's *Passtücke* ['adaptives'].<sup>5</sup> Other artists suddenly burst into the relational fabric in more aggressive ways. The work of Douglas Gordon, for example, explores the 'wild' dimension of this interaction by intervening in social space in parasitic or paradoxical ways: he phoned customers in a café and sent multiple 'instructions' to selected individuals. The best example of how untimely communications can disrupt communications networks is probably a piece by Angus Fairhurst: with the kind of equipment used by pirate radio stations, he established a phone link between two art galleries. Each interlocutor believed that the other had called, and the discussions degenerated into an indescribable confusion. By creating or exploring relational schemata, these works established relational micro-territories that could be driven into the density of the contemporary *socius*; the experiences are either mediated by object-surfaces (Liam Gillick's 'boards', the posters created in the street by Pierre Huyghe, Eric Duyckaerts' video lectures) or experienced immediately (Andrea Fraser's exhibition tours) [...]

### **The Subject of the Artwork**

Every artist whose work derives from relational aesthetics has his or her own world of forms, his or her problematic and his or her trajectory: there are no

stylistic, thematic or iconographic links between them. What they do have in common is much more determinant, namely the fact that they operate with the same practical and theoretical horizon: the sphere of interhuman relationships. Their works bring into play modes of social exchange, interaction with the viewer inside the aesthetic experience he or she is offered, and processes of communication in their concrete dimensions as tools that can be used to bring together individuals and human groups.

They therefore all work within what we might call the relational sphere, which is to today's art what mass production was to Pop and Minimalism.

They all ground their artistic practice in a proximity which, whilst it does not belittle visibility, does relativize its place within exhibition protocols. The artworks of the 1990s transform the viewer into a neighbour or a direct interlocutor. It is precisely this generation's attitude towards communication that allows it to be defined in relation to previous generations: whilst most artists who emerged in the 1980s (from Richard Prince to Jeff Koons via Jenny Holzer) emphasized the visual aspect of the media, their successors place the emphasis on contact and tactility. They emphasise *immediacy* in their visual writing. This phenomenon can be explained in sociological terms if we recall that the decade that has just ended was marked by the economic crisis and did little to encourage spectacular or visionary experiments. There are also purely aesthetic reasons why this should have been the case; in the 1980s, the 'back to' pendulum stopped with the movements of the 1960s and especially Pop art, whose visual effectiveness underpinned most of the forms proposed by *simulationism*. For better or worse, our period identifies with the Arte Povera and experimental art of the 1970s, and even with the atmosphere of crisis that went with it. Superficial as it may be, this fashion effect had made it possible to re-examine the work of artists such as Gordon Matta-Clark or Robert Smithson, whilst the success of Mike Kelley has recently encouraged a new reading of the Californian 'junk art' of Paul Thek and Tetsumia Kudo. Fashion can thus create aesthetic microclimates which affect the very way we read recent history: to put it a different way, the mesh of the sieve's net can be woven in different ways. It then 'lets through' different types of work, and that influences the present in return.

Having said that, when we look at relational artists, we find ourselves in the presence of a group of artists who, for the first time since the emergence of conceptual art in the mid-1960s, simply do not take as their starting point some aesthetic movement from the past. Relational art is neither a 'revival' of some movement nor the return of a style. It is born of the observation of the present and of a reflection on the destiny of artistic activity. Its basic hypothesis – the sphere of human relations as site for the artwork – is without precedent in the history of art, even though it can of course be seen, after the event, to be the

obvious backdrop to all aesthetic practice, and the modernist theme *par excellence*. Anyone who needs to be convinced that interactivity is scarcely a new notion has only to reread Marcel Duchamp's 1957 lecture on 'the creative act'. The novelty lies elsewhere. It resides in the fact that, for this generation of artists, intersubjectivity and interaction are neither fashionable theoretical gadgets nor adjuncts to (alibis for) a traditional artistic practice. They are at once a starting point and a point of arrival, or in short the main themes that inform their work. The space in which their works are deployed is devoted entirely to interaction. It is a space for the openness (Georges Bataille would have called it a 'rent') that inaugurates all dialogue. These artists produce relational space-times, interhuman experiences that try to shake off the constraints of the ideology of mass communications; they are in a sense spaces where we can elaborate alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of constructed conviviality. It is, however, obvious that the day of the New Man of the future-oriented manifestos and the calls for a better world 'with vacant possession' is well and truly gone: utopia is now experienced as a day to day subjectivity, in the real time of concrete and deliberately fragmentary experiments. The artwork now looks like a *social interstice* in which these experiences and these new 'life possibilities' prove to be possible. Inventing new relations with our neighbours seems to be a matter of much greater urgency than 'making tomorrows sing'.<sup>6</sup> That is all, but it is still a lot. And it at least offers a welcome alternative to the depressive, authoritarian and reactionary thought that, at least in France, passes for art theory in the shape of 'common sense' rediscovered. And yet modernity is not dead, if we define as 'modern' meaning a taste for aesthetic experience and adventurous thinking, as opposed to the timid conformisms that are defended by philosophers who are paid by the line, neo-traditionalists (the ludicrous Dave Hickey's 'Beauty') and militant *passéistes* like Jean Clair. Whether fundamentalist believers in yesterday's *good taste* like it or not, contemporary art has taken up and does represent the heritage of the avant-gardes of the twentieth century, whilst at the same time rejecting their dogmatism and their teleology. I have to admit that a lot of thought went into that last sentence: it was simply time to write it. Because modernism was steeped in an 'oppositional imaginary', to borrow a phrase from Gilbert Durand, it worked with breaks and clashes, and cheerfully dishonoured the past in the name of the future. It was based on conflict, whereas the imaginary of our period is concerned with negotiations, links and coexistence. We no longer try to make progress thanks to conflict and clashes, but by discovering new assemblages, possible relations between distinct units, and by building alliances between different partners. Like social contracts, aesthetic contracts are seen for what they are: no one expects the Golden Age to be ushered in on this earth, and we

are quite happy to create *modus vivendi* that make possible fairer social relations, more dense ways of life, and multiple, fruitful combinations of existence. By the same criterion, art no longer tries to represent utopias; it is trying to construct concrete spaces [...]

### **The Criterion of Coexistence (Works and Individuals)**

Gonzalez-Torres' art gives a central role to negotiation and to the construction of a shared habitat. It also contains an ethics of the gaze. To that extent, it belongs within a specific history: that of artworks that make the viewer conscious of the context in which he or she finds himself/herself (the happenings and 'environments' of the 1960s, site-specific installations).

At one Gonzalez-Torres exhibition, I saw visitors grabbing handfuls of sweets and cramming as many of them as they could into their pockets: they were being confronted with their own social behaviour, fetishism and acquisitive worldview... Others, in contrast, did not dare to take the sweets, or waited until those next to them took one before doing likewise. The 'candy spill' works thus raise an ethical problem in a seemingly anodyne form: our relationship with authority, the use museum attendants make of their power, our sense of proportion and the nature of our relationship with the artwork.

To the extent that the latter represents an opportunity for a sensory experience based upon exchange, it must be subject to criteria analogous with those on which we base our evaluation of any constructed social reality. The basis of today's experience of art is the *co-presence of spectators before the artwork*, be it actual or symbolic. The first question we should ask when we find ourselves in the presence of an artwork is:

Does it allow me to exist as I look at it or does it, on the contrary, deny my existence as a subject and does its structure refuse to consider the Other? Does the space-time suggested or described by this artwork, together with the laws that govern it, correspond to my real-life aspirations? Does it form a critique of what needs critique? If there was a corresponding space-time in reality, could I live in it?

These questions do not relate to an excessively anthropomorphic vision of art. They relate to a vision that is quite simply *human*; to the best of my knowledge, artists intend their work to be seen by their contemporaries, unless they regard themselves as living on borrowed time or believe in a fascist-fundamentalist version of history (time closing over its meaning and origins). On the contrary, those artworks that seem to me to be worthy of sustained interest are the ones that function as interstices, as space-times governed by an economy that goes beyond the prevailing rules for the management of the public. The first thing that strikes me about this generation of artists is that they are inspired by

a concern for *democracy*. For art does not transcend our day to day preoccupations; it brings us face to face with reality through the singularity of a relationship with the world, through a fiction. No one will convince me that an authoritarian art can refer its viewers to any real – be it a fantasy or an accepted reality – other than that of an intolerant society. In sharp contrast artists like Gonzalez-Torres, and now Angela Bulloch, Carsten Höller, Gabriel Orozco or Pierre Huyghe, bring us face to face with exhibition situations inspired by a concern to 'give everyone a chance' thanks to forms that do not give the producer any *a priori* superiority (let's call it divine-right authority) over the viewer, but which negotiate open relations that are not pre-established. The status of the viewer alternates between that of a passive consumer, and that of a witness, an associate, a client, a guest, a co-producer and a protagonist. So we need to pay attention: we know that attitudes become forms, and we now have to realize that forms induce models of sociability.

And the exhibition-form itself is not immune to these warnings: the spread of 'curiosity cabinets' that we have been seeing for some time now, to say nothing of the elitist attitudes of certain actors in the art world, which reveals their holy terror of public spaces and collective aesthetic experimentation, and their love of boudoirs that are reserved for specialists. Making things available does not necessarily make them banal. As with one of Gonzalez-Torres' piles of sweets, there can be an ideal balance between form and its programmed disappearance, between visual beauty and modest gestures, between a childlike wonder at the image and the complexity of the different levels at which it can be read. [...]

### **Relational Aesthetics and Constructed Situations**

The Situationist concept of a 'constructed situation' was intended to replace artistic representation with the experimental realization of artistic energy in everyday environments. Whilst Guy Debord's diagnosis of the spectacular process of production seems pitiless, Situationist theory overlooks the fact that, whilst the spectacle's primary targets are forms of human relations (the spectacle is 'a social relationship between people, mediated by images'), the only way we can analyse and resist it is by producing new modes of human relations.

Now the notion of a situation does not necessarily imply coexistence with my fellows. It is possible to image situations that are 'constructed' for private use, or even situations that deliberately exclude others. The notion of a situation reintroduces the unities of time, place and action in a theatre that does not necessarily involve a relationship with the Other. Now, artistic practice always involved a relationship with the other; at the same time, it constitutes a relationship with the world. A *constructed situation* does not necessarily

correspond to a *relational world* founded on the basis of a figure of exchange. Is it just a coincidence that Debord divides the temporality of the spectacle into the 'exchangeable time' of labour, ('*the endless accumulation of equivalent intervals*') and the 'consumable time' of holidays, which imitates the cycles of nature but is at the same time no more than a spectacle '*to a more intense degree*'. The notion of exchangeable time proves here to be purely negative: the negative element is not the exchange as such – exchange is a factor in life and sociability – but the *capitalist forms of exchange* that Debord identifies, perhaps wrongly, with interhuman exchange. Those forms of exchange are born of the 'encounter' that takes place in the form of a contract between an accumulation of capital (the employer) and available labour-power (the factory or office workers). They do not represent exchange in the absolute sense, but a historical form of production (capitalism): labour time is therefore not so much 'exchangeable time' in the strong sense of the terms, as time that can be *bought* in the form of a wage. An artwork that forms a 'relational world' or a social interstice can update Situationism and reconcile it, in so far as that is possible, with the world of art. [...]

### **The Behavioural Economy of Contemporary Art**

'How can you bring a classroom to life as though it were an artwork?' asks Guattari.<sup>7</sup> By asking this question, he raises the ultimate aesthetic problem. How is aesthetics to be used, and can it possibly be injected into tissues that have been rigidified by the capitalist economy? Everything suggests that modernity was, from the late nineteenth century onwards, constructed on the basis of the idea of 'life as a work of art'. As Oscar Wilde put it, modernity is the moment when 'art does not imitate life; life imitates art'. Marx was thinking along similar lines when he criticised the classical distinction between *praxis* (the act of self-transformation) and *poiêsis* (a 'necessary' but servile action designed to produce or transform matter). Marx took the view that, on the contrary, *praxis* constantly becomes part of *poiêsis*, and vice versa. Georges Bataille later built his work on the critique of 'the renunciation of life in exchange for a function' on which the capitalist economy is based. The three registers of 'science', 'fiction' and 'action' destroy human life by *calibrating* it on the basis of pre-given categories.<sup>8</sup> Guattari's ecosophy also postulates that the totalization of life is a necessary preliminary to the production of subjectivity. For Guattari, subjectivity has the central role that Marx ascribes to labour, and that Bataille gives to *inner experience* in the individual and collective attempt to reconstruct the lost totality. 'The only acceptable goal of human activities,' writes Guattari, 'is the production of a subjectivity that constantly self-enriches its relationship with the world'.<sup>9</sup> His definition is ideally applicable to the practices of the

contemporary artists who create and stage life-structures that include working methods and ways of life, rather than the concrete objects that once defined the field of art. They use time as a raw material. Form takes priority over things, and flows over categories: the production of gestures is more important than the production of material things. Today's viewers are invited to cross the threshold of 'catalysing temporal modules', rather than to contemplate immanent objects that do not open on to the world to which they refer. The artists go so far as to present themselves as worlds of ongoing subjectivation, or as the *models* of their own subjectivity. They become the terrain for privileged experiences and for the synthetic principle behind their work. This development prefigures the entire history of modernity. In this behavioural economy, the art object acquires a *deceptive aura*, an agent that resists its commodified distribution or becomes its mimetic parasite.

In a mental world where the ready-made is a privileged model to the extent that that it is a collective production (the mass-produced object) that has been assumed and recycled in an autopoietic visual device, Guattari's theoretical schema help us to conceptualize the mutation that is under way in contemporary art. That was not however their author's primary goal, as he believed that aesthetics must, above all, accompany societal mutations and inflect them. The poetic function, which consists in reconstructing worlds of subjectivation, might therefore be meaningless, unless it too can help us to overcome 'the ordeals by barbarism, by mental implosion and chaotic spasm that loom on the horizon and to transform them into unforeseeable riches and *jouissances*.'<sup>10</sup>

- 1 Louis Althusser, 'The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter', in *Philosophy of the Encounter. Later Writings 1978-1987*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006) 185.
- 2 Michel Maffesoli, *La Contemplation du monde* (Paris: Grasset, 1993).
- 3 See, *inter alia*, Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, Spring 1979; Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Artwork from 1966 to 1972: A Cross-Reference Book of Information on Core Aesthetic Boundaries* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).
- 4 Félix Guattari, *La Révolution moléculaire* (Paris: 10/18, 1977) 22.
- 5 Franz West's *Passtücke*, or 'adaptives', are uncategorizable works made of papier mâché, plaster, gauze and paint, intended for participants to interact with. West compares them to 'prostheses'. [Ed.]
- 6 The phrase 'making tomorrows sing' alludes to the expression 'vers des lendemains qui chante': the last words written by the Communist Gabriel Peri before he was shot by the Gestapo – and the title of his posthumously published autobiography. [Translator]
- 7 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmose*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1992, 183.

- 8 Georges Bataille, 'L'Apprenti sorcier' in Denis Hollier, ed., *Le Collège de sociologie*, Paris: Gallimard 'Idées', 1979, 36–60.
- 9 Guattari, *op. cit.*, 38.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 187.

Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 1998), 14–18, 30–33, 45–8, 58–60, 88–9, 106–8. Translated by David Macey, 2006.