

Introducing the *Transit Zone*

In 1999 I undertook my first long haul international flight, travelling from Auckland, New Zealand, to Frankfurt, Germany, via Incheon Airport, Korea. The trip began when I said goodbye to my parents, passed through New Zealand immigration control, then stepped through the security screening processes. I experienced the excitement of the journey's beginning and its diminishment into an act of endurance. I encountered the strange separated spaces of transit waiting in Incheon airport for my connecting flight and I suffered the reduction of my personal environment in the aeroplane. Finally I arrived, exhausted and jetlagged, in Germany. Walking through the arrival doors ended that first traversal through the *Transit Zone*.

This experience signalled a beginning to my as yet un-exhausted wanderlust and my obsession (not to put too fine a point on it) with the environment of international air travel. In 2001 I again travelled internationally, and while transiting in Chicago O'Hare International Airport, I made my first artwork directly exploring the experience of international air travel, *Chicago O'Hare International Airport (1)*, Figure 1. Filmed on the underground moving walkways under the lights and music of Michael Hayden's neon and sound sculpture, *Skys the Limit*, Figure 2, and against curved coloured walls, it embodied my disorientation and fascination with the site. Hayden's sculpture dominates the environment and transforms the architectural immensity of the tunnel into an absorbing and surreal space. During my research I found the same site reproduced in photographs by Martha Rosler, Figure 3, and Ross Rudesch Harley, Figure 4. Chicago O'Hare's tunnel, with its moving walkway and public sculpture, has become emblematic of a certain experience of transit. In a contained space the passenger is transported from one point to another, but distracted from the duration and length of this journey by lights and music. Since I made this first work my engagement with the sites and politics of the *Transit Zone* has evolved and increased. Indeed, over the course of my critical and uncritical engagement with international air travel I have come to realise that I am in good company, artistically, theoretically and passionately.

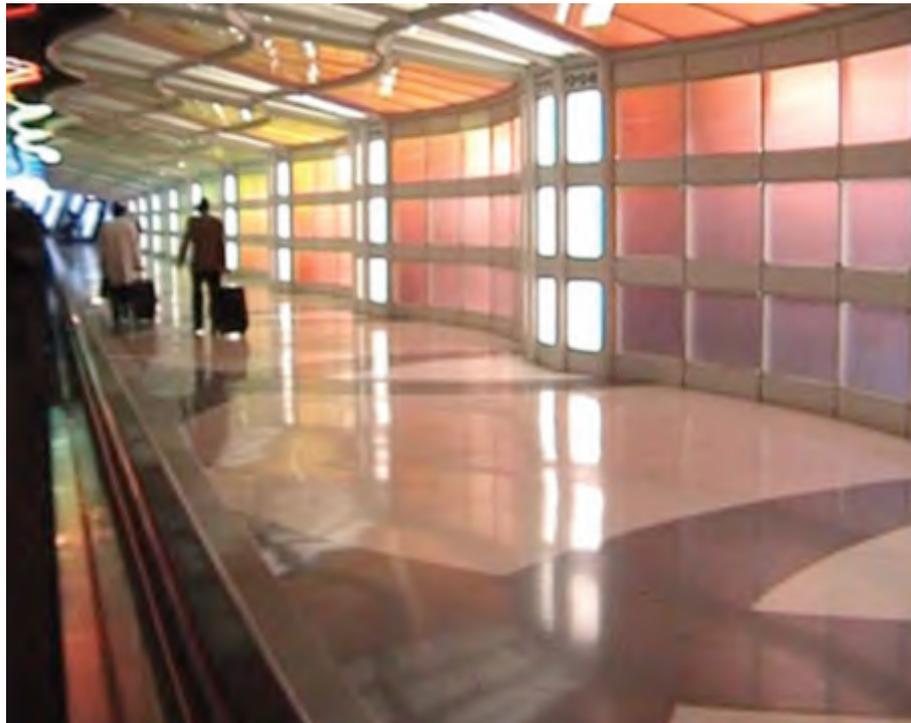


Figure 1: (top) Melissa Laing, *Chicago O'Hare International Airport (I)*, 2001, single channel video loop. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 2: (bottom) Michael Hayden, *Skys the Limit*, 1987, 7,193 sq. metres of mirror reflecting over one mile of neon, controlled by three solid state computers, one hour of electronic music. Chicago: O'Hare International Airport, United Airlines, Terminal 1. Image courtesy the artist.



Figure 3: (top) Martha Rosler, *O'Hare (Chicago)*, 1994, 1998, photograph, in Martha Rosler, *In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.

Figure 4: (bottom) Ross Rudesch Harley, from the *Aviopolis* series, 2002–2005.

Air travel, from its inception, has captured the public imagination. Over one hundred years has passed since the first powered flight was achieved.¹ In that time air travel has become embedded into our culture to the point that it is considered an essential underpinning of global society, a driver of economic growth and an object of cultural investigation. It is within the perception, the reality and the problematic of air travel that I situate my research. More specifically, I focus on the unique nature and requirements of international air travel. The systems of international air travel have evolved out of private enterprise and national interests into a global, interdependent network. This network has impacted on, and been shaped by, nation-state controls on identity, territory and movement. The international agreements and methods of managing this form of travel have created a space for international air travel which is conceptually and physically demarcated from normative social space. This separation has created what I call the *Transit Zone*.

Throughout this thesis I will build up a detailed outline of the *Transit Zone*. However, to begin with I will simply define the *Transit Zone* as a site entered into by the act of crossing over a border located at an international airport. This border crossing, performed by passengers (and flight staff), shifts them legally and conceptually out of nation-state territory. The passenger does not re-enter nation-state territory until they re-cross another border on arrival. In transit they remain outside the nation-state. The distance the passenger travels collapses into the space and time between two border processing events, into and out of the *Transit Zone*. The physical and legal separation of the passenger from the normative space of the nation-state enables nation-state control over the international movement of people via air.

This same separation creates a unique and contained environment inside which logistical processes, distraction tools and control systems can be identified and discussed. The physical sites the passenger occupies, on the airside of the airport and inside the aeroplane, coupled with the

¹ It is widely accepted that the first recorded instance of powered flight was on 17 December 1903 by the Wright Brothers in North Carolina.

duration of the experience, creates the environment for transit.² The passenger is filtered into and out of contained sites, directed within them, entertained and encouraged to spend, and within these sites they can experience, conform, resist, fantasise and create new cultural meaning.

Within the *Transit Zone*, there exists a multiplicity of sites and operations that condense, reflect, reveal or invert normative society. In 1967 Michel Foucault presented a lecture, *Of Other Spaces*, in which he expounded the idea of “certain sites that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect.”³ These sites can be classed as either utopias, unreal spaces which present society in either a perfected or inverted form, or heterotopias, real places, formed with the founding of society that represent, contest and invert other sites within the culture in which they are situated. These real places exist outside normative space, while still possessing a concrete form. I argue that the *Transit Zone* is a heterotopia, a real site that has formed alongside contemporary society and reflects on it.

The *Transit Zone's* separation from the normative space of the nation-state functions to both reinforce the nation-state and invert its structures. Foucault insisted that heterotopias “have a function in relation to all the space that remains.”⁴ He compared their function to a mirror, which when gazed upon makes “this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.”⁵ To perceive the structure of nation-state control over territory, citizenship and movement, I use the mirror space of the *Transit Zone*.

Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a way to reflect on society is not unique. The idea of an exception illuminating the general appears in Soren Kierkegaard's argument that:

² “Airside” refers to the secure areas of the airport, including the tarmac.

³ Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 23–24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

The exception explains the general and itself. And when one really wants to study the general, one need only look around for a real exception. It brings everything to light more clearly than the general itself. After a while one becomes disgusted with the endless talk about the general – there are exceptions. If they cannot be explained, then neither can the general be explained. Usually the difficulty is not noticed, since the general is thought about not with passion but only with comfortable superficiality. The exception, on the other hand, thinks the general with intense passion.⁶

Many contemporary issues are thought passionately within and around the *Transit Zone*. Immigration, national defence, international politics, logistics, architecture, social interaction and cultural fantasy become visible through the lens of the *Transit Zone*. I approach these issues by describing four sites, combinations of physical and conceptual systems, which can be analysed to reveal particular facets of the *Transit Zone*.

The first site is concerned with the construction of nation-state territory, population and legal movement. Its physical expression can be found at the border between the *Transit Zone* and the nation-state. However, its conceptual reach is much more extensive, appearing in immigration policy, national law, international covenants, data-sharing practices and the creation of a space external to, yet within, the nation-state system. This site creates the *Transit Zone's* paradoxical position of being excluded from nation-state territory while simultaneously defining it. The second site is premised on the (in)security of civil aviation and is expressed through the varying forms of physical, optical and data-based screening. The striving towards absolute security, and the unachievability of that goal, can be seen in the *Transit Zone* and is a reflection of the prevalence of (in)security discourses in contemporary society. The third site is created by corporate interest within the airport terminal and the aeroplane. It is the site of logistics and sales, of the passenger functioning both as an object or unit of movement and as a desiring purchasing

⁶ Soren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, quoted in Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1985), 15.

subject. This site is often referred to as a non-place, yet, as will be shown in my thesis, in many ways this site has a locus and is individualised. The fourth site is constructed through the imagination – it is made up of the ideas, cultural dreams and responses that have accreted around the site of the *Transit Zone*. These intimate and personal responses transform the *Transit Zone* from a site of function, profit and government control to a vehicle for the construction and realisation of fears, fantasies and rites of passage.

As can be seen by the diversity of subjects I will tackle, the *Transit Zone* is made up of sites which function in juxtaposition despite their conflicting interests. As Foucault argued “the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.”⁷ These sites exist simultaneously, their various needs jostling and competing within one overarching structure.

Within the bounds of the *Transit Zone*, the normative routine of the external world is ruptured, and duration becomes the dominant measure. Foucault asserts that heterotopias either operate by accumulating time or exist as fleeting, transitory sites. Ironically, the *Transit Zone* achieves both these forms of time adjustment: it is a zone of short, intense experiences and accumulated waiting time. “Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time.”⁸

At the beginning of his text Foucault asserted “we are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side by side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.”⁹ In a literal sense the *Transit Zone* is a network that connects points, brings the near and far together and

⁷ Foucault, ‘*Of Other Spaces*,’ 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

enables the dispersal of migrants, tourists and business people. This network reconceives geography, nation-state territory and perception of place, contributing to the creation of global society.

Aspects of aviation appear in music, literature, film, the performing and visual arts reflecting its widespread influence on western society's expectations, interpretations and experiences of the world. Throughout my analysis of the *Transit Zone*, I integrate discussion of specific performance and visual artworks that explore, explain or contest aspects of this site. The artworks reveal or create new meanings and perspectives. Art has a long standing engagement with societal constructs, ethnographic discourses and political systems. "Anthropology and modern art have always shared, in very different ways, a function of cultural critique in relation to forms of Western modern life."¹⁰ Artists, historical and current, engage with the culture in which they exist, as much as they are formed by the culture in which they exist.

The artists I discuss use the site of the *Transit Zone* as a means to segue into broader themes of movement, stasis, observation and imagination within contemporary society. Their approach led me to Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*,¹¹ wherein he uses the photograph as a conceptual device to move his discussion from photography into a meditation on presence, death and his mother. In a metaphorical way I am going to borrow from Barthes' discussion of photography to express the attraction of the sites of air travel. Barthes described his analysis of photography as both an endeavour to "give a name to Photography's essence" and discuss it as "immediately steeped in desire, repulsion, nostalgia, euphoria."¹² I would argue that my interest in the *Transit Zone* stems from a similar desire to pin it down and map it out logically yet discuss it in terms of desire and repulsion. It is a zone that operates through identifiable systems and logics but it also accumulates emotion and fantasy in a way that resists logic. It fascinates and repels, it is traversed in joy and in sorrow. With

¹⁰ George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, 'The Traffic in Art and Culture : An Introduction', in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, eds. George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 30.

¹¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 1993).

¹² *Ibid.*, 20-21.

familiarity these emotions are disregarded, yet they are always potentially present.

In two ways I draw a parallel between Barthes' discussion of photography and the ways artists and theorists have approached the *Transit Zone*. The first is through the way he approaches his subject as a spectator, not an operator. Barthes approaches photography as both someone who is photographed, the observed subject, and someone who looks at photographs, the subject observing, rather than as a photographer, "I possessed only two experiences: that of the observed subject and that of the subject observing."¹³ Likewise, the theorists and artists I discuss come from similar perspectives: as the passenger in transit, the observed subject; and as the critical analyst, the subject observing. Barthes, by refusing to discuss photography from the perspective of the photographer/operator, articulates the photograph's impact, rather than its technological production.

Theorists who write on the systems of international air travel from the perspective of 'operator' focus on how to manage airports, airlines, immigration, security, air traffic and safety. They approach the subject from a different position to that of the observed or observing subject of the passenger, orienting their research towards achieving best possible practice, maximising efficiency, safety, profit and customer satisfaction. In contrast, the subject observed or observing discusses the impact of the *Transit Zone* on themselves and others, as well as the impact of the 'operator's' political, legal and social practices.

The second parallel transfers to the *Transit Zone* Barthes' articulation of how a small detail within a greater whole gives an image an intensity unique to the specific viewer. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes argues that his broad interest in the photographic image constitutes a *studium*, or "a kind of general enthusiastic commitment."¹⁴ He likens the *studium* to inconsequential taste – we look at photographs because we aesthetically appreciate photographs, but in general they do not capture our continuing attention. However, he continues, within the body of

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

photographs that we observe, we encounter personally specific photographs from which a *punctum* arises unasked and grabs our attention. The *punctum* is that aspect of a photograph unique to each viewer, that attracts or distresses them. It is a small detail like the curve of a shoulder, or a pair of shoes present within the greater whole of the photograph. Barthes says the *punctum* “shoots out like an arrow and pierces me.”¹⁵ This arrow is what gives the photograph a life beyond its image; it provokes the viewer to consider the image with intensity, to attempt to understand what it is about the image that ‘pierces’ them.

In my research into theoretical and artistic discussions of the sites and systems of international air travel, I was struck by the diversity of access points that theorists and artists had found to approach the *Transit Zone*. I came to think of the body of moments, spaces, technologies and concepts that make up the interconnected site of international air travel as a *studium*, or area of general interest. Within the *studium* of international air travel, the theorist, artist and passenger periodically encounter their *punctum*, that which punctures the generality of their experience and becomes the pivotal point of their observation. Within this thesis I will discuss both my general interest in the *Transit Zone* and the elements of it which constitute my individual *puncta*.

These *puncta* can be seen most clearly in my artworks through the objects and subjects that repeatedly appear. For example, the airline blanket has long been a personal *punctum* arising out of the aeroplane. Throughout my work I have utilised the airline blanket as a device to discuss air travel. It represents an airline in its specificity, but more than that, it stands in for the comfort and discomfort of flight, the superficial privacy and intimate physical contact of close quarters, the idea of security and the danger of flight. The blanket is a object of retreat and protection. A simple object, but one which has many associations which can be used with great complexity. I have used the airline blanket to create a variety of artworks since 2003, including the sculptures *Harbouring I by Tentline*, 2003, Figure 5, *Harbouring II by Tentline*, 2004, Figure 6, and *Obsessing with the Surface*, 2005, Figure 7 and Figure 8.

¹⁵ Ibid.



Figure 5: (top) Melissa Laing, *Harbouring I by Tentline*, 2003, Lufthansa and British Airways blankets, tarpaulin, guylines, plastic, fabric. The work was exhibited with the video *The Stewardess*, Figure 9, playing inside it. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 6: (bottom) Melissa Laing, *Harbouring II by Tentline*, 2004, inflight blankets from Garuda Indonesia, American Airlines and Varig Brazil, aluminium, fabric, tarpaulin, book, Discman, inflight cup. Image courtesy the artist.

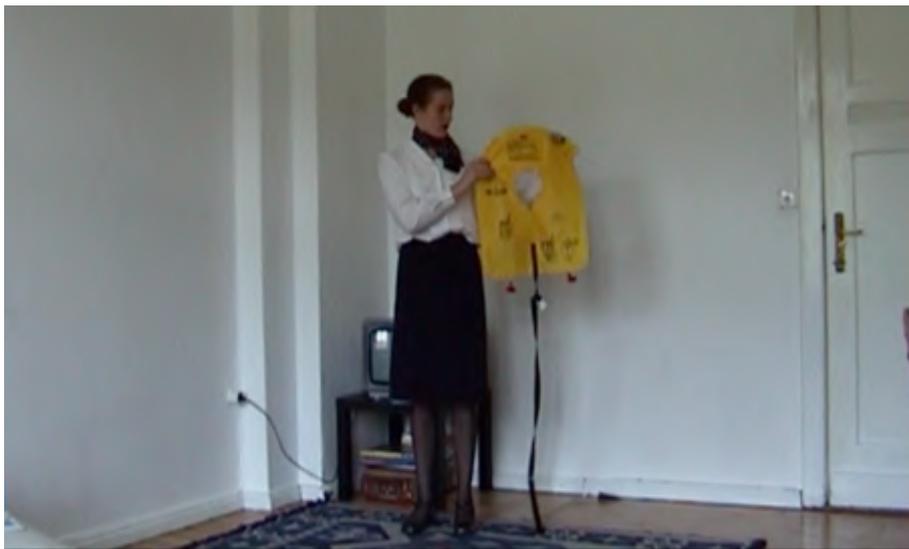


Figure 7: (top left) Melissa Laing, *Obsessing with the Surface*, 2005, Air New Zealand inflight blankets, model plane and people, plinth. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 8: (top right) Melissa Laing, *Obsessing with the Surface*, 2005, Air New Zealand inflight blankets, model plane and people, plinth. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 9: (bottom) Melissa Laing, *The Stewardess*, 2003, single channel video, 45 min. Image courtesy the artist.

They have featured in two video works, *The Stewardess* in 2003, Figure 9 (on the previous page), and *What more can I say* in 2006, Figure 10, and in the unpicked blanket series, Figure 12.

Another personal *punctum* appearing in my work arises out of visa waiver policies. International relations and freedom of movement are articulated for me by the seemingly simple differentiation between nation-states whose citizens receive a visa waiver, and those whose citizens must apply for permission to travel to the same destination. The differentiation is articulated at multiple points in advance of the *Transit Zone* and at its borders. This particular *punctum* was very influential in my perception of the *Transit Zone* as a separated space. My acute awareness of the nation-state interests being played out at the airport border arose out of my experience of working for the New Zealand Immigration Service in Germany, New Zealand and Sydney. Prior to this, I had only ever considered the experience of international air travel from the privileged perspective of a New Zealand citizen with an automatic visa waiver to every country I had visited.

This *punctum* is most explicitly referenced in the work *Atrium* in 2004, Figure 13, a two-channel video which lists all the countries in 2004 whose citizens did not receive a visa waiver to New Zealand or South Africa. This list is normally obscured by the infinitely shorter list of countries whose citizens do receive a visa waiver. Most recently this *punctum* reappears in the 2008 video work *borderline*, Figure 14, which recreates the spaces in which passports and visas are checked.

Last I will mention the fantasy of the flight attendant (not the reality), a *punctum* which has led to some of the more quirky and perverse artworks I have made. The works that have evolved out of this *punctum* explore the fantasies that arise within the Transit Zone. The fantasies surrounding the flight attendant have provided me access to the obsessive relationship I, and other people, have with air travel.



Figure 10: (top left) Melissa Laing, *What more can I say*, 2006, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 11: (top right) Melissa Laing, *What more can I say*, 2006, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 12: (bottom) Melissa Laing, *Unpicked blanket series : San Francisco International Airport (32 Hours)*, 2007, Air New Zealand business class blanket. 1.2m x 1.7 m. Image courtesy the artist.



Figure 13: (top) Melissa Laing, *Atrium*, 2004, two channel video, 6.30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 14: (bottom) Melissa Laing, *borderline*, 2008, production still. Image courtesy the artist.

As can be seen in video works such as *The Stewardess*, 2003, Figure 9 page 13, and *Do you know what you really want*, 2007, Figure 15 and Figure 16, I directly engage with the fantasy of being a flight attendant. In other works such as *Abject Apology: August 2001: Performed by an Airline Attendant to Placate Air Rage*, 2005, Figure 17, I look at how emotional responses within the Transit Zone are played out through flight attendants. This list of *puncta* in the studium of the Transit Zone is not exhaustive. However, the *puncta* have acted as points of expansion, and have led to other works which explore related areas.

Both my work and the work of others demonstrate the broad socio-political implications of the sites and systems of international air travel and its extensive links to other fields. However, within this thesis, I restrict my analysis to international civil aviation and the formation of the *Transit Zone*. Although many of the factors that form the *Transit Zone* are present in domestic aviation, international civil aviation demonstrates the most extreme and identifiable manifestations of the separation of the space of civil aviation from normative space and the most dramatic reshaping of geography. Additionally, the internal transit environments of international air travel are generally more complex.

The *Transit Zone* itself forms the boundary of my discussion. While issues of citizenship, immigration, security and nation-state responses to terrorism inform and underpin my arguments, I restrict myself to their impact on the *Transit Zone*. Each of these complex and highly political discourses have had widespread impact internationally; however, they lie outside of the scope of this discussion, which is specifically focussed on how the separated space of international air travel is constructed.

I have also excluded travel discourses from my analysis. In doing so, I choose not to discuss the reasons for and history of travel, other than to recognise that people access the *Transit Zone* for diverse reasons and that this access is not universally available. Those who use air transport are engaged, in various ways, in forms of 'travelling', be it for business, leisure, study, permanent migration, or as a refugee.



Figure 15: (top left) Melissa Laing, *Do you know what you really want*, 2007, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 16: (top right) Melissa Laing, *Do you know what you really want*, 2007, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 17: (bottom) Melissa Laing, *Abject Apology: August 2001: Performed by an Airline Attendant to Placate Air Rage*, 2005, single channel video, 2.56 min. Image courtesy the artist.

The entire process, that each individual who flies the ‘friendly skies’ engages in is, in the simplest form, travel, the act of going from one place to another. In discussing the experience of international air travel as transit, I am not excluding it from the experience and act of travel. I am positing it as a state within travel. As such, this thesis does not concern itself with actual destinations and reasons for travel; rather, it concentrates on the networks that exist between destinations and the state of transit that these networks engender.

In 1998 Graeme Hugo wrote:

The last three decades have witnessed a number of parametric changes in the scale, diversity, spatial patterning, and impact of population movements between nations. This is of course a function of broader trends of globalisation but also of increasing levels of education, penetration of mass media to all parts of the world, reductions in the real costs of travel, and increasing demographic and economic inequalities and differences between nations. It has also been facilitated by the proliferation of migrant social networks linking nations and the development of a global and regional immigration industry.¹⁶

Ten years on from this statement international air traffic volumes are still rising. In 2007 the Airports Council International released a report stating that “By 2010 the number of global passengers is forecast to surpass the 5 billion mark and by 2025 there is expected to be in excess of 9 billion passengers globally.”¹⁷ Statistics released by the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) demonstrates this ongoing increase in movement.¹⁸ In the 2006 – 2007 financial year 22,325,702 international arrivals and departures

¹⁶ Graeme Hugo, ‘The Globalization of Population Movements: Legal Migrants,’ in *Redefining Security : Population Movements and National Security*, eds. Nana Poku and David T. Graeme (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998), 91.

¹⁷ Airports Council International, ‘Global Traffic Forecasts 2006 – 2025: Executive Summary,’ http://www.airports.org/aci/aci/file/Press%20Releases/2007_PRs/ACI_Forecast_Executive_Summary.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2008), 2.

¹⁸ Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, ‘Immigration Snapshot 2003–2004,’ <http://www.immi.gov.au/statistics/index.html> (accessed June 16, 2005).

occurred via Australia's sea and airports.¹⁹ Three years earlier, DIMIA stated that "In 2003-04, around 18.6 million air passengers and 1.1 million aircrew personnel arrived and departed compared with around 16.6 million air passengers and one million aircrew arrivals and departures in 2002-03."²⁰ These statistics demonstrate the increasing scale and prevalence of international air travel in contemporary society. Given the significance of this type of travel, it is important that its sites are explored and contested.

Indeed, the air transport industry has generated a significant amount of writing on its history, management, security, psychology and economics. In addition, international air travel is referenced in discussions on globalisation, territory, citizenship, migration, and sociology. However, in the existing literature, issues such as immigration, nation-state control of territory and security are not discussed concurrently with the internal sites of the *Transit Zone* and the subjective experience of transit. Also of note is that border processing, the interior systems of the airport and the site of the aeroplane are discussed in isolation from each other. I argue that the separation of these issues leads to an incomplete perspective on international air travel as a whole. Through combining the political and legal construction of the *Transit Zone* with reflections on the physical experience of it and artistic interpretations of it, I will endeavour to explore the theoretical and social complexity of international air travel.

Two texts that I have found influential, *Aviopolis*²¹ by Gillian Fuller and Ross Rudesch Harley and *Airspaces*²² by Donald Pascoe, analyse aspects of the *Transit Zone*. These theorists utilise cultural production as an analytical tool and transfer their discussions to the broader socio-cultural arena. This use of international air travel as a means to discuss broader theoretical and cultural issues can also be seen in Manuel Castells' use of

¹⁹ Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 'Overseas Arrivals and Departures Statistics,' <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/statistical-info/oad/totalmovs/totmov.htm> (accessed January 8, 2008).

²⁰ Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 'Managing The Border: Immigration Compliance 2003-04 edition,' <http://www.immi.gov.au/statistics/index.html> (accessed June 16, 2005).

²¹ Fuller and Harley, *Aviopolis: A Book About Airports* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004).

²² David Pascoe, *Airspaces* (London: Reaktion, 2001).

air travel to discuss society in terms of networks in his book *The Rise of the Network Society*.²³ Likewise Marc Augé utilises the airport and aeroplane to advance his idea of *non-place* in *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.²⁴ And Paul Virilio repeatedly brings air travel into his theoretical arguments on speed, time and distance.²⁵ Indeed, in this thesis I utilise the *Transit Zone* to discuss the construction of nation-state territory, immigration, identity, security and the conversion of waiting time into economically useful activity. All of these aspects are also part of broader societal issues that exist outside the *Transit Zone*.

Pascoe uses the airport and civil aviation as a lens on contemporary society, as do Fuller and Harley. As Fuller writes in the introduction to *Aviopolis*, “In a world where mobility and connectivity of all kinds is increasing, the cultural significance of what we call the aviopolis has become apparent – for reasons ranging from security issues and civil rights, to urban planning and biometrics.”²⁶ Pascoe, reflecting on our cultural history through the airport, says, “It is not simply through the basic physical manifestations of airspace that we can discern the shapes of our modernities; we must also be aware of its representations.”²⁷

Fuller and Harley locate their discussion of the airport within contemporary control and network society, focussing closely on how the airport functions as a system of interconnected human and non-human actors. In *Aviopolis*, the subject is approached from multiple angles: methodologically through photographs, text and diagrams; and conceptually through an analysis of logistics, networks, signage, identity, biometrics, the language of architecture, scale and terraforming. The photographic analysis forms a core part of the book, the images demonstrating more clearly than a description how the spaces are dominated by signs, windows, clocks, queues and security devices.

²³ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

²⁴ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London, New York: Verso, 1995).

²⁵ Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (New York: Columbia University, 1986).; Virilio, *The Lost Dimension* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991).

²⁶ Fuller and Harley, *Aviopolis: A Book About Airports*, 11.

²⁷ Pascoe, *Airspaces*, 10.

Fuller and Harley posit the airport as an advance warning system for effects of globalisation on society, forecasting the future of urban and political environments through the vehicle of the airport. At one point, Fuller describes the airport as “a seeping miasma of control spaces and logistical architecture that is woven into the everyday life of the city.”²⁸ Underpinning their analysis is the assertion that what occurs at the airport, physically and logistically, has the potential to be implemented in everyday life. In the introduction Fuller provides the following examples: “Innovations in Security (such as biometric processing), legislative exceptions (such as the USA’s Homeland Security Bill) and transnational sovereignty (IATA and other global entities) are often tried out at the airport before being introduced to the polis in general.”²⁹ Paul Virilio has also argued that the airport is a testing ground for new control technologies that are later found in prisons and cities. In the *Lost Dimension* he writes, “As airports were turned into theaters of necessary regulation of exchange and communication, they also became breeding and testing grounds for high–pressured experiments in control and aerial surveillance.”³⁰

Forecasting future political and social systems through the airport is one of two dominant approaches to the subject of the civil aviation. The other approach, exemplified by David Pascoe’s insightful book *Airspaces*, explores the role civil aviation plays in contemporary society through a historical analysis. Pascoe’s book tracks the development of contemporary airspaces, in conjunction with the rise and fall of modernist ideals, through the appearance of aeroplanes and airports in literature, politics, war and architectural writing. Drawing from historical moments as diverse as Adolf Hitler’s election campaign in 1932, the opening of the TWA Terminal in 1961 and the Concorde crash at Charles de Gaulle Airport in 2000, plus the work of modernist cultural icons such as Le Corbusier and Marcel Proust, Pascoe constructs a compelling picture of how aviation has influenced society and cultural production positively and negatively.

²⁸ Fuller and Harley, *Aviopolis: A Book About Airports*, 106.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁰ Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, 10.

For example, Pascoe, discussing flight as a public spectacle, demonstrates the excitement and creative impetus that aviation has created. He presents examples from Marcel Proust, who used the aeroplane as a simile for creative velocity and achievement. He also provides a contrasting view of the airport as a theatre for war and disaster. He exposes the ways in which airports and aeroplanes have been intimately connected to war, violence and trauma in a discussion of the acts of terror–violence by the German Red Army Faction occurring at Berlin’s Templehof Airport in the 1970s.

Through his historical analysis of the airport Pascoe arrives at an understanding of the complexity of the airport’s role in societal imagination. His examples show that despite the contemporary cliché of the airport as a site of ubiquity and modern alienation, it is a lightning rod for dreams, inspiration and disaster. Pascoe presents airports and ‘airspaces’ as existing in a tension between the prosaic and the fantastical, the logistics of flight and the inspiration of it existing uneasily in parallel. As Pascoe says of the airport, it communicates “a resonant duplicity: the double feeling of hating control and yet cherishing it; of reaching for the sky and yet being fixed in place; of wanting to take off and yet not wanting to.”³¹

In my thesis I take up both Pascoe’s examination of the potential of aviation for inspiration and disaster, and Fuller and Harley’s logistical analysis of the airport. I expand their discussions on the airport to include the construction of the nation–state border and the inflight experience. The airport straddles that border and is a point of transfer where national and international interest meet and can be analysed. The interior of the aeroplane is both a reflection of the re–conceptualisation of territory embodied in the airport border, as it has a mutable relationship to national territory, and it is a significant part of the passenger experience through the *Transit Zone*. While both the interaction of the nation–state border with the site of the airport and the inflight experience are referenced in *Aviopolis* and *Airspaces*, they are not examined in detail. In my thesis I will

³¹ Pascoe, *Airspaces*, 18–19.

demonstrate the importance of discussing the airport, the border and the inflight experience in combination.

I follow Pascoe and Fuller and Harley's lead in using art work as a research tool. Throughout the thesis I use my own, and other artists' art works to analyse the *Transit Zone*. As David Pascoe demonstrates in *Airspaces*, artists, authors and filmmakers have been reconceiving civil aviation since its inception. All the artworks that I discuss in this thesis are engaged in creating new meanings within, around and through the *Transit Zone*. I use their elaboration, simplification, accents and fantasies as points to work from or towards in my analysis of the systems of the *Transit Zone*. In some cases, I theorise what they demonstrate about the structure of the *Transit Zone*; in other cases I use them to disrupt the conventional view and suggest potential for wonder, change and meaning within what is traditionally held to be a repressive, controlled non-place.

To contextualise the artworks within contemporary art discourse, I have chosen to preface my analysis of the *Transit Zone* with a discussion on contemporary art practices. Chapter 1, *Art in Context*, explores how artists access the *Transit Zone* through contemporary art practices, creating what theorist Justine Lloyd calls documents that are "strategic and tactical statements in themselves, as they often intercede in and contest, as well as reproduce, the fantasies of a society in motion."³² These include art as a form of critical and political discourse, the artist as ethnographer, performativity as a form of art practice and public art at the airport. This chapter provides a context for the interpretation of art as an independent area of critical research and informs the analysis of the *Transit Zone*.

I have constructed my discussion of the *Transit Zone* like a matryoshka doll, the nested doll which, when opened, reveals a new doll inside, and inside that doll another, and so on. Each chapter is independent, yet what it discusses fits within the previous chapter, as each doll fits inside the larger one. These chapters represent four different approaches to describing the internal structures of the *Transit Zone*, and the external

³² Justine Lloyd, 'I'd Rather Not Be in Marrickville: Aerial Modernities and the Domestication of the Sublime' (PhD diss., University of Western Sydney, 2000).

forces that it interacts with. As a result, each chapter engages with different areas of research and theorists. This approach fits the diversity of interests which converge at the *Transit Zone*.

The first of these chapters, *The Transit Zone and the Nation-State*, explores how international air travel has impacted on the contemporary structure of the nation-state and how it is in turn formed by the international and national discourses of territorial sovereignty, citizenship and the nation-state's right to control movement across national borders. I argue that international air travel has had a significant impact on how nation-state borders are conceived through an examination of an internationally-codified juridic conception of the nation-state as the legitimate source of authority over its territories and citizens.

I use the Chicago Convention, an international convention drawn up in 1944 that is still used today to structure international air travel, to demonstrate how territorial sovereignty over land, air and water is codified through international air travel.³³ The linking of international air travel to nation-state interests and processes, which are informed by global agreements, demonstrates the ongoing importance of the nation-state system in a society which is increasingly globalised. As Saskia Sassen argues, "The epochal transformation we call globalization is taking place inside the national to a far larger extent than is usually recognized. It is here that the most complex meanings of the global are being constituted, and the national is also often one of the key enablers and enactors of the emergent global scale."³⁴

I explore the reconceptions that have occurred around the sites and systems of international air travel to maintain territorial sovereignty while managing international movement. I argue that the major conceptual shift forms around the creation of the micro-border, arbitrarily located inside the physical borders of the nation-state. Using Giorgio Agamben's influential exposition on contemporary and historical uses of exclusion and

³³ International Civil Aviation Organisation, 'Convention on International Civil Aviation, Signed at Chicago, on 7 December 1944 (Chicago Convention)', 1944.

³⁴ Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights : From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

banning, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,³⁵ I argue that the nation-state strategically suspends its territory to create the airport border and so enables the control of movement across it. In this way the *Transit Zone* as a separated space is formed.

This conceptual, bureaucratically-realised border is not concerned with territorial connections to neighbouring countries. Rather, it is focused on international relations and movement. Air travel's impact on geographic proximity reorders the perception of space and draws the world closer for those who can travel; however, it also exposes global inequality. I argue that the exclusion of the *Transit Zone* from the space of the nation-state has created a confinement space. Inside this confinement space, undesirable travellers presenting themselves at the airport border are denied entry and held outside the nation-state, until they are returned to where ever they came from.

The construction and control of international air travel also has strong and ongoing links to the identification and embracing of its citizens by the nation-state system. Utilising John Torpey's in-depth analysis of the history of the passport and other national identity documents in *The Invention of the Passport*,³⁶ I explore how ideas of citizenship and proof of identity have interacted with the *Transit Zone*. The passport, together with national immigration policies, provides a basis for nation-states to manage legal and illegal movement in and out of sovereign territory. Continuing with Agamben's theory of exclusion as a fundamental operating principle of the contemporary nation-state, I look at how immigration policy uses citizenship to regulate desirable and undesirable movement. I also explore how refugee status, and the loss of citizenship, can negatively impact on an individual, causing an individual to be excluded from the normative space of the nation-state and the associated rights that citizenship grants. The stratification of rights to movement by citizenship, identity documents, and visas is visible at the border of the *Transit Zone*.

³⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

³⁶ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

In the final part of this chapter, I draw together the changing ideas of the border and individual right to international movement. I explore how nation-states are pushing their borders further and further away from their physical territory. Visa decisions made at embassies and consulates and the advance transfer of passenger information by airlines allow nation-states to screen passengers before they even enter the *Transit Zone*, creating a virtual border in advance of the airport. Airline officials make border decisions at check-in. Passengers are advance-processed into the United States on the Canadian side of the border, and the *Schengen* states of the European Union have shifted their borders to the outermost points. Borders are constantly being reconceived, and international air travel is pivotal in these changes, as will be demonstrated throughout Chapter 2.

I then move on to the next nested layer of discussion. Chapter 3, *(in)Security at the Border*, explores how much of the physical expression of the *Transit Zone* as a separated space has been shaped by the ever-increasing systems of control over movement, identity and security. Whereas early international air travel occurred in an environment of openness and privilege, since the late 1960s there has been an escalation of immigration and security measures and suspicion that runs concurrently with an increase in hijacking and terrorism and the arrival of spontaneous or illegal refugees at the airport border. The arrival of a spontaneous refugee, the success of a hijacking or an act of terror-violence represents a failure of the systems of the *Transit Zone* to control and filter its inhabitants.

Security in the *Transit Zone* makes a promise of safety for the nation-state which is conflated with safety for the individual. However, acts of terror-violence evolve with security practices and a guarantee of safety is unrealistic. In seeking this guarantee, security practices create a culture of unease and an insecure, obedient public. At this point in the evolution of security practices at the airport, one can see the growing dominance of the presumption of guilt, and the demand for self exposure or confession, that occurs when entering and exiting the *Transit Zone*. Security in the *Transit Zone* also makes visible a focus on permanently fixing identity through the use of biometrics. The scrutiny of identity, body and luggage

aimed at preventing potential terror–violence has become intimately linked with the other major security discourses around immigration and customs that occur in the *Transit Zone*. The existence of multiple security practices at the airport border creates a ‘clean space’ for international air travel which reinforces the separation of this space from the normative space of the nation–state.

I argue that the current (in)security practices in place in the *Transit Zone* have evolved out of watershed periods of hijacking and terror–violence. In this chapter, I focus on two periods: 1968 – 1972 and 2001. Acts of terror–violence against civil aviation achieve a disproportionate impact on the public, aided by the high levels of media attention they receive. Despite the relatively low frequency of such attacks compared to attacks on other public and private institutions, the public perceives a high risk and accepts a concurrently high level of intrusive security in the *Transit Zone*. I argue that the events of September 11, 2001 are the latest in a series of event periods which have led to the implementation of new security systems in the *Transit Zone* and the concurrent tightening of the *Transit Zone*’s borders.

Having focused on the *Transit Zone* specifically in relation to how nation–state interests in local and global arenas play out in and around it, in Chapter 4, *Passenger–Object, Passenger–Subject*, I deliberately shift my attention to how non–state actors such as architects, airport management bodies, airlines, and associated commercial ventures in areas such as retail and multimedia have constructed the internal experience of the *Transit Zone*. Both the *Transit Zone* and the greater system of commercial aviation exist to manage, and profit from, the business of moving passengers and cargo by air. To achieve this, commercial aviation constitutes itself through a multiplicity of interconnecting sites and systems. While the factors that I explore exist throughout domestic and international aviation inside and outside the nation–state, I focus specifically on how they reveal themselves within the *Transit Zone*.

To manage and profit from moving and holding people, the systems of the *Transit Zone* must both automate and standardise the passengers, thereby maximising operational uniformity, as well as provide services,

conveniences and consumer opportunities catering to individual taste in order to maximise profit and customer satisfaction. The logistical and commercial structures create an obedient, standardised, complicit unit of movement, while also activating a desiring, consuming subject. I argue that these two positions shape the individual experience of the *Transit Zone*.

I first explore how the passenger is automated, with their co-operation, into a unit of movement that moves swiftly through the *Transit Zone*, and the strategies that are in place to engender this. I argue that the passenger moves through the *Transit Zone* guided by fixed and changeable architectural and informational systems. These include the physical layout of the environments, management of time, informational and directional signage, electronic flight indicator devices, itineraries and boarding cards, data transfers and human and non-human customer service agents. These systems channel passengers into flows and create holding points for them in both the airport and the aeroplane. I identify these systems and analyse how they are used to structure the passenger experience.

Operating in parallel with the logistical systems of the *Transit Zone* are retail, entertainment and distraction devices. Using a number of case studies including the multimedia inflight entertainment systems, the construction of spectacle and Changi Airport's facilities, I explore how the passenger as a desiring subject is activated. The *Transit Zone* is separated from the normative space of the nation-state, and this separation also severs the passenger from their usual environment. I argue that, in addition to generating profit, the facilities at the airport and in the plane are designed to distract the passenger from this separation and the experience of duration that underlies the *Transit Zone*.

Through my discussion of the *Transit Zone*, I explore the ubiquity of its sites, constructed by systems that demand uniformity, and the familiar international retail chains which can be found in every airport. I contrast this ubiquity with the place-making endeavours of airports and airlines that locate each site culturally and aesthetically and politically. I argue

that airports and airlines promote themselves to the travelling public as unique through their facilities, using Changi Airport as an example.

The fifth and final chapter, *Reimagining the Transit Zone*, explores the cultural imaginings, desires and fears that have evolved around civil aviation and the *Transit Zone*. As David Pascoe, in *Airspaces*, argues, “Airports, lying as they do at the threshold of airspace, should be treated not as the sterile transitory zones with which we are all familiar, but as ‘vessels of conception’ for the societies passing through them.”³⁷ Utilising diverse artworks, I explore how aspects of the *Transit Zone* have been linked to existing religious and social rituals, fantasies and emotions. These reimaginings contest and rework the structure of the *Transit Zone* and the meanings that nation-state and commercial interests have created around it.

I discuss how artists have explored the liminal nature of border crossing and the separated space of the *Transit Zone*, and how they have compared it to a rite of passage with associated emotional resonance and cultural significance. I also look at works by artists that explicitly link Christian theology with the sites and figures of the *Transit Zone*. These associations include ideas of purgatory, spiritual guidance, the invocation of the pilot as God and the flight attendant as Virgin Mary. I connect this to the contemporary political structure of the *Transit Zone* through Karl Schmitt’s argument that western juridic principles have evolved out of traditional theological structures.

Another area of discussion focuses on how gender is constructed and performed within the *Transit Zone*. By analysing the cultural expectations of the primary roles associated with flight, the pilot and the flight attendant, I explore the *Transit Zone* as both a site of normalised heterosexual roles, and a site of sexual fantasy. The role of the flight attendant as mother, comforter, symbol of subservient femininity and subject of sexual desire is variously explored and contested by artists and theorists. Likewise, the pilot’s construction as masculine, competent and brave is subverted.

³⁷ Pascoe, *Airspaces*, 10.

I argue that the *Transit Zone* generates unusual behaviour due to the separation from normal routines and social constraints. This is expressed through explicit sexual behaviour and air rage in the aeroplane. I link this back to the legal exclusion from the nation-state and how aggression and other behaviour that breaks the law upset this separation. Finally, I explore the site of the aeroplane as a place of fear and isolation, and how this site has been used to expose these same emotions in the normative spaces of society.

The above chapters that I have outlined explore the structures and contradictions of the *Transit Zone*, building a complex picture of its political and social impacts and conventions. The artworks push at these structures, creating room to rethink them. It is within the spaces that these artworks, and the discussions theorists have created, that I construct my understanding of the *Transit Zone*.

Chapter 1 : Art in Context

Throughout this thesis I use contemporary art as an analytical tool, approaching the *Transit Zone* through photographs, video, performance, sculpture and multi media art works. However, the defining characteristic of these works is not their medium, but the artists' approach to art making. The artists use art as a form of critical and political discourse, ethnography and performance. In addition many of these artists come to the *Transit Zone* by invitation, creating works for the public art programs in airports. The artists create what theorist Justine Lloyd calls strategic and tactical documents which intercede in the fantasies of society.³⁸ This chapter places these documents in the context of contemporary art practice and provides ways of considering the works I discuss in this thesis and my own art practice.

1.1 : The critical discourse of art

Art has a longstanding engagement with the political, both as a direct polemical form of discourse, and a more indirect vehicle for challenging and subverting social and aesthetic structures. It is the latter form of working that interests me in this thesis; contemporary art that critically engages with the *Transit Zone* through what Hal Foster calls the "coarticulation of artistic and political forms."³⁹ Here I use the term political in relation to the act of expressing views about social relationships involving authority or power. This can include relationships between objects, individuals, and systems internal and external to the specific practice of art. I approach art as an area of discrete research producing its own outcomes and individual forms. I argue that it is through a complexity of intellectual and aesthetic engagement that art gains its power to reconceive and transform its object of analysis.

³⁸ Lloyd, 'I'd Rather Not Be in Marrickville: Aerial Modernities and the Domestication of the Sublime'. See quote on page 24.

³⁹ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 5.

Herbert Marcuse, in his book *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*,⁴⁰ calls for art that contributes to critical discourse in society yet does not subsume its aesthetic concerns and artistic integrity. Marcuse argues that:

The critical function of art, its contribution to the struggle for liberation, resides in the aesthetic form. A work of art is authentic or true not by virtue of its content (i.e., the "correct" representation of social conditions), nor by its "pure" form, but by the content having become form.⁴¹

Theodor Adorno, similarly argues in his book *Aesthetic Theory*, that an artist "mediates between the problem he confronts as a given and the solution as it potentially inheres in his material."⁴² The art work is a result of the idea expressed in the artistic form. Both these theorists stress that art's success in critically reflecting on the subject of its analysis arises out of the unification of political and aesthetic discourses.

For instance The Builders Association, a cross media performance company, combine innovative weaving of multimedia and performance which explores the forms of theatre and media arts with incisive comment on contemporary society in their works *Jet Lag* and *Super Vision*, discussed respectively in Chapters 2 and 3. Underlying the two works is the question of how technology constructs presence using data and audio-visual technology. Throughout the performances issues of technology are rarely overtly discussed, rather the camera mediates between individual performers, and between them and the audience. For example, in both *Jet Lag*, Figure 18, and *Super Vision*, Figure 19, actors sit onstage in front of video cameras and perform to the camera. The camera's point of view is simultaneously projected on a screen behind the actors so the audience sees both the real and the mediated versions of the performance at the same time. Sets are constructed on the computer and projected behind the actors as real environments.

⁴⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, trans. Erica Sherover (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴² Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 239.



Figure 18: (top) The Builders Association and Diller + Scofidio, *Jet Lag*, 1998 – 2000, a cross media performance. The actor on the right is projected on the screen above.

Figure 19: (bottom) The Builders Association and dbox, *Super Vision*, 2005, a cross media performance. The actor on the bottom right is projected on the screen above.

And when actors use computers in the performance the data they generate is also projected. The object of analysis, technology, also becomes a formal aesthetic device through which the performances are constructed. The critique is seamlessly integrated into the combination of performance and media, the content creating the form of the work as the work's form creates the content.

The two works present the audience with questions rather than answers. Adorno contends that an art work is similar to a riddle, "another way of putting this is to say that art expresses something while at the same time hiding it."⁴³ Art makes its points implicitly rather than explicitly. This became clear to me while simultaneously undertaking two forms of research, the theoretical and artistic. In writing my thesis I engage in an explication of my argument. Whereas, in creating my art work my position and the concerns I address are implied, with the intention of provoking an interpretive engagement from the viewer.

In addition, an artwork need not resolve aspects of itself. Adorno argues that artists should allow inconsistencies to remain, rather than creating a work which provides an obvious answer to the problem it poses. He writes:

In art, the criterion of success is twofold: first, works of art must be able to integrate materials and details into their immanent law of form; and, second they must not try to erase the fractures left by the process of integration, preserving instead in the aesthetic whole the traces of those elements which resisted integration.⁴⁴

A fully resolved art work is so self-contained that it shuts its audience out. It provides a didactic statement rather than posing a riddle for the viewer to interpret. An art work should create a space for interaction and reconsideration. In *Herbert Marcuse and the Subversive Potential of Art*, Carol Becker asserts that:

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 176

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

For Marcuse, art is a location – a designated imaginative space where freedom is experienced. At times, it is a physical entity, a site – a painting on the wall, an installation on the floor, an event chiselled in space and/or time, a performance, a dance, a video, a film. But it is also a psychic location – a place in the mind where one allows for a recombination of experiences, a suspension of the rules that govern daily life, a denial of gravity. It ‘challenges the monopoly of the established reality’ by creating ‘fictitious worlds’ in which one can see mirrored that range of human emotion and experience that does not find an outlet in the present reality.⁴⁵

I use art’s ability to create fictitious worlds by mimicking yet changing reality, as a means of analysis. Through diverse practices artists mimic aspects of the *Transit Zone*, and through this mimesis construct a new perspective on it. An example of this is my art work *borderline*,⁴⁶ Figure 20, for which I created a scale model of a border control hall, that I used as a film set. The model replicates the idea of the space, yet is not identical to any one border control hall. The resulting video is eerily empty, simulating a known environment yet making it strange to the viewer. Marcuse argues for art which estranges the viewer from reality, saying: “only as estrangement does art fulfill a *cognitive* function: it communicates truths not communicable in any other language; *it contradicts*.”⁴⁷ Playwright and theorist Bertolt Brecht also called for work to have a *Verfremdungseffekt*, an estrangement or distancing effect whereby the familiar becomes strange. The moment of estrangement reveals to the viewer what they assume to be natural. Indeed, Brecht asserts that when “things of everyday life are lifted out of the realm of the self-evident... That which is ‘natural’ must assume the

⁴⁵ Carol Becker, "Herbert Marcuse and the Subversive Potential of Art," in *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility*, ed. Carol Becker (New York: Routledge, 1994), 117.

⁴⁶ *borderline* is included in my examination exhibition

⁴⁷ Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, 10.



Figure 20: Melissa Laing, *borderline*, 2008, production still. Image courtesy of the artist.

features of the extraordinary. Only in this manner can the laws of cause and effect reveal themselves."⁴⁸ Through creating a *Verfremdungseffekt*, *borderline* creates a conflict between the reality it presents and accepted reality. It reflects what the viewer thinks they know of the environment through invoking the ubiquitous qualities of the space, and it contests that knowledge by making it strange.

A *Verfremdungseffekt* can also be achieved through intervening in an existing space and disrupting the normal pattern of the environment. This form of critique often occurs in permanent or temporary site specific and performative work. For example, Francis Alÿs interrupts normal conventions and uses of space through what he calls *paseos* (strolls).⁴⁹ These involve him taking a stroll with a performative element through a location. The *paseos* range from the small and personal displacement of himself to the movement of hundreds of performers. Alÿs' self-assigned instructions for each *paseo* create an interruption which, for however long, disrupts the normal interactions with the space for those who witness it by introducing an unusual element to the space. In Havana he strolled wearing magnetic shoes (*Magnetic Shoes*, 1994); in Sao Paulo he walked the neighbourhood of Pinheiros carrying a punctured paint tin which dribbled a trail of paint behind him (*The Leak*, 1995); in New York he co-ordinated a procession of people and replicated artworks from MoMA Manhattan to MoMA's temporary headquarters in Queens (*The Modern Procession*, 2002). In Chapter 2 I discuss his *paseo The Loop*, Figure 31, page 71, where he flew from city to city around the Pacific Rim. Referencing both the idea of the flaneur and the situationist idea of drift, these *paseos* are a way creating art that draws from and interacts with its environment and situation. The *paseo* presents to the gallery only the documentation of its path.

⁴⁸ Bertolt Brecht, *Schriften zum Theater*. (Berlin and Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1957) quoted in Adrian Carr, "Art as a Form of Knowledge: The Implications for Critical Management" (paper presented at the Art and Aesthetics in Management & Organisation Studies, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, England, 11 – 13 July 2001).

⁴⁹ Carlos Basualdo, "Head to Toes: Francis Alÿs's Paths of Resistance.," *Artforum International* 37, no. 8 (1999).

The artistic practices of mimesis and interruption create moments of alienation; gaps which inspire new knowledge and questions. As Adorno argued “Art completes knowledge with what is excluded from knowledge, and thereby once again interferes with its character as knowledge, its unambiguous nature.”⁵⁰ The art works incorporated into my thesis are used to both define the *Transit Zone* and expose its ambiguities, thereby expanding and interfering with my knowledge of it. This knowledge and questioning has diversified my research intellectually, aesthetically, explicitly and implicitly.

Art as a form of political discourse impacts on ethnographic observation, performativity and public art. These three forms of practice engage with social and aesthetic criticism through specific languages.

1.2 : Ethnography/Art

In this thesis the ethnographic turn in photographic and video work is used to reflect directly on the environment and subjective experience of the *Transit Zone*. The artist as cultural observer and analyst is a paradigm of long standing. However, only in the second half of the 20th century did artists, along with sociologists and ethnologists, begin to explicitly engage in a self-reflexive critique of how culture is produced by not only analysing the culture they observed, but analysing themselves as observers. In his book *Return of the Real*, art theorist Hal Foster argues that the artist critiquing contemporary culture is engaging in a form of cultural analysis; it is, he claims ‘the artist as ethnographer.’⁵¹

The self-aware (artist) ethnographer is explored by James Clifford in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, who positions ethnography as “diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture from a standpoint of participant observation.”⁵² Clifford

⁵⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 54. Translation modified by Frederic J. Schwartz, in *Blind Spots : Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth Century Germany* (New Haven Yale University Press, 2005), 239. I use the Adorno’s words as translated in *Blind Spots* as I find Schwartz’s English translation more appropriate for the point I argue.

⁵¹ Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*.

⁵² James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9.

asserts that the authority that derives from the presence of the participant-observer is based on the assumption that “the experience of the researcher can serve as a unifying source of authority in the field.”⁵³ The ‘truth’ statement that ethnography makes is based on the first person experience of a specific time and place. As Marc Augé wrote:

Anthropology has always dealt with the here and now. The practicing ethnologist is a person situated somewhere (his ‘here’ of the moment) who describes what he is observing or what he is hearing at this very moment. It will always be possible afterwards to wonder about the quality of his observation and about the aims, prejudices or other factors that condition the production of his text: but the fact remains that all ethnology presupposes the existence of a direct witness to a present actuality.⁵⁴

Both the ethnographer and the ‘artist as ethnographer’ engage with the subject position of participant-observer to authorise the information they present. They inhabit the here-and-now of the culture they observe and document it as they see it.

The concept of ‘participant-observer’ is integral to ethnology. It represents the attempt to simultaneously occupy inside and outside perspectives. Clifford defines this as “a pervasive condition of off-centeredness in a world of distinct meaning systems, a state of being in culture while looking at culture, a form of personal and collective self-fashioning.”⁵⁵ Theorist Miwon Kwon describes the concept of participant observation as a “relay between an empathic engagement with a particular situation and/or event (experience) and the assessment of its meaning and significance within a broader context (interpretation).”⁵⁶

The self-aware participant-observer is producing a reflexive critique on how culture is created, and concurrently analysing themselves as participants within that culture. Clifford emphasises the need to critically

⁵³ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴ Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 8.

⁵⁵ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography*, 9.

⁵⁶ Miwon Kwon, "Experience Vs. Interpretation: Traces of Ethnography in the Works of Lan Tuazon and Nikki S. Lee," in *From Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, ed. Alex Coles (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000).

read the products of this act of documenting to reveal the observer's context as well as that which is observed. This circular act of observing and then analysing the observation to reveal the observer observing was taken up by the arts when the postmodern discourse of deconstruction or reflexivity embraced the reading of the text to disclose the meta-narratives produced and the authoring roles. In the arts this textual analysis was applied to the imagery produced by artists as well as the texts written about the arts.

Artists I discuss in this context base their analyses of the *Transit Zone* (or facets of it) on the authority of having inhabited it, of having repeatedly passed through it. Reinforcing this authority many of them present their reflections on the *Transit Zone* through the documentary language of photography. I have been, I have seen, I have documented. The tourist, the photographer and the ethnographer speak in this language. In these artworks the artist works not as the producer of new meaning, rather as the analyst of existing culture. However, the artists are also analysing their own subjective experience of the *Transit Zone*. For example, Martha Rosler structures her explorations of the *Transit Zone* from the perspective of a passenger observing the environment and embracing her participation in it.⁵⁷ In her accompanying text she writes "My point of view continues to be, not that of an expert, an outsider, observer, or even a student, but that of a traveller. That is a traveller and an artist."⁵⁸ With this statement she acknowledges that she is not a disinterested observer, she is an active participant who also observes, and whose observations are shaped by her participation. Rosler's photographs are both documents of the spaces of the airport and aeroplane, and evidence of the photographer's travels. The text interventions suggest the lateral thoughts of the artist which shift and distort the meanings of the images. For instance, canal?", Figure 22, emphasising the visual analogy of the image, and exploring the subjective experience of the *Transit Zone*.

⁵⁷ Martha Rosler, *Martha Rosler: In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1998).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

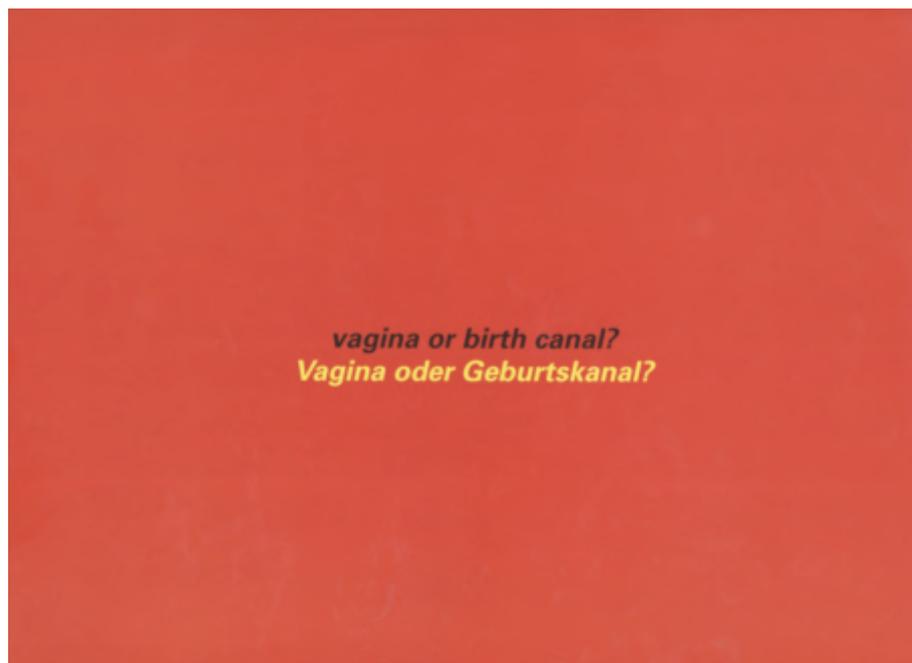
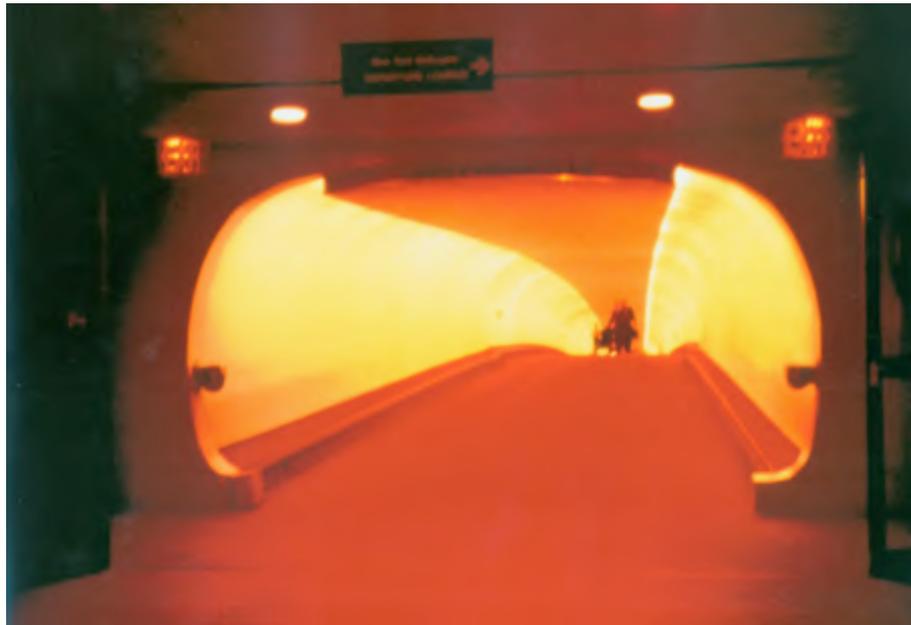


Figure 21: (top) Martha Rosler, *JFK, TWA terminal (New York)*, 1990, 1998, photograph in Martha Rosler, *In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.

Figure 22: (bottom) Martha Rosler, *vagina or birth canal*, 1998, in Martha Rosler, *In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.

By positioning herself as a traveller, Rosler makes herself an object of analysis. Her images document the *Transit Zone* as it impacts on the passenger, who she also comes to represent. Hal Foster argues that the artist and community become linked, often to the point that the artist stands for the community. The artist, through embodying the subject they present, positions themselves as the ethnographic 'other' as much as they examine the 'other'.⁵⁹ Ethnology and anthropology are engaged in the production of alterity; the 'other' is the central subject of their observation. As Marc Augé states "Anthropological research deals in the present with the question of the other. The question of the other is not just a theme that anthropology encounters from time to time; it is its sole intellectual object, the basis on which different fields of investigation may be defined."⁶⁰ The subject position of 'other' is created in a very explicit fashion through the observation and re-presentation that ethnology performs.

The artist who engages with a community or site to create their work is also producing alterity. They are situating the community and site observed in the language of ethnography for an audience to read. In the case of artists working with the *Transit Zone* they are examining the production of the passenger by the *Transit Zone*, or the mechanisms of the *Transit Zone* itself. They produce the passenger or *Transit Zone* as an 'other' for the viewer of the work, just as they produce themselves as passenger, artist and 'other'.

In contrast to Rosler, Harley approaches the *Transit Zone* as an expert documenting its sites, emphasising his observation rather than participation. Harley's images in the *Aviopolis* project are analytical tools. They position the photograph as a text which specifically articulates a position on the *Transit Zone*. Where Rosler's photographs are ambiguous, deliberately amateur, focussing on the experience of the sites of air travel, Harley's images locate, identify and critique the systems which construct the sites of air travel. Many of the photographs have a textual

⁵⁹ Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, 198.

⁶⁰ Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 18.

overlay, which intervene in the photographs as labels. For example Figure 23 shows a photograph of Pudong Airport in China, one side is labelled 'sterile' and the other non-sterile'.⁶¹ The photograph is one of a sequence which explores the architectural elements that separate the passenger flows. The image shows arriving passengers passing through customs on one side of an architectural divide, and on the other, 'non-sterile' side, the general public waits. This image presents the argument that the airport is a movement processing machine that shifts passengers between non-sterile and sterile states, movement and stasis, arrival and departure. It utilises photography's ability to bear witness to make this argument.

The methodology of observing and documenting a situation in which the observer is also a participant is uniquely appropriate to the photographic medium. Photography, like ethnography, privileges the truth of the act of observing and disclosing. In her seminal book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag explores the construction of the photographic image as truth. She deconstructs the myth of the veracity of the photograph, and thereby the authority of the photographer. While today's audience knows that photographs can be manipulated or staged and are the result of the photographer choosing what to photograph, nevertheless, the photograph, couched in the language of reportage, still retains its aura of truth.

Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph of it. A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture. Whatever the limitations (through amateurism) or pretensions (through artistry) of the individual photographer, a photograph - any photograph - seems to have a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects.⁶²

⁶¹ Fuller and Harley, *Aviopolis: A Book About Airports*, 19.

⁶² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977), 5.



Figure 23: Ross Rudesch Harley, from the *Aviopolis* series, 2002–2005.

Harley uses photography to represent to the viewer objects and sites that any passenger can see. But through invoking photography's truth value, he enables a reconsideration of these objects. The architectural devices, signage, clocks, telephones, fuel trucks and roads that appear in his photographs seem more accurate than our own memories of these sites and encourage the viewer to compare their personal experience against his analytical documentation.

Sontag's analysis of photography's truth statement, Clifford's critique of the ethnographer's 'distance' and Foster's discussion of art's engagement with ethnographic techniques are part of an ongoing recognition that the observer can never achieve absolute distance in that they are always a participant of what they choose to document, and the culture that informs them. This means the artist as ethnographer enacts a self-reflexive role in which the artist must acknowledge their own position in the gathering and presenting of information. This awareness underpins the practice of contemporary art practice whether it places the emphasis on participation, as in Rosler's case, or the observation as in Harley's work.

In addition to displaying an awareness of the artist's own participation in the *Transit Zone*, the art works that I discuss expect their viewers to have a familiarity with the sites and experiences they document. The works presume a mobile, travelled audience. They are resonant with shared experiences of the *Transit Zone*. The audience can read the text produced by the participant-observer against their own experiences of the site and culture examined. However, the works present new ways of considering and interpreting the experiences which utilise the familiarity of the site to shift the viewer's understanding of it.

1.3 : Performativity

Another way in which artists engage with the *Transit Zone* is through the language of performativity, whereby the artist themselves enacts a character or subject position that exists within the context of the *Transit Zone*. Performative construction of identity occurs in many of the works that I discuss in this thesis. These range from the direct utilisation of

performance in *Jet Lag* and *Super Vision* and the performative videos by Pipilotti Rist and myself,⁶³ to the performative assertion of identity in the ethnographic act of taking a photograph, where for example Rosler constructs herself as a traveller and artist or Harley constructs himself as a researcher and artist.

In discussing performativity in art I draw upon Amelia Jones' argument that "identity is not a 'position' based on biological anatomy or cultural experience ... but a process of negotiation involving complex circuits of identification and desire...."⁶⁴ For example, in the video works of Pipilotti Rist, whose 1997 video work *Pamela* is discussed in Chapter 5, the female subjects are not reducible to their biological identity, rather their identity is negotiated through the act of performance, always mutating and multiplying in their complexity. In constantly mutating the role that she performs, Rist reconstitutes the identity she is exploring, calling into question what we expect the subject to be.

I single out the performative methodology as it pertains specifically to my examination exhibition. The performative video works in the exhibition explore diverse ideas about the *Transit Zone* and attitudes towards it through monologues, costuming, props and performances that invoke and subvert desire, obsession and cliché. Amelia Jones made the following argument in regard to the performative use of the self in the works of Cindy Sherman and Hannah Wilke:

These performative images are still "self portraits" in the sense that they convey to the viewer the very subject who was responsible for staging the image ... and yet – through their very exaggeration of the performative dimension of the self (its openness to otherness and, especially clearly in representation, its contingency on the one who views or engages with it), clearly they profoundly shift our conception of what a self portrait – and the subject – is.⁶⁵

⁶³ Both Pipilotti Rist's and my own performative works are discussed in Chapter 5

⁶⁴ Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 215.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

By performing the characters in my videos I engage with the language of the performative self portrait which merges the artist with the character she performs while simultaneously revealing the artist. The artist plays with a self-aware knowledge that she is performing a character, while simultaneously performing herself, as each of the desires and obsessions enacted belong, in some degree, to the artist.

My performative practice engages with desire: desire for objects which have meaning to the possessor, such as airline blankets; sexual desire; desire for an attribute that a figure is purported to possess or embody such as bravery and competence; and the empathic embodying of how the subject enacted may feel about the desires directed at them. All are desires that I both express and elicit from the audience in my exploration of pivotal figures in the *Transit Zone*.

My own obsession can be clearly seen in the 2006 work *What more can I say*. In three acts a woman/the artist explains to the camera how she likes to care for the airline blankets that she collects. In the first act, Figure 24, she demonstrates how she irons the blankets and folds them so that they are all the same size. In the second act, Figure 25, she discusses the origin of each of the blankets in her collection and how some are gifts given to her by others who know of her obsession. In the final act, Figure 26, the woman demonstrates alternative uses for the blankets including using one as a backless dress. Through these acts we see how she uses the blankets to entertain herself, and how she defines herself through her interest. The woman is not limited by her obsessive blanket collecting, instead, she is stimulated by it.

To a certain extent the video is a metaphor for my broader obsession with the *Transit Zone* as it has played out over the last eight years, most recently within the process of my PhD candidature. The video performs an autobiographical truth transformed into a wittingly constructed character. I am not masking myself, rather I am deliberately and visibly performing an identity which explores the interstices between the artist/myself and the constructed ideas of a character or role connected to aviation: the flight attendant, the pilot, and the individual obsessed with flight and its associated accoutrements. The artworks shift our conceptions of who and

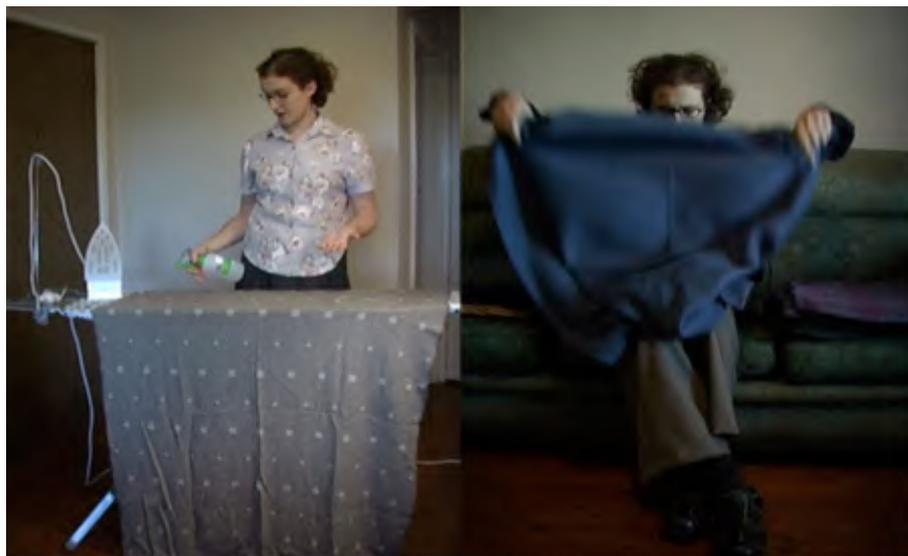


Figure 24: (top left) Melissa Laing, *What more can I say*, 2006, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 25: (top right) Melissa Laing, *What more can I say*, 2006, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 26: (bottom) Melissa Laing, *What more can I say*, 2006, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

what these selected figures of the *Transit Zone* are and how they have come to be constructed in broader social imaginings.

1.4 : Public art practices

Airports have long engaged with art by commissioning art work for their sites. This practice has enabled artists to directly intervene in the sites of the *Transit Zone*. Here I briefly discuss airport art commissioning practices of the last ten years. It is not an exhaustive discussion of art commissioning practices by airports, rather it creates a framework for the discussion of particular works which investigate both the *Transit Zone* as a specific locus and the sites that comprise it.

Public art operates in a cynical realm where the outcomes are not measured solely in aesthetic or intellectual terms. Public art is commissioned by corporations, councils, government bodies and wealthy individuals to fulfil different needs and functions: to display good corporate citizenship and seduce public opinion, to commemorate an event and evoke civic pride, to aid in the regeneration of a public area, to embellish the environment and to entertain the public. On rarer occasions it is commissioned to engage with social and political issues. In addition, there is public art generated by artists and galleries, whose projects, both temporary and permanent, focus on artistic rather than civic or corporate priorities.

Airports struggle to maintain a positive image in the local community as the traffic and noise of an airport impacts negatively on the quality of life and property values of surrounding neighbourhoods. Art programmes which draw from the local arts community are used to provide positive promotion for the airport within the area. Public art is also used as a valuable promotional tool, generating publicity whose value can exceed the expenditure on the actual artwork. The British Airport Authority (BAA) estimated that the initial launch of the BAA Arts Programme at

Heathrow Airport provided the equivalent of £90,000 (AU \$217,666) worth of advertising.⁶⁶

Writing about the development of contemporary public art practices in *Artforum* in 1988, Patricia Phillips asserted that “the making of public art has become a profession, whose practitioners are in the business of beautifying, or enlivening, or entertaining the citizens of, modern American and European cities. In effect, public art’s mission has been reduced to making people feel good – about themselves and where they live.”⁶⁷ The problem Phillips sees in this outcome is that such work is conservative and unambitious which results in work that occupies space rather than genuinely interacting with the given public and politics of the site. The work does not challenge, nor does it inspire, it “only understands how to preserve life, not to create it; and thus always undervalues the present growth, ...”⁶⁸

Public art within the airport tends to be dominated by such work; however, among the many works which entertain there are works which critically engage with the *Transit Zone*. I examine the difference between artworks which entertain and enliven the space and artworks which critique the *Transit Zone*; to do this I utilise Friedrich Nietzsche’s discussion in *The Use and Abuse of History*, transferring his perspective on history to the realm of public art. Quoting but transposing Nietzsche, I argue that “The fact that life does need the service of history [art] must be as clearly grasped as that an excess of history [art] hurts it.”⁶⁹ Nietzsche argues that history fulfils different needs in an individual’s life “in relation to his action and struggle, his conservatism and reverence, his suffering and his desire for deliverance.”⁷⁰ History (art) is necessary to

⁶⁶ Public Art Development Trust, *Documentary Notes: Frances Hegarty Andrew Kearney Philip Napier Maurice O’Connell Mick O’Kelly Louise Walsh* (London: Public Art Development Trust, 1998).

⁶⁷ Patricia C. Phillips, “Out of Order: The Public Art Machine,” *Artforum* 27 (December, 1988): 93

⁶⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins, 2nd ed. (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 20. In my use of Nietzsche I must acknowledge the influence of Paul Usherwood’s excellent chapter, “Public Art and Collective Amnesia,” in *Art, Money, Parties: New Institutions in the Political Economy of Contemporary Art*, ed. Jonathan Harris (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004)

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

provide an example and inspire; to preserve the past and experience pleasure through it; and to provide a critical perspective on contemporary times.

From the need for history Nietzsche defined three types of methodology or form: “the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical.”⁷¹ However, Nietzsche warned of their potential misuse. He decried what he saw as a false use of the monumental as fact rather than inspiration, saying when the monumental approach dominates “the past itself suffers wrong. Whole tracts of it are forgotten.”⁷² The monumental approach ignores the detail of history in its celebration of the end result. Nietzsche also despised the excessive use of the antiquarian approach, which he deemed the province of “curious tourists and laborious beetle hunters.”⁷³ He believed the antiquarian approach, in excess, privileged the past above progress and stifled a society’s growth. Nietzsche asserted that the monumental and antiquarian approaches needed to be balanced by a critical approach, “in the service of life.”⁷⁴ That is, history should be investigated to discover the past’s errors and injustices, to learn from them and attempt to create a new future.

As can be seen, both in Phillip’s critique of public art and in airport commissioning practices, public art is dominated by the antiquarian approach. However, as is outlined below, all three approaches are visible at the airport. Indeed, Nietzsche did not strive to destroy the monumental or the antiquarian approaches, he sought to warn against their abuse and inspire a healthy approach that made “use of the past in that threefold way – monumental, antiquarian, or critical.”⁷⁵

The ‘monumental’ artwork can be defined as that which seeks out the great moments, tragic or triumphant, creating an artwork that is inspirational – a work that proclaims “that the great thing existed and was therefore possible, and so may be possible again.”⁷⁶ Its purpose is to speak of the potential for greatness, to set an example for following

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 15.

⁷³ Ibid., 12 – 13.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

generations. Traditionally, the monumental sculpture is commemorative of war, celebrating the sacrifices that were made and the victory that was achieved. More recently the monument has come to celebrate the location, the people and the values connected with the place. For example Jaume Plensa's 2004 *Crown Fountain*, Figure 27, in Chicago's Millennium Park, celebrates the people and values of Chicago by screening 1,000 diverse faces of Chicago residents on two 50 foot glass block towers at each end of a shallow reflecting pool.⁷⁷

Nietzsche warns, of the monumental perspective, that it “will never be able to have complete truth; it will always bring things together that are incompatible and generalize them into compatibility, will always weaken the differences of motive and occasion. Its object is to depict effects at the expense of causes – ‘monumentally’”⁷⁸ His analysis of monumentality is a surprisingly accurate description of the monumentality of airports. Not only in their own right, but in the way they unify the diverse requirements of nation-states, cities, airlines, retailers, passengers and corporate bodies, to effect the processes of air travel.

Indeed, the monumentality of any individual public art work is generally diminished by the scale and intention of the airport. Airports speak to the status of the city and country that hosts the airport. They represent the economic and political situation which allows for travel and they celebrate the inspiration of flight both romantically and technologically. Architects custom design airports which strive to be unique, symbolic of the country and site. Influential architect Norman Foster, who designed Stansted Airport, Hong Kong Chek Lap Kok Airport and Beijing International Airport, said, of the Beijing International Airport, “It will be welcoming and uplifting. A symbol of place, its soaring aerodynamic roof and dragon-like

⁷⁷ ‘The Crown Fountain’,
http://www.millenniumpark.org/artandarchitecture/crown_fountain.html
 (accessed March 14, 2008)

⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 15.



Figure 27: Jaume Plensa, *Crown Fountain*, 2004, two 50-foot glass block towers, incorporating LED screens at each end of a shallow reflecting pool. Located in Millennium Park, Chicago, United States. Photograph by Melissa Laing.

form will celebrate the thrill and poetry of flight and evoke traditional Chinese colours and symbols.”⁷⁹ In other words the airport fulfils the purpose of the monument.

In fact, the now decommissioned TWA terminal building at JFK Airport in New York has become a monumental centrepiece inside the new redeveloped JetBlue Terminal 5 at JFK International Airport, Figure 28, due to open in late 2008.⁸⁰ The TWA terminal was designed by Eero Saarinen and finished in 1962. It is known for its ‘space age’ design and is an iconic architectural form. The TWA terminal proclaimed the modernity that flight embodied and became synonymous with New York. Ironically, the terminal was obsolete almost before it opened as it was designed for propeller aircraft, but by the time it was finished the larger jet aeroplanes had come into service.

‘The Saarinen building is open and big, but you can fit it in our lobby,’ says David Epstein, Gensler's lead designer on the project. With two sets of approach roadways, one to the old building and one to the new, the expectation is that passengers with a flair for the dramatic and architectural will get their boarding passes in the historic building and walk through Saarinen's Flight Wing Tubes to the new terminal.⁸¹

By incorporating the Saarinen terminal into the new designs it has been transformed into monumental sculpture celebrating the history and grandeur of civil aviation, its scale and impact dwarfing any other public artwork intended to be a monument to flight.

⁷⁹ Norman Foster, *Catalogue: Foster and Partners*, (London: Prestel Publishing, 2005), 54.

⁸⁰ Fuller and Harley, *Aviopolis: A Book About Airports.*; David W. Dunlap, ‘Renovated T.W.A. Terminal to Reopen as Jetblue Portal.’ *The New York Times*, February 22 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/2002/2022/nyregion/2022trumpet.html>.

⁸¹ Andrew Blum, ‘Jetblue's Terminal Takes Wing,’ *Business Week* (July, 2005) http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/jul2005/di20050721_216497.htm. (accessed January 31, 2008)

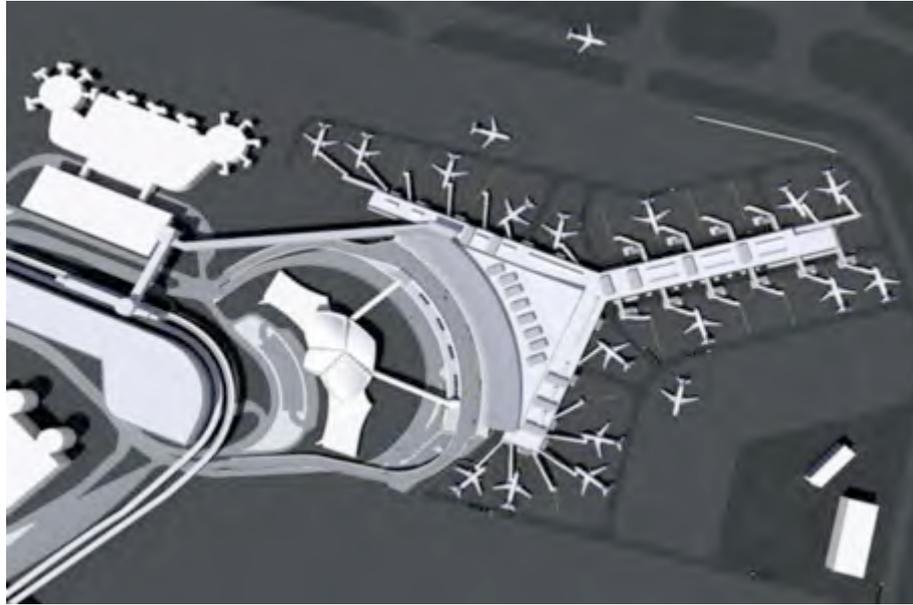


Figure 28: Architect's rendering, JetBlue Airways Terminal 5, JFK International Airport. Designed by architectural firm Gensler incorporating the TWA Terminal, designed by Eero Saarinen. www.gensler.com.

Art commissioned to occupy the airport tends to fall within the realm of Phillips' complaint that the art entertains and distracts but does not critically engage with the viewer or the site.⁸² Nietzsche describes this as an antiquarian approach, a use of history or, in this case, art which "invokes the past not for any ennobling or educative purpose but simply to provide amusement and interest."⁸³ The antiquarian approach is promoted by public art commissioning bodies for a variety of reasons which are not that different from other public art sites. As demonstrated by Denver International Airport's (DIA) exhibition program policy statement, airport art commissioning criteria and processes tend to be conservative and orientated towards diverting the passengers.

The DIA Art Exhibition Program entertains and informs passengers and airport visitors by providing a diversion from what can be a stressful time. The exhibits are engaging, aesthetically pleasing and enlightening to visitors, thereby enhancing their experience at DIA. ... The subject matter of the exhibitions must be appropriate for viewing in an airport venue. In keeping with the Airport's mission statement, DIA does not accept for display political statements, nudity, lewd or pornographic depictions, violent or menacing images, weapons, ethnic slurs or any controversial materials that could make airline passengers apprehensive about flying.⁸⁴

The difficulty with a policy that does not accept political statements or controversial materials is that it leaves very little room for a critical engagement with the site of the *Transit Zone*. Instead, public art is commissioned to reinforce the airport's role as a gateway to a particular location. The artwork celebrates the city and country it is located within and creates a positive aesthetic experience for the passenger. Another case in point is the 1998 to 2000 Sydney Airport upgrade. The airport was preparing for the 2000 Olympics, to be the 'gateway' to Australia and to promote the Australian experience to the vast influx of visitors

⁸² Phillips, 'Out of Order: The Public Art Machine,'

⁸³ Usherwood, 'Public Art and Collective Amnesia,' 122.

⁸⁴ DIA Denver International Airport, 'About DIA - Art Program Policy', (<http://www.flydenver.com/guide/art/policy.asp>. 2005 (accessed November 14, 2005))

from around the world. Additionally, airport management was trying to counteract the prevailing dislike of the airport by the surrounding local councils and residents by generating positive publicity.

As the public art program was conceived as a way to welcome the world to Sydney and reflect local identity and culture, the commissioning committee focused on Australian artists. They commissioned works ranging from photographs and videos to architectural structures and freestanding sculptures for both the airside and landside of the airport. The artwork briefs were constructed with an eye to the media benefits of the projects and were orientated towards provoking wide editorial coverage therefore generating “significant value through positive unpaid publicity.”⁸⁵ The artworks were intended to ‘humanise’ the airport environment and to fulfil functions such as reinforcing Sydney tourism promotions, increasing user pleasure in the environment and providing a sense of place.

A project description, published on the Euran Global Culture Network’s website, describes the project as drawing on a “philosophy of visual culture which allows for art to be popular and accessible to a broad audience of both art lovers and those who ‘don’t know about art but know what they like’.”⁸⁶ With a philosophy orientated towards broad popular taste it is not surprising that the art is primarily entertaining and enlivening, that is antiquarian. A work which embodies this approach is *Touchstone* by Ron Smith, Figure 29. It is a mosaic sculpture of a green and gold frog, “an endangered indigenous species which the airport is helping to conserve through its environmental plan.”⁸⁷ The frog promotes Australia’s fauna and is nostalgic for a time before the airport impacted on its habitat. It is also intended to be a touchstone for travellers for good luck and safe return; however, until it was fenced off, it was treated as a climbing frame by children.

⁸⁵ Euran Global Culture Networks, ‘Sydney Airport, Australia / Aéroport De Sydney, Australie’ <http://www.euran.com/airportsydney.htm>. (accessed November 7, 2005)

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.



Figure 29: Ron Smith, *Touchstone*, 2000, mosaic sculpture. In the Sydney International Airport. Image courtesy the Sydney Airport Corporation.

Susan Best points out that the airport provides a very mixed site saying “Site-specific words located in this context [the airport] have a difficult task: should they refer to the land that lies beyond or beneath the airport, or do they refer to the nature of the airport itself?”⁸⁸ In contrast to the approach taken in Sydney and Denver, Toronto’s Pearson International Airport deliberately sought out work that engaged with civil aviation, positioning itself as an international rather than local site. The commissioning body avoided artwork that engaged in ‘local boosterism,’ stating that:

The art wasn't designed to represent Toronto. It was designed to say we are part of the global aviation fabric, we are a major player on the global scene, and what you'll experience here is art in support of aviation, not art in support of a community or province or even a country.⁸⁹

The New York Times reported that the “official criteria for art stipulated work that would communicate ‘the essence of aviation and flight in a conceptual, abstract or realistic manner.’”⁹⁰ As a result the majority of the artworks commissioned for Toronto’s Pearson International Airport consider the nature of flight and the factors impacting on both aviation and the airport. Works such as Jaume Plensa’s *As One...* (Figure 37, page 97) discussed in Chapter 2, critically examine how international air travel impacts on the construction of geography. However, other works in the airport such as Robert Charles Coyle’s *Flight Song*, Figure 30, create an aesthetic depiction of flight, but do not challenge it.

As we can see from the foregoing three examples of public art programs in airports, the agenda of the airport determines the nature of the artwork found within it. Denver International Airport’s and Sydney International Airport’s art programs produced art which explores the city

⁸⁸ Susan Best, "Place-Making in a Liminal Zone: Sydney International Airport's Art at Work Program," *Art and Australia* 38, no. 3 (2001): 430

⁸⁹ Andrew Blum, "The White Zone Is for Loading and Unloading Art," *The New York Times*, March 28 2004, quoting Louis A. Turpin, president and chief executive officer of the GTAA. The works were commissioned as part of construction of the new terminal between 2000 and 2007.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* quote source not specified.



Figure 30: Robert Charles Coyle, *Flight Song*, 2001 – 2003, shot blasted lexan sheet, lexan rod, stainless steel cable, 19 figures, each 1.5 m long. Collection of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority.

and country of each and so provides a sense of location within the airport, whereas Toronto's Pearson International Airport's art program resulted in art works which explore civil aviation as an international phenomenon. Interestingly, within all of these airports there exists a similar mix of work, predominantly antiquarian with a small number of critical works.

Nietzsche says, of the necessity for criticality, "Man must have the strength to break up the past, and apply it, too, in order to live. He must bring the past to the bar of judgement, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it."⁹¹ Or in the case of public art it should interrogate the public, the politics and the site. The demand that a public, politics and site should be rigorously examined is met in many different ways within the spaces of the *Transit Zone*, despite the prevailing focus on art which entertains but does not challenge. In this thesis I have chosen to focus mainly on works that critically respond to aspects of the *Transit Zone*, acting from within the site of the airport. They respond to Nietzsche's call for a history (art) that is pursued "for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action."⁹²

Throughout this thesis I discuss art works which approach the *Transit Zone* through the language of ethnography and performativity, and works which intervene in sites of the *Transit Zone*, transitorily or as permanent public art pieces. I take the ways in which these art works suspend reality and recombine the rules of the *Transit Zone* to critically reflect upon it.

⁹¹ Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 20 – 21.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 3.

Chapter 2 : The *Transit Zone* and the Nation-State

In the last sixty years the contemporary nation-state system has been a topic of much analysis and theorisation. Ideas of territory, nationhood, sovereignty, citizenship, economics, violence, globalisation, colonisation and the rise of trans-national governing bodies have been much discussed. The dialogues I focus on are concerned with the construction of territory and citizenship, and their impact on the creation of the *Transit Zone*. Of particular interest to me is how the nation-state creates and manages its borders and citizens in relation to the right to legitimate movement. To do this I draw on theorists such as Saskia Sassen, John Meyer and Robert Jackson. These theorists approach the idea of nation-state and international interaction through the analysis of national and international rights, laws and obligations – a juridic analysis.

The juridic conception defines the territory and the citizens of the nation-state through the development and implementation of law. National laws provide structures which legitimate, and conversely de-legitimate the actions of governments and peoples. Contemporary society interacts with juridic premises on individual, institutional, national and international levels. National laws, which provide the structure for government, are integral to the smooth functioning of our globalised culture and economy. As Sassen, in her book *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*,⁹³ and Meyer, Boli, Thomas and Ramirez in their article *World Society and the Nation-State*,⁹⁴ argue, the nation-state system enables the development and implementation of world organisations, commerce and other networks that are closely linked with globalisation. Additionally, they argue that the demands of a global society and economy reciprocally shape the ongoing standardisation of the nation-state as an independent actor. In this chapter I explore the impact of national and international interests on territory, citizenship and geography at the site of the *Transit Zone*.

⁹³ Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*.

⁹⁴ John W. Meyer et al., 'World Society and the Nation-State', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 103, no. 1 (July 1997).

2.1 : Territory

The contemporary world polity is predicated on an overriding conception of the nation-state as a territorially bounded, self-governing country, with “the right to exercise jurisdiction over its territory and over all persons and things within it.”⁹⁵ This particular construction of the nation-state has been dominant in world culture since 1945, codified by such organisations as the United Nations, and has become more formalised over the intervening period. The conventions of international air travel have contributed to this reinforcement of the contemporary nation-state system, as I will explore in detail later.

Historically, the nation-state was defined by the body of the monarch, which formed its centre. In this older form of nation-state, borders were more porous and indistinct, the rule radiated from the centre out, fading and mingling at the edges. The boundaries of the state were mutable, with conflicts, colonisation, marriages, inheritances, purchases and treaties changing sovereignty over territories without any regard for the local inhabitants. In fact, Robert Jackson and Mark Zacher, in *The Territorial Covenant: International Society and the Stabilization of Boundaries*, assert that “Precisely surveyed national borders only came into clear view in the eighteenth century.”⁹⁶ Accurate surveying and mapping techniques had a significant influence on the fixing of national boundaries and are closely linked to the rise of the modern nation-state.⁹⁷

Jackson argues that surveyed, bureaucratic boundaries have become fixed to the point that in formerly colonised areas they bear little relationship to ethnic and tribal divisions; rather they follow the colonial internal and external administrative boundaries. Splitting nation-state territory along internal administrative boundaries has become the normative action in

⁹⁵ United Nations International Law Commission, ‘Draft Declaration on Rights and Duties of States’ (United Nations, 1949), http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/draft%20articles/2_1_1949.pdf (accessed March 10, 2008)

⁹⁶ Robert H. Jackson and Mark W. Zacher, ‘The Territorial Covenant: International Society and the Stabilization of Boundaries’ (Working Paper No. 15, Centre for International Relations, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1997), <http://www.iir.ubc.ca/pdf/workingpapers/webwp15.pdf> (accessed May 9, 2006).

⁹⁷ J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

cases like the dissolution of the USSR. Likewise the subsequent division of the former Yugoslavia into Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Bosnia occurred along existing administrative boundaries rather than cultural and ethnic divisions. This demonstrates a fixity to national boundaries that is in contrast to an earlier fluidity of territory. The fixity of colonial administrative boundaries in the face of the arbitrary cultural divisions they perform, and post-1945 territorial definitions, demonstrate an international vested interest in territorial stability.

The shift to the modern nation-state has involved a gradual consolidation and centralisation of territory and population under a sovereign government. Benedict Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities*, writes that “In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory.”⁹⁸ World society has institutionalised the nation-state system and rarely tolerates any attack on the territorial ownership of a nation-state. This institutionalised and reciprocal legitimation enables a nation-state to both maintain the integrity of the state and interact on a global scale with other states.⁹⁹

In addition to the codification of territory, the juridic state is based on the nation-state’s sole authority to legitimate and to delegate an action or right. These internationally recognised actions and rights include the nation-state’s right to: formalised violence, for example externally by an army, and internally by the police force; internal discipline, for example the internal legal and penal system; taxation; contract with other nation-states; and, of particular interest to this thesis, the right to control movement into and out of its borders.¹⁰⁰ Sassen argues that “one scale, the national, aggregates most of what there is to be had in terms of TAR [Territory, Authority and Rights]. Though never absolutely, each is constituted as a national domain and, further, exclusively so.”¹⁰¹ However,

⁹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 19.

⁹⁹ John W. Meyer, 'The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State', in *Institutional Structure : Constituting State, Society and the Individual*, eds. John W. Meyer et al. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987), 42.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley Waterman, 'Boundaries and the Changing World Political Order', in *Global Boundaries*, ed. Clive H. Schofield (London: Routledge, 1991), 32.

¹⁰¹ Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, 7.

every control system generates its own lines of flight. Violence, movement and economic activity, to name a few, can all occur outside and in avoidance of state control.

To function well, sovereignty, or the desire for sovereignty, requires international legitimation. Much of contemporary society crosses national boundaries, economically, culturally and physically. In addition to the United Nations and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) directly associated with it, trade agreements, military treaties and international conventions abound. These global interactions are facilitated by the institutionalised understanding of the rights of a nation-state to negotiate for its people and territory and enforce its law over its territory and people. The approval of the world polity can enable or prevent a nation-state in its involvement in the international arena. At the time of writing there exists a number of nation-states not recognised by the United Nations and partially or wholly unrecognised by other nation-states.¹⁰² For example the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is only recognised as a sovereign state by Turkey, and is effectively internationally embargoed in all fields: political, economic, cultural, social and sporting.¹⁰³

The *Transit Zone* exists through the international territorial covenant of nation-states and at the same time contributes to its construction. The *Transit Zone* both demonstrates and disrupts the territorial construction of the nation-state. Border processing for international air travel treats the airside of the airport and interior of the aeroplane as external to the nation-state. However, the land on which the airside of the airport is situated is not excised from a nation-state's territory. This construction of space has occurred via the evolution of the international conventions governing air travel.

¹⁰² Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Republic of China (Taiwan), Somaliland, South Ossetia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Transnistria are all states unrecognised by the United Nations. However the Republic of China (Taiwan) is independently recognised by many nation-states.

¹⁰³ Susan Sachs, 'Greek Cypriots Reject a U.N. Peace Plan', *The New York Times*, April 25, 2004, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9903E3DB133AF936A15757C0A9629C8B63&scp=6&sq=Turkish+republic+of+Northern+cyprus&st=nyt>. (accessed March 10, 2008)

Although, historically a nation–state could define the edges of its territory through surveyed lines, maps and natural geographic features, with the development of air travel the border could occur anywhere inside the nation–state. The solidity of national territory became permeable and in response nation–states developed internal micro–borders, represented by “airports, floating customs and immigration checks, post and passport offices, armed service installations, and internal revenue institutions.”¹⁰⁴ These micro–borders are designed to control legitimate movement of people and goods, and prevent illegitimate movement. The micro–borders of the airport are where I identify the borders of the *Transit Zone*.

The political, physical and conceptual differences between land and airport borders are explored by Francis Alÿs in his 1997 artwork *The Loop*. In 1997 Alÿs was invited to take part in the annual exhibition *inSITE* which occurs on the border between San Diego, United States and Tijuana, Mexico. *The Loop* was created as a response to the complex history of the land border between Tijuana and San Diego. Alÿs’s work was simple in concept: to make a *paseo* from Tijuana to San Diego without crossing the United States–Mexico border. The artist’s description of the project reads:

“In order to go from Tijuana to San Diego without crossing the Mexico/USA border, I will follow a perpendicular route away from the fence and circumnavigate the globe heading 67° SE, NE, and SE again until meeting my departure point. The items generated by the journey will attest to the fulfilment of the task. The project will remain free and clear of all critical implications beyond the physical displacement of the artist.

The project was completed between June 1 and July 5, 1997.¹⁰⁵

Over the course of thirty–five days, he flew from Tijuana to San Diego around the Pacific Rim via Mexico city, Panama City, Santiago, Auckland, Sydney, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Seoul,

¹⁰⁴ Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, 'Nation, State and Identity at International Borders', in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*, eds. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Sally Yard, ed., *inSITE97: Private Time in Public Space* (San Diego: Installation Gallery, 1998), 66.

Anchorage and Vancouver. Finally he flew from Los Angeles to San Diego. While the line-up of cities sounds impressive, the artist spent the majority of his time in aeroplanes, airports, and airport hotels. During his extended *paseo* Alÿs emailed the curator, Olivier Debroise, with updates on his trip. He gathered evidence that his journey was performed: “receipts, travel documents, postcards, emails, photos, passport”,¹⁰⁶ standard items that any traveller creates and collects during their time away. These items were presented as an archive in a file box in the *Centro Cultural Tijuana*, Figure 31.

Conceptually the work engages in an extended movement through time in an effort to avoid a problematic border. Alÿs asserts that the work refrains from any critical implications outside his physical displacement. This is, as Kierkegaard posits, a way of discussing the general situation through intensely engaging with its exception.¹⁰⁷ Alÿs is highlighting the issues of the Tijuana/San Diego border by interacting intensely with the alternate borders which can be crossed. In utilising the micro-border Alÿs engages with the idea of a land-based border at the edge of the nation-state.

Land borders are very closely connected with the negotiated relationships between neighbouring territories and concern themselves with the possession of space as well as control of movement. The histories of these relationships can make borders contentious places. In cases like the Mexico–United States border, this contention arises from a history of colonisation. The border was originally signposted in the 1890s by a series of stone markers, each one placed to be visible from the last. Currently it is demarcated by a fence that runs down into the sea dividing the two nation-states. This fence is heavily policed to control illegal

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁰⁷ See discussion of this in the Introduction.



Figure 31: Francis Alÿs, *The Loop*, drawings made during the paseo, 1997. Image taken from *Report (not announcement)* a PDF project by BAK in collaboration with e-flux. <http://www.bak-utrecht.nl/report/>.

migrants. The economic situations on either side of the border are widely divergent and Mexicans crossing the border legally are routinely treated with suspicion.¹⁰⁸

Air travel relocates the border away from the edge of the nation-state. Although this relocation sidesteps issues of inequality between neighbours and historical land ownership, micro-borders are still intimately connected to the construction of nation-state territory in relation to other nation-states. The airport micro-border, located inside the territory of the nation-state, leads to many different countries, concerning itself with broader international movement. It is a conceptual border, as opposed to the literal wall of the border between Mexico and the United States, but like the land borders, it is in place to control the movement of people and goods.

The construction of the airport micro-border began in 1910 with the Paris Conference on aviation. Eugene Sochor, in his book *The Politics of International Aviation*,¹⁰⁹ writes that this conference was dominated by two opposing views on the 'rights and privileges of flying'.¹¹⁰ One argued that complete freedom should be applied to the entire airspace above a national territory while the other sought to have this freedom restricted. The latter opinion was exemplified in the 1919 Paris Convention which "in its first article proclaimed that each state has 'complete and exclusive sovereignty of the airspace above its territory.' This has since become a fundamental principle of international law in matters of civil aviation."¹¹¹ This document was later replaced by the Convention on International Civil Aviation (also known as the Chicago Convention) drafted and signed in

¹⁰⁸ There is extensive discussion of the Mexico/United States border in the media, Government documents, popular literature and film, art and in academic discourses such as Border Studies. In looking at the Mexico/United States border I referenced a number of sources including: Yard, *inSITE97: Private Time in Public Space*; Deborah Waller Meyers, 'Does "Smarter" Lead to Safer? An Assessment of the US Border Accords with Canada and Mexico', *International Migration 4* (2003); and the documentary film by Chantal Akerman *From the Other Side* (2002).

¹⁰⁹ Eugene Sochor, *The Politics of International Aviation* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

1944 in Chicago – a document that has had a profound and ongoing effect on international codification of air travel.¹¹²

The Chicago Convention reinforces the international codification of the territorial nation-state. For example, the initial articles confirm the reciprocal recognitions of sovereignty and territory that I earlier argued are integral to the ways in which nation-states interrelate.

Article 1 : Sovereignty : “The contracting States recognize that every State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory.”

Article 2 : Territory : “For the purposes of this Convention the territory of a State shall be deemed to be the land areas and territorial waters adjacent thereto under the sovereignty, suzerainty, protection or mandate of such State.”¹¹³

These two articles provide a standardised definition of what a nation-state can claim as territory: the land, adjacent waters and all airspace above the land and adjacent water. The recognition of sovereignty over the airspace enables nation-states to control who flies over their territory and where they may fly. Landing and commercial carriage rights of airlines are negotiated as bilateral agreements between nation-states and conform to what are known of as the “freedoms of the air” as listed in the Chicago Convention.¹¹⁴ The Convention also specifies, in Articles 10 and

¹¹² International Civil Aviation Organization, 'Convention on International Civil Aviation, Signed at Chicago, on 7 December 1944 (Chicago Convention)', 1944.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ These can be summarised as “the exchange of overflying rights, the first freedom; rights to land for technical reasons, the second freedom; rights to carry traffic to/from the home state, third/fourth freedoms; and rights to carry traffic to/from third countries en route, the fifth freedom.” Pat Hanlon, *Global Airlines Competition in a Transnational Industry* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1997), 75.

Additional freedoms of the air are negotiated between states, but are not formally defined in the Chicago Convention. These additional freedoms are considered essentially combinations of third and fourth freedom rights. They are: rights of an airline to carry traffic between two foreign countries via its own country, the sixth freedom; rights of an airline to operate entirely outside of its own country, carrying traffic from point a to b without landing in its own country, seventh freedom; the right for an airline service originating or terminating in the home country to carry traffic between two points in a foreign state (this is called cabotage), the eighth freedom; and the ninth freedom, the right of a foreign airline to carry cabotage traffic entirely within the state, effectively allowing a foreign

13, that aircraft entering, not overflying, a nation-state must, if the nation-state's laws demand it, land at a designated customs airport, and that all regulations relating to "entry, clearance, immigration, passports, customs, and quarantine" must be complied with by or on behalf of the passengers, crew or cargo on board the aircraft on arrival and departure.¹¹⁵ While the conventions surrounding air travel are not themselves laws, they codify the laws that the signatories are expected to enact in the internal legislation of each nation-state, thereby further reinforcing the logic of the juridic nation-state.¹¹⁶ These Chicago Convention articles are the basis for the evolution of the *Transit Zone*. By providing a worldwide norm of entry into a country based on entry regulations at the point of landing, the Chicago Convention specifies the existence of the micro-border. It also codifies the rights of a nation-state to scrutinise entrants at any point of landing.

The border has been constructed in diverse ways to meet the challenges presented by international air travel. Borders are used to define entry and exit points and the limits at which national law and interest apply. The border at the airport is physically manifested by the legal processing of passengers in and out of the nation-state by a government official. The examination of the passport, and the registering of exit or entry is the point of transition in and out of the nation-state. This interaction reveals a complex negotiation of sovereignty over territory. For a micro-border to function, a portion of territory is conceptually and bureaucratically separated from the normative space of the nation-state. This strategic

carrier to act as a national carrier. Simon Hutcheson, *An Introduction to Air Transport Political, Economic, Operational and Technical Perspectives of Civil Aviation* (Maroochydore Australia: Aviation Training International, 1996), 10 – 11.
¹¹⁵ Chicago Convention.

¹¹⁶ A selection of these conventions is:

'Convention on International Civil Aviation, Signed at Chicago, on 7 December 1944' (Chicago Convention) which formalises the administration of international air travel

'The Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules Relating to International Carriage by Air, Signed At Warsaw on 12 October 1929, as amended by The Protocol Done at The Hague on 28 September 1955, as Amended by the Protocol Done at Guatemala City, on 8 March 1971' (Warsaw Convention)

'Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft, Signed at the Hague, on 16 December 1970' (Hague Convention)

'Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, Signed at Tokyo, on 14 September 1963' (Tokyo Convention)

'Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation, Signed at Montreal, on 23 September 1971' (Montreal Convention)

suspension of sovereignty is an international phenomenon and is the basis of my argument that the *Transit Zone* is a site excluded from the normative space of the nation-state.

The nature of exclusion as a legal and political device is explored by the influential Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.¹¹⁷ Agamben undertakes an analysis of contemporary political theory which argues that Western politics is based on a premise of inclusion and exclusion. Drawing on the German philosopher Carl Schmitt's political theory,¹¹⁸ and an analysis of Greek and Roman political philosophy, Agamben's analysis of sovereignty is based on a tension between interior and exterior as embodied by the sovereign. He argues the sovereign defines that which is inside the law and that which is excluded from it. Agamben states at the very beginning of the book, "The paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact that the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order."¹¹⁹ In contemporary society it is the nation-state system, rather than any titular sovereign that is both outside and inside the juridical order. It creates the laws, and so exists outside them, but it is also created by the laws, therefore exists entirely within them. In fact, Agamben argues:

What is at issue in the sovereign exception is not so much the control or neutralization of an excess as the creation and definition of the very space in which the juridico-political order can have validity. In this sense, the sovereign exception is the fundamental localization (*Ortung*), which does not limit itself to distinguishing what is inside from what is outside but instead traces a threshold (the state of exception) between the two, on the basis of which outside and inside, the normal situation and chaos, enter into these complex topological relations that make the validity of the juridical order possible.¹²⁰

Agamben is expanding Schmitt's idea of a state of exception. In Schmitt's book *Political Theology : Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, he

¹¹⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

¹¹⁸ Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*.

¹¹⁹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 15.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

argues that “The exception is that which cannot be subsumed; it defies general codification, but it simultaneously reveals a specifically juridical formal element: the decision in absolute purity. The exception appears in its absolute form when it is a question of creating a situation in which juridical rules can be valid.”¹²¹

The exception creates the space in which the law can function. It does so by defining what is outside the normative space of the sovereign state. Schmitt argues that the rule excludes the individual case or exception from itself. It excludes that which breaks the law from the normative space of society and places the individual who contravenes the law outside that normative space. As Agamben asserts “The law has a regulative character and is a ‘rule’ not because it commands and proscribes, but because it must first of all create the sphere of its own reference in real life and *make that reference regular*.”¹²²

The convolutions that sovereign territory goes through at the micro-border, in the creation of the *Transit Zone*, are illustrative of the sovereign exception. Without the excluded space of the *Transit Zone*, nation-states could not impose systems of control on international air travel. The nation-state, in suspending itself, creates the *Transit Zone* and maintains itself in relation to the *Transit Zone*. Through this strategic suspension of aspects of national territory an ‘outside’ to the nation-state is created. The outside of the *Transit Zone* reaffirms the validity of the juridico-political construction of the nation-state. By creating the ‘rule’ which excludes the space of the *Transit Zone* from the space of the nation-state the reference point of the border is created. Both the normative space of the nation-state and the right of the nation-state to control movement are confirmed, made regular.

This territorial exclusion does not only apply in the *Transit Zone*. It has a historical basis in maritime law and the ‘no man’s land’ of land borders. However, with the *Transit Zone* the exclusion occurs inside the nation-state’s territory, and disrupts the nation-state’s sovereignty over its legally demarcated territory. Importantly, the nation-state does not give

¹²¹ Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, 13.

¹²² Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 26.

up its juridical power and sovereign right to the land on which the airport is sited, neither does it release any rights to the airspace above its sovereign territory; it holds itself in abeyance in regards to those who have been processed beyond its borders. However, this ‘outside’ is placed within the confines of the nation–state system and is constructed through international covenants which maintain its relationship to the nation–state. It is a complex relationship which makes territorial sovereignty in contemporary society possible. The acknowledged ‘outside’ demonstrates the convention of territorial sovereignty while also regularising the exclusion of carefully defined pieces of territory from the rule and protection of nation–state systems.

Agamben states that one of the primary theses of his book is “that in our age, the state of exception comes more and more to the foreground as the fundamental political structure and ultimately begins to become the rule.”¹²³ In conclusion, Agamben argues that the detention camp or concentration camp has become an ongoing and “fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West.”¹²⁴ Power is wielded through the right to ‘ban’, to exclude an individual from the normative legal space of society.

Excluding a physical location from the normative laws of a nation–state has become a prevalent way of avoiding the obligations of national and international law. The inhabitants of that location are “entirely removed from the law and from juridical oversight.”¹²⁵ These individuals outside the law cannot claim the law’s protection. This *rule* of exception creates what Agamben calls the *camp*, a name he derives from the Nazi concentration camps.¹²⁶ From the extreme position of the concentration camp, in which the “very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection”¹²⁷ are suspended, the vulnerability of these rights can be seen. In the *camp* the exception becomes the norm.

The exception of border spaces from the juridical space of the nation–state is increasingly used to avoid spontaneous refugee claims at a

¹²³ Ibid., 20.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 181.

¹²⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4.

¹²⁶ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 170.

nation–state border.¹²⁸ Margaret Young, in a report for the Canadian Government wrote “Such movements affect the ability of a sovereign state to control its borders and are seen as threatening on that ground alone.”¹²⁹ A spontaneous refugee claimant must reach the sovereign territory of a nation–state to lodge their application. Hence countries such as Australia have excluded fringe territories, such as islands within sovereign waters, to forestall possible refugee claims.¹³⁰ In the case of the *Transit Zone* there exists a practice of holding the individuals on the airside of the airport. For example in Frankfurt airport, refugee claimants are held outside nation–state territory, so that they are unable to legally make a claim or avail themselves of basic rights enshrined in German law.¹³¹

A similar situation exists in the ‘international zone’ at Roissy–Charles–de–Gaulle Airport in Paris. In 1991 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe stated that that this zone “has no legal background and must

¹²⁸ The arrival of refugee claimants at the airport border is described as ‘spontaneous’ in the sense that they occur outside normal immigration channels and in an unpredictable fashion. They enter the *Transit Zone* as a ‘normal’ visitor, making a claim for refugee status when they arrive at border control at their point of destination.

The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as : A person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.

Individual nation–states participate in resettlement schemes, where individuals in refugee camps are resettled to a third country. In 2006 Australia granted permanent residence to 13,400 refugees under UNHCR oversight. These individuals enter Australia legally.

¹²⁹ Margaret Young, 'Refugee Protection: The International Context' (Law and Government Division, Government of Canada, 1991, revised 1998). <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/bp280-e.htm> (accessed March 11, 2008).

¹³⁰ National Communications Branch Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 'Fact Sheet 81. Australia's Excised Offshore Places', <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/81excised.htm>, (accessed June 3, 2007).

¹³¹ Elisabeth Zimmermann, 'Algerian Refugee Commits Suicide in Frankfurt Airport's Asylum Zone', <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/may2000/asyl-m24.shtml>, (accessed June 14, 2006); and 'Aktiv Gegen Abschiebung! Kein Mensch Ist Illegal!' <http://www.aktivgegenabschiebung.de/chrono.html>, accessed 14 June 2006.

be considered as a device to avoid obligations.”¹³² Switzerland also holds potential refugee claimants in an international zone.

When it is not possible to decide immediately on entry into the territory, the Federal Office for Refugees issues airport applicants with a so-called ‘provisional refusal of entry’. In such cases, applicants must remain in the airport, normally in the transit zone, until a decision is made. Special rooms have been built in the transit zone of Geneva and Zürich airports. Food is supplied by the airport police. Asylum seekers held there are free to move around within the transit zone.¹³³

The exclusion space of the *Transit Zone* is also a confinement space. It is a defined zone external to the nation-state but held within it. The individual is corralled inside and the perimeter is guarded so that he or she can not exit via alternate crossing points to that of the conceptual bureaucratic border. Agamben cites Maurice Blanchot on this point. “Maurice Blanchot spoke of society’s attempt to ‘confine the outside’ (*enfermer le dehors*), that is to constitute it in an ‘interiority of expectation or of exception’. Confronted with an excess, the system interiorizes what exceeds it through an interdiction and in this way ‘designates itself as exterior to itself’.”¹³⁴

By creating the *Transit Zone* as an exclusion held within the interiority of the nation-state global covenant, the nation-state attempts to confine the outside within its control. Confinement is achieved through physical means as well as conceptual. The architectural systems of the airport maintain secured separations between the interior of the *Transit Zone* and the exterior. Those who are held inside the Transit Zone are effectively quarantined from the outside and encounter only each other and airport staff with appropriate clearances.

¹³² European Court of Human Rights ‘Amuur v. France’, 17/1995/523/609: (1996), <http://hei.unige.ch/~clapham/hrdoc/docs/echramuurcase.html>. (accessed March 11, 2008)

¹³³ European Council on Refugees and Exiles, ‘Switzerland’, <http://www.ecre.org/drc/switzerland.shtml>, (accessed June 15, 2007).

¹³⁴ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 18. Agamben quotes from Maurice Blanchot *L’entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 292.

This state of exception, in which passengers exist, outside one nation-state but not yet in another, has been explored in recent art.¹³⁵ In the 1998 – 2000 multimedia theatre work, *Jet Lag*, Figure 32, the separation of the *Transit Zone* from the normative space of the nation-state is examined and turned to the protagonists' advantage. Created by Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio in collaboration with The Builders Association, *Jet Lag* presents two extreme travel narratives, or rather narratives of suspended movement based on two news items from the 1960s. The first act of the performance shows a protagonist who projects to the world the illusion of movement through daily video reports while stuck in one place, the middle of the ocean (see Figure 18 on page 35). His stasis is contrasted in the second act where two protagonists, by constantly moving, manage to stay in one place, the *Transit Zone*. Both acts take place outside the nation-state, that is, on international waters and in the excluded space of the *Transit Zone*.

The second act of the performance is of particular interest to my discussion of the *Transit Zone*. This act uses the real story of an American grandmother, Sarah Krassnoff, who kidnapped her grandson (in the performance the two are called Doris and Lincoln Schwartz). In an attempt to elude the boy's father, they spent a period of six months constantly flying between Amsterdam and New York. Finally, after 167 flights, Krassnoff died on the plane, from jet lag. The performance takes place entirely inside the *Transit Zone*, moving between the plane and the airport. The Krassnoff/Schwartzs remain constantly in transit, outside the nation-state borders.

The grandmother and grandson, in *Jet Lag*, take advantage of the statelessness of international travel, existing in an indeterminate zone. In doing so, they illustrate the confusion of being outside and simultaneously

¹³⁵ It has also emerged in popular culture. For example in the 2004 film *The Terminal* (directed by Steven Spielberg), a stateless passenger gets stuck in the *Transit Zone*.



Figure 32: The Builders Association and Diller + Scofidio, *Jet Lag*, 1998 – 2000, a cross media performance. Image courtesy Diller + Scofidio.

inside a country. The Krassnoff/Schwartz's attempt to become invisible to and unreachable by the nation-state, to avoid the application of national laws on the custody of a minor. By trying to exist in a space officially not of the state they are attempting to exist in exception to the laws of the state – or at least one law. The grandmother and grandson compound the state of exception by never arriving, by remaining constantly in transit. In effect, they remain in one place, as they never consummate the movement from country to country by entering the nation-state, that is, exiting the *Transit Zone*. They are engaged in a constant movement to achieve the stationary. The characters exist in a suspended state generated by fear of discovery and constant transit. They are in limbo.

The paranoia of discovery is acted out to the camera and surveillance equipment. The performance takes place in a set created by video footage, animations, and closed circuit TV projections. The grandmother and grandson remain still while behind them the animations move, providing the locations and contexts, Figure 33. We watch the Krassnoff/Schwartzs on stage performing live as well as on the screen via surveillance footage. The Krassnoff/Schwartzs cringe in fear when their names are called over the loudspeakers, the grandson makes faces to the camera, mocking and denying it, Figure 34. Diller said, of their intertwining of media and performance, “We are very interested in the role of media onstage as a tool and also as a topic of the work, an object of its own analysis and representation. *Jet Lag* is as much about the use of media to tell two stories as it is two stories in which media plays the prime protagonist.”¹³⁶

I do not know whether or not it is actually possible to achieve an ongoing state of exception, outside the nation-state, in the manner that the Krassnoff/Schwartzs do in *Jet Lag*. But the extreme nature of how they

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio interview by Laurie Anderson, in *Scanning: the aberrant architectures of diller + scofidio*. ed K. Michael Hays and Aaron Betsky (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003), 159



Figure 33: (top) The Builders Association and Diller + Scofidio, *Jet Lag*, 1998 – 2000, a cross media performance.

Figure 34: (bottom) The Builders Association and Diller + Scofidio, *Jet Lag*, 1998 – 2000, a cross media performance.

inhabit the suspended site of the *Transit Zone* demonstrates the conceptual and legal shift that enables international air travel. The general action of the passenger is to leave the *Transit Zone*. *Jet Lag* presents an exception to this, and in doing so reveals the excluded nature of the *Transit Zone* and the abnormality of being outside nation-state territory.

The soundtrack of *Jet Lag* emphasises the strain of existing constantly outside the nation-state, in a transitory environment; the constant music pulses with anxiety, and a subtle mechanical whirring underlays the sound track reinforcing the anxiety. Sarah Krassnoff/Doris Schwartz endeavours to normalise her abnormal situation, obsessively cleaning the boarding lounges before she sleeps in them, in an attempt to control her environment. Throughout the performance Sarah Krassnoff/Doris Schwartz visibly deteriorates, becoming more and more confused and fragile. The burden of avoiding notice while being confined within a surveillance space unhinges her. Her grandson retreats into yet another interior space, his computer games.

Gilles Deleuze, in his book *Foucault*, argues that “It is by excluding or placing outside that the assemblages confine something, and this holds as much for physical interiority as physical confinement.”¹³⁷ Both the grandmother’s and grandson’s retreat into the interiority of their minds and game is an expression of their (self-imposed) confinement in the *Transit Zone*. At the end of *Jet Lag* the media-generated environment morphs into the internal environment of the computer game. Sarah Krassnoff/Doris Schwartz’s eventual death is represented on screen by the computer game, a flight simulator, Figure 35. The plane crashes into the ground expressing the grandmother’s failure to survive her confinement in the environment of the *Transit Zone*.

2.2 : Citizenship

Up to this point I have focussed my discussion on territorial aspects of the nation-state. As I earlier defined it, the nation-state is a “territorially

¹³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 43.



Figure 35: The Builders Association and Diller + Scofidio, *Jet Lag*, 1998 – 2000, a cross media performance. Image courtesy Diller + Scofidio.

bounded, self-governing country, with ‘the right to exercise jurisdiction over its territory and over all persons and things within it’.”¹³⁸

John Torpey in his book *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* argues that, in order for a nation-state to exercise jurisdiction over the persons and goods within it, it “must be in a position to locate and lay claim to people and goods.”¹³⁹ Likewise George M. Thomas asserts in *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society and the Individual* that “The individual is both the source of modern state authority and the primary object of its legitimate purposes.”¹⁴⁰ This idea is represented in *Jet Lag* by the Krassnoff/Schwartzs’ endeavours to disappear. The security cameras which record her actions and display them on the screen behind her, and near the end of the play, the broadcast requesting her grandson to “dial 1232 for a very important message”¹⁴¹ demonstrate her inability to avoid being incorporated into the nation-state system.

The nation-state system seeks to establish the identity of its population for a variety of reasons which reflect the nation-state’s relationship to the individual as both a constituent part of itself and a subject to be regulated. A nation-state’s objectives for identifying its populace include, but are not limited to:

the extraction of military service, taxes, and labour; the facilitation of law enforcement; the control of ‘brain drain’ (i.e., limitation of departure in order to forestall the loss of workers with particularly valued skills); the restriction of access to areas deemed ‘off limits’ by the state, whether for ‘security’ reasons or to protect people from unexpected or unacknowledged harms; the exclusion, surveillance, and containment of ‘undesirable elements,’ whether there are of ethnic, national, racial, economic, religious, ideological,

¹³⁸ See page 66.

¹³⁹ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*, 11.

¹⁴⁰ George M. Thomas et al., eds., *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society and the Individual* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987), 35.

¹⁴¹ The Builders Association and Diller + Scofidio, *Jet Lag*, a cross media performance.

or medical character; and the supervision of growth, spatial distribution, and social composition of populations within their territories.¹⁴²

The means of determining citizenship vary from nation to nation. However, methods include birth in a nation-state, descent from a citizen, and grant of citizenship by the nation-state (generally as a result of long-term migration). To be without legally-defined citizenship and documentary proof of this creates immense problems for an individual. In contemporary society, the ability to prove one's identity is a basic requirement of gaining access to most services, both corporate and state-based, let alone the right to cross a nation-state border.

While nation-states, since their inception, have long tried to identify and control the movements of their population, it is only recently that states have had the administrative capacity to regulate identity and movement. Torpey argues that the modern identity and passport system is the product of "centuries-long labours of slow, painstaking bureaucratic construction."¹⁴³ Identity documents have been enhanced by the creation of computerised databases and inter-departmental data sharing, both within and between nation-states. This increase in information capacity and sharing allows participating nation-states to verify identity and aids the regulation of legitimate movement by the nation-state.

Developed specifically to facilitate international movement, the passport fulfils a different purpose to the internal identification document. The passport, in conjunction with the issuing of visas and permits, has become an international system exogenous to any particular nation-state. It is now a standardised document designed to attest to the identity and citizenship of an individual outside their nation-state of origin. It represents a request from one nation-state to all other nation-states that the bearer of the passport is accorded legal rights and freedom of passage. This codification of the passport is administered by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), an Non-Governmental

¹⁴² Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*, 7.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Organisation that sets the standards for internationally acceptable passports as specified in Article 37 and Annex 9 of the Chicago Convention.¹⁴⁴ The international codification of identity documents reinforces the nation-state system through the reciprocal recognition of the identity documents they issue.

By embracing its populace, the nation-state also creates the potential for exclusion. It endeavours to ban from its systems those who it does not want. The international accords on air travel, and their implementation in the nation-state's interest, control access to movement. Individuals must hold the appropriate passport and an automatic or issued visa to exit one nation-state and enter another. In the case of the *Transit Zone*, these documents must be presented to be able to enter into a state of exception, and to re-exit it. Through citizenship, immigration decisions made in advance of the border and the control of movement over the border, the systems of international travel create subclasses of desirable and undesirable movements.

As I argued earlier, the border has become conceptual, occurring at the moment of bureaucratic processing on the border. However, this is only the final point of processing. The beginning of the process can occur months or years in advance when the passenger begins to apply for visas and purchase their tickets. Didier Bigo and Elspeth Guild, in their article *Policing at a Distance: Schengen Visa Policies*, argue that for many, border policing occurs remotely at embassies and visa sections. A virtual border is created through the visa application process that is more abstract than the micro-border of the *Transit Zone*. Public perception of border control focuses on the micro-border at the airport which has a physical presence and demarcates the inside and outside of the nation-state. Bigo and Guild assert that:

Against this reasoning which is focused on the official physical border, the concept of border is breaking away from territory in the sense that it is no longer the physical boundary, the limit or the

¹⁴⁴ 'Specifications and Guidance Material (SGM) Section Status of Annex 9 (Facilitation) Related Guidance Material', http://www.icao.int/icao/en/atb/sgm/Annex_9_Status.htm, (accessed June 13, 2007).

envelope. This argument enables one to understand how the individual 'activates' various controls by movement and thereby meets the virtual border long before physically crossing the border of sovereignty.¹⁴⁵

Decisions that were traditionally made at the physical border are now carried out by immigration officials in embassies and high commissions outside the respective state's national borders, and are made in reference to the state mechanisms for immigration and security within the borders of the destination nation-state. Scrutiny and verification of identity, as well as evaluation of desirability, can occur well before an individual reaches the airport. Immigration policies, and from them, visa decisions, are essentially acts of differentiating between who is desirable and undesirable. Depending on a nation-state's immigration policy, assessment of an individual's access to temporary (visitor, work, student) and permanent (residence) visas and permits, varies. Citizenship, personal economic position, employment, criminal record, family ties and travel history impact on an individual's ease of travel. Additionally, the economic and political position of a nation-state changes the likelihood of its citizens receiving permission to travel to and enter another nation-state. Nation-states form bilateral agreements waiving visa requirements for their citizens based on political and economic grounds. Nationals from some countries easily acquire visas due to the political and economic status of their nation-state where other nationalities encounter difficulties due to political and economic factors. Individuals who have the most to gain by moving from a economically disadvantaged and/or politically unstable nation to a nation in a stronger economic and political position are the ones who find it the most difficult to legitimately travel.

In 2004, I created the two-channel video work *Atrium*, Figure 36, an exploration of the split between countries whose citizens automatically receive a visa waiver and the greater proportion of the world's citizens who must apply for visas to travel. At the bottom of a long video shot of the central atrium between two embassies – the New Zealand Embassy

¹⁴⁵ Didier Bigo and Elspeth Guild, 'Policing at a Distance: Schengen Visa Policies' in *Controlling Frontiers: Free Movement into and within Europe*, eds. Didier Bigo and Elspeth Guild (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), 234.

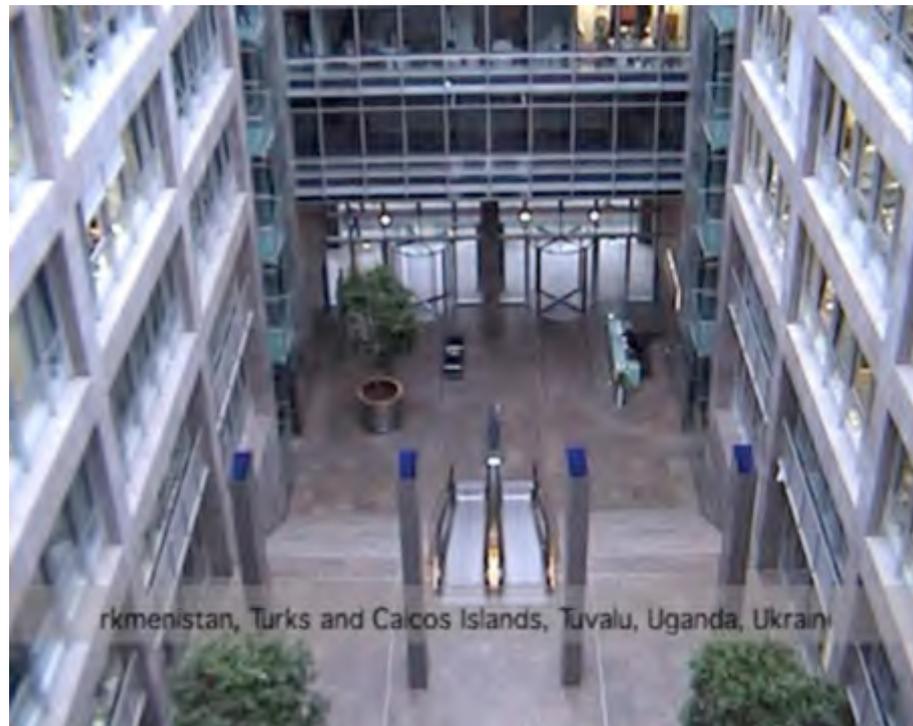


Figure 36: Melissa Laing *Atrium*, 2004, two channel video, 6.30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

and the South African Embassy – scrolls a list of countries whose nationals require visas. Each of these countries' citizens have been, as a group, deemed suspicious and considered likely to stay beyond the terms of their permits. The nationals of these countries must prove their innocence even before they reach the border of the *Transit Zone*. Even the building in which the embassies are located has controlled entry. Each channel of the video work shows identical video footage shot from a high angle at the back of the building.

In the video individuals enter the building, some progressing straight to the lifts and others go to the building attendant to be screened prior to being escorted to a lift and allowed to ascend. The slowly revolving doors of the atrium and the movement of the elevators and escalators in the space become a metaphor for the aspired-to international movement, and the attendant's prescreening plays out the later checks and controls that will occur at all points along the process of international air travel.

This work also explores how the nation-state delegates the control of movement to non-state actors. The attendant's role of prescreening in the atrium is re-enacted at the airport by the airline. At check-in the airline sights the individual's passport and visa. Nation-states impose financial penalties on airlines which transport passengers with improper documentation, an act which transfers the responsibility for regulating movement to the airline. More recently, many nation-states have linked airline boarding systems to immigration databases which verify the passenger's visa. These systems are known as Advanced Passenger Screening or Advance Passenger Information Systems.¹⁴⁶ Airlines, acting on behalf of the nation-state, will refuse to issue a boarding pass without first having received prior approval that the passenger will be allowed to exit the *Transit Zone*, into the destination nation-state. Advanced Passenger Screening effectively processes the individual's data double

¹⁴⁶ Advanced Passenger Screening and Advanced Passenger Information Systems are two names for systems in which airline check-in services are connected to immigration data bases. When the airline checks the passenger in their details are compared against the data base and the airline is advised whether to allow or deny boarding. This prevents passengers with false or stolen documentation, those not in possession of a visa or with an invalid visa, or those previously deported from the country, from boarding a flight before they have even entered the *Transit Zone*.

into the country of destination, while the passenger is still at the point of departure. The increase in advanced screening creates a situation in which the limbo of the *Transit Zone* is not universally available. The undesirables are excluded from exclusion.

In a world polity which endeavours to affirm sovereignty over territory, populace and movement by containing the transition between nation-states within an excluded space, the success of 'illegal' movement exists as an icon of the control system's failure. The presence of an unsanctioned passenger at the point where the *Transit Zone* meets the borders of a nation-state demonstrates a breach in the control mechanisms of international travel created by the system of virtual and physical micro-borders.

In *The Loop*, one of the points that Francis Alÿs makes with his physical displacement around the Pacific Rim is the difference between his privileged position, as the holder of a Belgian passport, compared to the comparative difficulty that a Mexican citizen would have in crossing multiple borders, let alone the fortified border between Tijuana and San Diego. The freedom of travel which Alÿs enjoys exposes the global inequality of nation-state visa and immigration policy. This disparity is not solely economic – easy access to air travel depends on nationality as much as finance.

Jacques Derrida, in his speech *On Cosmopolitanism*, expresses the ethical dilemma that underlies immigration policy. The Western construction of cosmopolitanism embodied by ideas of "tolerance, openness and hospitality,"¹⁴⁷ is inherent to how many nation-states and cities construct their identities within the dialogue of globalisation. Additionally, for many individuals an integral element of being cosmopolitan is the experience of travel. Derrida draws out contradictory imperatives from the conception of cosmopolitanism. On the one hand there is the ideal of hospitality, "universal hospitality *without limit*"¹⁴⁸ in which there are no foreigners,

¹⁴⁷ Simon Critchley and Richard Kearney, 'Preface', in Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001), 20.

only world co-citizens to whom one should ethically offer welcome and refuge. On the other hand, hospitality must have its limits, it cannot be unconditional. The extension of hospitality does not constitute the right of residence but the right of visitation. The guest must also behave ethically. In exploring these protocols Derrida quotes from Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* in which Kant says of the right to hospitality:

In this sphere hospitality signifies the claim of a stranger entering foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility. The latter may send him away again, if this can be done without causing his death; but so long as he conducts himself peaceably, he must not be treated as an enemy.¹⁴⁹

The politics of immigration are embodied in the dilemma between universal and conditional hospitality. The result is primarily the negotiation of hospitality between individual nation-states. An individual requires permission to enter and remain in a nation-state and this permission is more or less conditional depending in large part on the citizenship the individual holds. This permission can be automatically and almost unconditionally received, as in the case of European Union countries, where the nation-states have agreed to allow automatic permanent residence for each other's citizens. Or permission is conditionally received as in cases where an individual has applied for and met the criteria for a visa or permit. The individual's right to enter, and remain, is dependent on the duration and validity of the visa. At any point should the individual break the internal laws of the nation-state or, in the cases of temporary permits, cease to have the ability to support themselves without placing a burden on the nation-state, the individual can be deported to their home state, and not allowed back.

As I stated earlier, this discourse on hospitality impacts on access to international travel. It has also been pivotal to the ongoing development of nation-state borders in all their permutations, land, sea and airport. The

¹⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, trans.M. Campbell Smith (New York & London; Garland Publishing, 1972) 137 – 8 quoted in Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 21.

tightening of border control can be linked to the increasing conditionality of hospitality. In contrast, the reduction of border controls within the European Union can be linked to the unconditional hospitality between member states and the creation of the Schengen Acquis, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The dilemma of hospitality is also revealed through the figure of the stateless individual. In a world dependent upon defined citizenship, those who have been deprived of their citizenship are banned. They are, by their very presence, illegitimate everywhere. This unhappy condition is best known in the case of Mehran Karimi Nasseri who, stripped of his Iranian citizenship and losing his Belgian refugee documents, was stranded in France's Charles de Gaulle airport in 1988 when attempting to fly to England. Stateless, he could not be deported or allowed entry to a nation-state. Even though in 1999 the Belgium authorities offered to re-issue his refugee documents, he remained in the airport until 2006 having asserted that he wanted citizenship not refugee status.¹⁵⁰ Other stateless individuals have been indefinitely held in detention centres and prisons in various countries including the United States and Australia, but none with so much notoriety.¹⁵¹

The normal passenger is only suspended from the interior of the nation-state, not placed permanently outside it. At the culmination of an individual's passage within the *Transit Zone* they again present themselves at the border and apply to re-exit into a nation-state. However, the stateless refugee can remain suspended from the rights and protections of the nation-state for years. They are an extreme figure who calls into question the logic of the nation-state and citizenship. The global covenant of nation-states endorse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which it is declared that "everyone has the right to a

¹⁵⁰ Paul Berczeller, 'The Man Who Lost His Past', *The Guardian* September 6 2004, <http://film.guardian.co.uk/features/featurepages/0,4120,1298104,00.html>. (accessed March 10, 2008)

¹⁵¹ Adele Horin, 'Forgotten Detainee Only Dreams of Flight to Freedom', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 29 2005, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/Adele-Horin/Forgotten-detainee-only-dreams-of-flight-to-freedom/2005/01/28/1106850105377.html#>, (accessed May 11, 2006).

nationality.”¹⁵² The existence of individuals who have lost their citizenship represents the failure of the global covenant to protect the right to nationality. The stateless individual stands in the position of the interdicted individual, a position which has historically been filled by the leper, the convict, the mentally deranged and the poor.

Agamben argues, “In the system of the nation-state, the so-called sacred and inalienable rights of man show themselves to lack every protection and reality at the moment in which they can no longer take the form of rights belonging to citizens of a state.”¹⁵³ The stateless refugee creates a fear, points to a vulnerability in the world, representing a break in the continuity between (wo)man and citizen. This continuity was created by the historical conception of citizenship as bestowed by place of birth and right of blood and an inalienable right of (wo)mankind. As argued above, the modern nation-state builds its right to govern through embracing its citizens. Breaking the unit of individual/citizen puts “the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis.”¹⁵⁴

2.3 : Geography

Francis Alÿs’ paseo, *The Loop*, demonstrates how air travel in general, and the *Transit Zone* specifically, distorts traditional geography. Alÿs circles the world to come to the same point, border-hopping via airports, entering and exiting the *Transit Zone*. In this activity the airport border is seen to be multi-directional, it warps geography, creating a network of places connected by flight changes rather than common land borders. As I have argued, the *Transit Zone*, from the point at which the border is crossed, separates the passenger from the outside world. At this point the passenger’s relationship to geography is shifted. To quote Gillian Fuller,

I have of course, never been to Singapore. I have never left the airport. Singapore — whatever that entity may be — is quite abstract to me. My knowledge of Singapore is gleaned through

¹⁵² 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights', <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>, (accessed May 11, 2006).

¹⁵³ Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 126.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

newspaper reports, stories told by students, and by time spent at its airport. I may never have been 'to Singapore', but I have been 'in Singapore'. On my way elsewhere, I have pressed against this nation's frontiers from somewhere within its geophysical borders.¹⁵⁵

For Fuller, Singapore is an abstract location, a waypoint between two distinct locations. And she could just as easily have been in any other waypoint, as its geographic location, in the end, is irrelevant. The space between departure point and destination is entirely internal, inside the airport and aeroplane, outside nation-state territory. The passenger can only wait to arrive to reconnect to geography. As Paul Virilio argues in an interview with Sylvère Lotringer, the reconstruction of geography is produced by the vehicle transporting the passenger at high speed. "When one is on a jet or on a train, one sees the world in a different light, so to speak. It's not a problem of light source, but of relation to the world. The world flown over is a world produced by speed. It's a representation."¹⁵⁶

If geography becomes a representation, then it is easier to re-conceptualise it, to change it. Jaume Plensa's work *As One...*, Figure 37, does this, exploring the reconstruction of geography by technology. The work, installed in the baggage claim area of Toronto's Pearson International Airport, consists of four 130 metres long sections made of neon tubing, bi-coloured glass, metal plates and stainless steel rods. Plensa takes the original state of the continents, "the Pangaea of 200 million years ago"¹⁵⁷ (a single land mass that later separated), and recreates it in text, spelling out one 'super word' made up of the continents of the world – Asia, Africa, Oceania, Europe and Americas. These continents are displayed and reconstituted as the letters illuminate

¹⁵⁵ Gillian Fuller, 'Life in Transit : Between Airport and Camp', *Borderlands e-journal*, 2, no. 1 (2003), 1.

http://www.borderlandsejournal.net.au/vol2no1_2003/fuller_transit.html (accessed March 24, 2008)

¹⁵⁶ Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 83.

¹⁵⁷ 'Jaume Plensa : Recent Public Installations', http://www.richardgraygallery.com/exhibitions/exhib_jplensa.asp, (accessed November 29, 2005). Pangaea refers to a hypothetical super continent that included all the landmasses of the earth before the Triassic Period. When continental drift began, Pangaea broke up into Laurasia and Gondwanaland.

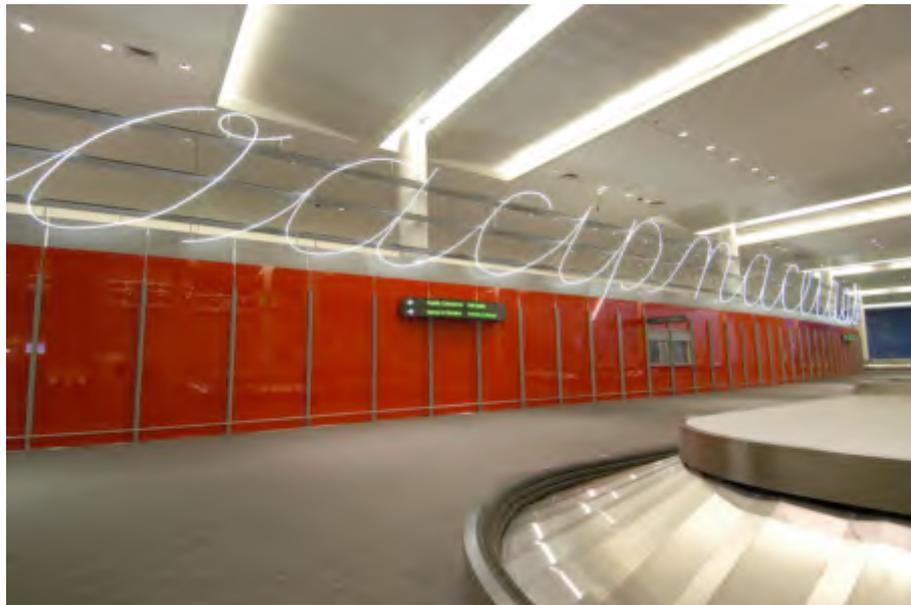


Figure 37: Jaume Plensa, *As One...*, 2001 – 2003, neon tubing, bi-coloured glass, metal plates, stainless steel rods, 4 x 130 metres. Collection of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority.

in combinations that spell incomprehensible words, or alternatively new locations. Through recreating the super-continent in text, Plensa explores how international air travel has reconnected all the landmasses. Plensa also reconstitutes the world, combining the letters from continents into new combinations, presenting a visualisation of how the world is being reconstituted by global movement.

Plensa's work does not just reference the reconception of distance and proximity created by flight connections. *As One...* references the recombining of nation-states through political and economic arrangements such as those of the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). While these arrangements assert individual national sovereignty, they also standardise trade and movement across borders, bringing countries into closer proximity. The micro-border is not the only development in controlling and facilitating border crossing. Two examples of the re-conceptions of the border, and separated spaces, in addition to the micro-border, are the Schengen Acquis¹⁵⁸ and the implementation of Preclearance between Canada and the United States.

2.4 : Schengen Acquis

To manage movement, the European Union and European Community states who are signatories to the Schengen Convention, which underpins the Schengen Acquis, created a frontier around the external edges of the signatory countries, and in the international arrivals areas of European airports, and so hold a form of sovereignty in common.¹⁵⁹ The Schengen

¹⁵⁸ The Schengen Acquis is the set of rules adopted under the Schengen Convention, which includes: the convention itself and the 1985 agreement; the accession protocols with Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Denmark, Finland and Sweden; and the decisions and declarations adopted by the Schengen bodies

¹⁵⁹ Signatories to the Schengen Convention are primarily members of the European Union or European Community. Three countries have opted out of these agreements – Denmark, Ireland and the UK. The signatory countries are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Switzerland has recently become a signatory and expects to have fully entered into the agreement by 2008. The new member states of the European Union are bound by the Schengen Acquis and will slowly be integrated into the system. 'Schengen Convention', http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/freetravel/frontiers/fsj_freetravel_scheng_en_en.htm, (accessed June 12, 2007).

Acquis treats air travel within the signatory states as domestic travel. These 'domestic' flights still hold the passengers and flight crew in a separated 'clean' space constructed by security screening. However, this 'clean' space does not remove the individual from the space of the nation-state.

The Schengen Acquis demonstrates the conceptual and contractual nature of the nation-state border in relation to the management of movement. The Schengen Acquis enables freedom of movement without border checks within the Schengen territory but does not change the possession and regulation of territory by each nation-state. In effect the Schengen Acquis separates border control from nation-state borders. It can be seen as a renegotiation of an individual nation-state's control of movement across its borders into a common contract on the control of movement. In order to create the 'external' borders of the Schengen states, short-stay visa policy had to be harmonised and border control processes standardised. The signatory nation-states had to negotiate a consistent concept of desirable and undesirable movement and the appropriate legal and procedural construction of this concept.

The decision by the Schengen states to create 'Fortress Europe' arises from both a historic demand by commercial interests to free up border crossing between member states and a belief that focussing resources on the external borders of the European Community would more effectively prevent the entry of illegal goods and persons into the European Community. The freedom of movement within the Schengen states can be contrasted with a hardening of access at the edge of Schengen territory. While the freedom of movement is normalised for individuals who can cross the frontier into the Schengen Area, those who are deemed risky, likely to overstay their visa and become illegal migrants are banned. Didier Bigo, in his text *Globalized (in)Security: the Field and the Ban-opticon*, argues that "the idea of free movement increasingly turned into a pretext; a justification for security measures and measures to fight

against clandestine immigration and fraud asylum cases rather than a real objective to implement at a global level.”¹⁶⁰

The Schengen Acquis creates a system under which the free movement across borders within the Schengen area is enabled by the proactive surveillance and banning of suspect groups and individuals up stream before they arrive. Minority individuals, defined as undesirable, are separated out from the normalised majority. These minorities currently include specific immigrant groups (as defined by the logic of each nation-state), asylum seekers and Muslims. The risk groups are excepted (banned) from the smooth flow of movement and placed under the intensive gaze of the security system. Bigo argues that this creates a ‘ban-opticon’, combining the panopticon, a dominant metaphor of control through real or perceived surveillance, with the ban or the permanent exclusion. “The Ban-opticon is then characterized by the exceptionalism of power (rules of emergency and their tendency to become permanent), by the way it excludes certain groups in the name of their future potential behaviour (profiling) and by the way it normalizes the non-excluded through its production of normative imperatives, the most important of which is free movement.”¹⁶¹

The Schengen Acquis affects my discussion of the *Transit Zone* in two ways. It changes the nature of international air travel within the Schengen states by treating travel between independent nation-states as domestic travel. The passenger is not removed into excluded space, rather the Schengen area is treated as one territorial body. This demonstrates a re-conception of geography for the purposes of travel which exists in uneasy co-operation with the strong sense of national identity that exists in each separate signatory state.

¹⁶⁰ Didier Bigo, 'Frontier Controls in the European Union: Who Is in Control', in *Controlling Frontiers : Free Movement into and within Europe*, Didier Bigo and Elspeth Guild eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), 68.

¹⁶¹ Didier Bigo, 'Globalized (in)Security: The Field and the Ban-Opticon', paper given in “Muslims in Europe and in the United States: A Transatlantic Comparison” a conference held at Harvard University, Cambridge Mass., December 15 – 16, (2006) 35.
<http://www.ces.fas.harvard.edu/conferences/muslims/Bigo.pdf>

Second, the Schengen Acquis reinforces the importance of advanced passenger information and the role of immigration databases in controlling movement. The Schengen Information System (SIS), a database which connects all the disparate external borders together, was implemented as a result of the Schengen Convention. “The purpose of the SIS is to improve police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters and policy as regards visas, immigration and free movement of persons.”¹⁶² This database enables the signatory states to maintain ‘Fortress Europe’ at any external border, land, sea or air. The concept of the Schengen Agreement is not new: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Norway set up a Nordic Passport Union in 1954. This has since been incorporated into the Schengen Acquis. However, it is only with the development of information-sharing technology and databases that this concept has become an effective reality. With the Schengen Information System each nation-state border can operate with real-time reference to the other signatory states. Information on visa violations, criminal activity and deportations occurring at other locations are available at any point, in advance of, at, and inside the frontier.

2.5 : Preclearance

Where the European Union states reconceived the management of movement over their borders as a common effort, the United States decided to move its borders as far away from sovereign territory as possible. It effectively shifted the United States’ border control into Canadian airports, at the point of departure rather than at arrival. Preclearance takes advanced screening a step further than Advanced Passenger Screening (APS), discussed earlier, and has been in existence longer than APS. Preclearance has been informally in place between Canada and the United States since the 1950s and formalised via treaty since 1974.¹⁶³ Preclearance occurs at eight international airports in Canadian cities: Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg. Although the treaty allows for Preclearance for travel to Canada

¹⁶² 'Schengen Information System II', <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l33183.htm>, (accessed January 21, 2008).

¹⁶³ U.S. Border and Border Protection, 'U.S. Customs Service Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Preclearance Operations', (accessed June 11, 2007).

to occur on United States soil, to date it has not been implemented. The United States has similar treaties in the Caribbean, with the Bahamas, Bermuda and Aruba, as well as with Ireland.

A passenger flying from Canada to the United States proceeds from check-in directly to the United States' Customs and Border Protection officials. This occurs before the passenger even boards the plane to fly to the United States. As a result of this advanced processing the passenger exits the airport in the United States as a domestic passenger. Where a normal passenger in transit is excluded from the nation-state, in this case the passenger is transferred from one nation-state to another while remaining in the physical territory of the first. Information provided by the Canadian department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade states:

As a traveller using US preclearance facilities at a Canadian airport, you are obligated to meet US entry requirements. You will be interviewed by a US preclearance officer. It is an offence under Canada's Preclearance Act to knowingly make a false or deceptive statement to a preclearance officer. American officials are authorized to inspect your luggage and can refuse you entry to the US. While you are in a preclearance area you are subject to Canadian law You may withdraw your request to enter the US and may leave the preclearance area at any time unless a US preclearance officer suspects on reasonable grounds that you have made a false or deceptive statement or obstructed an officer. The officer may then detain you for violations of Canadian law.¹⁶⁴

Through the implementation of Preclearance, the United States has extended its conceptual border beyond its physical border. The United States has no legal control over the territory the passenger is in, as can be seen in the above statement. However, they have, in a bureaucratic slight of hand, entered the passenger into the United States already. The passenger crosses the border virtually, in advance of the fact, and it only needs their physical arrival to consummate the movement.

¹⁶⁴ 'Travel Report: United States', <http://www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/report-en.asp?country=308000>, (accessed June 11, 2007).

Preclearance is indicative of how the bureaucratic border has constantly been reconceived and moved, despite the solidity of national territory. Both the Schengen Acquis and Preclearance reveal that the exclusion of the *Transit Zone* from the normative space of the nation-state is only one solution to the management of international movement by air. It is a solution which detaches the border from the edges of nation-state territory and enables the rethinking of border management. Jaume Plensa's textual recombination of continents parallels the textual recreation of territory on paper and in bureaucratic process. The physical territory remains the same, but the management of movement recreates the world, pushing some borders further away from the actual territory and removing others.

Despite the constant acceleration of both the speed of travel and the volume of movements, nation-states are endeavouring to produce control systems. The micro-border, the visa application process, Advanced Passenger Screening, Preclearance, and arrangements such as the Schengen Agreement, attempt to create braking points at which the flow of international movement de-accelerates sufficiently to be examined. Likewise, this chapter has used these braking points to reveal how international air travel interacts with the interests of the nation-state and the world polity to create the *Transit Zone*.

Chapter 3 : (in)Security at the Border

In the photograph *Barcelona, 1996*, Figure 38, artist Martha Rosler captures the (in)security of the *Transit Zone* in one seemingly simple image. The photograph, taken under greenish fluorescent light, shows three posters taped to the wall of the Barcelona Airport. The posters, written in Spanish, depict wanted members of ETA,¹⁶⁵ who are connected to acts of terror–violence. Beside the posters sits a fire extinguisher.

This image encapsulates the ever–present disaster, and the concurrently present security systems, within the systems of civil aviation. The photographs of six suspected terrorists speak of the culture of fear created by acts of terror–violence. The image of the wanted poster is linked to the search for individuals who commit acts of terror–violence. The fire extinguisher seems to remind us that security is a reactive discourse, responding to the disaster and trying to prevent its reoccurrence. The images of *ETA* activists directly link security discourses specific to civil aviation with nation–state security. On December 30, 2006, ten years after Rosler’s image was taken, *ETA* activists set a bomb in the car park of the Madrid International Airport, reinforcing the link the image makes between nation–state and aviation security formed through acts of terror–violence.

In this chapter, I explore how acts of terror–violence contribute to an operational logic of immanent disaster, premised on the (im)possibility of securing a ‘clean’ excluded space, an (im)possibility that has shaped the *Transit Zone*. I discuss the phenomenon of terror–violence through its media presentation and I examine the response of security discourses to the phenomenon.

¹⁶⁵ Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom) is a militant separatist Group in Spain that “wants to establish an independent socialist Basque state straddling northern Spain and the southern end of France’s Atlantic coast.” Simon Jeffery, “Q&A: ETA and Basque Separatism in Spain”, *Guardian Unlimited*, June 5, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/spain/article/0,,780871,00.html>. (accessed January 10, 2008)



Figure 38: Martha Rosler, *Barcelona, 1996, 1998*, photograph, in *Martha Rosler: In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.

The construction and management of a 'clean' space around air travel has evolved over time in response to a variety of needs. Government agencies at the airport work to control the movement of taxable goods, illegal imports (including drugs, weapons, pornography and proscribed chemicals, to name a few), plants, animals, food, money, and people. Security services screen the activities of passengers to prevent criminal activity, sabotage and terrorist acts. Of all these control systems, I will focus primarily on the screening of passengers to prevent sabotage, hijacking and attacks on the airport or aeroplane. Additionally, I will explore how security screening interconnects with efforts to control the legal and illegal movement of people across the airport border.

Securing the physical environment of civil aviation and limiting the permeability of the border are frequent topics of discourse in contemporary society. Politicians, government bodies, industries with vested interests, many journalists, and a significant proportion of the general public engage in these discourses.¹⁶⁶ As Didier Bigo, in his article *Security and Immigration: Towards a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease*, argues, the popularity of discussing issues through the prism of security "is the result of the creation of a continuum of threats and general unease in which many different actors exchange their fears and beliefs in the process of making a risky and dangerous society."¹⁶⁷ However, this process does not go uncontested, as is demonstrated by the extensive body of critique on security discourses, in written and visual forms. I draw from literature which both critiques and constructs security and I utilise a number of incisive artworks, including Johan Grimonprez's *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, Figure 39, The Builders Association and dbx's *Super Vision*, Figure 40, and Hasan Elahi's *Tracking Transience*, Figure 41, as entry points into debates on specific security practices and fears.

History has shown that it is necessary to secure a 'clean' space for civil aviation, as the watershed period in civil aviation between 1968 and 1972

¹⁶⁶ Didier Bigo, 'Security and Immigration: Towards a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease', *Alternatives*, 27 (Special Issue 2002).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.



Figure 39: (top) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

Figure 40: (bottom) The Builders Association and dbox, *Super Vision*, 2005, a cross media performance.

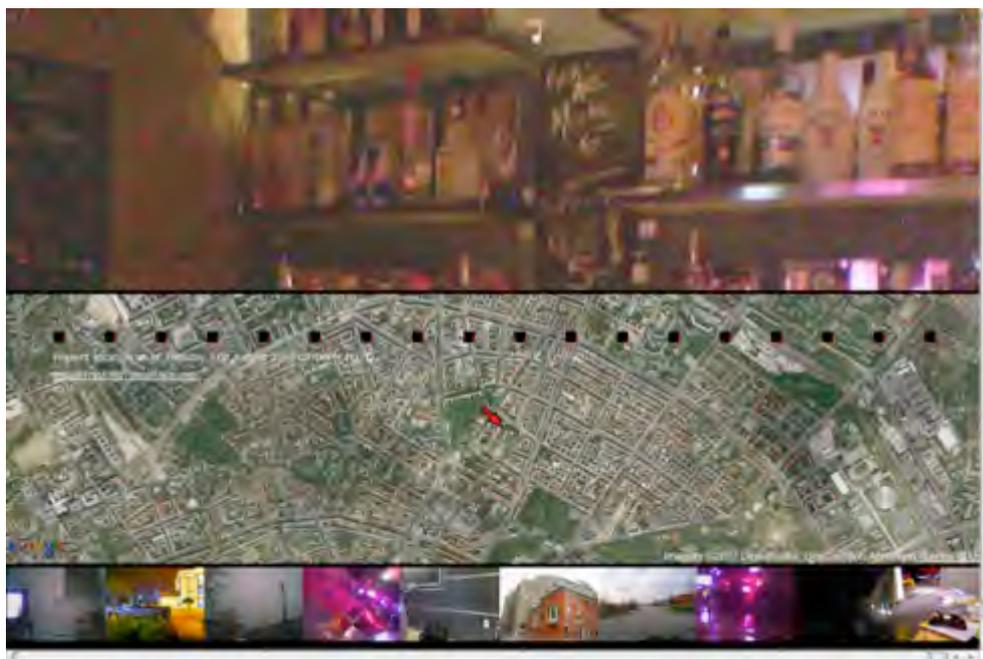


Figure 41: Hasan Elahi, *Tracking Transience*, ongoing since 2002, web based art work. Image captured August 21, 2007.

demonstrates. This period marked the transition of hijacking from a method of acquiring transport to an act of terror–violence, and introduced aircraft and ground facility bombing, firing on aircraft in the air or on the ground, and armed attacks on airports. It also saw the introduction of basic security screening procedures which form the basis of our contemporary systems.

The events in the United States on September 11, 2001 refocused world attention on the vulnerability of civil aviation. In the course of the event, two aeroplanes were deliberately flown into the World Trade Towers in New York City, one aeroplane was flown into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia and the final aeroplane crashed into the ground, as a result of passenger intervention, in Pennsylvania. A total of 266 terrorists, passengers and flight crew died on the planes, 2,605 people died as a direct result of the collapse of the World Trade Towers, and a further 125 at the Pentagon.¹⁶⁸

The security response to September 11, which marked an escalation of security discourses around identity, immigration and national security at the airport border can be used to show how these process have evolved. The periods between 1968 and 1972 and after the 2001 incident demonstrate how, in the specific case of the *Transit Zone*, security systems arose reactively to guard against their (re)occurrence, as a result of identifying real or perceived risks. Both the failure of security, and the absence of any events breaching it, provide support for its continued existence, making counter arguments to security systems in the airport difficult.

The need for security in civil aviation has been transformed into a general culture of fear, which has been managed and exploited. As Bigo asserts, professional risk managers, security professionals and politicians transfer the legitimacy they gain from being against “terrorists, criminals, spies and counterfeiters” onto other targets, creating further fear or unease by

¹⁶⁸ Information sourced from: Phil Hirschhorn, 'New York Reduces 9/11 Death Toll by 40', *CNN*, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/Northeast/10/29/wtc.deaths/> (accessed 11 July 2007); 'The September 11 Digital Archive', <http://www.911digitalarchive.org>, (accessed 11 July 2007); The 9/11 Commission, 'The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States : Executive Summary' (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004).

association and assertion.¹⁶⁹ For example, the unease generated by acts of terror–violence towards civil aviation has been expanded into a general unease about specific nationalities and non–normative groups. This has been amply demonstrated in the aftermath of the hijacking and deliberate crashing of the four aeroplanes on September 11, 2001. Politicians transferred the legitimacy they gained from responding to this attack into a mandate to invade Afghanistan; they changed internal legal codes pertaining to civil rights, and introduced significantly increased levels of domestic surveillance. Visa and immigration policy became stricter, and prejudice against Muslims and those deemed ‘other’ increased in the western world. Such responses have shifted world politics and galvanised the security industry – the new technologies and policies all couched in the rhetoric of keeping us safe.

The history of hijacking and terror–violence attacks on civil aviation leading up to, including, and after September 11, demonstrates the immanence of disaster inherent to the *Transit Zone*. Paul Virilio argues that “every time a technology is invented, ... an accident is invented together with it.”¹⁷⁰ As we keep inventing new technology, new accidents keep coming into existence. The idea that each invention concurrently invents its disaster(s) can be used to argue the impossibility of ever fully preventing the disaster – it is always an integral part of the invention itself. In Virilio’s terms, the plane crash came into existence with the first plane. Expanding on his argument, I maintain that each technology invents its sabotage. Or, alternatively, each technology invents its discourse of (in)security.

The discourses of (in)security surrounding the *Transit Zone* are strongly linked to nation–state discourses of (in)security. As I argued in Chapter 2, the *Transit Zone* informs the construction of nation–state territory, citizenship and migration through the micro–border and management of legitimate movement. In addition, civil aviation occupies an important place in the civic and social imagination. Airports contribute to the status

¹⁶⁹ Bigo, 'Security and Immigration: Towards a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease', 63.

¹⁷⁰ John Armitage, ed., *Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2000), 40.

of the city and country that hosts them. They function as a symbol of nation-state and civic pride and represent the economic and political situation that allows for travel. Airlines and aeroplanes can embody the action and struggle of a people and nation-state to be both respected by the world and able to access it. As the 1979 history of flight titled *Diamonds in the Sky* claims, “The landing of Air India International’s Constellation at Heathrow on 9 June 1948, to inaugurate its Bombay–London service, was much more than a mere commercial flight. It was a symbol of the fact that the new Indian state had, in more senses than one, arrived.”¹⁷¹

However, airports and aeroplanes also generate anxiety, stress and insecurity in society. The airport, the aeroplane, and the airline have become dramatic stages on which conflict between the interests of international and national governance and the interests of individuals and independent groups are acted out. As was first demonstrated by the hijacking of an El Al flight, Israel’s national carrier, in 1968 by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, attacking a national airline is effectively attacking the nation-state.

With the airlines and airports closely connected to national interest, it is not surprising that both have become targets for anti-state action. At the soft end, this action takes the form of non-violent protests against immigration policy and deportation by activist groups such as *Kein Mensch ist Illegal*.¹⁷² At the other extreme is an ongoing history of violent conflict, in the forms of hijacking, bombings and attacks on civil aviation by groups and individuals attempting to “attain a political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation.”¹⁷³ The link between civil aviation and national interest gives an attack on an international airport or flight significance in the national and international arena, generating fear and insecurity, both in relation to flying and to national security. Since the spate of politically motivated hijackings

¹⁷¹ Kenneth Hudson, *Diamonds in the Sky: A Social History of Air Travel* (London: Bodley Head: British Broadcasting Corp., 1979), 60.

¹⁷² 'Aktiv Gegen Abschiebung! Kein Mensch Ist Illegal!' <http://www.aktivgegenabschiebung.de/chrono.html> (accessed 14 June 2006). Kein Mensch ist Illegal is a German action group against deportation.

¹⁷³ Laura Dugan, Gary LaFree, and Alex R. Piquero, 'Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings', *Criminology* 43, no.4 (2005), 1040

between 1968 and 1972, debates about securing the airport have been, directly or indirectly, about securing the nation-state. These debates have only escalated after September 11, 2001.

Anthony Burke, in his article *Aporias of Security*, argues that security “has been able to trace a powerful path between subject and world, state and citizen, to promise simultaneously a solution to the inchoate fears and insecurities of everyday life and the enormous spatial, cultural, economic, and geopolitical complexities of government.”¹⁷⁴ The security systems in the *Transit Zone* simultaneously promise security for the individual and security for the nation-state. In fact, they twine the two together – security for the nation-state is security for the individual. As such the individual cannot refuse to accept security screening because, in doing so, they endanger the nation-state.

The security procedures remind the passenger of the immanence of disaster, and in reminding them, ensure their cooperation. Virilio argues that “From now on, in the face of omnipresent risk, and often of major risk for humanity, the question of the *management of fear* becomes once again a prime necessity.”¹⁷⁵ With this statement, Virilio is signposting both the use of fear to manage civil peace and the increasing fear in society, which must be managed.

The invocation of the immanent disaster creates an anxious and insecure subject, who obeys behavioural instructions and subsumes her- or himself to inspection and interrogation in order to eliminate varying dangers. Engin F. Isin, in his article *The Neurotic Citizen*, terms this ‘governing through neurosis’, saying “What I mean by that term as opposed to ‘governing through risk’ is that the subject at the centre of governing practices is less understood as a rational, calculating and competent subject who can evaluate alternatives with relative success to avoid or eliminate risks and more as someone who is anxious, under stress and increasingly insecure and is asked to manage its [*sic*] neurosis.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Anthony Burke, 'Aporias of Security', *Alternatives* 27, Special Issue (2002): 1.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷⁶ Engin F. Isin, 'The Neurotic Citizen', *Citizenship Studies*, 8, no. 3 (September 2004): 225.

3.1 : News Media

The perception of risk is, in part, constructed by media reportage of hijacking and terror-violence. The high profile that aviation has traditionally had from its earliest days has ensured a similarly high profile in the news media for attacks on it. The level of media coverage gives hijacking and terror-violence against civil aviation an impact on public perception disproportionate to its actual frequency and severity. Yonah Alexander, in the introduction to the book *Aerial Piracy and Aviation Security*, puts the statistics of violent attacks on aviation into context:

For example, in 1989 alone a record of 4,422 domestic and international terrorist incidents, ranging from hostage-taking to facility attacks, with 8,237 persons dead, were reported world wide. Yet the impact of aerial piracy and sabotage, which consisted in 1989 of only 10 incidents, have in terms of the political, economic, and psychological costs been far greater than any other types of attacks on civilian population anywhere in times of peace. The aviation environment is indeed the highest profile vulnerable soft target which is the most attractive to terrorists.¹⁷⁷

William A. Crenshaw similarly points out that:

Despite statistical evidence that attacks against commercial air travel represent only a small percentage of total terrorist acts reported, there appears an unusual quality about civil aviation that, at least at the time, galvanises public attention to focus on an aerial hijacking or related incident more than violence in a more static environment does.¹⁷⁸

In Johan Grimonprez's 1997 video work *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, the presentation of terrorist attacks and hijackings by the media becomes the substance and subject of the work. Media archives from the 1950s to the early 1990s are compiled and cut together to create a compelling

¹⁷⁷ Yonah Alexander, 'Introduction', in *Aerial Piracy and Aviation Security*, eds Yonah Alexander and Eugene Sochor (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1990), viii.

¹⁷⁸ William A. Crenshaw, 'Civil Aviation: Target for Terrorism', *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 498 (July 1988), 62.

montage of changing attacks on civil aviation and attitudes and responses towards them. Intercut into this footage are excerpts from films, documentaries, children's TV shows and public service broadcasts, Figure 42. The inclusion of these tangential images creates a *Verfremdungseffekt*, enabling the viewer to perceive the strangeness of (in)security discourses, and their presentation in the news media. Commenting on the film, Grimonprez says that it "situates the complicity between history and television in terms of a specific timeline: the evolution in the way hijackings have been represented on television."¹⁷⁹ The media has often been accused of being complicit in acts of terrorism, as they have allowed the terrorists a forum for dispersing their message. Confirming this, in a fascinating indictment of media rapacity, Grimonprez utilises footage showing the cameramen and reporters literally chasing the story, jostling each other to get footage of a hijacker and bombarding victims and their families with questions. At one point the footage shows a cameraman hit by a bullet while filming a story, Figure 43, his search for a good angle putting him in harm's way.

In her article *The Failure of Negotiation by Design: Releasing the Hostages at Revolutionary Airstrip*, Barbara Geary asserts that "Media attention is a major goal of the hijacker."¹⁸⁰ The media interest generates visibility and increases the impact of a hijacking, therefore increasing its leverage. It has been argued that successful attacks receiving media coverage have had a contagion effect, leading to an increase in subsequent attempts directly afterwards. Both the 1980 study published by Manus I. Midlarsky, Martha Crenshaw, and Fumihiko Yoshida, under the title *Why Violence Spreads: The Contagion of International Terrorism*, and the study published in 2005 by Laura Dugan, Gary Lafree, and Alex R. Piquero, *Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings*, found statistical

¹⁷⁹ Johan Grimonprez, 'Interview with Johan Grimonprez by Pierre Bal-Blanc & Mathieu Marguerin', *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* DVD insert (San Francisco: Other Cinema, 2004).

¹⁸⁰ Barbara A. Geary, 'The Failure of Negotiation by Design: Releasing the Hostages at Revolutionary Airstrip', *Negotiation Journal* (October 1990): 343.



Figure 42: (top) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

Figure 43: (bottom) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

evidence to support this.¹⁸¹ The 2005 study also found evidence that hijacking attempts declined in the wake of unsuccessful attempts. “The rate of hijackings significantly increased following a series of successful attempts but actually declined following a series of hijacking attempts that did not take success into account.”¹⁸²

Midlarsky, Crenshaw, and Yoshida argue that bombings, kidnappings and hijackings are the most contagious. They assert that

Bombings are attractive because of the extreme facility with which they can be imitated, and also their features of ‘trialability’ and newsworthiness. Kidnappings and hijackings are the most innovative terror actions, involving bargaining with governments over the fate of hostages. Because of the prolonged drama and suspense of the event and the prestige it confers on the terrorists, a kidnapping or hijacking inevitably compels world wide publicity.¹⁸³

These studies statistically prove the same point that Grimonprez visually constructs, that the media is complicit in the history of hijacking and terror-violence. Through reporting hijackings and other acts of terror-violence against civil aviation in a manner which elevates each event’s significance above a comparable natural disaster or terror-violence attack on another target, each event is granted a disproportionate impact. This impact, and the concurrent leverage or visibility it provides, increases the desirability of civil aviation as a target.

These same media reports shape the public perception of the dangers of terror-violence directed towards civil aviation and thus their willingness to accept preventative measures. Popular acceptance of the invasive security currently in place in the *Transit Zone* is dependent on the

¹⁸¹ Manus I. Midlarsky, Martha Crenshaw, and Fumihiko Yoshida, 'Why Violence Spreads: The Contagion of International Terrorism', *International Studies Quarterly*, 24, no. 2 (June 1980); Laura Dugan, Gary Lafree, and Alex R. Piquero, 'Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings', *Criminology*, 43, no. 4 (2005).

¹⁸² Dugan, Lafree, and Piquero, 'Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings': 1056.

¹⁸³ Midlarsky, Crenshaw, and Yoshida, 'Why Violence Spreads: The Contagion of International Terrorism': 291.

perception of risk associated with international air travel. In 1996 an American panel on aviation security stated that:

air carriers and the travelling public relate the extent of passenger screening they consider acceptable and adequate to the severity of the threat they believe is being averted by the screening process. For example, air carriers and passengers accept the more intensive security procedures used for international flights because they perceive a higher likelihood of terrorists targeting international flights.¹⁸⁴

Images of hijackings, bombings and other attacks, on TV at the time of each event, contribute to anxiety about civil aviation. This anxiety is assuaged, yet reinforced, by visible security screening. By managing the level of fear the screening legitimates itself.

In *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* Grimonprez parallels two media promoted social anxieties linked to national security: nuclear warfare and hijacking. Documentary images and public service broadcasts about what to do in a nuclear attack, Figure 44, is mirrored by footage from TV shows advising what to do in the advent of a hijacking, Figure 45. Images of school children diving under their desks as the warning sirens blare are reflected in footage of a test emergency evacuation from an aeroplane. Just as the fear of nuclear warfare fuelled the popular acceptance of the arms race, fear of terror-violence is now fuelling what could be called the 'total information awareness' race as nation-states implement more surveillance, data tracking and biometric technologies.

Concepts and procedures that have evolved as a reaction to hijacking and terror-violence include: the construction of 'clean' separated space through screening for weapons and bomb, which also physically separates the *Transit Zone* from the normative space of the nation-state; the creation of profiling criteria to select passengers for screening; the generation of an insecure and confessional subject through the reversal of a presumption of innocence, integral to Anglo-American law,

¹⁸⁴ The National Academy of Sciences, 'Airline Passenger Security Screening: New Technologies and Implementation Issues', (The National Academy of Sciences, 1996).



Figure 44: (top) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

Figure 45: (bottom) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

into a presumption of guilt; the ongoing fixing of identity through body markers and data mining; and the surveillance of the movement of human and non-human actors as a means of controlling mobility.

3.2 : 1968 – 1972

In discussing the history of hijacking, it is important to differentiate between hijackings for personal gain or transportation and hijackings intended to achieve a political purpose. Hijackings for personal gain or transportation dominated the international statistics up to 1973. The earliest known hijacking occurred in 1930 when a Peruvian aircraft was hijacked; and in the 1940s, there were reported instances of people hijacking planes to escape the USSR. Hijacking in the late 1950s and early 1960s, while prevalent internationally, primarily occurred between Cuba and the United States. Initially the direction of hijacking was from Cuba to America, then the flights began to flow in the opposite direction, with planes diverted from the United States to Cuba on a regular basis.

From late 1958 through 1969, aircraft hijacking was predominantly a phenomenon of the Western Hemisphere, centered on Cuba, and many of the hijackings of U.S. planes to Cuba are best understood in that larger context. Of the 177 worldwide hijacking attempts between 1958 and 1969, 80% originated in the Western Hemisphere and 77% either originated in Cuba or were efforts to divert planes to Cuba.¹⁸⁵

However, hijacking did not significantly impact on the security procedures of the airport until the exponential increase in incidents in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In his study *The Contagiousness of Aircraft Hijacking*, Robert Holden demonstrates that the peak period for hijacking internationally was between 1968 and 1972: “During that period there were 326 hijacking attempts worldwide, or one every 5.6 days.”¹⁸⁶ To a certain extent hijackings for transport were considered an inconvenience rather than a genuine threat, as no lives were lost and the planes were returned to their country of registration. In fact, hijacking to Cuba

¹⁸⁵ Robert T. Holden, 'The Contagiousness of Aircraft Hijacking', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 91, no. 4 (January 1986): 880.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

became so popular that “Airliners carried approach plans for the Havana airport and crews were instructed not to resist hijackers. There were also standard diplomatic procedures for obtaining the return of planes and passengers.”¹⁸⁷

In *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, footage of cheering crowds greeting Fidel Castro is coupled with interviews of hijacked passengers recently returned from Cuba where the passengers report positive experiences of their hijacking. This footage demonstrates how the media valorised the hijacker and contributed to the contagion of hijacking for transport. Hijackings and attempted hijackings for transport between the United States and Cuba should be seen in the context of the media romanticisation of the hijacker, in conjunction with the political rift between capitalist United States and communist Cuba and the absence of direct flights between those two countries. Such hijackings are substantially different in intention from hijackings for the purpose of terror-violence.

1968 saw the introduction of hijacking aimed at gaining political and media leverage and terror-violence against civil aviation including placing bombs on aircraft, or in ground facilities, firing on aircraft in the air or on the ground, and armed attacks on airports. These acts continued after 1973 and came to dominate attempts on civil aviation. Terror-violence attacks tend to be instigated by groups who have a specific political, economic, religious or social goal. For example, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), who committed many acts of terror-violence against civil aviation from 1968 onwards, sought to publicise the fate of Palestinian refugees and reclaim a Palestinian homeland. Their acts included the 1968 hijacking of an El Al flight out of Rome and the Boxing Day attack in Athens that same year where gunmen opened fire on an El Al flight and in February 1969, they similarly attacked an El Al flight in Zurich. A year later, on February 10, 1970, a bus containing El Al passengers at Munich airport was attacked, and on February 21, a Swissair flight bound for Israel was bombed, killing 47.

The PFLP’s most ambitious attack on civil aviation began on the sixth of September 1970, when they attempted to simultaneously hijack three

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 881.

planes. They successfully diverted a TWA flight from Frankfurt and a Swissair flight out of Zurich to the Jordanian desert. The attempt on an El Al flight failed, and in order to achieve the release of the captured hijackers, they commandeered a BOAC flight out of Bahrain on the ninth of September. On the twelfth of September, the hijackers blew up the TWA, Swissair and BOAC aeroplanes. In the wake of these events the Jordanian army moved into the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and fought the PFLP. September 1970 is remembered as Black September. Barbara Geary, in an analysis of the September 1970 hijacking, describes it as “a desperate attempt to focus world attention on its [the PFLP] political concerns” which sparked “civil strife that would result in the loss of many Palestinian lives”; she adds, “[T]he week (according to a 21 September 1970 *Newsweek* estimate) cost at least \$52 million in detonated aircraft and involved a grand total of 769 hostages.”¹⁸⁸

But it was not just aeroplanes that were targets for acts of terror-violence. In 1972 three men associated with the Japanese Red Army Faction, operating in conjunction with the PFLP, shocked the world with a brutal attack on passengers within an airport.¹⁸⁹ The attack, on May 30, 1972, in which three members of the Japanese *Red Army Faction* used machine guns and hand grenades on a crowd at *Lod Airport*, killing 26 and injuring nearly 80 more, was undertaken on behalf of the *PFLP*. However, the Japanese *Red Army Faction's* aim was more general: to bring about world revolution. In *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, Figure 46 and Figure 47, the sequence focussing on the Lod airport massacre shows the subsequent court case: the police solemnly bring out the suitcases in which the guns were hidden, gun shots resound on the audio track as the image cuts to a scene of blood being mopped from the floor. At the end of the court sequence we are finally informed that the sad and gentle seeming young man in the dock, Kozo Okamoto, was the sole survivor of the three Japanese terrorists responsible for the massacre.

¹⁸⁸ Geary, 'The Failure of Negotiation by Design: Releasing the Hostages at Revolutionary Airstrip': 337.

¹⁸⁹ Martha Crenshaw in her article *The Causes of Terrorism* describes the Japanese, German and Italian RAF as anarchist or millenarian groups, but acknowledges that they considered themselves as a classic national liberation movement. Martha Crenshaw, 'The Causes of Terrorism', *Comparative Politics*, 13, no. 4 (July 1981).



Figure 46: (top) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

Figure 47: (bottom) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

Patricia Steinhoff interviewed Kozo Okamoto in 1972, reporting that “Okamoto believes its [the attack’s] purpose was to shock the world by demonstrating the power of the revolutionary forces and the vulnerability of the bourgeoisie.”¹⁹⁰ She goes on to say: “... it might just as easily have been another group in another country. While he was personally concerned about the state of the Palestinian refugees, he said that was definitely not his motivation for entering guerrilla training. He was moved by a much more global desire to participate in world revolution.”¹⁹¹

Steinhoff concludes her article by reporting that what was notable about Okamoto’s personal belief regarding death and ideology was it was so “comprehensive and so neutral that it permitted the matching up of terrorists and victims almost at random.”¹⁹² The victims of Okamoto’s attack were truly random: he said that he could have equally been “asked to assassinate President Nixon or do something with the Irish Republican Army.”¹⁹³ What was important was the act of revolution, not the target of the act.

Okamoto’s actions are an example of the shift to a new type of terror-violence in the *Transit Zone*: shooting passengers, firing on planes and airport or aeroplane bombings. These changed the nature and impact of the threat of terror-violence. Whereas with a hijacking, the nation-state(s) negotiated for the return of their citizens, these forms of attack confronted them with the real death of their citizens. They were shock media events demonstrating the vulnerability of the nation-state. The arbitrary nature of the attack and the identity of the victims in acts of terror-violence generated fear and anxiety in the public.

At random moments throughout *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, footage of ducklings floating in zero gravity, lightning strikes, and a toy penguin on a dashboard rocking back and forth is inserted. The surreal and arbitrary nature of the footage evokes the arbitrary nature of the attack’s victims. There are no preventative actions a victim can personally take other than

¹⁹⁰ Patricia G. Steinhoff, 'Portrait of a Terrorist: An Interview with Kozo Okamoto', *Asian Survey*, 16, no. 9 (September 1976): 843.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 830.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 845.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 838.

not flying. Despite this, individuals try to manage their neurotic response to terror–violence and aviation by enacting preventative behaviours. In the video Grimonprez incorporates a monologue which expresses some forms preventative behaviour can take:

There is no moment on certain days when he's not thinking terror, they have us in their power. In boarding areas he never sits near windows in case of flying glass, he carries a Swedish passport, so that's ok unless you believe that terrorists killed the prime minister; and he uses codes in his address book for names and addresses of writers because how can you tell if the name of a certain writer is dangerous to carry. He's careful about reading matter nothing religious comes with him and no pictures of guns or sexy women. That's on the one hand, on the other hand he knows in his heart that he's going to die of some dreadful slow disease so you're safe with him on a plane.¹⁹⁴

In *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* the immanence of disaster is beautifully expressed by footage of an ice skater leaping and spinning in the air, as the crowd holds their breath waiting to see if she will land perfectly, Figure 48. Before she lands the film cuts to footage of a tornado swept wooden shack crashing into the ground, Figure 49. To a certain extent every flight is poised in this moment, in mid-air before the ice skater lands, as it is impossible to prevent every attack. However, the culture of (in)security, visible at the airport, promises freedom from these attacks.

3.3 : Security responses : profiling, legislation and universal screening

The *Transit Zone's* separation from the normative space of the nation–state has been formed as much by the security procedures arising from this period of history as by the juridic construction of the micro–border. The major form of security arising out of these years is premised on a

¹⁹⁴ Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.



Figure 48: (top) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

Figure 49: (bottom) Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997, video, 68 min.

separation between general public space and the airside of the airport. Access to the airside of the airport was, and still is, contingent on a passenger passing their hand luggage through a x-ray machine and then walking through a metal detector. The clean space of the airport, created by the inspection of passengers and hand luggage, can be seen as the direct result of hijacking for transport and is still effective against it. However, continuing acts of terror-violence still drive increases in airport security.

In the 1960s air travel was not a mass phenomenon and those who flew tended to be wealthy or travelling on business. As Michael Curry in his article *The Profiler's Question and the Treacherous Traveller* asserts, "In a way, the demographics of the airline passenger matched those of the white, middle-class suburbs and urban enclaves from which those passengers were drawn. People who flew were viewed as naturally respectable."¹⁹⁵ In 1969 three major U.S. airlines began to discriminate between intending passengers. They screened, searched and interviewed individuals based on a profiling system underpinned by ideas of who belonged on an aircraft and who didn't. Those that did not fit the stereotype were considered suspicious and had to submit to a search, either by a magnetometer (metal detector) or human.

A 1978 United States Task Force on Deterrence of Air Piracy stated that "Because the Task Force study of hijacker characteristics revealed hijackers to be very different from typical passengers, an effective profile could eliminate search procedures for all but a fraction of air travelers."¹⁹⁶ By asserting that a hijacker is inherently different from a normal passenger, and will display specific characteristics, profiling constructs a logic which conflates specific characteristics such as race, gender, and seat choice with an intention to hijack. The Task Force opinion supports Michael Curry's argument that profiling creates stereotypes about who belongs and does not belong in a given situation. He asserts that:

¹⁹⁵ Michael R. Curry, 'The Profiler's Question and the Treacherous Traveler: Narratives of Belonging in Commercial Aviation.' *Surveillance and Society*, 1, no. 4 (2004): 477.

¹⁹⁶ H. L. Reighard and John T. Dailey, 'Task Force on Deterrence of Air Piracy, Final Report', United States Office of Aviation Medicine and United States Task Force on Deterrence of Air Piracy, FAA-AM-78-35 (Washington: Federal Aviation Administration Office of Aviation Medicine, 1978).

notwithstanding the scientific trappings with which they are surrounded, the central role of symbol and narrative within the systems suggests that they are inevitably constrained by the limitations of time, place, class, culture, race and gender, and of the institutions within which they operate, and that the negative features of the systems may not be remediable.¹⁹⁷

These systems are linked to constructions of acceptable and suspicious 'narratives' of identity and intention, which have a striking similarity to the visa and immigration discourses I outlined in the previous chapter.

Between 1970 and 1973, the United States and Cuban governments began addressing the hijacking problem with legislation. The two governments put in place a series of policies that resulted in a significant decrease in transport related hijackings. In 1970 the Cuban Government criminalised highjacking, which reduced the attractiveness of Cuba as a destination. In 1972, the United States government first mandated that all airlines must implement a form of screening using one of the following methods: "behavioural profile, magnetometer, identification check, physical search."¹⁹⁸ Later that year, it mandated that airlines "refuse to board any passengers who fit a hijacking behavioural profile before they were physically or electronically searched."¹⁹⁹

In 1973, in recognition of the failure to eradicate hijacking through only screening selectees, universal screening of passengers and luggage was passed into law by the United States government. Metal detectors were installed in all airports in the United States, with similar devices gradually becoming standard internationally.²⁰⁰ The implementation of mandatory physical screening was successful in preventing hijacking for the purpose of transport.²⁰¹ Dugan et al found in their study that "metal detectors and

¹⁹⁷ Curry, 'The Profiler's Question and the Treacherous Traveler: Narratives of Belonging in Commercial Aviation': 477.

¹⁹⁸ Dugan, Lafree, and Piquero, 'Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings': 1043.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Holden, 'The Contagiousness of Aircraft Hijacking'.

increased police surveillance significantly reduced the hazard of nonterrorist-related hijacking.”²⁰²

The surveillance of hand luggage and the individual is the point at which surveillance at the airport becomes visible. For most travellers it is the moment that exemplifies security within the *Transit Zone* and reminds them that they are entering a ‘clean’ space that is under surveillance. It functions as a symbol for the CCTV surveillance and electronic systems that track movement through the *Transit Zone*, determining when an individual is ‘out of place’.²⁰³ Like the prisoner in Bentham’s panopticon, the passenger internalises the surveillance of their belongings and person and factors this into their behavioural decisions.²⁰⁴ Bearing security restrictions in mind when they pack, travellers divest themselves of objects that may be confiscated and they watch their words, as inappropriate conversation can lead to police interrogation and prosecution.

However, this same screening is also considered an irritant, a time-wasting exercise, a banal routine which every passenger undergoes with varying degrees of fortitude. It is associated with a history of inconsistency and arbitrary decisions – where one item is confiscated, yet another is not, leaving the passenger to wonder what the rationale was. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the new United States Transportation Security Administration (TSA), became known by the nickname “Take Scissors Away”, due to its constantly changing lists of items to be confiscated.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the scanning that occurs at the entrance to the *Transit Zone* creates a perception of safety, despite the fact that it has repeatedly failed to prevent terror-violence attacks.

In 1989 Isaac Yeffet, the former director of security for El Al, gave the following opinion on airline security in the United States: “The problem lies with the system. There is no airline security in the United States. What

²⁰² Dugan, Lafree, and Piquero, 'Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings': 1056 – 57.

²⁰³ Peter Adey, 'Secured and Sorted Mobilities: Examples from the Airport', *Surveillance and Society*, 1, no. 4 (2004).

²⁰⁴ Paul Rabinow, (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (London: Penguin Books, 1984).

²⁰⁵ Perry A. Russell and Frederick W. Preston, 'Airline Security after the Event', *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 47, no. 11 (July 2004): 1425.

little is being done to protect passengers is not being done well.”²⁰⁶ In the years between this statement and the September 11, 2001 attacks, very few improvements were made. As Perry A. Russell and Frederick W. Preston assert in their article *Airline Security After the Event*, the assumption that baggage screening provides airline security was incorrect. In 2001, in United States airports, “There was no equipment in use to scan baggage, and the airport staff charged with protecting and screening passengers and baggage was ill equipped to do so.”²⁰⁷ In the words of Darryl Jenkins, an American aviation expert, “The real reason that the events of September 11 did not happen earlier is simply that we have been lucky. The luck of the draw does not imply security on our part.”²⁰⁸ As Dugan et al state “the counterhijacking policies examined [in the United States between 1970 and 1973] had no impact on the hazard of terrorism–related hijacking attempts.”²⁰⁹

3.4 : Post September, 2001

The problem that any system of control grapples with is that those who wish to circumvent it have greater flexibility than the control system itself. As Brian Jenkins, in his article *Defense Against Terrorism*, asserts “When confronted with security measures, terrorists merely alter their tactics to obviate the security measures or shift their sights to other vulnerable targets. Because terrorists can attack anything, anywhere, any time, and governments cannot protect everything, everywhere, all the time, terrorists always retain a certain advantage.”²¹⁰

Despite ongoing professional recognition that the level of risk can only be lowered, not prevented, (in)security rhetoric post 2001 promises that

²⁰⁶ E. Barnes, ‘The next bomb’, *Life* 32, no. 3 (March 1989), quoted in Russell and Preston, ‘Airline Security after the Event’: 1423.

²⁰⁷ Russell and Preston, ‘Airline Security after the Event’: 1423.

²⁰⁸ Darryl Jenkins, ‘A Primer on Airport Security’, in Alasdair Roberts (ed.), *Governance and Public Security* (New York: Campbell Public Affairs Institute, Maxwell School, Syracuse University 2002), 82, quoted in Jens Hainmüller and Jan Martin Lemnitzer, ‘Why Do Europeans Fly Safer? The Politics of Airport Security in Europe and the US’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 15, no. 4 (2003): 21.

²⁰⁹ Dugan, Lafree, and Piquero, ‘Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings’: 1056.

²¹⁰ Brian M. Jenkins, ‘Defense against Terrorism’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 101, no. 5 (1986): 777.

new security policies and tools will provide safety. Intrusive, human centred, pre-emptive techniques such as profiling, interviewing, biometric identification and data mining gained legitimacy in the aftermath of September 11. The attack provided the trigger to implement security systems that were under discussion prior to September 11 and increase the use of existing systems.²¹¹

Many of the systems currently implemented were developed in Israel. Israel's airline El Al has the most intensive security screening in the world and has done so since the 1970s. Their security treats the entire airport as a clean zone. At Ben Gurion Airport in Jerusalem (formerly Lod Airport), guards are placed at the entrance to the airport, all vehicles entering the airport compound are screened and all security personnel carry guns.²¹² In addition to screening passengers, baggage and vehicles for weapons, security personnel profile passengers and read passengers' verbal and physical responses to exhaustive questioning. The presumption of innocence, which dominated early security profiling from 1969, was based on the belief that the hijacker was visibly different from the normal passenger whose innocence should not be challenged. The introduction of universal questioning reverses this premise into a presumption of guilt, where every passenger is assumed to be a potential terrorist.

According to a 2001 article in the *Israel Insider* by Ellis Shuman, "Upon arrival [at the airport], travellers are subjected to rigorous and time-consuming questioning. While passengers are asked perfunctory questions like "Who packed your bags?" and "Do you have any weapons?" inspectors are really looking for travelers giving evasive answers or hiding information. Passengers can be interrogated separately by three different screeners."²¹³ Individuals are separated into safe and unsafe groups, and individuals who are not Israeli citizens undergo more intensive scrutiny.

²¹¹ Thomas A. Birkland, 'Learning and Policy Improvement after Disaster: The Case of Aviation Security', *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, no. 3 (November 2004).

²¹² Ellis Shuman, 'El Al's Legendary Security Measures Set Industry Standards', *Israel Insider*, 3 October 2001, http://www.israelinsider.com/channels/security/articles/sec_0108.htm. (accessed January 22, 2008)

²¹³ *Ibid.*

This system combines profiling with a demand to perform a “continual, exhaustive confession.”²¹⁴ As Mark Salter argues, in *Governmentalities of an Airport: Heterotopia and Confession*, examination at the borders between the excluded ‘clean space’ and the nation-state is a process of looking for deviance from the normative narratives of mobility.

The border represents an important site of examination for criminal, sexual, class or labor-related deviance and the master deviance in international relations: the nature of mobility. In the border examination there is a questioning of our narratives of travel and belonging, which is adjudicated solely by the ‘customs’ agent of the sovereign.²¹⁵

These narratives of ‘belonging’ in the airport are similar to the narratives of visa acceptability. Nationality, financial status, reason for travel, race, family ties, religion, all feed into the adjudication process. Aviation security, border control and national security have become intimately linked.

Currently, customs, immigration and airport and airline security are central to (in)security discourses. In the 2007 Cabinet Office report *Security in a Global Hub: Establishing the UK’s New Border Arrangements*, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, firmly links border control and terrorism with the words “The United Kingdom’s border controls need to protect us against terrorism and crime.”²¹⁶ The report goes on to specifically state that the objectives of border security are “the facilitation of legitimate travel and trade; security from the threats and pressures of crime, whether illegal migration, terrorism, or attacks on the tax base; and protection of the border itself, our international transport networks and the people using and working on them.”²¹⁷ The report identifies security at the airport as “protective security at the border” firmly linking the protection of its

²¹⁴ Mark B. Salter, 'Governmentalities of an Airport: Heterotopia and Confession', *International Political Sociology*, 1 (2007).

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

²¹⁶ United Kingdom Cabinet Office, 'Security in a Global Hub: Establishing the UK's New Border Arrangements', 284440/1107, *Border Review, Domestic Policy & Strategy*, November 2007.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

facilities and aeroplanes to national security discourses of migration, terrorism and crime.²¹⁸

At the airport border, normative, desirable, narratives of travel within the airport are opposed to the nation-state's construction of risky behaviours and citizenships. The passenger, desiring mobility, attempts to conform to the standard narratives of society and in doing so uphold the formulation of normative systems.²¹⁹ Salter asserts that the state gains our consent for our surveillance and social sorting at the airport via the confessional complex.²²⁰ The passenger must confess their narrative of travel to demonstrate their innocence in the face of presumed guilt. In confessing they endorse the right of the state to demand and judge their confession.

However, our confessional discourses, as assertions of identity, are no longer trusted unless supported by accessible data patterns and a fixed legal identity attached to biometric markers. The passenger's confession must now conform to the existing information about them that the screener accesses. Increasingly, airlines and security personnel profile and screen passengers via data mining. They are seeking to identify potential terrorists and criminals through their data patterns, and base their evaluation of the individual on the question "Is this individual a known and rooted member of the community?"²²¹ The answer is no longer represented by an individual's social relationships, but their purchasing patterns and the fixed nature of their legal identity. Indeed, more often our data is made to confess for us – our verbalised confession has little to do with it.

In The Builders Association 2005 performance *Super Vision*, three stories intersect to explore how digital data is changing our lives.²²² Of interest to

²¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

²¹⁹ Michel Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality Vol 1*, demonstrated that modern society utilises the confessional discourse as an essential part of the creation and upholding of normative systems. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1 an Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

²²⁰ Salter, 'Governmentalities of an Airport: Heterotopia and Confession'.

²²¹ Curry, 'The Profiler's Question and the Treacherous Traveler: Narratives of Belonging in Commercial Aviation.' 476.

²²² The 2005 cross media production of *Super Vision* was created by the Builders Association and dbox and directed by Marianne Weems.

my current discussion is the narrative line that directly explores biometric fixing of identity, data-mining, and the confessional complex. A “solitary traveler gradually is forced to reveal all of his personal information, until his identity becomes transparent, with no part of his life left outside the bounds of dataveillance.”²²³ The character is a Ugandan citizen of Indian descent whom we meet at the border to the United States, where the data mining becomes visible. In *Super Vision*, Figure 50 and Figure 51, the traveller/protagonist repeatedly presents himself at the border and provides fingerprints and iris scans, and faces a camera in an ongoing collation of biometric data that is visualised in the screen behind him. The customs officials, who attempt to firmly fix the protagonist’s identity, are disturbed by the fact that he holds two passports and uses both his patrilineal and matrilineal name. The potential for him to travel under two separate identities is treated as suspicious. These interactions represent a culture which treats any deviation from a fixed identity as a symptom of criminality.

The collection of biometric data is demonstrative of the increasing desire to fix electronic identity firmly to a physical body, which can not be substituted. As Benjamin Muller points out, “A post-September 11 obsession with ‘securing identity’ has, through the political space of biometrics, helped produce identity as physical characteristics translated in binary codes.”²²⁴ While many governments avoid using fingerprints as part of their biometric identification due to the criminal associations, the United States shows no such reservations. The new US-VISIT database collects fingerprints and full frontal photographs of every individual entering the United States and compares them with the biometric identifiers already gathered from the passport or visa application.

On domestic flights within the United States, Passenger Name Records (PNR) are now forwarded to the Transportation Security Administration for analysis by its ‘Secure Flight’ system, which compares the passenger’s

²²³ 'The Builders Association', <http://www.thebuildersassociation.org>, (accessed July 20, 2007).

²²⁴ Benjamin J. Muller, 'Borders, Bodies and Biometrics: Towards Identity Management', in *Global Surveillance and Policing : Borders, Security, Identity*, eds. Mark B. Salter and Elia Zureik, (Devon: Willan Publishing, 2005), 93.

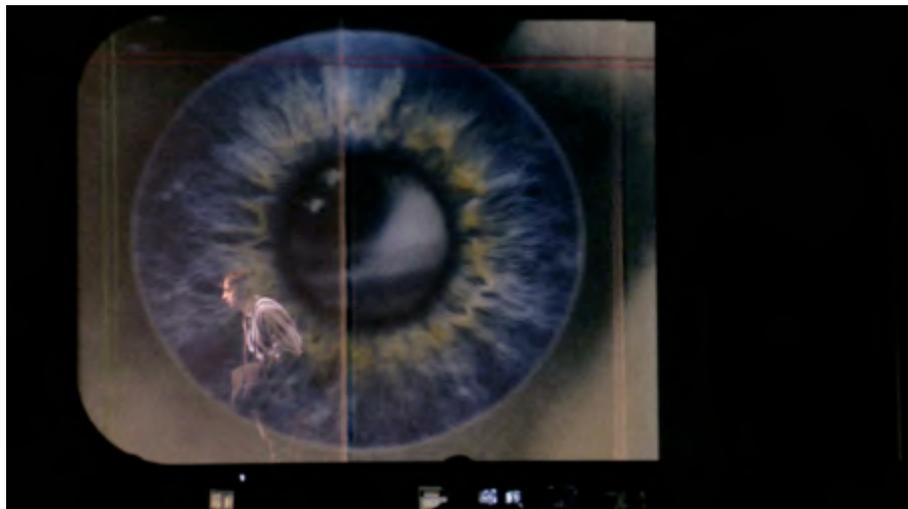


Figure 50: (top) The Builders Association and dbox, *Super Vision*, 2005, a cross media performance.

Figure 51: (bottom) The Builders Association and dbox, *Super Vision*, 2005, a cross media performance.

information against the known and suspected terrorist watch list and information from commercial databases.²²⁵ For international flights, a similar advance processing occurs via the Advanced Passenger Information System run by United States Customs and Border Protection. In November 2007, Britain announced similar changes, linking the capture of biometric details during visa applications and at the border to police databases, No Fly lists and intercept lists, and using passenger data collected directly from the carriers to inform their risk profiling.²²⁶ At the time of writing, Britain states that it will issue biometric identity cards to migrants, so it can track them within the country. This measure is intended as a precursor to introducing a national biometric identity card.

However, due to public outcry, not all security systems are successfully implemented. *Super Vision* was created during the time that the United States was intending to implement a system called Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System II (CAPPS II) which would have used a form of computerised information analysis called Non-Obvious Relationship Awareness. This system “can sort through oceans of data in real time, seeking links among people. It can also determine when an individual has transposed names or intentionally tried to obscure personal details.”²²⁷ While security professionals have advocated the development of programs like CAPPS II and the Total Information Awareness Programme (later renamed the Terrorist Information Awareness Programme) privacy advocates have, to date, managed to block their full development. Although the CAPPS II system was not implemented due to civil rights concerns, The Builders Association, when creating *Super Vision*, imagined how the system might be used.

²²⁵ A PNR can contain the passengers, name, date of birth, country that issued them a passport or travel document, passport number, gender and itinerary and routing information. Colin J. Bennet, 'What happens when you book an airline ticket? the collection and processing of passenger data post-9/11', *Global Surveillance and Policing: Borders, Security, Identity*, eds. Mark B. Salter and Elia Zureik (Devon: Willan Publishing, 2005.)

²²⁶ 'Security in a Global Hub: Establishing the UK's New Border Arrangements'.

²²⁷ Robert O'Harrow Jr., 'Preflight Checks: New Software Profiles Travelers in Advance', *Seattle Times*, September 7, 2002, <http://archives.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/cgi-bin/taxis.cgi/web/vortex/display?slug=profile07&date=20020907&query=preflight+checks>. (accessed May 12, 2006)

The ability of an artwork to demonstrate potential impacts of a proposed course of action, and the real impacts of an existing system, can be seen in *Super Vision*. *Super Vision* disrupts our ability to ignore the suspicion and interrogation that occurs at the border. It demonstrates how, in the name of security, the individual can lose his or her privacy, absolutely. Although CAPPs II is not, as yet, being used at the border, the idea has not gone away. Using the threat of terrorism, governments continue to push for further ways to fix identity and track potential criminals, illegal migrants and terrorists.

The Builders Association deliberately uses the tools that it critiques, in this case the tools of dataveillance and biometric capture, thereby exploring the “impact of technology on human presence.”²²⁸ In *Super Vision*, the border officials can pull up information about the character’s previous travel patterns, individuals that he has had contact with who are on the terrorist watch list, medical checks that he has had, parking and speeding tickets, properties that his family members own in the United States, changes in his routine and credit card purchases. Each time he is questioned, the information becomes more and more intrusive, and the visual representation of the data mining becomes increasingly complex until, finally, he reacts aggressively to all the suspicion, Figure 52 and Figure 53.

The actor deliberately plays the character as essentially safe, with a dubious undercurrent – being evasive, sweating, denying accusations – so that the audience often wonders whether the border official is, indeed, correct to suspect him.²²⁹ The protagonist’s capacity to confess is exhausted through the ongoing refusal of the border officials to accept his narrative, and in this exhaustion we see the potential for our own data to be misinterpreted. The border officials place their reliance on the information their systems have culled from the general data stream rather than on the person. This is visually represented throughout the

²²⁸ 'The Builders Association'.

²²⁹ Riwan Mirza interview by Nick Kaye 'The Presence Project', <http://presence.stanford.edu:3455/Collaboratory/Home>, (accessed November 28, 2007).

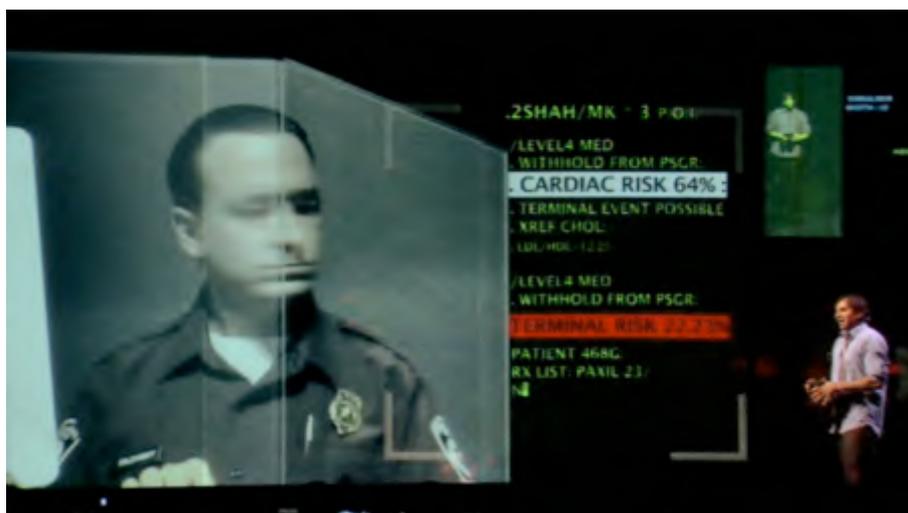
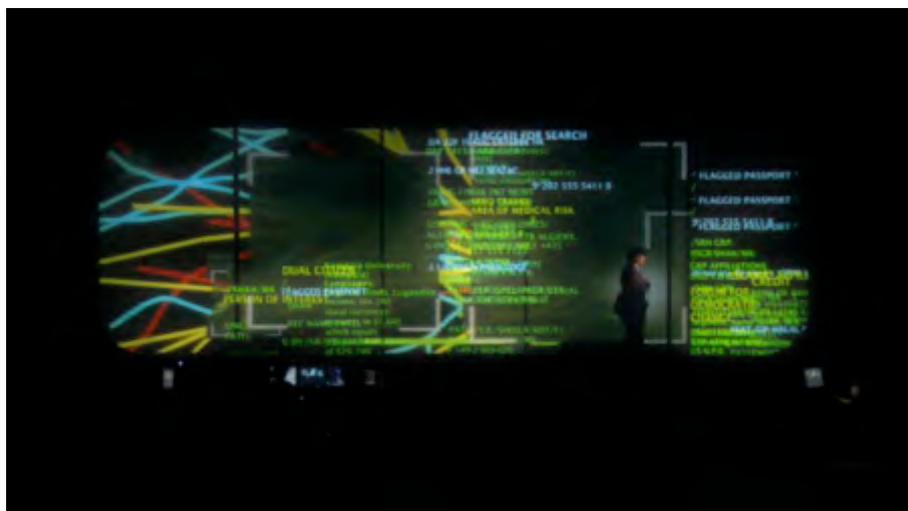


Figure 52: (top) The Builders Association and dbox, *Super Vision*, 2005, a cross media performance.

Figure 53: (bottom) The Builders Association and dbox, *Super Vision*, 2005, a cross media performance.

performance by evolving media projections in front of and behind the actor. In the words of the lighting director, Allen Hahn, “he became less a physical presence, and instead more a presence defined in the body of data that accumulated around him.”²³⁰ At one point, the protagonist demands that incorrect information be removed from his file. This sends the border official into a gust of laughter – the idea that an individual could determine the data held on his file is ludicrous. The idea implicit in this scene is that information, once on file, becomes a fixed truth, which can only be contested through more data rather than counter-assertion.

This idea is explored in Hasan M. Elahi’s ongoing web project *Tracking Transience*. In 2002, Elahi, an American citizen of Bangladeshi descent, was stopped at the border while re-entering the United States.

Arriving in Detroit from Europe, he handed over his American passport and the man behind the counter ‘literally froze.’ Elahi was led to a detention room and questioned by the FBI about his whereabouts on Sept. 11. Apparently, the owners of a storage unit that Elahi rented had called the police to report that an Arab man had been hoarding explosives and had fled on Sept. 12.²³¹

Elahi was a victim of the culture of unease that gripped the United States after September 11. His use of a storage unit, combined with his superficially Arabic appearance, was sufficient to trigger fear in another citizen.

Media campaigns directed at the general public have attempted to recruit the general public as auxiliary security through the reinforcement of their anxiety. Advertisements such as Australia’s “Be alert but not alarmed” and the United States’ “Don’t be afraid, be ready” fuel both our suspicion of the other and our willingness to confess to demonstrate our innocence and loyalty to the nation-state. In *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, Grimonprez includes footage from 1970s American TV programs advising what to do in the

²³⁰ Allen Hahn interview by Nick Kaye, ‘The Presence Project’.

²³¹ Anna Weinberg and Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, ‘Enemy of the State’, *Good Magazine*, 3 (2007), http://www.goodmagazine.com/section/Portraits/enemy_of_the_state. (accessed December 14, 2006)

case of a hijacking foreshadowing their reappearance in 2001. TV shows, articles and education programs instruct the public in how to spot a hijacker or terrorist and how to subdue them.²³² The reappearance of such material led Mark Salter to argue that such campaigns urge “citizens to be afraid in an ‘economy of danger’”.²³³

After a series of interviews and polygraph tests, Elahi was finally informed that he was cleared of the suspicion of being a terrorist. Elahi believes that this was in part due to the fact that he could use his Palm PDA to track his movements over the days leading up to and following September 11.²³⁴ Despite being cleared, Elahi was advised to keep the FBI informed of his movements. His response was to make his life his art and create a constant document of his movements. Online at <http://trackingtransience.net/>, he posts his GPS position and photographic evidence of his movements throughout the day, Figure 54. In addition, he has databases that track the airports he has flown in and out of and slept in (*Transience(Inter)State*), Figure 55, the airline meals he has eaten (*Altitude*), Figure 56, other meals he has eaten while away from home (*Away*), Figure 57, the toilets he has used (*Security and Comfort*), Figure 58, and his bank transactions, Figure 59.

Elahi positions his work as a response to the suspicion that fell on him and a preventative action against being re-arrested as a potential terrorist. He believes his movements are still being checked by the government. “His server logs show hits from the Pentagon, the Secretary of Defense, and the Executive Office of the President, among others.”²³⁵ By providing excessive information he is attempting to overwhelm the data mining system. Elahi is enacting the position of an individual under constant surveillance. He is also creating an extreme document of disclosure – in effect he manages his own FBI file. Elahi takes the demand that he exhaustively disclose where he has been and what he has done to its limit, and does so as publicly as possible by posting it on the internet. His work

²³² Mark B. Salter, 'Passports, Mobility, and Security: How Smart Can the Border Be?' *International Studies Perspectives*, 5 (2004).

²³³ *Ibid.* 80.

²³⁴ Weinberg and Greenfield-Sanders, 'Enemy of the State'.

²³⁵ Clive Thompson, 'The Visible Man: An FBI Target Puts His Whole Life Online', *Wired Magazine*, 15 (2006).

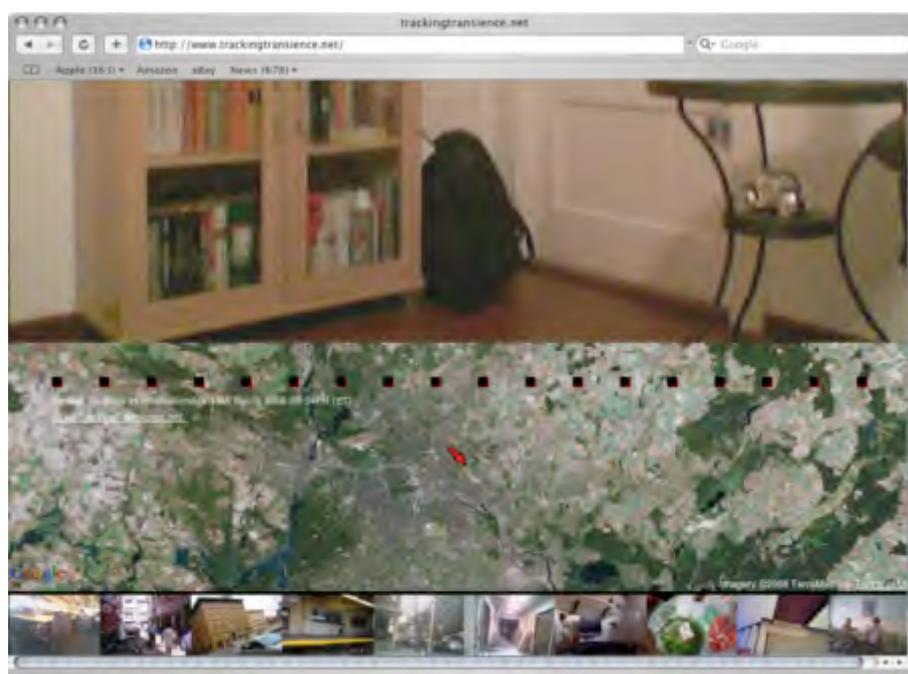


Figure 54: (top) Hasan Elahi, *Tracking Transience*, ongoing since 2002, web based art work. Image captured March 20, 2008.

Figure 55: (bottom) Hasan Elahi, *Tracking Transience, Transience(Inter)State*, ongoing since 2002, web based art work. Image captured March 20, 2008.

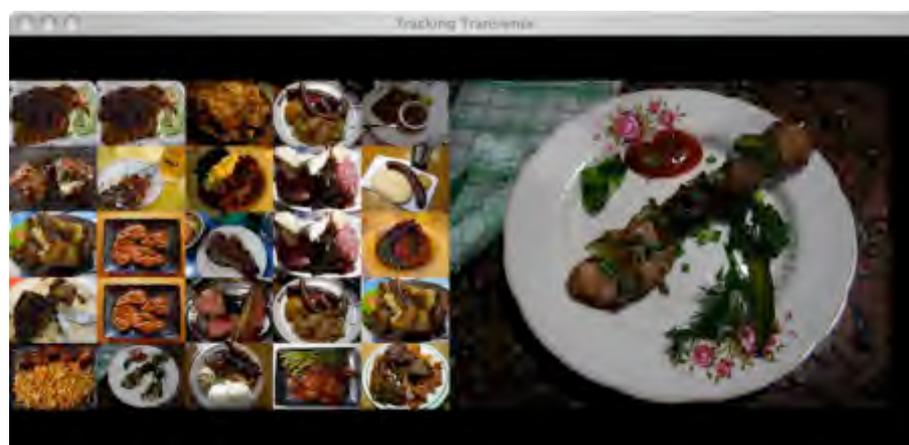
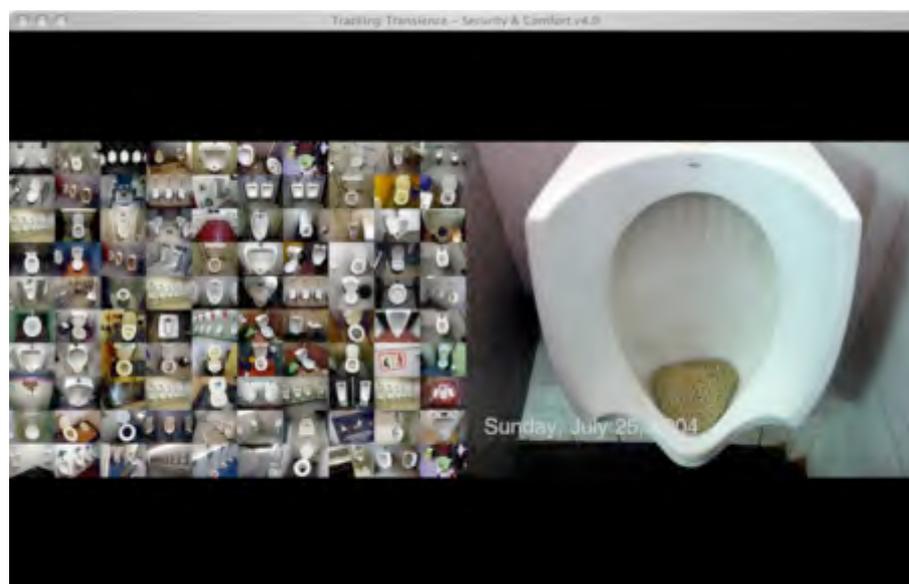


Figure 56: (top) Hasan Elahi, *Tracking Transience, Altitude*, ongoing since 2002, web based art work. Image captured March 20, 2008.

Figure 57: (bottom) Hasan Elahi, *Tracking Transience, Away*, ongoing since 2002, web based art work. Image captured March 20, 2008.



2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
3/19/08						\$147.93
3/17/08						\$30.38
3/17/08						\$1.14
3/17/08						\$2.45
3/16/08						\$7.68
3/16/08						\$14.02
3/16/08						\$11.55
3/15/08						\$38.19
3/15/08						\$3.33
3/15/08						\$54.25
3/15/08						\$5.97
3/14/08						\$27.27
3/14/08						\$16.81

Figure 58: (top) Hasan Elahi, *Tracking Transience, Security and Comfort*, ongoing since 2002, web based art work. Image captured March 20, 2008.

Figure 59: (bottom) Hasan Elahi, *Tracking Transience*, ongoing since 2002, web based art work. Image captured March 20, 2008.

demonstrates that an individual's confession, or statement of truth, can no longer stand in isolation, but must be backed up by the myriad of data traces that each individual leaves behind in their day-to-day life.

At the end of *Super Vision*, our protagonist moves into a normalised flow of movement. His final border screening is smooth and pleasant, as he has been upgraded to a trusted passenger whose data is interpreted positively. The category of 'trusted traveller' runs parallel to the construction of the 'suspicious traveller.' This can be an 'opt in' category, where an individual demonstrates their trustworthiness by voluntarily undergoing a background check; the check is then linked to their biometric data. Individuals who voluntarily sign up and pay for examination are rewarded by expedited security clearance and/or border crossing. Prior to 2001, this system was already implemented at Schiphol Airport under the name Privium, at Tel Aviv as the Express Entry Program, and at JFK Airport under the name INSPASS.²³⁶ It has been gaining currency internationally, with many nation-states and airports now utilising a biometric, automated border crossing for registered travellers.²³⁷

Marianne Weems, director of *Super Vision*, says about her protagonist's 'trusted' status:

The conclusion that you are "free to go", free to travel, as long as you are willing to expose all of your information, isn't fine. It's clear that this man remains under surveillance and meanwhile he is dragging a huge amount of personal data behind him. We aren't saying that this is fine, but we are saying that this is the state of affairs at this moment. We are all walking around with those trails of information floating behind us and that is where we wanted to leave the audience - to feel ultra-aware of that.²³⁸

²³⁶ Curry, 'The Profiler's Question and the Treacherous Traveler: Narratives of Belonging in Commercial Aviation', 496.

²³⁷ Australia has trialled a system with Qantas staff called Smartgate: 'Smart Gate - History', <http://www.customs.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=5557> (accessed 3 March 2008). The United Kingdom has a border crossing system called IRIS: 'IRIS - Iris recognition immigration system', <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/applying/iris/> (accessed 25 July 2007).

²³⁸ Marianne Weems interview by Nick Kaye, 'The Presence Project'.

As can be seen in the three art works I have discussed, security in the *Transit Zone* can no longer be understood as a simple search for the terrorist or their weapon. As Didier Bigo argues in his text *Globalized (in)Security: the Field and the Ban-opticon*, it is composed of multiple “narratives of police, military, customs and judicial institutions on free movement, the terrorist threat, transnational organised crime, the links between these phenomena and immigration, minorities and now asylum seekers.”²³⁹

The link between these discourses – criminal, border control, airport security and national security – can be seen in the increase in profiling, fixing identity through biometrics and data mining occurring at the borders of the *Transit Zone* after September 11, 2001. It can also be seen in the policy documents describing these changes. For example, the United Kingdom’s *Security in a Global Hub* specifically mandates both the border control agencies and protective security agencies with the task of preventing terror-violence.²⁴⁰

The interrogation and dataveillance of individuals at the border, as it is developing in contemporary border and airport management, stems from what Anthony Burke describes as a post September 11 public obsession with “security and its violent, exclusivist, ontologising technologies: counter terror, border protection, deterrence, ‘homeland security’, the ‘necessary’ erosion of civil liberties and the rule of law.”²⁴¹ The individual traveller’s privacy is ‘necessarily’ sacrificed to ensure the security of the nation-state both from the possibility of the dangerous ‘other’ entering its sovereign territory and from an attack on the nation-state through its ‘national’ airlines and airports.

²³⁹ Didier Bigo, 'Globalized (in)Security: The Field and the Ban-Opticon', (paper presented at Muslims in Europe and in the United States: A Transatlantic Comparison, Harvard University, United States, December 15-16, 2006): 44.

²⁴⁰ United Kingdom Cabinet Office, 'Security in a Global Hub: Establishing the UK's New Border Arrangements'.

²⁴¹ Anthony Burke, *Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence: War against the Other* (London: Routledge, 2007), 123

Chapter 4 : Passenger-Object, Passenger-Subject

Through my analysis of the sites and systems of the *Transit Zone* I have found them to require contradictory yet concurrent subject positions from passengers. They create an obedient, standardised, complicit subject who enacts instructions, while also activating a desiring, consuming subject. Both the *Transit Zone* and the greater system of commercial aviation exist to manage and profit from the business of moving passengers and cargo by air. In order to achieve this, the system must automate and standardise passengers, thereby maximizing operational uniformity, while also providing services, conveniences and consumer opportunities catering to individual taste to maximize profit and customer satisfaction. Thus, the *Transit Zone* constitutes itself through a multiplicity of interconnecting sites and systems which create a global processing machine distinguished by flows of movement and regrouping stasis points.

The logistical needs of international air travel, where a passenger's movement is programmed like cargo, are frequently at variance with the customer's needs for physical and mental comfort. The components of the *Transit Zone* which profit from the personal needs of the passenger require stasis time to allow for consumption. This must be balanced against a demand for speed and efficiency. The environment and systems of the *Transit Zone* must manage these contradictory impulses. These multiple needs are negotiated in and by the *Transit Zone* through a variety of strategies. In this chapter I explore how the passenger is automated, with their co-operation, into a unit of movement that moves swiftly through the *Transit Zone*, and the strategies that are in place to enable this. I also examine the strategies that are in place in the aeroplane and airport to engage with the passenger on an individual level, and maximise profit from the time spent in the *Transit Zone*.

4.1 : Logistics

The logistics of transferring a passenger via a given route, as part of a vast and ceaseless flow of movement, requires that the passenger be converted to a unit, or object with automated behaviour. As Koos Bosma points out, this has long been a prevalent operating mentality.

In present-day mass transport, every passenger is an anonymous cargo, to be shifted over the globe as comfortably as possible. This view was expressed even at the time of World War II: “The passenger, a mobile unit, must be controlled and guided for safety and operating efficiency in his own interest.”²⁴²

In introducing the idea of an automated unit of movement, I am positing a complicit subject who is making choices regarding their own movement in relationship to the options that the *Transit Zone* presents to them. The complicit unit of movement is obedient to the best of their ability, which is determined by their literacy in the systems of civil aviation, ability to understand the instructions given to them (linguistic and interpretation skills), and their physical and emotional state (able-bodied or disabled, age, level of alertness or exhaustion, and stress levels to name a few physical and emotional variables).

A passenger becomes complicit in their own automation when they purchase their ticket(s). The choices they make at this point determine their path through the *Transit Zone*. The decisions regarding dates, duration, airlines, points of departure, transit and arrival, and status and access within the *Transit Zone* are made in response to the options the elements and systems of the *Transit Zone* offer. Every passenger requires a set of instructions to traverse the *Transit Zone*, which conforms their choices and the system’s requirements. In creating their journey the passenger ‘opts in’ to becoming an automated unit of movement.

²⁴² Francis R. Meisch, ‘Architecture and Air transportation’, *Pencil Points* 25 (November, 1943), 43, quoted in Koos Bosma, ‘European Airports, 1945 – 1995: Typology, Psychology, and Infrastructure’, in *Building for Air Travel Architecture and Design for Commercial Aviation*, ed. John Zukowsky. (Munich New York: Prestel, Art Institute of Chicago, 1996), 51.

The passenger makes both a virtual and a physical journey when traversing the *Transit Zone*. At the point of sale the passenger creates a data double in the system. As I have previously argued, this data double travels in advance of the passenger and is scrutinised to determine the extent of their mobility in relation to nation-state and security interests.²⁴³ This data double is also the passenger's place holder in the abstract data assemblage used to create and manage the logistics of their journey.

Airports and their service providers use information derived from data doubles to predict traffic flow and service demand. In their article *Enacting Airports: space, movement and modes of ordering*, Hannah Knox, Damian O'Doherty, Theo Vurdubakis and Chris Westrup demonstrate how airports deal with issues of capacity and flow through "information systems and technologies that monitor, model and map space and movement."²⁴⁴ Likewise, airlines determine food and staff requirements, as well as fuel loads from the tickets sold and the information provided at point of sale. The use of modelling encourages the airports and airlines to plan for automated units of movement rather than individual subjects. As Knox et al. point out "Such systems have the effect of objectifying the imagined passenger and thereby reducing the unpredictability of subjectivity in order to represent the possibility of organization as an ideal of flow."²⁴⁵ To effectively realise their journey the passenger is supposed to enact the instructions applied to their data double, performing the ideal flow their data-double did. However, this expectation is based on the presumption that the passenger is a competent automated unit of movement who will be able to efficiently action all their instructions.

To understand the instructions that a passenger must enact and the systems that enable this, I briefly outline a 'typical' instruction set for a passenger. The passenger's journey begins outside the *Transit Zone*, and in order to enter it they must perform certain actions. Prior to entering

²⁴³ See Chapters 2 and 3

²⁴⁴ Hannah Knox et al., 'Enacting Airports: Space, Movement and Modes of Ordering', (working paper, Evolution of Business Knowledge, UK Economic and Social Research Council, 2005), http://www.ebkresearch.org/downloads/workingpapers/wp0520_Knox_etal.pdf, (accessed 12 March 2007).

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

the *Transit Zone* a passenger must confirm their intention to travel with the airline, either by physically checking in or by automated check in via a kiosk, or online.²⁴⁶ They must also check in their luggage, separating themselves from it physically for the duration of their time in the *Transit Zone*. At this point their luggage is linked to them through their data double, and should follow the same route that the passenger does.²⁴⁷ The passenger receives boarding passes for all or a portion of their trip, which, in conjunction with their passport, gains them access to the *Transit Zone*. The boarding pass constitutes a series of instructions to which the passenger/unit must conform. A typical boarding pass contains the gate number, boarding time, and seat number. This information set provides time limits, locations, and directions for movement.

Each instruction the passenger enacts moves them in and out of subsets of passengers within the *Transit Zone*. They belong sequentially to the general set of passengers in transit, passengers at a specific departure gate and then passengers on a specific aeroplane. They then belong to the set of passengers arriving and leaving the *Transit Zone* or passengers remaining in transit. From there they realign to a specific boarding gate and flight and so forth, until they arrive at the final destination and exit the *Transit Zone*. Described in this way we can visualise passengers/units as a series of combining and separating flows moving smoothly through space on a schedule determined by interlocking time periods. These time periods include the amount of time it takes to pass through security, the projected time it takes to traverse the airport, the duration of a given flight and the synchronisation of multiple flights which determines transit time.

However, this description presumes automated units who can correctly interpret and enact their instructions, combined with no disruptions or delays in the systems and sites of the *Transit Zone*. Competent passenger/units combined with a smooth flowing set of sites and systems demonstrate that the planned ideal flow of movement can occur. However, a passenger can be a confused, overwhelmed or overtired

²⁴⁶ Not every airline or flight offers international automated check in.

²⁴⁷ After pre-departure passenger to baggage matching was introduced the incidence of lost luggage has been reduced, however, it does still occur.

individual, who is unable to perform their automated movements. They may have language or interpretation difficulties, disabilities or be disinclined to enact their instructions. Or they may be delayed by circumstances beyond their control which impact on their current or connecting flights.

Furthermore, the passenger does not enact their instructions based solely on the boarding pass, they interact with environmental, electronic and interpersonal information systems. These include the architectural design of the airport or plane; information and signage systems, both fixed and changing; customer assistance, electronic and human; and the incorporation of stasis time into the logistics to allow for error and re-grouping.

4.2 : Architecture for movement

Airport architecture tends towards the monumental, with large atriums and long hallways. The land use of major airports is vast in comparison to other urban land uses, for instance Hong Kong's International Airport, Chek Lap Kok covers 516,000 square metres.²⁴⁸ The architectural firm that designed it, Foster and Partners, states that their new project, the Beijing Airport terminal, will enclose "a floor area of more than a million square metres and is designed to accommodate an estimated 43 million passengers per annum, rising to 53 million by 2015."²⁴⁹ Given that a Boeing 747 has a wing span of 59.63 metres, length 70.66 metres and a height of 19.33 metres, and the recently introduced Airbus A380 is even larger,²⁵⁰ the monumental size of an airport which handles long distance flights is not surprising.

The management of movement through architecture is integral to the smooth running of the *Transit Zone*. Airport terminals, that are custom designed for the purposes of international air travel, endeavour to create clear routes through the airport as well as manage the stasis points.

²⁴⁸ Norman Foster, *Catalogue: Foster and Partners* (London: Prestel Publishing, 2005).

²⁴⁹ 'Foster and Partners', <http://www.fosterandpartners.com/>, (accessed March 20, 2006.)

²⁵⁰ Wingspan 79.8m, length 73m, height 24.1m. 'Airbus Aircraft Families', <http://www.airbus.com/en/aircraftfamilies/>, (accessed March 20, 2006).

Airport architecture commonly separates the varying flows of the airport by directing departing and transiting passengers along separate routes from those of arriving passengers, and keeping both these groups away from the logistical spaces of luggage and aeroplane processing. In this way cross flows and potential confusions are minimised. This can be seen in Ross Rudesch Harley's photographs which document management devices such as separate roadways for departing and arriving passengers, Figure 60, architectural separation between clean space and general space, Figure 23, page 46, and enclosed walkways and separated waiting areas, Figure 61. The architectural design of the airport plays a major role in transforming the passenger into a unit of movement, and managing the flow and stasis each route requires.

These arrangements can be very complex and incorporate flexible spaces to allow for overflows and changing space demands throughout an average day. In an article on the recent opening of Toronto's Hammerhead Pier F terminal at Pearson International Airport it was revealed that "Airport officials spent years on 3-D models to ensure three streams of travelers – domestic, U.S.-bound and international – can flow through Pier F without mixing. Those departing walk on the ground floor, whereas arrivals use overhead walkways."²⁵¹ Through layering the building and separating the gates from the waiting areas they manage to keep each passenger group in the right place at the right time.

The permanent and movable architectural devices used to control and channel flow repeatedly appear in Martha Rosler's photographs. Many of them show the travelators, long corridors and glassed-off waiting rooms of airports such as in the photographs: *Washington National, 1991*, Figure 62; *JFK (New York), 1989*, Figure 63; *Los Angeles, 1987*, Figure 64; and *JFK, TWA Terminal (New York), 1990*, Figure 65. Her text accompaniments include statements like "endless corridors" and

²⁵¹ Peter Kuitenbrouwer, 'Is It a Terminal or a Cathedral?' *National Post*, 1 December 2006.



Figure 60: (top) Ross Rudesch Harley, from the *Aviopolis* series, 2002–2005.

Figure 61: (bottom) Ross Rudesch Harley, from the *Aviopolis* series, 2002–2005.

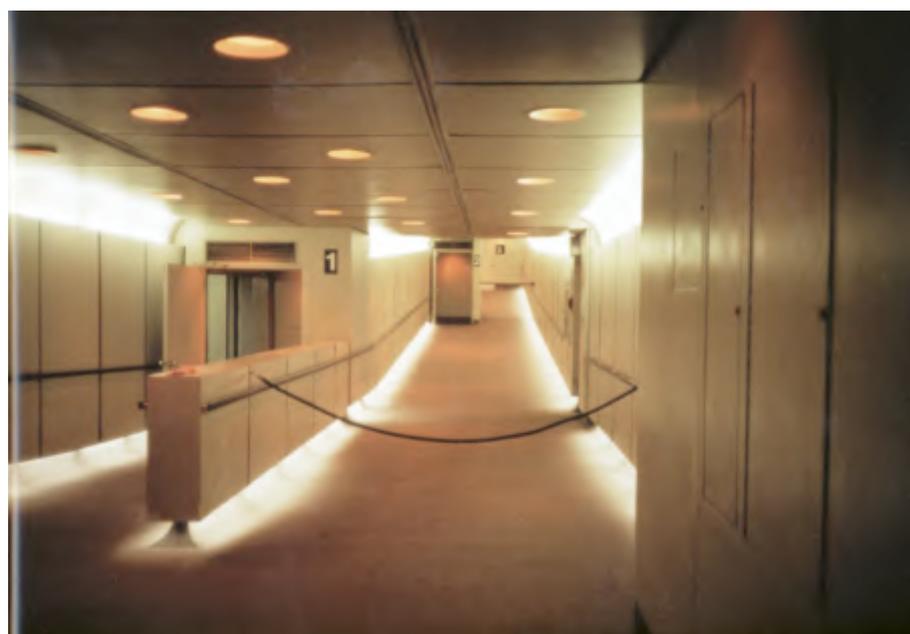


Figure 62: (top) Martha Rosler, *Washington National*, 1991, 1998, photograph in *Martha Rosler, In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.

Figure 63: (bottom) Martha Rosler, *JFK (New York)*, 1989, 1998, photograph in *Martha Rosler, In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.



Figure 64: (top) Martha Rosler, *Los Angeles*, 1987, 1998, photograph in *Martha Rosler, In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.

Figure 65: (bottom) Martha Rosler, *JFK, TWA Terminal (New York)*, 1990, 1998, photograph in *Martha Rosler, In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer*.

“destinations always approached, never achieved.”²⁵² The image *JFK (New York)*, 1989, Figure 63 on page 154, captures both the fixed and mutable architectural elements of the airport. The photograph, dominated by low yellow light, shows three gate entries, two of which are blocked off by a simple velvet cord, a ‘soft’ device to change the architectural flow of the space. Rosler’s image, dominated by the velvet cord, highlights the control and channelling of movement. The cord, insubstantial as a barrier, demonstrates the construction of pathways through space in a way that a closed door does not. However, through its impermanence it intimates the possibility of movement through the other gateways. The temporary nature of the barrier emphasises both the closure of a pathway and how this is determined by the particular route being enacted at that point.

Where Harley and Rosler construct their critique of the *Transit Zone*’s architectural sites by photographing them, Richard Serra was able to directly challenge the architectural site of the airport when he was commissioned to make a work for the atrium of Hammerhead Pier F, Pearson International Airport. In an interview with architect Peter Eisenman, Serra asserted that for him sculpture involved a critical examination of the precepts and language of architecture through the language of sculpture.²⁵³ Serra challenges architectural space and place with sculptural space and place. The weight, scale and perspective of his works cut the sites they occupy, causing a reinterpretation of the body’s and space’s interdependence through and in relation to the work. Hal Foster describes Serra’s conception of sculpture as a “structuring of materials in order to motivate a body and to demarcate a place: not a fixed category of autonomous objects but a specific relay between subject and site that frames the one in terms of the other, and transforms both at once.”²⁵⁴ Serra maintains that to critique architecture, sculpture must take on architectural scale, which the work *Tilted Spheres*,

²⁵² Martha Rosler, *Martha Rosler : In the Place of the Public : Observations of a Frequent Flyer* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1998). 92, 90.

²⁵³ Yve-Alain Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll around Clara Clara (1983)', in *Richard Serra*, eds. Hal Foster and Gordon Hughes, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: October files, 2000).

²⁵⁴ Hal Foster, 'The Un/Making of Sculpture (1998)', in *Richard Serra*, eds. Hal Foster and Gordon Hughes, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: October files, 2000), 179.

seen in Figure 66, indeed does, consisting of four individual curved plates, each 4.54 metres high, 13.86 metres long and 5 cm thick.

Similar to the airport, Serra's sculptures must be moved through in order to comprehend them. In plan they are an abstract form or arrangement of shapes. Just as looking at an airport plan does not accurately invoke the scale, time spent, and experience of passing through it, neither will looking at a plan view of *Tilted Spheres* totally prepare the passenger for the experience of walking through a sculpture almost three times the average height of a person. The full experience of Serra's *Tilted Spheres* requires an act of passage. The walls all tilt in towards the centre, looming over the viewer and casting them off balance. The curve of the steel plates creates both a central 'atrium' and two side paths which lead through the work, with only a limited view ahead. Like the separation of arriving and departing passengers, *Tilted Spheres* provides corridors and atriums; the passenger can choose the route through the sculpture, but each route is separated from the other and cannot be changed until the end of the twelve metre long passage is reached.

The monumental size and weight of the rolled steel sheets critiques the over-arching space of the airport atrium. The scale of the sculpture in relation to the passenger/viewer's body creates a reconsideration of the scale of the atrium, exposing its enormity. Just as Serra's sculpture renders the body scale insubstantial, the atrium renders the passenger into an insignificant entity, a unit of movement within a greater processing machine.

The sculpture's very material, solid steel which has been treated to maintain a blue-black matte finish, reveals the solidity of architectural divisions in the airport. Airport architecture hides this behind the illusion of transparency, created by the use of glass. Norman Foster, when designing Stansted Airport, which has influenced subsequent airport architecture, deliberately designed a building with clear sight lines and an appearance of openness created by large windows, high ceilings and large



Figure 66: Richard Serra, *Tilted Spheres*, 4 individual curved plates, each 4.54m x 13.86m x .05m, 2002 – 2004. Collection of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority.

spaces.²⁵⁵ Toronto Airport's architects have followed this approach yet the opaque, solid walls of *Tilted Spheres* contest the illusion of openness and freedom of movement.

4.3 : Information systems: fixed and changing

In addition to following specific architectural cues and limitations, the automated passenger/unit is dependent on the information that they receive to be able to perform their instructions. This information includes the instructions set they receive via the boarding card, fixed signage, changing electronic displays and human interaction. It is these fixed and variable information systems which enable the passenger to perform their automated tasks.

Fixed signage makes the airport legible to the passenger and enables them to implement their instructions, for how does one present oneself at departure gate 54 at 13:15 without the aid of signage? Signage can be divided into location, direction, information or instruction categories. For example, a sign specifying the number of the departure gate the passenger is at is locational, whereas a sign directing a passenger towards a set of departure gates or towards the arrivals hall is directional. Location and direction signs enable a passenger to navigate the *Transit Zone*. A sign at security advising the passenger to remove their laptop from its carry case constitutes an instruction, which in itself generates an independent action which must be fulfilled to move forward through the *Transit Zone*. Finally, information signs include non-essential locations and services which enable the passenger to comfortably traverse the *Transit Zone*. For example, a list of shops and services available at a given location provides information.

Directional signs are coupled with arrows indicating the correct direction for the passenger to move in, creating part of the momentum of the airport. Fuller argues that the arrow symbolises the underlying message of the airport: 'keep moving.' She asserts that "The arrow is both a tool and a trope for the imperatives of global transit: it turns place into passage,

²⁵⁵ Stansted Airport, UK, was completed in 1991

striates space into controlled flows, and urges the traveller to 'move on'.²⁵⁶

Marc Ruygrok's 1996 work *SO GO ON*, Figure 67, is a textual version of this arrow, which makes its urging explicit. Located near the departure gates of Pier D of Amsterdam Schiphol International Airport, the work consists of a group of letter combinations spelling out SO GO ON. The work is made out of bronzed copper and light behind yellow synthetic plate, a similar colour to the nearby directional sign. Each two letter combination 'SO' 'GO' 'ON' stands 3.2 metres high, almost brushing the ceiling of the walkway, creating an architectural structure, a sign and a message. The work can be read as an exploration of the role of text, signage and architecture in the airport.

Ruygrok refers to the work as "a form of concrete poetry between the utilitarian signs and commercial lettering and symbols that are all around at an airport."²⁵⁷ According to the artist "The work can be read three ways: SO GO, GO ON and SO GO ON (off you go to your destination and do what you've got to do...)"²⁵⁸ SO GO can be read as a prod to the reluctant or an end to an argument, GO ON as a direct instruction to the passenger to continue forward, and SO GO ON as an encouragement or endorsement of their current forward motion. The work is placed at a cross point at which the passenger/unit must decide whether to enter a boarding lounge or transfer to another pier. However the work does not aid decision making, rather, it accentuates the imperative to move and the constant interpretive decisions required from the passenger to effectively negotiate their 'instruction set', without providing an answer.

Location and direction signs are reference points which are read in relation to each passenger's itinerary. The architectural spaces of the *Transit Zone* constitute themselves in relation to the route that the passenger/unit is passing along. Each passenger experiences a different assemblage of sites and spaces within the *Transit Zone*, mediated by the

²⁵⁶ Gillian Fuller, 'The Arrow – Directional Semiotics: Wayfinding in Transit', *Social Semiotics*, 12, no. 3 (2002): 231.

²⁵⁷ Marc Ruygrok, 'Re: So Go On', email message to author, August 29, 2007.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

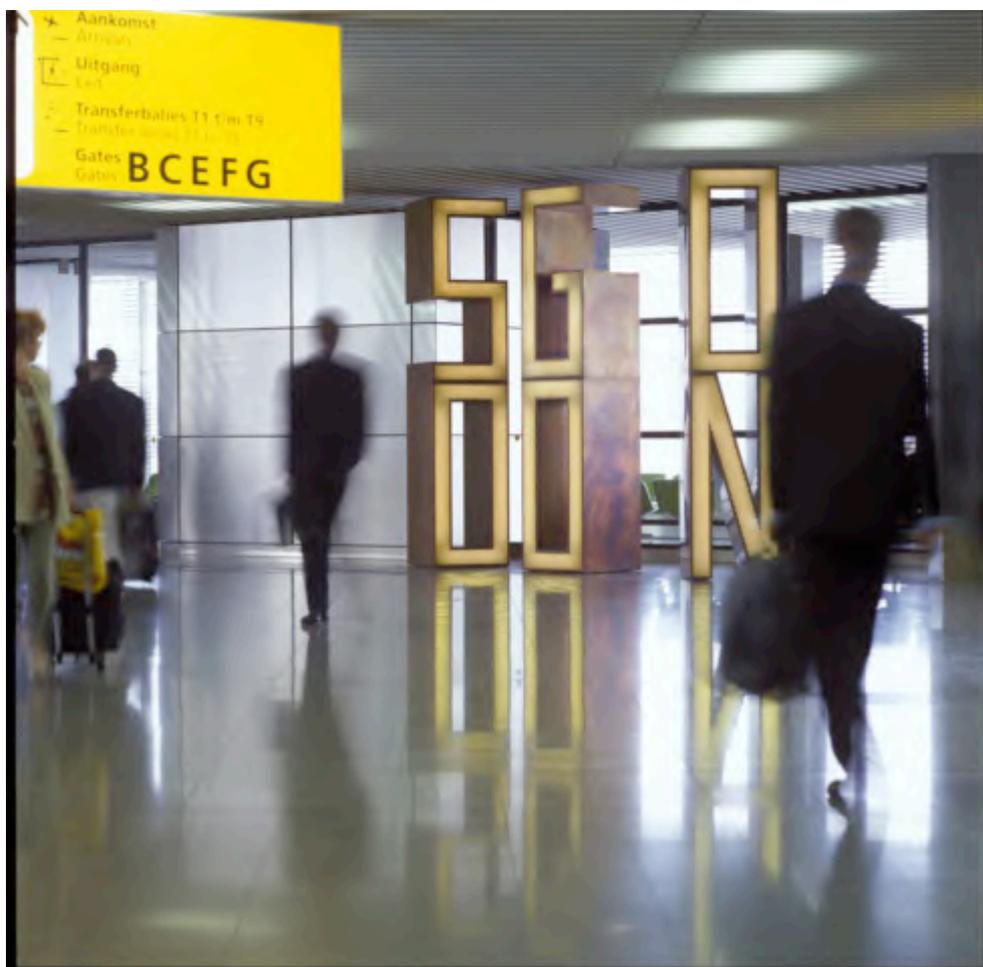


Figure 67: Marc Ruygrok, *So Go On*, 1995, (3 x) 3.2 m x .7 m x .7 m, copper plate, synthetic plate, strip lighting. Collection of Schiphol Airport.

route and signs they follow and decisions they make. As Gillian Fuller claims in her article *The Arrow—Directional Semiotics: Wayfinding in Transit*:

There is a sign for almost everything at the airport. No matter where one is in the world, pictograms, arrows and locational markers announce the familiar processual logic of the airport. These signs create a globalised navigation system, a visual interface through which one moves. These signs don't merely represent the airport, they create it.²⁵⁹

Reinforcing her opinion, the Transit Cooperative Research Program's (TCRP) *Guidelines for Transit Facility Signing and Graphics* decree that signage should enable an individual to "(1) determine their location within the setting, (2) determine that their destination is within that setting, and (3) form a plan of action that will take them from their location to their desired destination."²⁶⁰ This creates a sequential mapping system which enables the passenger to follow a route from point to point, node to node. These nodal points can consist of customs and immigration halls, shopping atriums, boarding gates, aeroplane interiors, baggage claims area etc.

A passenger very rarely has an overall picture of the entire environment at each individual airport or in each aeroplane. Instead, navigating by directional and locational signage, the individual's experience of the *Transit Zone* is constituted as an assemblage of serial spaces determined by their individual instruction set. To take the example of Sydney International Airport, before entering the *Transit Zone* passengers must determine if their flight is departing from Gates 8 – 37 or 50 – 63 before proceeding to immigration and security, as both subsets of gates are situated in different, and disconnected, parts of the terminal. Depending on the choice, the passenger follows the appropriate signage and experiences a different module of the Sydney International Airport (airside). Even in the aeroplane the specific signage locating each seat

²⁵⁹ Fuller, 'The Arrow – Directional Semiotics: Wayfinding in Transit': 231.

²⁶⁰ Transit Cooperative Research Program, 'TCRP Report 12 Guidelines for Transit Facility Signing and Graphics', (Washington: Transportation Research Board, 1996), 4.

determines a portion of the passenger/unit's composite environment that constitutes their experience of the *Transit Zone*. Additionally, it is not only the passenger who moves through space; the location of each node can move around the passenger as sites such as boarding gates and baggage carousels change to accommodate timetable adjustments. Because of this the complex logistical system of the *Transit Zone* cannot depend solely on fixed information. The mutable information is disseminated through changing electronic displays and voice announcements, and sometimes, in emergencies, even handwritten signs.

Where fixed signage provides spatial information to the passenger, electronic Flight Information Displays (FIDs) provide time based information, instructing the passenger where they should be at what time. The FID is both a harrying device, urging passengers/units to carry out their instructions and congregate at the specified redistribution points, and a reassuring device, advising passengers/units that they are moving towards or waiting at the correct gate number and that they are implementing their instructions within the given time limits. FIDs also generate specific instructions relating to individual subsets of passengers, advising the passenger that they should be checking in, proceeding to the departure gate, boarding, and that the flight is departing (and they are late).

In the airport stasis is used to enable mobility, incorporating waiting time into the logistics of air travel, allowing groups to refilter to where they should be. The FIDs play an important part in this. Because the screens provide information, and are constantly updated, passengers repeatedly consult them and remain in their vicinity. In his article, *'May I Have Your Attention': Airport Geographies of Spectatorship, Position, and (Im)Mobility*, Peter Adey argues that the FIDs are used to encourage the congregation of passengers in specific points.

The screens are considered within airport terminology to 'hold' people; they have an invisible tether to passengers 'We don't want people wandering around the building If people can be wandering down there at any time they want, then that has an operational effect on what's going on' (interview, airport architect,

2003). The screens keep people in specific spaces for operational considerations so that passengers do not miss the call for their flight, which can cause costly delays for the airlines.²⁶¹

By withholding information, such as the actual departure gate, airports keep passengers in close proximity to the FIDs, creating collection points in the airport.

The FIDs are heavily used by airports to provide information updates in order to reduce the need for overhead announcements. If the FIDs undertake the distribution of time based information, then the overhead announcement system becomes a 'galvanising' system. Every passenger who has passed through the *Transit Zone* has surely heard the overhead call for a specific missing passenger to urgently present themselves at the departure gate. These announcements are utilised to prompt 'out of place' individuals into their proper channels.

In the aeroplane the passenger's journey continues to be constructed and constrained by information and signage. Electronic seat back entertainment systems are used to manage the passenger's movement, creating a stationary passenger who does not move around the aircraft. To create a sense of movement within a static environment the airlines provide a computer graphic of the aeroplane's route, speed, height and time information. The passenger relies on this information to confirm that they are moving.

Indeed, movement and stasis co-exist in paradox; there is a disjunction between the physical movement of the passenger and the movement of the site they are within. In the airport the passenger often physically moves quite long distances from check-in to departure gate, between gates, and from arrival gate to arrival hall. However, they effectively remain in one location, the airport. In the aeroplane, which moves at high speed, the passenger is primarily stationary, occupying a very small space. This paradox of movement and stasis was explored in

²⁶¹ Peter Adey, "'May I Have Your Attention': Airport Geographies of Spectatorship, Position, and (Im)Mobility', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 528.

the 1997 – 1998 work *Imagine you are moving*, by Julian Opie, Figure 68 and Figure 69. The work was commissioned for the Flight Connections Centre, Terminal 1, Heathrow, where transferring passengers go to check in for their onward flight. *Imagine you are moving* was installed in 1997 and removed after a year, when the BAA Art Programme was discontinued.

Opie's style of image making draws from the language of signs and comic books, using flat colours and hard lines. His objects and images are signs or place holders which invoke the actual object in the simplest graphic language. His artistic language of graphic signs is very apt within the site of the *Transit Zone* where movement and place are constructed through information and signs. With *Imagine you are moving*, Opie chose to provide those passengers who were passing through the country without entering it, a version of the British countryside they were missing. The work was in two parts. Part one consisted of four light boxes that ran continuously along the length of the two lower atriums, showing gently rolling hills, valleys and trees and a summer sky. Between the light boxes were escalators descending and rising, transporting the passenger and simulating experiences of taking off and landing. Part two played on video monitors upstairs in the transfer lounge waiting area. While the passenger sat and waited, the same stylised landscape moved across the screen.

Opie experiments with the codes and conventions of representation, reducing his images to the minimum of detail needed to evoke the overarching concept of an object, landscape, road, person walking, etc. His images reference the 'universal' language of pictograms and reinterpret the graphics of early racing games and flight simulators by redrawing their landscapes. The images in *Imagine you are moving* were signs of signs, representations of symbols of the British landscape.

Opie describes how he arrived at this style of image making, saying:

I thought it was interesting to mimic the look of the computer, but I worked it all out by hand first. I suppose I'd become interested

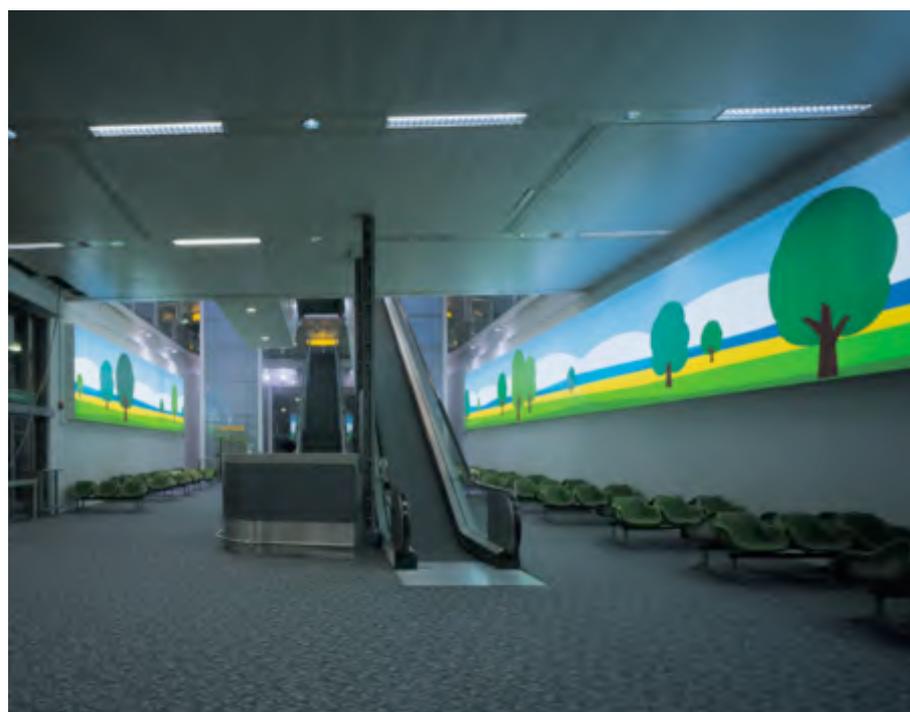


Figure 68: (top) Julian Opie, *Imagine you are moving*, 1997 – 1998, in Flight Connections Centre, Terminal 1, Heathrow. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 69: (bottom) Julian Opie, artist's rendering *Imagine you are moving*, 1997 – 1998, in Flight Connections Centre, Terminal 1, Heathrow. Image courtesy the artist.

in computer games – I remember playing a Formula 1 racing game, and later, I bought a flight simulation programme and spent a lot of time downloading stills and drawing them.²⁶²

Both the racing games and flight simulators create a sensation of virtual speed through the use of stylised, swiftly moving landscapes. And, as in the aeroplane, the player is immobile while movement is generated on screen by computer graphics. In Chapter 2, I quoted from Paul Virilio, who asserted that a world moved over at speed becomes a representation. Opie's work *Imagine you are moving* created a representation of the British landscape moved over at speed. It is simplified and reduced to its essentials. However, this sign for movement gained ironic meaning from its location in a stasis point in the airport. It reminded the passenger of their immobility on the ground and in the air.

The immobility created by the incorporation of stasis into the timetable of movement is essential in the *Transit Zone* as the systems must have room to constantly readjust themselves in response to error. The number of systems, individuals and service providers that interlock to make civil aviation possible creates a form of barely contained disorder. Equipment breakdowns, flight delays or rescheduling and inclement weather are among the many circumstances which can cause crisis through delay. Additionally, the systems must allow for variation in passengers' abilities to efficiently perform their automated movement.

In recognition of potential interruption between instruction and enactment of it, the systems provide human mediators to interpret for the passenger. When the system is running smoothly customer service agents dispense directions, clarify instructions, confirm information and manually process passengers through the nodal points. The customer service agent interprets the signs and instructions for the passenger, correcting or amplifying their interpretation of the information systems. As Knox et al. argue "The customer service agents who staff the various

²⁶² Mary Horlock, *Julian Opie* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 61.

help and information desks are central to the translation and reconciliation of these abstractions in the day to day practice of flow management.”²⁶³

When the system is disrupted, provides contradictory information or the passenger does not perform their automated tasks, the customer service role becomes more complex. They must determine and dispense the correct information, and make the relevant decisions to enable the systems to flow. In times of complete or individual system disruption they become the focal point for frustration and receive the hostility or demands that the passenger is making. “Order is co-implicated with disorder, and flow with inundation; the role of the customer service agent might therefore be interpreted as an obligatory point of passage between flood and order.”²⁶⁴ Just as the illegal passenger represents the failure of the nation-state to control movement, and the terrorist the failure of the security, the need for a customer service agent represent the failure, in small or large ways, of the automated movement within the *Transit Zone*.

As we can see from my brief analysis of ‘automated’ movement made by a passenger through the *Transit Zone*, this movement is enabled through systems comprised of instructional and informational codes, human and non-human which, read together correctly, enable the passenger/unit to move and pause appropriately through the *Transit Zone*. In enacting the automated movement the passenger becomes a part of the movement machine that is civil aviation; the identity and desires of the passenger are less important than their standardisation and effective implementation of instructions. The rigorous conforming of individuals to a logistical flow akin to the movement of objects underlies the entire experience of the *Transit Zone* and creates an object out of a subject. This, coupled with the inherent demand that the passenger speed through the spaces, embodied by the arrow on the directional signs, contributes to the undercurrent of urgent stress and feeling of de-individualisation within the environment.

²⁶³ Knox et al., 'Enacting Airports: Space, Movement and Modes of Ordering', 13.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 15.

4.4 : Reintroducing the subject

Mathieu Gallois explores the contradictory role of the passenger as an object or unit of movement and as an individual, desiring subject, in his work *Flight 934B* seen in Figure 70 and Figure 71.²⁶⁵ He photographs the passengers inflight, at the height of their enforced passivity, creating a typology, which presents them as both uniform and individual. The passengers are unified by the situation and the commonality/limitation of the things they can do within the confines of an airline seat, yet they are distinct from each other.

The passenger as a complicit unit of movement, who conforms to the demands and limitations of the *Transit Zone*, appears in the commonalities between passengers. Their acceptance of this role is revealed in their confinement to a seat, and the seat's confinement within the photographic image. The image transforms the passenger into an interchangeable object. The sheer volume of 400 'individuals' photographed and displayed in groupings of 3 then 4 then 3, with aisles between as the seating plan of the aircraft, causes the 'individuals' to merge into one. Each passenger becomes part of the greater whole, a place holder representative of the idea of 'passenger'. This is reinforced by the arrangement of the photographs. They are not laid out in the same order as they were taken, an intruding elbow in one photograph does not match the passenger in the neighbouring image. In this way Gallois treats the passengers as objects just as the *Transit Zone* does.

However, the separation created by the photograph's edges, emphasises the passenger's individuality. Each passenger is determinedly making their individual choices on how to pass the duration of the flight, and how to respond to the camera. The passengers are seated, and varyingly look at the camera, sleep, wear airline or personal headphones, watch videos or read. They are shown in a variety of contortions: slumped, leaning, sitting straight or angled in an attempt to maintain a level of comfort. Passengers who chose not to be photographed are represented by empty

²⁶⁵ The work was created by the artist, with the cooperation of Ansett and the passengers on Flight 934B.

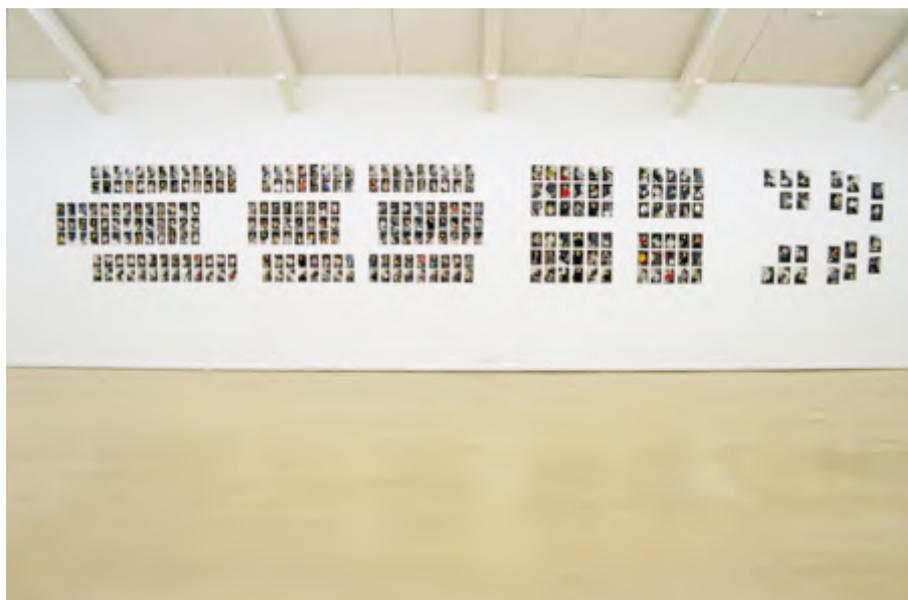


Figure 70: (top) Mathieu Gallois, *Flight 934B*, 1999, 400 C-type photographic portraits. First class 200 x 150mm. Business class 175 x 125 mm. Economy 150 x 100 mm. Overall size 12m x 1.5m.

Figure 71: (bottom) Mathieu Gallois, *Flight 934B*, 1999, detail.

seats, often strewn with belongings. The multitude of choices, documented in the photographs, reminds the viewer that the passenger is an object and a subject simultaneously, and this dual position is constantly negotiated within the *Transit Zone*.

Within the logistics of civil aviation and the *Transit Zone*, the passenger also occupies the role of a customer, who must be retained. While many of the elements constituting construction of movement, such as signage, architectural clarity, information and speed contribute to customer satisfaction within the airport and aeroplane, the periods of stasis, necessary to manage flow, generate a need for entertainment and distraction within the *Transit Zone*. It is in these periods of stasis that the needs of a passenger as an individual subject can be seen. The consubstantial position of object and subject, constantly active within the *Transit Zone*, is negotiated by both management systems and passengers as will be seen in the following section.

The passenger's subject position reactivates in a variety of ways, some of these actively promoted by interests within the *Transit Zone* and others occur in resistance to the *Transit Zone*. Within the airport, entertainment, retail and relaxation options are provided. Similarly, airlines provide entertainment and retail systems, in both electronic and print forms. Additionally, passengers provide their own distractions in cooperation with and resistance to the options provided by airlines and airports.

Within aeroplanes different strategies have been implemented to distract (and/or financially gain) from the passenger asserting their subject position. As can be seen in Gallois' photographs, in the aeroplane passengers provide their own distractions, through novels, magazines, personal music, computer games and so forth. In addition, airlines distract the passenger from the duration of the flight with inflight entertainment and food, as well as actively encouraging passengers to sleep by controlling the environment's lighting. These are strategies to segment time and thereby create a sense of movement and progression. Through managing the environment and structuring the passage of time the airline attempts to keep the passenger distracted from the duration and monotony of the actual flight.

In the absence of any specific task to be achieved in the aeroplane there is only passive duration, rather than the active 'natural' rhythm of an individual's day. It is the cessation of an individual's ordinary activities which changes their perception of passing time. As Michel Flaherty argues in his book, *A Watched Pot: How We Experience Time*, "the first paradox of lived duration is that time is perceived to pass slowly in situations with abnormally high or abnormally low levels of overt activity."²⁶⁶ Activity in the aeroplane is abnormally low, physical mobility is restricted and the passenger is held in an unchanging environment for hours on end.

Flaherty asserts that waiting time is perceived to last longer than active time as a result of the increased attention that the individual pays to every component of the waiting experience including their perceptions, feelings and thoughts. Through this:

we burden standard units of temporality with a mass of subjectivity that makes the interval seem much longer than it really is. Magnifying the density of experience slows the perceived passage of time because standard units of temporality are then bloated with an awareness of things that far exceeds what they contain under ordinary conditions.²⁶⁷

The aeroplane environment, in which the waiting individual develops a 'bloated awareness of things,' is enclosed, with no perceptible physical movement (except for during take off, landing and pockets of turbulence). Unlike train or car travel the external environment offers few reference points that a passenger can use to determine movement and speed. The aeroplane moves through time zones and 'day' and 'night' are frequently out of sync with the passenger's biorhythms. The audible environment of the aeroplane is dominated by a form of white noise generated by wind passing over the skin of the plane. Overlaying this is a cacophony of low level noise generated by the other passengers.

The economy class passenger is in constant close contact with other people, known or unknown, and through their immobility and very small

²⁶⁶ Michael G. Flaherty, *A Watched Pot : How We Experience Time* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 21.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 95.

personal space is aware of their own and other peoples' physicality. The topic of enforced physical contact within the aeroplane environment frequently appears in online forums and blogs. Discussions on appropriate etiquette in the aeroplane such as how to negotiate armrest possession, seat recline, overweight passengers, odour issues and overloud conversations and music reveal a dominant preoccupation with preserving personal space, physically and aurally.²⁶⁸

In 2004 I created the artwork *Harbouring II by Tentline*, Figure 72 and Figure 73. This work explores efforts made by passengers to create a sense of privacy within the very public areas of the *Transit Zone*. The work specifically arose out of my experiences as an economy class passenger who could not afford to purchase privacy within the *Transit Zone*. My movements through the airport and in the aeroplane were in full public view. The work takes the form of a classic A-frame tent constructed out of transparent mesh with a covering fly made of Garuda Indonesia airline blankets. Inside the tent a seat is constructed out of a camp stool and an American Airlines blanket, a life jacket underneath and oxygen mask above are made out of a Varig blanket, scattered around the tent is a used tea cup, CD player, socks, and an 'airport' novel. The work reveals how a passenger encamps space creating a sense of privacy and control within the *Transit Zone*.

Some passengers spend money to gain privacy. For example, they rent private rooms such as hotel or office type space; become members of organisations like the *Qantas Club* that provide private lounges in airports; or purchase a first class ticket which provides access to private lounges, for example Qantas provides the *Qantas First* lounge.²⁶⁹ In addition,

²⁶⁸ Alina Tugend, 'If Only the Flier in Front of You Were a Fan of Miss Manners', *The New York Times*, August 2, 2005 http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/02/business/02etiquette.html?_r=1&oref=slogin (accessed February 5, 2008).; 'Etiquette', http://news.cheapflights.com/airlines/2007/01/flier_etiquette.html, (accessed February 5, 2008).; '10 Rules of Airplane Etiquette', http://steelkaleidoscopes.typepad.com/steel_kaleidoscopes/2003/12/airplane_etique.html (accessed February 5, 2008).; 'Airplane Etiquette for Frequent Flyers', <http://www.etravelergear.com/airetfreq.html>, (accessed February 5, 2008).

²⁶⁹ Qantas, 'Qantas: Flying with Us', <http://www.qantas.com.au/info/flying/index>, (accessed March 5, 2008).



Figure 72: (top) Melissa Laing, *Harbouring II by Tentline*, 2004, inflight balnkets from Garuda Indonesia, American Airlines and Varig Brazil, aluminium, fabric, tarpaulin, book, Discman, inflight cup. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 73: (bottom) Melissa Laing, *Harbouring II by Tentline*, 2004, inflight balnkets from Garuda Indonesia, American Airlines and Varig Brazil, aluminium, fabric, tarpaulin, book, Discman, inflight cup. Image courtesy the artist.

holders of premium frequent flyer membership are often granted access to business class lounges. However, the passenger in transit who chooses not to purchase these services occupies space in a way akin to how teenagers appropriate and live in public space. Herb Childress in his article *Teenagers, Territory and the Appropriation of Space* suggests that teenagers appropriate space as they “have a limited ability to manipulate private property. They can’t own it, can’t modify it, can’t rent it. They can only choose, occupy and use the property of others.”²⁷⁰ Childress relates the mode of temporarily occupying space to an idea of marking territory and opposes it to a tenure based occupation and ownership of space which is typically available to enfranchised adults in the community. In this case, the first and business class passengers and those holding premium frequent flyer membership are enfranchised in comparison to the economy class traveller.

The average individual in the *Transit Zone* has a limited ability to manipulate space. Those who do not purchase access to exclusive space can end up encamping space. They appropriate and occupy a site, thereby generating temporary ownership of it. As can be seen in the gate lounges of the airport, families and individuals claim space through the strategic dispersal of property. They generate physical space around themselves by appropriating additional seats and aurally claim the environment either through interaction with each other, or the use of personal media such as iPods to create a distance from the other passengers. These claiming mechanisms, which are fragile and intangible, are represented in my artwork by the mesh of the tent, a barrier which is permeable. The solidity and comfort the territory represents for the individual is present in the blanket fly that provides security.

Likewise, in the aeroplane passengers demarcate their space and privacy through socially recognised demands for privacy such as reading books, wearing headphones and eye masks and/or spreading into unoccupied space to generate a feeling of greater physical freedom and construct a buffer space between themselves and others. The encampment of space is time based and temporary, when the passenger leaves all markers of

²⁷⁰ Herb Childress, 'Teenagers, Territory and the Appropriation of Space', *Childhood* 11, no. 2 (2004): 196.

their occupation go with them, or are erased, leaving the space free for the next encampment. However, during the time that the space is occupied the majority of passengers respect the subtle territory markers.

Airlines recognise the desire for personal space and privacy in the facilities they offer to business and first class passengers. For example, on selected flights, airlines such as Emirates now offer pod style seating in business class, which creates a physical barrier between two passengers, and private suites in first class.²⁷¹ However, the dominant method the airlines use to distract the passenger from the duration of the flight and the close physical proximity created by seating arrangements, is the provision of multimedia entertainment options. It is in the new aeroplanes, where all passengers are provided with personal inflight entertainment systems embedded in the seat backs, that we can see most clearly how media is used to distract the passenger from the time spent waiting. Seat back Inflight Entertainment Technology now offers movies, TV shows, documentaries, games, flight updates and music. In addition, it is used to distribute the inflight safety message and promotional information about the airline. For example, Emirates proudly offers “more than 140 movies to choose from, over 60 TV channels, 350 radio and CD channels and over 40 games.”²⁷²

The traditional cabin TV, still in use on many flights, offers a series of movies, TV shows, promotional and informational programs and news broadcasts, which striate time. However, this form of viewing is communal and does not offer individual choice. It recognises the passenger’s need for distraction but does not enable the individual to control their environment. The new seat back entertainment systems introduce the ability to assert taste and construct an individualised experience through ‘on demand’ media. However, the passenger is still a captive audience for promotional programming regarding the airline, duty free shopping and the airline’s partner institutions at the point of arrival.

²⁷¹ Emirates, 'New Private Suites', http://www.emirates.com/english/flying/cabin_features/first_class/new_private_suites.aspx, (accessed February 5, 2008).

²⁷² Emirates, 'Inflight Entertainment', <http://www.emirates.com/TravellerInformation/Inflight/InflightEntertainment/Overview.asp>, (accessed September 20, 2007).

The seat back inflight entertainment systems are airline controlled versions of what many passengers already bring with them: portable computers, personal game players, MP3 players and digital video players. As Michael Bull argues in his study on iPod users *No Dead Air!*, the ability to determine what one listens to gives the user a sense of control over their environment.²⁷³ This illusion of control can be very important in a site where the passenger has limited control over any other element of the space.

The introduction of personalised TV screens has increased the passenger's ability to generate a sense of private and personalised space. Anna McCarthy, in her book *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space*, asserts "accommodating one person at a time, such positionings are explicit in their invitation to use spectatorship to construct a zone of privacy in public."²⁷⁴ By providing seat back entertainment systems the airline promotes a perception of personal space generated by the passenger's engagement with their 'own' individual screen. Through audiovisual programming the passenger is provided with a mental 'elsewhere' to mitigate their physical 'here'.

Within the airport, media is also used to distract and entertain the passenger. Airports provide televisions at boarding gates, frequently tuned to special airport television channels. However, media provides only one of the visual spectacles present at the airport. The airport also enriches the built environment through public art works and provides a shopping environment. It deliberately activates people and aeroplane watching with viewing platforms looking onto the interior and vast picture windows looking out toward the runways.

In *Aviopolis* Fuller and Harley focus on the airport window as the site of the spectacle. Fuller writes that "huge jumbos with exotic livery press against the glass walls of the terminal, people from everyplace and every timezone move purposefully around us, the planes and the sky are

²⁷³ Michael Bull, 'No Dead Air! The Ipod and the Culture of Mobile Listening', *Leisure Studies*, 24, no. 4 (2005).

²⁷⁴ Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 133.

presented in exhilarating panoramas.”²⁷⁵ The business of air transport, framed by the windows, becomes a display for the passenger to watch.

Adey argues that “the purpose of the window is, therefore, to ‘arrest’ movement, by drawing people’s gaze and capturing their attention.”²⁷⁶ He points out that airport windows are surrounded by retail outlets, and often are sites for food courts, thereby turning the spectacle of the outside into a way of capturing the passenger in a retail environment. Like the Flight Information Displays, the spectacle created by the airport holds the passenger in one place. However, the spectacle is used to activate the passenger as subject, rather than the passenger as object (unit of movement). It captures the passenger in a retail environment which is designed to activate them as a desiring, purchasing individual.

Airport architecture deliberately frames the activities of the airport, focusing the passenger’s attention inward to the airside of the airport. Sitting by a terminal window a passenger can watch planes land, taxi and take off, dock, and the baggage unloaded and loaded. They can observe the catering trucks delivering food and the fuelling trucks refuelling the aeroplane. The multiple activities that support the plane become a spectacle, and the passenger can see the complexity of the machinery that enables their trip. Peter Fischli and David Weiss’ photographic series, *Airports* (1987–2006), captures the spectacle of the airport embodied in the aeroplane. The images are simply shot and focus on the aeroplane on the tarmac and runway. Yet, in their simplicity they dramatise the activity of the airport and the aesthetics of the aeroplane.

In Figure 74 three aeroplanes can be seen nestled against each other diminishing in scale as the sun sets behind them, the image anthropomorphising the aeroplanes into a family unit. Figure 75 shows a Lufthansa aeroplane on the runway, evoking a sense of imminent flight. Figure 76 shows the tails of three red liveried aeroplanes against a darkening sky of storm clouds. Fischli and Weiss’ photographs reveal the

²⁷⁵ Gillian Fuller, 'Welcome to Windows', (book proposal, *Aviopolis: everyday culture at the airport*, 2004).

²⁷⁶ Adey, "'May I Have Your Attention": Airport Geographies of Spectatorship, Position, and (Im)Mobility': 526.



Figure 74: (top) Peter Fischli and David Weiss, from the series *Airports*, 1987 – 2006, cibachrome photograph, 1.6m x 2.25m.

Figure 75: (bottom) Peter Fischli and David Weiss, from the series *Airports*, 1987 – 2006, cibachrome photograph, 1.6m x 2.25m.



Figure 76: (top) Peter Fischli and David Weiss, from the series *Airports*, 1987 – 2006, cibachrome photograph, 1.6m x 2.25m.

Figure 77: (bottom) Peter Fischli and David Weiss, from the series *Airports*, 1987 – 2006, cibachrome photograph, 1.6m x 2.25m.

aesthetics of the vast machinery of flight. Their extensive documentation of aeroplanes references the activities of aircraft enthusiasts who repeatedly return to sites around the airport to photograph the aeroplanes that fascinate them. But where the aircraft enthusiast strives for the perfect side shot in full daylight which displays the aeroplane to the exclusion of all else, Fischli and Weiss' images contain people, cars, equipment and window reflections displaying the business of air travel as it interacts with the watching passenger, as can be seen in Figure 77, page 180.

Fischli and Weiss have been photographing aeroplanes for the *Airport* series since 1987; Martha Rosler has been documenting the airport since the 1970s. Other artists such as Nicole Carstens, Marilyn Fairskye, Ross Harley, Mark Wallinger, Gary Winogrand and myself, to name a few, have also turned their (still and video) cameras on the spectacle of the airport. These artists document people within the *Transit Zone* as well as its non-human structures. The airport turns the flows of human movement into a spectacle for the individual, creating viewing platforms from which the passing world inside the airport can be seen, distracting the passenger from their waiting experience. The people watching aspects of the airport are reinforced by a variety of documentaries and reality TV shows focusing on the airport such as BBC's *Airport (UK)*, a British documentary television series based at London Heathrow Airport.²⁷⁷ Through TV footage such as this the passenger is primed to see the site of the airport as a visual spectacle.

One of the attractions of the airport is the constant spectacle embedded in its sites and systems. However, as Sontag suggests, the camera is often used as an intermediary between the individual and the experience.

A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it – by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir. Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs. The very

²⁷⁷ *Airport (UK)* ran for ten seasons between 1996 and 2005. It followed a 'fly-on-the-wall' documentary style following airport and airline staff and selected passengers in the airport.

activity of taking pictures is soothing, and assuages general feelings of disorientation that are likely to be exacerbated by travel.²⁷⁸

We could read photographing the *Transit Zone* as an attempt to gain control over it. It can be viewed as an assertion of the individual's status as artist, and the passenger's status as an individual. By using their profession to interact with the *Transit Zone*, the artist asserts themselves as a person within it. This consideration of the camera as a device to separate and assert identity can be compared to ethnologists who live in the same space as those they observe but separate themselves from the community through their acts of observation and interpretation.

However, despite the visual spectacle of air travel, the *Transit Zone* is often called a ubiquitous site, due to the commonality of experience within it. A passenger passes through immigration and security, shops for duty free goods, waits at the departure gate, waits in the plane, disembarks, transits, shops for duty free goods, waits at the departure gate, waits in the plane, disembarks, etc, until they finally pass through immigration and customs. The international standardisation of civil aviation leads to a standardisation of experience. But, around the logistical requirements of international air travel, airports and airlines try to create a sense of unique location for their spaces, thereby branding them as individual sites rather than generic nodal points in a journey.

Airports are symbols of national and civic place, gateways to specific countries and symbols of travel with all their location specificity. Yet, they are also symbolic of global movement and strive to demonstrate their internationalism. The balancing act between the local and the global permeates the *Transit Zone*. Within the airport, retail concessions which are specific to the local site are included among the international brands and companies. Local and international food is sold at restaurants and cafes. Sites within the airport celebrate local flora and fauna, whereas viewing platforms, where the individual can watch aeroplane movements, focus the passenger on global movement. Public art commissions create

²⁷⁸ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977), 9-10.

focus points within the airport, some reference the local site, such as Julian Opie's *Imagine you are moving*, others, like Richard Serra's *Tilted Spheres*, focus on the global structures of the *Transit Zone*.

The systems of the *Transit Zone* reactivate the individual desiring subject within the airport, endeavouring to create a unique experience for the passenger. However, the activation of the individual subject position focuses on generating economically productive activity, whether it is in the direct form of the passenger purchasing goods and services, or in the less tangible area of customer entertainment and satisfaction aimed at branding the airport and ensuring repeat custom.

'Dwell time', the time that a passenger spends in the airport not performing their automated tasks, is when the airport activates the passenger as an individual subject. Airports (and airlines) achieve this through providing retail, service, leisure and entertainment options, which focus on transforming the act of waiting into an economically useful activity. An American market analysis company, Airport Interviewing and Research, Inc., stated that in 2005 in America on average a passenger spent 86 minutes in the airport after clearing security.²⁷⁹ Within the airport, public art programs, visual spectacles, retail opportunities, business and communication services and other entertainment and leisure activities are offered to the passenger to while away this time. The options offered range from the widely available to the exclusive lounges and vary in cost from free to expensive. Justine Lloyd argues that these endeavours constitute "distraction as an end in itself. Instead of experiencing waiting time as wasted time, which inevitably leads to boredom and alienation from one's environment, the urban traveler is invited to use transit time to accumulate useful experiences of leisure and work."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ 'Airport Interviewing and Research, Inc', <http://www.pri-air.com/air/travel.html>, (accessed November 23, 2005.)

²⁸⁰ Justine Lloyd, 'Dwelltime: Airport Technology, Travel and Consumption', *space & culture*, 6, no. 2 (May 2003): 94.

4.5 : Changi International Airport – a case study

As a case study I will explore the options that Singapore's Changi Airport offers to passengers in the airside of its terminals. Changi Airport is a bustling hub airport which provides employment and generates income in the community. As Deyan Sudjic asserted in *The Hundred Mile City* in 1992 regarding Heathrow Airport: "Along with a handful of other international airports, Heathrow has reached the critical mass that makes it much more than simply an interchange between passengers, aircraft and cargo. If not actually a city in its own right, it has become a vital constituent of the city as a whole."²⁸¹ As with Heathrow, major airports such as Changi become urban centres in their own right, offering a myriad of facilities and activities. In addition, Changi advertises that it has an annual handling capacity of 68.7 million passengers. The volume of people passing through a major airport such as Changi, as well as those employed in management, maintenance, service and government capacities is comparable to other urban centres.

I have chosen to focus on Changi Airport as it consistently wins awards for its facilities and customer satisfaction levels and aims to provide a high level of services, consumer options and activities to cater to the passenger as an individual.²⁸² Importantly, Changi Airport only services the international market so is solely concerned with the systems of international air travel, which are the topic of this thesis. Changi Airport offers both a budget terminal, which has fewer facilities, and a specialised business terminal. On Changi Airport's website they proudly advertise their facilities, asserting that "Changi is both your journey and destination."²⁸³ This rhetoric is not uncommon among airports as they try to persuade passengers and airlines to choose them as a transit point.

²⁸¹ Deyan Sudjic, *The 100 Mile City*, (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1992), 147 – 8.

²⁸² Changi Airport, 'Awards and Accolades', http://www.changiairport.com/changi/en/about_us/awards_accolades/?_local_e=en, (accessed February 5, 2008).

²⁸³ Changi Airport, 'Changi Airport Singapore', <http://www.changi.airport.com.sg/changi/index.jsp?bmLocale=en>, (accessed November 23, 2005).

Once sites solely devoted to the facilitation of aircraft movement, airports have expanded their role, generating large amounts of revenue through sales and services peripheral to the movement of aircraft. Brian Edwards, in his book *The Modern Terminal*, attributes the development of non transport orientated goals to privatisation of airports. “As airports have become privatised – in whole or part – during the 1980’s and 1990s, their goals have tended to be less aviation orientated.”²⁸⁴ Privatised airports lost most of their government subsidies and consequently became more profit orientated. Currently most airports earn more money from renting commercial space than they do from the airlines in landing fees.

Privatisation occurred around the same time as the aviation industry began deregulating in 1978 with the result that flight routes, previously serviced by only one airline, opened up to competition between airlines. Deregulation of the air transport industry has led to the airlines competing for passengers as customers.²⁸⁵ Airlines compete on a basis of comfort and/or cost, trading off between customer service and price. Some, such as Singapore Airlines, compete on the basis of customer service in an effort to retain customer loyalty, with a concomitantly higher fare schedule than budget airlines, such as Tiger Airways, that offer a budget service that removes “frills so passengers only pay for what they want. Excess luggage, meals and entertainment on board flights are all available at affordable prices should passengers want them.”²⁸⁶ The passenger’s advance choice of airline, through an evaluation of price, customer service and route, determines the level of customer service and individual care they should receive.²⁸⁷

It is in the interests of high service airlines to fly via airports that also offer good customer facilities, whereas budget airlines, which rely on fast

²⁸⁴ Brian Edwards, *The Modern Terminal New Approaches to Airport Architecture* (London: E & FN Spon, 1998), 28.

²⁸⁵ Leonard Rau, ‘Deregulation and Design: The Changing Role of Identity at the Airport’, in *Building for Air Travel Architecture and Design for Commercial Aviation*, ed. John Zukowsky, (Munich, New York: Prestel, Art Institute of Chicago, 1996).

²⁸⁶ Tiger Airways, ‘Company Overview’, http://www.tigerairways.com/about_us/, (accessed February 5, 2008).

²⁸⁷ With a budget airline, the customer can opt in to further services at any point by purchasing them.

turn around, tend to use airports with fewer facilities in less convenient locations as they offer lower operating fees. Changi Airport caters to the luxury, standard and budget markets. It charges the same aircraft landing fees to each airline, but charges different 'in terminal' costs depending on which terminal the airline chooses to use.

Among the many ways in which Changi Airport maximises its return and engages with the passenger as a consuming subject is through leasing concession space to retail and food outlets. More than 60% of its revenue comes from these non-aviation earnings.²⁸⁸ The 300 retail outlets at Changi Airport sell books, magazines, confectionary, fashion, accessories, jewellery, fragrances and cosmetics, healthcare, electronics, computers, gifts and souvenirs, sports equipment, toys, wine, liquor and tobacco and 'specialty' items. They offer bars, lounges, fast food outlets, food courts, restaurants and bistros.

While many passengers come into the *Transit Zone* with the intention to take advantage of the duty free pricing, retailers also try to create an environment in which passengers will impulse shop to alleviate their boredom. Gerry Crawford and T.C. Melewar, in their article *The Importance of Impulse Purchasing Behaviour in the International Airport Environment*, argue that "retailers must create an environment that minimises inherent stress and accentuates or at least maintains natural levels of excitement, while also virtuously motivating impulse purchasing by reducing or eliminating barriers to purchase."²⁸⁹ Advertising for Changi's Terminal Three, which opened on January 8, 2008, encourages passengers to check in early to maximise their shopping time. Promoting the airport as a shopping and eating destination, Changi Airport endeavours to activate the passenger's consumer subject position, thereby maximising the financial benefit of their dwell time.

²⁸⁸ Changi Airport Singapore, 'Airport Revenue and Charges', http://www.changiairport.com/changi/en/about_us/fact_sheets/ap_revenue_charges.html?__locale=en (accessed March 18, 2008).

²⁸⁹ Gerry Crawford and T. C. Melewar, 'The Importance of Impulse Purchasing Behaviour in the International Airport Environment', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 3, no. 1 (September 2003): 85 – 98.

Changi Airport also provides services and leisure activities which are orientated towards relaxing the passenger and accentuating the positive experience of air travel. These include internet access, business services, children's play areas, roof top gardens and swimming pool, nature trails, a gym, hair and beauty care, showers, movie theatre, TV lounges, x-box stations, medical services, convenience stores, money changers, telephones, prayer rooms, smoking areas, live music, napping lounges and transit hotels. Special features are promoted online such as the following: "Passengers can soothe their minds and bodies with oxygen therapy at the Plaza Premium Lounge, or relax in a jacuzzi at the Rainforest Lounge in Terminal 1."²⁹⁰ Business travellers are promised site facilities which enable them to work while in transit. Changi Airport has exhibitions, its own tabloid newspaper, and offers appearances by celebrities and children's TV show characters. In trying to entertain and distract the passengers Changi Airport goes to the extreme of taking the passenger on trips outside the airport.²⁹¹ Passengers who are transiting in Changi for over 5 hours can take tours around Singapore. The airport effectively turns the city of Singapore into a visual spectacle for the passenger.

In *Aviopolis* a photograph by Ross Harley of Changi Airport, Figure 78, encapsulates the airport's orientation towards comfort and customer satisfaction. Two signs directing passengers to the amenities sit above a display by Qantas of their new sky beds with the tag line "it's all about comfort." The juxtaposition of a demonstration of "first class" facilities with the offered amenities of the airport demonstrates how comfort is a sales point. Changi Airport sells itself through the image of opulence, much as the aviation industry has historically sold itself through images of luxury, service and exoticism.

Changi is a stratified site and each passenger has a different subjective experience of it, dependent on the areas they access and the services they purchase. Like any urban centre, the passenger is presented with a

²⁹⁰ 'Changi Airport Singapore'.

²⁹¹ Changi Airport, 'Free Singapore tour', http://www.changiairport.com/changi/en/airport_guide/exp_changi/rest_n_relax/free_sgtour.html, (accessed March 6, 2008).



Figure 78: Ross Rudesch Harley, from the *Aviopolis* series, 2002–2005.

variety of spaces which are comparable to forms of urban public and semi public space. These include: the public areas which any inhabitant may access, the walkways, atriums, parks and waiting lounge areas – in these areas exhibitions, performances and public events occur; the shops in which any person may browse; the restaurant seating areas where only customers may sit and the purchasable service and leisure facilities; the airline lounges and frequent flyer clubs, which require membership to enter; and the hotels and napping areas where a passenger may purchase privacy and a bed. Like an urban centre, a passenger's access to specific spaces is dependent on purchasing membership to specific sub groups. Those who choose to pay can obtain temporary privacy, others must transit in public view.

Changi International Airport now offers expedited customs, immigration and security clearance for those who chose to become members of their JetQuay facility. "A JetQuay personal concierge will greet and escort each passenger personally upon arrival or departure and be on standby to assist with luggage check-in or retrieval and customs and security clearance at JetQuay's dedicated customs, immigration and security counters, facilitating speedier clearance."²⁹² At the other end of the scale the airport has a Budget Terminal dedicated to budget airlines, which offers fewer facilities to the passengers transiting through it. In these ways Changi Airport caters for the passenger's individual desire for privacy, speed, exclusivity or economy.

As we can see from this chapter the *Transit Zone* is a site of multiple imperatives and resistances. It both de-individualises and reactivates the individual's subject position. The passenger is a complicit unit of movement who must traverse the *Transit Zone* in timely accordance with their instructions, interacting with informational, directional and instructional signage. These create a nodal environment which is different for each route followed. In enacting these instructions the passenger subsumes their individual desiring self to the imperative of movement. Built into this movement are stasis points which allow for regrouping. The *Transit Zone* distracts the passengers from their stasis though the use of

²⁹² 'Changi Airport Singapore'.

media, enriched environments, consumer opportunities and spectacle. These devices deliberately reactivate the individual's subject position. The passenger must negotiate these changing positions just as the *Transit Zone* must negotiate the changing needs of its various interest groups, including those of the passengers.

Chapter 5 : Re-imagining the *Transit Zone*

Up to this point this thesis has discussed the construction of the *Transit Zone* and its systems, including specific resistances to its structure. It has built a picture of international air travel based on legal and bureaucratic conceptions, the securing of its sites, systems logic and commodification of the passenger. The varying approaches that I have utilised focus on how the *Transit Zone* has evolved around international air travel. However, this approach does not take into account how the *Transit Zone* connects with cultural imaginings, and generates unplanned, messy, emotional, subjective responses. Psychiatrists argue that the separation of the passenger from their normal routine and social inhibitions can provoke withdrawal, disconnection from reality, and anger or fear responses. E. Graham Lucas wrote of air travel: "... every conceivable environmental stress is exaggerated at a time of maximum vulnerability when basic personality traits such as anxiety, aggression, obsessionality, and irritability can all be caricatured."²⁹³

Many discussions of the *Transit Zone* posit it as a de-individualising, ubiquitous and commercialised environment that must be endured. For example, Marc Augé described the airport and aeroplane as a quintessential 'non-place,' which creates "neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude."²⁹⁴ Indeed, much of my discussion to this point has implicitly endorsed this position. However, as Augé himself acknowledges: "Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten."²⁹⁵

While the systems of the *Transit Zone* create an imperative towards similitude and solitude, individuals transform this through their intentions, interactions and behaviour within the *Transit Zone*. Likewise, artists

²⁹³ E. Graham Lucas, 'Psychological Aspects of Travel', *Travel Medicine International*, 8, no. 3 (1987): 99.

²⁹⁴ Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 103.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

explore both the isolating imperative and its resistances in their work. This chapter explores how meaning, emotion, social relationships and cultural constructions have organically grown around and inside the *Transit Zone*. Within the *Transit Zone* there exists the possibility for transformative experiences, iconic figures and intense emotion. In this chapter I consider the *Transit Zone* through the concept of liminality, positioning movement through it as a rite of passage, with all its attendant transformative implications. I utilise the iconic figure of the flight attendant to discuss gender, eroticism and relationships within the cabin. And finally I discuss the rational and irrational fears and anxieties that occur in relationship to flight.

The diversity of individuals and reasons for travel which come together within the *Transit Zone* include: travel for business, education, leisure, visiting family or returning home; travel to migrate permanently; and travel as an invited refugee or uninvited asylum seeker. Whether making a new start, beginning an adventure, continuing a routine or leaving a place behind, the passenger brings their personal history with them into the *Transit Zone* and this has an impact on how they experience it.

In addition, the *Transit Zone* is informed by the complex historical and social associations with the idea of travel. The word 'travel' is used to describe tourism, adventure and exploration, evoking the idea of the overseas experience as a journey of discovery, of self and/or others. This notion, firmly embedded in the Western literary and scientific tradition, finds its expression in nineteenth century Prussian naturalist and explorer Alexander van Humboldt's statement: "I was spurred on by an uncertain longing to be transported from a boring daily life to a marvellous world."²⁹⁶ Yet Caren Kaplan, in her book *Questions of Travel*, argues that travel, "cannot escape the historical legacies of capitalist development and accumulation, of imperialist expansion, and of inequities of numerous kinds...."²⁹⁷ She goes on to point out that the word 'travel' can be used

²⁹⁶ Alexander van Humbolt, quoted in Alain De Botton, *The Art of Travel* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 253.

²⁹⁷ Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 131.

inappropriately in reference to diaspora, forcible relocation and the inability to return home.²⁹⁸

Each individual entering the *Transit Zone* brings with them their own personal and cultural associations. A business person who flies overseas routinely is likely to respond to the procedures of security and transit with boredom, treating the time in the *Transit Zone* as part of their normal 'office' routine. A first time or infrequent tourist will more likely be excited and experience stress while travelling, whereas, a refugee who does not expect to be able to return home will have an entirely different emotional reaction to the *Transit Zone*. The complexity of experiences and subject positions brought to the *Transit Zone* inform my following discussion.

5.1 : The *Transit Zone* as a liminal site

The *Transit Zone* is a threshold which transports passengers to and from potentialities. Syed Manzurul Islam considers the crossing of the threshold between locations to be at the heart of travel, arguing:

Taken at its simplest, the narrative of travel unfolds the events of trekking space. The events that we call travel can be said to be composed of movement between spatial locations: leaving one spatial marker and arriving at another. The presumed departure and arrival, in the very process of their movement, paradoxically stages the threshold to be crossed, and enacts the between that divides and joins spatial locations.²⁹⁹

Traversing the *Transit Zone* can be considered a rite of passage. By passing over its borders and through its spaces the passenger enacts a ritual that changes their status and location. Islam argues that it is the negotiation of the rite of passage that creates the traveller. "We could say that it is precisely in the very process of negotiating 'the between'

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Syed Manzurul Islam, *The Ethics of Travel, from Marco Polo to Kafka* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 5.

traversing threshold and crossing boundary, that s/he makes her/himself a traveller.”³⁰⁰

Arnold van Gennep, in his book *The Rites of Passage*, posits that there are three phases to any rite of passage: *separation*, *transition* and *incorporation* or the preliminal, liminal and post-liminal.³⁰¹ These three stages can be paralleled to the structure of the *Transit Zone* and the way an individual must pass through it. The initial stage of the rite of passage, *separation*, involves the demarcation of profane space and time from sacred space and time. The individual passes from the profane to the sacred space/time in an act of *separation*. In the case of the *Transit Zone*, the (profane) space of general access, held within the nation-state, is demarcated from the (sacred) space of the *Transit Zone*. In Chapter 2 I discussed the act of *separation* as a physical and bureaucratic movement of the individual across an arbitrary point, shifting the individual from nation-state territory to the excluded space of the *Transit Zone*. In this chapter, I liken this movement to a ritualistic separation of the individual from their current (profane) status in order to enter the space of the (sacred) *Transit Zone*. The entry rituals for the *Transit Zone* – passport control and security – are the rituals whereby a passenger exposes themselves to be cleansed and *separated* through the rite of inspection.

Within and at the entrance to the *Transit Zone*, can be found art works which mark and amplify the symbolic nature of its sites, they make visible the change the passenger is undergoing. For example, for five years, between 2000 and 2005, the Sydney International Airport marked the moment of separation with Robyn Backen’s *Weeping Walls*, Figure 79 and Figure 80.³⁰² In front of both entrances to the departure halls stood glass and metal frames which contained fibre optic strands that lit up, flashing Morse code messages. The *Weeping Walls* visually screened the entrances and marked the beginning of the *Transit Zone*. They were the last point of contact between those who were leaving and those who were

³⁰⁰ Islam, *The Ethics of Travel, from Marco Polo to Kafka*, 5.

³⁰¹ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (3rd edn.; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).

³⁰² In the 2005 upgrade of the Sydney International Terminal the works were relocated.



Figure 79: (top) Robyn Backen, *Weeping Walls*, 2000, fibre optics, morse code light generators, metal halide light boxes and mixed media, 25m x 4m x 0.2m.

Figure 80: (bottom) Robyn Backen, *Weeping Walls*, 2000, fibre optics, morse code light generators, metal halide light boxes and mixed media, 25m x 4m x 0.2m.

remaining; they became the site for photographs, last hugs and kisses and other farewells. Indeed, they were commissioned to provide “a focused emotional hub to the Total Journey Experience, to highlight the emotional transition from landside to airside, to provide a farewell point at the 'heart beat' of the airport.”³⁰³

Backen’s work dramatised the moment of separation and increased its significance. The rain-like strands of fibre called to the anguish, or wrench of separation, and spoke of the anxiety and fear of change. However, the messages flashed in Morse code are playful quotations spelling out phrases such as Andy Warhol’s “Famous for fifteen minutes” and Oscar Wilde’s “I have nothing to declare but my genius.”³⁰⁴ They turned the passenger, briefly, into a star and inject levity, joy and pride into the rite of separation.

The middle phase of the rite of passage, *transition*, is described by van Gennep as a period and/or site of ambiguity, a state of limbo. He invokes the idea of spatial and symbolic areas of ‘no man’s land’ or neutral territory, of which the *Transit Zone* is a complex contemporary version. Of neutral territory, van Gennep states that “Whoever passes from one to the other [adjacent territories] finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds.”³⁰⁵

An example of an art work connecting the secular movement through space to the magico-religious transition can be found in the United Airlines Terminal at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport. The long underground passageway between concourses B and C is home to an immersive art work by Michael Hayden which envelops the passenger in changing sound and light: *Skys the Limit*, Figure 81. It is made up of “23,600 sq. ft. of mirror reflecting over 1 mile of ‘neon’ ... controlled

³⁰³ 'Sydney Airport, Australia / Aéroport De Sydney, Australie ', <http://www.euran.com/airportsydney.htm>, (accessed November 7, 2005).

³⁰⁴ Robyn Backen, 'Robyn Backen – the Weeping Walls', http://www-personal.usyd.edu.au/~rbacken/text/ww02_txt.html, (accessed December 6, 2005).

³⁰⁵ van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 18.



Figure 81: Michael Hayden, *Skys the Limit*, 1987, 7,193 sq. metres of mirror reflecting over one mile of neon, controlled by three solid state computers, one hour of electronic music. Chicago: O'Hare International Airport, United Airlines, Terminal 1. Image courtesy the artist.

by 3 solid state computers. 1 hour of electronic music.”³⁰⁶ The neon tubes turn on and off in patterns over the distance of the passageway, and the music creates a trancelike effect.

This passageway is truly a no man’s space; its only purpose is to provide a pathway from one set of departure gates to another. The lights and sound create a magical effect transforming a long tunnel into a visually and aurally astounding space. The art work constantly changes the tunnel, making it waver between a functional link between terminals and a transformative aesthetic environment. Passengers passing through the walkway are briefly connected with the wondrous possibilities of a rite of passage before they emerge from the underworld, up into the concourse.

The final phase of any rite of passage is *incorporation*, the re-assimilation of the individual into their normative or newly defined position in the total society. In the case of the passenger, this is achieved by the exit processes of the *Transit Zone*. Here the passenger undergoes rituals to reintegrate them into the normative space of the nation-state. In 2000 Mark Wallinger created the single channel video work *Threshold to the Kingdom*, Figure 82 to 85. Shot at an arrival gate in Heathrow Airport, the art work presents the act of walking through the automatic doors into the general space of the arrivals hall as a transcending moment. The slow motion footage is combined with Allegri’s religious hymn *Miserere Mei*, to make crossing from the *Transit Zone* to general space, momentous.

Wallinger’s *Threshold to the Kingdom* transforms the secular act of passing through the arrival gates to that of a magico-religious rite of incorporation, into the ‘Kingdom’, whether it be heaven or the secular nation-state. As Ralph Rugoff wrote in the catalogue text for Wallinger’s exhibition at the 49th Venice Biennale, “Imagery of a random dispersal in a profane and soulless environment is somewhat miraculously made to suggest its opposite; in a place characterised by indifference, if not oblivion, Wallinger prompts us to envisage the possibility of mercy and

³⁰⁶ Michael Hayden, 'Thinking Lightly Incorporated', <http://www.thinkinglightly.com>, (accessed October 10, 2007).

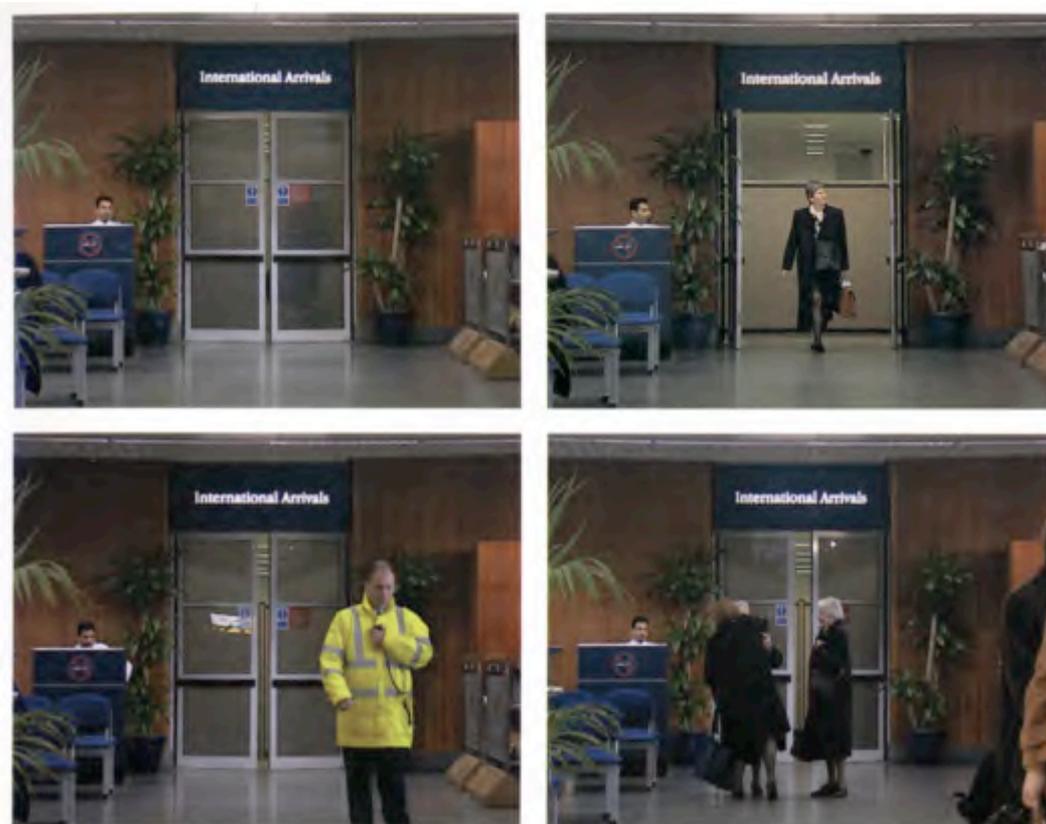


Figure 82: (top left) Mark Wallinger, *Threshold to the Kingdom*, 2000, single channel video.

Figure 83: (top right) Mark Wallinger, *Threshold to the Kingdom*, 2000, single channel video.

Figure 84: (bottom left) Mark Wallinger, *Threshold to the Kingdom*, 2000, single channel video.

Figure 85: (bottom right) Mark Wallinger, *Threshold to the Kingdom*, 2000, single channel video.

spiritual arrival.”³⁰⁷ In *Threshold to the Kingdom*, there is a lightness, a sense of relief that emanates from the people crossing the threshold into the United Kingdom. On their faces, and in their postures, are the varying emotions of arriving, of exiting the paradox of transit and entering the 'real world' again.

Van Gennep argues that magico-religious rites of passage are present in everyday ceremonies and acts, for example, crossing a house threshold. He demonstrates that the symbolic and spatial areas of transition may be found in some form in all ritualistic passages from one position to another. He articulates the connection between the physical crossing of a threshold and the symbolic crossing of a threshold by saying “In order to understand rites pertaining to the threshold, one should remember that the threshold is only a part of the door and that most of these rites should be understood as direct and physical rites of entrance, of waiting, and of departure – that is, as rites of passage.”³⁰⁸ As can be seen, artists draw out the liminal associations of *Transit Zone* through articulating or accenting its rites of *separation, transition and incorporation*, the three stages of the rite of passage that are enacted when moving through the *Transit Zone*.

Traversing the *Transit Zone* has the potential to be a journey of self discovery or a ritual marking a change in status. Rather than articulating the role of the passenger as a complicit unit of movement and a commercialised subject, the rite of passage introduces the possibility that traversing the *Transit Zone* can be symbolic and transformative.

Pipilotti Rist approaches civil aviation from this perspective in her work *Pamela*, Figure 86 and Figure 87, a four minute, one channel video loop which she made in 1997. Rist’s practice uses humour and popular culture coupled with an underlying seriousness to examine the world in which we exist. Rist’s video, *Pamela*, is a complex and densely packed work which explores many ideas within the interior of a small aeroplane. It

³⁰⁷ Ralph Rugoff, 'Jesus Is an Oxymoron', in *Mark Wallinger: British Pavilion the 49th Venice Biennale 2001*, eds. Ann Gallagher and Hannah Hunt (London: The British Council, 2001), 12.

³⁰⁸ van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 25.



Figure 86: Pipilotti Rist, *Pamela*, 1997, single channel video loop. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 87: Pipilotti Rist, *Pamela*, 1997, single channel video loop. Image courtesy the artist.

transforms the mundane into the fantastical, converts the rituals of air travel into spiritual and/or religious rituals, and examines perceptions of air travel. In *Pamela* the aeroplane is the device and facilitator for a journey of discovery.

The video's protagonist, played by Rist, is a flight attendant dressed in a dark blue uniform with white gloves and a white hat with headscarf. Her clothing declares her to be a vision of respectability, to be admired and desired from afar. However, Rist explodes the role she is dressed for, continually changing the enacted role of the flight attendant, shifting it away from the clichéd construction of the flight attendant as a subordinate feminine figure providing service and maternal care. The video can be divided into four parts, or the four roles that Rist performs. She becomes a life guide introducing the passenger to new possibilities, a pilot flying the plane, a figure of worship and a free spirit. Through these roles she changes the flight from an experience of transit to one of exploration.

At the beginning of *Pamela* Rist reinterprets the flight safety demonstration, an iconic aspect of the in-flight experience. It is a necessary aspect of flight and the information given in the demonstration can significantly improve a passenger's chance of survival in the event of an accident; however, it also reminds the passenger of the potential accident and can increase anxiety. Airlines expend much effort on in-flight safety videos which are multi-lingual, accessible and reassuring. In Rist's flight safety demonstration we see and hear both what is normally said and what she is actually saying. Standing in the aisle of the aeroplane she begins a series of hand movements which reference dance, sign language and the hand motions of an in-flight safety demonstration. She performs these actions in silence as a female voice-over speaking English, German and French guides the passenger into reconsidering the space they are in, as well as the flight attendant's role within the plane. The familiarity of the ritual gives her reinterpretation more weight.

Mesdames et Messieurs

Bienvenue a bord de notre vol a destination

To nowhere ... to you... deep inside
 Auch wenn Sie verletzt sind,
 auch wenn es schwierig erscheinen mag
 sind wir vor 5 min. abgehoben
 Die Liebe ist unklar,
 darum bleiben Sie bitte angeschnallt
 Beachten Sie den Orbit, Mondaufgang, Sternenstaub
 Beachten Sie links und rechts ihre Nachbarn
 We are on the way to find you...
 So please forget who you are
 Nous vous remercions de choisir, choisir, choisir la joie ³⁰⁹

This opening sequence introduces many of the themes that are present in the video. The monologue begins by welcoming the passengers and viewers to a destination that is nowhere, yet inside themselves. This changes the flight from one with a specific, mundane, physical destination to one of internal exploration and discovery, one which should be pursued despite the potential for pain and difficulty. It then indicates that the journey will be challenging and turbulent, and so asks the passengers to keep their seatbelts fastened. It is not a journey undertaken alone, the words invite the passengers to consider the external world and their neighbours, and so realise their mutual connections. This invitation contests the perception of 'solitude and similitude' within the plane and positions the duration of a flight as pure potentiality. This idea disrupts the normative perception of a flight as wasted time and asks the viewer to reconsider their approach to air travel.

³⁰⁹ Ladies and Gentlemen
 Welcome on board this flight bound
 To nowhere ... to you... deep inside
 Even if you are hurt
 Even if it seems to be difficult
 We departed five minutes ago
 Love is unclear
 Therefore please leave your seatbelts fastened
 Observe the orbit, the moon rising, the star dust
 Observe your neighbours to the left and right
 We are on the way to find you...
 So please forget who you are
 We thank you for choosing, choosing, choosing joy

Having introduced the passenger to the transformative potential of the journey, Rist proceeds to transport them. In the second sequence, clouds fill the sky and then part to reveal the flight attendant drawing aside the galley curtain and walking the length of the plane to the cockpit, a baby in her arms, Figure 88. She enters the cockpit, places the baby in the co-pilot's seat and takes the pilot's controls herself, Figure 89. The video, which places the flight attendant and the child in a circle of colour amid a black and white environment, directly references the Christian roles of the Madonna, Baby Jesus and God. These are represented by the flight attendant as Mary the mother (Madonna), the child (Jesus Christ), and the flight attendant as pilot (God). Taking a Catholic approach to the three figures, the Madonna intercedes between the passenger and God, guiding them as a mother figure and transmitting their needs to the pilot. As the flight attendant passes through the door of the cockpit the video solarises, visibly transforming her. She becomes the pilot or God the Father who, on the plane, is the ultimate authority, holding the passenger's life in his (or her) hands. The child, the Son becomes the co-pilot.

Rist utilises the systemic Christian structure of the Father, Mother and Child to transform the aeroplane into a place of worship. When the flight attendant/pilot re-enters the cabin it is to the adulation of the passengers. She progresses down the aisle extending her foot in its high heeled black patent leather shoe to be kissed, Figure 90, and then the passengers stand and cheer her. She has become a Messiah for the transformative possibilities of flight and they thank her for guiding them through their liminal experience. In the final segment of the video, the back of the plane dissolves and the flight attendant is seen walking down a forested path as an object streaks across the sky, Figure 91. This poses the question: was the entire video a fantasy imagined by the woman walking down the path; or, is walking down the path a personal fantasy of the attendant in the plane?

The religious overtones in *Pamela* can be compared to Wallinger's transformation of the mundane into spiritual travel in *Threshold to the Kingdom*. Both Wallinger and Rist overtly reference Christian 'mythology' in conjunction with air travel. *Threshold to the Kingdom* combines



Figure 88: (top) Pipilotti Rist, *Pamela*, 1997, single channel video loop. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 89: (bottom) Pipilotti Rist, *Pamela*, 1997, single channel video loop. Image courtesy the artist.



Figure 90: (top) Pipilotti Rist, *Pamela*, 1997, single channel video loop. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 91: (bottom) Pipilotti Rist, *Pamela*, 1997, single channel video loop. Image courtesy the artist.

entering the borders of the United Kingdom with religious ideas of entering the Kingdom of Heaven. The profane, the bureaucratic governance of entry to the United Kingdom by immigration and customs, is contrasted with the complex theological beliefs governing spiritual entry to heaven.

Carl Schmitt in his text *Political Theology* argues that Western society's legal systems and the conception of the state are based on religious concepts.

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic structure³¹⁰

Wallinger's video parallels the systematic structure of the *Transit Zone* to the structuring of space in Christian theology. The exclusion of the *Transit Zone* from the normative space of the nation-state creates a physical purgatory which resembles that of theology in which souls wait in limbo to be allowed into heaven, or not. Wallinger is comparing the rite of passage through the *Transit Zone* to the most significant rite of passage in Christian theology. The word play in the work's title, *Threshold to the Kingdom*, positions the arrival destination as heaven with the border officials guarding its gates. The act of exiting the *Transit Zone* is, like entering, governed by processes of proving identity, asserting intention and proving innocence: one's luggage is rescanned, one's identity documents inspected. Asylum seekers and suspect people are detained, are not allowed the redemption of entering the Kingdom.

However, where Wallinger positions the *Transit Zone* as purgatory, Rist suggests that the in-flight experience can be a rite of passage or metaphor for a personal journey of discovery, in the same way 'travel' has been in literature and art throughout history. *Pamela* represents the potential for

³¹⁰ Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, 36.

magico-religious experiences for the passenger as they occupy the transitional space of the *Transit Zone*. The art work wavers between fantasy and reality, interweaving the two to create the aeroplane journey as transformative experience, making it a rite of passage for the passengers who follow the guide – the flight attendant.

5.2 : Performed gender

Rist, by structuring her video around the figure of the flight attendant and transforming her into the pilot, explores the two iconic and gender polarised figures of flight. Within civil aviation, the flight attendant and the pilot occupy the binary positions which constitute a normalised and highly traditional construction of heterosexual sexuality and gender roles. Indeed, they have come to stand for specific constructions of femininity and masculinity. Normative females within the aeroplane have historically been presented as “distillations of subordinate feminine heterosexuality,”³¹¹ caring, nurturing, attractive and submissive. Airlines have promoted their companies through images which sexualise the flight attendant and reinforce this image of subordinate femininity. In Asian airlines these characteristics are accentuated through marketing campaigns selling the exotic orientalism of the flight attendants.

This construction of the flight attendant has its roots in the restrictions on marital status, age, and appearance, combined with an expectation that flight attendants will perform emotional labour. Emotional labour commodifies traditional feminine virtues such as “charm, pastoral care and sexuality”³¹² and is implicitly constructed around the idea that women naturally possess the required skills to perform such tasks. While the discriminatory restrictions on weight, age, marital status, etc. have been contested with much success, the socialisation of the airline attendant through strict grooming rules and behavioural expectations still reinforces the image of ideal femininity. The flight attendant as a feminine icon repeatedly appears in popular culture, as do the historically linked roles of nurse, mother and waitress.

³¹¹ Claire Williams, 'Sky Service: The Demands of Emotional Labour in the Airline Industry', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 10, no. 5 (2003): 516.

³¹² Drew Whitelegg, 'Cabin Pressure: The Dialectics of Emotional Labour in the Airline Industry', *The Journal of Transport History*, 23, no. 1 (March, 2002): 73.

On the other hand, the role of the flight deck staff has been constructed as specifically masculine, and few women are employed as flight crew.³¹³ Albert Mills, in his study on constructions of masculinity within the history of British Airways, argues that the gender role of the pilot was constructed and promoted to reassure the public. Initially, the pilot was portrayed as “a *type* of man – brave, unflappable and calm in the face of danger; concerned about his company and his passengers; highly skilled and technically knowledgeable, and, ultimately, reliable.”³¹⁴ Later, the heroic image changed to a more corporate, professional image of a man who embodied “experience, scientific and technical knowledge, careerism, and contradictory notions of professionalism and organizational commitment.”³¹⁵ These two constructions of masculine identity typify idealised forms of masculinity within society.

Rist, by positioning the flight attendant in the roles of pilot and life guide, contests both the subordinate feminisation of the flight attendant and the masculinization of the pilot. She exposes the roles of the pilot and flight attendant as performative. For example she performs the hand gestures accompanying the flight safety demonstration without giving them function. She performs maternal behaviour by holding the baby. While enacting the pilot she gives the screen the thumbs up sign, performing the control and capability of the ‘masculine’ pilot. In doing so Rist parodies these multiple roles. As Judith Butler argues, “The parodic repetition of ‘the original’ ... reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original.”³¹⁶

Beginning in the 1960s, the eroticisation of the aeroplane cabin and sexualization of the flight attendant through airline advertising and costuming has shaped a popular perception of her as a sex symbol. Slogans such as “I’m Cheryl, Come Fly Me” and “We Would Move Our Tails for You” have had a lasting impact on the idea of the flight attendant long

³¹³ In 1991 only 5% of commercial pilots in America were female, and only 2% in Britain. Albert J. Mills, 'Cockpits, Hangars, Boys and Galleys: Corporate Masculinities and the Development of British Airways', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 5, no. 3 (1998).

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 175

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 41.

after it has become a mixed gender profession without age and weight restrictions. Indeed, because it is considered a female role, the male flight attendant is commonly perceived as feminine, that is homosexual, thereby continuing the stereotype of the flight attendant as feminine.

Claire Williams in her article *Sky Service: The Demands of Emotional Labour in the Airline Industry* asserts that “the aircraft cabin, is an eroticized site where women flight attendants are constructed as the main objects of desire.”³¹⁷ This leads to passengers making sexual advances towards the flight attendants. Williams conducted a survey of members of the Flight Attendant Association of Australia in 1994 which showed that the feminisation and sexualization of the role made female flight attendants more vulnerable to sexual harassment.³¹⁸ Male flight attendants are not exempt, experiencing harassment regarding their masculinity and sexual orientation as well as unwanted sexual advances from both male and female passengers.

This is fuelled by the eroticisation of the cabin and crew embodied in the idea of the ‘Mile High Club’. To become a member of the Mile High Club one must engage in sexual intercourse while in flight, a mile or greater above the ground. This long-standing and salacious concept has done much to promote sexual behaviour within the aircraft. It appears in newspaper reports of arrests or scandals following sexual activity in the air, in exposés such as *Air Babylon*³¹⁹ and most explicitly in online postings regarding the Mile High Club.³²⁰ Descriptions of sex in the toilets, or on the seats with known or unknown co-passengers, passengers being fellated by other passengers, having sex with the pilot while flying, paying flight attendants for sex in business class, or getting it for free are all common themes. Whether or not the contributors to these online discussion groups have genuinely performed the acts they describe is not relevant, what is important is that their stories reveal the fantasies that exist around sex on aeroplanes.

³¹⁷ Williams, 'Sky Service: The Demands of Emotional Labour in the Airline Industry', 545.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Imogen Edwards-Jones, *Air Babylon* (London: Bantam Press, 2005).

³²⁰ 'Mile High Club', <http://milehighclub.com/> (accessed April 7, 2006).

Evidence that some of these acts are actually occurring can be seen in articles by flight attendants who report witnessing sex on aeroplanes: "Throughout 14 years as a commercial airline flight attendant, I've witnessed numerous inductions into this infamous society of airplane passengers who engage in fellatio, cunnilingus and various other forms of sexual communion at high altitude."³²¹ In February 2007, the 'scandal' of Qantas flight attendant Lisa Robertson having sex in the aeroplane toilets with movie star Ralph Fiennes hit the media, reigniting discussion about the Mile High Club.³²² Robertson initially denied that she had had sex with Fiennes, asserting that he had followed her into the toilet and she had requested him to leave. Later she affirmed that she had had sex with him on board the plane.

The difference between the fantasy of the sexually available flight attendant and what the airline considers acceptable behaviour can be seen in the ensuing fallout from this sexual encounter. Qantas suspended Robertson while investigating the case and later fired her, thereby distancing itself from the scandal and condemning the sexual behaviour of the flight attendant. This is ironic given that airlines have historically constructed and benefited from the flight attendant as sexual object. On the TV show *60 Minutes* the interviewer, Peter Overton, repeatedly asked Lisa Robertson to iterate the unacceptability of having a sexual encounter while working.³²³ Robertson said "I mean, we both did the wrong thing. What we did was – it was silly, it was inappropriate; it was very unprofessional for me, as a flight attendant, to do what I did. I'm very well aware of that, you know."³²⁴

³²¹ Elliott Neal Hester, 'Welcome to the Mile-High Club ', *Salon.com*, September 21, 1999, <http://www.salon.com/travel/diary/hest/1999/09/21/hester/index.html>, (accessed April 6, 2006).

³²² Jo Knowsley, 'Qantas Sacks Mile-High Hostie', *The Daily Telegraph*, February 19, 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,21245846-5006002,00.html>. (accessed July 27, 2007); Fiona Hudson, 'Ralph Fiennes: I Was the Victim', *The Daily Telegraph*, February 18, 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,,21243247-5001021,00.html>. (accessed July 27, 2007)

³²³ Peter Overton, 'Flying High: Lisa Robertson's Story', *60 Minutes*, February 25 2007, Nine Network, (Australia, 2007).

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

However on the same program they showed a clip of American comedian Jay Leno making the following joke: “And that Qantas flight attendant – remember the one that had sex with the actor Ralph Fiennes in the airline bathroom? She's now been fired. Is that fair, huh? Finally, an airline employee dedicated to customer service, she gets fired.”³²⁵ The joke goes to the heart of the sexual fantasy about the airline attendant, positioning her sexual availability as part of her customer service role.

In the interview Robertson openly stated that she desired Ralph Fiennes and asserted that she would “have to be insane not to [want to have sex with him]”, going on to describe him as an excellent lover.³²⁶ Her open acknowledgement of her own sexual desire reminds the viewer that the flight attendant is a desiring human as well, not merely an object of desire. However, the ‘discovery’ that Lisa Robertson had worked as a call girl made her sexual behaviour seem more predatory.³²⁷ The statement that Ralph Fiennes’ publicist Sarah Keene released also positions Robertson this way. “This woman seduced him on a plane. She was the sexual aggressor.”³²⁸ Lisa Robertson subsequently endorsed services offered by a Sydney brothel, *The Site*, including a re-enactment of the toilet encounter.³²⁹

The complexity of roles that Robertson occupied throughout the scandal ran the full gamut, from real to fantasised, that are attached to the flight attendant. These include the flight attendant as: a glamorous jet setting professional, in that Robertson was working in business class on an international flight from Darwin to Mumbai where she associated with Fiennes, a film star; a sexually harassed employee, embodied in the statement “Mr Fiennes became amorous towards me and, after a short period of time, I convinced him to leave the toilet, which he did ... At no

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Marnie O'Neill, 'Fiennes' Hostess Was an Escort', *The Daily Telegraph*, March 18, 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,21400386-5001021,00.html>. (accessed July 27, 2007)

³²⁸ Fiona Hudson, 'Ralph Fiennes: I Was the Victim', *The Daily Telegraph*, February 18, 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,,21243247-5001021,00.html>. (accessed July 27, 2007)

³²⁹ Sydney Confidential Exclusive, 'Fiennes Hostie Backs Bordello', *The Daily Telegraph* May 25, 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,21788779-5001021,00.html>. (accessed July 27, 2007)

time did any crew member come to my assistance”³³⁰; an independently desiring woman as expressed in her *60 Minutes* interview quoted above; and a sexually available ‘escort’ or sex worker which was revealed in later articles such as *The Daily Telegraph’s* ‘Fiennes’ Hostess Was an Escort’.³³¹

Artists, including myself, have been drawn to the eroticised site of the aeroplane and its icons, the flight attendant and pilot. In my 2007 video work *Do you know what you really want*, Figure 92 and Figure 93, I explore sex and eroticisation via the figure of the flight attendant. Mathieu Gallois, in his 2004 animation, *Social Body*, Figure 95, populates an entire aeroplane with identical passengers/flight attendants who lose their inhibitions as the plane crashes in a strange act of self-masturbation and violence. My multi channel sound work for my examination exhibition, *Is it bravery*, which is constructed around the transcript of the averted Japan Air Lines Flight 46E disaster, approaches the role of the pilot, exploring it in terms of hero worship and bravery.

Do you know what you really want explores the female flight attendant through various morphing sexual roles, ranging from a woman who fulfils the fantasy of the sexually available airhostess, to one who contests her sexualization, and one who asserts her own desires. In my performative video I enact these roles, playing with my perceptions of them and the desires and fantasies associated with each role. In this way I create a character that merges myself, the artist performing, and characters that are not myself. For simplicity in the following discussion I will refer to the character/myself in the third person.

Dressed in a pastiche of a flight attendant’s uniform, made of a military influenced 1950s form hugging dress and a garrison cap, wearing ‘vamp’ lipstick and 4 inch high heels, she walks into camera and introduces herself, “Hi, and welcome to the flight, my name’s Magdalena and I’m your stewardess for the day. The Captain’s told me to take extra special care of you, so if there’s anything I can do to make your flight more special

³³⁰ ‘Hostess and Ralph Fiennes in Mile High Sex Claim’, *The Sunday Telegraph*, February 11, 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,21205870-2,00.html>. (accessed July 27, 2007)

³³¹ O’Neill, ‘Fiennes’ Hostess Was an Escort’.



Figure 92: (top left) Melissa Laing, *Do you know what you really want*, 2007, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 93: (top right) Melissa Laing, *Do you know what you really want*, 2007, single channel video, 30 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 94: (bottom left) Mathieu Gallois, *Social Body*, 2004, digital animation, 6 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 95: (bottom right) Mathieu Gallois, *Social Body*, 2004, digital animation, 6 min. Image courtesy the artist.

don't you hesitate to tell me."³³² Over the duration of the video the flight attendant tells the camera/viewer about what has 'happened' to her inflight, expresses her fantasies, directly asks the viewer questions and reads out descriptions and criteria of an airline hostess.

Throughout the video she uses body language and gestures to sexually challenge the viewer: to invite desire or express hostility towards her sexualization. No one role is fixed. She is a good and bad girl, a vamp, a sexually aware and autonomous woman, and a woman who refuses to be defined by her sexuality. The choice of the 1950s clothing and make-up specifically references the glamour years of the cabin, when air travel was exclusive and adventurous. However, where the Lisa Robertson scandal as it played out in the media, created a 1950s era story where the sexually adventurous woman is punished through loss of reputation and job, the attendant in my video asserts that this is her fantasy and she enjoys it, unpunished.

In my artwork the protagonist embraces her desire to explore both the eroticised site of the aeroplane cabin and the role of the flight attendant as she sees them. She reveals herself to be performing the varying roles as an expression of her own sexual fantasies and asks if it matters whether she is an actual flight attendant. In both Pipilotti Rist's *Pamela* and my *Do you know what you really want* the aeroplane cabin is seen as an arena through which inner desires, dreams and sexual identity can be expressed or contested.

In his book *From Ritual to Theatre: the human seriousness of play*, Victor Turner utilises van Gennep's theories on the liminal, or suspensory, qualities of a rite of passage to argue that a rite of passage, for its duration, liberates the individual from the normative constraints of society, thereby changing their behaviour and mental states. He described this as "the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate

³³² Melissa Laing, *Do you know what you really want*, (2007), 30 min. single channel video.

group.”³³³ Mathieu Gallois, in the 2004 video animation *Social Body*, explores the expression of sexual desire as a symptom of the separation from the normal routine and social relationships which allows for a freeing of restrictions and repressions. This separation opens up possibilities and provides an opportunity to embody different roles.

Gallois’ work begins at an airport, Figure 96, depicted in greys, as Blair French’s catalogue text about the earlier work *Flight 934B*, discussed in Chapter 4, appears on screen:

Both aircraft and airport as quintessential mainframe processors of societal flows have in recent years become ubiquitous subjects of (and sites for) contemporary art. But rarely does the ‘passenger’ feature as either individuated subject or class of social organisation as here in Matt Gallois’ ‘The Social Body’. Why so? Perhaps this is due to a certain incongruity introduced by the human subject that disturbs an accepted reading of the aircraft body, for example, as exemplar of French academic Marc Augé’s ‘non-places of supermodernity.’ Augé’s non-places are marked by an absence of identity, relations, history or organic society—all supposed conditions of aircraft travel and supermodernity.³³⁴

The text asserts that Gallois’ work contests Marc Augé’s construction of the aircraft as non-place. However, as I argued in Chapter 4, Gallois’ works supports the perception of the *Transit Zone* as a non-place by treating the passenger as a representative object. In *The Social Body* ‘solitude, and similitude’ of non-place is made evident by the uniformity of passengers and staff. Each passenger appears identical to the female flight attendant, Figure 97, as does the pilot.

Yet, through the narrative of the video Gallois reactivates the passenger as an individual. The camera point of view shifts from the aeroplane cabin,

³³³ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 44.

³³⁴ Blair French, ‘Aircraft Body/Social Body’, http://mathieugallois.com/text/flight943b_2.html (accessed March 13, 2008) quoted in Mathieu Gallois, ‘The Social Body’, (2004), 6 minute digital animation.

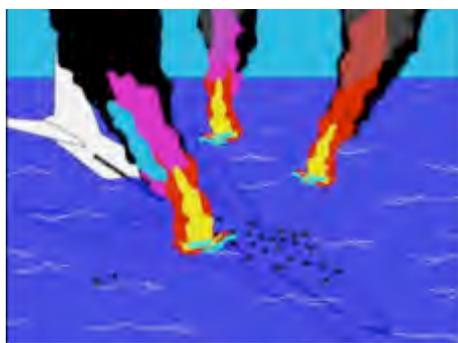
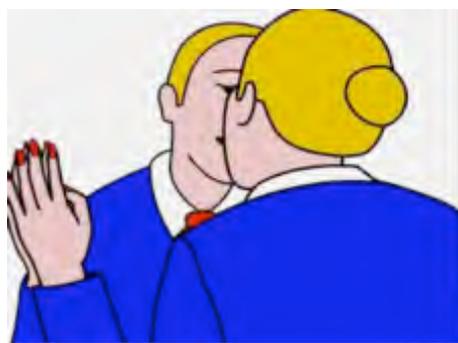


Figure 96: (top left) Mathieu Gallois, *Social Body*, 2004, digital animation, 6 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 97: (top right) Mathieu Gallois, *Social Body*, 2004, digital animation, 6 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 98: (bottom left) Mathieu Gallois, *Social Body*, 2004, digital animation, 6 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Figure 99: (bottom right) Mathieu Gallois, *Social Body*, 2004, digital animation, 6 min. Image courtesy the artist.

which is filled with identical women, to the cockpit, where the pilot proceeds to place the plane on autopilot and enter the bathroom. She asks her reflection “a community by default for the duration of the flight, does this cargo, do these data units represent a hiatus from the conditions and apparatus of society? A suspension from the acculturated norms of social and individual behaviour.”³³⁵ Following this statement the pilot kisses her reflection and masturbates, Figure 98 on the previous page. Her expressions of pleasure are mirrored by the identical passengers in the plane. Gallois’ explicit mention of suspended cultural norms, followed by masturbation, links the separation of the passenger from the normative space of the nation–state and their everyday routine to sexual expression.

However, the passengers’ cries and gasps suddenly gain sinister meaning when a wing engine in flames is revealed. As the plane crashes the pilot continues to masturbate, Figure 99. The disaster associated with the expression of female sexuality forecasts the personal disaster that was the result of Lisa Robertson acting on her desire. *The Social Body* culminates in a series of scenes where the passengers/flight attendants fight for life jackets, drowning each other in the struggle for survival. The passengers’ identical nature raises the possibility that this is an internal struggle represented through the experience of flight. Alternatively, liberation from social restriction, compounded by the aeroplane disaster, has stripped the passengers/flight attendants back to their primary instincts: sex and survival.

5.3 : The aeroplane crash

The history of flight goes hand in hand with accidents and disasters. Many attempts at heavier–than–air flight crashed back to the ground before success was achieved. The first fatal heavier–than–air accident occurred on September 17, 1908, when Orville Wright crashed while demonstrating his plane, killing his passenger Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge.³³⁶ Robert Wohl in his book *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western*

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings : Aviation and the Western Imagination 1908 – 1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

Imagination 1908 – 1918 argues that the many deaths and other injuries that accompanied the development of aviation enhanced the appeal of aerial displays. “The West was much too intoxicated by speed and the exhilaration of flight to refuse the sacrifice of human lives that the conquest of the air would demand. Indeed, the danger of flight enhanced its attraction to the public.”³³⁷

This intoxication with speed, flight and disaster is revealed in media representations of the disasters of air travel. Despite the vast, and primarily successful efforts that were made to make flight safe, it still carries with it the aura of this history, the danger lurking at the back of our minds. Images of the mangled, widely distributed remains of an aeroplane hit the news media regularly in the wake of plane crashes. The detritus that remains after a crash is imbued with a lingering horror. The wreckage reminds us of the fragility of flight and human mortality. For example, it was an insignificant, small piece of metal on the runway that tore a tire and caused the infamous Air France Concorde disaster on July 25, 2000. The exploding tire cut fuel lines and caused the Concorde to catch on fire and then crash into a nearby town.³³⁸ The simple phrase ‘human error’ can cover air traffic control misdirecting planes, pilots flying into other planes in the air or ground, and crashes due to improper maintenance. Even with a perfectly maintained plane, unforeseeable events like pilot heart attack or the simple case of a bird flying into the plane can cause disaster. All these possibilities are immanent in any flight. The pilots, flight crew, maintenance staff and other airline and airport staff can only guard against the disaster; they can never fully eradicate its presence. As Virilio argued, every technological invention concurrently invents its disaster.³³⁹

The sublime terror of the aeroplane crash can cause its image to linger in people’s imagination and reappear in artworks. As Edmund Burke, in his second edition of *A Philosophic Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* wrote, “What ever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible,

³³⁷ Ibid., 110.

³³⁸ Pascoe, *Airspaces*.

³³⁹ See Chapter 3

or analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, production of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.”³⁴⁰ He goes on to later assert that “Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime.”³⁴¹

Terrance De Pres argues that Burke approaches the sublime on both an aesthetic level and as a “special kind of experience in response to objects and conditions” which by “virtue of the terror they thrust upon us, are perceived as sublime.”³⁴² The aeroplane, crushing itself into the ground through its momentum and being consumed by flames connects with the viewer on the sublime level, as is demonstrated by the opening sequence of Johan Grimonprez’s *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, Figure 39 on page 108. The plane, which rushes towards the camera in an exploding ball of flame, inspires an awe and terror that can only be sublime, in that it produces “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.”³⁴³

Nancy Rubins’ 2002 sculpture, *MoMA & Airplane Parts*, Figure 100, captures the sublime of the accident by evoking its aftermath. Emerging off the ceiling and tumbling down to the floor, *MoMA & Airplane Parts* is a cabled together construction of battered aeroplane parts that spiral around the exhibition space at MoMA and loom over the viewer. The innards of the aeroplane are on view; the unidentifiable mechanical items from the aircraft expose the internal, mechanical logic of flight. Other recognisable portions are sourced from the ruptured, damaged and bent exterior skin of the aeroplane. The sculpture serves as an uncomfortable reminder of how fragile flight can be, echoing the crash which deconstructs the aeroplane through abruptly halted velocity.

³⁴⁰ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 36.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 54

³⁴² Terrance Des Pres, 'Terror and the Sublime', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 5, no. 2 (1983): 137.

³⁴³ see note 340



Figure 100: Nancy Rubins, *MoMA & Airplane Parts*, 1995, mixed media, dimensions variable. Photo: Adam Reich.

5.4 : Fear, anxiety, aggression

The aeroplane crash is closely linked to fear of flying as was iconically captured in *Rain Man*.³⁴⁴ Raymond Babbitt, the autistic brother as played by Dustin Hoffman, refuses to fly, listing a series of plane crashes and mid-flight explosions as the grounds for his refusal. Although flying is statistically safer than driving, many prefer driving as they retain a greater sense of control. In a 2006 *Time* article David Ropeik, an independent risk consultant, asserted that a feeling of control affects our risk perception:

We similarly misjudge risk if we feel we have some control over it, even if it's an illusory sense. The decision to drive instead of fly is the most commonly cited example, probably because it's such a good one. Behind the wheel, we're in charge; in the passenger seat of a crowded airline, we might as well be cargo. So white-knuckle flyers routinely choose the car, heedless of the fact that at most a few hundred people die in U.S. commercial airline crashes in a year, compared with 44,000 killed in motor-vehicle wrecks.³⁴⁵

Loss of control, or the fear of losing control, is one of the influencing factors on anxiety and distress within civil aviation. Zoran Juretic categorises passengers' fears as "acrophobia (fear of heights), claustrophobia (fear of closed spaces), fear of airplane crash – death, and the fear of loss of control over a situation (control relinquished to somebody else)."³⁴⁶ Fear, the unplanned and uncontrollable response to flight and its attendant procedures, impacts on a quarter of the flying population. Studies performed in Europe and the USA report that "10% of the general population do not fly due to intense fear. In addition, 25% of the population that flies experiences intense distress during flight."³⁴⁷ This distress does not only occur when the passenger is in the aeroplane,

³⁴⁴ *Rain Man* (1988), directed by Barry Levinson.

³⁴⁵ Jeffrey Kluger, 'Why We Worry About the Things We Shouldn't... ...And Ignore the Things We Should.' *Time*, 168, no. 23 (2006): 64.

³⁴⁶ Zoran Juretic, 'Fear of Flying: An Overview', *Arh Hig Rada Toksikol (Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology)*, 51 (2000): 425.

³⁴⁷ C. Botella et al., 'Treatment of Flying Phobia Using Virtual Reality: Data from a 1-Year Follow-up Using a Multiple Baseline Design', *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy* 11 (2004): 312.

situations that can stimulate anxiety include: purchasing the ticket, packing, watching planes overhead and just being in the airport. In some cases the pre-flight activities cause more anxiety than the actual flight.³⁴⁸

As I discussed earlier, there is potential for intimate contact on board the plane, however, the majority of passengers limit themselves to their seats and only superficially connect with the other individuals around them. This isolates and exposes the individual to their personal fears and insecurities. The physical impact of travel fatigue coupled with psychological stressors such as anxiety, anticipation and frustration can lead to a dissociative reaction where the passenger withdraws from the world. Distress caused by fear of the real or perceived disaster, and by emotional isolation and separation from the known, as well as other anxiety causes, such as immigration and security screening and the imperative to perform instructions efficiently, underlies the *Transit Zone*. All of these and many other environmental and associational stressors create an anxious and fearful environment for the passenger to traverse, externally and internally.

The separation of the individual from their normal surroundings and social contacts, coupled with enforced inactivity and monotony, can promote fantasy and impair contact with reality in those who are predisposed toward dissociative behaviour.³⁴⁹ The resulting dysfunction is “usually of a minor order such as expressions of irritability, mild distrust of strangers, etc.”³⁵⁰ Many artists explore responses to the emotional stressors of flight, withdrawal and aggression. The two works I discuss are Karen Yasinsky’s *Fear*, Figure 101 to Figure 103, and my own *Abject Apology : August 2001 : Performed by an Airline Attendant to Placate Air Rage*, Figure 104.

³⁴⁸ Fear thoughts include: fear of aeroplane failure caused by mechanical failure or pilot error, fear of falling and dying, the aeroplane catching on fire, falling in the ocean and not being found, and fear of panic attacks, loss of personal control, dizziness, and others noticing the panic attacks and loss of control occurring. Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Don E. Flinn, 'Transient Psychotic Reactions During Travel', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 119 (1962).

³⁵⁰ Francis F. Barnes, 'Travel and Fatigue as Causes of Partial Dissociative Reactions', *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 21, no. 1 (January/February 1980): 60.



Figure 101: (top) Karen Yasinsky, *Fear*, 2001, two channel video loop.

Figure 102: (middle) Karen Yasinsky, *Fear*, 2001, two channel video loop.

Figure 103: (bottom) Karen Yasinsky, *Fear*, 2001, two channel video loop.



Figure 104: Melissa Laing *Abject Apology : August 2001 : Performed by an Airline Attendant to Placate Air Rage*, 2005, single channel video, 2.56 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Yasinsky looks at the fear of and desire for intimacy in society. Her 2001 two channel video, *Fear*, explores isolation through the site of the aeroplane cabin. Yasinsky creates her wordless dramas using stop motion to animate handmade dolls. The video begins with a couple making love on a beach as a plane passes overhead. Both the characters are dolls, the man is a handmade doll representing a human, but the woman is a traditional commercial doll. The difference between the dolls makes the commercial doll seem not alive in comparison to the animation of the handmade 'doll' man who is expressing his desire. The difference between the two kinds of doll, one individuated, the other a commodity, implies that the man can only have a simulated rather than real relationship.

The video then shifts to a male and a female doll sitting in an aeroplane cabin on opposite sides of the aisle, each side of the aisle a separate projection. The two characters in the video are seen to desire intimacy, but do not achieve it, prevented by their physical and mental isolation, which is represented by the aisle and the edge of the separate projections. The two protagonists are confined to their own screens. The dolls are awkward and inarticulate, yet simultaneously lucid and poetic. They sit with tears running down their faces but the pathos of the work lies in their inability to make a meaningful connection with each other. When they stand and reach out to each other on the other side of the aisle the flight attendant hugs them but simultaneously intercepts them, thereby preventing any interaction between the two sides of the plane.

Through awkward movements and introspective gestures, the characters speak to our own anxieties; anxieties that are exacerbated by the stress, claustrophobia, fear of flying and separation from the normal daily routine which provides security and stability. Brett Kahr, in his chapter on *The Psychodynamics of Travel Phobia* points out that air travel impacts on our internal mental state, saying:

We can readily understand that the very nature of airline travel will not only become a lightning rod for realistic fears and for reasonable fears of crashing or of being caught in a terrorist attack, but that, additionally, our more primitive agonies will become inflamed as air travel forces us to deal with separation and

loss, fears of falling, and the regressive situation of having parental substitutes controlling some of our bodily functions amid a gaggle of needy siblings.³⁵¹

The dolls' tears and outreaching arms can also be read as responses to the anxieties and fears that Kahr outlines; the passenger/doll's fear of falling or of being irreparably separated from everyone and everything they know.

The dolls are manipulated, and only gain 'life' through stop motion; every movement is a display of someone else's control. The dolls' inability to initiate activity is analogous to the passengers' disempowerment. Travel psychologist Robert Bor argues that "Almost every aspect of the [travel] experience reinforces a sense of lack of control Feeling that we have little control in the situation and associated feelings of being infantilised can increase feelings of anxiety."³⁵²

The airline infantilises the passenger, placing them in their seat and abjuring them to behave. The seat with its eating tray forms a confining space like a child's high chair and the passenger calls the attendant with a 'crying' button rather than acting for themselves. The pilot (father) and flight attendant (mother) even control when a passenger may leave their seat, thereby controlling their access to the toilet. Sleep times are regulated through adjusting the light in the cabin. According to Brett Kahr:

As passengers on board an aeroplane, we do not have complete control over our basic alimentary-incorporative or defecatory-expulsive capacities. This situation will undoubtedly encourage regressive behaviours or fantasies: hence the preponderance of air rage, but more especially, the experiencing of fear and terror. As we sit passively strapped into our seats, we do succumb to a certain regressive pull, potentiated by the fact that we sit helpless

³⁵¹ Brett Kahr, 'The Psychodynamics of Travel Phobia: A Contribution to Clinical Aerospace Psychology', in *Anxiety at 35,000 Feet : An Introduction to Clinical Aerospace Psychology*, by Robert Bor (London: Karnac, 2004), 70.

³⁵² Robert Bor, *Anxiety at 35,000 Feet : An Introduction to Clinical Aerospace Psychology* (London: Karnac, 2004), 12.

at 35,000 feet, cared for by parental figures of unknown capabilities.³⁵³

In *Fear* the regressive pull in response to being infantilised is expressed through the strangely adult dolls that, nonetheless, are symbols of childishness. The flight attendant/mother captures them as they attempt to leave their seats and returns them to their rightful place.

As Kahr mentions, air rage is another common response to stress, anxiety and loss of control inherent in air travel. Air rage is expressed through the acting out of aggressive and/or violent impulses within the aeroplane. These range from verbal abuse of passengers and staff to physical abuse of property and people, including individuals storming the cockpit and taking control of the plane. The causes of air rage have variously been attributed to excessive alcohol consumption, the inherent personality of the passenger (demanding or intolerant), timetable delays, travel stress, smoking bans, cramped conditions, unmet and overly high passenger expectations, and/or crew mismanagement of passenger problems.³⁵⁴

A primary component of an airline's marketing focuses on the inflight service staff, entertainment, facilities and seat comfort. As a result of the constructed image of air travel, the expectations of the passengers are greater than the reality of the *Transit Zone*. Expectations of "punctuality, quality of service, or amenities available at airports or on board the aircraft"³⁵⁵ can enable passengers to cope with the anxiety of flying. Consequently, disappointed expectations underlie many instances of air rage. While airline advertisements promote the quality of food and show fully reclinable seats "Today's air traveler is frequently crammed into a narrow, high-density seat, surrounded by carry-on luggage,

³⁵³ Kahr, 'The Psychodynamics of Travel Phobia: A Contribution to Clinical Aerospace Psychology', 69.

³⁵⁴ Robert Bor et al., 'Managing Disruptive Passengers: A Survey of the World's Airlines', (working paper, Psychology Department, Guildhall University, London, 2001).

³⁵⁵ Bor, *Anxiety at 35,000 Feet : An Introduction to Clinical Aerospace Psychology*, 9.

grasping a tiny bag of pretzels while trying to quench a powerful thirst from a 3-ounce glass that also contains two ice cubes.”³⁵⁶

The passenger's aggressive response to a service failure by the flight attendant is symptomatic of a growing emotional and performative response to the environment of transit. In these situations the flight attendant's role of feminine subordination removes any shield of authority or status from her and makes her more vulnerable to the passenger's frustrations and anger. In cases of aggressive behaviour against female airline staff the passenger is, through dominating them, effectively rejecting their roles as both maternal figure and official representative of the airline.

My 2005 work, *Abject Apology : August 2001 : Performed by an Airline Attendant to Placate Air Rage*, arises from a reported case of air rage when a Japanese flight attendant spilled whiskey on a passenger's shirt on an international flight from Tokyo. The passenger demanded that the flight attendant crawl the length of the plane gangway in apology.³⁵⁷ The work focuses on the performed apology and the abasement of self that was required from the airline flight attendant. In the video a mechanised 'baby' doll in a flight attendant uniform, crawls across the carpet. The groan of the mechanism provides the sound track for the re-enactment of the flight attendant's physical shaming and domination by the passenger. The use of a doll reinforces the flight attendant's complete subjectification to the passenger.

Air rage is symbolic of a rejection, conscious or not, of the environment of international air travel. It results in a disruption of the smooth running of the *Transit Zone*, emotionally, logistically and legally. Acts of air rage which involve assault on property or persons, and other criminal acts occurring within the *Transit Zone* disrupt the exclusion of the *Transit Zone* from the normative space of the nation-state in that it must appeal to the

³⁵⁶ Steve Luckey, 'Air Rage', *Air Line Pilot* <http://cf.alpa.org/internet/alp/2000/sept00p18.htm>, (accessed April 4, 2006).

³⁵⁷ Angela Köhler, 'Unordentliches Verhalten in Der Luft', *Berliner Zeitung*, August 4, 2001, <http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2001/0804/vermishtes/0063/index.html?keywords=Unordentliches%20Verhalten;ok=OK%21;match=sloppy;author=K%F6hler;rssort=;von=;bis=> (accessed August 15, 2007).

law of the nation–state. If the passenger is truly excluded from any nation–state territory then national law cannot be applied to him or her. Attempts to resolve this problem have resulted in varying international conventions, including the Tokyo Convention, the Hague Convention and the Montreal Convention.³⁵⁸

The Tokyo Convention, signed in 1963, states in Article 3 that: “1. The State of registration of the aircraft is competent to exercise jurisdiction over offences and acts committed on board.”³⁵⁹ This means that the nationality of the aeroplane determines the criminality of the act. This jurisdiction is deemed to be in place from the moment the aeroplane closes its doors, even though it still sits on the soil of another nation–state. This designation reinforces the contractual and conceptual nature of sovereign territory in the *Transit Zone*. However, the Convention also mandates that the Captain (or aircraft commander) may request the destination state to prosecute the passenger. Article 9 states “1. The aircraft commander may deliver to the competent authorities of any Contracting State in the territory of which the aircraft lands any person who he has reasonable grounds to believe has committed on board the aircraft an act which, in his opinion, is a serious offence according to the penal law of the State of registration of the aircraft.”³⁶⁰ Yet the state of destination is under no obligation to allow the passenger to enter their nation–state, thereby effectively refusing to take responsibility for them.

Nation–states have proven reluctant to take responsibility for prosecuting acts of air rage. Indeed, according an International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) report:

Many States' legal systems do not include jurisdiction to charge a person for an offence, which has not taken place in its own territory. This means that it is often impossible to lay charges against the offender if an offence is taking place in a State that is

³⁵⁸ These conventions came about in response to acts of terror–violence and hijacking, and attempt to identify the various jurisdictions that could prosecute the perpetrators. However, the conventions include criminal acts.

³⁵⁹ International Civil Aviation Organization, ‘Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, Signed at Tokyo, on 14 September 1963’ (Tokyo Convention), 1963.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

not the State of arrival and on an aircraft that is not registered in the State of arrival.³⁶¹

In the case of air rage this has resulted in an inconsistent treatment of it depending on the policies of the airline and the 'competent authorities' in the city and nation-state of destination. In 2007, the ICAO was still urging contracting nation-states to implement appropriate legislation, indicating that this problem is as yet unresolved.³⁶²

The expression of an extreme response to the environment of the *Transit Zone* illustrates how its structures can be disrupted by human emotion. Sex, fear and rage all interrupt the conceptual and contractual relationships established by the *Transit Zone*.

³⁶¹ Presented by the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), 'Unruly Passenger', *Facilitation (FAL) Division — Twelfth Session: Cairo, Egypt, 22 March to 2 April 2004* (Cairo: International Civil Aviation Organisation, 2004), http://www.icao.int/icao/en/atb/fal/fal12/documentation/fal12wp055_en.pdf. (accessed February 12, 2008).

³⁶² Legal Commission, 'Draft Text for the Report on Agenda Item 48', *Assembly — 36th Session* (International Civil Aviation Organization, 2007), http://www.icao.int/icao/en/assembl/a36/wp/wp301_en.pdf. (accessed February 12, 2008).

Conclusion

International air travel is commonly seen as simply a way of getting about. However, as this thesis demonstrates, many contemporary issues infuse and surround the *Transit Zone*. Immigration, national defence, international politics, logistics, social interaction and cultural fantasy all collide there. This thesis explores the complexity of the *Transit Zone*'s paradoxical collection of sites and systems, which can not be reduced to one single reading. The *Transit Zone* has evolved, and continues to do so, in response to government and international demands, legal problems, technological advancements, logistical and commercial needs, and social changes. In doing so, its evolution redefines and articulates contemporary concerns.

The thesis also reveals the extensive artistic engagement with the *Transit Zone* and the contemporary concerns it articulates. Art is used as a designated imaginative space that challenges the established reality.³⁶³ The art works I discuss change our understanding of the *Transit Zone*, contesting the common perception of it as a ubiquitous space of modernity, which smoothly transports people from place to place. Some art works expose the *Transit Zone*'s roles in controlling access to movement and managing movement. Others contest the construction of bureaucratic and social forms of identity by legal, political, (in)security and commercial interests that have invested in the *Transit Zone*'s structures. And many find fantastical possibilities within the *Transit Zone*.

The first chapter of this thesis lays the groundwork for the discussion of individual art works by arguing that art can critically address contemporary issues. It asserts that the art works approach the *Transit Zone* through a variety of discourses including ethnography and performativity; the works intervene in sites of the *Transit Zone*, temporarily or as permanent public art pieces. All of the works critique the *Transit Zone* through their form and content. They mimic and interrupt its sites and those who enter and work in it, and hence they offer alternative perspectives on the *Transit Zone*.

³⁶³ This is a paraphrasing of Carol Becker's quote used in Chapter 1, page 37.

As was argued in the Introduction, the *Transit Zone* exists in relation to the normative sites of the nation-state and everyday life, yet it reflects these sites in a way that makes these sites 'suspect'. It can be seen as a heterotopia, "a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live."³⁶⁴ The *Transit Zone* is revealed as an internal environment with its own logic, time and expectations. It is separated from the nation-state and the everyday routine, and so acquires an illusory aspect. It generates emotional responses ranging from desire, fantasy and rage to fear. However, the *Transit Zone* is also revealed as a real and functional place, founded with the invention of heavier-than-air flight and evolving alongside it. Its systems and laws are (il)logical responses to the demands and problems of international civil aviation, as are the passenger's emotional responses.

The *Transit Zone* is both global and local, ubiquitous yet unique, nowhere yet site-specific. The paradox of the simultaneously international and national occurs repeatedly throughout the *Transit Zone*, both at its borders and within its sites. The *Transit Zone* exists in exception to the nation-state. It constructs the nation-state's borders yet sits outside them, an international no man's land intimately connected to the nation-state system. This paradox impacts on the management of immigration and security as much as it informs the environment and promotion of the airport and aeroplane. Each international airport and airline constructs itself as representative of a nation or region, yet also positions itself as a global player. Architecture, media, visual spectacle, public art, shops, services and facilities can all serve to identify the international and the unique national character of the airport.

The *Transit Zone* can be considered a limit figure to the nation-state. As quoted from Kierkegaard in the introduction to this thesis, "The exception explains the general and itself the general is thought about not with passion but only with comfortable superficiality. The exception, on the other hand, thinks the general with intense passion."³⁶⁵ Limit figures are exceptions to the general, and so passionately think about what they are in exception to. The *Transit Zone*, a site which is held outside the nation-

³⁶⁴ Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', 24.

³⁶⁵ Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, 15.

state, casts light on the nation-state's management of movement through the construction of territory and citizenship. It passionately thinks the normality of these systems.

However, the *Transit Zone* itself possesses limit figures who reveal and contest that which the *Transit Zone* represents in contemporary society, and how it constructs and refuses limit figures. Throughout the thesis I have utilised limit figures to chart the *Transit Zone*: the spontaneous refugee and the stateless individual; acts of terror-violence and hijacking; disruptive emotional responses to the environment, expressed as sex, rage and fear; and finally, art works that push at the structures of the *Transit Zone*.

For the spontaneous refugee or stateless individual the *Transit Zone* is a barrier, and sometimes a prison. It represents the inhospitable nature of the contemporary world polity, which excludes the undesirable from itself. These limit figures reveal that the *Transit Zone* and the nation-state construct their borders to filter movement and exclude undesirable movements from even entering the *Transit Zone*. The limit figure of terror-violence thinks passionately about discourses of (in)security. Each successful act of terror-violence exposes the workings of security practices and reveals how promises of security frame political practices internationally.

The passenger's experience of the sites of the airport and aeroplane are in part shaped by their separation from the normative space of the nation-state and their everyday life. Disruptive emotional responses such as air rage and inappropriate sexual behaviour upset the social conventions of behaviour within the *Transit Zone* and reveal the stress that this separated space places on the passenger. These limit figures create changes within the *Transit Zone*. The systems tighten to eradicate them or open to cater for their needs. These systems are conceptual, contractual and physical, appearing in relation to security, logistics and social re-imaginings. They demonstrate that international air travel is constantly used to reconceive our world.

These paradoxes, management systems and limit figures are explored in detail in four chapters, each chapter focussing on a different aspect of the *Transit Zone*. Chapter 2, *The Transit Zone and the Nation-State*, examines how the *Transit Zone* rethinks the location of the border, arguing that the border is constructed through the confluence of nation-state and international interests. As the ongoing development of solutions to the management of movement (such as the Schengen Acquis and Preclearance) demonstrate, borders are concepts and contracts as much as they are physical edges to territory. They are created by the management of data as much as by the scrutiny of physical movement. Micro-borders, that is, borders separated from the physical edge of a nation-state, are able to be placed anywhere without reference to the physical territory of the nation-state.

In Chapter 3, *(in)Security at the Border*, the physical construction of the *Transit Zone* is analysed as an excluded space in response to the discourses of (in)security. The two forms of clean space, a space clean of weapons, and a space clean of undesirable movement represented by terrorists, criminals and illegal migrants, are intimately connected to the construction of the *Transit Zone* as an excluded space. They physically reinforce its separation from the normative space of the nation-state and contribute to the construction and control of the nation-state border. While in existence prior to 2001, (in)security discourses around the *Transit Zone* have gained currency since the events of September 11, 2001. This chapter argues that nation-state security is linked to the security of civil aviation through the construction of (in)security around undesirable movement represented by terrorists, criminals and illegal migrants.

Together, these two chapters position the *Transit Zone* as constructed by control and containment systems. These systems manage movement by conceptually and physically excluding the *Transit Zone*, and the passengers within it, from the normative space of the nation-state. The *Transit Zone* and nation-state construct categories of desirable or undesirable movement, low or high security risk. Those suspected of illegitimate action, falling into high risk or undesirable categories, are denied trust, scrutinised and even banned from movement.

In Chapter 4, *Passenger-Object, Passenger-Subject*, the *Transit Zone* is described as a site of multiple imperatives that both de-individualise and reactivate the individual's subject position. The passenger is a complicit unit of movement who must traverse the *Transit Zone* in timely accordance with these orders, subsuming their individual desiring self to the imperative of movement. Simultaneously, the *Transit Zone* reactivates the individual's subject position through the use of media, enriched environments, consumer opportunities and spectacle. The passenger must negotiate these changing positions just as the *Transit Zone* must negotiate the changing needs of its various interest groups, including those of the passengers.

Chapter 5, *Reimagining the Transit Zone* explains why and how individuals respond with fantasies, regression and aggression to the demands that the environment places on them, in turn placing demands on the *Transit Zone* – demands that their (un)reasonable expectations be met. As can be seen, the *Transit Zone* incorporates magico-religious possibilities; its spaces can be approached as transformative and liminal. It is a site for erotic encounters (with or without consequence) and the negotiation of gender identity. It generates fear and anxiety in individuals both through the potential for disaster and the stress of the environment. The *Transit Zone* is not a neutral space – it requires mental, emotional, physical and spiritual negotiation at all times. *Reimagining the Transit Zone*, uses artworks to demonstrate the diversity of associations, relationships and potentialities present in the *Transit Zone*. Within the crannies of its systems, the *Transit Zone* has evolved into a rich and diverse cultural icon which houses desires, fantasies and resistances to its standardising logic.

Overall, this thesis celebrates and critiques a form of movement that has become embedded in our social and political world. However, it has become so usual for many of us to inhabit the *Transit Zone* that we forget to consider its implications. The fantastic dream of air travel has changed into a mundane reality informed by fear of the next disaster. But airports and planes represent contradictory realities. They are monuments to modernity, freedom of movement, economic development and global society. They are also spaces of government control, exclusion, psychological stress and the limbo of transit. As such the thesis

endeavours to bring about a new awareness of a site, structure and process: the *Transit Zone*. A conceptual and real environment, it shapes our conceptions of territory, geography, acceptable control and scrutiny. It constructs those who enter it as both objects – units of movement, and as subjects – individual, desiring consumers. It is a site of artistic, critical engagement. It is an expression of a culture's aspirations, fears and fantasies.

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