VISUAL ART AND EDUCATION IN AN ERA OF DESIGNER CAPITALISM

Deconstructing the Oral Eye

jan jagodzinski

Education, Psychoanalysis, and Social Transformation

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Education, Psychoanalysis, and Social Transformation

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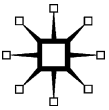

VISUAL ART AND EDUCATION IN AN ERA OF DESIGNER CAPITALISM

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2010 978-0-230-61879-4

First published in 2010 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

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ISBN 978-0-230-61880-0 ISBN 978-0-230-11360-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230113602

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jagodzinski, Jan, 1948–
Visual art and education in an era of designer capitalism : deconstructing the oral eye / Jan Jagodzinski.
p. cm.—(Education, psychoanalysis, social transformation)

1. Visual perception—Psychological aspects. 2. Visual perception—Social aspects. 3. Visual sociology. 4. Art—Philosophy. I. Title.

BF241.J33 2010
701—dc22 2010008777

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

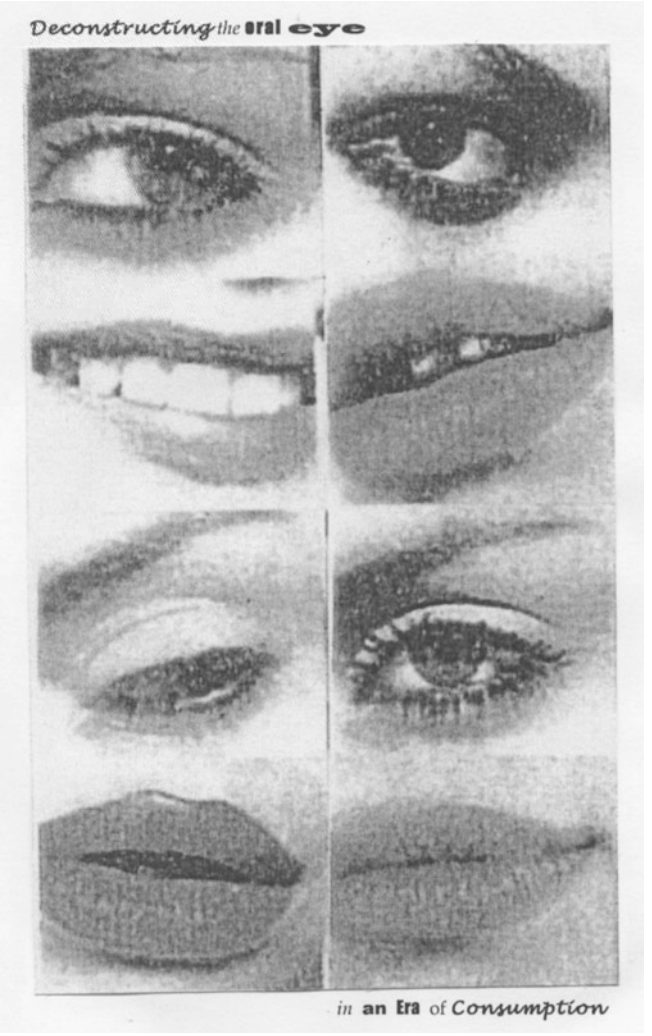
Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: October 2010

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is dedicated to

Brigitte . . . always Brigitte
and to Harry Garfinkle, whose genius always remains with me
and to my mom, who at 86 remains an indomitable spirit



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Acknowledgments

I owe a very special thanks to Lesley Morgan Johnson for her amazing front cover, as well as to a special class of students who did the "Barbie" illustrations that appear as section dividers throughout the book, many of which deconstruct designer capitalism. Many thanks especially to all the class members. I wish I could have included all the interesting variations, but that proved not to be possible. To honor all the willing participants who shared their ideas with me, I wish to thank Lachelle Farris, Emily Hill, Lesley Johnson, Veronica Juarez, Karly Lagore, Stephanie Lavine, Melanie Liles, Sarah Lun, Shawn Mackey, Jen Martineau, Christina Molnar, Glori Palmer, Nadia Poelzer, Natalie Pool, Steph Richmond, Kyla Satermo, Shelly Seifridt, Kristie Seright, Nekole Thauvette, Lindsay Twerdoclib, Teresa Wallsten, and Ken Yau—the Advanced Professional Team (APT) of 2010.

Introduction

Aestheticization of the Wor(l)d Picture

E. J. Dijksterhuis (1961), the great Dutch historian, once characterized modernization as the "mechanization of the world picture." Secularization—brought on by mathematics and the utilitarian pragmatic mind-set of merchant and laissez-faire capitalism—eventually began to infiltrate all aspects of life as capitalism continued its aggressive developments. We can say that postmodernity, which shapes the information society under designer capitalism, has brought about an 'aestheticization of the *wor(l)d picture*.' The signifier as word and its signified as image or picture—word and image together as a post-hieroglyphic *sign*—are presented "seamlessly" together as various forms of simulacra—such as xenomoney, which made its appearance in financial capitalism in 1973. Money refers only to itself as a sign of exchange. I use the portmanteau term 'wor(l)d' to refer to both 'world' (globalization) and 'word' to indicate the aestheticization of the image as the manipulation of the sign through de(sign), with the prefix 'de' enabling the play of images through perceptual games of privation, removal, separation, negation, intensity, and reversal—the 'surrealization' and serialization of appearances. Hyperreality of image and sound, as hystericized by Jean Baudrillard, has become business as usual in postindustrial designer capitalism. Spectators living in globalized world centers are caught within an information age of consumerism, resulting in a new machinic assemblage of the synopticon—the panopticon has been inverted.

The metaphor of the *oral* eye of the subtitle of this book refers not only to the act of consumption, the isolation of the eyeball as counted by networks to hold spectators affectively hostage through spectacular entertainment, but by extension also to the *aural* ear, which is coextensively tuned to soundscapes that vibrate the body's molecular being. The intrarelations of the homonyms oral/aural, as the 'oralization' of word, image, and sound pervade and define our mediated global order. The other allusion, to the I/eye, should be apparent.

This is a rather ambitious book, for it seeks to develop and support artistic and educational practices that remain faithful to the continuation of a radical attempt to disturb the consumerism of the eye, which de(sign)er capitalism captures through 'tele-images,' as facilitated by tele-technologies that Derrida (2002, 3) named through two neologisms: "artifactuality" and "actuvirtuality." These terms point to the seemingly vanishing gap that exists between the actual construction of the image and its virtual reception through the imperative of 'live' transmissions. This machinated mode of screen production is facilitated by the technicity[1] of digitalization, the Internet (Facebook), and surveillance capture of information to identify a 'calculable' body (see Andrejevic 2004).

Capturing Affect

Jonathan Beller (2006) has identified the capture of the oral eye as a "cinematic mode of production," understood not just in the popular sense of a cinematic experience, but also in the sense of "the manner in which production generally becomes organized in such a way that one of its moments *necessarily* passes through the visual, that is, that it creates an image that (while the tip of the iceberg) is essential to the general management, organization, and movement of the [capitalist] economy" (10, original emphasis). Beller brilliantly argues that this expropriation of the visual leads to a generalized expropriation of *attention*, what Siegfried Kracauer (1995/1927) and Walter Benjamin (2008/1936) referred to as "distraction,"[2] thereby opening up an "attention theory of value." This extraction of 'attention' becomes a productive value for capital in the way it seeks the distributive 'presence' of the (interactive) viewer. This "cinematic mode of production" has been supplemented and to some degree supplanted in its effective capture of attention by an interpassive-interactive paradox as presented by 'new' media, best exemplified by the paradigm case of the video game and interactive mobile screen media (iPhone, Wii gaming technology) that are shaping the posthuman sensorial condition. Perhaps it is better to rename the process as a capitalist "screen mode of production." The word 'screen' has a rich etymology and genealogy. As Kress (2003) has argued, we have moved from the page to the screen—the screen referring to protection as well as projection. Beller asks precisely the question that captures the difficulty addressed in this book and the challenge that a critical art and its education would entail:

> Could we rethink the hold of the cinema [the production of desire through the image] on our eyes by producing another way of thinking about it which at once takes seriously the *sublime*, the internalized relation of the cinema

> with money, the function of the cinema as *time machine*, and yet which does not reproduce aesthetics or philosophy or repeat the work of ideology critique or of psychoanalysis? (Beller 1994, para. 51, emphasis added)

This is a tall order, which I hope to tackle.

Beller, following Walter Benjamin, connects the emergence of the 'aura' with the modification of the sensorium brought about by the development of the metropolis, where a changed relationship to the visual object occurs between the perceiver and the perceived. This occurs in relation to the various forms of looking: from early cinema to the movement of the *flâneur* and *flâneuse* around the arcades, *grand magasins,* amusement parks, and cafes of Paris, caught by the lure of the *vitrines*.[3] Benjamin's *dialectical thesis* characterizes the economy of modernization. It is minimally anthropological where production and reproduction lead to *modification* as new conditions emerge from such transformation. To leave the mediation of technicity out of this account would be to discount the way in which hominization is itself shaped by technics, which has been the important preoccupation of Bernard Stiegler[4] (1998, 2009), as will become more and more evident. The perception of the aura eventually becomes "the subjective experience of the objective commodification of vision" (Beller 1994, para. 17). The circulation of the commodity brings about a new value system imposed on goods that is attributable to Baudrillard's (1998) Second Order of Simulacra, made possible through the electric technologies of reproduction.

The fetishistic character of objects, attributable to the First Order of Simulacra, depended on originality, uniqueness, and authenticity. The frame that surrounds an *objet d'art* was meant to take it *out* of circulation so that the desire to contemplate its transcendence, as that which is beautiful, becomes possible.[5] The aura that surrounds the objet d'art, identifiable by the gilded frame, for instance, makes it untouchable, utopian, and transcendental, and it is usually housed in special institutions—such as churches, cathedrals, and museums. Such religiosity and creation of awe can help describe the body's affective surrender to such objects (and people) to the point of weeping and crying, an emotional state in which the viewer is overwhelmed by the object's (or person's) presence.[6] Beauty flips over into sublimity only when the perceiver is no longer able to maintain the frame. When the image begins to dominate, a reversal has taken place. The gap between subject and object is where the negotiation or transference of the aura takes place and where questions of desire and surrender to the image or possession of it arise. The injunction against touching in churches, cathedrals, and museums ensures that this gap or distance is maintained. The dissolution of this frame, or rather its repositioning

through the tele-technologies into the 'frameless' image of digitalization, marks another approach to art as 'new media' and its education in which touching the screen is often encouraged.

The frame's function begins to change with the Second Order of Simulacra, which can be identified with ideology proper, as institutionally defined by the state, articulated by Althusser's (1996, 1997) 'structuralist' reading of Marx. Monopoly/cartel capitalism at the turn of the century reached a position, to use a Hegelian term, 'for-itself' (*für sich*), from its (often misnamed) earlier laissez-faire 'in-itself' (*an sich*) status (1880–1918).[7] From the state being a 'neutral' player (as conveyed through Adam Smith's notion of the 'invisible hand'), it now becomes, in Alfred Chandler's (1977) terms, a 'visible hand' aiding and abetting capitalist expansion. Between World War 1 and World War 2 was when Walter Benjamin's thought matured, as the critique of what was the 'first' phase of the 'society of the spectacle,' the phase of phantasmagoria,[8] which the Situationalists, led by Guy Debord, developed. Interpellation, as Althusser develops it, still holds here, since the belief in an 'original' has not been fully weakened. This happens when capital moves into its latter phase after World War 2, into what Baudrillard (1993, 50–86) terms the Third Order of Simulacra: the move from capitalism of production to that of consumption; from electric to electronic technologies; from the movement-image to the time-image, in Deleuzian (1986, 1989) terms. The shift is essentially from closed to open systems of thought, from 'objectivity' (positivism) to 'subjectivity' ('emic' sciences and pluralism of cultural studies), from internationalism to the globalism of trading cartels, from ideology to 'postideology,' from Marxism to post-Marxism, from proletariat to 'multitude,' from snail mail to Internet, from analog to digital, and so on.

Above all, perhaps, this is the ontological shift from depth to surface—or, I will argue, from the dominance of space to its supplantation by *time* that comes with the cinematic mode of production, which manifests as moments of reorganization of libidinal flows of matter. Zygmunt Bauman's (2000, 2003, 2005) 'liquid oeuvre' addresses the 'post' status of modernism, where he develops the concepts of 'liquid life,' 'liquid love' and 'liquid modernity' to capture the constant becoming of things. Changes in social conditions seem to outpace any possibility of members consolidating habits and routines. Time becomes theorized as a liquid. Speed matters, not duration; 'liquid life' now becomes a consuming life. To put all of this in another way—globalization is the flattening of the world into a new cartography. As Henri Bergson had already prophetically theorized at the turn of the twentieth century, the postmodern sensorium has become a world of images.

Commodity of Desire

Commodity fetishism, as productively reorganized within monopoly capitalism through reproductive technologies, generates lack (*manque*), in the Lacanian sense, as the "desire of the Other" (social order). It does this through *magic* (an unexplainable event) and *suggestion* (hypnosis), which affect the subliminal self; these are the two traits mainstream Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis has largely abandoned.[9] The processes of structuring and interpellating the mass-psyche in this period are performed through the form of the montage, as Sergei Eisenstein developed it. The regime of the image, defined as the conflict between two shots that forces the spectator to think its synthesis, is meant to 'educate/discipline,' within the *proletkult* aesthetic.[10] Like the reflexology of Taylorism and Pavlovism, as the capitalist and communist equivalents, respectively, the ambivalence between educating and disciplining the body is meant to mobilize action, to move the *body* into praxis, but through 'presentation' rather than representation; to generate belief or what Beller (2006) calls "the *productive value of human attention*" (108, original emphasis), thereby achieving transformation—creating 'history' as such by manufacturing the event. "In our conception a work of art is first and foremost a tractor ploughing over the audience's psyche in a particular class context" (Eisenstein *Writing,* 62; in Beller 2006, 99). Eisenstein's film *The Strike* is exemplary in its dialectical method. Dialectics as mediation "is today actualized as media" (Beller 2006, 138). In the truest sense, *the screened image as impressed in/on our body's imaginary is* the *vanishing mediator.* It does its job at the level of attention, where memory and affect coalesce.

The question that will emerge later in this book is whether the shift to a *nondialectical* tradition, as developed by Deleuze|Guattari, might provide an alternative development to the Marxist-Hegelian philosophical tradition that has pervaded critical cultural thought: Marx, the social Darwinist of historical change versus Nietzsche's *Übermensch,* signifying a historical 'Messiah' yet to appear, where the will to power replaces God to reverse the master-slave relationship; where Zarathustra, as a prophet of the new age, challenges a Christianity that fetishizes a utopian heaven rather than a 'grounding' in the here and now. This is an 'aristocratic' approach, like that of Deleuze, where the message serves only those who want to hear—it is not proselytizing in its approach. I will later develop this as an *avant-garde without authority.* Yet the dangers of this approach are obvious, for was it not Benito Mussolini who brought Marx and Nietzsche together, fashioning himself as the 'superman,' the Messiah that had come via the National Socialist Party in Italy that was to meet the crisis of capitalism (Pierson 2001, 23–25)? If Marx is too 'communist' in his redemptive Utopianism,

then Nietzsche is too 'individualistic' in his. Indeed, they were contemporaries. There is a fork in the road that persists to this day as to what direction the critical spirit is to be kept alive that stems from their trajectories.

Commodity fetishism in the Second Order of Simulacra shifts desire onto the mass-produced object, whereas the copy still derives its lure from an *original* that anchors its many possibilities and innovations. Deleuze|Guattari's (1987, 167–191) discussion of *faciality*, especially the close-up of the affect-image, as developed by the Hollywood 'star' system of divas, would be an obvious example of Second-Order Simulacra ideology. The 'star' amasses transferential and transcendental 'light' not only from fans, but also from being projected on the 'big' screen. Objects take on a new, sublime dimensionality, and a new force forms an idealized gaze. There is an accumulation or accretion of memory of the 'stars' image simply because of the amount of distributed exposure he or she gets through the available media outlets. This technology directly targets the 'suggestive (optical) unconscious,' which becomes hypnotically entranced by the early screen faces of Greta Garbo (as Roland Barthes (1972/1957) once discussed in terms of an absolute state of flesh), Marlene Dietrich, June Allyson, and Ava Gardner; the moving image in general is made possible by the mechanical 'kino eye' that Dziga Vertov so enthusiastically promoted as the experiment of a new form of image production freed from both literature and the theater stage. The link between design and technology to commodity fetishism again brings in the seeming *magic* of unexplainable events, the specter of ghosts, caused not only by accidents in early photography as afterimages, as well as animated filmic sequences where objects seem to move by themselves (like the chairs unfolding in the opening of Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*), but also by recording instruments that leave the voice disembodied, sounding hauntingly strange and uncanny.

While the vitrines displayed the mass-produced *objects* that could not be touched, which were lit up for presentation, even live mannequins posed in windows to show off the latest fashions. This remained primarily a generalized feminine space/time. The peep shows in erotic arcades, however, were reserved for men. Peep shows make the act of looking conditional on payment, as the image displayed behind the vitrine now becomes a commodity one has to pay for just to look; "The image of the commodity becomes the commodity," as Roberts (1991, 223) puts it.[11] The commodity itself becomes redundant, since the goal of such customers is masturbation rather than actual contact or coitus. The ephemeral image generates surplus value that advertising thrives on as *the* capitalist art form.[12] Putting money into the slot so that the sexual image is exposed becomes the very paradigm of libidinal economy. The expenditure of

capital and the expenditure of male desire (ejaculation) are relationally calculated. *It is the dematerialized image that becomes the commodity, with the movie screen becoming the counterpart structuring technology of the dematerialized visual commodity image.* It is here, of course, where advertising becomes an embedded capitalist practice, establishing itself after World War 1. "[B]y 1925 advertising was the primary industry, capable of setting the cultural agenda of radio, film, and later, television as well" (Wicke 1988, 15). Within monopoly imperialist capitalism, the frame, like the Model-T, now becomes a standardized screen, a point emphasized by Deleuze (1986) when he maintains that "[t]he frame ensures a deterritorialization of the image" (14–15). It becomes possible to reduce every image into an exchange value simply through the various developing technological camera techniques that Vertov, for example, had already explored: close-up, extreme close-up, morphing techniques, long shots, dolly shots, and the combination of close-up to cut to establish distance.

The 'society of the spectacle,' as Debord theorized it, emerged between the wars (ca. 1918–1939). It was a time of both capitalist and communist crisis that included the Stock Market Crash (1929), the Great Depression (1929–1933), and Stalinism. Besides the advertisement industry, which established itself by 1925 and where the question of capturing attention was of central concern, there were a number of other important technological developments that addressed Benjamin's thoughts on the aura: 1927 was the year that television was perfected, the year sound film was developed, as well as the year when production, distribution, and exhibition were integrated in the film industry (Crary 1989, 1999). "The introduction of sync sound transformed the nature of *attention* that was demanded of the viewer" (Crary 1989, 102, original emphasis). The hypnotic voice and the gaze made possible through the recording technologies furthered the capture of attention. The year 1927 was also when Benjamin began his Arcades Project, while Henri Bergson—who becomes such a key figure for Deleuze's nondialectical approach to perception—received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1928, although his philosophy was fading. The importance of memory for perception that Bergson introduced is of overriding significance when it comes to the afterimages that persist in the commerce of commodities.

Capitalist Iconoclasm

It is useful at this moment to make mention of Ann Kibbey's (2005) intervention when discussing "the theory of the image" within capitalism. Her key thesis that Calvinist iconoclasm formed the antecedent event to the commodity fetishism of consumerist capitalism draws a line

of disagreement with and a critique of Jean Baudrillard, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and Laura Mulvey. Kibbey's key point is that the performative act of transubstantiation that magically 'transforms' ordinary bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ does so through the trope of metonymy, which does *not* require any form of displacement (like metaphor);therefore, there is no altering of shapes. Such a performative act is paradigmatic of the commodity fetish. Upon consumption of the commodity, one can join the 'corporate' body in communion, so to speak. Metonymic disruption does not generate an image; it is the *figura* of the substance that radiates the spiritual presence rather than the quality of the object. Kibbey maintains that Baudrillard's "precession of the simulacra" thesis as a form of apostasy is caught ultimately by his own nostalgia for the loss of "basic reality," while Barthes's thesis in *Camera Lucida* reverses what he wrote in *Mythologies*, wherein second-order signification is referred to as myth. Instead, the photographic image becomes reified as "the person's soul or essence" (31). And, quite rightly following Goux's (1991) analysis, Kibbey labels Lacan a hard-core iconoclast, while Mulvey's groundbreaking psychoanalytic thesis, for Kibbey, inflects iconoclasm with sexuality, namely the femme fatale and the fetishized body of the 'good' woman.

What escapes Kibbey's analysis is the very obvious and elementary point that Calvin's iconoclasm by way of metonymy has a long history for Lacan when he was developing his theory of desire. As a metonymic phenomenon, desire reaches as far back as Plato's *Symposium,* where Alcibiades (a handsome young man) perceives Socrates (who was old and by all standards 'ugly' in looks) as possessing the *agalma*, the hidden jewel inside that ugly casing, that Alcibiades lacked—namely, knowledge. As an object *cause of desire*, the transference (secular transubstantiation) that Alcibiades invests in Socrates shows Lacan that the magnetic force of adornment (which Socrates rejects and denies) is imaginary and fetishistic.[13] The apostate from the Protestant religion no longer would see bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ but as just ordinary substances drained of their magic; that is, drained of desire. Gold turns into shit. This is precisely the same psychic mechanism that is at work when tribal statues, some elaborately carved and painted, are then 'used up' in some ritual act of exorcism and shorn of magical power, to be simply discarded (and later picked up by tourists or archeologists and thereby resignified in museums, antique stores, and import/export sales). Anyone who has watched *Antiques Roadshow* on PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) sees this constantly happening. What is someone's trash becomes instant gold, provided there is a buyer. The object's worth can only exist within the hype that is bestowed upon it as a 'sacred' secular object, to use an oxymoron.

It has obviously been the genius of Slavoj Žižek (1989) to present the fetishistic object as a "sublime object of ideology." Ideology regulates the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real psychic orders. The fantasy of the Imaginary sustains it through forms of *jouissance* as well as affect. These two forms of libidinal energy are *not* to be equated. The closest Lacanian term for affect is the drive (*Trieb*), but feminine *jouissance*, following Luce Irigaray (1993), may be closer, since this is a difference formed in multiplicity. Her concept of "the sensible transcendental" paradoxically fuses mind with body, yet retains women's difference. It is closer to Gilles Deleuze's "transcendental empiricism" as thoughtfully explored by Tamsin (1999). I will argue later that this is only half the story. What is often suppressed in Žižek's oeuvre is not the object cause of desire but the *a*bject, where the transferential investment is not between the Real and the Symbolic but between the Real and the Imaginary. There are two forms of the Real, but *the psychic Imaginary remains common to both*. I develop this tension throughout the book as a 'parallax' view between the presymbolic and the postsymbolic Real. What is the more difficult task when it comes to commodity fetishism is what supports the *belief* in the exchange value of goods. What sustains the fantasy, and why should it or should it not *be* sustained? Why would anyone pay, for example, several million dollars for Liberace's piano (he owned thirty-nine, only one of which was the famous rhinestone piano that sparkled) that looks like any other piano?

Baudrillard's final stage of the simulacrum is its 'pure' form, which is a form of *consumptive becoming*—what, in this book, I refer to as *design*. The forms of design in the capitalist sense are characterized by the imposition of human models through various forms of rationalism and instrumentalism and a general coding by means of signs for meaning, along with mediated surveys, so that a prefabricated simulation with a factored end in sight is achieved. Baudrillard's idea that there is a perpetual (re)doubling of the sign so that there is no 'de(sign)ation,' no referent, becomes possible when capitalism presents itself in the *für Alle* (for all) position. This is a (post)ideological state of affairs where social class, as Baudrillard outrageously claimed, has disappeared, by which he meant, on one level at least, that it seemed that one's position relative to the production processes in terms of class and status seemed rather trivial compared to the hype that everyone had access to prestigious consumer goods if they had the money; the institutionalization of state-wide lottos, available credit, and more gambling casinos and video lottery terminals assured that such hype sustained itself. High-ranking call girls and their pimps, and porno stars and their producers, could drive luxury cars and own mansions as well. But this is the frailest of arguments, given that designer capitalism of the simulacrum manages these signs to create new fantasies that keep

the socioeconomic arrangements in place (MacCannell and MacCannell 1993). Baudrillard's theory of *seduction,* written in 1979 to meet the challenge of these surface 'appearances' and aimed at feminine difference as championed by Luce Irigaray, did not wash well. Seduction was but a game, yet another clever way to reinsert masculinity (Plant 1993).

Spectacular Tensions

If the montage shaped attention and affect in this earlier period of the spectacle as cinematic movement, then it is Cubism in the capitalist development and Constructivism in the parallel Russian communist development that does so in this stage of the spectacle under the signifier of *collage*.[14] The collage technique was its ability to capture the unfolding spectacle of the metropolis by juxtaposing space and time next to and in front of each other.[15] The assemblage seems to do the same work as collage, but constructs space in three-dimensional form. It seems more appropriate for what was developing in Russia concurrently, although the Futurists used this term as well. The question is to what extent such assemblage is 'machinic.' Deleuze (1986, 80–83) makes the claim that Dziga Vertov's kino eye offered a 'montage' effect that demonstrated a machinic assemblage. An *inhuman* perspective is constructed that is able "to carry perception into things, to put perception into matter, so that any point whatsoever in space itself perceives all the points on which it acts, or which act on it" (81). Vertov's montage 'style' sets up an "empty place" from which can be observed what constructs the 'human.' Such an "empty place" is without ideology; it anticipates the multiplicity of differences, which will then be ideologically constituted into statements of truth. But how does one tell which styles enable such deanthropomorphization to take place, enabling the unthought and those that recuperate it ideologically? Beller (2006) makes the case that Eisenstein did the latter, Vertov the former.

Some of this same difficulty emerges with the question of spectacularity. Debord (1977, sec. 63–65) made a distinction in this first phase of the spectacle between what he termed 'concentrated' and 'diffused' types. The concentrated spectacle characterized Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and Maoist China. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao—figures who were larger than life, as their monumental portraits were meant to convey—guaranteed national cohesion and a totalitarian mentality. Debord took the United States as the model of the diffused spectacle, which was associated with the abundance of commodities and an undisturbed development of modern capitalism—the "grandeur of commodity production in general" (sec. 65). But it seems to me that this distinction can only hold as tendencies during this prewar time, since Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were equally

strong paternal figures who could just as easily fit the 'authoritarian personality' type, as T. W. Adorno and fellow researchers argued in their 1950 reflective summation of leadership during the war. After World War 2, the spectacle became "integrated" in Debord's (1990, VIII, 21–23) view when he wrote a reflective correction and updating of his original thesis.

It seems to me to be precisely during this interwar period that the *fundamental antagonism* between art & design in modernism that is paradoxically embedded in the Kantian *Critiques*, which I explore in chapter two, comes to a head between the reception of Cubism in Europe and New York and mid-1920s Constructivism in Russia and its eventual importation into America via Naum Gabo's "Realist Manifesto" written in 1920 and co-signed by Antoine Pevsner. It is the antinomy between (capitalist) art and (communist) production that appears to repeat an impossible reconciliation within artistic and utilitarian practice. The Constructivist critique of Western art was in terms of Marxist commodity fetishism. The idea was to generate a new proletarian culture with practices integrated into industrial production and collective reception—*proletkult*. The new society was to be developed through Vkhumetas ('high grade art-technical workshops') and Inkhuk ('Institute of Artistic Culture') via an avant-garde of industrial designers, engineers, and architects who were to produce revolutionary functional designs of practical use. Constructivist artists such as Tatlin, El Lissitzky, and Rodchenko were influenced by the utopian avant-garde theories of both Saint Simone and Marx attempting to wed art to life (Rose 1984). Hal Foster (1990) discusses this issue within Russian Constructivism, which was an overdetermined response to art as conditioned by a bourgeois culture of individual production, reception, ideal taste, and the patron and open-market system. Could Tatlin, who tried to find a path between art and production and whose own path took him in the direction of synthesizing artistic and utilitarian thought through a "truth to materials," or Rodchenko, whose own path was a synthesis of the ideological and the formal, be considered performing the same task as Vertov's kino eye? Could any of the Constructivists be conceived as anything other than ideological statements? It's difficult to tell, according to Foster, but the tension that exists between Vertov and Eisenstein repeats itself, in the utopian impulses of the kino eye to "create a new, perfect man" and in the Taylorist impulses that eventually lead to Stalinist social realism as propagated by Zhdanovism. It seems that the productivist side of Constructivism was eventually co-opted and recuperated by the West through Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art, via the Cubist-constructive tradition, while the Bauhaus seemed to have been embroiled by the same fundamental tension between useless art and functionalist design. The more 'mystical figures' such as Johannes

Itten and Paul Klee, who were opposed to Walter Gropius, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the supporters of functional corporate design, were ousted as capitalism moved forward.

Desire of Commodity

Turning to the commodity fetishism of consumerism, which progressively develops with industrial capitalism after World War 2, Baudrillard's Third Order of Simulacra as 'sign value' emerges. The aestheticization of the *art*-commodity becomes established, along with the dominance of Swiss-developed Helvetica, which becomes *the* classical typeface that best represents the corporate look—clean, tight, secure, and modern, boasting over forty corporate logos. Baudrillard, who remained close to the Situationists, gave his controversial talk on Andy Warhol[16] at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1987, calling him the prime representative of the renunciation of art, of its disappearance, by turning commodity into an art form. Only the signature of the artist gives it a differential value within a system of signs. It was Warhol's art factory and his machinelike output that made 'art' part of the sign culture, subject to rules, codes of fashion, and commodification whose value is determined by the market. Warhol seemed to play an endgame as to where art had 'arrived' in the West. It was the neo-Dada Fluxus group (1962–1978) that attempted an anti-aesthetic attitude, like Baudrillard himself, to keep the possibility of art open.[17] It is precisely this Conceptual Art movement in the later 1960s and early 1970s that tried to evade the market trap—unsuccessfully.[18] However, a strand of contemporary art that I shall mention in my later chapters eventually picked up the legacy they left.

Robert Miklitsch (1996, 1998a) attempted to provide an updated 'general economy of commodity fetishism' as classically developed by Marx by drawing on Baudrillard's simulacrum of the sign—calling it "commodity-body-*sign*" (79), where use- and exchange- as well as *sign*-value all come into play.[19] The commodity (exchange value) and the body (use-value) are supplanted by the sign in a 'perverse' economy. In Baudrillard's terms, "The fetishization of the commodity is the fetishization of a product emptied of its concrete substance of labor and subjected to another type of labor, *a labor of signification* that is, of coded abstraction (the production of differences and sign values)" (in Miklitsch 1998a, 78, added emphasis). Whereas Marxist critics (the Frankfurt School and especially Adorno, who with his concept of 'negative dialectics' pushed and radicalized the dialectic to a point of a 'utopian impossibility' in his break with Hegel) stress the primacy of production of the culture industry within a perverse capitalist system, along with their resultant pessimism, the tendency of cultural

studies has been to champion an optimistic cultural-populist movement. The active, resistant, and savvy consumer who is not duped by the culture industry is the hegemonic subject of cultural studies. The two positions are locked in struggle, neither of which seemed to offer a completely satisfactory solution. Miklitsch's (1998a) discussion of Madonna studies that emerged during the early 1990s (99–138) exemplifies both sides of the debate, including some sort of middle ground that confirmed this malaise as having no resolution.[20] Madonna 'is' the commodity; Madonna 'is' postmodernism; Madonna appropriates black and queer culture; Madonna 'liberates' female pleasure. Madonna 'is' a prostitute, it's the way she 'gets off,' and so on.

There is however, another way to look at this. Miklitsch identifies Marx's indifference to *individual consumption*: "'what the laborer consumes for his own pleasure' *beyond* the surplus-value imperatives of the capitalist" (83) is a realm outside the circulation of value during the nascent period of capitalism. It is precisely this realm that the 'labor' of the sign captures through its 'use' value as pleasure and desire. The 'body' part of the sign-value, which Deleuze|Guattari identify and develop through their 'body without organs' (BwO) is recognized by Miklitsch (52–56), but subsequently dismissed (as did Baudrillard).[21] But the recognition of the *body* sets us in a direction different from Žižek's Hegelio-Lacanian position, which distrusts Deleuzian forms of subjectivity, maintaining that Deleuze's Spinozian interpretation simply plays into capitalist forms of subjectivity (Žižek 1993, 216–219; 2004).

Bodily Woes

The worry about the body and its excesses perhaps can be understood as reaching back to Herbert Marcuse's[22] failed attempt to develop a Marxist-Freudian counterrevolution of a new subjectivity in the late 1960s and early 1970s (right around the time of the student protests in 1968, which he influenced), which was to release the accumulative "surplus-repression" of the social order of domination by drawing on the drives (*Triebe*) that had creative potential (as in the *Spieltrieb* [creative drive] of infancy). His critique of "affirmative" bourgeois industrial capitalist culture maintained that art had become a mere commodity wherein the repression inherent in bourgeois liberalism had been sublimated. The reality principle had become the "performance principle" that was in the service of surplus-repression. What was called for was a release of pleasure—the repressive desublimation whereby desire was manipulated and channeled through the culture industry. The libidinal release, often referred to as the sexual revolution, was part of such liberation. The body as an instrument of

pleasure rather than one of labor led to a nonrepressive society, a free and happy society.[23]

Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005), in their *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, tried to show that this very period from 1968 to 1978 was a time of 'artistic critique' and progress, while (in France) the period that followed (1985–1995) was a period of progressive setbacks.[24] Bernard Stiegler (2006) would have none of that. He faults Boltanski and Chiapello not only for failing to recognize Marcuse's contribution, but also for their inability to recognize the role of technicity in capitalist formations. He identifies the 'mistake' Marcuse makes in his belief that it was possible to "uncover a golden age of libido," thereby liberating the "instincts" by supplanting the pleasure principle over the reality principle. Stiegler's entire point is that there is no pure state of desire that can avoid the question of thinking the originary technics, where desire is already enwrapped with species modification. All objects of desire are *pharmaka*—poison and cure—and the paradox is that even use-value as alienated labor can be a source of pleasure: the worker learns to love his chains. As the theorists of libidinal economy (Lyotard, Deleuze, Baudrillard, Pierre Klossowski, Lacan) in the mid-1970s maintained, the perverse social structure of capitalism thrives on liquefying all of the superego barriers—what Žižek is fond of calling "the demand to enjoy!"

The Synoptic Assemblage

Historically, we have moved from a cinematic apparatus of 'exhibitionism'—its attraction was the very display of its own visibility for spectators (Gunning 1990)—to a state where self-conscious constructivist self-reflexivity of the narrative (or lack of) expands spectator pleasure.[25] This extraction of 'attention' becomes a productive value for capital in the way it seeks the distributive 'presence' of the (interactive) viewer, best exemplified by the video game industry. As a corrective, Jonathan Crary's (1999) genealogical study of 'attention' is a valuable contribution in the way he charts the changes of perception—understood broadly as a bodily sensorium—dislodging the hegemony of vision when theorizing spectacular culture, exploring rather the "strategies in which individuals are isolated, separated, and *inhabit time* as [being] disempowered"(3). In designer capitalism, the very aggrandizement of 'attention' through celebrity status and reality shows enables such isolation to be overcome through fandom, sports, spectacular events, Internet dating, and so on.

These interactive and cybernetic machines—not only the video camera and computer, but also the audiovisual recording and playback technologies—have become the new prosthesis integrated into our bodies and minds. They have changed our perceptions of 'reality' through the

modulation of speeds and intensities they create in the affective flows of our bodies. The Foucauldian machinic assemblage of the panopticon has now been inverted: we live in a *synopticon*[26] where the many watch the few on screens and a few watch the many by surveillance (Andrejevic 2004). This new machinic assemblage of technomedia is able to aggrandize 'attention,' that is, affect, through celebrity status, reality shows, and news documentation of various sorts (its encoding and decoding capabilities); at the same time, its surveillance capabilities (especially editing as its recoding capacity) are able to capture and modulate the body into its proper categories and regulate its flows despite the failure of complete seduction. That designer capitalism uses 'bodies' to power this synoptic assemblage by harvesting affect, analogous to the supercomputer in the film *Matrix* harvesting electricity from human movement to run it, should at least give us pause. The transformation of life into value in the form of commodity and capital, as presented through the dystopic vision of Richard Fleischer's film *Soylent Green,* seems equally 'close.' Reality television 'harvests' death as well, not only in the suicides that result when casting members don't make it (Feldinger 2009), some suffering the psychosis of the 'Truman Show Syndrome,' but also in the processes of dying itself (e.g., Lance Loud, Pedro Zamora, and Jade Goody). The interactivity between accumulating affect and then controlling it—spectacle as dramatic narrative and traumatic psychic breakdown—coupled with surveillance makes the synoptic assemblage the perfect desiring-machine for designer capitalism. (The telescreen in George Orwell's *1984* masterpiece also had two-way capabilities.) Desiring and social production find themselves in a renewed circuit for capitalist gains. Wealth can now be extracted once again through what can be called the 'creative turn' of affective labor, where desiring-production and social-production (libido and labor power) are no longer separate spheres: private and public collapse.

Designer Affect

In light of this, art and its education should no longer theorize perception "in terms of immediacy, presence, punctuality" (Crary, 1999, 4)—a phenomenological inheritance[27] that has often led to a residual *visual essentialism*. Instead, it should concentrate on how perception is now being intensified, stretched, slowed down, speeded up, widened, condensed, and so on, through contemporary *interactive* technicities. 'Attention' is now marked by the disjunctive synthesis of both fullness and lack—of seemingly full presence and also that which can't be grasped, what is impossibly absent. The screen holds the ambivalence in its ability to monitor and record movement (surveillance), at the same time being capable of reversing this function as spectacle, holding our attention for its own