MAKING ART OF DATABASES

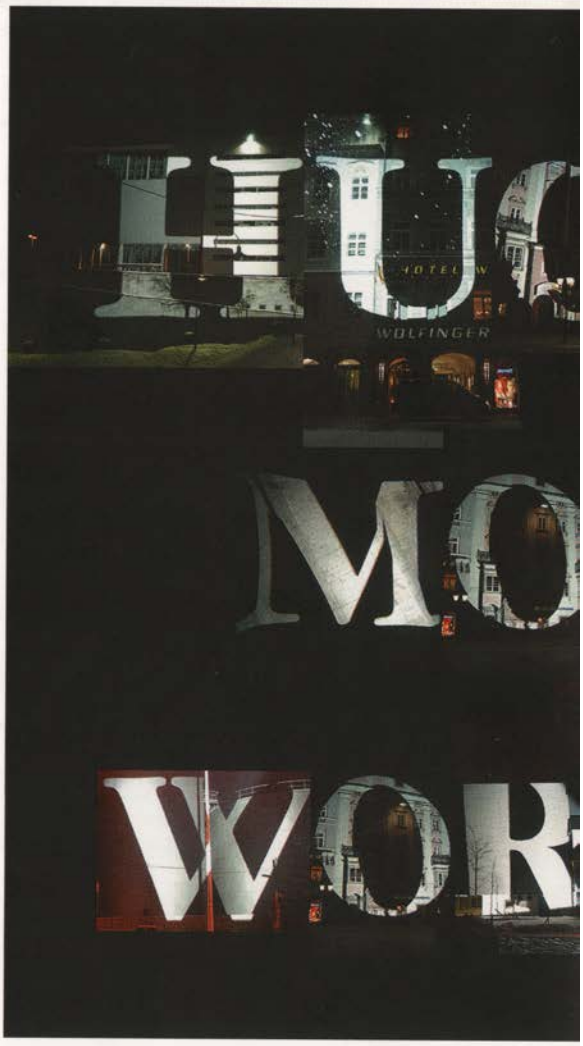
Massumi, Brian. “Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO).” *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

MASTER CLASS

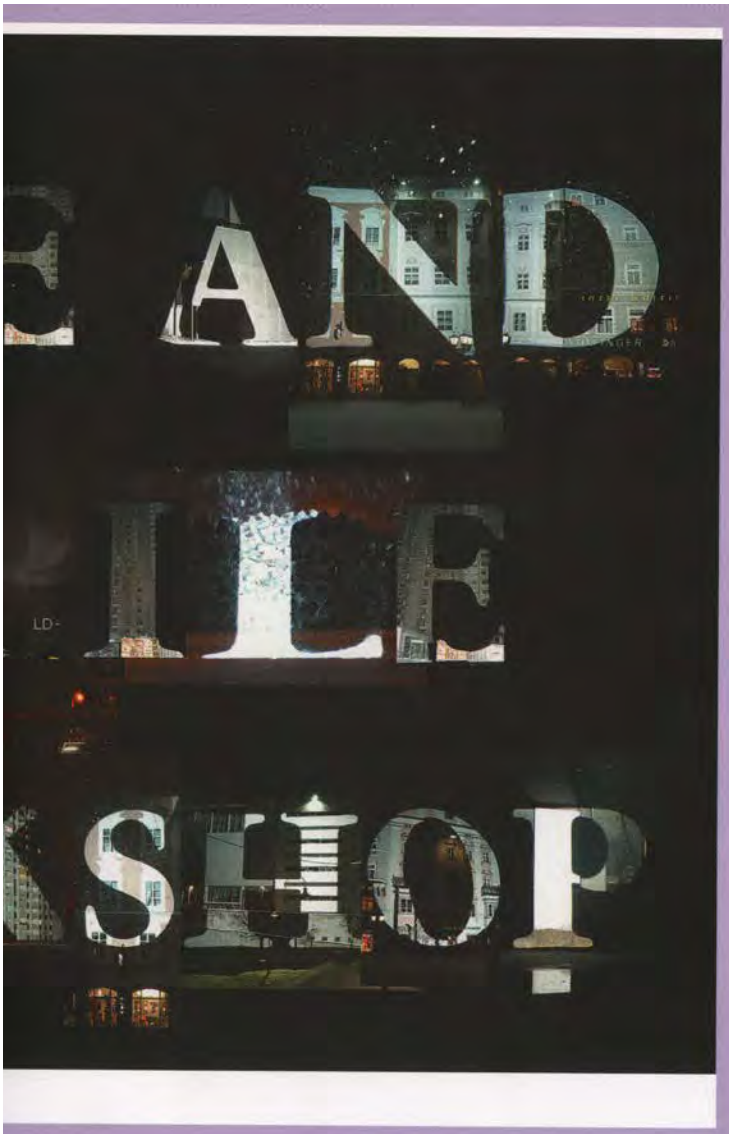
HUge and MObile (HUMO)

Julie Andreyev
Noel Douglas
Rainer Eisch
Johanne Gees
John Gerrard
Peter Grünheid
Martin Honzik
Maya Kalogera
Anya Lewin
Stefan Mittlböck-Jungwirt
Harald Schmutzhard
Flavia Sparacino
Lorenzo Tripodi

by RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER
and BRIAN MASSUMI



Massumi, Brian. “Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO).” *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)



URBAN APPOINTMENT

A Possible Rendezvous With the City

Brian Massumi

To catch the city in a different light, the Situationists recommended making virtual appointments.[1] A group member was asked to show up at a certain corner at a pre-designated time. Neither party knew who the other was. Steeped in uncertainty, the encounter was destined to remain merely a possibility. Merely a possibility? *Fully* a possibility. Think of what it feels like going to meet someone you have never seen before in a public place. Every person walking by might be about to step into your life. The slightest of gestures amplifies into an emergent sign of recognition. The space around is no longer a neutral frame. It is charged with anticipated gazes leading potential approaches.

> 'Arrival supplants departure; everything arrives without necessarily having to depart.'
> Paul Virilio[2]

Your peripheral vision sharpens to catch the subtlest flutter of arrival at every angle all around, giving a much more palpable sense of immersion than you normally feel. Space thickens, liquefies and stirs. Wavelets of possibility fill it like a fourth dynamic dimension.

> 'Transitions and arrivals are the only events that happen, though they happen by so many sorts of path ... '
> William James[3]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

The device of the virtual appointment is designed to make possibility movingly palpable, in a city space now defined as much as an over charge of potential paths of human encounter as by its geometrical and geographical properties.

> 'The experience says "more", and postulates reality existing elsewhere.'
> William James[4]

The HUMO workshop made a virtual appointment, not between individuals in the city but between a collectivity and the city. Twelve artists were invited to Linz, Austria, for the week of 3–7 February 2003. Waiting for them was the world's most powerful projector mounted with a power generator on a 12-ton truck. The projector is capable of throwing an image over 60 x 60 meters, large enough to cover the facade of a large building.[5] HUMO = HUge and MObile. 'The project', Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's call for participation announced, 'will consist of rapid deployment of strategic images to transform urban landscapes. Logos, emblematic buildings, quotidian spaces, suburban malls, advertising billboards etc, will be the targets of unannounced, unregulated ephemeral interventions ... below the radar of potential regulators'. The Ars Electronica FutureLab was placed at their disposal for the preparation of digital images and their transfer to acetate slides for rapid-fire open-air projection.

Like the Situationist *dérive*, or experimental urban 'drift', for which the possible rendezvous was one tactic, HUMO was a plan to exceed the expected. A truck-borne band of artists would roam the city making stealth image attacks on buildings, factories, fields and highway underpasses; onto anything and everything. The locations would be scouted ahead of time or chosen on the spur of the moment, in passing. They would be as central as a main plaza or as marginal as an industrial slag heap. In either case, art would leave the walls of the gallery behind to flit for a moment on the periphery of official urban vision, out of place, out of scale, out of nowhere. The image's arrival would momentarily alter the perceptual conditions of the local space, crystallizing at least a vague sense of the unaccustomed possibilities it enfolds. Even if no legible message were sent, the anomaly of the image's very presence would signal a 'more' postulating the existence of an elsewhere, beyond the conventional logic of that place.

In the everyday course of things, the sites of the city can be trusted to keep their appointments. A skyscraper can be counted on to be in the right place at the right time, in order to serve as a landmark. A train station or government building will faithfully fulfill its promised function, on schedule. There are regions of known possibility surrounding each of the building types or infrastructural elements composing the city – ways of featuring in the lives of those who enter them or pass them by that are as conventionalized as the types are generic. For each generic, there are regulated rhythms of passage into and out, more or less predictable patterns of circulation around, and strict zoning and ownership limitations on what can affix to the external envelope that stabilizes its public mode of appearing. The regularity of a building's regime of transition creates a backdrop against which

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

any unexpected arrival will stand out. The background, however, does not simply disappear under the weight of the anomaly. In fact, it rises to the surface and reasserts itself in and through, in addition to, the unaccustomed gesture. For example, projecting an inside scene on an outside wall actually strengthens the feeling of exteriority. Nobody is fooled into thinking that it is no longer a facade. But few seeing it will be untouched by the strangeness of seeing the inside out. The uncanniness of the feeling brings a sharpened awareness of the facade's exteriority, but with a twist: not as it normally presents itself. Exteriority reasserts, with new and added effect: in a special effect.

When an artist makes an appointment with the urbanly unexpected, this must be taken into account. There is no simple displacement or replacement. There is no straightforward inversion, contradiction or even combination. The accustomed persists in background conditions, contributing to a special effect which is not reducible to a logical operation on the generic type, a message about it, or even a visual recontextualization of it. This is because the sensori-motor specifications of the human body are built into the city on several registers at every site. The city's amenities offer what James J Gibson calls 'affordances', and Madeline Gins and Arakawa, 'landing sites'.[6]

Landing sites are offers of useful connection and platforms for possible action, pre-fit to the needs and capacities of the human body. Each landing site offers the body one of its own functions, stored in objective form. A park bench, for example, is a storage of repose. It has been sculpted to that function. Its objective form is that function in urban reserve: an available mold for its civil reliving. Each landing site beckons the body from a particular angle of its unfolding experience, to which it affords a response. The park bench beckons the body from the angle of its city-caused exhaustion, affording rest in response. For the foot-weary, the sight of a bench is not just a visual image of a recognizable object. Compressed into the visual image is a palpable anticipation of the additional steps it will take to reach the state of rest, a pre-sensation of knees flexing and body plopping at destination, an advance on the pleasure of tired muscles relaxing throughout the body, already tempered by the coming hardness of slats against vulnerable bones.

The landing sight already includes an anticipatory feeling, stretching across perceptual registers other than vision, of the experience of affording oneself of the offered function. The sight of the bench invokes movement-feeling (or kinesthesia), as well as postural feeling (or proprioception) and tactile sensation (texture, pressure, hardness). These other-than-visual sensings are included in the image, in nascent form, as inklings or pre-feelings of a promise kept. They inhabit the sight and are as present in the recognition of the object as its properly visual form. The recognition is not a merely cognitive act triggered by visual form. It is a veritable pre-living of the process leading to the enjoyment of the promised function. Fused into the visual presentation of the object are nascent experiences in other sense registers, whose pre-feeling compresses into the presence of the image their own unfolding over time. The bench sighting is *fusional* (an integral experience whose overall quality is attributable as much to touch and other senses as to vision) and

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

durational (presenting not just an object but an unfolding).

The facade of a building is also an affordance. Enfolded into the sight of an apartment complex is the feeling in the legs of winding down corridors and the drop in the stomach of ascending in elevators and the touch of a doorknob and the slip of a key and a swaddling in warmth and artificial light: a nascent, multi-registered experience of arriving home, already presented, in fusional duration, in the facade's visual attributes of flatness and verticality. We cannot not experience home arrival, from one angle actually and integrally in potential, at the sight of the apartment facade. It is built into our learned relationship to that generic building type. Every city sight, at any moment, is an arrival of this kind without, as James would say, any necessity of departure.

Because there is perceptually built in to every city feature an acquired relationship that has taken time to develop and takes time to unfold, Lozano-Hemmer emphasizes that urban art is not site-specific but *relationship-specific*. The relation always arrives, coming to us through a leading perceptual edge – usually visual – in advance of its next sequential unfolding. In other words, its arrival is a promised *event* that has yet to occur: an appointment with a known but not yet actually afforded outcome. To afford oneself of the outcome is to eventuate the relationship, to *perform* it, to follow through with its actual step-by-step unfolding.

Urban art, as a relationship-specific practice, approaches the external surfaces of urban elements, such as buildings, as *performance envelopes* already presenting potential events. It *suspends* the unfolding of those events for its own duration. For example, as long as a citizen has stopped to experience a strange art image on a familiar facade, he is not affording himself of home. The promised home-appointment is still perceptually enfolded in the facade, but its step-by-step fulfillment is temporarily suspended. For that duration, the event is held in its potential: the appointed outcome remains virtual. In place of the beckoning event, what unfolds is an unsought art experience. The art *parasitizes* the expected event with its own happening. The Situationists also had a name for this practice of inserting unexpected encounters with potential into existing landing sites: *détournement* (hijacking or detouring).

Urban art intervention involves holding virtual appointments in a parasitic event. It affords a temporary detour from accustomed paths, leading to known landing sites. The detour, like the unfolding it suspends on arrival without erasing, is not a merely cognitive act. Even though it always involves a combination, displacement or replacement of forms, and these procedures often suggest inversions or contradictions of message and meaning, the art event cannot be reduced to its formal procedures or semantic content. The accustomed event it detours is a fusional duration which is irreducibly experiential, in that it compresses into itself perceptual continuations that are really, if nascently, lived. In order to effectively substitute its own event for the expected event, the art intervention must be of the same nature as it. It is also a fusional duration, compressing in itself multiregister experiential potential. But since there is no expected out-

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

come in particular, what that potential might unfold as remains unspecified. The already known, normally expected event is thus wrapped in a parasitic *indeterminacy.* The art intervention's *special effect* is an added parasitic twist to the pre-fit experience habitually associated with the site type and the promised outcomes its form generically enfolds. This special indeterminacy effect is *felt* without being recognized.

In the example of an interior scene projected onto a facade, the nascent other-sense experiences of being inside are already elicited on the outside that normally promises them only after an unfolding. Their arrival comes too soon. The spatial displacement of the interior and its combination with the exterior presents a temporal distortion, whereby two unfoldings find themselves occupying the same surface. The presence of the disjoint durations produces interference between the multisense patterns each enfolds. It is this excess of interference that is felt as the event's added special effect: a surplus of undefined potential. This extra indeterminacy effect has its own experiential quality arising from the coming-together of its component durations: the feel of unaccustomed potential taking up residency in the joints of the familiar. More other-sense nascencies pack in, less distinguishably affording: the promise of more promise, without landing. A performance envelope has been differently activated, without, however, anything in particular eventuating.

The felt suspense of this eventuating of a public 'nothing in particular' could be the whole art event. Or it could just be a first phase. The event can be framed in such a way as to invite its viewer to become a participant. Platforms using motion detection, tactile interface or sound activation may offer actual other-sense opportunities to interact with a hijacked visual surface as well as with other participants. This actuates unaccustomed intersense linkages, which may crystallize into suggestions of as-yet unrecognized affordances inhabiting landing sites to come. Rather than re-experiencing a generic type, the participants will have performed a *prototype* of experience. And they will have done it together. From the leading edge of a perception, the event has drawn the participants into a collective unfolding, however vague to begin with, of their own *sociality* as such.

Urban art intervention is not best fit to reflect the reality of the city, for the simple reason that it is better suited to revise it. It has its sights more immediately on the augmentation of urban reality than its representation. It is a *social laboratory:* a performative platform for provisional group definitions of potential in a public innovation of affordance.

The setting in place of a provisional performance envelope is complicated by the fact that the relations which the art event parasitizes always, in fact, include a *nonlocal* dimension: all the more reason why the intervention cannot be site-specific. Every generic type composing the city is iterative and distributive. Home buildings, for example, repeat themselves at any number of sites, with variation, in an ever-developing distribution, as houses sprout and apartment complexes are razed and rebuilt. The same applies to storage tanks, highway underpasses, industrial slag heaps and museums; to every urban ele-

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

ment. The art intervention pertains as much to this process of elemental distribution and variation inherent to the city, on which its ability to regenerate itself is based, as it does to any particular si(gh)ting. The art event is addressing not just the specific site, but, through that site, a general urban dynamic, a way the city has of being and rebecoming itself: a city *mannerism*.

Urban art intervention addresses *citiness*, the city itself, from the mannerist angle of one of its constitutive self-iterations. That is why whatever kind of interaction eventuates from the art event's special activation of a performance envelope is prototypical. If distributive conditions are right, the parasitism may inherit the host-site's potential to repeat elsewhere with variations. The design of the event platform can take measures to accommodate this mannerist possibility. This is the role of *documentation*. Documentation is the art event's park bench: the form in which it rests. Except that documentary rest is for transport, since it is in documentary form that the event may move from one 'park' to another. Documentation as vehicular event benching. To vehiculate the event, the documentation cannot be conceived merely as reflecting or representing it. It must be thought of as, and designed to be, the event in seed form. If the documentary germ falls on fertile urban ground, the performative prototyping may well resprout. *Documentary design* is an integral component of urban art as ongoing *process*, dynamically addressing the city from a local angle on its generality (its translocal iterability). It is the event's way of angling itself or generally affording its own rehappening.

There is another way in which nonlocality features in an urban art event, in particular, one employing the strategy of

ANYA LEWIN (USA/UK)
http://www.dartington.ac.uk/staff/anyalewin

In the midst of a snowstorm a water aerobics class taking place in Palm Springs, CA is projected onto the postmodern landscape of a Linz Multiplex which came complete with fake palm trees.

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

A bear/human wanders like a lost astronaut around an alien landscape of south Devon. In a further confusion of location the figure is found walking across oil barrels in an industrial park, or on the facade of a condemned building.

image projection. The urban surface is itself a generic type. Every surface in the city onto which an image might be affixed or projected already affords a recognizable, nonlocal function: advertising. An urban art event cannot avoid being, simply by virtue of deploying *public* imagery, an engagement with *publicity*. Advertising makes every urban surface a potential billboard. And every urban volume can now be transected in a way that resolves it into a configuration of newly available surfaces. Any and every city space can in principle be sliced into, so as to multiply indefinitely the number of publicity surfaces it can host. This is the leading edge, not just of a perceptual mode – visuality – but in the same stroke of a global system – capitalism. Through the ubiquity of advertising, capitalism is continually breaking and entering the lived volumes of urban experience, parasitizing them in its own profitable way. This public breaking and entering of the city by visible expressions of capital is what Paul Virilio calls *effraction*.[7] It 'overexposes' the city to capital-intensified sight. New digital technologies have provided advertising with effraction tools of inestimable power. They offer previously unseen possibilities: variations of scale, from the smallest of miniaturizations to a new giganticism, in addition to new dimensions of mobility and angles of attention-getting. The logo is as much a component part of the urban landscape as the apartment block.

An advertising image brings *transnational* arrivals to the city. The logos more and more attach to multinational companies of global reach. Their presence betokens connections between each city locale and local sites across the globe. As Saskia Sassen argues, the contemporary city is a global city in the sense that it connects outwardly and horizontally, through or beneath its vertical integration in a nation-state,

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. “Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO).” *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

to form an economic and social network filigreeing with other far-flung urban centers and their associated rural reaches. Cities are part of a 'new geography' that 'links sub-national spaces across borders ... This is a space that is both place-centered, in that it is embeddded in particular and strategic locations, and transterritorial, because it connects sites that are not geographically proximate yet are intensely connected to each other.'[6]

Not all the finely webbed connections are made visible in the advertising image. There are many its sponsors have an interest in *not* envisioning. The arrivals to the global city are not only consumer goods bringing purchase choice, but also people bringing labor power. Immigrants of all kinds, including political and economic refugees, flow into and out of the cities as part of a mass human migration of unparalleled magnitude. Their life histories, memories, and maintained economic and cultural links connect back to areas of the world where the structural effects of 19th-century European colonization are still playing themselves out, as new forms of imperialism daisy-chain with them. The sweatshops and child-labor practices targeted in recent years by boycott campaigns are emblematic of the kind of operative imperialist connections that go unsighted by advertising. A giant Nike ad that recently occupied the entire multistorey facade of a large building in the center of Rotterdam is a case in point. Featuring Edgar Davids, a Dutch soccer star born in Surinam, it makes visible a structural effect of colonial history that can be publicly and profitably affirmed (the cosmopolitanism and increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of global cities that makes them a social factory for the creative emergence of new skills, styles and modes of expression that are subject to appropriation and logoing) while backgrounding others that

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

Rotterdam, 2000

are troubling (the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth in the global economy and the dependence of companies like Nike on exploitative labor practices in other corners of the world in order to maintain their profitability in an intensely competitive transnational economic environment). Like all urban perceptual events, an advertising display presents in the now of the moment an other duration, and in the here of that now, a potential unfolding elsewhere. The desired unfolding from the Nike ad is toward the elsewhere of a shoe store and the time of a purchase. It is not a step-by-step retracing of the connections leading to sweatshops, possible labor action in Asia and domestic boycott.

An urban art event employing image projection engages with this dimension of advertised nonlocality in the global economic environment, whether it wants to or not. Consciously or not, it will embed decisions about how it can or will deal with that engagement in the very form of the platform it designs for itself, the performance envelope it actuates and the documentary follow-up tactics it adopts. Will it ignore it, at the peril of further blurring the boundaries between art and advertising, already called into question by the cannibalizing of what were once avant-garde artistic strategies by an increasingly style-savvy public relations industry? Will it consciously try to suspend the consumer unfolding for a moment by producing perceptual interference patterns that detour participants' actions and deflect attention toward other unfoldings? Or will it exploit its parasitizing of potential advertising sites to ironize or explicitly comment upon the kinds of connections that the advertising normally occupying and multiplying urban surfaces makes a concerted practice of not envisioning? Or will it combine strategies, either in different phases of its eventuating or integrated

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

into each phase as different levels of itself (giving it a multi-layering effect, like an event-depth or spacing proper to the time of its performance)?

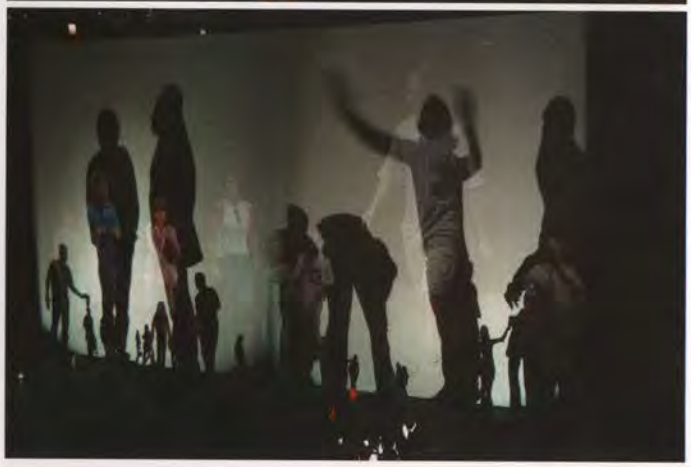
The strategy of explicitly displaying unvisualized connections suggests a second pole or orientation of urban art intervention. The first orientation was the perceptual/experiential pole tending toward a prototyping of sociality as a self-disseminating process that is itself essentially urban in nature. The second orientation is ideological, asserting missing logical connections and transmitting a message that is not urban itself, but is rather *about* the city and its elsewheres, 'speaking' from a principled distance on them. Every urban art project operates at both poles, to different degrees or intensities. Every such intervention must prepare the perceptual conditions for its own occurrence and, at least momentarily, suspend site-specific affordance. And, to the degree that it does, it operates at the experiential pole. Every intervention is also a comment on generic urban practices, like advertising, if only by virtue of unexpectedly occupying a city surface, and thus carries a certain weight of ideological analysis and comment. It is a question of emphasis, or what is preponderately conveyed. If what is vehiculated is primarily an idea or message content about the city and the connections between the local and the global, the conveyance is *communicational* or informational and parks itself toward the ideological end of the urban art spectrum, toward the iteration of a principle. If what is vehiculated is primarily a self-seeding performance of sociality, it is preponderately *contagious* or mimetic, and parks itself at the perceptual end of the spectrum, toward the iterative dissemination of a new experience-type.

Krzysztof Wodiczko, projection on the 'Arco de la Victoria', Madrid 1991, coinciding with the first Gulf war. Commissioned by the Circulo de Bellas Artes.

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

Body Movies, Relational Architecture 6 *by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Linz 2002. Interactive projection with 1 200 giant portraits that are revealed inside the shadows of passers-by. First installed by V2_ in Rotterdam.*



The work of a given artist is likely to tend more toward one pole or the other. Lozano-Hemmer's work tends toward the social contagion of experience pole, while that of Krzysztof Wodiczko tends to the ideological communication of a message pole. In most instances, to the extent that an urban art practice operates at one pole, it backgrounds or disengages from the other. If it emphasizes one pole, it is because it has set specific mechanisms in place to uphold that orientation. Every practitioner or project will display a selective emphasis or signature mixture of these tendencies. Either tendency may be staged in a way that empowers participants to appropriate the event's outcome for themselves, toward their own ends.

The perceptual/experiential pole was presented above as the base state or default setting of urban art intervention, not because the genre in any way excludes communicational strategies, but because the communicational function it can play is not unique to it but is shared with other arts (and can be practiced in print, online and in the gallery). It is through its communicational aspect that urban art intervention itself communicates with other arts, and through its necessary treatment of perceptual/experiential urban landing sites, that it drifts off on its own as an autonomous art practice.

The members of the HUMO workshop came from a variety of art practices and represented a healthy mix of these strategies. Some worked in more than one medium. A number were seasoned practitioners of urban art intervention, who had already developed their own approach, including ways of ensuring public participation, enabling follow-on effect, and grappling with issues of event documentation (workshop initiator and orchestrator Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Julie Andre-

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

yev, Johannes Gees, Peter Grünheid, Harald Schmutzhard, Lorenzo Tripodi). Among these, the relative emphasis between local site specificity and nonlocal linkage varied. One artist's work was most directed toward ideological analysis and comment in the context of the revolutionary anti-capitalist wing of the anti-globalization movement (Noel Douglas). The workshop provided these artists with an opportunity to experiment with a technological platform for urban art practice to which they normally would not have access, due to the high cost of the equipment and technical support. Other workshop members were artists working in screen media (Rainer Eisch, Maya Kalogera, John Gerrard: computer graphics and digital imaging; Maya Kalogera, Noel Douglas: web art and site design; Anya Lewin, Julie Andreyev: film and video); paper-based media (John Gerrard: photography); and performance (Anya Lewin: multimedia performance; Lorenzo Tripodi: VJing). For these artists, the workshop was an opportunity to transport their artistic work or its concerns into a different medium. Also participating in the workshop were Flavia Sparacino (software development and interactive systems design), workshop co-planner Brian Massumi (philosophy), and two Ars Electronica Center technical experts (Martin Honzik and Stefan Mittlböck-Jungwirt). This brief summary does not do justice to the diversity of skills and interests represented (more information on the participants can be accessed through the website addresses accompanying their images). The aesthetic question the workshop posed for all participants was what happens to an image designed in a 2D medium when it is scaled up many magnitudes and dropped onto a surface that is an integral part of a live 3D environment.

The truck that transported the generator and the projector to the sites

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

The broad range of participant approaches and disciplines was essential to the workshop conception. The exceeding of the expected was meant to be part of the workshop experience itself, and to feed forward into the on-site projections. Group heterogeneity can produce positive feedback, fostering the emergence of unplanned synergies. This notably occurred in the HUMO workshop, at least in part in response to other contingencies. As with the Situationists, chance and constraint were not considered contraries. The attitude was that they could work hand-in-hand, as in the tactic of the possible rendezvous where the arbitrary imperative of being at a particular time and place for an imposed purpose gives rise to an intensified living of potential. Working under unchosen imperatives, friction in the procedural machinery and obstacles encountered en route can gel perceptions that might otherwise remain peripheral and crystallize creative tactics that might have been overlooked. Unsuspected avenues open, constraint transforms into a new chance to advance, blockage into a new opportunity. This thinking informed the workshop concept: what was being offered was not a class, but an adventure. And an adventure it was.

Obstacles began to be encountered almost immediately. The simplicity of the technological platform of single still-image projection from acetate was a planned constraint. What hadn't been known in advance was that the size of the generator needed to power the projector required a truck so large and heavy as to render improbable the modus operandi of 'rapid deployment of ... short interventions below the radar of potential regulators'. Simply to drive the truck on the narrow streets of Linz required a permit which imposed limits on the number and length of the sorties. The permit alerted regulators to the project, who then imposed a further permit requirement for each projection site. Dealing with the authorities became almost a full-time occupation for the tireless resident Ars Electronica Center program coordinator, Eva Kühn, whose organizational skills were, as a result, redirected from other critical areas. The time it took to laser print the acetates and the fussiness of mounting them on the projector frames, also came as a shock. Once the team finally made it out into the field, maneuvering the truck into projecting position was a project in itself, with each site offering its own resistances. Relentless snow, day after day, created not only more maneuverability issues, but, at times, basic visibility issues as well. Given the compressed timeframe of the workshop, it soon became clear that the preparatory work of reconnoitering sites and preparing the projection context, as well as opportunities for working through public participation issues, would be significantly curtailed. For the first two days, it was a crash course in the contingencies of urban art intervention. It was a great relief when the first projections were cast upon the facade of a large abandoned apartment block in the suburb of Leondig.

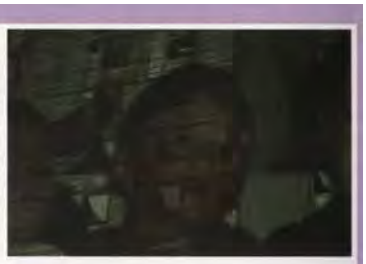
That was when it became clear that, in order to hijack a city site with an image, you have to deal with the possibility that the image might be hijacked by the site. This is precisely what was happening at first. There is no such thing, the group soon learned, as a simple 2D projection on a found city surface. A building is not just a bigger screen. Its surface has a shallow depth of its own, due to the texture of its construction materials, which can give

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

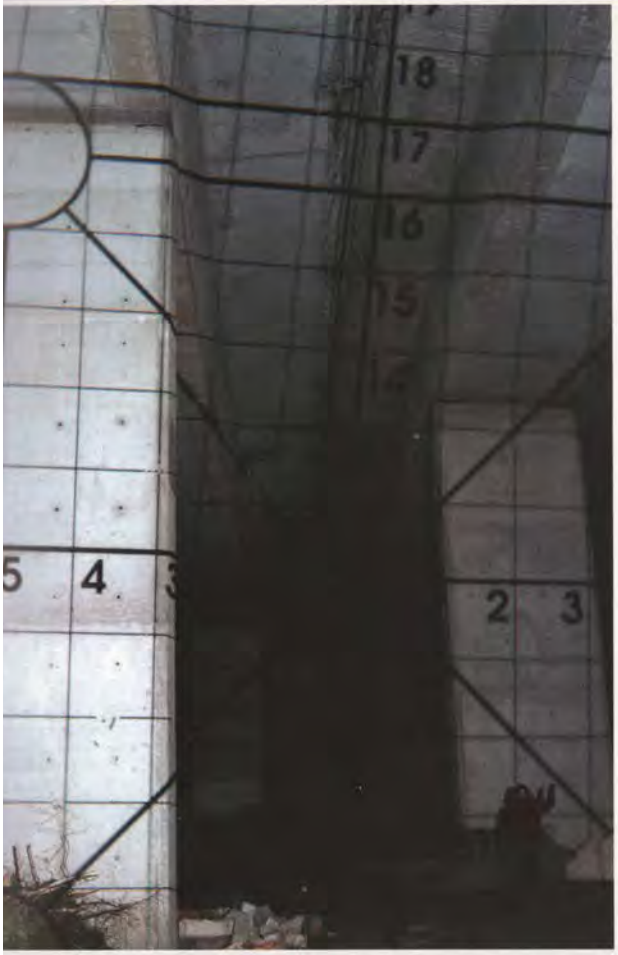
the image a strange, almost tactile thickness. The building also imposes in places its own form and configuration. Windows, for example, can swallow pictorial elements like black holes, significantly altering the overall visual effect, to the point sometimes of undermining the comprehensibility of the image. Matching the image to the facade's size and configuration is no straightforward enterprise. Just the fact of being blown up in scale can turn some images monstrous, while neutralizing others. Which way a given image will go is not as easy a call to make as one might expect. Scale comes into its own as a problem. Unpredictable plays of ambient light and weather conditions can also significantly affect image quality. Further, a building in its urban context, unlike a screen or canvas, is essentially unframed. It is impinged upon, even visually altered, by its surroundings. The presence of neighboring buildings, for example, may impinge upon an image by casting shadows, and even alter its perceived form by peripherally entering into a gestalt with it. Street and security lights dapple the scene. Trees grow, sometimes in the vicinity of fences, in league with which they can make finding an optimum line of sight, or even any line of sight, difficult. Visibility can be hard to format. This was brought home to the group, when it realized that the first projections, which were barely discernible on site, had been so striking a kilometer away that people driving on the highway had started to pull over in large numbers to watch.

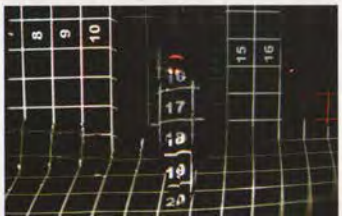
Johannes Gees summed up the general group feeling following the first projections: 'It's amazing how a building can get in the way of an image'. If producing interference effects and bringing on the unexpected is an integral part of urban art, HUMO was off to a good start.



MAYA KALOGERA

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)





There are two responses to the indiscipline of buildings. One is to learn how to gain a measure of control over site-interferences by developing a sensitivity to them and a feel for assessing their parameters, and then adopting or inventing technical procedures to eliminate contingencies where possible or, for those that cannot be eliminated, to minimize their impact. The second response is to embrace the unpredictability of the context as a collaborator, treating the contingencies as non-human image co-authors. The accidental swallowing of the pictorial element of an eye by a window, for example, can produce a strikingly unplanned effect of face and facade morphing into each other (Harald Schmutzhard). Projecting onto a highway underpass fractures an image onto disjunct surfaces at different depths from the projection point, creating an eerie amalgam of surface and volume that gives a sense of motion in stillness that cannot be achieved in a non-urban medium. When, on top of this, the image is of a building interior or a human body, the scene is weirdly, almost ineffably, affecting. The strongest image-enfoldings of multisense feelings, and the most intensely suspending special indeterminacy effects, seemed often to arise at fortuitous conjunctures.

The HUMO group developed both the control and embrace responses. On the control side, composition and printing techniques were found to sharpen image resolution to withstand certain ambient interferences. Devices were employed to enable the artist to fit the image precisely to a site configuration. One device was a preparatory trip, during which a coordinate grid composed of white lines on a black background was projected onto the site. The resulting site map was then digitally photographed. This created a digital template. Back at the lab, an image could be superimposed upon

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. “Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO).” *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

the template in an image processing program, allowing it to be scaled to the site with its constituent elements exactly positioned. This control device actually yielded chance results of its own, as the group started spontaneously responding to certain grid projections as works of arts in themselves. Templates were also produced manually, using a camera obscura to outline the scene in perspective. In the lab, the perspective outline was scanned into the computer to be used as a template in a similar fashion to the gridded photograph. The ability to fit the image to the building enabled, for example, Julie Andreyev to project a synthetic Sim Tower highrise onto a university residence building, with each simulated floor corresponding exactly to an actual storey. Artistic considerations were not the only reason for image control. John Gerrard used it specifically to 'remove antisocial elements' from the projection (ie working around windows to avoid flooding unsuspecting people's living rooms and bedrooms with 100 000 lumens of light).

Once these control procedures had been perfected, the workshop members could go back out into the field with a mix of controlled and uncontrolled images to test at different sites under variable conditions. A spirit of image experimentation effectively took hold, actually enhanced by the availability of image control devices. Group members no longer felt that the buildings necessarily got in the way. But they also did not necessarily feel a compulsion to prevent them from doing so. There was a creative margin of play between the image hijacking the site and the site hijacking the image, in which the group quickly learned to operate artistically.

The overall response of the workshop members to the barrage of obstacles they encountered in the beginning was to rally

MAYA KALOGERA (Croatia)

For the HUMO workshop I've chosen to work with the images of people from my ongoing project Beauté – mode d'emploi. *Those projections of faces on the huge diverse surfaces were in some way experiments to find out how they work (behave) in different spaces, sometimes with quite suprising results.*

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

around each other, and each other's images, facilitated in large measure by the expert motivational orchestration of Lozano-Hemmer. Participants worked together around the clock to respond to the challenges. A mutual aid ethic took hold. One form it took was an informal assembly-line set up to shepherd each artist's images from screen to acetate to projector to landing site. The collaborative nature of the work loosened somewhat proprietary feelings of individual authorship. In the end, each participant was able to realize images they were happy with, and each feeling of achievement was shared by the group. By the last night, the mood had upturned to euphoria, despite the accumulated exhaustion of a week of sleeplessness and endless hours huddled around the truck late into the night in subzero temperatures. Even before they had left Linz, some participants were already talking about restaging HUMO on their home terrain.

With the prospect of a certain HUMO contagion becoming a reality, the almost compulsive documentation that now accompanies virtually every art undertaking started to take on germinal significance. Each projection event had been multiply recorded using an arsenal of digital video cameras, digital still cameras and traditional film cameras. Each projection was caught from almost as many angles as a Los Angeles police chase. HUMO participants were a self-effracting urban band. They iterated in their own events the 'overexposure' that Virilio sees as an inherent to the contemporary city experience. The question, what for? was in the air even as the shutters were snapping. It was decided that a collective database would be created, to be centrally archived on an Ars Electronica server and made available to group members through FTP. DVD downloads would also eventually be distributed. HUMO participants would be free

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

to use each other's images, conditional upon a simple acknowledgment. The documentary archive would become a resource base for partial presentations destined for the public (such as this book spread). It would also serve as a storage vehicle for what it was hoped would be the first in a self-disseminating series of HUMO-like events and related publications, allowing subsequent projects to afford themselves of the Linz experience and build upon what the participants collectively happened upon, in terms of technical procedure, artistic technique, context evaluation, site preparation, public participation issues and urban-art group dynamic.

Although many of these aspects of urban art practice were not experimented with in depth or much at all at HUMO I (most particularly the crucial angle of public participation) due to its planned and unplanned constraints, it was felt by most participants that an enabling seed had been sown. Formal and informal theoretical discussions during the workshop linked what did eventuate to further potentials that might be developed in spin-off or follow-up undertakings. Lozano-Hemmer's insistence that the group study urban art precedents and discuss participants' prior work gave a sense that the project was already implicated in a distributive event-iteration that would continue beyond it, perhaps in some measure re-prototyped and conveyed by it. It was hoped that the workshop and the subsequent work of its participants – a translocal community of inquiry into and experimentation with urban art intervention – might begin to network itself. To the extent that it does, the virtual appointment with the city will have been kept, by many and still multiplying paths.

'The experience says 'more' ... '

LORENZO TRIPODI

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)

Notes

1 Guy Debord, 'Theory of the Dérive', *Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, ed Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa Barcelona, Museu d'Art Contemporani, 1996, p26
2 Paul Virilio, 'The Overexposed City', *Zone1/2*, 1987, p19
3 William James, 'The World of Pure Experience', *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1996, p63
4 Ibid, p67
5 The HUMO workshop utilized the BP12 projector from PANI Austria. This projector has a 12 000 Watt HMI lamp that can produce images with over 100 000 ANSI lumen intensity.
6 James J Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1979, pp 127–143; Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *Architectural Body*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2002, pp 5–22
7 Virilio, 'The Overexposed City', p25
8 Saskia Sassen, 'Geographies and Countergeographies of Globalization', *Anymore*, ed Cynthia C Davidson, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 2000, p137

[RLH]

Massumi, Brian. "Master Class Huge and Mobile (HUMO)." *Making Art of Databases* Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/Nai Publishers, 2003: 28-47. Print. (english)